

## RALLY FOR RIVERLAND

---

**Advocacy Road Map - Final**

Prepared by Fred Consulting Pty Ltd

5 June 2020

**NOTES FOR PUBLICATION AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION:**

- Please ensure that the disclaimer remains on the front or 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the published document
- Consider removing Appendices from the published document and make them 'available on request' or a separate link on Council websites

**DISCLAIMER**

This document has been prepared by FRED for the exclusive use of the client in accordance with the terms of engagement. While we have tried to ensure the accuracy of the information of this publication, FRED does not and shall not assume any responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or resultant consequences including any loss or damage arising from reliance on the content of this document. As the document takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client, it is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
GLOSSARY .....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	6
What is advocacy? .....	6
The role and function of the Councils .....	6
A ROADMAP FOR ADVOCACY .....	7
Understand .....	7
Activate .....	8
Advocate .....	10
Monitoring, Evaluation and Review.....	10
RALLY FOR RIVERLAND: THE STORY SO FAR .....	11
Our Advocacy Journey .....	11
Facts about the Riverland Region .....	14
Our Vision for the Riverland.....	16
IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PRIORITY AREAS .....	17
Optimising collaboration .....	18
Water/the River .....	22
Accessibility of Region .....	26
Regional Infrastructure .....	29
Working Age Population .....	36
Equitable Access to Services and Support.....	43
Housing .....	50
APPENDICES.....	53

# GLOSSARY

Term/Acronym	Meaning/Definition
<b>Advocacy</b>	An activity or series of activities to access and secure funding and/or to bring about changes to policy and regulations.
<b>Ask</b>	The objective that each advocacy campaign is trying to achieve. For example obtaining funding, securing regulatory change or a new service.
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and linguistically diverse
<b>Campaign</b>	A set of actions and activities targeted to create support for an ask
<b>CHWN</b>	Critical Human Water Needs Water
<b>CVS</b>	Community Visitor Scheme
<b>FRED</b>	Fred Consulting Pty Ltd
<b>HAC</b>	Health Advisory Council
<b>Influencers</b>	Those who have the potential to encourage the target to make a decision that supports an ask.
<b>GAPA</b>	<i>Global Advocacy for Physical Activity</i>
<b>LG</b>	Local Government
<b>MDBA</b>	Murray Darling Basin Association
<b>MRLGA</b>	Murraylands & Riverland Local Government Association
<b>NDIA</b>	National Disability Insurance Agency
<b>NDIS</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>NESP</b>	National Environmental Science Program
<b>PATS</b>	Patient Assisted Transport Scheme
<b>PCG</b>	Project Control group
<b>PIRSA</b>	Primary Industries and Regions SA
<b>RDAMR</b>	Regional Development Australia Murraylands Riverland

Term/Acronym	Meaning/Definition
<b>ROSI</b>	Roads of Strategic Importance
<b>Stakeholder</b>	An individual or organisation with an interest in the ask. A stakeholder may benefit or be impacted by the ask.
<b>SME</b>	Subject Matter Expert
<b>Tactics</b>	Any activity used to communicate campaign messages, seek support for the campaign and place pressure on the target to support the ask.
<b>Target</b>	The individual or organisation responsible for funding, supporting or implementing an ask.

# INTRODUCTION

The Riverland is well loved by its community and has many strengths. There are however a number of challenges and issues that individual (or collective) Councils do not have the resources or remit to solve. Many of these challenges and issues rely on State and Federal Governments providing solutions through infrastructure, programs and services.

One of the most important functions we can perform as local Councils is to advocate for the infrastructure, services and changes to regulations required for our communities to thrive.

The purpose of the **Rally for Riverland Advocacy Roadmap** is to provide a shared vision and a collective and strategic lens to direct the efforts, resources and advocacy priorities of all regional councils (and their strategic partners) as they work towards achieving a better future for their communities.

## What is advocacy?

Council led advocacy is the direct action, relationship building, and collaboration activities undertaken on behalf of the community to access and secure funding and/or to bring about changes to policy and regulations. Successful council led advocacy will deliver infrastructure, facilities, services, and other benefits to the community that are beyond individual (or collective) Council responsibilities or capabilities.

## The role and function of the Councils

The South Australian Local Government Act (1999) identifies the broad role of Councils to include the following activities:

- To provide and co-ordinate various public services and facilities and to develop its community and resources in a socially just and ecologically sustainable manner;
- To encourage and develop initiatives within its community for improving the quality of life of the community; and
- To represent the interests of its community to the wider community:<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the responsibility of the Councils to represent the interests of the community, during the stakeholder engagement undertaken in 2019 and early 2020, the community gave strong support to the Councils playing an advocacy role with respect to a range of issues discussed in this Road Map.

---

<sup>1</sup> Local Government Act, SA (1999) (Chapter 2-6)

# A ROADMAP FOR ADVOCACY

Successful advocacy doesn't happen without consistent effort and a little bit of luck! To ensure maximum impact and effectiveness, advocacy also requires a strategy which will support:

- The most effective use of resources;
- A focus on long term goals;
- Efforts to maximise opportunities and minimise risks;
- Coordination and collaboration between stakeholders; and
- Align advocacy with other Council objectives.

This **Rally for Riverland Advocacy Roadmap** is designed around a four-step approach to advocacy:

## Understand

The key to successful advocacy is to obtain a rich and detailed understanding of the problem or challenge that is the subject of advocacy efforts. This includes the following activities:

### Obtain an evidence base

The 'asks' that will form the basis of the **Rally for Riverland** advocacy campaigns will need to be grounded in evidence. Evidence can come from many sources including: community and stakeholder engagement, policy documents, statistics from reputable sources and case studies. Evidence must be valid, able to be verified and able to withstand scrutiny.

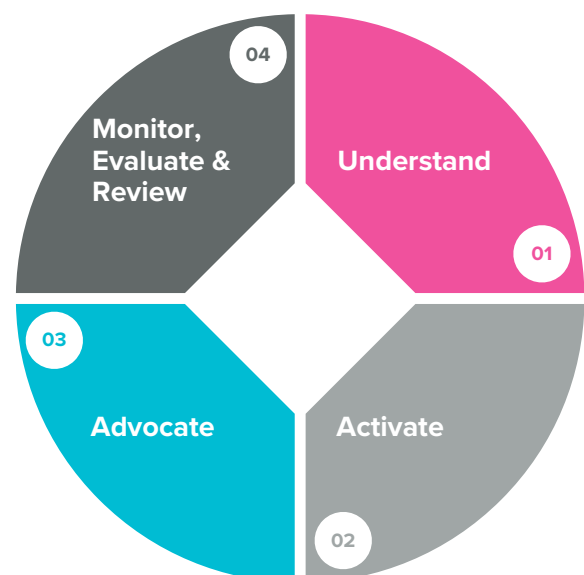
Community and stakeholder engagement is a key source of evidence for a number of reasons. It provides a richness of detail that shapes the issue to a much more granular level.

When building a case for advocacy, it is easier to engage the community around a specific issue or problem relevant to them. Community engagement sends a powerful message to politicians that the Councils are reflecting the views of their constituents; and is also a way to bring councillors on the journey so that they can understand the issues of their constituents at a much deeper level.

### Identify the key priority areas and define the 'ask'

An effective way to raise saliency of issues is through intensive engagement with stakeholders including the community and elected members, officers and staff at each Council. Through the current engagement efforts, there have been numerous opportunities to both articulate and refine the priority areas. This engagement has also provided a rich source of potential solutions. More work needs to be done to refine and define the 'ask' or 'asks' in each priority area.

It is important to ensure the 'ask' is realistic and relevant. It can be ambitious, but it needs to be within the realms of what is achievable from a political, financial, environmental or economic perspective.



## Create an advocacy culture across the Councils

Building on the current momentum, creating an advocacy culture across the councils including building awareness around what advocacy is and the role of the Councils will support:

- A deliberate and unified implementation of advocacy that resonates well with the community and is therefore supported by the community; and
- The management of competing priorities of different regional advocacy groups.

## Grow community of concern

The needs and interests of the community must be at the centre of each advocacy campaign and an activated, engaged community is vital to help further any advocacy campaign. Developing and engaging with the communities of concern around each priority area provides the opportunity for those impacted by the issues and challenges are involved in decision making. Further, real stories from real residents are very powerful and can lead to media showing the community as the face of the campaign

When developing and engaging with a community of concern:

- Acknowledge and ensure that community contributions will influence decisions;
- Seek out those affected by or interested in the issues, not just recipients of services but broader stakeholders;
- Provide an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the Councils' Roadmap;
- Spend time educating the community on the role of the Councils with respect to advocacy;
- Seek input from the community on how they can participate in advocacy campaigning. Ensure they understand the campaigns; and
- Communicate campaign outcomes to the community.

