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The State Government’s main aim is to ensure every part of South Australia performs at its absolute best.

To achieve this, the prosperity of regional areas – through investment, jobs, exports and strong communities – is absolutely vital.

In the Riverland, my Ministers and I spoke to locals about a range of issues - including the sale of the Berri Bowling Club land and the Renew Riverland concept.

This report is the Government’s response to what we were told. It outlines our commitment to continue to work with the Riverland community.

This work is already underway. The State Government has negotiated more than $250 million in Federal funding for the Murray Darling Basin Plan and this money will be used to develop economic growth.

The Riverland community is quite rightly very proud of their region. The Murray River is one of the state’s premier tourist destinations and the region’s food and wine is second to none. Put simply, it is a fantastic place to live, work and visit.

The State Government’s decision to hold three Country Cabinets each year was one of the commitments made to me by the Premier.

Regional communities now have the ability to meet directly with the Premier, Ministers and department Chief Executives, to raise and discuss issues and ideas from their own region.

This report is a very welcome recognition of some of the challenges and opportunities that South Australia’s regional communities face and how we can work together to make our regions stronger, more productive, more competitive and sustainable places in which to live and work.

As Regional Development Minister, I travel extensively around South Australia.

The regions are facing challenges, some of which are region specific and need local solutions, while others are common across the State.

However, I’m constantly impressed by the passion in the regions, the innovative ideas put to me by locals, and above all the positive attitude coming from those communities.

I thank everyone who brought their ideas to the first Country Cabinet and look forward to future events across the State, and the results that come from them.

Jay Weatherill
Premier of South Australia

Geoff Brock
Minister for Regional Development
OUR REGIONS

Three in every 10 South Australians live in a regional community. Regional communities make a major contribution to South Australia’s identity, quality of life and prosperity.

Regional South Australia generates much of our state’s wealth, contributing more than $20 billion towards our economy and producing more than 50 per cent of South Australia’s overseas exports. Building stronger regions is a priority for the South Australian Government.

Our regions help to define our state – breathing life into our state’s sense of itself, its culture and traditions and its place in the nation. Country South Australia not only provides an economic engine for the State, it contributes to our state’s unique character and helps define what it is to be South Australian.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIVERLAND

The Riverland is a key region for the production of premium food and wine and is a destination for tourism in South Australia.

The region is home to diverse agricultural and horticultural output and food processing and relies on the efforts of growers, irrigators and associated industries to maintain its reputation as a food bowl, making a significant contribution to the local and state economy.

Because the Riverland produces some of the finest food and wine in Australia, it is a vital part of the Government’s effort to get international recognition for our state’s premium food and wine. This involves promoting the high standards of our local producers and the regions in which premium food and wine is produced.

As one of the State’s premier tourism destinations, South Australia’s Murray River offers a host of sporting and recreational opportunities as well as historic sites and a spectacular landscape for tourists to visit and enjoy.

The Riverland Country Cabinet gave Government Ministers the opportunity to learn more about the region by engaging with the local community about issues of regional importance. Ministers heard from community and business leaders on matters such as regional development, health and wellbeing, employment and training, community, tourism and premium food and wine.
COUNTRY CABINET

In June 2014, the Riverland hosted the State’s first Country Cabinet meeting for the year, as part of a three day regional visit by the Premier Jay Weatherill and the State’s Cabinet Ministers.

Almost 300 people attended a community BBQ and public forum in Loxton on Sunday 22 June. The event provided an opportunity for local community members to raise region-specific issues and opportunities with the South Australian Government.

The Country Cabinet meeting was held the next day, which included opportunities for local council and businesses to speak with the Cabinet, as part of its renewed commitment to regions following the agreement between the Premier and the Independent Member for Frome, the Hon. Geoff Brock MP.

The Riverland is the first of three Country Cabinets scheduled for 2014, as part of the Government’s Charter for Stronger Regional Policy.

While in the Riverland, Cabinet Ministers visited a number of local businesses and organisations to see firsthand some of the developments already being undertaken, and to hear from the community about local issues.

Ministers attending the Riverland Country Cabinet met with many local people during the visit.

