How State, Local Government and University leadership can influence regional economic and community Development

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How State, Local Government and Federal leadership can influence regional economic and community development.
• In January last year the SA regional organisations Central, South East, Murray and Mallee, Eyre Peninsula, Southern and Hills and Provincial Cities launched our Election Platform for Regional and Rural South Australia "Regions Matter'.

• Local Government's message to the State Government was clear - strong regions are the building blocks for a strong state

• Since then some things have changed - but there is still a lot of work to do to make South Australia vibrant, vital and strong

• At the LGA's General Meeting a few weeks ago we had the State's Treasurer, Tom Koutsantonis as our key note speaker on the future of South Australia's economy

• The Treasurer recognised that to achieve prosperity there needs to be a strong partnership between industry, governments, universities and the community focusing on building on our strengths, upskilling our communities and diversifying our companies

• He recognised the need for Local Government engagement in regional development referring to us as 'the canary in the coalmine' and alternately the 'head of the spear' - in acknowledgement that Local Government knows local communities
• We agree and we recognise the growing need for our entrenched regional businesses to look at their business models and where they can value add
• The 'Regions Matter' policy paper, released early last year, contains information that is relevant to this forum
• Regional South Australia contributes more than $20 billion to the state's economy, more than half a million jobs and 50% of SA's exports
• We produce around half of Australia's green power and a quarter of the barley crop
• $2.2 million is contributed by the wine industry
• National leader in the seafood industry
• $2.7 million in minerals exports
• In comparison to other states, SA is well behind the mark in supporting country areas
• Victoria has a $1 billion Regional Growth Fund
• Western Australia and Queensland have Royalties for Regions
• To grow regional economies we have to first grow regional populations
• Decentralize Government Departments
• It is the role of government to ensure regions have infrastructure and services to build strong communities
• Regional communities should have the same service levels as metropolitan communities
• There are 29 regional cities in Australia with populations over 30,000 and eight with populations over 100,000 - none are in South Australia
• Tasmania's second largest city Launceston boasts a population of 67,114 which qualifies it for membership of the Regional Capitals of Australia alliance
• Our second largest city is Mt Gambier with a population a touch over 26,000 or Whyalla at 23,200
• Neither makes the threshold for the Regional Capitals alliance - we are the only State not to make the grade
• Studies like the LGA's 'Council of the Future' report and SA regional reports from the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, commissioned by the LGA - are clear that regional communities need to grow from the bottom up
• We need to develop what is already in existence
• There is little or no point plonking a new industry in an area, just because we can
• To develop and secure regional economies will need all three spheres of government working together and with long term objectives
• The State/Local Government Relations Agreement, first signed in 2004 and updated at regular intervals since then, seeks a better strategic alignment between Local Government and the State across strategic planning, policy development, decision making processes and consulting arrangements to achieve better outcomes for all South Australian communities

• Certainly in recent times the communication or consultative process has improved in most areas - although there are still a few lack of communication issues

• Rates are the main component of our income but Councils are constrained by the amount of rates that can be applied to properties

• SA properties already have significant impost from State levies, the River Murray levy, the Emergency Services Levy and the Solid Waste levy

• The Government's announcement last week of a $200 cost of living concession to replace the State's pensioner concession on Council rates, was the result of a concerted LGA campaign, assisted by our Member Councils and their communities

• Disappointed in Canberra, for not reinstating the supplementary road funding for South Australia

