



SEGRA 2008
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Speaking Up for Regional Australia

National Conference Communiqué
Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia
SEGRA 2008

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Speaking Up for Regional Australia

The **SEGRA** Communiqué includes key highlights from the most recent national **Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA)** conference. The Communiqué provides a means whereby matters raised at the conference may be communicated to decision makers in government, business, and communities of space and interest across the nation.

Using the material distilled from the three days of the **SEGRA** Conference and workshop highlights, the Communiqué helps to:

- **Focus** the issues and challenges that are being faced in regional Australia;
- **Communicate current considerations and views** of government, industry sectors, business and regional development practitioners;
- **Highlight the solutions** that have been found and the resolutions that are being sought; and
- **Initiate processes** that seek to influence the sustainable regional economic growth agenda in Australia.

The **SEGRA** 2008 Conference Theme

The **SEGRA** 2008 Conference Theme: “*Creative Solutions: expect them to be different*”, explored the need to recognise that in the face of challenge:

- the obvious may not be the best;
- the familiar may not be the most effective; and
- more of the same may miss exciting opportunities.

The conference highlighted:

- The importance of individuals’ capacity to **organise knowledge differently** and for organisations to have the capacity to absorb the information and processes required to facilitate this more fluid and ambiguous (but still deliberate) process;
- The need to create **different operational and organisational strategies** to support building new and different relationships across all sectoral interests;
- **Organisational flexibility and courage** were required along with the establishment of **achievable goals**;
- **The ability to manage and engage** the **different capacities of parties** to contribute across the duration of a project;
- A **willingness to share** ideas and learn from others.

The full **SEGRA** conference program can be accessed at www.segra.com.au/segra.

The **SEGRA** Mission

The **Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia, SEGRA**, conference was established in 1997 in response to growing concern about the absence of a single forum in which practitioners, business, government and researchers with a deep commitment to regional Australia could discuss issues and advance options and solutions. **SEGRA** is now an annual event drawing over 300 delegates from across Australia with a reputation as Australia's most credible and influential voice on issues affecting regional Australia.

SEGRA is committed to providing challenging, thought provoking keynote addresses by Australia's leading social, political, economic and environmental thinkers; exemplars of some of Australia's outstanding regional development success stories; and providing a mechanism from drawing together and advancing knowledge and issues. Its focus is on practical and applied presentations.

A hallmark of **SEGRA** is the commitment and passion of individuals to regional Australia. The **SEGRA** Secretariat is committed to profiling a different regional location each year to capture local flavour and enable greater participation from specific regions. In 2008 **SEGRA** was hosted by Albury, NSW.

SEGRA 2008 was the twelfth annual conference. The event extended over three days with more than 80 speakers. A record number of delegates attended encompassing all levels of government, business, academia, regional bodies and community organisations from all states and territories. For more information about **SEGRA** see Appendix 1.

SEGRA 2009
will be conducted in
The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder
27-29 October 2009.

Themes Identified and Discussed at the *SEGRA* 2008 Conference

- 1. Cooperative Federalism**
- 2. Economic Trends**
- 3. Infrastructure**
- 4. Environmental Sustainability**
 - Climate Change
 - Water Scarcity and Food Security
 - Commercial Prospects of Green Technology
- 5. Relations between Cities and their Regions**
 - Population Movement and Workforce Needs
 - Urban and Regional Divide
 - Regional Amenity
- 6. Remote and Inland Australia**
 - Governance
 - Indigenous Business
- 7. Professional Development**

1. Cooperative Federalism

The growing consensus that economic, environmental and social changes require a strengthening of regional governance capacity is a recurrent theme for delegates at **SEGRA**. Delegates believe the notion of 'joined up' government, or cooperative federalism needs to be developed more strongly and be much more evident at a regional level. Conference delegates were strongly of the view that all levels of government must work together to deliver integrated infrastructure and services. Regional managers' forums, involving multiple agencies and government levels, were endorsed as important mechanisms for enhancing coordination. The likely directions, structure and functions of Regional Development Australia was discussed with interest and passion.

Key points included:

- Practitioners engaged in regional development are frequently frustrated by the lack of links between spatial relationships and institutional arrangements leading to overlapping and duplication of programs, legislative bases and decision making. There is a general impatience with what is perceived as 'buck-passing' between jurisdictions. The expectation amongst delegates is that the Federal and State Governments can and will cooperate to deliver integrated services and projects to regions. To this end there was a renewed interest in changed regional organisational structures and a statutory basis for regionalisation.
- Delegates were very interested in the proposition that major change in Federal-State relations to the benefit of regions is still possible and that innovation in voluntary arrangements and service provision and management need not wait on constitutional change.
- Assoc Prof Ian Gray, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University presented his current research findings regarding *'People's perceptions of governance and the implications for Regional Australia'*. His paper concludes that "Very many Australians see an imbalance in effectiveness among our levels of government, with the federal level being the only one to be consistently perceived positively. A substantial proportion of Australians, around one-third of those sampled, have indicated an interest in fundamental change to our Federal system. There is no clear direction as to what such change might entail, except that a regionalised form of governance would gain significant popular support. While certainly not enough to carry a referendum were one ever to occur, there is a strong suggestion that regional governance should be on the agenda for public debate."

- Further results from Assoc Prof Gray's study included: "A substantial proportion of Australians, over half the population as estimated by sample survey findings, perceive themselves as living in a region. Among those people, a sense of belonging to a region is just as strong as their sense of belonging to locality. A similar proportion would apparently consider the creation of a regional level of government, without necessarily eliminating either the state or local level, though there is some support for reducing government to two levels. It can be concluded that the federation issue has currency and it may be driven in part by regionalism."