The Premier and Ministers talked with business and industry leaders, local councillors and members of the community during a range of different activities including:

• Answering questions at a community forum and BBQ held in Loxton, attended by almost 300 people.
• Receiving a presentation to Country Cabinet from the Mayors and Chief Executives of the district councils of Renmark Paringa, Berri Barmera and Loxton Waikerie on issues and opportunities for the region in Renmark.
• Hosting a lunch at the Renmark Club with community representatives.
• Individual site visits by the Premier and Ministers.
• Hosting a reception with local business owners.
• Hosting a community morning tea.

In addition, Premier Jay Weatherill opened a $36 million redevelopment of the Riverland General Hospital at Berri.

During the visit, local residents shared their ideas about how to make the Riverland a more thriving and vibrant place.
Riverland Country Cabinet also saw the launch of ‘Fund my Idea’ – a program supporting projects for up to $50,000 in regions that host Country Cabinet.

People were invited to submit ideas for projects in the region, and the community voted on how they felt the money should be spent.

A total of 71 ideas, all generated by the community, were published on the Government’s YourSAy website (www.yoursay.sa.gov.au).

The community voted for a period of three weeks. The top three ranked ideas after voting were then considered by the Government for funding.

The two highest ranked projects, as voted by the community, were successful:

**Active Learning Space**  
*St Joseph’s School Renmark ($20,000)*  
St Joseph’s School Renmark will use the entrance to their school to deliver an outdoor learning space where children can play, be active, explore, communicate and socialise. The space will be available for children across the community to enjoy.

**Loxton Stadium Redevelopment**  
*Loxton Netball Club ($30,000)*  
Funds have been provided to assist replacing an existing multi-use courts that were first erected in 1975. The current stadium and outside courts have reached the end of their useful lives. The project is a significant priority for the District Council of Loxton Waikerie, and the funds will enable the project to be costed and tendered.

The message that Cabinet took away from the Riverland Country Cabinet was one of a dynamic region, with a strongly connected community that is working towards a better future, based on a proud history of enterprise. There are however, some significant challenges for the region. Discussions about how the Government can offer support for revitalising and modernising the local economy provided Cabinet with insight into local issues.

This report gives a snapshot of the Government’s response to what we heard. It is not a comprehensive overview of everything being done in the Riverland, but it provides a sense of the Government’s interest and commitment to better outcomes for the Riverland. Findings from the visit will continue to inform the Government’s support for the region into the future.

**These include:**

- Ministers heard that local industry and businesses want support to gain access to export markets and high quality infrastructure to support growth.
- People stressed the importance of maintaining a wide range of local health services.
- Keeping young people in the region is an issue that was raised in several forums. Young people need good training and employment opportunities and the chance to make a productive life from regional endeavour.
- The Government heard that social services in the area were considered to be under pressure and members of the community highlighted that in particular, people with a disability want better access to transport and jobs.
- With its natural beauty and temperate climate, many people thought that there were untapped opportunities for greater promotion of the region. Tourism is a key asset that needs ongoing promotion.
RENEWING THE RIVERLAND

Riverland councils want to revitalise the region and renew ‘main streets’ by working with landlords to fill empty shops.

A pilot project to attract business to the main street of Renmark will be run as part of Made in South Australia. Made in South Australia is an initiative that will deliver programs and activate business networks that will create employment and small business growth in South Australia. The program will have a permanent home at HUB Adelaide and activate ‘pop-up’ HUBs in regional locations.

There is support for the pilot from local council and 40 local entrepreneurs have already expressed their interest.

The pilot will include engagement with local stakeholders and leverage the experience of Renew Adelaide to activate the main street. Made in South Australia aims to expand to other regions as a collaboration between the Government’s Renewal SA, HUB Adelaide and local corporate partners for the benefit of small businesses and entrepreneurs.

THE BERRI BOWLING CLUB

A significant focus for the local community and its leaders was progressing proposals for developments on Crown Land.

For some time, negotiations between the Berri Barmera Council and the South Australian Government to enable the relocation of the Berri Bowling Club had failed to reach a resolution.

