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Regional
Development
Australia
Riverina
Annual Report



Vision

RDA Riverina - facilitating regional growth and prosperity

Vision

The RDA Riverina region will be renowned for its excellence in all dimensions – economic, social and environmental – with an emphasis on innovation, life-long learning, healthy living and an optimistic, outward looking culture based on confidence, resilience and social inclusion.

Mission

RDA Riverina will build partnerships that facilitate the development of a sustainable region.

Values

RDA Riverina embraces and supports the following values:

- Innovation/creativity
- Commitment to a learning culture
- Inclusiveness
- Sustainability
- Optimism

Cover image credit:
Kara Rosenlund

RDA Riverina connects communities, business and government to projects, programs, services, funding and other people.

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Our role

Building strong, confident and vibrant regions



Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a national network of Committees made up of local leaders who work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the economic development of their regions. RDA Riverina plays a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Riverina.

Through collaboration, knowledge sharing and facilitation, RDA Riverina leverages the skills and expertise of its networks to develop local solutions to local problems. The results are evidenced by the number of regional businesses, councils, industry sectors and community groups supported each year, and the region-relevant advice given to Government on issues critical to the economic prosperity of the Riverina. This Annual Report showcases some of RDA Riverina's key areas of progress, activities and achievements in 2018/2019.

In 2018/2019, RDA Riverina changed its focus and developed structural adjustments that made us less reliant on grant funding. RDA Riverina introduced a suite of professional services that are now on offer on a fee-for-service basis.

They include:

- Grant Writing/Proofing
- Statistics
- Economic Impact Analysis
- Report Writing
- Business Award Writing Assistance/Mentoring
- Investment Impact Analysis for Business Case
- Data Subscription
- Tourism Impact Analysis
- Regional/Local Economic Profile
- Secretariat Services

Professional Services Testimonial

"The assistance and information provided by the RDA Riverina has been invaluable in our assessment of our funding applications before submission. The letter of support and projected jobs growth figures as well as the possible benefits to our region from our development, allowed us to confidently apply for the funding. The RDA Riverina are committed to providing quality information that is useful and easy to incorporate in feasibility and budgeting project costs"

- Debbie Blanchard (Executive, L.P.C Trading)



Message from the CEO



Rachel Whiting

CEO and Director of Regional Development

RDA Riverina commenced 2018 with a reviewed RDA Charter, a new funding agreement taking the organisation into 2020 and performance measures setting the direction for the next 3 years. This direction will focus on attracting Investment, fostering Innovation and workforce development.

Despite the disruption experienced through this period and the relocation of RDA Riverina offices to Charles Sturt University with the plan of being a critical first tenant of the CSU AgriPark, our wonderful staff and supportive committee kept this organisation moving in a positive direction, for which I would like to thank them.

Miriam Dayhew took on the role of Acting Chair from January 1st and was later appointed Chair by the Minister. Later in 2018, Ms Dayhew resigned her position due to a change in employment and Kerry Penton took on the role of Acting Chair. Staff consisted of the CEO Rachel Whiting also taking on the Director of Regional Development position, Marg Couch as part-time Project Officer, Faye Anderson as the Skilled Migration Officer, and Elliot Lee as the Research Officer.

The new funding agreement which did not include NSW state government assistance has highlighted the opportunity for RDA Riverina to provide extra professional services on fee-for-service basis to make up the short fall in budget.

The RDA Riverina committee members held two meetings in 2018, in Leeton Shire and Wagga City, and two meetings in early 2019, in Tumut and Hay. Committee members gained substantial insight and appreciation for the diversity, productive capacity and economic development opportunities that the region presents through these visits and presentations from Council Mayors, General Managers and representatives.

The 2018/2019 year saw RDA Riverina produce the Riverina Regional Profile, create a new research officer position to support an expanded suite of professional services now offered, consolidate the workforce development plan which includes the launch of a digital jobs platform Jobs Riverina, continue to reinvigorate Country Change, begin moves to act as the honest broker for Grow Our Own, takeover and expand the Grow Our Own program with additional funds to support a part-time Industry Liaison Officer, run multiple workshops, industry tours, development officer forums and partner for the second year with AgriFutures Australia to celebrate National Ag Day and partner with Destination Riverina Murray to begin planning for a Tourism Business Accelerator across the Riverina and Murray regions.