Assoc Prof Gray's paper is available on the **SEGRA** website at www.segra.com.au/segra and conference proceedings CD Rom.

Future policy action:

1. Greater on-the-ground implantation of regional economic development policies. This includes increased inter-regional cooperation because of the need for regional entities to manage across boundaries.
2. Structural devolution of resources – it was suggested that 12% would be a reasonable target.
3. Develop tools to better measure and understand regional spatial relationships.
4. A proposal to have designated regional governance with the auditing and reporting of the performances of agencies, both State and Federal, on a region-by-region basis this may include a national statutory framework for regional coordination.
5. Mechanisms to deliver planning and community engagement, coordination and capacity building within regions.

2. Economic Trends

It should be noted that the conference was held prior to the recent concern about the international economy and so the focus of economic discussions was on how regions could engage with global markets rather than weathering an economic downturn.

Key points included:

- The continuing reality of globalisation was discussed in terms of the need for regions to be linked to global markets giving particular consideration to the questions of who we do business with and a range of issues associated with investment attraction. In particular discussion focused on the importance of cooperation across organisations and jurisdictions to provide a seamless experience to investors.
- The continuing overseas demand for minerals and agricultural products remained on the agenda. While currently the resource boom may be good for many remote and rural regions, where such industries dominate, there was concern about how these industries contributed to their immediate local area and the preparedness of some regions for managing a post – mining economy. A paper by Prof Bob Miles, Executive Director, Institute for Sustainable Regional Development, CQUniversity, *'Responding to the Challenges of Regional Development: Clermont's preferred future and community development strategy'* is available on the **SEGRA** website www.segra.com.au/segra and conference proceedings CD Rom.
- There was also some discussion regarding the over-reliance on land and asset price booms and consumer demand as the prime driver of economic development for some regions (e.g. sea change areas) without underpinning this by other industry development.

Future policy action:

1. Enhance regional economic planning and assessment. Regions need improved economic planning and assessment arrangements in order to set clearer goals and to retain and attract investment that maximises returns. Devolution of decision making to the regions and reducing 'metro-centricity' is an important step in the direction of enhanced regional economic planning. This needs to be coupled with regional development mechanisms that have a degree of permanence as illustrated by Regional Development Commissions in Western Australia that have been established by a statute that emphasises an economic imperative.

2. Refocus on the economic basics. For example, regional economic policy players need to remember that: cost + investment + government inputs + exports – imports = gross domestic product [ie wealth]. When refocusing it is important to consider two things. First, that economic growth is not just a function of population and consumer demand. Second, that Australia in general, and regions in particular, have clearly identified products to sell (ie have to give emphasis to export based activities that are wealth generating rather than wealth consumption).

3. Infrastructure

Economic and social infrastructures were noticeably back on the agenda in 2008.

Key points included:

- Delegates positively endorsed the fact that governments are starting to address the issue of infrastructure and the evidence of increasing expenditure. There was strongly expressed hope that regional infrastructure would benefit from the increasing expenditure and in particular it was hoped that all projects would be prioritised to get the best outcomes for the regions. This included major port, road and rail transport as well as water, energy and fast accessible broadband networks. This is an area where delegates held high expectations of intergovernmental cooperation. (Access to social infrastructure such as health and education are discussed under Urban and Regional Divide).
- There was particular interest in the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund model used by Regional Development Victoria. Key features of this fund included: flexibility, the use of trust fund rather than funding rounds; responsiveness; transparent and robust administration including administratively embedded rolling evaluation program, auditor general reviews and whole of government input; and skilled (technically expert) project members with significant time/expertise invested at front end of projects. A presentation by Lea Corbett, Executive Director Infrastructure, Regional Development Victoria is available on the conference proceedings.
- There was some discussion that from experience public private partnerships were not always possible or appropriate for many regional areas. This combined with discussion regarding alternative funding models. Bob Shead, Partner, BDO Kendalls presented on the alliance model of infrastructure contracting and outlined the circumstances in which alliancing was appropriate, compared with traditional fixed price contracting and PPPs – notably when there is significant scope for innovation, when risk is difficult to cost up-front, an when the client is comfortable with a consensus 'best for project' approach to decision making. Bob's presentation is available on the conference proceedings.

- The location and financing of intermodal hubs and inland freight ports were of high interest to delegates. Likewise there was still strong support for working to improve the rail system and delegates were particularly interested in alternative rail transport technology.
- The impact of rising energy costs and supplies on population movement and infrastructure received some attention. For example rural-urban commuting may be less viable and limit the attraction of some near-urban regions for the development of satellite towns. (Will people still commute 200 kilometres a day if the price of oil doubles in the next decade?) Tourism, both domestic and international is already feeling the impacts of increases in the cost of energy.
- The establishment of Infrastructure Australia and the outcomes of the current review attracted considerable anticipated interest. There is strong support for improved cross-jurisdictional relationships to ensure appropriate coordinated, transparent policy, regulatory and governance decisions regarding investment in infrastructure across Australia.

Future policy action:

1. To ensure that infrastructure priorities focused on all aspects of sustainable development so that social inclusion, access to public services and addressing rural-urban disparities were priorities as well as productivity, investment, job creation and export opportunities.
2. That prioritisation of infrastructure projects and methodologies for assessing cost/benefit ratios and risks include a regional context.
3. To ensure an independent mechanism for effective strategic planning, audit and review processes with a national oversight.
4. An expansion of the use of market based mechanisms to address infrastructure including a range of funding options – trusts, public expenditure, public and private sector partnerships, alliances.
5. Further initiatives to be developed around business retention and attraction and the provision of physical and virtual infrastructure for business.