As a result of Cabinet’s visit, the Government gained a greater appreciation of the issue and took immediate action by agreeing to sell a parcel of Crown land to the Berri Barmera Council.

The Council will buy the riverfront land in Berri for $1.86 million and subdivide it into residential sites. The Government will also provide $687,000 to relocate the bowling club from its current riverfront location to Glassey Park.

Work to relocate the Berri Bowling Club is already underway.

Work on upgrades to the Waikerie Caravan Park is also being progressed with the Government currently investigating the sale of the land to the Council at market value under an appropriate agreement.

The Government is committed to facilitating regional development and will continue to use Crown Land to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits to the community.

Some of the things the Cabinet heard will take sustained, long-term effort to deliver. However, there are some areas where the Government is able to take action immediately.
What we are doing to deliver on other important issues
TOURISM

The Riverland region offers a wealth of attractions, activities and experiences for tourists.

Ministers witnessed firsthand the breathtaking views and natural beauty of the Murray River as a playground for people interested in boating, water sports, houseboat holidays, camping, fishing or simply enjoying the beautiful environment.

Maximising the economic benefit of tourism is a key concern for the community. The community manages a range of enterprises that attract visitors to the region, such as hotels. Local attractions include historic sites, conservation parks, wineries, rose gardens, a lavender farm, golf courses and endless sunshine.

The Government will continue to promote all the Riverland has to offer to tourists from Australia and around the world.

Key issues

The Riverland has infrastructure, cultural and environmental features that can be more heavily promoted to attract tourists.

Improved facilities such as boat ramps are crucial for tourism.

Our Response

The Government has identified tourism as a key growth area for the Riverland and has funded infrastructure to improve local facilities and attract tourists. It has launched a tourism advertisement to promote the region in cinemas and on television.

The Government will continue to work with the local community to support the Build our Brand theme from the government’s plan to promote South Australia’s premium food and wine.

The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure officially opened the Moorook riverfront boating facility during the Country Cabinet visit.

The Berri Riverview Drive Marina boating facility will undergo a major upgrade and upgrades to the Rilli Reserve and Qualco boat ramps have also been funded.
The Government heard that regional development support for the Riverland is a high priority for the community.

There is a need to help local producers gain access to export markets, including a well maintained transport network to enable industry to deliver and receive goods and supplies.

The Government heard that the Riverland also needs access to quality services, skills development and infrastructure as well as the reduction of red-tape to develop and compete in the global economy.

South Australia has negotiated more than $250 million in Commonwealth Government funding for regional economic development projects in the Riverland and Murraylands through the Murray Darling Basin Plan and the Government will support industry and businesses in the Riverland to use this money to develop sustainable economic growth.

Key issues

- Fast and reliable internet access is crucial.

Our Response

The South Australian Government continues to lobby the Commonwealth Government and the National Broadband Network Company to extend the network more quickly across South Australia. New fixed wireless services should be available in Loxton surrounds, Glossop, Mypolonga, Murray Bridge, Karoonda, and Mannum over the next 12 months. Satellite services will also be improved, offering higher speeds in the Riverland from next year.
Business growth and other development initiatives in the Riverland need government support.

The government has already attracted Syntec Diamond Tools and Bickfords Australia to set up their business operations in the Riverland.

The $240 million allocated to the South Australian River Murray Sustainability (SARMS) Irrigation Industry Improvement program will build upon the region's capability as world-class irrigators. The first $100 million worth of projects was recently announced and will help deliver South Australia's targets under the new Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

When combined with $25 million from the SARMS Regional Economic Development program, an additional $25 million from the Commonwealth Government’s Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification and the South Australian Government’s $15 million Regional Development Fund, the Riverland has an array of opportunities available to it for community, business and industry development.

In addition, the Premier recently announced measures to simplify regulation and streamline the approach to development within the state and across its regions.

During Country Cabinet, plans for the $7.5 million redevelopment of the Loxton Research Centre were announced. The vision is for the centre to be used as a self-sustaining hub for innovation that will attract substantial investment and drive economic activity in the region. The Government will continue to promote the centre, which has already attracted commitment from a number of tenants prior to its planned redevelopment.

A well maintained road network is critical to the development of the Riverland.

