

## **MSEAT Regional Leadership Meeting Notes**

### **4pm - Thursday 28 October 2021**

#### **Agenda**

Key items to think/ talk about:

- Do you have a Covid Emergency Management Plan in place?
- Economic and social impact of the lifting of restrictions – what have you noticed in your region?
- What is the current community sentiment in your region - economic and/or social? What campaigns to re-activate the Murray region are you aware of?

#### **RDA Murray Update**

##### **Edwina Hayes – RDA Murray:**

- Members are asked to complete the RDA Murray Strategic Regional Planning Stakeholder Survey. The purpose of the survey is to collect opportunities in our region that should be highlighted in the plan.
- RDA Murray has been involved in Covid emergency management planning - current events in Albury-Wodonga are highlighting some of the gaps in our plans e.g., relationships between schools and health etc. This has implications for schools - when children are close contacts it requires whole families to isolate. Hospitals and police impacted by this
- Social impacts of current COVID-19 outbreak – reported issues of racism in the community towards refugee groups.
- Community sentiment on COVID-19 is that services are clunky due to NSW VIC lines of management. Frustrations in the community on how quickly response has been activated.
- Destination NSW – the new NSW tourism campaign has been launched. Activation campaigns are exciting and on target. Murray will be right at front centre of these.

#### **Member Updates**

##### **Glenn Stewart - Robinvale/Euston**

- Covid Planning – A-W could learn from Mildura's experience of outbreaks.
- Influx of people into the regions - people are apprehensive about what this will bring.
- Has been speaking to Robinvale hospital - 2500 undocumented (no Medicare card) workers have been vaxxed at the hospital and another 1000 at the pharmacy.

##### **Murray Scholz – Scholz Farming and RDA Board Member**

- Apprehension in Albury amongst schools and medical community. Communication is poor, especially from the education department. Medical system is stretched due to people isolating. Concern about the covid ward being based in Cancer Ward.
- Agriculture - how are people going to manage covid during harvest as most teams are small. This may cause a labour issue.

- China has decided that they will no longer export fertiliser or base chemicals for herbicides to the rest of the world. Farmers are trying to source inputs for next year from elsewhere and having to pay 200-400% more than last year.

#### **Phil Stone – Edward River Council**

- Difficulties in getting the data right for vaccinations. All local providers are convinced that the data for Edward River is incorrect, and rates are higher. We are relying on vax rate to allow freedoms. Incorrect data will affect this. Currently in conversation with NSW Health and MLHD. Trying to encourage as many people as possible to come forward for vax.
- Cases in region have been maintained and well managed
- Impacts on the community - border rules - the differing ways in which each state views the other state. This has impacted tourism. However, a regional benefit in that more people were shopping locally.
- Ag and manufacturing have been impacted by changes of rules - delays in significant projects. SunRice \$2.5 mil project delayed due to VIC workforce not being able to come over.

#### **Phil Clements – Softwoods**

- Covid - seeing inconsistent application of some of the rules regarding close contacts
- Timber industry issues - things are still going strongly in demand for timber products. Reported shortages of building supplies will be ongoing for a while.
- A lot of commentary around the need to expand plantations to fulfill need for next 30 years but there are not too many options.
- Currently working on TransGrid - snowy valleys area, fire recovery activities, Southwest slopes forestry hub.

#### **Ray Davy – Balranald**

- Covid - Postcode data appears to be incorrect. Anywhere where the stats are incorrect are going to cause significant consequence on the community in terms of restrictions. In our case this will impact on access to and from SA unless our double jab stat passes 80% by 23 November under the SA roadmap. In our case the problem is low reported second jab stats from Euston, presumably heavily skewed by seasonal/temporary workers
- Not having any direct economic impact now but it is still difficult getting people into the region.

#### **Dan Brear – NSW Farmers**

- COVID impact on farmers is limited due to relative isolation and outdoor nature of workplaces
- TransGrid project is a key project.
- Farm labour top of priority - labour shortage is real and access to contractors is lower than in other years. People are staying further north.
- Horticulture - trying gauge volume of the amount of people who may come into the Australia on an agricultural visa
- Rural crime prevention team has been raised to create more awareness. More crime prevention officers have been sent into the southwest region.

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

- COVID-19 – seeing fear in community groups
- Vax rates have increase dramatically - but noticing older residents who are still not as well informed.
- Childcare having to close their doors for care due to close contacts.
- Land and housing availability - shortages. Council is opening up further industrial land at Jindera and residential at Walla
- 87 new building applications - normally 63
- Rural financial counselling services - increasing need related to the price of farming land, succession planning.
- Circular economy - looking at greater involvement in this. Holbrook Project - plastic forests - recycling silage wraps material.

**Jim Dannock – AI Group**

- Manufacturing is going well, issues regarding the outbreak - isolating workforce. Delays in getting access to testing it making iso time longer.
- How do we manage testing with Rapid antigen testing in businesses? Hoping it will allow people to manage risks.
- Mandatory vax in VIC but it's a mess due to difference in timings.
- VIC Govt have just tightened up the reasons for vax exemptions.
- Industrial relations issues – Fair Work commission says that a worker must be ready to come to work. If vaccines are a public health order requirement, then a company may stand down workers

**Julia Ham – Snowy Valleys Council**

- COVID-19 Emergency plan is in place.
- Effect of opening has been hard. Businesses impacted. People are afraid. Cafes have no visitors
- SCV are running an expo to show people what is happening in the region to generate business

**Josh Bergamin – Helen Daltons Office**

- Griffith is ticking along. We are still in a covid zero mindset - getting used to the numbers increasing and managing this nervousness is on the agenda
- Rocky beginning to the opening up of the state - people feeling like they are losing freedom. Especially young people who weren't about to be vaxxed and older people who are vaxxed but not up with the tech to prove it.
- Nervousness about labour in agricultural sector.
- Undocumented workers – office is working on amnesty but not much of a response. Checks of visa status are not required for COVID-19 vax, but there is fear in that community that they might be found out if they present for vax.

**John Elgin - BEC**

- Community impacts of covid - message is to "get off the bench and get onto the field".
- Logistics issues are a big factor - supply of goods and price
- Trades are busy

**Michael Pisasale – Murray Irrigation Ltd**

- Received a full water allocation.
- Managing the implications around delivery when everyone wants their water at the same time. Constraints in channel size etc

**Gerard Van Emmerik – Federation Council and RDA Murray Board Member**

- Significant level of frustration in the community around ability to get vaccinations
- Agriculture sector is strong - grain harvest management report in positive and upcoming even better.
- Industrial land - none left (35 lots sold since Jan)
- Final negotiations in final details for the GROW project.
- Tourism - apprehension and covid impact on ability to provide services due to school closures. But looking to being to move strongly.

**ACTIONABLE COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES**

- Nil

**Next Meeting** Thursday 25 November 2021 4pm via zoom.

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