RDA Riverina provided feedback in writing and through consultation with the Australian Government's Regional Telecommunications Review and Our CEO and Director completed research on communications accessibility in Coolamon Shire.

This direction will focus on attracting Investment, fostering Innovation and workforce development.

About RDA Riverina

Regional Development Australia Riverina (RDA Riverina) is part of an Australian Government initiative based on building partnerships and responding to local priorities and needs.



It is a facilitator of networks and partnerships, and a provider of information and economic and social support to the communities of the Riverina. We serve as a conduit between government and local communities.



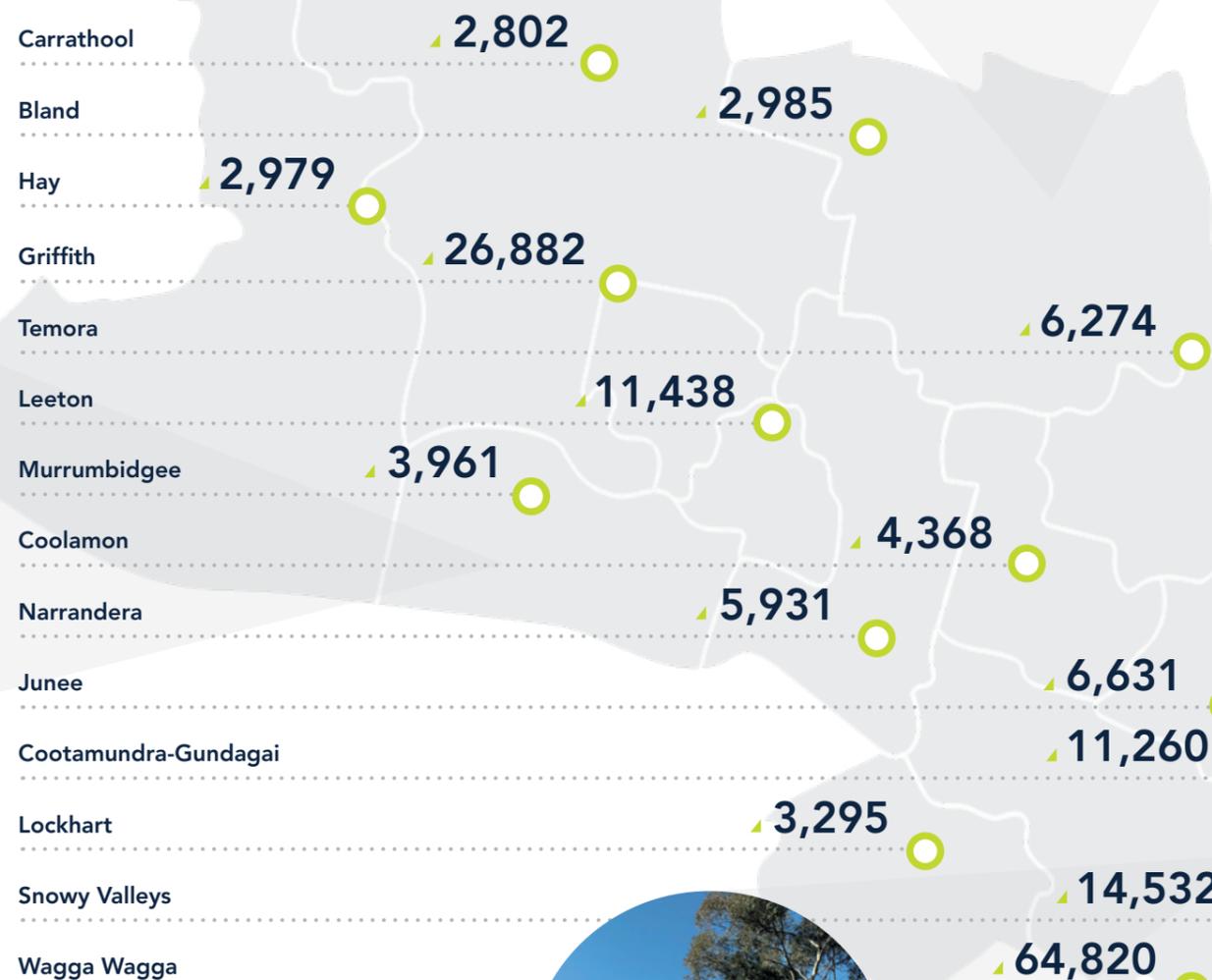
RDA Riverina covers 14 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and includes the major centres of Wagga Wagga and Griffith.

