

## **MSEAT Regional Leadership Meeting Notes**

**4pm - Thursday 30 September 2021**

### **Agenda**

- RoadMap and COVID Restrictions/Vaccinations access and vulnerable communities' feedback.
- Election preparation and expectations - How much change in Mayors and Councillors in each LGA? Impact on CSP leadership and focus?
- Emerging economic opportunities incl grant and funding applications (especially BBRF, Regional Leadership etc)

### **RDA Murray Update**

#### **Total HRM Update – Linda Griffiths – Brown and Jenny Griffiths**

- Have been engaged by RDA Murray to them in the development of a Strategic Regional Plan.
- Looking at strengths, challenges and needs across the region. Supporting stakeholders and identifying opportunities.
- Community Consultation process about to begin, starting with a survey, followed by focus groups during the second half of October. A draft summary report will then be presented to RDA board before community consultation on the plan in December.
- Anticipated launch date in February 2022
- EH - Board members are available to talk to about regional plans and needs.

#### **Edwina Hayes – RDA Murray:**

- Hume Dam flood warnings.
- Working with Multicultural agencies on regional COVID-19 comms.
- Workforce development and population growth - escapees from metro areas
- BBRF – the next round is coming up soon. There was \$4.5 mil of investment in the region from the last round. RDA Murray will work with community to ensure the applications are well structured.

### **Member Updates**

#### **Geoff Lowe – Ikon Suspension and RDA Murray Board**

- Elections – has heard that there are mayors in the Murray region who are not wanting to stand for re-election.
- COVID-19 – noted there is confusion about roadmaps in the community.
- Opportunity for the region - investment coming out of superannuation industry into the future. Regional infrastructure as a target

**Lynnette O'Reilly – Greater Hume Shire Council and RDA Murray Board**

- Vaccinations - issues with mandatory vaccination impacting some of our education providers.
- Concern from local govt around confidentiality in reporting the numbers of people vaccinated in organisations.

**Pip Walker - Helen Dalton's Office**

- Vaccinations - access and supply continue to be issues. Requirement for Medicare card is becoming a challenge.
- Undocumented workers coming forward to get vax. Helen Daltons office is asking for amnesty for these people, so they are not discouraged to get the vaccine.
- Would like a common border between NSW and VIC - call for end to the hard border.
- Asking for regional people to be allowed to continue to work with a single Jab.
- Concern about how businesses will manage policing vaccine passports on their premises.

**Murray Scholz – Scholz Farming & RDA Murray Board**

- Service industry concerns about roadmap/vax passports - legalities around policing of this. Some businesses not comfortable about it.
- Agriculture - concern about how harvest will be managed if an LGA goes into lockdown. What regulations they will have to deal with and how to communicate these?
- High pressure year for grain storage. - good years last and this year will strain storage. Logistics will be difficult.

**Brett Millington - Mildura Regional Development**

- Separation of communities on the border are challenging and means it's not viable for some businesses to open. One iconic business in his region has closed this week.
- Vax rates slowly getting up towards where they want to it be.
- Concerns from businesses around how to "police" vax status

**Justin Clancy – MP**

- Same concerns as Brett and Helen.
- Vax - working to make sure we get the vax as accessible as possible.
- Impact for hospitality on Oct 11 opening date is the biggest challenge
- Need to be looking at risks ahead - access to capital and labour for businesses.

**Ray Davy – Balranald Council**

- Vaccinating 100's of undocumented workers in Euston (coming across the border to get vaxxed). RFDS is targeting those people.
- Emergency management - downside to opening is increase in regional travel = increased transmission. Working on what the response plans need to be in areas that will struggle with health care
- Managing communications cross border is difficult. Some residents are being denied access to businesses across the border based on recent sewage testing results.

**Gary Rodda - MLLS**

- Uncertainty with harvest - movement for labour and machinery - how will this be affected by LGA and border closures?

- Grain storage - landholders wanting to get grain off farm to prevent mouse infestations will strain the storage network.

#### **Ambrose Glass - ACC Economic Development**

- Protocol for managing COVID-19 safe grain silos
- There is a contrast between the roadmaps in NSW and VIC. Different Sq meter rules and timings creating challenges across the border.
- Oct 11 opening date will impact some businesses who have younger workers who have been unable to get vaccinations in time.