The South Australian Government will invest $2 million over the next four years from the Rural Road Safety program to widen and improve the Karoonda Highway and cater for the increased use by road trains carting grain should the railway lines close.

Extensive upgrading of the transport network within the Murray and Mallee Region over the next 30 years is planned. Maintenance activities will continue on arterial roads in the Riverland.
People in the Riverland want to lead healthy, productive and happy lives, just like all South Australians. They want a range of quality health services to be available locally.

The Government has invested $36 million in redeveloping the Riverland General Hospital to make sure people can get specialist and other medical services without having to travel too far. While specialist services are available in the Riverland, through locally based or visiting services, the community has asked for more health professionals to come to the region on a permanent or regular basis.

The Government understands that people need help to get to health services, particularly when they have to travel to Adelaide for specialist care, and acknowledges the importance of carers to support them when they travel.

Ministers heard that domestic violence is an ongoing concern in the Riverland and that victims need prompt responses and priority access to support services.

**Key issues**

**Our Response**

The Patient Assisted Travel Scheme should help carers.

Key changes to the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme include removing the patient co-payment, increasing the nightly accommodation contribution and helping carers to travel with patients. The changes will take effect on 1 January 2015.
Adequate health services, including cancer care and other specialist services, need to be locally available.

**Specialist services**
The Riverland General Hospital employs salaried specialists. The region also has a comprehensive range of visiting specialists, which will continue to grow through a government commissioning process to make services available as close as possible to where people live.

**Chemotherapy**
Country chemotherapy units now provide chemotherapy through specially trained staff and options for general practitioners to be involved will be developed over the next 12 months.

**Nurses**
Hourly ward rounds by nurses have been introduced at the Riverland General Hospital and a volunteer program for non-nursing duties helps free up nurses to spend time with patients. The Government will continue to monitor nursing staff numbers to make sure Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation requirements are met.

**Respite care**
The Commonwealth Government funds respite services. A request for tender in the near future may increase the availability of services.

**Aboriginal health service**
Getting the Morrundi Aboriginal Health Service established in Murray Bridge will pave the way for a similar model in the Riverland.

An additional police officer will be added to the Local Service Area Family Violence Investigation Section.

South Australia Police also supported a recent Centacare grant proposal for an additional liaison person to work with police.

The Government is working with the Domestic Violence Service to make sure vulnerable victims are given priority and will improve the operation of Intervention Orders.

Domestic violence continues to be a problem.
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Community and government agree that employment and training are crucial to the development of the Riverland.

The Government acknowledges that training must be of a high quality and relevant to local industry needs.

Newly arrived migrants and backpackers are an important part of the local workforce and their employment rights and work safety need to be supported.

Ministers heard that young people are vital to the wellbeing and future economic prosperity of the community. They should be developed as leaders and offered opportunities to pursue careers that enable them to stay in the region. They also need to know about training and development programs that are available to them and have access to courses online.

Key issues

People with a disability need employment options in the Riverland.

Our Response

Through the Skills for Jobs in the Region program the Government is working with the Riverland’s Disability Employment Service to assist people with a disability to connect to employment.

The Jobs4YouthSA program is also being reviewed to include more young people with a disability.
Through the Jobs4YouthSA program five trainees, who reside in Renmark, Berri and Loxton, have been appointed into positions in the Riverland. Successful trainees will be offered ongoing employment.

The Government also offers a range of youth leadership and development programs in the Riverland. Information about these programs will be given to local youth organisations.

The Government promotes regional locations to newly arrived skilled migrants and will make sure people have access to information about work visas, employment conditions and their rights and responsibilities.

SafeWork SA is also working with key industry associations to target important safety issues. This program will focus on vulnerable workers including young and inexperienced workers, backpackers and 457 visa holders and will be particularly relevant in regional settings.

The Government’s Jobs Accelerator Fund regional employment project, a one-off $10 million package being rolled out in 2014-15, will help create jobs in regional areas.

The Skills for Jobs in Regions program works with local industry leaders and employers to make sure the Government responds to local training and employment needs and helps fill jobs with local, work-ready job seekers. The Government has committed $717,000 in 2014-15 to assist 337 people into jobs in the Riverland/Murraylands.

