



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*

# Strategic Direction 2023+

## MURRAYLANDS & RIVERLAND



# Welcome from the Chair

Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland Incorporated (RDAMR) was established in 2010 as part of the Australian Government's Regional Development Australia (RDA) network of over 50 RDAs across the nation. The South Australian RDA model is the gold standard, with all three levels of government (Federal, State and Local) partnering to deliver shared regional outcomes with RDAs (we are not government).

In 2021, RDAMR developed our purpose statement, and it now drives all that we do as a not-for-profit charity. We exist to **connect our region for a resilient and sustainable future.**

In line with our purpose, and the increasing impacts of global events on our local experience, our approach to regional development is changing. While we will continue to deliver regional economic insights and modelling, attract and support regional investments, and deliver projects to support local businesses and workforce development, we will expand our focus toward the global context, double-down on evidence-based approaches, and focus more on community engagement. It is the health of our communities (through built and social capital) that underpins private and government investment.

For years, regions have faced the same issues, including a lack of suitable accommodation, health and social services, connectivity, and road and freight networks. Governments have done what they could within previous regional investment frameworks, but this has not kept up with growing regional needs, let alone our aspirations. Pleasingly, governments are changing their approaches to economic development across the globe – wellbeing is now core to many European measures of prosperity. Industry is counting the cost of climate change and poor practices of the past, and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) is fast-becoming a 'must have' as opposed to a 'nice to have'.

Through developing the Murraylands and Riverland Plan (MR Plan) in partnership with the MR Local Government Association and the MR Landscape Board, we heard from over 550 regional community members (each committing an average of seven hours) on what would make our region more resilient. From this, we learnt that our communities are very aware of global impacts

on our local lives, and that they want to be more deeply involved in decision-making; we also learnt that some traditional supports were actually disempowering our communities. At RDAMR, this experience taught us how to listen without judgement, expanding the core of our business from delivering activities within existing paradigms, toward supporting our communities to undertake deep and long lasting transformations.

Our new Strategic Direction 2023+ is the result of our history, our region's community voice, and the global context in which we live. Our region is strong and has much to offer in food production, tourism and manufacturing, as well as other emerging sectors (such as communications, energy and advanced manufacturing), but we are clear that things will not change if we keep doing the same things ... so we are changing.

We are keen to hear about your contributions to our region, and to support changes that are transforming our region for the better!

**Jodie Hawkes**  
Chair, RDAMR



Jodie Hawkes



Peter Walker, Deputy Chair



Elaine Bensted, Treasurer



Bridget Mather



Petrina Coventry

'In the spirit of reconciliation, RDAMR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'

# Our Purpose & Values

**Figure 1:** The Murraylands and Riverland Region and constituent Councils



## Murraylands Riverland Regions

- Mid Murray Council
- Berri Barmera Council
- Renmark Paringa Council
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie
- Southern Mallee District Council
- Coorong District Council
- Rural City of Murray Bridge
- District Council of Karoonda East Murray



We care,  
We listen,  
We connect

We engage  
business and  
empower  
community

We are  
passionate and  
committed to  
our region

We deliver

**Connecting  
our region for  
a resilient and  
sustainable  
future**

# Our region – Murraylands and Riverland

The original inhabitants of the Murraylands and Riverland region were the Naralta, Nganguraku, Ngarkat, Ngarrindjeri, Ngawait and Wergaia Aboriginal people. For thousands of years, our region would have sustained a relatively small and stable population. We pay respect to these people of the past, and value current and future descendants for their deep connection to our region's waters, sky and land.

From the mid-1800's, European settlers explored along the Murray River, with irrigation being introduced to the region in 1887. In the early 1900's, government incentives were offered to returned soldiers to settle in the region, dramatically increasing the region's population. From this time, we have

continued to add value to the productivity borne from our land and the waters of the River Murray and various aquifers, with food manufacturing from our region accounting for 20% of our State's food manufacturing output in 2021-22.



As of the **2021 census**, the Murraylands and Riverland **population was around 73,000 people**, with population **growth of around 6%** over the previous decade.

Regional residents were mostly aged between **45 to 74 years** old and we have **high ethnic diversity**, including around **80 different ancestral backgrounds**, with more than **one in every ten residents born overseas**.



Our **largest industry in 2021-22** was **agriculture**, generating around **one in five regional jobs**.

With health services, manufacturing, retail trade, and education and training included, these **top five sectors** accounted for around **60% of the region's 31,000 jobs**.



Our **2021-22 Gross Regional Product was \$4.6 billion**, rounding out two years of **growth above 10% per annum**.