4. Environmental Sustainability

- Climate Change
- Water Scarcity and Food Security
- Commercial Prospects of Green Technology

- **Climate Change**

Environmental concerns and sustainability are always an important focus of **SEGRA**. They have received renewed emphasis given the current water crisis and the implications of climatic variability and climate change on regional economies and lifestyles. The implications of global warming means that climate change and the suite of associated environmental changes will have increasing prominence in relation to economic growth and the costs of adaptation in regional Australia.

This year the discussion has moved from considering the possibility of climate change to a stronger focus on the range of tools and methods for adapting to and managing the impacts. It was noted that this is an issue that cuts across all areas of regional development.

There were key presentations from the Murray Darling Basin Commission on the issues they are managing and the responses they are initiating as well as a full day workshop conducted by Assoc Prof Peter Waterman, Faculty of Science, Health and Education, The University of the Sunshine Coast, Prof Bob Miles, Executive Director, Institute for Sustainable Regional Development, CQUniversity and Prof Richard Warrick, CLIMsystems Pty Ltd.

Key points included:

- There was considerable discussion around an appreciation of the need to understand the science and terminology of climate change. Discussion also looked at the implications of sensationalism on the issues of climate change and the need to maintain a scientific focus to discussion. Included in the discussion was the need to maintain issue awareness and avoid cynicisms and issue fatigue. It was also acknowledged that climate science, risk and vulnerability assessment, and adaptation processes and procedures are not exact.
- There was concern expressed about the importance of not just issue awareness but the need to provide a sense that a range of active responses are available. The emphasis needs to shift to adaptation including

risk/vulnerability identification and reduction. In particular delegates were interested in green house gas mitigations and carbon emissions trading.

- There was concern around the deemed rate of government planning approvals being made without any assessment of the implications of climate change at the regional and local scales. It was felt that overall limited consideration is given in development approval processes to climate induced risks or the sustainability issues relating to climate variability and extreme weather events. This includes risk from fire in extremely dry seasons or risk from flood. Concern was expressed that new infrastructure e.g. ports needed to give more adequate consideration to proactive planning for climate change.
- There was also discussion regarding what might be the appropriate responses at a governance level including a sense that there was considerable legal risk associated with climate change actions and decision makers at the planning level and that public sentiment could get ahead of the governance mechanisms distorting the delivery of planning based responses to perceived risks.
- Delegates discussed the need for highly localised, community driven responses as an over-reliance on institutional frameworks for action to adapt to climatic induced changes lead to a tendency to be reactionary rather than proactive.

Future policy action:

1. There needs to be wide access to tools and techniques for integrated assessment and management of the impacts of climate change. This needs to include initiating demonstrations and undertaking case studies at national, state/territory, regional, local community and site specific scale.
2. There needs to be better selection of regional indicators for triple bottom line and other spatial and temporal assessment of the effects of biophysical and socio-economic change. This entails more effective measurement of trends in environmental change.
3. Ensure more effective economic tools for environmental management including a greater use of market based tools for improving environmental management.
4. Mitigation and adaptation should work concurrently and co-operatively not against each other. Currently there is an institutional tendency to separate them. This is an issue that needs to be taken up at the local level by both public and private sector interests.

5. There needs to be a strengthening of the essential links between perspectives, policy, tools and techniques for reducing risks and impacts.
6. Capacity building across governments, business and industry and regional communities to adapt to climate and relate environmental changes is critical. This needs to recognise the multiple different ways to respond to climate risk and vulnerability and let communities choose the right mode of adaptation. There is no 'golden bullet' solution in seeking adaptive responses. Geography, governance and community will be key factors dictating responses.
7. Some impacts should be dealt with on a reactionary basis and some proactively. There is a need for firm responses to readily identified vulnerabilities on a case by case basis whilst at the same time moving to anticipate emerging areas of issue.
8. Currently there is considerable inconsistency in planning schemes across Local Government jurisdictions. This is a combination of the location of the LGA's and the planning regimes of the states. Consistency across LGAs needs backing by the State and the Territory governments.
9. In order to support changes to the planning regimes there is an immediate need to improve regional and local scale climate scenarios and projections.
10. Partnerships are needed between climate scientists and the communities of space and interest. Mainstreaming adaptation approaches and solutions needs to reflect regional and local environmental conditions by recognising 'one size fits all' planning is not the way forward.
11. Partnerships between agencies are needed to avoid duplication and to strengthen action. As an integral part of the partnership process there is a need to develop open communication between national-state-regional-local institutions and agencies.
12. The need to broker regional and economic interests with environmental concerns continues to be a major issue in relation to resource development projects. New intergovernmental and community consultative mechanisms are needed to facilitate agreement rather than conflict.
13. Adopt broader frameworks for making decisions about changing landscapes and resolving land use issues. Again, this would seek to mainstream the consideration of a broad spectrum of biophysical and socio-economic considerations into strategic level environmental assessment for development projects. It would also entail enhancing the range of environmental factors to be considered through land use planning instruments.

- **Water Scarcity and Food Security**

Water and more particularly water scarcity, was one of the major issues of the conference. This issue was brought into sharp focus in part because the conference was conducted in an area in which water allocations for irrigation had been severely reduced over the past few years. There is concern about the reduction in farm output and also about the impacts on rural towns and regional centres. Water resources are now a priority national issue and one that has long confronted regional Australia.

