

RDA National Forum 2015 - Compilation of round-table discussions, issues and strategies

The following is a compilation of the workshop round table discussions held during the Forum and recorded on butcher's paper.

Investment/Industry attraction

Issues/Challenges

- Investment framework/business certainty.
- Attraction for industry/industry clusters/innovation.
- Industry decline (traditional)
 - Transition versus transformation e.g. manufacturing
 - Opportunities e.g. dairy (robotics - skills required)
- New developing industries e.g. Arts, Education
- Unskilled jobs
- Withstanding changes in government
- How return on investment is a constraint to attracting private investment to a region
- Increasing unemployment and under employment
- LGAs can facilitate private sector partnerships for attracting industry through de-risking
- Research and development – universities reactive to industry
- Collaboration between Government, Industry and RDA
- Commercialisation value chain (cradle to grave)

Strategies/Opportunities

- Investment prospectus
- Council providing cheap services; ready and appropriate zoned land
- Faster development applications/LGA Assistance
- Government incentives for business re-location
- Better networks actual and virtual and use of them (all sectors)
- Create more demand/customers.
- Match money to activity
- Bring in external; grow internal
- Economic gardening
- Economic entrepreneurship
- Engage
- Marketing
- Prospectus
- Promotion of competitive advantage
- Sound viable projects – ready to go
- Contribute to framework development
- Lack of investment ready projects
- Business planning – enhanced
- Governance
- Coordinated integrated interface of providers – private and government
- Investment ready projects pipeline
- Visioning, leadership, skill development required
- Workforce Development Plan (employer needs not met by training institutions)

- Drive aspiration and educational attainment
- Workforce matching skills to need
- Need agreed Infrastructure Priorities
- Regional Governance Model to rank projects (need to share models)
- Robust process to develop strategy
- Funding
- Collaboration
- Develop a concept/idea e.g. Gold Coast – to have already begun the discussion with the community before approaching business
- Develop Investment Framework/ Attraction Strategy for Industry
- Diversifying industry base where single industries dominate (future proofing defined resource base)
- Creating/supporting industries that will create jobs
- Investing in human capital – deliver innovative industries; skills for jobs we don't know exist yet (new and innovative)
- Talk about the positive story
- Research partnerships (national/global), Conditional policy
- COCAC ownership, co-lo ind/research/etc., government programmes
- Funding models (PPP, Crowd, UC, and Traditional)
- Target teams
- Industry focus group
- Clustering
- Co-location
- Demonstrate ROI – commercial standard ROI required on all projects to attract private investment
- Continuity of Government Policy
- Long term cross-jurisdictional policy required by government
- Bi-partisan support
- Be Seen – Forums/Industry Groups
- Investment incentive/infrastructure - innovation boost – idea to commercialisation

RDA Role/Relevance/Credibility

Issues/Challenges

- Recognition and awareness of what RDA can do
- Lack of seed funding for business case/feasibility studies/research and development to assist applications and partner with regional organisations to work on strategies
- Helping people write up quality applications is an important role - need to link proponents/projects to RDA assistance
- Assistance with funding applications
- NSRF Mandatory Engagement in application lends relevance/credence to RDA Committees
- Mandate
- We don't have a clearly defined role
- We need legitimacy
- Was better defined (role) when RDA had a place in RDAF (Stronger Regions) – have lost some purpose
- We need a role in the grant/funding process. We know of other funding that might be better suited
- Every time we have a change of government we get a slightly different role – some don't know what to do with us?
- Need greater appreciation of the collective experience and wisdom of the RDA Committees
- Excellent officers, very experienced, need to ensure they have opportunities to discuss pertinent issues e.g. feedback from the first round of Stronger Regions
- We need to clarify the expectations of being able to promote all the programmes in detail when senior officials struggle with it

- Confusion over roles/direction e.g. board vs staff (in some cases)
- Clarity of purpose – what do we do?
- Personality based/loss of continuity if people leave
- Credibility of RDA Committees/Board selection
- Role clarity of the various bodies – RDA/LG/Regions SA
- Clarity of RDA role and relevance (confusion)
- Relevance and credibility
- RDA and regional stability and credibility (regional downturn make stability critical)
- Credibility of RDA Committees
- RDA review process (delays)
- Role clarity of the various bodies – RDA/LG/Regions SA
- As RDA Committees we should know about any application submitted for funding by LGAP etc. (helps with feedback and stops duplication)
- Valuing the role of RDA
- Mandatory RDA involvement in NSRF applications – all funding (state based)
- Leadership and Governance – recognising our role