A non-profit, community-based organisation, RDA Riverina is steered by a committee of 12 members from across the region who represent local government, businesses and communities. Collectively, the Committee brings a broad and diverse skills base and demonstrated networks and alliances to the organisation.

The work of the RDA Riverina is undertaken by a small but passionate team based across the region led by a Chief Executive Officer who also holds the role of Director Regional Development.



Population



Map of 14 LGAs covered by RDA Riverina (Reference: <https://rdariverina.org.au/our-region/>)

Data Source: 3218.0 Regional Population Growth Australia (Released at 11.30am (Canberra Time) 27 March 2019)

Regional profile

The Riverina is an agricultural region of south-western New South Wales (NSW), which extends from the foothills of the Snowy Mountains north west through the Murrumbidgee River catchment area to the flat dry inland plains of Hay and Carrathool.



The **RDA Riverina region** covers an area of 80,545km² and services an estimated population of 171,158 (REMPPLAN, as of June 30, 2019). It comprises the regional cities of Wagga Wagga and Griffith and the local government areas of Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Gundagai, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys and Temora.

Employment is primarily driven by agribusiness and service industries. RDA Riverina estimates that **89,561** people were in the labour force in the Riverina region as of **March 2019**.



Gross Regional Product

\$11.9 Billion



Median Age

39.85



Median Weekly Household Income

\$1,517

The labour force participation rate for the Riverina is estimated at 66.02% as of March 2019 with an unemployment rate of 4.3%. The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry sector is the Riverina's largest employer with 9,991 jobs or 13.3% (REMPPLAN), followed by Healthcare and Social Assistance at 9,619 (12.8%) (REMPPLAN).

The Murrumbidgee River runs through the Riverina region and delivers water to major food producing areas of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) and Coleambally Irrigation Area (CIA). These irrigation areas provide over one-quarter of all the fruit and vegetable production in NSW and are also one of Australia's largest exporters of bulk wines. Further growth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is being experienced in cotton, aquaculture and nut industries.

The Riverina's burgeoning food culture currently presents numerous opportunities for businesses. The diversity of the produce grown in the area is unmatched and has enhanced the attractiveness of the region.

It also home to a strong education base with Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW, RAAF Base Forest Hill and Kapooka Army Base. All these facilities are vital in building the skills and confidence of all people (including Aboriginal & new immigrants) in the region.

The Riverina has a wealth of people with a proactive and entrepreneurial approach to business and life. Opportunities for development exist in the Riverina region in agriculture, aged care, defence, manufacturing, wood products, transport & logistics and education.

To read the full Riverina Regional Profile January 2018, visit: rdariverina.org.au/our-region

RDA Riverina Committee 2018/2019

The RDA Riverina committee comprises 12 members from across the region who represent local communities, businesses and local government and understand the challenges, opportunities and priorities within these communities.



