



SEGRA 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

SEGRA Secretariat
GPO Box 2301, BRISBANE, Q 4001
Phone: (07) 3210 0021
Fax: (07) 3210 0044
Web: www.segra.com.au
Email: info@segra.com.au

Attention News Editors / Chief of Staff
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Creativity Key to Prosperous Regional Australia

Country, coastal and remote regions around Australia must be resilient, prosperous and vibrant, with communities people want to live in, if they want to survive.

This was the key message from the 14th national ***Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA)*** conference held in Townsville this week with regions talking about how to creatively forge communities that will prosper without relying on a single industry or variable.

"As we've seen in the Murray Darling region, an over-reliance on a single sector such as irrigated agriculture can be costly for the environment and the community," said Ms Kate Charters **SEGRA** convener.

"Migration trends are seeing skilled foreign workers increasingly opt to settle in regional Australia rather than capital cities, which will add to the cultural vibrancy of regions over time. There is also an increasing awareness of the role the Arts can play in making regional communities more amenable and more attractive, which is a critical factor."

There is a feeling that Canberra is listening to the regions.

"Minister Crean was very supportive of local decision-making, and as Minister for Regional Australia the delegates were very encouraged to hear him talk about the importance of local self-determination," said Ms Charters.

Minister Crean also talked about the opportunities the National Broadband Network will offer regional Australia, which could potentially open up business opportunities across a range of industries spanning fashion, education and manufacturing.

With the challenge thrown out to the conference, by Minister Crean, to be creative and to 'build up' from the local level, there has been an array of projects and ideas highlighted at the conference -:

- a new major transport hub for Townsville;
- a community owned water project on the Sunshine Coast;
- outback business networks across the desert areas of Australia;
- employment projects in Gippsland and Geelong regions in Victoria;
- emerging Indigenous business opportunities across Australia;
- social inclusion projects in Tasmania being linked into planning processes;
- Katanning in Western Australia and the challenges being overcome with a very diverse cultural background in its population;
- energy production by the Victor Harbour Council in South Australia;
- the use of Broadband to connect communities and to develop e-commerce, e-education and e-health;
- opportunities for regions with an explosion grey nomads travelling around Australia expected from 2011.

"This is only a snapshot of issues and projects being discussed", said Ms Charters.

“It’s fantastic to hear all these projects being worked on around the country and with rural, regional and remote Australia being discussed across all levels of government and communities. I can only see a bright future for regional Australia.”

“We need to encourage all communities across the country to create their futures and bring all the stakeholders together to do so, including government, business and the non-government sector”, Simon Boughey from the **SEGRA** National Steering Committee said.

“It’s not all about what funding might be out there to build projects. People need to talk and plan projects and look at the outcomes first, then tackle of how to fund them - and there are some great existing and new programs to tap into across the country from the new Federal funding and state based programs such as the Royalties for Regions program set up in Western Australia”, he said.

The conference continues in Townsville today with the final communiqué and recommendations to be presented to Minister Crean in Canberra at the end of November by the **SEGRA** National Steering committee.

It was also announced that the SEGRA conference in 2011 will be held in Geelong.

-ENDS-

SEGRA 2010 is proudly supported by the Townsville City Council; the Queensland Government; James Cook University; Regional Futures Institute, Southern Cross University; Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation; and Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government; James Cook University; Townsville Enterprise; Port of Townsville; Indigenous Business Australia and the Australian Rainforest Foundation, National Institute for Rural and Regional Australia and Remplan.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT KATE CHARTERS
ON 0408 882 871

ISSUED THURSDAY 21 OCTOBER 2010