Strategies/Opportunities

- Work with federal member; network news distribute state and federal; chairs reference group to actively promote RDA committees
- Access to seed funding to assist RDA Committees; numerous applicants have no funding for business cases or feasibility studies; funding would assist greater buy in by RDA Committees into economic forums
- Government seed funding required for project proofing and start up
- Is there room for seed funding – sometimes a good idea needs to be tested/ supported.
- Federal Government to elevate the role of RDA Committees (i.e. make consultation a requirement for funding programmes)
- Mandatory RDA involvement in NSRF applications – all funding (state based)
- Mandate proponents looking for grant funding working with RDA and monitor RDA committees to ensure they add value
- RDA Committee Role in Funding Applications
 - Increased relevance
 - Early engagement
 - Letters of support – direct to department – improve honesty
 - Independent comment
- The next national conference be a conversation between RDA Committees and the Department
- Support for RDA Committees from Canberra
- Empower decision making to RDA Committees
- Mandate RDA in decision process (grants/staff selection policies)
- Advise ministerial visits
- Have clear pathway to process inquiries/issues, access skills/strengths, governance training
- break down responses to projects; identify priorities; case studies of success
- Bi-partisan support
- Quality board members; communications strategy – celebrate successes/media releases; strong leadership
- Contract extensions for RDA Committees
- Realistic communication from Canberra to RDA Committees
- Be clear about the role of RDA Committees
- Make mandatory presentation of applications to RDA Committees prior to submission
- Self-assessment – measure need for change

Skills/Education/Training

Issues/Challenges

- Lack of job opportunities, retention and redeployment/pathways/work experience
- Low educational aspirations and attainment
- Business and industry have not all taken a forward looking view and determined skills needs for the future
- Schools lack the capacity to make lasting linkages with business and industry
- Careers officers in schools do not all have the skills required to advise on industry and business roles
- Access to tertiary education for remote and rural areas
- Accommodation for education (including TAFE)
- Relevance of industry
- Jobs creation in small business (technology, skills, market research)
- Skills for the future
- Youth employment opportunities/retraining
- Unemployment (education and training programmes – accountability of outcomes)
- Mental health
- Develop youth culture – community sports or social infrastructure
- Partnerships with potential industry partners can drive skill development, education and job creation outcomes
- Rising unemployment and underemployment.
- How to map needs of children who may be being educated via other means e.g. School of the Air
- Job Creation

Major Youth/Indigenous/Generational Disadvantage

Strategies/Opportunities

- Diversify the workforce
- Ensure people are trained for available jobs/look for opportunities in other industries.
- Exchange programs between school
- Engage future leaders/future business people today.
- Start-ups/entrepreneurs – access to capital, mentors, access to talent.
- Need w-o-g approach, real life learning
- Workforce talent development strategies / broaden educational offering.
- Better aligned education sector with industry (regional education boards/unis).
- Better recognition of disadvantage.
- Visas
- RDA Committees can facilitate industry workshops involving futurists and strategists to elicit information on skills needs for the future
- RDA Committees can facilitate introductions between schools/universities etc. and industry
- Must start early e.g. primary school
- Run forums/workshops
- Direct introductions
- Partner with Department of Education to lobby for change
- Careers officers in schools should be sourced from the private sector and should not require teaching qualifications
- Enhance private sector
- Industry skills need identification
- Link to local skills and training providers
- Industry specific places at TAFE and university
- Need to ensure integrated planning - experience of duplicated training facility in close proximity and now both facilities underutilised

- Leadership
- Providing opportunities
- Research into potential future jobs and what skills will be needed to fill these jobs
- Promoting STEM
- Talking to and engaging with industry and education providers to ensure that the needs are met matching employer needs
- Basic community education – coding, innovation, entrepreneurship
- Knowledge economy awareness and infrastructure
- Facilitation of major infrastructure projects
- Skills retention/attraction – NSRF; liveability
- Attracting industry
- Business collaboration – capability
- Training options to suit needs
- Reducing impediments to employment – lobby/advocacy
- Restore low workforce development
- Regional development as a national agenda
- Better dividing the pie

