



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*  
SOUTHERN INLAND

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# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN INLAND

## Annual Report

2022-2023

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## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

We began the 2022-23 financial year under a new Federal Government, and a new Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, the Hon Kristy McBain MP was appointed in May 2022. These changes have added a renewed focus on the roles of RDA committees and have resulted in increased engagement from the department and the Minister with regular briefings on a range of issues including disaster, health, and housing issues. This highlights the important role RDAs have in providing local and regional intelligence to the government to help inform strategic thinking and decision making to support regional NSW.

RDASI has successfully revitalised the face-to-face networking opportunities through the Regional Connect Roadshow events and built a strong following through monthly newsletters. Engagement with local councils has continued over the last 12 months, with a focus on further developing these valuable relationships.

The NSW and ACT RDA Chairs Committee (RDACC) has met 4 times during the year to discuss regional issues including a review of the current RDA boundaries, housing shortages, jobs, workforce development and the 491 visa program administration.

RDASI successfully completed our 491-visa contract with the NSW Government on 30 June 2023. It is hoped that a renewal of the contract will be announced in the coming months. Discussions with RDA Orana have continued in relation to becoming part of an inland DAMA, which will assist with increased flexibility in supporting visas for jobs that are not identified under the 491-visa program.

I would like to thank the RDASI Board, our CEO and staff for their commitment and enthusiasm to our local region and the people that make it such a wonderful place to live, work, invest and play..



Rowena Abbey  
**Chair RDASI**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022-23 financial year was very successful for Regional Development Australia Southern Inland (RDASI). The development of key information sharing strategies, with the implementation of the Regional Connect Roadshows has served to build engagement and trust with our local chambers of commerce and councils. Our reputation has improved immensely through this process, while at the same time, our regions are benefiting from receiving high level, targeted information they would not be able to access.

Housing shortages have reached crisis levels across the region, with homelessness, mortgage stress and cost of living pressures pushing upwards. Skilled workforce is also at critically low levels and many regional businesses are unable to reach their full capabilities to recover after COVID due to their inability to acquire appropriate staffing levels. Businesses are reporting they are limiting their future investment due to a lack of workforce.

RDASI has taken a proactive approach to the workforce crisis, collaborating closely with the Local Jobs Program (LJP) and funded by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations (DEWR) we delivered a key re-engagement strategy, targeting multiple cohorts on the Workforce Australia caseload, including youth, aboriginal, women and mature age. Jobs Southern Inland (JobsSI) saw RDASI connect with over 200 disengaged jobseekers across 3 LGAs to ignite their focus and passion on locally available employment and training opportunities. We can proudly report real jobs outcomes were achieved due solely to this program.

Improving the liveability of our communities is imperative to create sustainable and prosperous regions. With digital connectivity now a requirement for work, education, and entertainment, RDASI considers it the 'great equalizer' for our regions. Increasing our local council's understanding of the process required for best practice connectivity infrastructure delivery has been a focus for RDASI. We believe digital connectivity should be deemed an essential service and so we focus our submission delivery on espousing this. RDASI provided support to deliver on improved digital infrastructure worth \$84,000 in the Wingecarribee.

To encourage infrastructure investment in our region, we continue to provide access to grant and funding opportunities through the grant funding software embedded in our website. Our local council's partner with us to provide this free service to our communities and we provide support to organisations during the application process. We have successfully supported over \$27,000,000 of infrastructure projects in our region this financial year.

RDASI is committed to the betterment of our regional communities through key program implementation and targeted investment strategies. Cohesive all level of government collaboration is essential to deliver on and improve economic and social outcomes for our regions. With a strong governance framework, passionate Board, and dedicated team, we are focussed on utilising our stakeholder relationships to drive such capabilities into the future.



Carisa Wells  
**CEO and Director of Regional Development**

## OUR COMMITTEE

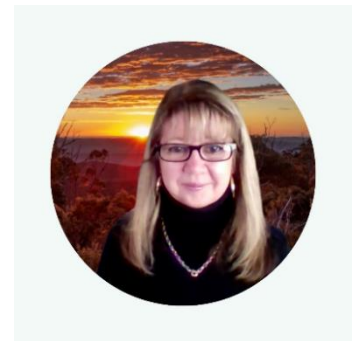


### Chair | Rowena Abbey

Rowena Abbey OAM was appointed as Chair of RDA Southern Inland in January 2021. Rowena has over 35 years' experience in finance, risk management, governance, and leadership in various industries in both the public and private sectors. Rowena is the Mayor of Yass Valley Council, the Chair of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO) and the Chair of SELX, which runs saleyards in Yass Valley NSW and Mortlake Victoria.