Key points included:

- There was a degree of concern expressed about the increasing competition between urban versus regional areas and residential versus industry use and an anticipation that the potential for conflict was going to become more intense. It was seen that regional areas highly dependent on irrigation were going to become more vulnerable.
- There was also an emerging interest in the issue of ‘food security’. While some delegates were sceptical about claims of impending food shortages, many delegates wanted to pursue the likely impacts on agricultural commodity prices.
- There was also some discussion about the likely impact of increasing fuel prices on the demand for locally grown produce on the part of consumers and a shift to localised food productions as complex supply chains and logistics as used by major food retailers may become unsustainable in the future.

Future policy action:

1. Responses to the water crisis by way of desalination, water recycling, and pricing need to be considered in spatially identified regional contexts.
2. There is a need for further research and discussion on the issues related to ‘food security’.
3. Need to look at a broader range of ways to adapting yesterday’s irrigation systems to tomorrow’s needs to include buy back and other strategies e.g. cropping that can be conducted by supplementing rainfall with small amount of irrigation and water harvesting.
4. Facilitate increased productivity from agriculture using science- and technology-based solutions.
5. To provide greater incentives to upgrade rain fed agriculture and the water management in rain fed areas for example soil – water management

- **Commercial aspects of Green Technology**

There was a noticeable increase in interest of the commercial prospects of green technology. There were some optimism regarding the opportunities to be at the vanguard of new green technology and the marketability of environmentally sustainable practices. **SEGRA** has long given voice to the belief that economic growth and prosperity must include a paradigm of environmental sustainability.

Key points included:

- There was considerable animated discussion regarding the understanding of carbon trading and the risks and opportunities for regional Australia.
- Andrew McEwen, Economic Development Manager, Townsville City Council presented on Carbon Trading Cluster and Sustainable Farming: Townsville carbon trading exchange (recently renamed Prime Carbon – www.primecarbon.com.au) noted:
 - Voluntary carbon trading globally was \$63B (2007)
 - Voluntary carbon trading globally is estimated to be valued at \$95B for 2008
 - It is growing rapidly in excess of 50% p.a.
 - Global emissions trading and decarbonisation will be a trillion dollar industry when a global emissions trading scheme is introduced
 - The value of carbon credit exports could be in excess of \$70B annually for Australia based on carbon soil sequestration.

Further details about the TCx (the operational entity of the Carbon Townsville Cluster) as an aggregator of Carbon Credit Units with the National Stock Exchange of Australia (NSX) are included in the **SEGRA** CD rom conference proceedings.

- There were several presentations on nature-based tourism, green branding in marketing of products and regions more generally, and eco-tourism possibilities.
- There was also an extended interest this year in environmentally sensitive development with a number of national and international businesses presenting their companies ongoing commitment to and strategies for using recycled products as a primary source of materials (GeoFabrics Australasia PTY LTD), environmentally sensitive and appropriate development and design of infrastructure (Woodhead) and sound water management (Norske Skog).

- There was a lot of interest in how current climate change policy can create new value add for rural investment and the capacity of environmentally sustainable practices to increase profitability.

Future policy action:

1. The need for more research and development into the possibilities of commercial 'green' sustainable technology.
2. Further action is required to support the development of sustainable farming and carbon soil sequestration networked industry clusters.
3. Support for community based sustainability focused groups through funding grants.
4. Employ advanced IT to streamline measurement and enforcement of offsets, financial flows, and carbon credits for investors.
5. Enhance global financial facilities and governance to increase and manage funding flows for both mitigation and adaptation.

5. Relations between Cities and their regions

- Population Movement and Workforce Needs
- Urban and Regional Divide
- Regional Amenity

- **Population Movement and Workforce Needs**

While there was somewhat less of a focus on the 'seachange' demographic shifts, this now being a widely understood phenomenon, there was still considerable interest in discussing the impacts of population movements.

Key points included:

- The tree change, sea change phenomenon creates new challenges for local governments and conservation bodies in reconciling competing regional lifestyles. This was especially so where the production activities of some citizens are seen to reduce amenity for others – “the right to farm, lifestyles, gourmet getaways, landed gentry, serial complainants”.
- A workforce shortage in regional Australia in terms of attraction and recruitment of the necessary skill sets as well as retention and this was again a major issue for conference delegates. The generally strong economy (at the time), high wages in the mining industry and the pull of metropolitan living for your people were seen as contributing to major workforce deficits and higher costs of production there was increasing recognition of the competition for labor at an international level,
- There was discussion on how to mobilise older workers, especially in sea change and tree change regions. The ageing of Australia’s population was discussed in terms of the direct impact on metropolitan, rural and remote regions. It was also noted that those who are retiring or relocating to coastal regions are contributing to upward pressures on property prices.
- Another age related issue was mobilising productive ageing as enterprising social capital. Many of those over 55 years have considerable wealth, are generally in good health and represent an untapped source of human capital. Experience has shown that many may wish to return to the workforce in a range of different ways and present an opportunity for new enterprise activities built on existing and new skills. There is some new, emerging research regarding the potential to attract ‘grey nomads’ into the workforce. This may require reworking of traditional human resource management models to deal with the increasing reality of a mobile/transient regional workforce.
- A recurring issue related to population and the ageing of the population is the general movement of young people to metropolitan areas. This ‘hollowing out’ of the 14-25 age group occurs in inland and coastal regions as well as provincial cities. Some delegates were interested in ways to stem the flow of younger people through providing leisure services and opportunities. Other delegates proposed that it might be better to concentrate on getting skilled, working-age people back to the regions after they have lived in a metropolitan area for a period of time.
- There was strong support for the need for people to have post-secondary educational opportunities in regional areas. There was seen to be a need to promote and facilitate more opportunities for engaging and leveraging existing business, educational institutions and organisations to work in partnerships to

provide tertiary qualifications that translated into direct, relevant employment within the region in which the institutions were located. Joy Stocker, Director Educational Planning and Development, TAFENSW Riverina Institute presented the results of a partnership program between the community (including business) Charles Sturt University and TAFENSW Riverina Institute to provide an integrated program they enable students to study locally, obtain employment and contribute to the social and economic and sustainable prosperity of their regions.