Telecommunications/Broadband

Issues/Challenges

- NBN blocks innovation
- Telstra isn't open to small/medium partnership
- NBN is about domestic needs, not business
- NBN
- Speed up
- Seek advice from locals
- Communications updates
- To encourage business investment
- Access to high speed internet connection
- Access to modern communications (broadband, mobile connectivity)
 - network capability
 - infrastructure
- Telecommunications/connectivity

Strategies/Opportunities

- Explore other options
- Keep lobbying
- Deliver grass roots results
- Work with competitors to pilot small single town solutions
- Explore other service providers to encourage competition
- Open up access to towers
- Multi-purpose infrastructure (towers)
- Access to networks
- Agreed locations
- High speed wireless project – private providers; black spot testing

Agriculture

Issues/Challenges

- Investor Readiness
- Facilitating investment

- Transformation/innovation
- Partnerships
- Labour shortage
- Rural town decline
- Individual growers vs industry approach

Strategies/Opportunities

- RDA understand constraints
- RDA facilitating sector engagement in solutions
- RDA advocating regulatory change and streamlining of government and industry solutions
- Facilitating connections with business proponents and advisers for development of business cases
- Facilitating introductions (matching enquiries)
- Profiling successful businesses online: 'case study' to provide stimulation for young farmers and domestic and international investment
- Connections with research organisations
- Awareness of innovative or transformational practices that are scalable and replicable
- Case studies and communication
- Target sectors – for growth and land use, gain confidence and intelligence from major players
- more 417 visas, local education
- Focus on areas with growth potential
- Encourage cooperation to gain critical mass/volume
- Agribusiness

Freight/Roads/Transport

Issues/Challenges

- Transport/freight traditionally/normally the responsibility of state and federal government
- Onerous compliance
- Population tax based of regions not enough to traditionally fund infrastructure
- Private sector adverse to red tape
- Need policy changes that allow greater private sector involvement
- Poor transport connectivity around road, rail and air
- Identifying and engaging the stakeholders including their requirements
- Identifying key links
- Monopolies
- Freight (road) transport optimisation project in Mackay – TMR, Ind, NQ bulk ports, mining services, RDA, DSD
- Alternatives to road freight movement
- Identifying optimisation opportunities through supply chains – consulting ind not just LG view
- Challenge to get good data about transport/freight movements
- Freight costs
- Port congestions
- 'The' Issue - Current transport system lacks integration
- Food Supply Chain
 - Bringing value forward: profit closer to suppliers
 - Need to do economic analyses to consider/prove net value
 - Business case – grains and meat
 - Economics of long term supply contracts
 - Supply chain bringing closer to the farmers/other industries

Strategies/Opportunities

- Identify infrastructure priorities
- Facilitate discussions on need of public-private partnerships

- RDA Committees need a fund they can apply to or access through the Department in order to undertake the necessary analysis and use the funds to leverage funds from the region for studies/reports/benefit analysis
- Invite round table discussions
- Call on stakeholders
- Secure capital investment
- Give momentum and support
- One coordinating body on behalf of industry (RDV model)
- Encourage competition by identifying all players
- Legislation to prevent monopolies
- Need state and federal government engagement
- Network with regions to increase support for project
- Awareness of existing strategies and ensure all are on the same page
- Transport linkages – especially linking to ports
- Transport Linkages
 - Road, rail, ports
 - Freight link
 - Intermodals at Mundijong, Bullsbrook – direct to port via road and rail
- Accurate planning data
 - Freight movements
 - Regionalise the data
 - Business census data
- Integrated transport planning
- To identify gaps in road network
- Infrastructure needs – through Diversify Mackay
- Coastal shipping and identifying benefits to regions to overcome stumbling blocks – communicating this to the regions so that the push for coastal shipping update is demand driven
- RFID transmitters, Sense T – Federal Government supported University of Tasmania by apps, putting sensors on items to be freighted can be adapted, open source data
- Modelling beef movements can be replicated the other commodities
- More intermodal terminals, technological optimisation (RFID, vehicle tracking, more efficient integration)
- Need to look at overseas best practice examples – road and rail shouldn't work in isolation/competition
- Connectivity
 - Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan
 - Infrastructure Plans
- Map transport demand and government policy
- Policy support for more competition
- Coordinated
- Work with growers – professional development