### Deputy Chair | Suzanne Gearing

Suzanne is passionate about supporting regional NSW and creating sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities. Suzanne has 30+ years' experience working in senior roles across organisations that support business growth by providing organisational leadership, strategic management, and positive stakeholder engagement. Suzanne and her husband run a social enterprise farm in Mongarlowe, on Yuin country, where they acclimatise edible bush plants, including from her home region of K'gari, for commercial production and seedling sales.



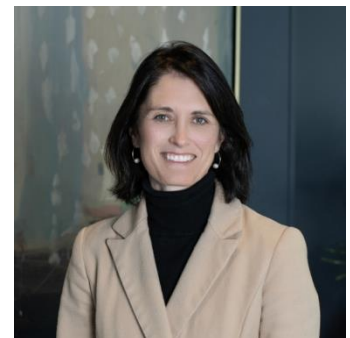
### Committee Member | Fay Steward



Fay's career spans 40 years, developing strategic land use policy and strategy for the NSW Government, and entrepreneurial roles with Vodafone, and telecommunications venture capital firms. As Executive Director Land Planning and Management for the ACT Government, Fay was responsible for Canberra's urban services, National Arboretum Canberra, commercial forests, and national parks. Fay has assisted community organisations establish cooperative agreements managing public land. Now retired, Fay is a small-scale beekeeper, RFS volunteer and Director of the SE Region Local Land Services Board.

### Committee Member | Clair Bremner

A communications and public affairs specialist with over 20 years' experience across diverse sectors, Claire brings an in-depth knowledge of the intersection between business and government to RDA Southern Inland. Actively involved in the community, Claire is a strong advocate for the local Montessori pre-school and is patron of the community-based organisation. Claire is passionate about the value of local communities and regional businesses and is committed to driving opportunity and growth for the Southern Inland region through RDA.





**Committee Member | Stephen Wentworth**

Stephen is the principal of Feeding the Future Consulting & Research, with more than 20 years’ experience in the Agri-sector and 15+ years of experience conducting related market research across Australia and New Zealand. Stephen has government and private industry sector experience including multinational companies and grower organisations. Stephen is the current Agribusiness Member of the Regional Advisory Council TAFE NSW – Southern Region and a former Director of Agribusiness Australia and has a keen interest in sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia Pacific region.

**Committee Member | Levi Nupponen**

Levi is a horticultural scientist with 15 years’ experience in the protected cropping sector and executive training at INSEAD. Levi has held technical, operational, and marketing roles in Oceania, Europe and North-East Asia and is currently the Managing Director of Agrology Pty Ltd, a consultancy service for the agribusiness sector. The business delivers innovative solutions and technical support for sustainable food production systems. Agrology’s clients include commercial businesses, industry bodies and Government, both domestically and abroad.



**OUR STAFF**



**Carisa Wells**  
CEO & Director of Regional Development



**Suzie Presswell**  
Events & Communication Officer



**Lenka Vysokai**  
Migration Assistant



**Jane Purcell**  
Administration Assistant



**Tash Maguire**  
Research & Policy Officer

# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN INLAND

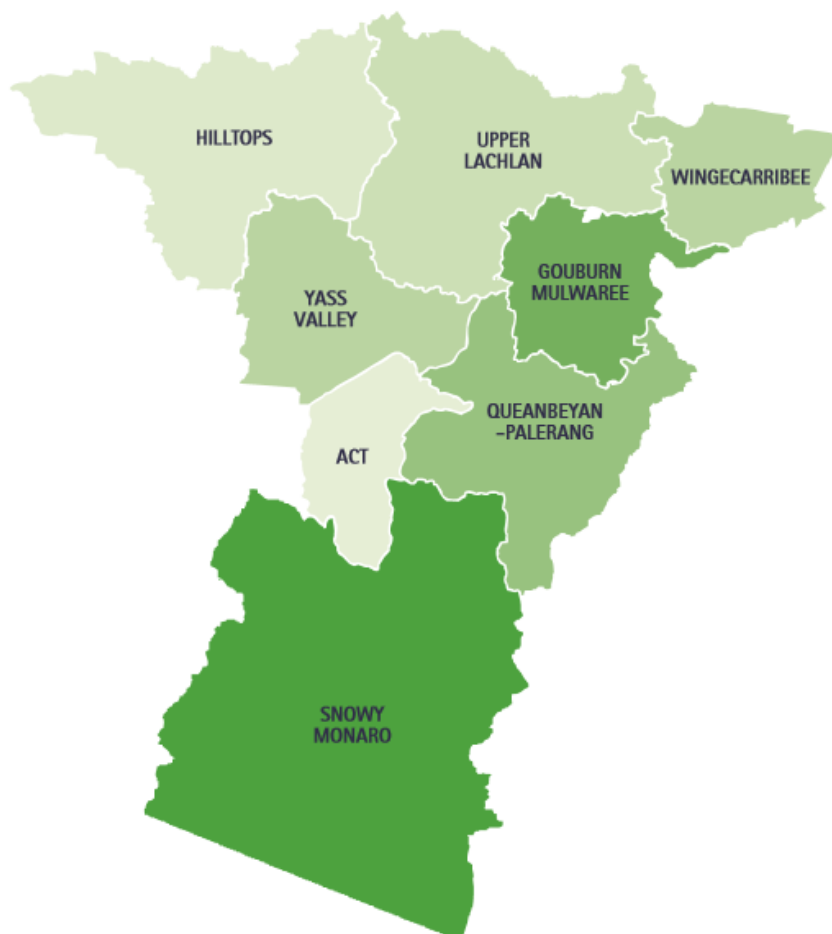
**Regional Development Australia Southern Inland (RDASI)** is part of a national network of committees funded by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts. RDASI's purpose is to drive innovation, growth, and development in Southern Inland NSW through the facilitation of regional projects, collaboration, communications, and advocacy, with a clear focus on growing strong and resilient regional economies that harness their competitive advantages, seize economic opportunities, and attract investment.