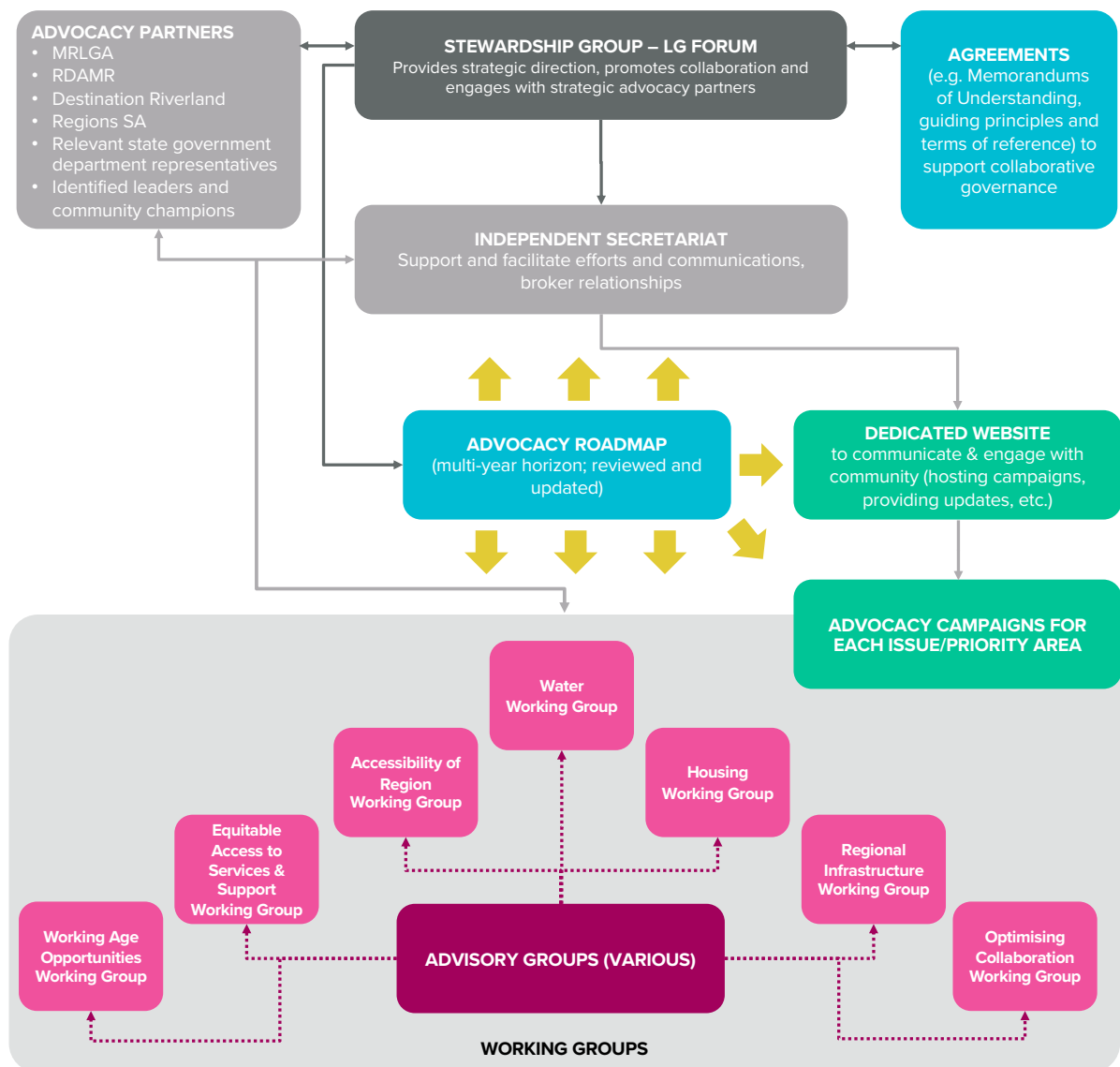
## Activate

The next phase of successful advocacy is to activate. We recommend this is centred around collaboration and partnership.

We have developed a **Collaboration and Partnership Framework** articulated in Appendix A in which we recommend the establishment of the **Riverland Advocacy Forum**, to act as the central communication, coordination, collaboration, and decision-making mechanism relating to regional advocacy. The proposed model for The Forum is captured on the following page.

Strategic communications activities are essential for supporting effective advocacy and will need investment in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the Roadmap.

Communications and engagement within the region can help to support stakeholder collaboration, buy-in from diverse partners, build capability and capacity of the community, demonstrate strong leadership, build trust in councils and celebrate progress. Communications and engagement focused on stakeholders outside the region can support advocacy efforts required at a state or federal level, as well as raise the profile of the region.



Proposed Model - Riverland Advocacy Forum

In addition to engaging community members and other stakeholders through Advisory Groups, other online and in-person engagement activities may include hosting a regular (i.e. annual) summit where many partners and stakeholders can come together to hear updates on the advocacy efforts, celebrate progress, and discuss options for future advocacy needs.

It is recommended that the **Riverland Advocacy Forum** develop and host its own website (and a possible social media presence) in order to effectively communicate clear and consistent messaging and easily engage stakeholders and the community through one dedicated platform. This will need to be managed by the Secretariat, possibly with support from communications staff across the three partnering councils.

## Advocate

Targeted campaigns to influence change in priority issue areas will need to be designed and developed with input from the Stewardship Group and Working Groups and supported by the Secretariat and communications support staff from across the council organisations. These campaigns should highlight few clear key messages or “asks” that are used over a set period of time to influence changes in the priority issue areas. These campaigns can be hosted on a dedicated Forum – or ‘Rally for Riverland’ – website. They will need to be updated and changed to respond to progress on issues and changes in the priorities of the Forum.

The Local Government Association of South Australia has published a very useful advocacy toolkit: “*A guide to building, maintaining and improving relationships between Local, State and Federal Governments*”.<sup>2</sup> It includes detailed and relevant guidance on the steps for local Councils when advocating and is recommended as a resource during this stage.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Advocacy for change must be supported by evidence and therefore regular (i.e. annual) tracking of progress with data and research should be a key activity of the Forum.

Ongoing measurement of changes in the key issues of the region will ensure efforts are directed effectively and efficiently. It will support the reviewing and updating of the strategy and campaign messages. Communicating these changes publicly will help to maintain transparency and engagement with community, as well as share the story of positive change in Riverland.

In addition to tracking issues, some high-level research may be undertaken, such as environmental scanning and investigation of examples of good practice solutions to problems.

---

<sup>2</sup> This resource can be found in the member section of the LGA SA website <http://www.lga.sa.gov.au>

# RALLY FOR RIVERLAND: THE STORY SO FAR

## Our Advocacy Journey

In 2019 The ‘Riverland Region’<sup>3</sup> engaged Fred Consulting Pty Ltd (FRED) to develop a Social Indicators Strategy for the region – which came to be known as the **Rally for Riverland Project** (The Project). The vision for The Project was to build a meaningful data set over time and to use this information to create a better future for the Riverland community. The stated objectives of the project were to:

1. Develop a clear and complete picture of the health, wellbeing and the social landscape within the Riverland region benchmarked to other regions and the state;
2. Equip the three participating Councils with the ability to undertake evidence-based decision making and better support service/program planning and delivery with robust, timely and holistic data;
3. Develop a framework for advocacy and influence to facilitate targeted support and investment in social programs within the region; and
4. Facilitate an environment of collaboration amongst stakeholders based on a shared purpose and vision.

The support these objectives, the following activities were undertaken:

### Development of Evidence Framework

In this phase, FRED developed an *Evidence Framework* which specified the data to be collected in the data collection phase. In developing the *Evidence Framework*, Fred reviewed and considered:

- The *Social Issues Paper* and *Riverland Social Indicators Social Issues Discussion Points* (as developed by the client) which identified some of the key issues faced by the Riverland region;
- The outcomes of the stakeholder meeting/s undertaken (with the Project Control Group and Health sector representatives) in May 2019;
- General research on the issues faced by Australia’s regional and remote communities; and
- Best practice thinking on the determinants of ‘community wellbeing’ (incorporating social, economic, and environmental factors).

The Framework identifies the six domains as being relevant to community wellbeing within the community:

- Access to essential services
- Health and health behaviours
- Sense of community
- Community safety
- Economic environment
- Community resources and infrastructure

---

<sup>3</sup> Renmark Paringa Council, Berri Barmera Council and District Council of Loxton Waikerie, in collaboration with RDAMR

## Secondary Data Collection

In this phase of the Project, FRED collected and analysed national, state, and local data relating to the Region's population, economy and wellbeing. The purpose of the data collection phase was to capture robust and compelling evidence of key regional issues and the potential need for investment in infrastructure, services and other programs. The key deliverable of this phase was a rich data-driven report on the state of health, wellbeing and social landscape within the region; including a comprehensive profile of the Riverland population (see Appendix B).

## Stakeholder Engagement

FRED also undertook extensive stakeholder engagement with a view to:

- Facilitate a shared understanding of the key challenges, issues and opportunities relating to the prosperity, health and wellbeing of the region;
- Articulate a shared vision for the Riverland Community; and
- Explore opportunities for future collaboration around advocacy and service provision.

A summary of the stakeholder engagement activities undertaken is provided below. The detailed outcomes from the activities can be found in Appendix C.

What	Purpose	Participants
<b>Pre-contract engagement activities</b> Undertaken by client, 2018/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulation of project objectives and agreement of project scope</li> <li>• Preliminary identification of issues for exploration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Councils</li> <li>• Regional Development Australia Murraylands Riverland (RDAMR)</li> <li>• Murraylands &amp; Riverland Local Government Association (MRLGA)</li> </ul>
<b>Preliminary Engagement</b> May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary exploration and interrogation of issues</li> <li>• Agreement of data collection priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Control group (PCG)</li> <li>• Health sector representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder Workshops (x2)</b> August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and exploration of regional strengths and key issues to impact the future of the region</li> <li>• Articulation of vision for the ideal future of the Riverland</li> <li>• Opportunities to work together to create a better future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders from government, health, tourism, community services, the arts, industry, education</li> </ul>
<b>RDAMR Facilitated Discussion</b> August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project update</li> <li>• Understand key issues relating to the Riverland economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RDAMR Board</li> </ul>
<b>LGA Forum</b> August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project update</li> <li>• Present preliminary findings of data collection phase</li> <li>• Articulation of vision for the ideal future of the Riverland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Councils</li> <li>• MRLGA</li> </ul>

What	Purpose	Participants
<b>Subject Matter Expert Survey</b> Online Survey,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To generate a deeper understanding of the causative factors relating the issues identified in earlier stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject matter experts in water, transport, telecommunications, health, community services, the economy and education</li> </ul>
<b>Elected Member Workshop</b> March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of detailed findings from the evidence report (key insights and population trends)</li> <li>Articulation of desired future state</li> <li>Agreement and prioritisation of key issues (based on where Councils can have the greatest influence)</li> <li>Identification of possible solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Councils               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Members</li> <li>Executives and PCG members (as observers)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Executive and PCG Workshop</b> March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulation of desired future state (ambition)</li> <li>Agreement and prioritisation of key issues</li> <li>Identification of possible solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Councils - Executives and PCG</li> </ul>

## Data Analysis

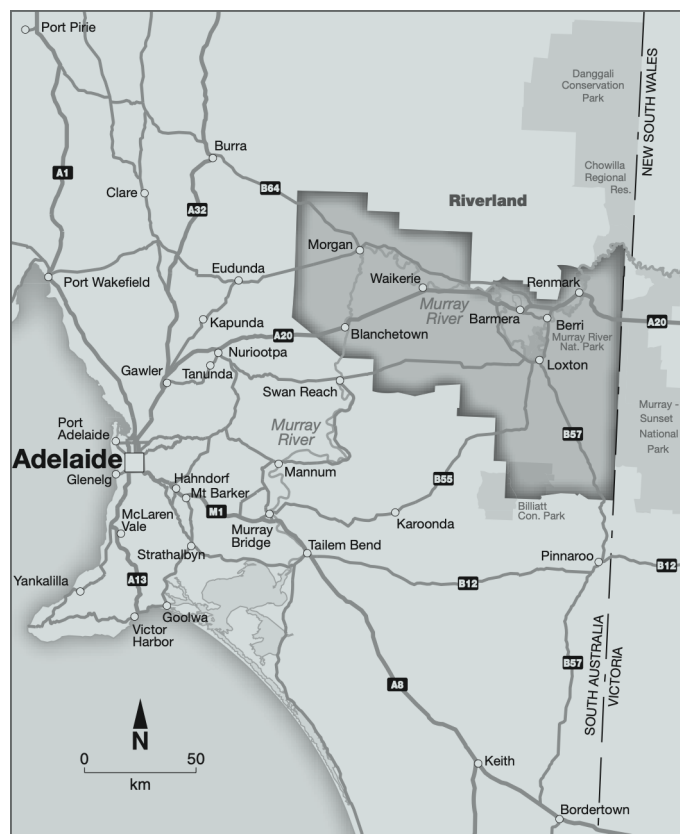
This stage focused on understanding and synthesising data to provide a complete picture of the social landscape of the Riverland region; and offered insight into current service provision, cause and effect linkages and emerging and future trends.