RDA Committee Funding

Issues/Challenges

- \$\$\$\$ - we could do more if we had more. We do the best with what we have
- Need certainty of funding
- Surety of funding
 - Staff mobility (attraction/retention)
 - Short term contracts
- Funding (lack of/inequality)
- Continuity of funding
- No discretionary funds, just brokers' limited capacity

Resources/People

Strategies/Opportunities

- 3-yr agreement
- Longer term funding arrangements
- Appropriate/transparent outgoing funding model
- Security of funding – policy issue
- 5 year funding security tied to performance
- Lobby for 3 year funding
- Secure bi-partisan support as too important to touch
- Review how funds are distributed
- Increased investment in FTE to deliver solutions
- Federal and State MP support

Working with other RDA Committees

Issues/Challenges

Collaboration among RDA Committees with shared interests – industry or geographic

Strategies/Opportunities

- Department to develop a ‘ready reckoner’ – which RDA Committees are focussing on which sectors – snapshot by sector (who is focussing on which sectors)
- RDA partnerships – Like: Like informing practice
- Connect through collaborative framework

Working with Federal and State Government

Issues/Challenges

- Consistency
- Meaningful engagement by Commonwealth
- Less patronising language
- Lack of acknowledgement of RDA Committees by state
 - Multiple regional plans (state department)
 - Unnecessary intervention (state government)
- Government policies can result in communication and other infrastructure inefficiencies and underutilisation.

Difficulties to do business (NSW): lack of clarity on processes, timeframe & cost.

Strategies/Opportunities

- Influence government policy
- Sole Federal Funding
- Clearly outline process, timelines and cost.

Tourism

Issues/Challenges

- Parochialism
- Fear of competition
- Leadership
- New experiences e.g. cycling
- Facilitation, opportunities to work together, investment ready
- Clean green image overseas, protection and leverage (don't put at risk)
- Branding
- Marketing and international presence

- Fragmented e.g. states/regions
- Needs to be coordinated in outbound mission e.g. China/India
- Silo focussed – competing in international markets
- Region largely dependent on tourism vulnerable to market fluctuations e.g. GFC and Cairns
- Extending visitor length of stay
- Increasing yield
- Planning – strategic context and shared understanding thereof
- Engaging in shared responsibility – strategic planning
- Lack of coordination
- Infrastructure

Strategies/Opportunities

- RDA lead the conversation
- Link to Federal
- Support industry upskilling
- All stakeholders need to collaborate for regional/sub-regional tourism strategy
- Leverage on strong destination products/attractions
- RDA can facilitate, broker partnerships, assist industry, find solutions e.g. event strategy
- Forums = start talking
- Economic data/analyse trends
- Identify potential new markets
- Seek professional input
- Consider other successful organisations and tourism destinations
- Strategies – iconic markets e.g. product national package not state or region based
 - Choose 2 – 3 starters
 - Variety of packages
 - Then identify private providers
 - Link international reach
 - Locally – find private providers
 - Raise profile of market - tourism and events, national linkages, partner with membership based organisations, don't reinvent wheel

Partnerships with the Private Sector

Issues/Challenges

- Connections – honest broker connections
- Identify opportunity for the private sector
- Can garner funding from all three levels of government
- Establishing valued connectivity/linkages
- Building Effective Relationships and maintaining them
- Building effective relationships with industry on board
- Establishing digital/online connectivity and linkages of value
- Attracting private investment alongside regional partners

Strategies/Opportunities

- Informal engagement e.g. breakfasts – keep lines of communication open
- Value proposition
- Setting up industry clusters – information, data sharing, skills development
- Ensure strong industry representation on committees
- Site visits and face to face meetings
- Committee inductions
- Ensure no-one is excluded

Common goals (sing from same hymn sheet)