**Agriculture contributed around 40%** of this value, with construction, health services, manufacturing and utilities services rounding out the **top five industries that equate to 70% of regional value** added.

## Sources:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0). Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.
- National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2022 Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id the population experts.
- South Australian Tourism Commission, data compiled from Tourism Research Australia.



**Agriculture is also our largest export industry, generating around \$2.7 billion**, with manufacturing around \$611 million, and utilities services generating just over \$172 million.



The region is home to over **6,600 business**, with **41% being agricultural, 11% in construction, 8% in rental and real estate services, 6% in retail trade, and 5% in transport and warehousing.**

Over **4,000 of our businesses are 'non-employing'** businesses, meaning that they are run by one person, often being a sole trader, family-run businesses. **Nearly 90% of our businesses employ no more than 4 staff.**



The Murraylands and Riverland **tourism industry** provides rich **nature-based experiences**, a variety of **River cruising** options, **world class motorsport** facilities and close-up **wildlife encounters**. We boast **superb food and wine** and the internationally significant **Coorong wetlands and Dark Sky Reserve.**

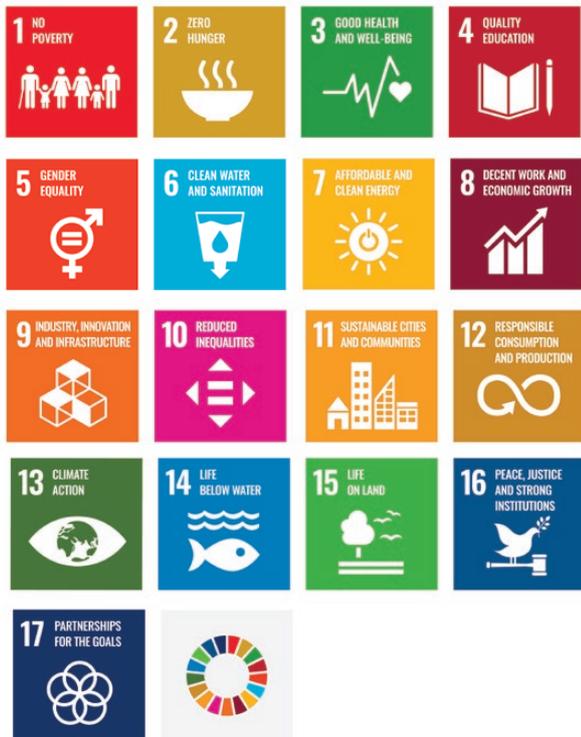
**Annual visitor expenditure** was **over \$440 million in 2022**, with over 2.1 million visitor nights and over 1.2 million daytrips. Around **95% of our visitor economy is driven by domestic travel**, presenting an international growth opportunity for the sector.

# Our Direction

In 2015, the United Nations set the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, identifying 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All that RDAMR supports aligns with these goals that seek to end poverty and other deprivations hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our natural resources.

RDAMR continues to progress toward our 2030 vision: *to be internationally recognised as a world-leading, vibrant circular economy, with high-performing businesses, resilient communities and individuals with a deep sense of wellbeing and connection with the world around us.* Our partnership with Green Industries SA on the Regional Circular Economy Opportunities report is one of only a handful of such reports in the world.

In June 2022, the CSIRO identified seven global megatrends, being: climate change impacts; resource constraints; health imperatives; geopolitics; digital evolution; autonomy; and unlocking the human dimension. This foresight poses many questions for the way that we currently live and the paradigms in which we operate and shapes the type of projects that RDAMR seeks to attract to our region.



### Unlocking the human dimension

The elevating importance of diversity, equity and transparency in business, policy and community decision making

### Increasingly autonomous

The rise of artificial intelligence and advanced autonomous systems to enhance productivity and outputs across all industries

### Diving into digital

The rapidly growing digital and data economy

### Adapting to a changing climate

The protection of livelihoods, infrastructure and people's quality of life as the climate changes

### Leaner, cleaner and greener

The global push to reach net zero and beyond, protect biodiversity and use resources efficiently

### The escalating health imperative

The promotion of health in the face of rising demand, demographic ageing, emerging diseases and unhealthy lifestyles

### Geopolitical Shifts

The increase in efforts to ensure global stability, trade and economic growth

Sources:

<https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/data/Our-Future-World>

<https://treasury.gov.au/policy-topics/measuring-what-matters/framework>

[https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/final\\_2023-24\\_rmbs.pdf](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/final_2023-24_rmbs.pdf)