## Strategy Development

This phase involved the identification, analysis and synthesis of the key issues identified in the data collection and stakeholder engagement phases. From there, the **Advocacy Road Map** was developed, which included an articulation of key priority areas (advocacy pillars), a detailed and rich description of each issue and their possible impacts on the community; and a summary of possible responses to these issues - as identified in the stakeholder engagement phase and supported by current research. This phase also involved the development of a **Collaboration and Partnership Framework** to support collaboration around regional advocacy (see Appendix A).

## Facts about the Riverland Region

For the purpose of this project, **The Riverland Region** is defined as comprising the three local government areas of Berri and Barmera, Loxton Waikerie and Renmark Paringa. The Riverland is located 1 ¾ to 3 hours north-east of Adelaide and around 90 minutes west from Mildura, Victoria.



The region (as defined above) has a population of approximately 32,000 people, with the majority of residents living in Waikerie (6,856) and Barmera (6,637), followed by Loxton (5,479), the broader Renmark area (5,073), the town of Renmark (4,834), and Berri (4,088).

Local Government Area	Estimated Resident Population (2019)
Berri & Barmera	10,842
Loxton Waikerie	11,743
Renmark Paringa	9,907
<b>Total Riverland Population</b>	<b>32,492</b>

The Riverland economy is driven by primary production which represents 27.4% of Gross Regional Product; and is the largest wine producing region in Australia by volume. Healthcare and Social Services is the second largest industry representing 8.5% of GRP; followed by Manufacturing (at 8.1% of GRP).

## Summary Trends

<p><b>We are not growing</b></p> <p>Population growth in the Riverland has been stagnant for roughly 10 years</p> 	<p><b>We are becoming older</b></p> <p>Older age groups have grown rapidly in the past 10 years, while younger age groups have declined</p> 
<p><b>The majority of households do not have children</b></p> <p>54.1% of the population are lone persons or couples without children</p> 	<p><b>We mainly work in</b></p> <p>Agriculture, Fishing &amp; Forestry Industry (20.9%)</p> <p>Healthcare and Support Services (12.1%)</p> <p>Retail Trade (10.7%)</p> 
<p><b>We have lower levels of education</b></p> <p>Overall education levels are comparatively low in the Riverland both in terms of the level of qualifications achieved and early childhood development</p> 	<p><b>On average, we earn less</b></p> <p>In 2016, the median weekly income across the three local governments ranged between \$642 - \$661 compared to \$672 for regional SA and \$877 for Australia as a whole</p> 

## Our Strengths<sup>4</sup>

- Warm Mediterranean climate
- High life satisfaction levels
- Relaxed lifestyle
- Natural environment
- The River
- High volunteering rates
- Community safety
- Sense of inclusion

## Our Challenges<sup>4</sup>

- Population stagnation and decline of our working age population
- High levels of obesity
- High risk health behaviours
- High levels of socio-economic disadvantage
- Difficulties accessing transport and health services
- Economic reliance on water security

<sup>4</sup> Based upon secondary data collection and stakeholder engagement feedback

## Our Vision for the Riverland

The following vision for the Riverland was informed by a review of local Council strategic documents and stakeholder engagement outcomes.

In 2030 the Riverland region will be a **strong, vibrant, and diverse economy**, supported by smart and sustainable infrastructure, and a growing population.

We **protect and enhance our natural and built environments** to ensure the long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability of the region.

Our **prosperous, healthy, safe, and engaged communities** have reliable and equitable access to essential services and enjoy a range of quality educational, social, cultural, recreational and leisure opportunities.

We all share a **great sense of pride in and connection to the Riverland**, and actively encourage friends and family to live, work and visit here.

# IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PRIORITY AREAS

Following a review of key strategic documents, secondary data collection findings and stakeholder engagement outcomes, Fred worked with Elected Members, Council CEOs and the Project Control Group to synthesise and prioritise identified issues into seven **Key Priority Areas** relating to the relating to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of the region. These are summarised below.



In assessing possible priority areas, a number of criteria were considered:

- An issue's relative importance to the community – Key Priority Areas include those that received the highest levels of discussion (and where undertaken, prioritisation) across the various stakeholder engagements (measured as a count and/or ranking);
- The Councils' remit, responsibilities, and capacity (recognising capacity constraints within the G3 Councils); and
- The type of advocacy action proposed by stakeholders across the engagements:
  - **Monitor/report** on the status of an issue or data/information relating to an issue
  - **Educate** the community about aspects of an issue
  - **Support/enable** the advocacy efforts of others
  - **Partner/collaborate** with others to advocate
  - **Lead** advocacy activities on an issue

Where there was significant discussion of possible direct actions by the Councils' (in contrast to advocacy actions) these have been identified.

**Please note:** Stakeholder engagement led to the identification of a wide range of possible responses within each priority area. These responses are summarised in Appendix D. Stakeholder engagement also identified potential secondary data sources above and beyond those identified during the preparation of the Evidence Report. These data sources are summarised in Appendix E

## Optimising collaboration

### Challenge

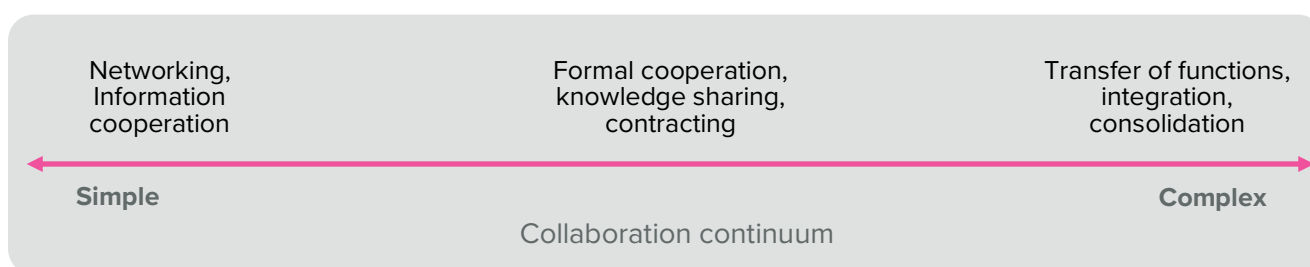
Improving community wellbeing and opportunity is multi-dimensional and multi-jurisdictional<sup>5</sup>. The Riverland's communities are deeply interconnected, with many of the challenges identified in this *Advocacy Roadmap* spanning multiple local government areas.

For the Riverland's regional advocacy efforts to be successful, a collaborative and coordinated approach to addressing major issues will be required; one that leverages an expanded network of stakeholders to effect change.

Strategic collaboration enables participating councils to achieve common goals in innovative and cost effective ways. Collaboration can help to reduce duplication, deliver cost savings, access innovation and enhance skills development. It also provides a mechanism for local communities to share ideas and connect with others<sup>7</sup>.

“Collaboration is the only option for regional development that is owned by locals, driven to meet local needs and is tailored for long-term community success.”<sup>6</sup>

Collaborative activity falls on a continuum, from silo-based activities through to full strategic collaboration.



Given the current economic climate of limited resources, increasing demands on services and complex community expectations, it is important that councils look at strategic collaborations and partnerships as ways to respond to these challenges<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bostonreview.net/forum/cities-hill/amy-liu-nathan-arnosti-modern-case-regional-collaboration>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018\\_Final\\_Competition-and-Collaboration.pdf](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018_Final_Competition-and-Collaboration.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ipa.ie/\\_fileUpload/Documents/StrategicCollaboration.pdf](https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/StrategicCollaboration.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

The aims and benefits of strategic collaborations, as outlined by the NSW Department of Local Government are captured in the table below<sup>9</sup>:

Aims	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture and share knowledge and innovation</li> <li>• Connect councils in maximising service delivery opportunities to meet common community needs</li> <li>• Reduce costs through elimination of duplication</li> <li>• Access economies of scale</li> <li>• Develop an effective local platform to work with other levels of government to achieve better whole of government outcomes for the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of more comprehensive services at the local and regional level</li> <li>• Promotion of joint cultural and economic development</li> <li>• Strengthened relationships between councils and other government entities</li> <li>• Improved local governance through modelling, information exchange and joint problem solving</li> <li>• Opportunities for integrated planning across local government</li> <li>• Increased access to a wider range of skills, knowledge and specialist services</li> <li>• Better use of and access to available technology</li> <li>• Better utilisation of capital and other assets, including improved investment strategy options</li> <li>• Improved economies of scale resulting in better products at a cheaper price, freeing up resources for other uses</li> </ul>

Up until now, there has been no regional approach to advocacy; nor a shared agreement or understanding of what the Riverland region needs to support long term prosperity, community wellbeing and sustainability. This has resulted in:

- A perceived lack of coordination/agreement around key issues (thereby diminishing credibility);
- Ad hoc and sub-optimal decision making and advocacy efforts; and
- Potential duplication of services and/or lack of knowledge of what is being delivered in region and by whom.

Stakeholders are very keen to see Regional Councils, strategic partners and the community working together to solve or advocate for regional issues. They also identified an opportunity to build community capacity to advocate or campaign around certain issues.

In the recent inquiry into local government costs and efficiency<sup>10</sup> the South Australian Productivity Commission made a number of recommendations to improve local government efficiency and to create capability to pass on cost reductions to rate payers. Specifically, the Commission recommended that local government:

- Facilitate in depth benchmarking between councils;
- Prioritise, in any systems upgrades, a focus on improving collection and retrieval of information for planning, monitoring and managing performance; and
- Enhance the transparency and accountability of their operations

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sapc.sa.gov.au/inquiries/inquiries/local-government-inquiry/draft-report>

## Aspirational Outcome

There is a desire amongst the Regional Councils to take a more coordinated and unified approach to advocacy and related activities. In particular we are seeking to:

- Improve communication, coordination and collaboration around regional advocacy;
- Reduce unnecessary duplication and maximise the efficient use of resources; and
- Build regional advocacy capacity (Councils, community and strategic partners).

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
Regional advocacy	High direct control  High importance to community	<p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of the <b>Riverland Advocacy Forum</b> to support the development and deployment of a shared (and clear) advocacy agenda</p> <p><b>Key first steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Review Advocacy Strategy and agree advocacy priorities and objectives for 2020/21</li> <li>• Scope, fill and fund Secretariat position</li> <li>• Develop Annual Advocacy Action Plan aligned to advocacy objectives</li> <li>• Engage with relevant key partners around advocacy priorities</li> <li>• Establish working groups as required</li> <li>• Deploy action plan</li> <li>• Monitor and report</li> </ul>	<p>Build regional advocacy capacity</p> <p>Improve communication, coordination and collaboration around regional advocacy</p>

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
Use of resources	High direct control High importance to community	<b>Lead</b> a comprehensive Asset and Services Audit with a view to develop a better (and shared) understanding of the assets, services and programs available across the region, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Community services</li> <li>• Community assets/facilities</li> </ul>	Reduced duplication of resources

### Direct Action

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	G3 Direct Action	Desired Outcomes
Use of resources	High direct control High importance to community	<b>Lead</b> the exploration of opportunities for G3 Councils to work collaboratively to deliver greater efficiencies (e.g. shared services, coordinated planning)	Reduced duplication of resources

### Key Stakeholders

- G3 Regional Councils
- MRLGA
- RDAMR
- The Community

## Water/the River

### Challenge

Water, and in particular the Murray River/Murray-Darling Basin, is the life blood of the Riverland and the State – both in terms of economic prosperity and liveability.

The Riverland's main industry, *Agriculture, Fishing & Forestry* - which represents 42% of businesses in the region, contributes \$829.6 million to Gross Regional Product (20.9%) and employs 20.9% of the workforce - is heavily reliant on water (a key cost of production); as are other key sectors such as tourism and recreation. As a result, the Riverland is very vulnerable to changes in the availability and affordability of water.

The *Murray-Darling Basin Agreement* (part of the *Water Act 2007*) sets out how water is to be shared between New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Before any water is allocated, the South Australian Government keeps water in reserve for critical human needs such as drinking, food preparation and hygiene – this is known as *Critical Human Water Needs Water* (CHWN)<sup>11</sup>. Consideration is also made to ensure there is enough water available to improve or maintain river health (environmental watering).

Thereafter, water is allocated to entitlement holders (in response to factors such as rainfall and storage levels); who can then use the water as needed or trade it on 'water markets'<sup>13</sup>. Under *The Agreement*, South Australia has an annual total entitlement of 1,850 GL; and while in most years the full entitlement is made available, in dry years South Australia's entitlement may be reduced to a 'share' of available water resources<sup>14</sup>.

In recent decades, demands on the Basin's increasingly variable flows have increased significantly, resulting in a loss of water security for communities, industries, and the environment.

CSIRO<sup>12</sup>

This, combined with low rainfall in the catchment area, and an increase in the amount of water reserved for the environmental recovery of the river, had the effect of increasing uncertainty around water allocation.

Exacerbating the situation is the way that water markets operate – which allows water to be traded out of region or across State lines to the highest bidder. This has resulted in 'churn' style purchases (i.e. to hold water and then re-sell for profit), off market deals and other speculative trading; which in turn has pushed water prices up.

In order to address water shortfalls, the South Australian and Federal governments have recently agreed to increase the use of the Adelaide Desalination plant. It currently provides Adelaide with 8 gigalitres a year and will be increased to 40 gigalitres per year – meaning an equivalent volume of water can be returned to the river and used for drought relief. If the trial is successful, the plant will provide a further 60 gigalitres in 2020/2021.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocation-and-carryover/water-allocations-and-announcements/how-water-is-allocated>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.csiro.au/en/About/Our-impact/Our-impact-in-action/Natural-environment/Water>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mdba.gov.au/managing-water/water-markets-and-trade>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocation-and-carryover/water-allocations-and-announcements/how-water-is-allocated>

The State government has previously been hesitant to increase the output of the plant due to the fact that desalinated water is roughly five times more expensive than river water to produce – costing the state \$13.5 million in 2016/2017 despite producing only 2% of South Australia’s water supply. The Federal government has agreed to pay for the increased use of the plant in the upcoming year.

The current situation has significantly and negatively impacted agricultural producers in the region by:

- Increasing uncertainty around water allocation
- Driving up production costs
- Increasing difficulties around financing the water required to operate farms
- Increasing the risk of investing in multi-generation farms
- Reducing the efficiency of irrigation channels as some farmers sell their entitlements and stop irrigating – creating ‘holes’ in irrigation area. This in turn increases maintenance costs and delivery fees for those who remain

This has ultimately resulted in:

- Job losses across the agricultural sector and related industries such as transport and services. Since 2001, employment in the *Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry* industry has reduced by 30.8%, *Administrative and Support Services* reduced by 3.2%, and *Transport, Postal and Warehousing* grew by only 7.4% despite seeing strong growth in other regions (+31.4% for South Australia as a whole)
- Reduced confidence across the business, retail and social spheres
- Population decline as people move out of the region in search of employment

“When these industries [horticulture, agriculture... and related... industries] are performing well, there is an air of confidence in the area, and conversely, when they falter through low water supply, high water prices and/or low commodity prices, confidence and socio economic wellbeing falter.”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

Some of the other challenges identified around the ‘water’ issue include:

- Economic over-reliance on water/irrigation
- Poor river navigation/signage
- Delineation of river use
- River health
- ‘Whole of basin’ inter-connectivity

“Water to the Riverland is like electricity to a city. Without it nothing runs. As a permanent plantings based horticultural region with a large amount of associated infrastructure (services providers, irrigation infrastructure etc.) this region is highly exposed to the vagaries of water supply and associated markets”.

**Subject Matter Expert Engagement**

## Aspirational Outcome

Looking forward, 'water' is seen as a key enabler for industry development, lifestyle and economic diversity within the Riverland region. We are seeking:

- Sustainable, reliable and high quality water supply
- Improved equity in water allocation across the Murray-Darling Basin
- Healthy and attractive river and environs
- Better delineation of river use
- Science-led innovation and technological improvements
- To protect and maximise the long term lifestyle, environmental and economic benefits associated with being a 'river' region

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
Water security	Low direct control  High levels of importance to the community	<p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around water security; to understand/ identify issues, agree advocacy priorities, define a realistic and relevant 'ask' and develop a coordinated response.</p> <p><b>Partner/collaborate</b> on the Region's advocacy efforts around water security, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advocate</b> to the Federal and SA Government to implement measures to better meet and manage water demand</li> <li>• <b>Advocate</b> for more equitable river regulation and responsible water use</li> <li>• <b>Advocate</b> to reduce speculation in the temporary water market;</li> <li>• <b>Support</b> the implementation of the basin-wide environmental watering strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Better water market regulation</p> <p>Improved equity in water allocation</p> <p>Affordable/reliable access to a high quality water supply</p> <p>Reduced costs of production/higher productivity</p>
Water reliance	Some direct control  High levels of importance to the community	<p><b>Partner/educate:</b> work with industry to reduce (or mitigate) the region's economic over-reliance on water through innovation and diversification</p>	<p>Industry diversification; increased GRP</p>

## Direct Action

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	G3 Direct Action	Desired Outcomes
Water security	High direct control Medium importance to community	<b>Lead</b> the responsible management of water resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake water stewardship certification</li> <li>Demonstrate leadership and innovation around responsible water use (and re-use)</li> </ul>	Better water resource management; cost savings
Leveraging the River	High direct control Medium importance to community	<b>Lead</b> the development of a Regional Waterfront Masterplan	Enhanced liveability and tourism attraction

## Key Stakeholders

- G3 Regional Councils
- Federal and State Government including local members, the Department for Environment and Water, and the Federal Environmental Water Holder
- Murray Darling Basin Association (MDBA)
- Tourism and Agriculture Industries
- The Community

## Funding Opportunities

- National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2:  
<https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/national-environmental-science-program-nesp-2>
- SA River Murray Sustainability Irrigation Industry Improvement Program:  
<https://www.business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs/SA-River-Murray-Sustainability-Irrigation-Industry-Improvement-Program>
- Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program (Possible round 3):  
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/edpgrants>

## Local Success Stories

- Collaborative farming collectives
- Improved water use efficiency programs
- South Australian River Communities group – advocacy on behalf of the regions on Basin Plan issues

## Accessibility of Region

### Challenge

A safe and efficient transport network to the East (Riverland - Mildura) and West (Riverland - Adelaide) has been identified as a significant issue regarding the accessibility of the region.

In particular, stakeholders have identified the following the issues/opportunities:

- The need for wider, higher quality roads suitable for heavy transport
- The need for new/improved/replaced bridges at several locations (including Paringa or Lyrup)
- Conflict points between arterial roads and local roads
- Carriageway crumbling and no overtaking lanes between Riverland and Mildura
- Unsealed roads in some areas
- The need for a dual highway to Waikerie/Barossa
- The need for a bypass at Truro
- A regional airport providing air transport to major centres
- Ongoing federal/state funding for ongoing costs
- A re-routing solution to B-double and triple vehicles travelling through small towns

Stakeholders have identified the accessibility of the region as an issue that impacts:

- Safety (real and perceived)
- Health
- Access to market
- Economy
- Tourism
- Trade
- Freight
- Social connectivity
- The ability to connect to air travel via Mildura

The importance of safe and efficient transport infrastructure in the region and the burden of road development and maintenance for local governments is well documented.<sup>15</sup>

In the 2019/20 Federal Budget the Government committed \$4.5 billion for the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) initiative, including an additional \$1.0 billion in the 2019-20 Budget. The Renmark to Gawler corridor was identified as a key corridor and allocated \$70.0 million.<sup>16</sup> With additional funding from the State government, a total of \$87.5 million is budgeted to upgrade the road from Renmark to Gawler with construction expected to commence in late 2020 and completed by early 2023<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rdawep.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RDSA-Regional-Infrastructure-Projects-Prioritisation-Report-2018.pdf>  
[https://www.infrastructure.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/98101/Discussion-Paper-WEB.pdf](https://www.infrastructure.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/98101/Discussion-Paper-WEB.pdf)  
<https://cdn.alga.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/ALGA-2019-Local-Government-Roads-and-Transport-Agenda.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2019\\_2020/ministerial-statement/infrastructure-regional-development-cities.aspx](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2019_2020/ministerial-statement/infrastructure-regional-development-cities.aspx)

<sup>17</sup> [https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/projects/ProjectDetails.aspx?Project\\_id=100558-18SA-RSN](https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/projects/ProjectDetails.aspx?Project_id=100558-18SA-RSN),  
<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/mccormack/media-release/feds-boost-freight-roads-south-australia>

Upgrades will include:

- Shoulder sealing;
- Road safety improvements (including at Berri bypass junctions, addressing roadside hazards and investigating the potential for wide centre median treatments);
- Overtaking lanes;
- Truro town bypass;
- Potential road realignments through Accommodation Hill (east of Truro); and
- Road rehabilitation and resurfacing.

### Aspirational Outcome

- The Riverland is serviced by high-quality and safe and efficient transport infrastructure that cuts travel times, improves safety and brings businesses closer to markets.

### Directions

#### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
Transport infrastructure	Low direct control High importance to community	<p><b>Lead</b> the convening of key stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a shared understanding of key issues (to sense check and expand upon the work undertaking on this project)</li> <li>• Develop agreement on a regional transport infrastructure agenda and advocacy priorities; and</li> <li>• Identify potential members of a working group</li> </ul> <p><b>Lead</b> the development of a united voice to advocate, educate and inform funding providers.</p> <p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around transport infrastructure; and develop a coordinated response.</p>	A safe and efficient transport network to the East (Riverland - Mildura) and West (Riverland - Adelaide)

### Key Stakeholders

- G3 Regional Councils
- Federal and State governments including local members, Road Transport Authority, and the State Transport Authority
- Cross boarder stakeholders e.g. Mildura
- Regional Development Australia Murraylands Riverland
- The Community

### **Funding Opportunities**

- Federal Government – [Roads to Recovery Program](#)
- Federal Government – [Roads of Strategic Important Program](#)

### **Local Success Stories**

- MRLGA's work with Regional Councils to prioritise remedies for conflict points

## Regional Infrastructure

### Challenge

The following issues relating to regional infrastructure have been identified as requiring intervention or attention.

- A lack of diversity of ‘non-structured’ and non-sport recreational facilities;
- Ad hoc approach to the management of recreational facilities across the region, leading to potential underutilisation and duplication;
- Insufficient tourism infrastructure (including tourist attractions and accommodation);
- Reliability of and access to telecommunications technology; and
- Access to affordable and sustainable energy.

These are explored in more detail below.

### Recreational Facilities

A lack of diversity of ‘non-structured’ and non-sport recreational facilities such as walking trails and cycling infrastructure has been identified as an opportunity to improve community wellbeing/liveability, encourage physical activity and boost visitation to the Riverland. It is also seen as an opportunity to take better advantage of the region’s exceptional natural environment and climate; and use eco-tourism and nature trails to connect the region and attract visitors.

Physical activity, including participation in sport and active recreation is linked positively to physical, social and cognitive health<sup>18</sup>. It prevents disease, promotes wellbeing, physical and mental health, improves social connectedness and quality of life; provides economic benefits through the reduction of direct and indirect health care costs and improved productivity; and supports environmental sustainability through a reduction in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions<sup>19</sup>.

Conversely, physical inactivity has been identified as the 4th leading risk factor for mortality in the world<sup>20</sup> and contributes to over three million preventable deaths annually worldwide.

This is particularly relevant and concerning to the Riverland, where the majority of residents report at least one of ‘high risk’ health behaviours<sup>21</sup> including little or no exercise and relatively high rates of obesity (ranging from an age-standardised rate [per 100] of 84.0 to 86.1 across each of the three local government areas).

Over the longer term, these community health risk factors will contribute to a rise in non-communicable disease such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer, which in turn will put increasing pressure on the already stretched health system.

Given the above, there is a significant opportunity/need for Regional Councils to work together to enable and support opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in physical activity.

*Global Advocacy for Physical Activity* (GAPA) has developed an evidence-based framework that captures the “seven best investments” for physical activity. The interventions most amenable to local government/regional action include<sup>22</sup>:

- Transport policies and systems that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport;

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/images/uploads/publications/Blueprint/Blueprint\\_Sport\\_and\\_active\\_recreation.pdf](https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/images/uploads/publications/Blueprint/Blueprint_Sport_and_active_recreation.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.globalpa.org.uk/pdf/torontocharter-eng-20may2010.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.globalpa.org.uk>

<sup>21</sup> High risk factors: current smoker, high-risk alcohol consumption, obesity, little or no physical activity

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.globalpa.org.uk/pdf/investments-work.pdf>

- Urban design regulations and infrastructure that provide for equitable and safe access for recreational physical activity, and recreation and transport-related walking and cycling across the life course;
- Public education to raise awareness and change social norms on physical activity;
- Community-wide programs involving multiple settings and sectors that mobilise and integrate community engagement and resources; and
- Sports systems and programs that promote sport for all and encourage participation across the lifespan.

Stakeholder feedback suggests there is also an opportunity to take a more integrated and ‘whole of region’ approach to the planning, development and management of recreation facilities. It is believed that this will help to reduce possible duplication and under-utilisation of current facilities; as well as support the attraction of significant sporting events to the region.

### Tourism Infrastructure

The tourism industry has been identified as a growth industry for the Riverland region. Since 2013, the annual value of tourism (measured in visitor expenditure) has grown by 29% from \$140 million to \$181 million (as at June 2019)<sup>23</sup>.

There is an identified need to increase/improve tourism infrastructure within the region so as to maximise the growth potential of the industry. Specifically there is an identified need to:

- Increase the availability and quality 3-4 star accommodation, especially during peak times; and
- Increase the number of tourist attractions in the Region.

According to Tourism SA “a focus on all parts of the visitor mix are required: growing events, creating new visitor experiences, driving increased collaboration and supporting operators”<sup>24</sup>.

### Digital Inclusion: reliability of and access to telecommunications technology

Access to telecommunications technology is now essential for people to connect, work and run businesses; and will play an increasingly important role in enabling people to participate in the Australian economy<sup>25</sup>. As more and more government, education, information and community services move online, internet access is increasingly regarded as an ‘essential service’<sup>26</sup>.

While the Murraylands and Riverland has made significant progress in terms of its telecommunications network<sup>27</sup> and is relatively well serviced, a number of issues have been identified around access to and reliability of telecommunications technology within the region, specifically:

- Capability and ability to access digital technology
- Network coverage and reliability

These are explored further below.

#### Capability and ability to access digital technology

The *Australian Digital Inclusion Index of 2018* found substantial and widening gaps between digital inclusion and exclusion for some groups of the population<sup>28</sup>. In general, Australians with low levels of income, education, and employment are significantly less digitally included. It also found that people

<sup>23</sup> <https://tourism.sa.gov.au/documents/CORP/documentMedia.ashx?A={DD38BB8F-B838-4C70-AC21-88B557A879F3}&B=True>

<sup>24</sup> <https://tourism.sa.gov.au/documents/CORP/documentMedia.ashx?A={7ED38B22-6BED-4B33-AB33-7D0882202423}&B=False>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FINAL-Digital-Futures-report.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Australian-digital-inclusion-index-2018.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> RDAMR (2019) Infrastructure Audit: Murraylands and Riverland

<sup>28</sup> <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Australian-digital-inclusion-index-2018.pdf>

65 years and older are Australia's least digitally included age group; and that the digital inclusion gap between Australians with disability and other Australians is substantial and grew in 2018.

Social-economically speaking, Riverland residents are among the most disadvantaged in Australia with 94.1% of the population living in areas of high disadvantage (as measured by the bottom 5 deciles of the *Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage*). This disadvantage is also present when isolating levels of education and occupational skills (93.1% in the bottom 5 deciles of the *Index of Education & Occupation*); and economic resources and income (66.1% in the bottom 5 deciles of the *Index of Economic Resources*).

This disadvantage together with other population characteristics such as an ageing population and relatively high levels of disability (7.1%)<sup>29</sup>, may help to explain why a large proportion (23.4%) of Riverland households do not have access to the internet (compared to 14.1% In Australia).

### Network coverage and reliability

While the majority (58.1%) of Riverland residents consider the quality of mobile phone reception in the region to be 'good', around a quarter (25.1%) of the population rate reception as 'poor'. Stakeholder feedback suggests that there are still issues around the reliability of network coverage; and the ability of people who live in outer areas to access the mobile phone network. Generally speaking, towns have better coverage than more remote areas whose reception can be unreliable and patchy.

It is important that the advantages of telecommunications are accessible to everyone in the Riverland community, not just those who can afford it; those who live in areas with reliable coverage; or those who are digitally literate. We are seeking reliable, equitable and affordable access to telecommunications technology, specifically:

- That every member of the Riverland community is able to make full use of digital technologies - to manage their health and wellbeing, participate in the economy, access education and services, and connect with friends, family and the rest of the world;
- That the benefits of the digital economy are shared equally across all members of the community.
- That telecommunications infrastructure in the Riverland fully supports industry development and attraction.

### Affordable and sustainable energy

Sufficient affordable power and energy is considered critical to investment attraction, expansion and growth within the Riverland Region.

The primary demand for power in the region is associated with the pumping of water for domestic, commercial, industrial and irrigation purposes<sup>30</sup>. According to the RDAMR, the cost and unreliability of power has been detrimental to attracting and expanding businesses within the region<sup>31</sup>. Furthermore, long lead times for electrical infrastructure and augmentation has hindered commercial and development activity; and impeded the region's ability to attract economic investment.

There is also an identified need to increase gas supply to support the development and expansion of food processing and manufacturing, particularly in Loxton, Renmark and Waikerie<sup>32</sup>.

Stakeholder feedback has also identified prohibitive power costs as an inhibitor to night time activation (sporting grounds etc.).

<sup>29</sup> Measured as the need for assistance with day-to-day activities due to a health condition, disability, or old age

<sup>30</sup> RDAMR (2019). Infrastructure Audit: Murraylands and Riverland

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

## Aspirational Outcome

- A wide range of quality recreational opportunities that support lifelong physical activity and help to attract people to the region;
- Reliable, equitable and affordable access to telecommunications technology;
- A quality tourism offering that supports a thriving tourism and events industry and attracts domestic and international visitors; and
- Reliable access to affordable and sustainable energy.

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Reliability of and access to telecommunications technology</b>	Low influence High importance to the community	<b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around telecommunications infrastructure; to understand/identify issues, agree advocacy priorities and develop a coordinated response  <b>Advocate</b> to the Federal government and telecommunications providers for reliable and affordable telecommunications technology (partner/collaborate)	High levels of reliable telecommunications technology
<b>Access to affordable and sustainable energy</b>	Low control High importance to the community	<b>Support</b> a region-wide energy audit to understand the location and magnitude of existing power constraints (RDAMR-led); and use findings to inform advocacy efforts  <b>Partner</b> to develop a regional approach to ensure secure energy provision (including the potential for solar energy)	Improved access to reliable and affordable energy; reduced carbon footprint; improved economic productivity

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Insufficient tourism infrastructure</b> (including tourist attractions and accommodation)	Some control  Med-High importance to the community	<b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around tourism infrastructure; to understand/identify issues, agree advocacy priorities and develop a coordinated response  <b>Partner</b> to increase tourism infrastructure, including accommodation	Sufficient high quality tourism infrastructure; increased visitation
<b>Recreational opportunities</b>	Some control  Medium importance to the community	<b>Partner</b> to attract large cross-regional events that fully utilise recreational facilities across the entire region	Increased in-region events; increased economic activity  Maximise utilisation of regional facilities

## Direct Action

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	G3 Direct Action	Desired Outcomes
<b>Reliability of and access to telecommunications technology</b>	Medium influence High importance to the community	<b>Lead/Partner</b> to build the capacity of the Riverland community to access and use telecommunications and digital technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital literacy programs</li> <li>In-library access and support</li> <li>Technology hubs</li> </ul> <b>Facilitate</b> better (online) access to Council – online payments, information sharing, community engagement (lead) <b>Support</b> through education and customer support (lead)	Increased levels of digital technology use within the Riverland community
<b>Recreational opportunities</b> (see also Working Age Population Priority Area)	Med-High direct control Med-High importance to community	<b>Lead</b> collaboration between councils to review the recreational facilities and programs currently available and develop an aligned plan for future activities	A diverse range of quality recreational opportunities within and across the region  Reduced duplication of facilities and programs
<b>Insufficient tourism infrastructure (including tourist attractions and accommodation)</b>	Some control Med-High importance to the community	Explore ways G3 Councils can facilitate/support an increase in tourism accommodation (lead)	Sufficient high quality tourism infrastructure

## Key Stakeholders

In addition to the G3 Regional Councils and the Community, the following stakeholders have been identified:

### Recreation infrastructure

- Federal and State Government including Local Members, State Department of Sport & Recreation
- Local businesses (including tourism providers and sports & recreation providers)
- Community organisations (sporting clubs, recreation clubs, social clubs etc.)

### Technology infrastructure

- Federal and State Government including Local Members, Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, State Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Regional government departments
- Telstra
- Local industry, businesses, landowners and service providers (health, education, etc.)

### Tourism infrastructure and advocacy

- Federal and State Government including Local Members, South Australian Tourism Commission
- Destination Riverland
- Local Industry and businesses

### Energy infrastructure

- RDAMR
- Federal and State Government including Local Members, State Department for Energy and Mining
- Local Industry and businesses

### Funding Opportunities

- Mobile Black Spots Program - <https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/mobile-services-and-coverage/mobile-black-spot-program>
- Smart Cities and Suburbs – <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/smart-cities/>
- Building Digital Skills Grant - <https://www.beconnectednetwork.org.au/grant-program/building-digital-skills-grants>
- Federal Government ASBAS Digital Solutions Program – delivered to regional communities through the [Adelaide Business Hub](#)
- Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund <https://www.energy.gov.au/government-priorities/energy-programs/regional-and-remote-communities-reliability-fund>
- SA State Government, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing - [Community Recreation and Sporting Facilities](#)

## Working Age Population

### Challenge

When we look at the demographics of the Riverland Region, specifically those relating to growth, age structure, inward/outward migration and household composition, we can see a clear decline in the relative size of the working age population; with less working age people (15 – 64 years) in the region than those of retirement age or older. According to stakeholder feedback, this issue has been driven by the loss of Riverland's young people to metropolitan centres in search of education, employment or lifestyle opportunities. This is supported by secondary research, which shows that, on average, more young people have moved out of the Riverland than have migrated in over the past 15 years.

A range of social and economic indicators provide some insight around the potential impact of limited opportunities available to youth and young adults. For example, youths aged 15 to 24 represent the cohort with the highest level of unemployment (7.1%) in the region. They are unlikely to be enrolled in University (3.6%) or TAFE (5.6%), and – with only 82.1% involved in school, work or further education or training – are considered relatively disengaged overall.

A declining working population can hinder economic growth through labour shortages and reduced productivity; with potentially detrimental consequences for housing markets, local government finances and consumer spending<sup>33,34</sup>. It can also put pressure on the healthcare system due to changing health profiles, increased demand for health services and rising health costs<sup>35</sup>.

Increasing the rate of youth participation in the economy provides significant benefits to the community as a whole. Engaged youths are less likely to experience negative social and economic outcomes – including social isolation, involvement in anti-social or illicit activities, financial disadvantage and mental or physical health issues – resulting in an increased levels of wellbeing across the lifetime. Evidence also suggests that youths are more likely to display early entrepreneurial behaviour such as creativity and community mobilisation than older cohorts. The potential for youth contributions to positively impact the economy extends beyond that of simply increasing the number of individuals at work.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.nikkoam.com.au/adviser/articles/2018/09/a-numbers-game-the-changing-face-of-demographics>

<sup>34</sup> <https://wol.iza.org/news/declining-working-age-population-is-a-major-problem-for-the-us-economy-study-finds>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2014/contents/table-of-contents>

This is not a new or unique issue for regional areas. Research on rural youth frequently cites outmigration – sometimes referred as ‘brain drain’ - as a significant issue facing rural communities.<sup>36</sup>

“...the cost of population churn, especially in small remote communities, can be high. Over and above the high cost of transporting, settling and integrating workers and their families to a community, there are considerable, often intangible costs, such as the disruption to services, the turnover in social networks such as sporting teams, clubs and social support groups and the need to develop local knowledge, understand local nuances and networks. At a local level community organisations, especially local government authorities, understand the potential personal and community costs associated with population churn and several have developed successful strategies to welcome workers and their families to ameliorate the sometimes uncomfortable settling-in process and so retain people in the community longer.”

**McKenzie, 2011**

According to stakeholder feedback, one of the key factors contributing to the region’s declining working age population is a lack of opportunity for youth, young adults and families, leading to an outward migration of these groups.

There are a number of specific factors contributing to this situation. The first, is that while the quality and affordability of education within the region is generally considered to be good, there is limited ‘in region’ access to university education; coupled with limited curriculum choice (health is the only university pathway offered in region). This has resulted in the tendency for young people to move out of region, often to Adelaide, to complete their tertiary studies sometimes at significant social and economic cost.

Stakeholder feedback also suggests that schools (and the Riverland community more generally) encourage young people to aspire to a university education even though only 15-20% of Year 12 students attain this. It is thought that this might be to the detriment of alternative pathways such as trades/apprenticeships and TAFE. There is also concern that high school students not accepted into university might become disenchanted and disengaged. Related to this is the recent downsizing of the TAFE at Berri, which has found it difficult to attract and sustain the minimum number of enrolments required to run certain subjects.

Another factor contributing to the loss of youth, young people and families from the region is a lack of appropriate services, facilities and support targeted to these age groups; including a lack of diverse non-structured recreational facilities (e.g. walking trails, cycling infrastructure, skate parks), entertainment and lifestyle options and limited access to childcare and early education.

<sup>36</sup> [https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/young\\_people\\_in\\_regional\\_rural\\_and\\_remote\\_australia.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/young_people_in_regional_rural_and_remote_australia.pdf)

Whilst there is some discussion about the degree to which youth outmigration affects rural communities, there are indications that communities would greatly benefit from strategies to **maintain ties** with the young people who have left. The determining factor for young people deciding to return is the contribution that they perceive they can make in their communities.<sup>37</sup>

Another identified opportunity for the Riverland is to **improve engagement with education**, which research shows leads to improved educational outcomes. Education also provides a smoother transition to employment; and young people with higher education levels are able to contribute to a greater degree in their communities.

Other strategies used by regional communities to reduce outmigration and encourage inward migration of young people and working age individuals and families include<sup>38</sup>:

- Providing a variety of housing styles and lifestyle opportunities;
- Enabling good regional career pathways for young professionals;
- Offering good public transport with connections to regional/metropolitan centres;
- The creation of support structures for young people and families;
- Better access to youth and family oriented health services;
- The promotion of the benefits of a rural lifestyle; and
- The provision of a range of recreational opportunities, including facilities to support popular sport (e.g. skating), more recreation not linked to drugs or alcohol; and the creation of inclusive culture and arts opportunities.

### Aspirational Outcome

The ability to attract, develop and retain skilled staff is seen as a limitation to regional growth; and increasing Riverland's working age population has been identified as a key priority area.

Our ambition is that:

- Our young adults are choosing to stay in the region and are thriving; and
- Working age individuals and families are choosing to stay, return or migrate to the region and are thriving.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.yacvic.org.au/assets/Documents/Staying-in-touch-Young-people-maintaining-relationships-with-rural-and-regional-communities-VRYS-March-2014.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/archive/rrc/inquiries/YoungPeople/submissions/90\\_CoGB.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/archive/rrc/inquiries/YoungPeople/submissions/90_CoGB.pdf)

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Optimise the attractiveness of the region for working age individuals and families</b>	<p>Medium direct control</p> <p>High importance to community</p>	<p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around the working age population; to understand/identify issues, agree advocacy priorities and develop a coordinated response.</p> <p><b>Partner/collaborate</b> for access to services that meet the needs of working age individuals and young families (see later sections where these specific areas are addressed - health, transport connections, housing)</p> <p><b>Monitor/report</b> on the evidence related to the size and composition of the working age population and families within the region</p> <p><b>Partner</b> to develop a campaign to attract and retain working age individuals and families to the region</p> <p><i>See the sections below (Equitable Access to Services and Support and Housing) for more detail on G3 Advocacy Responses</i></p>	<p>Increases in working age populations within the region</p> <p>Increases in the levels of health services, inter region transport connections, and affordable/ fit for purpose housing within the region</p>

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>In-region access to post-secondary education and training opportunities</b>	Low direct control  High importance to community	<p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around education, training and career pathways; to understand/ identify issues, agree advocacy priorities and develop a coordinated response.</p> <p><b>Support/enable</b> the expansion of an in-region study hub</p> <p><b>Partner</b> to understand and mitigate any barriers to remote/online learning</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> for reliable, relevant and sustainable in-region access to a TAFE education (lead or partner)</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> for the introduction of in-region courses that support local employment and industry growth (lead or partner)</p> <p><b>Monitor and report</b> on evidence related to the number of 15-24 year olds involved in school, work and further education and training within the region</p>	Increase number of 15-24 year olds involved in school, work and further education and training
<b>In-region career pathways and employment opportunities</b>	Low direct control  High importance to community	<p><b>Explore and educate</b> others on how the State Government's <a href="#">Apprenticeship Program</a> can benefit the Riverland</p> <p><b>Educate</b> local businesses on the benefits of apprenticeships and the <a href="#">resources/support</a> they can access</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> to educational institutions, government agencies and industry to facilitate better access to in-region career pathways, including apprenticeships (lead or partner)</p> <p><b>Monitor and report</b> on the evidence related to apprenticeships and employment within the region</p>	<p>Increase number of apprenticeships in region</p> <p>Increase the number of work experience opportunities resulting in future employment</p>

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Opportunities for a wide range of non-traditional recreational facilities and programs in the region</b>	Med-High direct control  Med-High importance to community	<b>Lead</b> advocacy for funding for the improvement/increase non-traditional sporting facilities (e.g. skate parks)  <b>Monitor and report</b> on the evidence related to youth social and economic indicators within the region	Increased availability and use of non-traditional sporting facilities  Improvement in youth and working age social and economic indicators  Increases in the youth and working age populations within the region

### Direct Action

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	G3 Direct Action	Desired Outcomes
<b>Optimise the attractiveness of the region for young people, working age individuals and families</b>	High direct control  Med-High importance to community	<b>Lead:</b> specifically consider the needs of the working age population in local government planning and strategy development (planning, built and natural environment, support structures, recreation facilities/ opportunities, services)  <b>Lead:</b> maintain ties with young people leaving the region through social media, emails	Increases in the youth and working age populations within the region
<b>Optimise the attractiveness of the region for young people, working age individuals and families</b>	Med-High direct control  Med-High importance to community	<b>Lead/partner</b> to increase the range of opportunities for and engagement in sporting facilities and programs	Increases in the youth and working age populations within the region
<b>In region career pathways</b>	High direct control  Medium importance to community	<b>Lead:</b> plan for and enable regional career pathways for young professionals within local government	Increase in-region employment opportunities

“Schools and communities need to be engaged to start the process - it will not work if there's a top down approach from Government. [We need to] get the support mechanisms in place at [the] grass-roots level first.”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

### Key Stakeholders

- G3 Regional Councils
- State and Federal Government including Local Members, Department for Education, Department of Human Services (Office for Youth), Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA)
- Educational Institutions (Universities/TAFEs)
- RDAMR
- MRLGA
- Service providers
- Business community
- Agriculture Industry
- The Community

### Funding Opportunities

- [Destination Australia Program](#) [Flinders University in Renmark](#) have been allocated 12 scholarships for domestic and international students
- [Regional Growth Fund](#) (PIRSA)
- SA State Government, Department of Planning Transport & Infrastructure - [Open Space and Public Realm Investment](#)

### Local Success Stories

- Jobs4Murraylands Program
- Nursing course established in Renmark
- Aged care training established in Loxton (subsidised by local Health Advisory Councils (HAC))
- Career Connections Program (RDAMR)
- Some early collaboration between schools and local industry

“The Jobs4Murraylands program is proving to be a great success. It is addressing some of the workforce gaps, employment outcomes high, low dropout rates and in 2017 was shortlisted for a National Training Award”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

## Equitable Access to Services and Support

### Challenge

A wide range of issues were identified relating to equitable access to services and support. These have been grouped into three categories:

- Accessibility within the region – specifically relating to public transport;
- Difficulties with navigating the community support system; and
- The availability, sufficiency, and timeliness of health services.

These are explored in more detail below.

### Accessibility within the Region

Transport in rural areas is a recognised as a national challenge for places outside of our major cities characterised by small populations over large areas.

Transport disadvantage can be defined as the difficulty accessing transport (public and private) and/or difficulties associated with maintaining private transport as a result of cost, availability of services or poor physical accessibility.<sup>39</sup> In the Riverland, stakeholder engagement has identified transport disadvantage with the local transport network both intra and inter towns. This is supported by secondary research which estimates that the majority of the Riverland community (72.6%) would rate their ability to access public transport networks as “poor”. As a result, the percentage of residents that use public transport when commuting to work is low (6.5%, compared to 11.1% for South Australia as a whole).

Overall, the age-standardised rate (per 100) of individuals that have difficulty accessing transport in each of the three local government areas varies from 2.8 to 3.5. The impact of transport disadvantage is further complicated by factors such as households not having access to a motor vehicle (5.3%) and the large distances residents are required to travel to places of work (ranging from a median of 5.1 to 8.8 km across each of the three local government areas).

Research indicates that transport disadvantage is more likely to be prevalent in the following groups: young people; women; families with young children; unemployed people; those on low incomes; senior citizens; culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people; Indigenous Australians; and people with a disability<sup>40</sup>.

In the Riverland, restrictive public transport scheduling can result in the requirement for overnight stays when accessing health care in other towns. Another identified issue is the Patient Assisted Transport Scheme (PATs) which is seen as antiquated; poorly funded; and difficult to access. Stakeholders were also concerned that a lack of access to public transport was limiting the ability of young people to secure and maintain intra-regional work.

<sup>39</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/relationship-between-transport-and-disadvantage-austr>

<sup>40</sup> Currie & Senbergs (2007) Indigenous communities: Transport disadvantage and Aboriginal communities. In Currie, Stanley, & Stanley (Eds.), No way to go: Transport and social disadvantage in Australian communities. Melbourne: Monash University Press. Currie, Stanley, & Stanley (2007) No way to go: Transport and social disadvantage in Australian communities. Melbourne: Monash University Press.

## Difficulties with navigating the health care and community support system

In a perfect world, all individuals would have the capability to make rational independent choices about their health care and support arrangements. In practice, the health and community support system is complex and is struggling to provide equitable access to care for all Australians<sup>41</sup>. The system is difficult to negotiate with multiple tiers and avenues for services.

Difficulty in navigating health care and community support creates barriers to accessing services and support for those most in need. One term used to describe this issue is ‘service navigation’ – how individuals understand the service system they are participating in and how they can make informed decisions about the care and service offering they wish to access.<sup>42</sup> This definition suggests a notion of choice that is often not present in the Riverland adding an additional layer to an already inequitable environment.

Stakeholder engagement identified the need for support with service navigation including educating people on how to access information; use it purposefully; and how to talk to the right people. NDIS, aged care, and mental health were identified as particular areas of difficulty.

## The availability and sufficiency of health services

A recent report by the Federal Government body, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare stated that “On average, Australians living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services, compared with people living in metropolitan areas. Poorer health outcomes in rural and remote areas may be due to multiple factors including lifestyle differences and a level of disadvantage related to education and employment opportunities, as well as access to health services”.<sup>43</sup>

Stakeholder engagement identified a range of specific issues related to the availability and sufficiency of health services including:

### General issues related to Health Services

- Limited range of specialists in region
- Long wait-times for visiting specialists
- The need to travel to Adelaide for specialist consultations and treatment
- Challenges in attracting and retaining training staff
- Limited access to allied health and hospital ‘add-ons’
- Large distances between services
- Lack of shared understanding of what is actually available in region
- Duplication of services in some areas
- Long GP wait times/limited access to GPs/lack of service continuity
- Affordability of health care

### Mental Health Services

- Only basic mental services are offered.
- Those mental health services that are available are insufficient to meet current demand
- Little follow-up of mental health patients
- Insufficient preventative/proactive services

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/australian-health-services-too-complex-to-navigate.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Davidson, Connolly, and Hampson (2019) Service Navigation, Red Globe Press, London

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-remote-health/contents/access-to-health-care>

### Addiction Services

- Insufficient drug and alcohol support services (no in-region detox facility)
- To access addiction services residents must either travel to Adelaide or be admitted to the Riverland General Hospital under the band of “mental health”.
- Limited staff in region and long term issues attracting and retaining staff
- Opposing views in the community on the nature/cause of issue (i.e. crime vs social/health) and how it should be addressed
- Available data underestimates the number of admissions due to addiction, leading to insufficient government funding

“[There’s a] constant blame game over which Government [Federal or State] should provide [addiction services], and little or no appetite from local health management to pick up this service... All sits in too hard basket.”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

### Disability and Aged Care Services

- Only large organisations are registering for NDIS and Aged Care leading to smaller providers leaving the region
- Not enough aged care packages and insufficient home support packages
- Limitations to the quality, variety, volume of aged care and NDIS services
- NDIS system difficult to navigate with inconsistent assessment outcomes and misalignment of funding to client need
- Challenges around inclusion, especially for those living with an intellectual disability
- Accessibility focused on compliance rather than practical access
- Limited in-region residential facilities for working age people with disabilities; with many living in aged care facilities not suited to their needs
- For the elderly, transport can be difficult, especially for those ageing at home
- The number of affordable and appropriate rental properties is insufficient to meet demand

“On the whole the region needs to recognise the diversity of its citizens and that vulnerable individuals such as those with disability or in aged care should be included in forward planning”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

## Other Health Services

- Limited services for domestic violence (including emergency accommodation)
- There are no or insufficient services for Paediatrics; Obesity; Dentistry; Cardiology; Dialysis; Oncology; and preventative health services

“[I would advocate for] a resident paediatrician, and a resident oncologist. I have no confidence that this will be successful because of the constraints of the health budget and the intransigence of the AMA who continue to write guidelines for various medical protocols which benefit doctors practicing in capital cities to the disadvantage of rural doctors.”

## Stakeholder Feedback

The following indicators provide **evidence of the need for** available and sufficient health services in the Riverland, as well as the **impact** that inaccessibility may have had on health concerns:

- The age-standardized rate (per 100) of residents that consume alcohol at levels considered to be a high risk to their health over their lifetime (i.e. more than 2 standard drinks per day, on average) ranges from 14.3 to 16.7 across the three local government areas.
- An estimated 21.6% of the population in the South East, South Australia region (the closest Statistical Area Level 4 to the Riverland) have used an illicit drug in the past year.
- The number of people that report methamphetamine use may be declining, but for those people that do use the drug, their use has increased in recent years.
- The age-standardised rate (per 100) of residents that are *obese* ranges from 35.0 to 39.1 across the three local government areas.
- The age-standardised rate (per 100) of residents that have mental health or behavioural problems ranges from 16.9 to 18.4 across the three local government areas.
- The number of residents that receive treatment for their mental health conditions in local Emergency Departments has increased by 28.5% from 2014 to 2018.
- The average annual age-standardised rate (per 100,000) of deaths by suicide and self-inflicted injuries ranges from 11.7 to 12.9 across the three local government areas.
- The estimated proportion of residents that are homeless or at risk of homelessness is 0.77% in the Murray & Mallee region (the closest Statistical Area Level 3 to the Riverland).
- The proportion of children in their first year of full-time school whose physical health and wellbeing is considered developmentally at risk or vulnerable is 26.8%.
- The proportion of residents that identify as needing assistance with core activities (including self-care, mobility and communication) because of a health condition, disability, or old age is 7.1%.
- The age-standardised rate (per 100) of residents with fair or poor self-assessed health ranges from 17.5 to 18.3 across the three local government areas.

## Aspirational Outcome

We are seeking:

- Affordable, reliable, accessible transport within the region for all
- Individuals in the community are equipped or supported in health service navigation
- Health services are sufficient and available

“[We need to become the] leading region to showcase locals supporting locals”

**Stakeholder Feedback**

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Public transport accessibility within the region</b>	Some direct control  High importance to the community	<p><b>Lead</b> the establishment of a working group around improving access to public transport; to understand/ identify issues, agree advocacy priorities, define a realistic and relevant ‘ask’ and develop a coordinated response.</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> for government funding for intra-regional transport services</p> <p><b>Collaborate</b> on improvements to the accessibility of PAT services</p>	A minimum base level of affordable, reliable, accessible transport within the region

Priority Areas	Control/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
<b>Health Services</b>	Some direct control  High importance to the community	<p><i>The key response from the community was for <b>collaboration</b> between stakeholders to provide a coordinated approach to health services within the region<sup>44</sup></i></p> <p><b>Partner</b> to establish a working group around Equitable Access to Services and Support; to understand/identify issues, agree advocacy priorities, define a realistic and relevant ‘ask’ and develop a coordinated response</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> for increased access to health services including: specialists, mental health, drugs and alcohol, detox, and psychology.</p>	Improving the availability, sufficiency and timeliness of health services

## Key Stakeholders

- G3 Regional Councils
- State and Federal Government including Local Members, State Department for Education, SA Health, Department of Transport, Department of Social Services, Department of Human Services
- Hospitals, GPs and local providers (including Allied Health, Aged Care and NDIS)
- Local College of Rural Doctors
- Local Health Network
- Local HAC
- Drug Action Team
- Riverland Community Services Alliance
- NGOs/service providers
- Local business
- The Community

## Funding Opportunities

- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) - [Individual Capacity Building Program 2020-2021](#)
- Australian Government, Department of Health - [Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission](#)
- Australian Government, Department of Health - [Dementia and Aged Care Services \(DACS\) Fund](#)
- Australian Government, Department of Health - [Community Visitors Scheme \(CVS\)](#)
- Australian Government, Department of Health - [More Doctors for Rural Australia Program](#)

<sup>44</sup> Including between the following groups: Local HAC (Loxton & Districts, Berri Barmera, Renmark Paringa & Waikerie); the three regional councils; allied health service providers; NGO's; and the Drug Action Team.

## Local Success Stories

- An MRI service was recently funded and will go on-line in 2020. It will improve the provision of services, particularly for orthopaedics.
- Funding for 6 rehab beds secured following advocacy efforts by the Riverland Drug Action Team
- The introduction of a pilot MATRIX program (2019 – 2020)
- A cooperative of disability providers working with the South Australian Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure initiated an integrated transport service more than 10 years ago to provide transport to day services and employment.
- The Disability Alliance Group run by Regional Development Australia was helpful

## Housing

### Challenge

Two issues have been identified with respect housing in the region, the first is a lack of **available housing** and the second is the **affordability of housing**.

Stakeholders have identified a lack of available housing across many areas based on location, size, and type. Pressure areas include public housing and privately owned rentals, ‘fit for purpose’ housing for those with disabilities, family homes to purchase in the \$250,000 to \$600,000 range and single dwelling homes.

Affordable housing has also been identified as a significant issue, specifically<sup>45</sup>:

- Undersupply of quality affordable housing;
- High barriers to property ownership;
- Lack of options for older people downsizing;
- Emergency and transitional accommodation often at capacity;
- Lack of transport hampering access to services; and
- Long wait times for public housing<sup>46</sup>

Stakeholders expressed concern that the lack of affordable and available housing was negatively impacting health and wellbeing within the region; hindering economic growth; and the ability to attract youth and young families into the region.

Those most heavily affected are individuals/families on benefits or pensions with single adults and young people also struggling.

The properties that are available within an appropriate price range tend to be lower in quality, have less security and are located out of the major Riverland towns. This leads to a requirement for transport to access the town for shopping, medical appointments, etc.

Available data indicates that while the overall rate of home ownership in the Riverland is similar to other regions, outright ownership is more common (37.3%, compared to 32.7% in South Australia) and ownership via a mortgage less so (30.8%, compared to 35.4% in South Australia). This may be explained, in part, by the large proportion of residents in the region that have reached retirement age or older, who are more likely to have completed the process of repaying their homes. It also suggests a lack of demand for home ownership by residents that have yet to enter the property market. The stability of housing values in the Murraylands and Riverland region (+1.2% from 2014 to 2018), despite strong growth in Regional South Australia (+15.8%), South Australia (+12.9%) and Australia (+25.7%), provides support for this theory.

Average rental costs in the region have also stayed relatively stable (+4.2%). Rental housing prices are highly correlated with local opportunities for employment and the finding is consistent with a low level of demand. Additional barriers - such as the price or adequacy of housing – are also likely to have an influence on the tenancy decisions of residents, as the feedback from stakeholders has suggested.

<sup>45</sup> Feedback received from stakeholders attending the *State Housing and Homelessness Strategy* Roundtable held in Berri in August 2019 (hosted by South Australian Housing Authority)

<sup>46</sup> Stakeholder engagement feedback

Fewer low-income households in the three Riverland local government areas experience housing stress than in other regions, suggesting that the cost of housing is relatively in-line with the household incomes. With higher rates of individuals that are homeless or at risk of homelessness, issues with housing in the Riverland may be more closely related to accessibility and social support.

The South Australian government has been progressively selling its stock of public housing in order to fund other activities. Some of this gap has been addressed by an increase in the number of houses provided by not-for-profit organisations.

“In the future each community will be more responsible for overseeing their populations as governments handball the onus to local councils and communities. We need to be proactive and to form our own housing foundations to oversee housing and homelessness in our region.”

**Stakeholder feedback**

## Aspirational Outcome

We are seeking

- A public and private housing supply that matches the needs of the community; and
- A future where all members of the Riverland community are living in affordable housing.

## Directions

### Advocacy Response

Priority Areas	Sphere of Influence/Importance	Advocacy Response	Desired Outcomes
Available and affordable housing	Some influence Medium importance to the community	<p><b>Partner</b> to establish a working group around housing; to understand/ identify issues, agree advocacy priorities, define a realistic and relevant ‘ask’ and develop a coordinated response.</p> <p>In parallel, <b>Partner</b> to hold a <b>Housing Options Forum</b> with key partners to identify possible solutions and interventions and to understand what is available within region and identify housing gaps</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> to real estate agents and developers to invest in the region (lead/partner)</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> to the South Australian Housing Authority for better in-region access to social and public housing (partner)</p>	Improved public and private housing supply matched to the needs of the community

## Direct Action

Priority Areas	Sphere of Influence/Importance	G3 Direct Action	Desired Outcomes
Available and affordable housing	Medium influence Medium importance to the community	Explore opportunities for local government interventions to increase housing availability/stock (lead)	Improved housing supply matched to the needs of the community

## Key Stakeholders

- Regional Councils
- State and Federal Government including Local Members, South Australian Housing Authority, Department of Social Services
- RDAMR
- Real Estate Agents
- Property Industry
- The Community

## Funding Opportunities

- Australian Government, Department of Social Services - [National Rental Affordability Scheme](#)
- State Government, [Affordable Homes Program](#)
- SA State Government – [PR Connect](#) (for help paying bond or rent)

## Local Success Stories

- [ac.care](#) conducted trials on different models of homelessness support (although this has been limited by funding and resources)