

## Submission on the Discussion Paper for a South Australian Infrastructure Plan

**To:** InfrastructureSA

**From:** Regional Development Australia Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains (RDA BGLAP)

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RDA BGLAP in general supports the propositions, principles and philosophy of the discussion paper in its recognition of the multiple elements and impacts of infrastructure investment in South Australia. In a thinly populated state, infrastructure and labour force will be the drivers of business investment and the interaction of hard and soft infrastructure to attract and equip a labour force cannot be ignored in a strategic plan for infrastructure.

In particular RDA BGLAP endorses the principle that a systems approach to infrastructure is required and that infrastructure prioritisation decisions can not happen in isolation but must be viewed in the context of the business case as a whole. Consequently, a funding pool for business case and cost benefit analyses for large and small infrastructure projects should form part of the Infrastructure policy.

This submission briefly addresses several points which RDA BGLAP considers warrant further emphasis in the paper and ultimate plan and should be considered in priorities and funding formulation. Whilst some of these issues are primarily a commonwealth responsibility, unless they are prioritised by the state, they are unlikely to be prioritised by the commonwealth.

1. Better and Better digital connectivity: whilst digital connectivity alone is not enough and people need people to guide them through information and application of information, digital connectivity for government services, including health, emergency services and education, supports localised delivery with more accurate and up to date information sources, more complete information and better and more efficient searching capacity. Investment in broadly based high quality digital connectivity improves the efficiency and effectiveness of spend on core government services.
2. Transport People and Goods: Transport of people in thinly populated areas is an economic challenge, however a combination of infrastructure and planning with hub and spoke connectivity and services can alleviate isolation and car dependency, particularly on the young and old. Whilst some level of service is anticipated to be feasible with the advent autonomous vehicles, connected, walkable communities have demonstrated better health and business outcomes than “suburbs in the bush”. The connectivity is facilitated by neighbourhood centres with services which can then lend themselves to an “urban feel” and investment in current facilities such as co-working places which drive productivity and jobs. The utilisation of rail corridors for autonomous shuttles is a viable option for connecting regional, particularly peri urban towns but might also have value more remotely. Transport of Goods spending should pay strong attention to first mile last mile gaps as well as nation building transformative projects. Addressing first mile last mile gaps leverage existing infrastructure and lead to good return on infrastructure investment: “low hanging fruit”. The federally initiated supply chain led roads and infrastructure strategy was a useful approach to understand roads and infrastructure as a system and look for benefit to the system as a whole from investment.
3. Trade and export facilitation through infrastructure provision are a key requirement for economic growth. Industry negative perceptions of the competitiveness of some ports

presents barriers to trade as does the complexity of default load air freight of fresh and cold chain food products. Exploring options such as additional use of defence air bases for dedicated export freight (in action in other states) could be a benefit. Strategic transport infrastructure to get product to market is a major consideration in a decision to export. In particular, with improving conditions for import of food and wine into Asia, processing, packaging and transport logistics for food gain priority. Master planned Infrastructure blueprint for Northern Adelaide Plains would give some vision to investors of what the opportunity and business case for investment looks like. It would also save government from lobbying for retrofitted infrastructure when people purchased water in the avowed expectation that if the government sold them water to a particular site, government would put supporting infrastructure in place.

4. Population Growth infrastructure challenges also need to be viewed as a system. South Australia needs more people, the BGLAP area is offering housing and population growth at a rate substantially above the state average. Leading infrastructure is critical to get good design led development that creates productive creative communities that drive innovation and new growth, not infrastructure-less suburbs that offer the next depressed area, and ongoing cost to the government for remediation. There is an exciting opportunity stimulate South Australian growth and productivity – working with a locally driven land use planning framework with a world’s best infrastructure vision and prioritisation plan might be a model for attracting Public private partnerships in infrastructure investment – including community bonds which have historically appealed in times of uncertain markets and sluggish interest rates. Connected communities with links to employment lands relevant to the kind of development in those communities serves public and private enterprise. Investment in urban like precincts in these areas, creating neighbourhoods and township centres for a ‘heart and soul’ of a community can drive investment in hospitality, entertainment and co-working spaces, all drivers of jobs and further investment.
5. Contracting regional populations in expansive regions demand a rethinking of how liveability is achieved, and places and spaces are used, reused and repurposed. Multi-functional infrastructure, innovative regulation and facilitative public ownership that provides access to public spaces and places for community liveability, recreation and services is required. High speed digital connectivity is a basic requirement, along with amenity and equity (not necessarily equality) of access to health, education and extracurricular services can all be facilitated by technology, minimal local staffing and access to disused spaces (maybe refurbished). By way of example, the Commonwealth study hubs program referred to below. If the state endorses and contributes to these hubs, they are more likely to be sustained by the Commonwealth.
6. Infrastructure for International Students includes the Regional Study Hubs. In addition to supporting local communities, and improved skills and qualifications attainment, they can serve to attract skilled migrants, resettlement and international students seeking a differentiated experience of study. By way of example, the Barossa Study Hub looks to attract internationals interested in studying courses such as wine, food, tourism, entrepreneurship and a range of executive education sources in the wine region. These are likely to be in addition to students attracted to Adelaide, building the total pool of international students, populations of regional towns and enriching the cultural life of those towns.
7. **Climate Change impact is most evidenced in disaster destruction and reduced water – a real threat to prime agricultural production and productivity. Recycled water is an available option to mitigate these impacts, and it is RDA BGLAP’s submission that water in**