Possible Policy Actions

1. Increase rural workers and particularly farmers, access to skills development in business strategies to support developing value adding and diversifications options. (Rose Wright, Manager, Regional Industry and Destination Development, Tourism Australia addressed this in her presentation including information about the expertise Tourism Australia has had in this area.)
2. Offer a broader range of policy implementation tools to assist access to capital in regional areas through for example HECS model applications to regional businesses.
3. Develop a more proactive approach to socio-economic analysis. For example, greater use of improved planning instruments and approaches that give mainstream consideration of demographic trends when evaluating settlement patterns and dwelling densities.

- **Urban and Regional Divide**

While there has been a general acceptance of the need for regions to be nationally and globally integrated, there is resurgent concern about the potential for a widening rural-urban divide. Incomes are generally lower in regional areas and in some cases infrastructure is insufficient for social and economic outcomes in the inland. There was also concern among delegates that increasing competitive pressure in a widening range of industries has lead to unintended negative consequences as regions and industries compete internally and externally.

Key points included:

- This year **SEGRA** saw evidence of a renewed focus on knowing the key regional strengths and associated industry strengths. Queensland's regional economic development strategy, Centres of Enterprise, as presented by Helen

Polzin, Project Manager, Regional Development Strategies, Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, discussed in some details the approach Queensland Government has taken that drew on regional strengths, collaboration and regional leadership at an integrated state based level that identified and targeted key priority sectors and specific regional strengths and opportunities. The strategy worked actively to promote leadership and capacity, business economic development and entrepreneurship and draw on existing relationships and knowledge.

- Daryl Warren, Business and Tourism Officer, Hobsons Bay Council and Cr Reid Mather, Mayor, Buloke Shire Council presented a 'friendship alliance' between their two councils designed to increase understanding and support between regions and cities.
- The importance of community ownership, empowerment and self-reliance were continually 'identified' as key ingredients to effective economic development. There is a clear link between pride in what a community has to offer and business investment and growth. The need to have constant communication within and across agencies was a recurrent theme.
- IT access was seen as critical to creating new opportunities in terms of linkages to for example GIS mapping and property systems for items such as development assessment guides. Grant Meredith, Senior Development Assessment Officer, Shellharbour City Council presented an On-line Application Service and Intel System that attracted a lot of favourable interest for providing a flexible, transparent and adaptive system to fully integrate an online portal for more than 15 council services.

Key policy actions:

1. Elevate the regions role to a state level strategically.
2. Expand the concept of sister cities to embrace and foster stronger urban-regional ties.
3. Greater recognition and resources to support local communities and embed the link in the administrative culture of regional areas.
4. Greater appreciation of the growth of entrepreneurship and capacity of regional organisations and institutional arrangements to capture this creative potential.
5. Expanding access to the use of smart IT for council operations.

- **Regional Amenity**

Community and regional amenity and services were seen as very important regional attractants.

Key points included:

- Critical factors in establishing regional amenity and ensuring liveability value adds to the competitive advantage including secondary job opportunities, career development, work conditions, perceptions, life cycle stage, education and training, place identity and social networks, infrastructure, housing and health provision. Kerry Grigg, and Debra Da Silva, School of Business and Information Technology Charles Sturt University presented their current research on impacts on the decision to relocate.
- A parallel trend to globalisation was an increasing tendency to localisation, whereby people look for the connections to the familiar and develop stronger regional alliances. Pride in community was a significant feature in towns that were doing well – this was reflected in streetscapes, signage, park maintenance and the like.

Future policy action:

1. State governments give consideration to the establishment or enhancement of growth coordination/management agency;
2. Provision of decentralised and additional funding to regions to allow more responsive actions to meet emerging demands. This includes strategies to allow regional transitions to occur.
3. Developing a more strategic approach to support stronger regional centres. This includes developing decentralised workplaces for e-commuting as well as reviving declining rural towns with retrofitting of decentralised water and energy services.
4. Review carrying capacity of specific biospheres. This may entail consideration of population caps for some fast growing regions (e.g. Noosa Shire in Queensland). Such mechanism may be needed to maintain the quality of life and the urban and peri-urban amenity that attracted people to an area. That is, don't slay the goose that laid the golden egg.

5. Providing assistance incentives to encourage the diversification of regional economies so that there is less reliance on population growth and the construction industry as primary main economic drivers. Diversification is essential for sustaining regional and local economies and assists in addressing the regional skills shortage.

6. Remote and Inland Australia

- Governance
- Indigenous Business

- **Governance**

The Honorable Fred Chaney AO, highlighted the problems of governance for remote, inland Australia, which he equated to a failed state. He and other presenters did highlight some positive developments in remote areas, but it was argued that there was a need for high level cooperation to improve social and economic outcomes in the inland.