- Working together
- Share stories – don't recreate wheel all the time
- Grow size of pie rather than competing from same slice of pie – not everywhere can be everything to everyone
- Look for commonalities and share strengths
- Look for competitive advantage further afield (not from next door)
- Synergies are important, and shifting culture relies significantly on trust
- Identify best practice (share success/solutions)
- More case studies/workgroups
- New board induction – site visits to projects/ infrastructure/ industry
- Ensure good representation of industry on boards
- Engage with existing private sector networks e.g. Chambers of Commerce
- Regional Economic Development Employment Strategy
- Strategy Implementation Groups (meeting monthly)
- Common objectives
- industry collaboration (on-site and face to face)
- delivery of small collaborative projects with industry
- SERREE cluster model
- Facilitate RDA as one-stop shop to alleviate multiple interactions with government departments

Working with Local Government

Issues/Challenges

- Dealing with Local Government
- RDA is regional (local government can be very parochial if challenged)
- Engaging with local government
- Number of local governments
- Working with local government

Strategies/Opportunities

- 3 levels of government collaboration
- Co-location
- Having something to offer them
- Well-developed relationships will get you in the door
- Personal relationships/engagement
- Better articulation by government to regional bodies about expectations
- RDA to work with local government to share resources to align purpose and actions
- RDA establish economic development group among local government economic D.G staff
- Make an effort (LGA relations)
-

Prioritising projects

Issues/Challenges

How do you/we prioritise?

Strategies/Opportunities

- Quality projects
- Quality projects
- Local knowledge
- Stakeholder engagement

- understand priorities and sing from same hymn book
- Have a plan and stick to it
- RDA Common platform for agreed priorities

Research and development

Issues/Challenges

- Need for links between research and development and business growth
- Technological research and development

Strategies/Opportunities

- Audit of research and development activity
- Review - LG research and development fund, possibly environmental scan
- Research and development base driving growth
- Link research

Community/Stakeholder Engagement

Issues/Challenges

- Priorities change with stakeholders
 - Perceptions of duplication/competing programmes
 - Regional engagement to deliver regionally identified solutions
 - Divergent priorities
 - Managing expectations
 - Parochialism
 - Who are the stakeholders?
 - Relevance of RDA committees to stakeholders
 - Stakeholders include local government, state government, federal government, industries, peak bodies, politicians, not for profits, community
 - Parochialism
 - Stuck in past
 - Detail focus minutiae/small scale
 - Not strategic
 - Competing interests of a region/Competing interests
 - Obtaining agreement across a range of stakeholders
 - Continue increasing the value of RDA Committees for stakeholders
 - Getting agreement across a range of stakeholders/aligning strategies
 - Clarity and community awareness of RDA and its role.
 - Government partnerships outside economic development
- What's a regional project?

Strategies/Opportunities

- Identify key stakeholders
- Develop relationships – MOUs/meetings/industry roundtables – formalise procedures.
- Shared vision.
- Be the conduit between stakeholders.
- Broad community engagement to determine project list
- Liaise/engage with stakeholders to prioritise and implement (including LG)
- Three levels of government collaboration
- Co-location/Clustering
- Target teams/industry focus groups
- Relationships with all key stakeholders developed

- Be at the table
- Relationships symbiotic – get rid of the parasites
- Concentrate on the delivery of outcomes when getting into relationship
- Joint board meetings with government and community leaders
- Respect transparency
- RDA Committees need to better contribute to policy development for their regions
- Better networks actual and virtual and use of them (from all sectors).
- Need to improve relationships with business. Business is a key stakeholder in regional development. Need to engage with businesses to see if there are ways of working with them to improve capacity development (i.e. traineeships)
- Build relationships with Development Commissions (WA)
- Targeted engagement/role of ‘honest broker’
- Find the common thread
- Building and maintaining relationships

Regional view – commit to overcoming parochialism

Population

Issues/Challenges

- Declining /stagnant population
- Ageing and decreasing population – loss of youth 18 – 24 years
- Declining or stagnant populations of cities

Job creation/unemployment – youth population growth

Strategies/Opportunities

- Attraction/retention strategies
- Liveability
- Developing, attracting and retaining strategic thinkers
- Recognition/marketing of regional living benefits

Communication

Issues/Challenges

- Communication/feedback on applications and results
- Communication coordination
- Communication
- Consistent communication