**the most critical issue for South Australia and water treatment and reticulation infrastructure the most critical infrastructure priority for the state. This cannot be over emphasised. For this region extending the reach of the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme to the east of the region to Barossa and Eden Valley for further treatment and application for viticulture is a tangible reduction in reliance on the River Murray system sustaining highest value agricultural production and exports. Barossa wine exports attract a premium of \$9 per litre over the nearest Australian wine region with a net impact for the state of approximately \$100 million per annum. Investing in this premium with additional water infrastructure makes good business sense for the state and the commonwealth.**

8. The Creative Industries have been highlighted as a strength of South Australia and have been a cornerstone of economic development activity in the BGLAP region. However, investment in infrastructure for a range of creative industries and the need to coordinate elements of Science, Art and Design for innovative outcomes is not recognised in public investment. Creative industries are relevant to the emerging workforce and their opportunities to create new value in our economy. Not just digital technologies, but the creative aspects that inspire STEAM as a driver of future economic activity. Creative Industries drive the energy in our communities that motivate connections and collaboration. Whilst it is recognised academically, this interest should be translated into infrastructure investment if there is to be real transformation in South Australia.
9. It is recognised that health facilities are a big issue in the budget with increasingly aging populations and therefore higher demand on health services, innovation in service delivery is eternally necessary. However, given the population growth trajectory of this region, it makes business sense for further health facilities to be established here, relieving stress on other facilities to the south. This peri urban region is close enough to attract quality medical teams with the right facilities, and close enough to lose them without the right facilities. Situated outside the metro area, the catchment for regional areas is substantial with ease of access and accommodation options for families already in place. The Barossa Hospital has been prioritised on regional and state infrastructure plans for 20 years and needs to be prioritised with a new plan for a current and future health model.
10. There is a real risk to investment in infrastructure if too much facilitation becomes dehumanised either through purely online access to human centred services, through unselective privatisation or through a narrow view of health that does not include investment in wellbeing. The services economy is booming and not all of it will realise value without facilitation. Saving expenditure now for greater costs and expenditure in the future does no favours to the budget a long-term strategy.
11. Related to a wellbeing strategy as an element of the infrastructure prioritisation plan is access to justice. The legal system, whilst it stands up against international models reasonably well, is so complex that most lawyers need to specialise and any five judges on a bench usually can't agree on the outcome. Accordingly, community needs supported access to justice to perform in an operating system of regulation and rules. The growth of alternative dispute resolution (even now in international disputes) offers more cost-effective resolution methods but does not entirely preclude the need for assistance to understand the rules and regulations in the first place. The savings to the public purse can be substantial if the justice system is viewed as a system – which, like quicksand, once you are in it you are almost never out of it – which is a substantial cost to the community. For real budget repair, systems like justice and low-cost justice and access to justice should not be overlooked in an infrastructure plan. Whilst technology in court is some assistance, for out of court dispute resolution, person to person negotiation and mediation has a much more successful record.

Where technology can help is that decentralised resources can rely on technology for support in research, expertise and backup in the delivery of justice services in regional areas.

RDA BGLAP as a member of RDSA will submit a further submission through RDSA on state significant regional infrastructure. Attached to this memorandum is a current listing of priority infrastructure projects for RDA BGLAP region.

#### **Addendum: Current Public Infrastructure Priorities Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains**

- 1. Water infrastructure to reticulate treated wastewater from Bolivar to Barossa and Eden Valleys and Gawler (and potentially up to Clare as well)**
- 2. Further treatment plant to improve the quality of that treated wastewater to fit for purpose standards for viticulture and amenity horticulture**
- 3. Masterplanning and Infrastructure associated with the Northern Adelaide Plains horticultural expansion north of the Gawler River to attract investment in the sector**
- 4. Infrastructure (gas and stormwater in particular) to Kingsford Industry Estate to facilitate further investment and jobs**
- 5. NorthEast Bypass of Gawler to facilitate population growth and consequent expansion of the town of Gawler and the passage of freight transport from Murraylands, Adelaide Hills and Barossa through the Southern Barossa to Sturt Highway and North South Corridor. Design could facilitate flood mitigation for Gawler, Plains and Two Wells area.**
- 6. Electrification of rail to Gawler to support the population growth, journey to work, and reduce pressure on arterial roads into Adelaide**
- 7. Great Wine Capitals Cycle Trail from McLaren Vale through the Hills, Barossa and up to Clare, eventually to Flinders Ranges creating a globally relevant tourism infrastructure product equivalent to the Camino de Santiago in Spain and France.**
- 8. International Equine Centre at Roseworthy to leverage Infrastructure at Roseworthy Campus, including Equine Health and Performance Centre, Equine surgeries and laboratory facilities. Opportunity for international events – including 2026 Commonwealth Games.**
- 9. Barossa Hospital – supports community health services and health tourism (international as well as domestic)in the region.**
- 10. Airstrip to support high yield international tourism – needs facilities in the region to safely store fixed wing aircraft – multiple options.**
- 11. Culinary Education Centre, for national and international students – ideally outreach facilitate that offers extension, gastronomy tourism, regional opportunity of Lot 14 establishment.**
- 12. Cultural and Creative Industries Precincts – creative industries and entertainment are fast growing industries with meaningful jobs, particularly for youth.**