Key points included:

- 80% of Australia has less than 5% of the population and which is largely governed by remote control from Canberra and the State and Territory capitals.
- 70% of Australia is desert and has 2.5% of the population.
- The population in regional, remote Australia is sparse patchy and mobile.
- There is a high concentration of Aboriginal communities.
- There is an urgent need to re-examine how financial, policy, and administrative arrangements, work in areas remote from the political and administrative centres in terms of national security, environmental management and social justice.

- **Indigenous Business**

Indigenous enterprise issues, once an area of limited interest, has gained increasing prominence at **SEGRA** and needs to be seen in the context of a major emerging driver of regional economic development in rural and remote Australia

Key points included:

- Effective management of the wealth generated by and the need to ensure the whole community benefits.
- Delegates heard from Mike Crowe, Networking and communications Manger, Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) about a range of initiatives from DKA including their initiatives to advance and promote indigenous education and employment.

Future policy action:

1. Promote greater indigenous enterprise development. This has been shown to be a most effective mechanism in rural and remote regions and can be linked to skills enhancement programs that help to reduce reliance on fly-in-fly-out workforces. By developing and enhancing the indigenous labour force through new enterprises it will be possible to make communities more self sustaining. (e.g. land management and security, climate change, ecotourism, pastorlism and resource development)
2. Adopting a broader perspective on the basis for recognising native title and providing for a wider range of economically usable outcomes.
3. Greater emphasis on providing the means of securing substantial public and private investment in essential service s infrastructure and local economic development.
4. To not just create employment opportunities with a community but to ensure the disadvantaged individuals are encouraged to apply for positions, become hired, remain in paid work and achieve high level personal satisfaction.
5. Open up opportunities for volunteerism that may lead to employment.
6. To open up opportunities for private contractors to keep work aside solely for local employees.

7. Foster education – business partnerships for example school students sign onto contracts with business who can give them the offer of a job or vocational placement. Develop strategies and protocols that increase business capacity to see re integration of socially disadvantaged groups as a longer term staged activity.
8. To integrate whole families in schooling.
9. To ensure employment longevity of people who have re integrated through personal development programs erg in self confidence and social participation.

7. Professional Development

Key points included:

- There was strong support for moves to provide professional development opportunities for economic development practitioners.
- Delegates raised the need for mechanisms to recognise existing knowledge and work-based learning as well as recognise that economic development is a cross disciplinary activity.

Future policy action:

1. To expand the practice of using multi disciplinary teams to facilitate adaptive decisions making, social learning and participatory research initiatives at the regional scale.
2. To continue to work develop strategies and protocols to integrate research activities and practice.

***SEGRA 2009 – The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, WA
27 -29 October***

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is the hub of the Western Australian Goldfields region. Located approximately 600 km west of Perth, Kalgoorlie-Boulder has a population of over 30000 people. The city is a dynamic and sophisticated regional centre, rich in culture and history, with a cosmopolitan lifestyle and modern facilities and services. The city has remained resilient through many ‘boom and bust’ periods, synonymous with the mining industry, demonstrating that this historic gold rush town has grown to be a sustainable regional city of the future.

Mining is the main industry as well as the largest industry for employment on the gold fields. It is estimated that the Western Australian mining industry is worth more than \$30 billion to the State and the Eastern Goldfields is a major contributor to this wealth. The Gross Regional Product of the region in 2004/05 was put at \$5.38 billion. Major players include Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines and Placer Dome Asia Pacific. Manufacturing, driven by the mineral processing generates income estimates at \$968.7 m, followed by commercial centres with a retail turnover in 2004/05 estimated at \$518.9 m. There is a well established agricultural sector in the south of the region. The value of agricultural production in 2003/04 was \$466.5 million, consisting principally of cereals, wool and livestock disposals.

Kalgoorlie-Boulder has a history as a wild, west pioneering, gold-mining town, which continues to resonate today in the heritage buildings, the wide streets, the prevalence of the gold and nickel mining industries and a community made up of people from many cultures all over the world. The city features some of the finest examples of heritage mining town architecture in the world including the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Town Halls. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder also has an active arts culture that has continually grown during its 110 year mining history.

There are first class amenities and facilities located within the city including extensive retail opportunities, quality education facilities, a progressive cultural lifestyle and an abundance of parks and leisure facilities. Kalgoorlie-Boulder is well serviced with 31 flights coming into and departing the city weekly as well as the legendary Indian Pacific from Sydney to Kalgoorlie. Direct flights to Kalgoorlie depart from Perth daily and Melbourne 3 times per week.

Appendix

The *SEGRA* conference provides a unique opportunity for all sections of the Australian community, rural and urban, to explore the key issues affecting regional, rural and remote Australia and be part of providing positive sustainable outcomes to ensure future growth and development.

The *SEGRA* conference comprises of a range of:

- Keynote addresses and speakers
- Plenary and concurrent sessions
- Applied workshops
- Relevant field trips
- Policy development opportunities
- Roundtable discussions

Program development and speaker selection strategies are based on policy development models and draw on a policy community approach to ensure balanced representation from elected officials, government appointees, research institutions, private enterprise and regional economic development practitioners. The broad cross section of participants ensures depth in experience, knowledge and range of issues canvassed. It ensures discussion is evidence based, critically analysed and firmly grounded in practice. Over the duration of *SEGRA* we have repeatedly received feedback that ‘ideas’ germinated at *SEGRA* are subsequently applied in their own regions. Recent examples are the translation of the climate adaptation models; scenario building strategies and the council - community data base interface directly back to regions.

Up to **date research and policy propositions** are provided by as many as 30 national research leaders across a range of core subject matters including Governance; Climate Change; Demography and the Economy. More than 30 senior government representatives and highly experienced regional practitioners round out the program with **practical exemplars** of their own or organisation’s initiatives during the concurrent sessions.