• The LGA Regional Work Plan provides links with the Council of the Future report and the LGA Economic Development Statement
• The Council of the Future report challenged Local Government to establish more robust arrangements for cooperative planning and service delivery at the regional level
• South Australia's economy is shifting - the loss of the automotive industry - the changing face of the mining industry - closure of the United Dairy Power milk processing plants at Murray Bridge and Jervois -
• The State Government remains upbeat about South Australia's economic future - the reality is that it will be a struggle to achieve economic renewal - but we have to try
• We have to adopt and adapt new processes - we have to actively seek avenues for growth and previously untapped export opportunities
• We are currently looking to China and next week SA Local Government will accompany the Premier on his mission to China - this delegation - we will use the information from the visit to Shandong Province to inform the LGA's China Engagement Strategy and
• Establish a trade platform to ease entry into this massive market
• Several Councils, including Port Lincoln, Onkaparinga, Mt Gambier have already made major strides in the development of relations with China
• We can assist our local businesses to review their business models to become export ready
• There is a growing world demand for quality food and wine - but markets are not just going to come to us, we have to go to them and sell ourselves
• As China recovers from Government imposed austerity measures and as the Chinese middle class grows rapidly - South Australia has an exploding market
• China is South Australia's largest trading partner
• SA exports more wine to China than all other states combined.
• Food and wine remain our largest export earner with our quality grains, seafood, meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables produced in SA's clean and green regions
• Local Government has a major role in fostering diversification and investment opportunities for local business and focusing on competitive strengths
• To rebuild our regional economies we have to take a multi-pronged approach with a sound strategy and framework
• We must partner with the other spheres of government, with universities and our communities - we must be open to investment opportunities as well as markets for our world class products
For many years successive governments have talked about South Australia's future as the nation's transport hub - we are located at the centre of Australia's road, rail and air networks - but we are not there yet.

Last year the State Government announced 10 economic priorities to unlock the State's potential as a place to do business, create jobs, develop industry and attract investment.

I am pleased to say that Local Government has taken up the challenge and we are active in the Premier's economic activity list.

We must upskill our workforce and look for training opportunities - we must welcome international students into our communities - but to do this our regional communities must have the services, housing, adjunct activities and employment.

We must encourage our bright young people to stay and work in South Australia - to do that there must be employment opportunities and viable career paths.

Regional health must have the same focus as the city - those of us in the country read with wonder and envy that Adelaidians might have to travel up to 30 kilometres to the nearest large hospital emergency room - if you live in Buckle Boo (35 kilometres from Kimba) on the Eyre Peninsula, you are 177.7 kilometres from Whyalla and more than 200 kilometres from Port Lincoln.

Pleased to see the Government's pride in the SA Health and Biomedical Precinct - but regional health, like regional education, should not be forgotten if we want to encourage families back into regional towns and communities.
The LGA has commissioned a number of papers to look at the challenges in the regions and opportunities which might mitigate these challenges.

Local Government is no stranger to forming partnerships where outcomes will have positive impact on our communities.

Which brings me to mining.

In 2013 the LGA commissioned SACES to prepare a paper on the effects of mining on the Eyre Peninsula.

At that time there were 33 developing minerals projects in South Australia - 15 were on the Eyre Peninsula.

Apart from the two largest councils in the Eyre Region the other nine councils are relatively small. They will be required to deal with individual mine operators, with local and regional impacts. There are service and infrastructure requirements to be addressed.

As a result of the report a Task Force was established with representatives from Local Government, the mining industry, State and Federal Governments, NRM Boards and regional LGA.

Provision of water, electricity, housing, education, social services and infrastructure, plus the impact on local roads from movement of heavy vehicles and increased traffic flows from mine workers' vehicles and all the other extra dimensions that new industries bring are being looked at.

Impacts on regional airports from 'fly in - fly out' movements must be considered.
• South Australia has world-leading mineral assets - we have 69% of the nation's copper resources, 12% of the gold and 23% of the world's uranium.
• Those resources are going to be realised and our rural and regional communities have to be prepared.
• Again I want to stress that Local Government cannot do it on its own.
• Our three spheres of government and exploration and mining companies have to work together.
• The LGA's 2013 "Statement for Regional South Australia" was very clear.
• The prosperity of South Australia’s country communities is dependent on Local, State and Federal Governments working together to address:
  • population growth or maintenance;
  • employment generation;
  • investment in infrastructure;
  • development of human capital;
  • health of families and communities;
  • quality of life;
  • sustainable use of natural assets; and
  • a profitable business environment.
• this is a fascinating State - it has untapped tourism operations, world class renewable energy resources such as solar, wind and geothermal power sources
• we have primary produce that is second to none
• our aquaculture is growing rapidly
• our agribusiness is booming and with proper nurturing will continue its economic rise
• we should be forging ahead together building strong regional communities and economies
• I'd like to finish with this quote from our Statement for Regional South Australia
  • “When all spheres of Government work collaboratively in the early stages of developing policies and plans that impact on the social, environmental and economic growth of country communities, benefits will be delivered to all South Australians”.

• Thank you