



**SEGRA**  
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

# CRADLE COAST AUTHORITY

## SEGRA Conference Communique 2022



**BUSINESS  
EVENTS  
TASMANIA**



The Tasmanian Government's Business Events Attraction Fund (BEAF) is delivered through Business Events Tasmania.

The Cradle Coast Authority SEGRA Conference was held on 31 August – 2 September 2022 at the paranable Convention Centre, Devonport Tasmania. It was the 25<sup>th</sup> annual SEGRA conference hosted by Business Events Tasmania, the Cradle Coast Authority and Devonport City Council.

## **AIMS**

The SEGRA conference aims to assist regional, rural and remote Australia to source and identify the techniques, skills and issues they need to address to achieve successful economic growth and development.

## **ATTENDEES**

The conference brought together over 150 professionals from every state of Australia. Professionals represented all levels of government, universities, industry bodies, private and not for profit organisations who live and work in or for the regions.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Centred on the theme 'Regional Activity Transition and Sustainability' speakers and delegates had an opportunity to listen to a broad range of topics. These included:

- regions planning and preparing, managing, responding and leading from crisis;
- attracting retaining people in regional Australia;
- the role of regional Australia in renewables and ESG;
- the contribution of rural, remote and regional Australia to the visitor economy;
- place based development;
- protecting and valuing natural and built assets; and
- celebrating and supporting volunteers.

## **KEY THEMES**

SEGRA is committed to sustainability of community, economy, governance and the environment. To this end SEGRA is multi-disciplinary and multi-sector.

Our discussions can be summarised within three overarching themes;

- Regions as places for people
- Regions as places for people's endeavours
- Regions as places for resource optimisation and commercial innovation

### **Regions as places for people**

This year reflected the turbulent experiences of regions with disasters. Discussion around disaster preparedness, response and recovery was a reoccurring theme. The importance of partnerships, collaboration and community in terms of preparedness, response and recovery were paramount in many of the presentations.

#### **1. Partnerships are key to disaster preparedness, response and recovery**

The work being undertaken by VirtualTAS to digitally map Tasmania will help to support the concept of disaster smart communities. A joint project by 42-24 and Enzen Australia will result

in the island state being mapped with 4cm aerial imagery. One use is to help communities, government and emergency response organisations plan for and manage events such as bushfires and floods. The intent of the work is to pave a path to a more resilient, prosperous and sustainable future for all of Tasmania.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman has recognised that small business is vital to local communities and economies, but vulnerable to natural disasters. The ASBFEO has coined the phrase 'socio-commercial capital' to help articulate that community connection, business connection and relationships of trust between the two helps build a more resilient, unified community that can respond and rebuild after natural disasters.

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal recently conducted research and engagement with rural communities and defined community resilience as 'the ability to sustain and use available resources to respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations.' Regional communities have demonstrated an abundance of resilience over the past few years. Whilst difficult at the time what has resulted is the adaptation and growth of communities.

Evident across presentations from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Rebecca White MP and the Cradle Coast Authority was the important role local networks, knowledge, experiences, skills and meeting places were during disasters or adverse events. Supported participatory design either conducted formally or informally was also a key theme to build community ownership, gain momentum and deliver a response.

**Take Away:** *Value place based, community centred systems and responses in disaster planning, response and recovery*

## **2. Collaboration is a necessity**

Whilst regions are defined by geographical boundaries on a map; local governments, businesses, institutions, organisations and their people within them are wholly interconnected. Due to this interconnection, collaboration and cooperation are necessary values that are required to progress community priorities.

The Cradle Coast Authority has demonstrated how an entity can be born out of and based on cooperation and collaboration. The formal entity of nine local governments has helped advance communities of common interest, assisted with advocacy and progressed agreed regional projects.

Host Council, Devonport City collaborated with local, state and federal government to create benefit for the northwest region with its Living City project. The Living City project has transformed Devonport with the creation of new retail, business/service and waterfront precincts focused on highlighting tourism, arts, food and services.

The Devonport City Council opened Stage 1, a \$71.1 million investment incorporating the impressive new multi-purpose civic building, the paranple centre (where SEGRA was held), which is home to a state-of-the-art Library, integrated customer service centre including Service Tasmania, a café, Devonport Online, Council offices and an 800-seat conference centre.

Seedlab Tasmania built an online community of start-up businesses based across the regions of Tasmania during the health pandemic. The cooperation and collaboration amongst participants helped create new food businesses and products, initiate supply chain pathways and market entry.

West by North West demonstrated the powers of collaboration by working with state, regional and local organisations during the health pandemic. Collaboration saw the advancement of tourism marketing, product development, tourism business development and advocacy.

