

**Regional head wants**

# A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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A high-end hotel would be a key driver of economic growth in Mayo, he said, discouraging day trip tourism and building on the region's renowned food and beverage industries.

But with that concept reliant on private investors, he believes a Federal commitment to prioritising the rail bypass – the first step of the transport solution – is Mayo's most immediate key need.

"Efficiency of connection between the growth centres and the CBD are very, very important," he said. "We come back to the old story about the rail coming through the Hills – I think that's something that has to be seriously looked at."

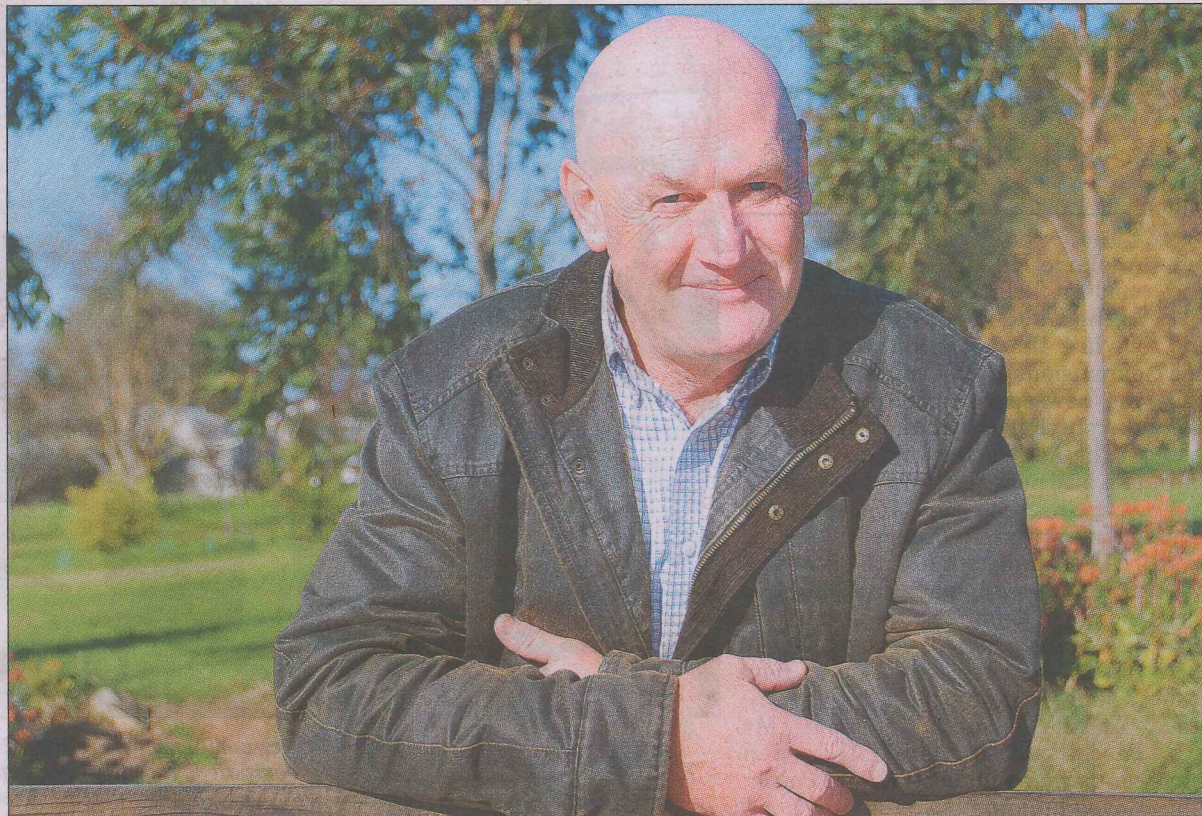
Regional Development Australia Hills, Fleurieu and KI has undertaken a scoping study about the viability of a rail bypass around the Hills and Mr Cooke said the State Government had recently committed to exploring the benefits of the bypass.

## Long-term thinking

But he said the Federal Government needed to commit to prioritising the concept after the State Government's study was completed.

"What we want is for Federal Government and State Government to continue to work with us on looking at the business case on these things and actually being innovative and thinking long term, and not within election cycles," he said.

Mr Cooke said the project would not only to open the existing rail corridor for long-term, faster transport options through the



*Regional Development Australia Hills, Fleurieu and KI chief executive Damien Cooke says the 100km stretch of rail line between Murray Bridge and the Adelaide Rail Centre is the most inefficient in the country.*

Hills and Fleurieu – which could include a fast train or O-Bahn – but would also be important for the "future proofing" of the State.

"We're putting SA or Adelaide up as a major defence manufacturing hub," he said.

"Defence relies on rail – if we're not on the national rail grid, we're not going to be able to be able to maintain defence industry in SA, we're not going to be able to maintain the Port.

"The risk is we just get cut off the national rail grid, because that 100km between Murray

Bridge and the Adelaide Rail Centre is the most inefficient piece of rail in the country."

With the formerly blue-ribbon Liberal seat of Mayo made more marginal at the 2016 election by Centre Alliance member Rebekha Sharkie, Mr Cooke believes the spotlight on the electorate offered a "great opportunity" for Mayo and one that should be "used for all it's worth".

He said he would welcome Federal funding for any of a number of projects already put

forward by local Governments and groups.

But he hopes the Government will consider where the greatest economic benefit would lie, also highlighting the development of the Goolwa wharf and the completion of the Amy Gillett Bikeway as projects that could drive growth.

"My desire is that they just don't go for the populist vote, they really look at what is the economic impact and what is going to have the longest term benefit for the region," he said.