

Abattoir revival leads to award bid

DANI BROWN

THE effort to revive the Strathalbyn Abattoir has led the Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island (RDA AHFKI) to being a finalist in the National Economic Development 2022 Awards for Excellence.

RDA AHFKI is a finalist in the Economic Development Through Partnerships and Collaboration category of the awards, which is run by Economic Development Australia.

Through the RDA AHFKI's establishment of the Fleurieu Community Co-operative, the Strathalbyn Abattoir is now scheduled to re-open under the collaborative set-up this month.

The upcoming re-opening of the abattoir will have huge benefits for the Fleurieu's producers, RDA AHFKI regional development director Stephen Shotton said.

He said being named a finalist was recognition for the support and work undertaken to get the Fleurieu Community Co-operative off the ground.

"Without RDA AHFKI influence, the Strathalbyn Abattoir would likely have stayed closed at the disadvantage of the regions livestock producers," he said.

Strathalbyn Abattoir closed in December 2020, but RDA AHFKI gauged local interest and ran feasibility studies to see if and how it should be re-opened as co-operative owned abattoir.

RDA AHFKI put \$20,000 towards getting the project up and running, and began extensive promotion of the co-operative.

The support shown by RDA

AHFKI led to a \$1.5 million state government grant being awarded to the project in March this year.

Mr Shotton said the industry collaboration has seen more than 100 members join, and the re-opening is set to create 20 new jobs in the region by the end of the year.

"Fleurieu Community Co-operative is a solution designed to overcome several headwinds for livestock producers keen to run a paddock-to-plate business model including the ongoing loss of local kill facilities, resultant increased logistics costs with greater distances to abattoirs, and inability to retain provenance in the kill and processing chain," he said.

"Besides solving those issues, a co-operative model brings many advantages to the table including democratic ownership and control with owner or service orientation rather than an investor or dividend-driven orientation.

"This builds a higher level of service, improved economic protection, and increased farm income."

Other economic benefits of the abattoir's re-opening include a \$3.5 million in investment attraction, increased options for producers to reduce costs and improve margins, increased ability for local retailers and hospitality operators to use and promote locally produced red meat, increased supply security for local smallgoods manufacturers in the region, and a new supply deal signed between the co-op and Foodland Supermarkets.

RDA AHFKI will find out if it has won the award on Thursday, October 13.



LOOKING AHEAD: Fleurieu Community Co-Operative general manager Grant List surveys the yards at Strathalbyn.

PHOTO: BRYAN LITTLELY