Collaboration and cooperation in regional Australia are a necessity if we want to resolve our common challenges and capture our opportunities. We are geographically and physically isolated from one another, we often experience a lack of resources (people, time, energy, money etc) and we sometimes do not have critical mass. Going forward, collaboration must be agile and inclusive. Collaboration is about working together to create or achieve something, where it has collective benefits for all, and it is built on trust and respect.

**Take away:** *Shared purpose and commitment to work together is fundamental to improve rural, remote and regional outcomes*

### **3. Community connection creates impact**

The Cradle Coast Authority and City of Launceston shared an insight into how local governments can engage and work with communities in the planning, design and enhancement of places. In doing so, planners and designers that work with the local community can see a plan go beyond its pages. It helps build momentum, progress and ownership.

Town Team Movement and the Great Regional City Challenge demonstrated how communities can lead change from the ground up in flexible and participatory governance models. Town Team Movement built a set of guiding principles for communities to align with, to help them improve 'their places'. Like the Great Regional City Challenge, what has resulted, is local communities working positively with each other and their local governments to 'kick in the same direction' and care for their towns, streets and spaces.

Cooperative Bulk Handling, Australia's largest cooperative shared an insight into their community investment strategy. The cooperative places immense value in returning benefits to the rural communities in which its grower members live and work. The community investment strategy is currently under review and seeks to maximise cooperative business value and social impact.

**Take away:** *Regions need to actively engage businesses and community in developing participatory models supported by clear governance mechanisms for example: collection and capture of information, transparency of participation and clarity of where final responsibility will lie and how decisions will be made.*

## **Regions are places for people's endeavours**

### **1. Workforce planning and attraction**

Following research by the University of Melbourne's Future Work Lab, the regions are well placed to take advantage of the movement of human capital that is occurring between the city and the bush. Three key factors regions need to consider when attracting skilled workers: the rural lifestyle must be better than what the 'prospective employee' is currently experiencing, they must have the ability to be closer to the natural environment and have access to affordable housing.

A common thread in discussion was access to affordable and quality housing in the regions, to attract and retain employees. Ian Ugarte shared his insights into how to develop affordable, multi-use and sustainable housing but more importantly how to utilise existing housing stock to

meet demand. Ian shared his 7 principles of housing design which was well received. He also emphasised reform in state and local planning policies to activate and capture the full benefits of existing housing supply.

When rural communities are looking to attract a workforce, InspireAg emphasised the importance of being clear on the objectives and desired outcomes before the process commences. Support from key stakeholder's party to the workforce plan was identified as critical during implementation.

West North West Working supported the need to develop hard and soft skills in the future and current workforce to assist in resolving 'whole of' community and societal issues.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Jim Cavaye of the University of Tasmania emphasised the importance of training people in the region they live in and the essential role universities play in contributing to regional vitality. Professor Kilpatrick spoke about the value of communities working together in collective workforce planning to improve employment and career outcomes at all levels – young people, parents, education providers, employers, local government et al.

The Bundaberg Jobs Commitment was an example of the value of all stakeholders in a community working together for improved social and employment outcomes, particularly for youth. Led by the Bundaberg Regional Council the commitment focused on building human and social capital of its youth to reduce youth unemployment and disengagement.

**Take away:** *Preparing our current and engaging our future workforce is everyone's business*

## **2. Regions are well placed for geotourism development opportunities**

The visitor economy provides an opportunity for rural, remote and regional communities to educate visitors and tourists about the natural environment, heritage, culture, as well as create authentic connection to the land and its people. Geotourism is part of the national visitor economy strategy and is increasingly viewed as an instrument for regional economic development. It has a critical role in the visitor economy whilst connecting an area's natural and cultural heritage (particularly First Nations people) to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society.

Glen Innes Severn Council has included geotourism in its Destination Management Plan to help deliver outcomes in community and economic development whilst moving towards becoming a GeoRegion. It's Skywalk Geotourism visitor experience in partnership with Naveze, will deliver 22 audio stories, 360-degree drone footage, maps and wayfinding to create a high quality physical and digital experience.

Created from Chaos incorporates 13 sites in northern Tasmania of geotourism significance and is an example of how geotourism can engage locals and visitors in learning about landscapes, whilst the Royal Tasmania Botanical Gardens has identified and interpreted underlying geological themes to add value to their existing product and visitor experience.

**Take away:** *Geotourism has the potential for significant value in rural communities and helps raise awareness and understanding of our history and environment.*

## **Regions are places for resource optimisation and sustainability**

### **1. Infrastructure**

Constructive Energy challenged the concept that critical infrastructure is more than engineered bricks and mortar. Infrastructure also has a natural element and social element. The challenge for rural, remote and regional Australia is to consider all three as pieces of critical infrastructure and to think beyond the traditional concrete and steel. Each are intertwined and need equal consideration.