Richard Allsopp
Chair
Retired Business Owner
Term: 1 Jan 2019 - Dec 2020



Sue Molyneux
Acting Deputy Chair
HR Manager at Casella
Family Brands
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020



Dean Hawkins
Treasurer
Fibre & Forestry Manager -
Visy Pulp & Paper
Term:
24 Nov 2016 - Dec 2020

Kerry Penton
Committee Member
Regional General Manager,
South - TAFE NSW
Term: Jan 2012 - 31st Dec 2020

Shaun Duffy
Committee Member
Managing Director, Great
Southern Electrical
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Robyn Harvey
Committee Member
Tumut area
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Iva Quarisa
Committee Member
Executive Officer, Irrigation
Research and Extension
Committee
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Bradley Kent
Committee Member
Farm Owner
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Christine Howard
Committee Member
Director of Three Rivers
University Department of
Rural Health, CSU
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Gary Lavelle
Committee Member
General Manager, Temora
Shire Council
Term: 21 Nov 2018 - Dec 2020

Last year marked a change of guard to RDA Riverina as **9 new members** were welcomed in the 2018/2019 change over to continue the work of guiding RDA Riverina in strengthening the region.



Miriam Dayhew
Committee Deputy Chair
University Ombudsman &
Head of Campus
Charles Sturt University
Term: 15 Jan 2016 - Sept 2018
Chair
Term: Jan 2018 - Sept 2018



Kerry Penton
Committee Member
Regional General Manager,
South - TAFE NSW
Term: Jan 2012 - 31st Dec 2020
Acting Chair
Term: 1st July 2018 - 31st Dec 2018

Dean Hawkins
Committee Member
Fibre & Forestry Manager -
Visy Pulp & Paper
Term:
24 Nov 2016 - Dec 2020

Deirdre Lemerle
Committee Member
Professor of Agricultural
Innovation - Charles Sturt
University
Term: 1 Jul 2015 - Dec 2020

Paul Pearsall
Committee Member
Managing Director -
Grain Link Storage
Term: 1 Jul 2015 - Dec 2018

Margaret Andrezza
Committee Member
Grants Officer - Griffith
Regional Theatre
Term: 1 Jan 2012 - Dec 2018

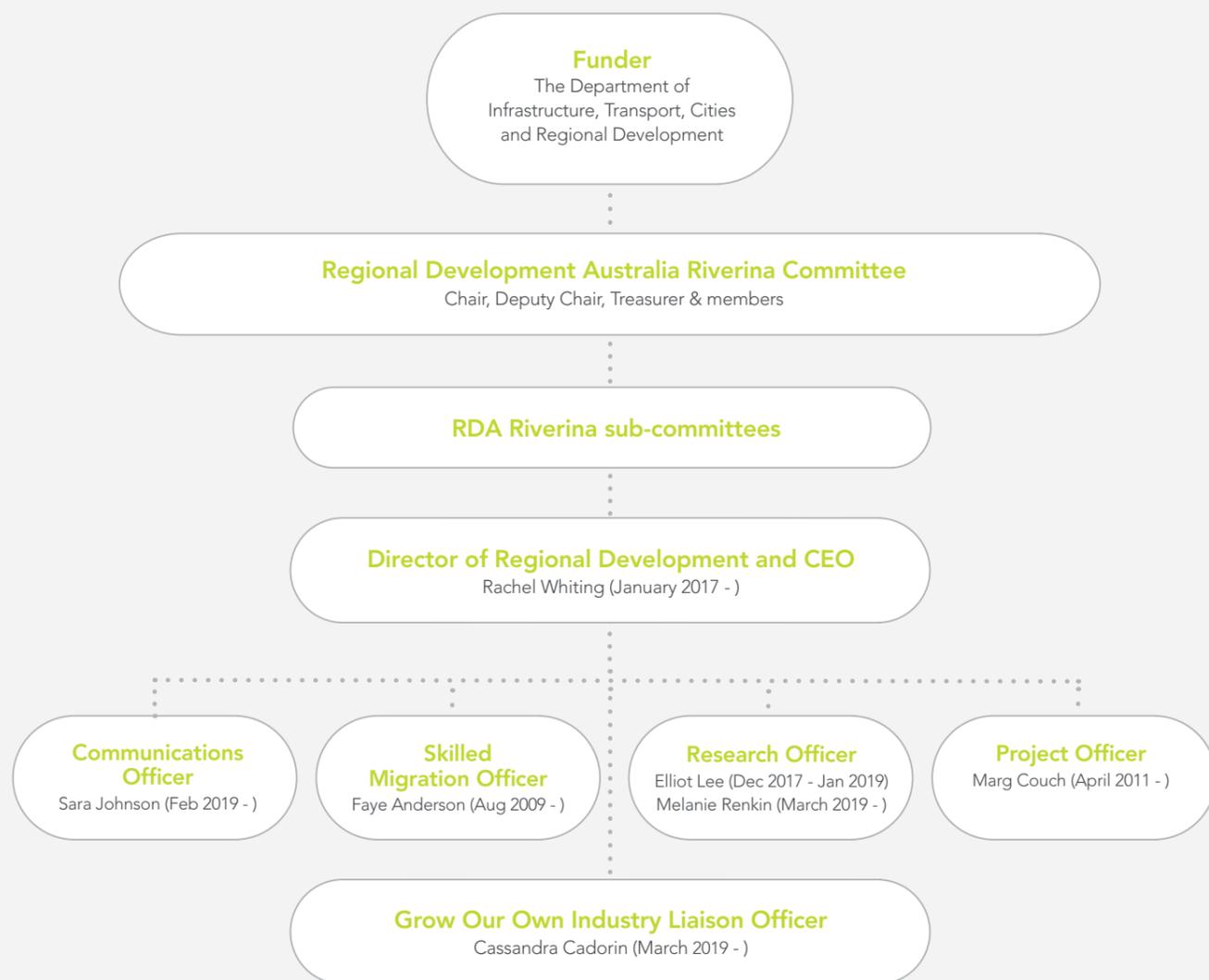
Patricia Wilkinson
Committee Member
Tourism & Strategy Senior
Project Officer - National Parks
& Wildlife Service NSW Office of
Environment & Heritage
Term: 1 Jul 2015 - Dec 2018