RDA Brand and Relevance

Strategies/Opportunities

- Formalised communications protocol regarding success or failure
- Set up best practice website/portal
 - Highlight successful projects/funding applications
 - If every RDA contributed you would have one good story a week
- Portal – regional/geographic; shared resources
- Communications and Marketing and Engagement strategy and process
- RDA federal to RDA local re applications for various projects
- Feedback to RDAs and applicants after process.
- Improved investment in communications (it’s good but could be better)
- Better use of technology: videoconferencing, skype, NBN (need good mobile phone coverage/internet)
- PR Campaign (RDA/Government)

Business Development and Growth

Issues/Challenges

- Establishing and maintaining effective engagement – how to get them to the table and keep them there;
- Creating compelling argument (research based) for government and private sector
- Dependence on large single industry – we understand it's life cycle based but need to recognise it and facilitate growth of other industries (future proof other regions) – issue is how to adapt, build diversity
- Getting a Committee with the right people
- Commitment/consistency with RDA mandate
- Understanding/focus on the problem/their business opportunity
- Economic transition
 - Planning for visionary solutions
 - Use collaborative investment
 - Regulatory Fragmentation
- Export value enhancement
- Resource allocation
- Cost of energy

Innovation

Strategies/Opportunities

- Incentives – ensure we have something to offer them; long term modelling and planning Solving problems they are unable to solve individually
- Focusing on RDA unique strengths
- Use collective power/collaborative group
- Engaging all key stakeholders (business, academia, investment, government etc)
Vision/inspiration/needs
- Innovation programmes – growing/encouraging entrepreneurs
 - Where appropriate value add locally
 - Connections to markets (higher value)
 - Upskilling
 - Learn
 - Reducing red tape

Minimising waste

- Maximising benefit to client
- Capital raising for small business
- Entrepreneurialism
- Industry advisory – use local expertise

Alignment of plans

Issues/Challenges

- Projects should have to align with Regional Plans.
- Levels of government plans should align.
- Industry and government priorities don't always align.
- Alignment of planning and investment strategies.

Principle based planning approach to planning and delivery – regional strategic plan

Strategies/Opportunities

- Joint planning
- Planning alignment

- Integrated planning

Working across jurisdictions

Issues/Challenges

- Intrastate access
- Red tape – particularly in cross-jurisdictional regions/projects

Strategies/Opportunities

Nil

Infrastructure

Issues/Challenges

- Infrastructure needed
 - Communications/NBN connectivity
 - Power.
 - Transport (including freight/fast track)
 - Export.
 - Infrastructure – relevant
 - Infrastructure – catalytic; nation building
- Infrastructure investment – power, transport, export, communications

Strategies/Opportunities

- State, Local and Federal Government Collaboration
- Systems for prioritisation/plan for regions
- Big focus on logistics
- Farm to port approaches
- Integrated logistics
- Business case to shovel ready
- Financing reform (15% GST)
- Collaborative investment
- Offer small amounts for proponents (on a \$ for \$ basis) to develop business cases, evidence base and feasibility – for infrastructure projects (incl. transport and communications).

Miscellaneous

Water

Issues/Challenges

- Addressing water availability
- Water (cost included)

Strategies/Opportunities

- Opportunities to move water to areas of need – infrastructure
- Water efficiency/conservation

Distance

Issues/Challenges

- Diversity, distance, agility to ‘on the ground’ support
- Location, isolation (distance), cost to travel to engage with stakeholders
- Tyranny of distance
- Sometimes region is dispersed – regional psyche
-

Evidence/research

Issues/Challenges

- Developing evidence base can take a long time for strategic projects; sometimes years.
- Need for evidence base

Aged Care

Issues/Challenges

- Implement Ageing in the Bush (including Perth)
- Affordable Respite
- Increased specialised services

Land Tenure

Issues/Challenges

- Native Title clearance
- State agreement review;
- Identified special development zones (agri-precincts in Perth/other zones in the regions)

Meeting regional/state/territory priorities

Issues/Challenges

- Regions have lost a lot of human capital and leadership as Corporates and Government shrink their footprints and deliver by internet.

Strategies/Opportunities

- Need regional leadership programs (include young people), actively promote – ‘practical hands-on project work’. Maybe RDA can facilitate – collaboration. Needs to be a link.