#### **Anthony McFarlane – Business NSW**

- Concerns about the vaccine passport and the role that business will have to play in policing. Waiting for further detail in the public health orders.
- Covid-19 disaster payment being turned off - this may cause difficulties in regions where custom won't return as quickly as metro areas.

#### **Yvette Myhill - Destination Riverina Murray**

- Concern about period between October and December - capacity rules and ability to retain staff mean they will still require support during that period.
- Service NSW won't be ready to check vaccine certs for possibly up to 3 weeks after October 11. No clarity on how will be managed.
- Holding a roundtable zoom session on Tuesday 5th at 1pm for tourism - 200 RSVP already. All interested parties welcome.

#### **Jeff Sheather - Upper Murray Inc**

- Council elections - mayor is restanding and most candidates are as well. There is a push to inject new blood into the mix
- Concern with business about policing vaccine passports.
- Upper Murray Inc secured funding on VIC side to install standalone communication and electricity supply hubs. Chamber of Commerce in Tumbarumba are applying for funds to replicate this in NSW

#### **Ben Foley - Hume Bank & RDA Murray Board**

- Housing market and demand for property continues to go gangbusters. Slight drop in first home buyers but investors are soaking up any downturn.
- Rising property prices and higher rental yields - growing increase in homelessness. Area of great concern.
- National scam awareness week in Nov – Hume Bank will be running webinars. Partnering with councils in the region.

#### **Michael Pisasale and Gabrielle Cusack – Murray Irrigation Limited**

- Director elections have just been held. Phil Snowdon and Lachlan Marshall to be elected
- Survey coming out on levels of engagement from MIL

#### **Graeme Kruger - Rice Growers Association**

- Trying to encourage a less conservative approach to water allocation.
- Agriculture is booming and could stimulate the economy if farmers are confident that they will get water.

- Lots of prep for rice in the region
- Sun Rice concern about harvest labour force. There is a shortage of labour in the region

#### **Alex Anthony - MDBA & RDA Murray Board**

- MDBA balancing act is about not flooding people out and managing water in the dams for allocations.
- Holding weekly briefings in flood mitigation and working with councils
- Ramped up comms through weekly reports and social media.

#### **Glenn Stewart – Robinvale/Euston**

- There is roadmap confusion
- Undocumented workers & vaccinations - significant issue in Robinvale
- Bendigo and SMECC vaccinating a lot – 1600+ in Robinvale Euston
- Estimated that there could be up to 10,000 workers in the region - 30% possible undocumented.
- Opportunity going forward around ag tech - change in Telstra and NBN approach in the last 6 months regarding connectivity.

#### **John Elgin - BEC**

- Much confusion about roadmap and policing of vaccine passports.
- Access to capital is important
- Reduction in stimulus/ support is making people anxious
- Variation of vax rates across regions may cause issues.
- Pushing businesses to get back into business to meet Christmas demand
- Holding a webinar with Damien Tudehope on Friday 8 October at 9am

#### **Mark Francis – Murray Regional Tourism**

- Business support from both federal and state is critical. Anomalies on the border mean that NSW business with VIC customers will have no support or business with the border still closed.
- Businesses are not ready to open on 11 Oct due to lag in vax rates. Potential to open with one vax only?
- Policing - businesses looking to employ security to manage that
- Labour issues and business continuity is critical
- Formal study in hospitality has had zero uptake
- Concerns around water management of the river - high river events and floods may affect reopening.
- Putting pressure on VIC government to commit to reopen border by late October.

#### **Mary Hoodless - RDA Murray Board Chair**

- Confusion cross border
- The NSW Govt roadmap has been welcomed. Opportunity to get together to reconnect is valuable, especially in bushfire affected regions.
- VIC kids do not know if they are going to school next week
- LGA elections -hard to recruit. What message is this telling us when younger leaders have no interest in local govt? What pathways can we support?
- Grants and opportunities - lots around.

- Increase in rural crime - stock loss and equipment loss. Drone tech is being used to scope properties.
- Homelessness in Upper Murray is an emerging issue.

#### **ACTIONABLE COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES**

- Nil

**Next Meeting** Thursday 28 October 2021 4pm via zoom.

Please contact Edwina 0427267753 [edwina.hayes@rdamurray.org.au](mailto:edwina.hayes@rdamurray.org.au) for further clarification or information