Karen Hutchinson
Committee Member
Customer Services & Policy
Manager - Murrumbidgee
Irrigation Ltd
Term: 1 Jul 2015 - Dec 2018

Brett Stonestreet
Committee Secretary
Public Officer
General Manager -
Griffith City Council
Term: 1 Jan 2012 - Dec 2018

In 2018 meetings were held in Leeton on 9th March and Wagga Wagga on 21st November. In 2019 meetings were held in Tumut on 7th March and Hay 23rd May.

RDA Riverina Staff structure



Stakeholders/collaborators:

- LGAs: Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra Gundagai, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Temora, Snowy Valleys & Wagga Wagga.
- Regional Organisation of Councils: REROC/RAMJO
- Government Departments (NSW and Commonwealth) / Agencies/ NGOs

Clients:

- Community members, Business and Industry Groups, Businesses, Regional Organisations, Community Groups
- RDA Riverina has offices located in Griffith and Wagga Wagga to ensure adequate servicing of the region.

Economic Growth 2018-19

RDA Riverina's focus is on facilitating the growth and prosperity of the region. In 2018 RDA Riverina produced a Regional Profile to help local government, industry, small business and community groups better understand their region.



The Regional Profile includes population, demographic, employment, industry, tourism and housing information presented in concise format. It is compiled from a range of sources including REMPLAN, ABS Census data, .id Forecast and Destination NSW.

The Regional Profile includes statistics such as:

- **Population forecast:** the region's population is expected to grow by 14.5% from 2018, reaching 187,500 by 2036
- **Industry information:** the total output generated by the Riverina's economy in 2016 was estimated at \$21.678 billion, with Manufacturing and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing the two key drivers of the economy
- **Tourism data:** visitor numbers increased by 12.1% in 2016-17, with visitor expenditure increasing by 11.4% to \$661 million

While the Regional Profile provides a snapshot, RDA Riverina also provide more specialised data for individual entities on a fee-for-service basis (e.g. investment impact analysis), cementing its value as a reliable source of regional data and investment information.