The Next Economy shared insights from the 'What Regions Need on the Path to Net Zero' report. Renewables represent an opportunity for economic diversification however regions need to ensure that energy projects build local and domestic supply chains, manufacturing and digital capacity, skills and workforce capabilities, climate resilience and adaptation as well as a potential to move from an extractive to regenerative impact.

**Take away:** *Investment in hard and soft infrastructure in the regions goes hand in hand*

## **2. Accessing capital for sustainability**

Ethical Fields supports community wealth building and identified a plethora of common economic and investment challenges faced by rural communities. These included ad hoc approaches to government and philanthropic funding, institutional finance inflexibilities, wealth created by the region leaking out of the region and ownership and decision making controlled by people outside of the regions, to name a few.

A key element of a region's sustainability is how well it can attract, retain and capture the benefits of investment. Place based capital programs can ensure that any investment is aligned to the strategic priorities of the region, is coordinated and locally led and owned.

**Take away:** Investment in a rural community needs to align with the local priorities and deliver benefit to

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

'People in the regions have a quiet pursuit of the extraordinary.' Words spoken by Rear Admiral (Rtd) Steve Gilmore AM, CSC, Defence Advocate for the Department of State Growth in Tasmania at SEGRA 2022.

We agree.

The diversity and quality of speakers and delegates at SEGRA 2022 demonstrated that we have great people and organisations living in and working with rural, remote and regional Australia. We need to continually improve advocating for our needs, telling our story, working together and building our brand.

## **SEGRA NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE**

Kate Charters (Chair)

Rod MacDonald, Simon Boughey, Dr Jen Cleary, Sharni Foulkes, Jodi Samson, Prof Rolf Gerritson, Ashley Bland, Caroline Robinson

## 2022 PRESENTERS

Krystal James	Business Events Tasmania
Rachel Williams	Millwood Media
Todd Babiak	Brand Tasmania
Tara Jacobsen	GROEI
Dr Hazel MacTavish-West	Seedlab Tasmania
Sheree Vertigan	Cradle Coast Authority
Cr Annette Rockliff	Devonport City Council
Matthew Atkins	Devonport City Council
Natalie Egleton	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
Ian Aitken	Growth Endeavours
Ashley Bland	Constructive Energy
Dr Peter Ghin	University of Melbourne
Minister Felix Ellis MP	Minister
Rebecca White MP	Tasmanian Labor Leader
Rear Admiral Gilmore AM, CSC	Department of State Growth
Jonathan Pavetto	Data AU
Emilee Freeman	Future Isle
Talitha Devadass	Future Isle
Angus M Robinson	Australian GeoScience Council Inc
Margot Davis	Glen Innes Severn Council
Caroline Falkiner	Naveze
Peter Manchester	Created from Chaos
Michael Vicary	Mineral Resources Tasmania
Ralph Bottrill	Mineral Resources Tasmania
Melinda McHenry	University of Tasmania
Sharni Foulkes	Broome Chamber of Commerce
Jenny Donovan	Cradle Coast Authority
James McKee	City of Launceston
Deanna Hutchinson	Cradle Coast Authority
Owen Tilbury	Great Regional City Challenge
Dr Jen Cleary	Centacare Catholic Country SA
Anne Greentree	Tourism Tasmania
Tom Wootton	West by North West
Gill Parssey	wakulina Walk
Michael Campbell	Lucid Economics
Dr Lisa Schimanski	Volunteering Tasmania
Mel Blake	Volunteering Tasmania
Eleanor McCormack	HeyWire
Dr Devaki Monani	Charles Darwin University
Jaya Srinivas OAM	Office of The Hon Min Ngaree Ah Kit, MLA, NT
Ben Artup	Bunderberg Regional Council
Kate Charters	SEGRA National Steering Committee
Jim Cavaye	University of Tasmania
Natalie Browning	Cooperative Bulk Handling
Hon Bruce Billson	Australian Small Business and Enterprise Ombudsman
Dean Cracknell	Town Team Movement
Seán McGoldrick	TasNetworks
Ian Ugarte	Australian Housing Initiative

Dr Amanda Cahill	The Next Economy
Stuart Mitchell	Virtual TAS
Dr Millie Rooney	Australia remade
Sara Hales	Avistra
Prof Sue Kilpatrick	University of Tasmania
Danielle Kidd	West North West Working
Sally Murfet	Inspire Ag
Adam Mostogl	The Van Dieman Project
Meghan Burkett	Ethical Fields
Fiona Gormann	Horsham Rural City
Paul Rosair	NAJA Business Services
Jenny Newman	RDA Tasmania
Ryan Waddington	Trellis Technologies
Sam Marshall	NBN Co
Anna Barwick	PharmOnline
Simon Boughey	SEGRA National Steering Committee
Rod MacDonald	Community Broadband Networks