A key opportunity afforded by *SEGRA* is to hear first hand success stories from regions.

SEGRA is committed to establishing an environment that engenders genuine opportunities for the development of a policy community where networking, information exchange, policy solutions and aspirations can be discussed and debated.



SEGRA 2008 Program Themes and Action Agendas

Action Agendas for *SEGRA 2008*:

- Regional Australia and the National Agenda
- Delivering Sustainable Economic Development
- Tools and Models for Regional Development
- Successful Case Studies – the different and unexpected
- Adaptation and mitigation of Climate Change
- Identifying the latest trends impacting regional Australia
- Review government, community, practitioner and commercial responses and experiences
- Showcasing innovative policy responses, actions and decision making techniques
- Outlining scenarios for regional futures
- Demonstrating a range of successful projects from regional Australia, and
- Identifying key actions within high performing organisations.

Plenary Sessions at the conference were conducted around the themes:

- Regional Australia and the National Agenda
- Strategies for Success
- Staking Out the Regional Agenda

Concurrent Sessions focused on:

- *Key Issues on the Regional Agenda* including Sustainability and Climate Change; The Role of Cities in their Regions; Recruitment and Retention of Regional Skills Capacity; Regional Tourism; and Regional Development in Action.
- *Responding to the Challenges and Opportunities* including Education and Training in Regional Australia; Models for Regional Australia; Regional Development Strategies (2 concurrent sessions) and Regional Development in Action.

Facilitated Study Tours

SEGRA is conducted in a different region each year to allow delegates the opportunity to observe at close quarters the practical application of regional economic development in different parts of regional Australia. The inclusion of **study tours** led by senior regional economic development practitioners from the Host Regions enable a highly focused professional development stream as part of the conference program. Study tour delegates have first hand exposure to current regional economic development strategies in the host region and a highly valued opportunity to talk directly with policy initiators, strategists and implementers across a range of specific economic strategies, policies and programs. The strong participation of the private sector in this initiative adds considerably to the benefit of the study tours. The provision of extensive written materials to support the learning objectives ensure add on take home value.

Practitioner workshops

SEGRA has a long standing reputation for its skills based, best practice professional development with workshop programs that are academically sound, engage participants and encourages improved performance. They are conceptually rigorous but focused on practitioners and workshop place contexts and tasks. Facilitators or specialists with combined academic knowledge and strong practitioner experience and workshops are supported with resource materials, case studies and hands on group work.

Workshops conducted at **SEGRA** 2008:

- Understanding Regional Economic Development
- Economic Development through Community Invigoration
- Scenario Planning
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Forums and Panels

SEGRA prides itself on the range and depth of its speaker program but also recognises that there needs to be time to digest and integrate information. This is achieved through the provision of networking opportunities and inclusion in the program for a series of structured panels and forums.

The panels are held in theatre style and are included at the end of each of the morning plenary sessions to allow exchange of ideas, challenges and clarifications between keynote presenters. The forums are held each afternoon between



afternoon tea and happy hour and delegates are able to sit in rounds creating a more collegiate atmosphere. Members of these panels are high level representatives from each of the policy community streams. The discussion is more of an 'integrative' brief and participants draw on their policy and administrative expertise as well as content knowledge. These latter forums are particularly well received in that they provide an opportunity to extend the range of participants and also provide an applied focus.

Conference Communiqué and Conference Proceedings

The Conference communiqué and conference proceedings provide a means to integrate and reflect on the outcomes of the conference and also inform the direction of the next planning committee.

The conference proceedings are produced on a CD-rom and are distributed to all delegates and sponsors after the conference. Where requested papers were blind peer refereed. This year all refereed papers were freely available on the web at www.segra.com.au/segra.

Feedback from *SEGRA* 2008 Delegates

- Thank you for a wonderful conference, it was really great – *State Government, Queensland*
- Congratulations on a great conference – one of the best yet – *Chair, ACC*
- Best feature of the conference was networking with people across the nation
- Got me thinking beyond my own scope and that enthuses me. Ideas were translated directly. Networking. Economic Development brain in top gear - *Economic Development Officer*
- I attended the **SEGRA** Conference in Albury and enjoyed it very much – *Senior Policy Officer*
- Thank you for a very good conference. Extremely well organised. The panel on Monday worked better than Tuesday's - new people were given the opportunity to speak – *Project Manager*
- Congratulations on a successful conference. Thank you to the administration staff for their great job – *Managing Director*
- Thank you for a very well organised **SEGRA** Conference at Albury. I really enjoyed my time at the conference. Keep up the great work in trying to revitalise regional Australia, its great – *Economic Development Officer*.



SEGRA 2008

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Table 1
Speakers Representation by Organisational Groups