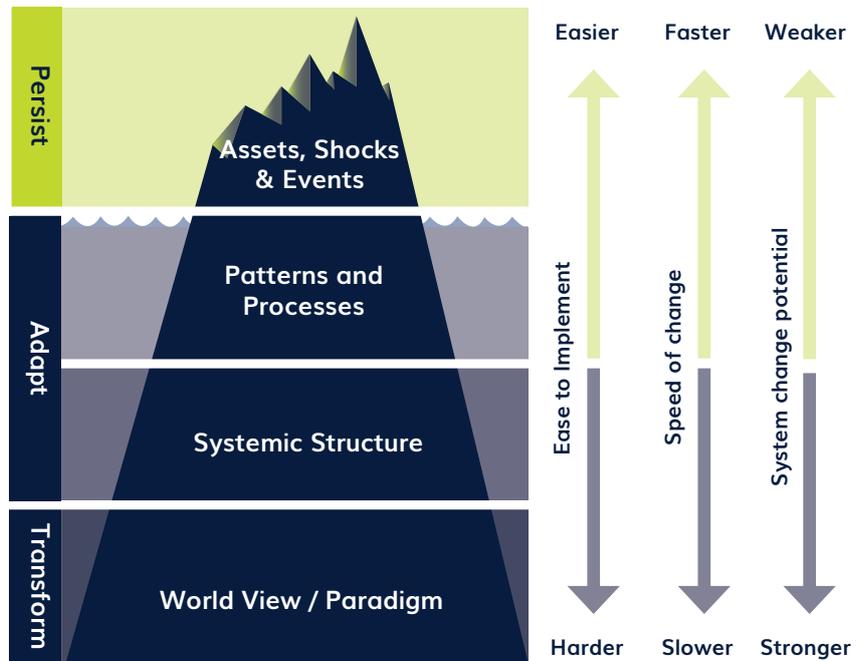
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals#>

<https://www.mrplan.com.au/resources/>

In June 2023, the Australian Government released 'Measuring What Matters', a living framework that will continue to evolve, measuring progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia. This complements the Regional Investment Framework, released in May 2023, that recognises the importance of involving local governments, communities and representative groups (including Regional Development Australia committees) in tailoring investments to region-specific needs.



In 2021, RDAMR partnered with the MR Local Government Association and the MR Landscape Board to develop a Regional Drought Resilience Plan under the Future Drought Fund. The process commenced with a focus on drought but soon moved on to building resilience in and around our agricultural sector, with flow-on impacts across our entire regional ecosystem. Through this process, RDAMR realised that, although harder and slower, the issues of the times require us to expand our focus toward transforming our systems.



**"If you run the same system over and over, you can't expect better results."**

MR Plan Interviewee

## Our Actions

With a view to the global context, and direct interaction and feedback on what is needed from our businesses and communities, RDAMR will continue to maximise outcomes for our region from available national, state and local policy and program settings.

From our beginnings in 2010, with the merging of the Murraylands Regional Development Board and the Riverland Development Corporation, RDAMR has taken pride in evolving with the times. We continue to plan and deliver through funding, market and environmental variability, forever learning and adapting ... with the last three years of delivery leading to a profound transformation in our focus.

In 2020-21 we invested \$1.8m back into our region through the Agri Food Tourism Development Program (AFTD) Stage One, workforce and business development initiatives, supporting development of the Waste Management Strategy and Public Health Plan on behalf of the Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association (MRLGA), managing the Murray River Study Hub (MRSH) on behalf of the Rural City of Murray Bridge, running the #WeAreHere campaign to support businesses through COVID-19, giving weekly briefings to Federal and State Ministers on C19 impacts, delivering economic modelling to Councils and other partners to support business case and grant proposal development, convening quarterly Murraylands Food Alliance (MFA) meetings of the largest food manufacturers in region, and supporting funding proposals, including to increase regional mobile connectivity.

In 2021-22 we invested \$2.4m back into our region through gathering regional investment pipeline data, supporting the MRLGA in developing a Regional Freight Options paper, looking into emerging trends in regional digital connections, delivering AFTD Stage One and commencing Stages Two and Three, evolving our workforce development work (including supporting Study Adelaide with international student tours across the region), managing the MRSH, and commencing

work on two transformational projects – Regional Circular Economy Opportunities (in partnership with Green Industries SA), and the Murraylands and Riverland Plan (MR Plan, in partnership with the MRLGA and MR Landscape Board), while continuing to support local businesses, Councils and the MFA.

In 2022-23 we invested \$1.6m back into our region through further refining our approach to gathering investment pipeline data (increasing to \$1.85b), completing delivery of all stages of AFTD, delivering more workforce development initiatives and Study Adelaide tours, hosting the Regional Development South Australia 2022 Summit in Murray Bridge, delivering a freight transport workshop and a digital connectivity report, launching the Regional Circular Economy Opportunities report, and had the MR Plan assessed and endorsed by the CSIRO, while continuing to support local businesses, Councils and the MFA. From late 2022, much of the region and RDAMR's focus expanded to supporting our response to, and recovery from, the 2022-23 River Murray Flood Event – RDAMR captured some of our early lessons in an Early Impact Insights report.

As we head into 2023-24 and beyond, we will continue to work closely with our Federal, State and Local Government partners as we also seek to partner with private and philanthropic investors in support of our regional businesses and communities. RDAMR will continue to act according to our values and purpose, and continue working on developing an enduring system of regional resilience as requested by our people through the MR Plan; a system that listens to local voice and places this voice seamlessly into government and industry planning and policies.

*“We can’t impose our will on a system. We can listen to what the system tells us and discover how its properties and our values can work together to bring forth something much better than could ever be produced by our will alone.”*

Donella H. Meadows. 2009. *Thinking in Systems: a primer*. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan.

Every year, RDAMR invests an average of \$2m in our region.



In 2020-21  
**we invested**  
**\$1.8m** back  
into our region



In 2021-22  
**we invested**  
**\$2.4m** back  
into our region



In 2022-23  
**we invested**  
**\$1.6m** back  
into our region

# Our Priorities

Our priorities are to 'connect' networks to strengthen our regional ecosystem, 'evolve' our region toward resilience and sustainability, and implement initiatives that align with 'future' global trends and local priorities.

In connecting our region, we commit to curating our regional voice in partnership with others who wish to 'lean in' to this approach to regional development. Through the MR Plan, more than 550 locals identified four principles with which they wanted to align, being 'Together Community', 'Prepared and Proactive', 'Productive and Collaborative' and 'Leadership in Action'. RDAMR are now clear on what we add to this regional voice (i.e. to 'connect', 'evolve' toward resilience and sustainability, and have an eye to the 'future').

We will curate this evolving community voice through listening and questioning in each of our projects, by conducting interviews and surveys, and by just having a chat. We will invite others to place the contributions that they are making in with the community's priorities, encouraging organic evolution of

our local voice. This will shape how we see our own and others' contributions to our region – it will be more transparent, accountable and supportive ... and it will celebrate all of the wonderful things that members of our business and local communities do every day (usually without much, if any, recognition).

We will seek expert advice from across the globe to ensure sound evolution of this process. This may sometimes conflict with some views and be challenging – we will address these challenges openly, respectfully and in line with our values.

We have started to shape delivery of our current and proposed projects against this community voice (see below). This will evolve from this solid foundation.

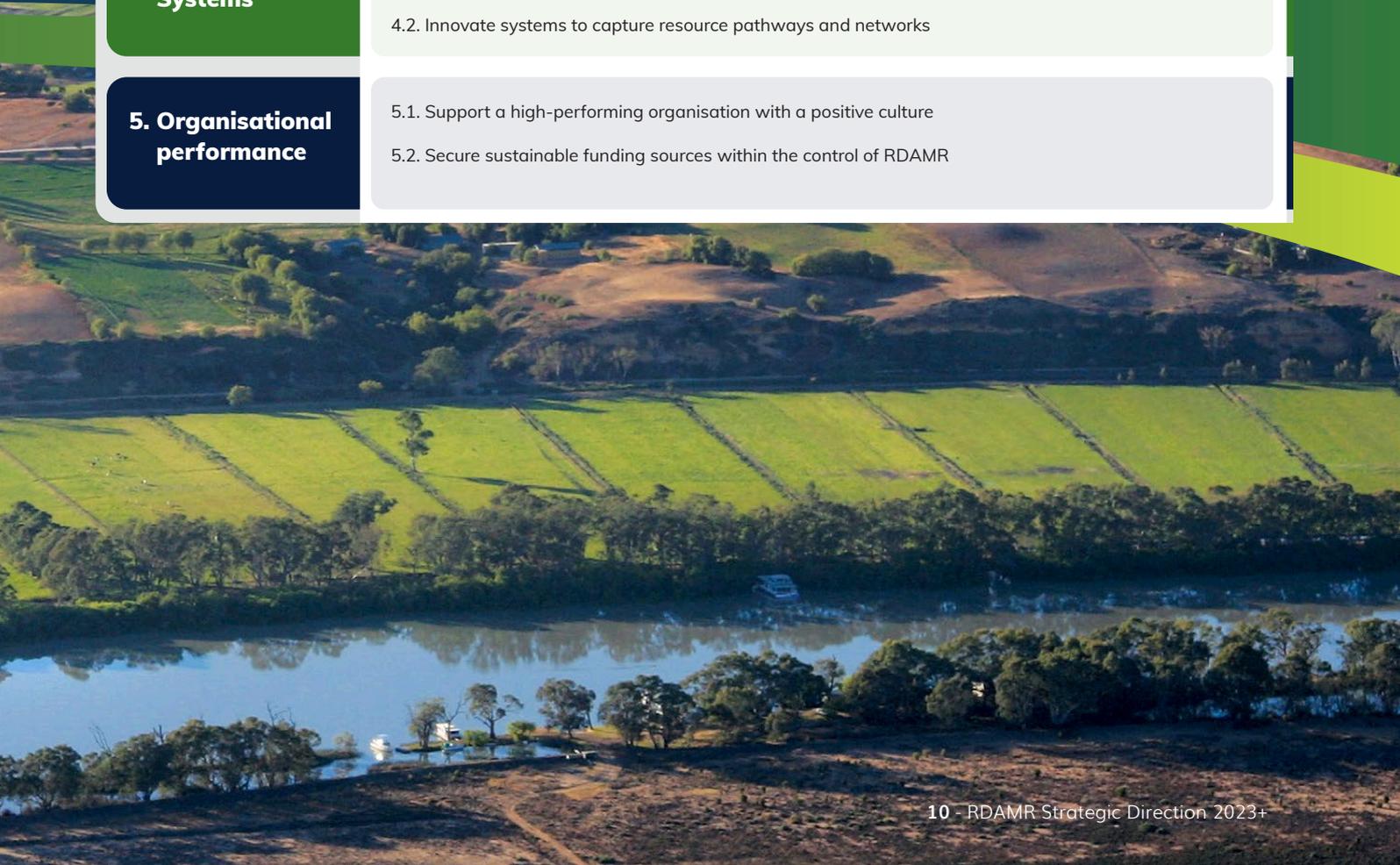
## Community voice (as commenced through the MR Plan)

<b>RDAMR Contribution</b> (Active / Proposed)	 <b>Together Community</b>	 <b>Prepared &amp; Proactive</b>	 <b>Productive &amp; Collaborative</b>	 <b>Leadership in Action</b>
<b>Connect</b> networks to strengthen our regional ecosystem	Community Impact Program	Community connections	Regional Workforce Connector and Collaboration Program; Jobs Mapping; Mentee to Mentor (Youth / Aboriginal Leadership);	Network connect
<b>Evolve</b> our region toward resilience and sustainability	Murraylands and Riverland Plan (MR Plan)	Early Impact Insights (flood recovery); One Basin CRC	Circular Economy Opportunities; Fight Food Waste CRC	Regional Leadership Development Program; Insight Interviews; Case studies
<b>Future</b> global trends and local priorities	Insight Interviews; Case studies	UNSDG & megatrend alignments	Investment Pipeline; Southern Food Tech Hub	Insight Interviews; Case studies

# Key Result Areas

The following key result areas (KRAs) will inform our annual planning cycles and may require adjustment as we learn and evolve. Performance against these KRAs will be based on progress, not on setting arbitrary targets, and will be regularly reviewed by the RDAMR Board and evolve via our Annual Business Plans.

Strategic Foundations	Key Result Area (KRAs)
<b>1. Connect</b> networks to strengthen our regional ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1. Support relationship-building between regional network leads to create networks-of-networks (business and community)</li><li>1.2. Support better connections between the socially disadvantaged, learning institutions and industry with future job prospects</li></ul>
<b>2. Evolve</b> our region toward resilience and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1. Evolve the voice of locals from a resilience plan into an enduring process for regional resilience in which stakeholders can 'see' their voice</li><li>2.2. Progress the circular economy in region through education and adoption of circular economy practices, and support game-changing investment opportunities</li></ul>
<b>3. Future</b> global trends and local priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1. Support and develop initiatives that clearly evidence alignment between global trends and local priorities</li></ul>
<b>4. Knowledge Systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1. Continue to build trust with businesses and communities to encourage participation in information gathering by RDAMR to support regional development opportunities</li><li>4.2. Innovate systems to capture resource pathways and networks</li></ul>
<b>5. Organisational performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1. Support a high-performing organisation with a positive culture</li><li>5.2. Secure sustainable funding sources within the control of RDAMR</li></ul>





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