



Regional  
Development  
*South Australia*

REGIONAL PRIORITIES STATEMENT

**STRONG  
REGIONS,  
SMART  
GROWTH**

**2025**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**Regional Development South Australia would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the South Australian lands on which we work and pay our respects to the elders past and present.**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

**A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIR**

4

**DRIVING A NEW FUTURE FOR OUR REGIONS**

6

**THE FUTURE OF SA'S REGIONS**

8

**HOW WE GET THERE TOGETHER**

11

**JOIN US**



# 20%

# OF AUSTRALIA'S GRAIN IS PRODUCED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS SA, GRAINS TOOLKIT



Drea Chong | Adelaide Central Market | Adelaide



# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIR

In this Regional Priorities Statement, we ask:  
**What if South Australia took a deliberate, coordinated approach to regional development?**

One grounded in a shared vision, with planned growth, clear priorities, and actions that foster long-term commitment and collaboration.

As the peak body for regional development, Regional Development South Australia (RDSA) is committed to shaping a bold and proactive narrative for the future of our regions. Our vision is centred on transforming perceptions, shifting mindsets, and removing barriers to unlock the full growth potential of regional South Australia.

Regional SA is not only a vital part of our state's identity, but it is also a key driver of economic prosperity and population growth. Its strategic value in achieving South Australia's long-term social, environmental, and economic goals cannot be overstated.

**The future of our state depends on the strength and sustainability of its regions.**

We believe the time has come to move beyond reactive policy and instead adopt a strategic, long-term approach. We urge government and industry leaders to join us in recognising the central role of regional South Australia in shaping the state's future.

Together, we can create a shared roadmap for regional growth, built on collaboration, innovation, and purpose. By working across sectors and levels of government, we can turn challenges into opportunities and ambition into action. Let us drive the conversations and commitments that will position regional South Australia at the forefront of the state's progress.

**Stronger regions are the key to smarter growth for South Australia.**

This statement is an invitation to engage with regional South Australia and the RDA network to design a pathway towards our shared vision, identifying actions we can undertake together.

**Hon Rob Kerin**

Executive Chair RDSA



# DRIVING A NEW FUTURE FOR OUR REGIONS

## RDAS PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN DRIVING REGIONAL GROWTH

The eight Regional Development Australia organisations (RDAs), funded by federal, state, and local government, are the backbone of regional development in SA. They play a crucial role in facilitating significant economic outcomes in regions, connecting governments, identifying investment opportunities, and making the process of growing our regions collaborative.

RDSA focuses primarily on long-term outcomes. We serve as a rational voice to help identify the specific needs of our regions and advocate for place-based solutions informed by solid evidence and fact-based research. RDSA's annual Regional Blueprint and individual RDA Investment Pipeline tracking provide valuable insights to inform external investors and governments in decision-making. The information held can guide and enhance strategic planning for utilities, water supply, skill development, housing, and both soft and hard infrastructure. There is potential to build RDA and regional capacity further to unlock investment opportunities.

## BUT SO DO OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

State, local, and federal governments, regional communities, and industry peak bodies all play crucial roles in shaping the future of our regions. But too often, regional elements are afterthoughts of city-centric policy making and priority setting or are considered too hard or too costly to deliver.

Across sectors, there is strong alignment on what is needed to support strong regions and smart growth:

- Planned future infrastructure in freight, roads, water, renewable energy generation, and connectivity
- Increased export of high-quality regional products
- Workforce, education, and training pipelines that provide the workforce and skills needed to support growth and sustain communities
- Improved service capacity and delivery – notably, childcare, health, and aged care
- Improved industry development, economic diversity, and complexity
- Global leadership in green steel
- Improved housing supply and mix in regional SA – more rentals, affordable housing, and greater diversity (size and type)
- Sovereign capability in food production, energy, and key manufacturing inputs

To realise these ambitious outcomes, regional South Australia must be an essential consideration for state and federal governments, as well as key industry peak bodies.

# OUR REGIONS HAVE UNIQUE AND STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

Our regions are crucial to South Australia's economic complexity. Our best opportunities to leverage SA's competitive advantage and accelerate our emerging industries are in regional South Australia, whether that is in value-added premium food, beverage, and fibre, copper and mineral production, renewable energy, or green steel.

Our regions are also at the heart of South Australia's international reputation for excellence, with the bulk of South Australia's exports coming directly from our regions to global markets. And our regions are the engine house of manufacturing for South Australia, with many of the raw materials and inputs essential to South Australia's manufacturing base produced in regional South Australia.

South Australia has competitive advantages that position it uniquely in domestic and international markets. But it's our regions that create this positioning: as clean, green, and sustainable.

## THAT WE ALL BENEFIT FROM

When our regions thrive, our whole economy grows. Strong regional industries fuel South Australia's prosperity and resilience.