The Riverland Industry Leaders Group was also formed to help the Government make sure that local training targets local employment opportunities and funded places meet regional needs.

TAFE will work with the McCormick Centre to make sure TAFE materials are always available and will continue to develop online and short courses to give local students more training options.

TAFE offers concessions and payment options and Skills for All offers courses that are fee free. Other courses are subsidised.

The Government closely monitors training quality and encourages feedback from participants so that complaints can be acted upon.
COMMUNITY

All South Australians want their families and communities to thrive.

People in the Riverland care about each other and want all community members to have access to the services they need. Government and community agree that everyone should be treated fairly and feel valued.

This means paying special attention to supporting those who are disadvantaged – young people who have been in state care, people who are homeless and those who are living with disability, Aboriginal people and others who need help with life skills.

Ministers heard that the community wants services that meet the particular needs of all people in the Riverland to give them their best chance in life.

Key issues

Disadvantaged young people need services.

Our Response

The Government funds Relationships Australia SA to support young people leaving care in the Riverland.

The Government also funds the Southern Country Generic Homelessness Service and the Riverland Assertive Outreach Program to provide support to homeless people, including young people. Other government funded support services are also available through the Salvation Army and Mission Australia.

Specific government programs to support Aboriginal young people in the Riverland are currently being designed following consultation with local organisations. These programs will be rolled out in 2015-16 in close cooperation with non-government service providers.

Government grants are also available to help communities deal with local youth issues.
Public transport is not readily available and disability access is an issue.

The Government is working with the Federally funded Riverland Community Passenger Network to find solutions to recent increases in demand for regular transport for disadvantaged people.

The Government is also considering options to improve transport in regional areas across the State through community-based transport and sharing of resources such as government owned vehicles, for example, school buses.

Riverland councils and non-government organisations want greater involvement in social housing.

The Government is committed to working with local government on potential involvement in social housing. 5000 houses will be transferred to the community housing sector through the Better Places, Stronger Communities project and planning for the location and transfer of a further 4000 houses is underway.

Commonwealth budget cuts will affect the Riverland community.

The South Australian Government is raising community awareness of the impact of Commonwealth budget cuts and how these will affect South Australians.

Will changes to the Emergency Services Levy affect emergency services staff and volunteers?

The changes to the levy will not affect emergency services staff or volunteers in the Riverland. All money raised through the Emergency Services Levy is spent on emergency services like the Country Fire Service, State Emergency Service, rescue services and similar activities.
The Government has a continuing commitment to preventing fruit fly in the Riverland.

A world-class $3 million fruit fly sterile insect facility is also being built in Port Augusta to produce a male only strain for use in areas of endemic populations. This will benefit the Riverland if growers in the Sunraysia and other areas pick it up.

South Australian Government representatives will go to China with a Commonwealth trade mission in September 2014 to promote the Riverland’s fruit fly free status.
Assistance to pursue export markets, particularly to China and Japan, is paramount to attract tourists.

The Government is working with Riverland businesses to help them gain access to markets in China through the China Agribusiness Initiative.

Riverland export companies will be added to government databases to receive invitations and information about export opportunities through the government’s China Team and TradeStart program.

In June 2014, $1 million was allocated as a first step toward developing a comprehensive and targeted engagement strategy for ASEAN to identify opportunities in this diverse region.

The Government is strengthening the state’s ties with India, which will bring opportunities for food producers.

Older farmers in the Riverland need innovative and collaborative business options.

The Riverland has been targeted to pilot several collaborative innovation cluster projects as part of the Government’s Premium Food and Wine Innovation Cluster Program. The program will support regional agriculture, food and wine businesses, including farms, to become more collaborative innovative, productive and globally competitive.

The Government also offers a collaborative contracting workshop and resources to help local businesses plan their legal structures for collaboration. Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (SA) could host this.

Ongoing government support for innovative citrus growing and packing techniques is crucial.

In 2013, the Government established the Food Innovation Hub to help the food and beverage industries with research and new processes and technologies, to improve productivity and commercial opportunities. The aim is to boost market and export potential and increase economic returns.