We are a Board of local leaders and staff, passionate about the communities we live in and committed to the RDASI vision - that the Southern Inland region is the most desirable place in NSW to invest, work, live and play by 2025.

## RDASI REGION

The Southern Inland Region is uniquely located between the two biggest population centres and domestic economies in Australia, Sydney, and Melbourne, and surrounds the Australian Capital Territory.

The region encompasses 44,639 square kilometres of south-east NSW, incorporating seven local government areas including Hilltops, Goulburn Mulwaree, Queanbeyan Palerang, Snowy Monaro, Upper Lachlan, Wingecarribee and Yass Valley.



## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

TOPIC	RDASI	NSW	AUSTRALIA	REFERENCE PERIOD
Estimated Resident Population	216,448	8,165,731	26,005,540	Jun-22
AEC Indicator: Population Growth	0.80%	0.80%	1.20%	2022 FY
Gross Regional Product (\$M)	\$13,837	\$697,364	\$2,309,211	Jun-22
AEC Indicator: Economic Growth	1.90%	1.60%	3.50%	2022 FY
Unemployment Rate (%)	1.70%	2.90%	3.30%	Jun qtr - 23
Total Businesses (No.)	23,327	860,066	2,563,706	Jun-22
Average Annual Household Income (\$)	\$117,233	\$118,496	\$112,465	Census 2021
Average Household Size (Persons)	2.5	2.6	2.5	Census 2021
Average Annual Worker Income (\$)	\$65,408	\$76,131	\$72,976	Census 2021
High School Completion Rate (% of persons aged 15 years and over)	55.50%	61.00%	60.70%	Census 2021
Non-School Qualification Rate (% of total population)	87.20%	3.60%	3.40%	Census 2021
Indigenous Representation Rate (%)	3.60%	30.90%	29.20%	Census 2021
Proportion of Population Born Overseas (%)	15.60%	30.90%	29.20%	Census 2021
Volunteer Rate (%)	19.00%	13.90%	15.10%	Census 2021
Total Employment (No.)	82,045	3,715,355	12,343,110	Jun-22
Average Age (years)	41.4	39.4	39.3	Jun-22

Source – Data AU, January 2024.

## MAJOR INDUSTRIES



Source – Data AU, January 2024.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA STATISTICS

LOCATION	GRP 2022 (\$M)	POPULATION	AV. AGE	JOBS	AV. INCOME	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
GOULBURN MULWAREE	\$2,197	32,428	41.2	13,867	\$64,944	3.2
HILLTOPS	\$1,265	19,239	42.5	7,798	\$59,544	3.6
QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG	\$3,424	64,233	37.8	18,766	\$71,001	1.3
SNOWY MONARO	\$1,977	21,823	41.8	12,026	\$64,120	1.8
UPPER LACHLAN	\$484	8,551	44.7	2,758	\$61,485	1.8
WINGECARRIBEE	\$3,690	52,795	45	22,118	\$64,948	0.8
YASS VALLEY	\$801	17,379	40.6	4,723	\$62,893	1.4
<b>SOUTHERN INLAND REGION</b>	<b>\$13,838</b>	<b>216,448</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>82,056</b>	<b>\$64,134</b>	<b>1.99</b>

Source – Data AU, January 2024.



## COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

RDASI board members contribute to a wide range of committees and groups across the region to enable a better understanding of regional and local issues, and to ensure our local stakeholders feel supported by having an opportunity to share their opinions and ideas. Information gathered through these opportunities is used to advise Minister Kristy McBain via a regular teleconference.

Through these relationships and via representation outlined in the Committee and Group Membership section below, RDASI has been an integral contributor in regional conversations, with information shared and ideas progressed to develop collaborative opportunities that achieve positive impacts and continue to drive regional economic development, investment, and funding opportunities.

## COMMITTEE & GROUP MEMBERSHIP

### Business Southern Highlands

CEO, Carisa Wells, is Chair of Business Southern Highlands. This close working relationship with a local chamber allows for greater understanding of the issues that local, small businesses face.

In addition to this, our team members represent RDASI as members across the following committees and groups:

#### Carisa Wells

- Snowy Monaro SAP Community Advisory Group
- Capital Regions Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce
- Economic Development Australia
- Committee for Economic Development – Wingecarribee Shire Council
- Regional Australia Institute – Regional Activators Alliance

#### Suzie Presswell

- Snowy Monaro Regional Business Services Group

RDASI has facilitated collaborations with additional groups, including:

- Business Southern Highlands
- Yass Valley Business Chamber
- Goulburn Chamber of Commerce
- Braidwood Chamber of Commerce
- Cooma Chamber of Commerce
- Jindabyne Chamber of Commerce

## RDASI STAKEHOLDERS

RDASI works with a variety of key stakeholders across local, state, and federal government, industry, business, and community representatives. Our key stakeholders are listed below:

STAKEHOLDER	RELATIONSHIP
APM Employment Services	Collaborate and partner in workforce development programs
AusIndustry	Collaboration, cross referrals

Business Australia	Refer support and services
Canberra Region Joint Organisation	Collaboration on regional issues
Department of Education	Partner to provide industry engagement and collaboration on education programs
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts	Primary funding source & reporting structure which provides the Charter and Better Practice Guide
Department of Regional NSW	Collaborator on regional issues
Destination Southern NSW	Collaboration & partnership on regional events
Destination Sydney Surrounds South	Collaboration & partnership on regional events
Department of Home Affairs	Collaboration on regional visa program
Housing NSW	Collaboration on regional issues
Illawarra Business Chamber local chambers of commerce and business associations	Collaborate, support, promote and partner
Investment NSW	Collaboration on regional visa program
Local Job Taskforce Capital and Illawarra regions	Collaborate, support, promote and partner
Local Councils	Collaborate on events, projects & provide support for infrastructure approvals
nbnCo	Collaborate on regional issues
RDAs ACT, Illawarra, Riverina, Murray, FSC, NR, MNC	Collaboration on working groups, projects & regional issues
Regional Australia Institute	Collaborate on regional issues & projects
Regional Tech Hub	Collaborate on regional issues & solutions
Enterprise Plus	Partner in projects, events, and cross referral of services
TAFE NSW	Partner to provide industry engagement and collaboration on education programs
Telstra	Collaborate on regional issues & solutions
Training NSW	Partner & collaborator on workforce issues & projects
Young Change Agents	Partner and service provider for Young Change Agents Program

## KEY MESSAGING



## RDASI STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Economy, Infrastructure and Leadership framework, led to the following five key strategic priorities:

1. Digital Connectivity – advance ‘the great equalizer’ for regional and remote communities.
2. Workforce Development – facilitate localised employment, education, and skills outcomes.
3. Innovative Agriculture – promote innovative practices, people, and programs.
4. Regional Infrastructure – support local infrastructure investments.
5. Local Small and Medium Enterprise – enable collaboration, communication, and connection.

## TOP 5 BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

1. Digital Connectivity – Manage digital connectivity steering committee, hold forum and research gaps.
2. Workforce Development – Regional visa administration, Grow Our Own and JobsSI program delivery.
3. Regional Infrastructure – Support significant infrastructure developments through submissions, letters of support and advocacy.
4. Local Small and Medium Enterprise – Assist local SMEs develop, utilising digital communications and the Regional Connect Roadshows.
5. Informing Government – Submission writing and advocacy on targeted, regional issues.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

RDASI projects align with our strategic priorities. Projects are internally financed, supported by third party partnerships through funding opportunities or sponsorship, or a combination of both. The following table provides a summary of RDASI projects and funding sources:

PROJECT	FUNDING SOURCE
Digital Connectivity Forum	Internal & sponsorship
Regional Migration Program	Investment NSW
Welcome to Region	Investment NSW
Grow Our Own (GOO)	Internal
Jobs Southern Inland (JobsSI)	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
Young Change Agents (YCA)	Rotary
Regional Connect Roadshows	Internal & sponsorship
Small Business Month	Small Business Commissioner Grant
International Women's Day	Internal & sponsorship
Business Southern Inland (BusSI)	Internal

### Digital Connectivity

#### Digital Connectivity Forum

The Digital Connectivity Forum was held on June 20th, 2023, in Yass and brought together 21 council staff from across our region and beyond. Representatives from Eurobodalla and Wollondilly councils located outside of our region also attended. Sponsorship was provided by nbn.

Presentations were given by nbn, Regional Tech Hub, and Telstra, with attendees given the opportunity to ask questions during the full day event and during a panel session featuring representatives from each presenting organisation.

Outcomes of the event include increased knowledge and understanding of technology options for digital connectivity including mobile and internet. The event enabled networking opportunities and education on the best practice strategies for implementing connectivity into the DA process. Learnings from the forum will be used to create fact sheets and inform policy development.

### Workforce Development

#### Regional Migration Program

In the 2022-23 financial year, RDASI:

- Referred 20 x 494 Employer Sponsored Visa Recommendations
- Administered 314 x 491 Regional Skilled Migration Visas

In total, RDASI assisted to bring 334 skilled migrants into the region, filling roles that were unable to be recruited within the local workforce.

#### Welcome to Region

Welcome to Region is designed to provide targeted information on the Southern Inland region to assist migrants with assimilating into their new communities. The events provide an opportunity for newly arrived migrants to meet other migrants and representatives from community groups and key service providers.

Two Welcome to Region events were held in the 2022-23 financial year, one in Goulburn and the other in Queanbeyan. Both events welcomed representatives from key stakeholders and community groups such as Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) and Migration Institute of Australia (MIA), Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW), Goulburn – Mulwaree Council, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Local Health Services, Service NSW, Enterprise Plus, Local Jobs Program and several multicultural groups.

### **Grow Our Own**

The objective of the Grow Our Own (GOO) program is to promote a variety of occupations and opportunities through group workplace and educational facility visits. The Grow Our Own program is an extension of the successful program run by RDA Riverina, targeting senior school students.

As part of the program, RDASI act as the conduit, linking participants and industry through our partnerships with government, educational institutions, and community organisations to assist local businesses to develop and retain a skilled workforce. Participants gain insights into the career prospects available to them through industry visits where they engage in interactive activities.

During the 2022-23 financial year RDASI facilitated excursions, exposing 69 participants to job opportunities and career paths, which led to three expressions in interest for roles, generated a high level of interest in future program participation.

### **Jobs Southern Inland**

Jobs Southern Inland (JobsSI) is designed to re-engage the un and under-employed people from across the region by highlighting local opportunities for career, education, and training progression.

In 2022-23, three industry information sessions were held, one in Goulburn, another in Queanbeyan and the third in Cooma. In addition to this, multiple excursions were facilitated across the corresponding local government areas. 100 participants attended the information sessions and more than 100 joined the excursions. As a result of the program, 30+ applications were made for jobs across the RDASI region.

Both employers and workforce Australia service providers were extremely satisfied with the outcomes of the program. See the case studies section below for more information, images, and testimonials for the JobsSI program.

### **Young Change Agents**

On 12 October 2022, RDASI hosted Young Change Agents (YCA) to deliver a one-day program dedicated to developing the entrepreneurial skills of local students from years 9 and 10.

Over 50 students from Goulburn High, Mulwaree High, Trinity College, Crookwell High and home-schooled students attended the event.

Students worked in teams to identify problems young people experience when it comes to finding and choosing the right careers. They were mentored through creating a solution, from ideation, validation, prototyping and pitching. By the end of the day, a total of nine social enterprise ideas were pitched.

The program was deemed a great success, with students building on strategic and creative thinking skills as well as developing new entrepreneurial capabilities.

## **Regional Infrastructure**

### **Infrastructure Development**

RDASI supported two successful applications to the Regional Connectivity Program - Round 2, which resulted in \$84,000 worth of infrastructure development across the region.

- Ace Internet Services Pty Ltd Southern Highlands Network Upgrade (\$26,000) – Bullio Fixed Wireless Broadband Bullio NSW - The project will upgrade the fixed wireless network in the Bullio area of the Southern Highlands, maximising the existing network and ensuring greater reliability and capacity.
- Ace Internet Services Pty Ltd Southern Highlands Network Upgrade – Tuggalong Road Fixed Wireless Broadband Canyonleigh NSW (\$58,000) - The project will upgrade the fixed wireless network and its corresponding backhaul along Tuggalong Road in the Canyonleigh area of the Southern Highlands, maximising the existing network and ensuring greater reliability and capacity.

### Investment Attraction

RDASI provided the following funding support in the 2022-23 financial year:

SUPPORT	VALUE
Business Case and Strategy Development Fund	8 Letters of Support provided and \$2.567m in grant funding secured for the region
NSW Small Business Month Grants Program	2 Letters of Support provided and \$5k in grant funding secured for the region
Stronger Country Communities Fund, Round 5	1 Letter of Support provided and \$232k in grant funding secured for the region
General support	4 Letters of Support with a total of \$27m worth of projects supported across the region.

### Local Small and Medium Enterprise

#### Regional Connect Roadshows

RDASI's Regional Connect Roadshows consist of events held across multiple local government areas, usually over a week or two each quarter. The events provide targeted information delivered by experts, on subject matter decided by at steering committee of regional representatives, to assist in upskilling, educating, and supporting our business communities. Events attract an average of 25-40 businesses and provide business owners and managers with a vital networking opportunity. Attendees are encouraged to discuss potential partnerships and collaborations, ask questions, share innovative ideas, and engage with local council, state, or federal government representatives when present.

The events are free to attend across all regions, except for Wingecarribee Shire Council, with RDASI securing sponsorship and support from regional partners to minimise costs.

During the 2022-23 financial year, RDASI held roadshows in September, February, and May. Events were hosted in Goulburn, Yass, and the Southern Highlands for all three roadshows, with Snowy Monaro joining in February and Queanbeyan in May.

The outcome for each roadshow is summarised below:

- September 2022 – Workforce: focus on employment attraction and retention. Malcolm Peak from Peak Corporate Solutions was the key speaker, with over 60 people attending the three events. Sponsored by Region Media (Yass & Goulburn)
- February 2023 – Migration: Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) and Migration Institute of Australia (MIA) were key speakers, with 173 attendees across four events. Sponsorship - RegionMedia Goulburn & Yass, Snowy Hydro Cooma.
- May 2023 - Grant writing tips: Service NSW, AusIndustry, Enterprise Plus were key speakers, with 235 in attendance across five events. Region Media – Queanbeyan & Yass, Snowy Hydro – Cooma, Goulburn Mulwaree council

See the case studies section below for more information and images of the Regional Connect Roadshows.

### **Small Business Month**

Thirty-eight local participants joined the free Wellness Day – Stress to Resilience workshop held at The Range in Berridale, for Small Business Month in November 2022. The full day event included yoga, breathing, music therapy, guided meditation, alpaca feeding, and freshly produced food.

RDASI secured funding of \$5000 through the Small Business Commissioner Grant program to host the event, which assisted with hiring local suppliers to host activities at workshop and local caterers to deliver a wholesome and nourishing menu.

Like so many other Australians, residents from across the Snowy Monaro region had been adversely affected by fires, floods and COVID, highlighting the need for a focus on mental health and methods to cope with extreme levels of stress. Participants formed new relationships and were appreciative of the opportunity to take time to relax and recharge. Feedback from participants was extremely positive, with requests for similar workshops to be held in the future.

### **International Women’s Day**

On March 8, 2023, RDASI hosted an International Women’s Day (IWD) event at Poachers Pantry in Yass Valley, encompassing the theme Embrace Equity, underpinned by the view that improving female equity and inclusion will help deliver better economic and social outcomes across the region.

Fifty-eight participants enjoyed a recorded introduction by Minister McBain, followed by a panel discussion comprising of four regional leaders, designed to inspire the next generation of female farmers to remain in the region, and showcased that building a successful career and raising a family as a farmer is possible.

The event highlighted and celebrated the achievements of women working in the agriculture space, including three female future farmers, who spoke about their experiences and inspiring ideas for the future of farming and agriculture across the region.

### **Business Southern Inland**

Business Southern Inland (BusSi) is a resource hub on the RDASI website designed to provide regional business owners with information that may assist to build knowledge, skills, and capabilities, with the aim to improve economic outcomes.

During the 2022-23 financial year, BusSi, previously housed on a standalone platform, was integrated into the main RDASI website, providing a small and medium enterprise support portal within its structure. In addition to this development, a quarterly BusSi newsletter has been launched, focusing on business support and funding opportunities.

## Communication Strategy

### Informing Government - Submissions

RDASI undertakes desktop research and community consultation via targeted surveys to assist with writing submissions to government, to inform public policy and decision making.

In addition to contributing to collective submissions curated by RDA Sydney, RDASI developed four submissions as outlined below:

OPPORTUNITY	MONTH	SURVEY RESPONSES	SUBMISSION
<a href="#">Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan</a>	Sep 22	22	
<a href="#">National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality</a>	Apr 23	26	<a href="#">National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality</a>
<a href="#">Bank Closures in Regional Australia</a>	May 23	68	<a href="#">Bank Closures in Regional Australia</a>
<a href="#">Commonwealth Procurement Rules</a>	Jun 23	25	<a href="#">Commonwealth Procurement Rules Review</a>

### Stakeholder Contact Management

RDASI uses Tall Emu, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to collect and manage information about our stakeholders.

TALL EMU	NUMBER
Total contacts	7,757
New contacts	872
Updated contacts	2019

### Stakeholder Email Direct Marketing

RDASI began a subscription with Mailchimp for all Email Direct Marketing in January 2023 to improve stakeholder communications and access to reliable campaign monitoring and analytics.