South Australia's regions are essential to the state's economic strength and everyday life. They supply the raw materials and resources that power our most important industries – from food, beverage, and pharmaceutical manufacturing to renewable energy, electronics, defence, and construction. They underpin our tourism appeal, fuel our exports, and provide the minerals, energy, and materials that drive innovation and growth across the economy.

Regions are integral to SA's economic future and contribution to the national economy. SA's prospects for being a leader in emerging growth areas, including green steel, copper production, renewable energy, and agritourism, primarily exist in regions. The role of regional SA in enabling national sovereign capability continues to increase in importance in mitigating geopolitical risks.

## THAT WE SHOULD TAKE AN INTENTIONAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPING IN PARTNERSHIP

According to data from the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia is the second-largest seafood producer in Australia.



Rumi on Louth | Rumi on Louth | Eyre Peninsula

Too often, regional progress is left to chance—shaped by population decline or triggered only in times of crisis.

Instead, this Statement calls for a proactive, future-focused agenda that recognises the unique value of our regions and puts them at the centre of South Australia's next chapter.

This Statement is a call to action: to shift from fragmented responses to a unified agenda for growth. To invest with purpose, coordinate effort, and champion the people, industries, and communities that make South Australia thrive.

# THE FUTURE OF SA'S REGIONS

## OUR VISION IS FOR REGIONS THAT:

- are recognised as being at the heart of South Australia's growth and transformation.
- are productive, prosperous, and competitive.
- generate increased economic complexity and a more resilient, balanced and diverse economy for South Australia.
- are liveable, vibrant and attractive, with planned population growth in key regional centres.



According to Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia, South Australia accounts for almost **80%** of the nation's premium wine, with over **700** wineries representing just under half of the country's vineyards.

Daniel Trimboli | Longview Vineyard | Adelaide Hills



# REGIONAL ECONOMIES

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

While a strong contributor to the state and national economies and exports, some of South Australia's regions are low in economic complexity, relying on bulk commodity exports with variable degrees of value adding. Additionally, a lack of economic diversity in some areas increases reliance on single industries and vulnerability to economic shocks. The ongoing impacts of climate change, notably the increased length and severity of drought conditions, underscore the need for further action.

## OUR ECONOMIC VISION

- **Complexity:** Increased contribution to Gross State Product by increasing the value and volume of regional services and products
- **Growth:** Regional economies that capitalise on unique strengths and have the enabling capacity to attract investment, supported by long-term planning
- **Resilience:** Diversified economies that can withstand economic shocks, environmental and biosecurity threats, and uncertain global trading environments, while increasing state and national sovereign capabilities.



# REGIONAL POPULATION

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

Many towns in peri-urban South Australia are experiencing high population growth, and while the state government's focus is on the larger populated areas of Greater Adelaide, infrastructure capacity development in these areas is not keeping up with residential growth.

SA currently has no satellite cities of comparable size to other Australian states, resulting in less economies of scale for service, program, and infrastructure delivery.

## OUR POPULATION VISION

- **Robust:** Ensure population maintenance and targeted growth to sustain regional centres and service delivery, and unlock regional economic potential
- **Attractive:** Regions are desirable, sought-after locations for young and working-aged people and families with strong liveability, lifestyle, and secure jobs
- **Workforce-ready:** Ensure the availability of skilled workers to support ambitions for economic growth and complexity

# HOW WE GET THERE TOGETHER

We have identified the key elements that will help us achieve our vision through the RDA South Australia network. These are outcomes, not actions. But they invite a discussion on opportunities for partnership along an agreed-upon and intentional pathway for regional growth.

## 1 ACCELERATE OUR ADVANTAGES

### PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VALUE-ADDING AND COMPLEXITY IN REGIONAL INDUSTRIES

Develop a regional economic growth strategy with the Government of South Australia that focuses on:

- Evolving existing industries aligned to our strengths: moving into greater value-adding and higher value export opportunities
- Maximising regional growth in new and emerging industries, including defence, space, renewable energy, green metals, and the defence value chain
- Working with industry clusters, cooperatives, and peak bodies to identify industry-wide innovations and future-focused improvements
- Maximising regional capacity and capability in existing growth industries, including the health and care economy and professional services

### MAKE IT EASY TO GET TO MARKET

Identify key regional infrastructure challenges that make it harder for regional businesses to grow, including water, energy, regional roads, and intermodal freight, and create a long-term plan for how these will be addressed to best support regional sustainability and growth, and reduce the cost of doing business.



Showgrounds overpass - constructed in South Australia's regions by Bowhill Engineering.

# 2 POWER OUR POTENTIAL WITH PEOPLE

## GROW THE POPULATION OF KEY REGIONAL HUBS

South Australia lacks regional centres with populations over 30,000, making it more attractive to provide infrastructure and services in higher-density areas of Greater Adelaide or larger regional centres interstate. The existing trunk infrastructure and proximity to essential services, like healthcare, support population growth in these areas.