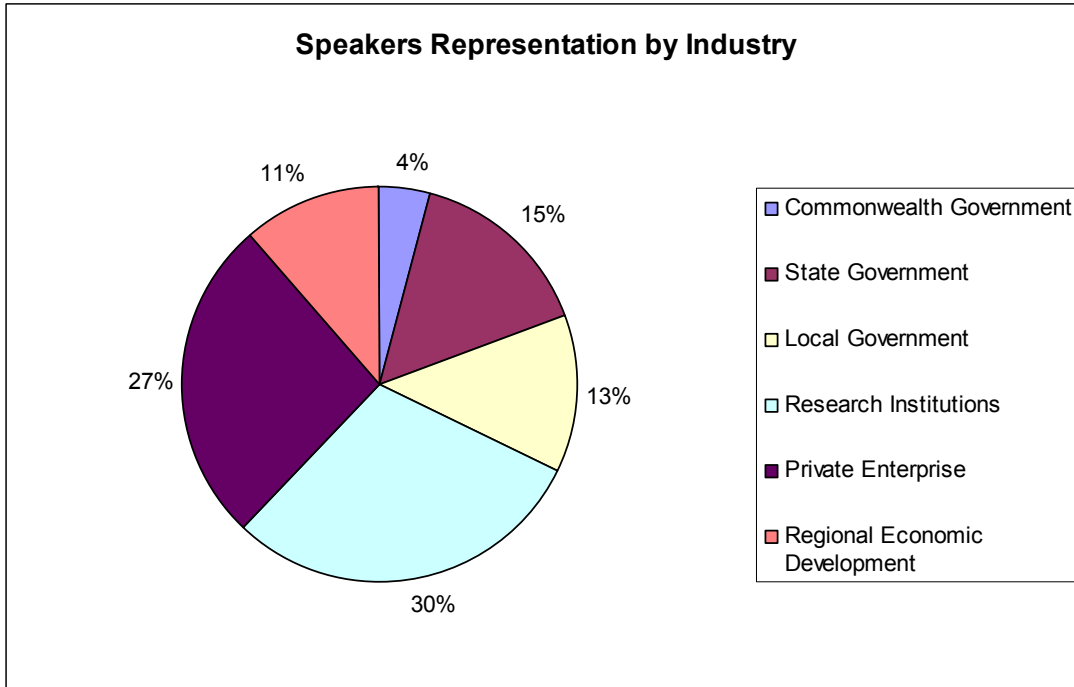
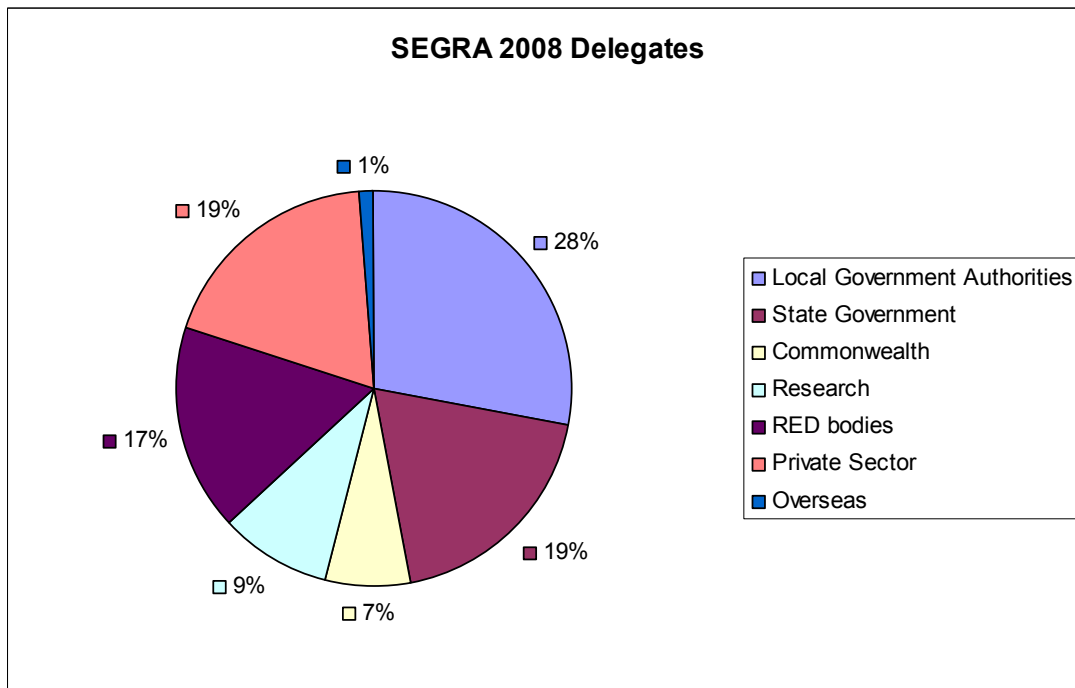


Table 2
Delegates' Representation by Organisational Groups





Expressions of Interest in *SEGRA* 2009 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, WA 27-29 October 2009

The *SEGRA* Planning Committee is accepting offered papers for *SEGRA* 2009 being conducted in Kalgoorlie - Boulder, WA on 27-29 October.

Themes are still under consideration

Current topics include:

- Regional Australia and the national agenda
- Sustainable economic development
- Tools and models for regional development
- Climate change
- Latest trends impacting regional Australia
- Government, community, practitioner and commercial responses and experiences
- Innovative policy responses, actions and decision making techniques
- Successful projects from regional Australia
- Key actions in high performing organisations
- Community and governance in northern Australia
- Tourism in regional Australia
- Mineral industry economies
- Emerging industries in sustainability
- Royalties to the regions

Please send me more information about:

- Presenting at *SEGRA* 2009
- Profiling and/or sponsorship opportunities
- Ordering a copy of the *SEGRA* 2008 Conference Proceedings CDrom
- Ordering copies of previous *SEGRA* Conference Proceedings CDroms
- Please add my name to the *SEGRA* database
- Please subscribe me to The Meeting Post, an e-newsletter on issues affecting regional Australia

Title _____ First Name _____ Surname _____
 Position _____
 Organisation _____
 Postal Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Postcode _____
 Phone _____ Mobile _____
 Email _____

Fax back to Jessica Shelton, *SEGRA* Secretariat at (07) 3210 0044 or phone (07) 3210 0021