MAILCHIMP	JAN 23 – JUN 23
Emails sent to individual contacts	59,296
Open rate	33%
Unsubscribe rate	.53%



### Social Media

RDASI social media runs across multiple platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. We use a software management platform to schedule posts and monitor outcomes.

PLATFORM	FOLLOWERS	NEW FOLLOWERS	POSTS	IMPRESSIONS	ENGAGEMENT RATE
LINKEDIN	750	254	143	17,907	9.15%
FACEBOOK	2100	202	270	125,149	7.16%
INSTAGRAM	393	23	138	12,425	5.48%
TWITTER	440	-6	119	1280	N/A

### Website Engagement

The RDASI website is a resource centre for all our knowledge and information. We use it to house documents, resources and presentations for our external stakeholders, community groups and businesses to access.

During the 2022-23 financial year, the RDASI website had over 31,000 visits, of which approximately 20,000 were unique users and 68k+ page views. Below is a summary of results, including statistics for source, referrals, and views.

TRAFFIC SOURCE	REFERRALS WEB	REFERRALS SOCIALS	TOP 3 PAGES	TOP 3 FORMS	TOP 3 BUTTONS
Direct 19,713	RDA Sydney 230	Facebook 819	Home page 21,295	Visa Payment 482	Learn more SWRV Visa 5058
Google search 9,295	local host 219	LinkedIn 68	Regional Migration 16,186	Contact Us 95	Learn more 491 Visa 954
Facebook 819	ANZSCO search 41	Instagram 26	Skilled Work Reg. Visa (SWRV) 10,077	Application checklist 494 49	Access Regional Data 675

### Regional Development Australia Rebrand

In June 2023, Regional Development Australia (RDA), rebranded in keeping with a federal government directive.

As a result, the RDASI website and email signatures were updated in line with templates and logos provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (the department), which is responsible for the RDA Program.

## CASE STUDIES

### Regional Connect Roadshows

RDASI Regional Connect Roadshows have been delivered across our region over the 2022-23 financial year, with events held in September 2022, February 2023, and May 2023. Working with a steering committee consisting of either chamber or council representatives, RDASI delivers expert advice on the topic matter chosen by the group. These events have helped to build stakeholder engagement, community connections and business capabilities in our regions. We have partnered with sponsors to bring these events to participating locations for no or very low cost to the attendees.

RDASI has seen considerable reputational improvement due to these events, and they have become key to delivering our purpose of driving jobs, investment, and innovation. Bringing experts to regional communities to where they would not usually have access assists in increasing knowledge and in turn economic development. We have seen the positive impact these events are making and have been requested by LGAs outside of our footprint to deliver them into those areas.

### Workforce Attraction and Retention – September to October 2022

We kicked off the new financial year series of events in September 2022, with the important subject matter of attraction and retention. Our steering committee told us that workforce shortages were the most challenging factor to doing business and so we delivered expert advice on how to stand out from the crowd when attracting employees to apply for roles. Malcolm Peak, an experienced HR professional travelled with us to Yass, Goulburn, and Berrima pro bono to help our regional businesses integrate proven strategies to improve the volume and quality of applications they receive. He also shared poignant intel on how to retain staff without it just being about the money.

RDASI hosted 111 attendees across the three events, and the response to the information was very positive. Participants communicated that much of the information provided they had not heard prior to the event and a link to the presentation was provided after the event.

### Regional Skilled Migration – February to March 2023

Our Regional Connect events in February 2023 were held in Cooma, Yass, Goulburn, and the Southern Highlands (Berrima) over a two-week period. This year marked a milestone as our Regional Connect Roadshows expanded to four regions, with the subject matter being regional visas and migration. Representatives from the Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) and the Migration Institute of Australia (MIA) joined us on the roadshow. The four events proved to be our most successful Connect series to date, drawing a diverse audience of businesses, and migrants, supported by our stakeholders.

A highlight of the events was the real migrant stories that were shared, bringing a human reflection to the challenges migrants face when moving to a completely new country. Cooma witnessed the largest turnout with over 55 attendees, including Mayor Narelle Davis, making it a great result for our first connect collaborating with the Cooma Chamber of Commerce. An attendance of 173 participants was recorded across the four events with feedback being the events were very well received. A follow-up newsletter was emailed to all attendees who registered to provide further information and links to both DOHA and MIA presentations.

### Grant Writing Tips & Tricks – May 2023

The events in May 2023 focussed on grant application writing and Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) joined the chambers of commerce in Yass, Goulburn, Cooma, and the Southern Highlands as event partners. This is the first time we have successfully collaborated with QPRC since the relationship soured back in 2018.

RDASI's Research and Policy Officer, Tash Maguire was the key presenter for the information sessions. With extensive experience in writing successful grant applications for businesses and not-for-profit organisations, while also assisting applicants on the delivery and acquittal phase of successfully funded projects, her knowledge and understanding from an applicant's perspective were invaluable.

The presenter lineup featured presentations from our external stakeholders including Enterprise Plus, AusIndustry, and Service NSW, all with additional tips and tricks for developing successful grant applications. Each event included representatives from the five councils QPRC, Yass Valley, Goulburn-Mulwaree, Snowy Monaro and Wingecarribee Shire.

The events attracted 226 attendees from a diverse range of groups including small businesses, community groups, individuals, as well as arts and culture enthusiasts. All participants received a follow-up newsletter providing links to our website with the presentations to access at any time.



### Jobs Southern Inland (JobsSI)

Mid-year, RDASI was requested to make a closed tender application under the Local Recovery Fund (LRF) program to run a pilot program focussed on re-engagement strategies. JobsSI was a short, sharp project, delivering insights to jobseekers on local employment and education opportunities. Collaborating with some of our key local industry partners, an information session was held to introduce the participants to the sectors and then provide a tangible experience on their sites and facilities.

The purpose of the JobsSI pilot program was to drive engagement, interest and knowledge of local career and education pathways for local unemployed across multiple cohorts including youth, aboriginal, women and mature age; test outcomes and learnings to lead into an ongoing program to consistently deliver a local workforce funnel for Southern Inland businesses; increase awareness of industry sectors experiencing workforce shortages and improve pathways to sustainable employment for participants.

Information sessions were organised with local industry partners in each region to present what job opportunities are currently available; workplace training and benefits; available career paths and job pathways. Job seekers expressed their interest in attending the industry tours to view the prospective workplace at the information sessions. Industry tours were facilitated to include tours of the workplace and to hear first-hand stories about career progression directly from staff members and management.

Target sectors included:

- Goulburn (Aged Care and Trades/Construction)
- Queanbeyan (Trades/Construction)
- Cooma (Trades/Construction, Retail)

The information sessions were promoted to targeted participants through the involvement of key stakeholders, Employment Service Providers (ESP), social media, and community groups. One of the expected outcomes of the program was to build the knowledge and understanding of the participants of the broad range of employment opportunities available locally. This outcome exceeded our expectations with so many of the industry tour participants not realising the breadth and scope of the local businesses and councils until they had been on the tours. Throughout the activity, employers were encouraged to link immediately with participants offering opportunities for work trials or interviews that provide a pathway to sustainable employment. The below table shows the data for the program:

LOCATION	REGISTRATIONS INFORMATION SESSION	ATTENDED INFORMATION SESSION	REGISTRATIONS INDUSTRY TOUR	ATTENDED INDUSTRY TOUR	APPLICATIONS	JOB PATHWAYS
GOULBURN	53	26	59	30	6	6
COOMA	50	41	77	62	19	3
QUEANBEYAN	42	23	61	45	20	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	145	90	197	137	45	14

**Testimonials**

*‘As the largest employer in the Queanbeyan-Palerang local government area, Council was honoured to present to prospective employees as part of the Jobs Southern Inland Program. The program allowed Council to promote its wide range of employment opportunities and benefits to a wide cross section of the community. Much of the community isn’t fully aware of the different roles offered by Council, so promotion events such as the JobsSI Program are invaluable to increasing our brand awareness and employee value proposition.’*

**Ricky Tozer | Manager Workplace and Performance | Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council**



*‘I just wanted to send you a little feedback regarding the industry tours back in June. Tahlia absolutely LOVED the tour. For her to hear about others journeys within the industry and the opportunities that are out there was eye-opening for her and has really motivated her to think about her future and how to start her own journey.’*

*Learning about all the different avenues from the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council tour had really planted that seed for Tahlia, and she was so fascinated to learn that so many opportunities and avenues can stem just from one position. However, after seeing Jye at Canberra Build and hearing about all the background work needed for each project -it had really sparked that light. Being able to hear his story and relate to his youth years is exactly what she needed. She is now PASSIONATE about where she wants to start. She is*

*MOTIVATED to make those steps in the right direction. She is ENGAGING in her education again because she knows this is something that can benefit the path she wishes to go down.*

*We need more of these! I cannot stress enough how fantastic these tours are. Often people lose that desire or interest in exploring the possible opportunities that are out there for them. However, it only takes just one person's story to resonate and change that mindset. Going from 'I don't know what to do' to 'this is what I want to explore' is the switch we are wanting to see and encourage!*

**Alyce Marillanca | Mum and Employment Service Provider | Parents Next Pathway Support Worker |  
Mission Australia Parents Next-Capital Region**