Expanding services in metropolitan and peri-urban regions are often more expensive in dollar terms than enhancing existing services in regional centres. Therefore, it is crucial to consider investing in regional centres to support SA population growth. This could alleviate pressure on Greater Adelaide and provide a workforce for economic opportunities in regional South Australia.

## BUILD REGIONAL RESILIENCE AND CAPACITY THROUGH JOBS AND SKILLS CENTRES, UNIVERSITY HUBS, TECHNICAL COLLEGES, AND ACCESS TO INNOVATION NETWORKS

Giving students the chance to undertake further study and education in regions is essential to population growth and retention, and to matching training needs to local workforce demand.

Provide funding for RDAs to drive the development of regional workforce and skills data mapping. This could inform the development of regional workforce plans in collaboration with regional stakeholders, including SA Government, the Australian Government Local Jobs Network, and industry associations.

This investment would capitalise on RDA access to real-time data and a place-based perspective. Data and information can be collated to provide a statewide voice and inform stakeholder decision-making.

## BUILD REGIONAL SERVICE CAPACITY

Collaborate with all three levels of government to establish hubs for various services, including health, education, and childcare, ensuring availability of key services that sustain population and support attraction of key professionals.

## INCREASE REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

Develop regional infrastructure plans aligned to economic and population growth plans – housing, water, energy, roads, telecommunications, and social infrastructure.

Develop innovative funding models, including the increased use of public-private partnerships, to unlock capital for delivering game-changing regional infrastructure projects.

## IMPROVE HOUSING DIVERSITY AND AVAILABILITY

Work with state and local government on regional policy, programs, delivery and investment models, and procurement settings that support private and public investment in fit-for-purpose diversified housing stock.

For example, reviewing the regional reach of existing government programs, resources, and funding, and the impact of policy settings around zoning, land tax, and stamp duty, which are currently disincentivising downsizing.



# 3 MAKE IT MATTER

## EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND REGIONS

- Establish meaningful engagements between government departments and regions facilitated by RDAs, recognising them as the key economic development agencies and regional connectors in South Australia. This will allow greater consideration of the regional impacts of government policies and programs and greater opportunities to expand and increase cross-collaboration
- Increase regional reach of existing government programs and support, for example, housing supply stimulation, training and skills development and case management of investment projects
- Increase coordination across all levels of government, for example, in population and land use planning, and environmental approvals

## IMPROVED DATA SHARING

Coordinate and increase cross-stakeholder sharing of information, data, and intelligence to inform regional growth planning.

Optimise the use of RDA investment pipeline data, information and intelligence to inform:

- Regional infrastructure planning and delivery
- Workforce, education and skills development pipelines, planning and capacity
- Service demand planning and delivery

## COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY PEAK BODIES

RDSA is actively seeking to join forces with like-minded partners across government, business, and other industry groups to amplify our collective impact and drive meaningful progress.

Recognising the strength that comes from collaboration, we aim to align with those who share a common vision and complementary goals. By working together, we can speak with a unified voice, advocate more effectively, and achieve outcomes that would be far greater than working in isolation.

This collective approach promises not only increased influence but also a stronger, more resilient regional economy built on shared success and innovation.

Copper cladding on Adelaide Oval  
-Resourceful SA Campaign, SA Chamber  
of Mines and Energy

John Montesi | Oval Hotel | Adelaide

# JOIN US

---

Across South Australia, government, industry and representative bodies share some or all of these visions.

Regions are an essential element to achieving industry development, sector growth and sustainable, smart and inclusive economic growth.

We invite you to consider where our interests overlap, and where we can be stronger by working together.

RDSA seeks to be recognised as the trusted peak body for policy collaboration and development for regional South Australia. Not because we have all the answers, but because we can ensure the right regional voices inform government decision-making at every level.

We want to work together on identifying the meaningful actions that will move us towards the vision and outcomes identified in this Regional Priorities Statement.

**With strong regions, South Australia gets smart growth.**

## CONNECT

Contact us to join the conversation.

RSDA Executive Chair, Hon. Rob Kerin  
[robkerin@ymail.com](mailto:robkerin@ymail.com)

RDA Adelaide CEO, Leonie Boothby  
[ceo@rdaadelaide.com.au](mailto:ceo@rdaadelaide.com.au)

## ENGAGE

Attend RDSA and individual RDA events - including our Annual RDSA Summit.

[www.regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au/2025-annual-summit/](http://www.regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au/2025-annual-summit/)

## SEEK

Connections, support, regional knowledge and information.

[www.regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au](http://www.regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge our RDA network funding partners.



An Australian Government Initiative



Government  
of South Australia



Local Government Association  
of South Australia

# WE THANK YOU

# FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT