

Regional Development Australia – Southern Inland

Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct - Submission

22 July 2021

Regional Development Australia-Southern Inland (RDASI) commends the NSW Government and other contributors on the development, content, and presentation of the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Project Draft Master Plan – June 2021.

RDASI would like to thank the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Special Activation Precinct, Snowy Mountains Draft Master Plan.

It is pleasing that many of the items included in the Submission of RDASI in July 2020 (copy attached) to the Ideas Wall have been included.

Overall, RDASI endorses the Objectives and Strategic Indicators contained in the draft Master Plan and is providing this further additional submission for your consideration.

RDASI is part of a national network of 52 Regional Development Australia Boards across Australia and one of 14 in NSW. RDASI is a Federally funded, non-government organisation encompassing seven Local Government Areas in Southern NSW: Wingecarribee, Goulburn Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Snowy Monaro, Hilltops, Queanbeyan-Palerang and Upper Lachlan.

Our Charter states that we are to:

- Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, local procurement, and jobs
- Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research
- Improve Commonwealth regional policymaking by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues
- Co-ordinate the development of a strategic regional plan, or work with suitable existing regional plans that will align with the Commonwealth's regional priorities

With the above in mind our role is to promote economic development in the region by identifying opportunities for business development and linking businesses and community organisations with government grants, programs, and infrastructure investments, creating jobs and encouraging prosperity for the region's population.

We believe the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct is a game-changing opportunity for the Snowy region's future.

It is our belief that the Snowy Mountains region, and especially Jindabyne has been under-utilised as one of the State's most unique recreational areas with access to incredible natural assets. Following the example of Queenstown in New Zealand, Jindabyne, with careful planning and both public and private investment strategies, has the potential to become a world class, year- round tourist destination.

RDASI would like to congratulate the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on the extensive work that has been produced thus far and would like to suggest the following recommendations:

PRECINCT VISION

RDASI suggests that the Vision recognises that as the Snowy Mountains SAP develops, it will "lift surrounding towns and communities with the tide" creating additional opportunities that are yet to be discovered. Visitors, business owners and employees, service providers and people relocating from the cities will undoubtedly also seek to live just outside the Precinct for economic or lifestyle reasons hence boosting the economies of surrounding communities (Eg: Berridale, Cooma, Dalgety, and Adaminaby).

The impact of the SAP benefiting the wider Communities is a significant effect which RDASI considers worthy of highlighting.

PRECINCT PRINCIPLES

Matters which should be further developed or added:

1) Economic Resilience

- The current economy of the Snowy Mountains is dominated by Winter tourism. It is critical due to global warming and the variability of the snow season, that greater diversification is achieved through this process. The single season economy has severe impacts on employment, housing, infrastructure, and the social fabric of the communities. It is manifested in shortages of labour, accommodation stress and incredibly busy services for several months then under-utilised capacity for the rest of the year. **A Four-season economy must be the pinnacle outcome, underpinning this Masterplan for the future economic progression of this unique region.**

2) Place & Landscape

- As previously highlighted, Jindabyne surrounds the huge asset of Lake Jindabyne. Queenstown in New Zealand makes great use of the adjacent Lake Wakatipi. However, it needs to be recognised that Lake Jindabyne levels change seasonally due to inflows, environmental releases, and operational requirements. **There is enormous potential to better utilise the pristine Lake for recreational and commercial activities while preserving**

the environmental and amenity aspects in close consultation with Snowy Hydro and NSW Government Agencies.

- The Lake Jindabyne foreshore is a valuable asset which must be carefully developed to maintain environmental quality and aesthetic values. Inappropriate developments are likely to risk water quality, visitor access and visual amenity. Close liaison with and approval from Snowy Hydro for future foreshore development is essential.

3) Connection to Country

- Respect for the cultural heritage in this region is essential and could be further enhanced by including more Indigenous Place Names and information on signage located at significant sites. Immersive learning could be achieved through cultural education tourism initiatives.

4) Carrying Capacity

- The Snowy Mountains has a sensitive ecology and unique landscape. It is essential that the carrying capacity of the region is thoughtfully managed and adhered to. The upgrade to services such as communications, transport, sewerage, and water **MUST** take place before increases to the capacity load take effect. It would be counter-productive and a potential high risk not to.

5) Housing Diversity

- It is of concern that affordable housing options for the lower-paid, often local, and transient workforce, required to maintain the accommodation and tourism sectors imperative to a 4-season economy will be left to private sector investment. With regional housing currently in critical short supply, having been exacerbated through higher demand due to Covid, rental prices and sale values are already at unaffordable levels in the Snowy region. **It is RDASI's recommendation that the State should consider public housing investment to guarantee a minimum volume of accommodation at affordable rates.**
- SMRC currently struggles with "un-authorized Camping" resulting in rubbish collection issues. Increased "free camping" options need to be considered and a strategy devised with SMRC as a means of funding associated services to facilitate such.

6) Social Infrastructure

- Provision should be included for a future Tertiary Education Centre within the SAP, possibly a Country Universities Centre and Tafe. Many outback communities have developed "after hours" activities for visitors. Although younger people are likely to have various social venues and gatherings, there are opportunities to develop more cultural opportunities for more mature visitors Eg: Indigenous culture, Renewable Energy, National Park presentations, Art exhibitions?

7) Economy & Industry

- The Economy and associated Industries are dominated by the Winter peak and will undoubtedly grow and continue. Greater diversification is critical to achieve better utilisation of resources. **Hence entrepreneurs need encouragement to recognise and invest**

in “non-Winter” activities and industries that preserve the environment and amenity of the Precinct.

- Consideration should be given to identifying what “thrill seeking” commercial operations may be included in future. It is apparent that such activities as jet boating and bungy jumping are huge drawcards to Queenstown as are links to the Otago Rail Trail. Commercial operators such as A J Hackett and World Expeditions could provide some valuable input.

8) Transport & Connectivity

- The Jindabyne Ring Road (perhaps better phrase than Bypass) is supported as a key initiative in opening up the land to the West of Jindabyne.
- It is anticipated that road transport ie: private cars and buses, will continue to be the predominant mode of transport. With the increasing use of Electric Vehicles, many additional fast charging stations will be required. **RMS will need to continue highway improvements between Cooma and Canberra to improve safety & capacity.**
- Identify if the Jindabyne Airstrip is suitable for regular commercial air services due to length (for larger aircraft) and orographic downdraft (“foehn”) during strong westerly winds (affecting smaller aircraft).

9) Infrastructure & Services

- The COVID pandemic has demonstrated the importance and value for high speed and capacity telecommunications networks for business, education, and information sharing. As an increasing number of professional and self-employed people move from the cities to regional areas such as the Snowy Mountains, there will be a significantly increased need for a strengthening of the network to improve reliability of communications to Jindabyne, surrounding villages and rural communities. Previous outages have dramatically affected commercial operations and severely impacted emergency services efforts in times of crisis.
- Medical services in the SAP have been lacking but improved recently. However, it is expected that increased “first response” medical capability including facilities and staffing will be required. It is recognised that good medical facilities are available at Cooma with specialist services available at Canberra and Bega. The availability of the Southcare Helicopter service is critical for search & rescue as well as medical evacuation and transfer. **All 24x7 and weather helicopter landing facilities at multiple locations need to be included in future planning.**

GENERAL COMMENT

It is considered that the draft SAP Master Plan contains many excellent Goals and Actions. However, it appears lacking in specific Measurable Targets and Timeframes. It is understood that such Deliverables will be included in a subsequent Plan.

Nevertheless, the addition of specific Measurables and Dates would enhance the credibility, priority, focus and accountability of the final Master Plan. RDASI indicates a willingness to support the SAP Project team in preparing such Targets.