"The Regional Profile has multiple benefits to local government, industry, business and community groups in providing current regional statistics for use in business planning, tenders, grant applications, proposals and capability statements. It also assists regional entrepreneurs and emerging business leaders to focus on their competitive advantage." RDA Riverina Director of Regional Development and CEO Rachel Whiting

In 2018, RDA Riverina commenced the compilation of a Riverina Wide Investment Profile Map which shows proposed infrastructure projects across the Riverina. Renewable energy is a major focus with many potential and existing solar farms showcased. Building Better Regions and the Regional Growth Fund provided further opportunities to engage private investment in our region to support beneficial projects.

RDA Riverina continued to support projects developing:

- roads, bridges, airports, rail links, ports, intermodal centres and public transport
- land, water and energy infrastructure
- affordable housing projects
- a proposal for increased softwoods timber plantations in the Snowy Valleys Council area and beyond

RDA Riverina also investigated how telecommunications and internet are used in small communities for connectivity within and to outside communities.

RDA Riverina continues to assess proposals and information regarding the growing and changing face of our region. The Riverina region is vast and varied, subsequently the opportunities and priority areas are diverse. Infrastructure that supports this is integral to our growth and economic prosperity.

Professional Services

RDA Riverina can assist you or your organisation in growth and development.



Our team includes professionals who can assist with grant writing, statistics, economic impact analysis, report writing, business award writing, investment impact analysis, tourism impact analysis, regional and local economic profiles and secretariat services.

In 2019 we recruited Melanie Renkin, Research Officer, and Sara Johnston, Communications Officer. Melanie is an experienced researcher who excels in data analysis. With ten years of experience in scientific services, Melanie enjoys using her skills to help regional communities:

"We're currently working on a skills audit for the Riverina, speaking to local businesses and industry to find out what roles they can't fill and why. We will then be able to provide advice and develop strategies to fill those skill

shortages and anticipate future needs." Melanie Renkin (Research Officer)

From Sydney to the Riverina, Sara is a country-changer with a passion for our region: "The Riverina has so much to offer, with great local produce, fine wines, stunning scenery and a thriving cultural scene - what's not to love? Our Country Change - Your Future campaign is giving people a vision of a better life in our region." Sara Johnston (Communications Officer)

Along with her skills in communications, Sara is an experienced grant writer - a valuable addition to the team. If you need help with grants, reports, statistics or analysis, get in touch with our team who will be happy to assist you.

The Riverina has so much to offer, with **great local produce,** fine wines, stunning scenery and a thriving cultural scene – what's not to love?



Big Springs Giving Local Businesses an Edge

For more than **25 years**, the Wilson family has provided the people of the Riverina and beyond with natural spring water sourced from their property, Big Springs Station.



Starting with just a handful of customers, Big Springs Natural Spring Water today employs 20+ staff and services central and southern NSW, northern Victoria and the ACT. In 2017, Angus Wilson took part in RDA Riverina's first Regional SME Accelerator, designed to help regional businesses further develop and grow. For Angus, who came home to join the family business after years studying and working in Sydney, participating in the Accelerator program helped him examine Big Springs from an owner's point of view.

"When you own your own business, you report to yourself unless you have a board of directors or significant shareholders who require that. You don't often sit back and say, 'Where are we? Where are we taking the business?' so taking the time to examine that was fantastic.

"Kay Hull said that you've got to put yourself in the helicopter, and I think that's true. How often do you look at your business from above and see all the moving parts and what's working well and who are your good customers and what's costing you money? Sometimes it's really easy, especially when you get more and more staff, to get side-tracked in the day-to-day management rather than month-to-month and year-to-year."

With the help of his program mentor John Hemphill, Angus decided to concentrate on growth of his core product line in other locations.

"We have distributing depots in Canberra, Parkes and Griffith and looked especially at Canberra because it's got a large audience. We focused in on what products are selling well there and then how many potential customers could be in Canberra. Then we moved upon that with marketing

and it's paid good dividends. "As part of the Accelerator, I pitched the idea of growth in Canberra and in the past two years, we have grown at about 35% compounding on what I presented, which exceeded my targets." In the two years since completing the program, Angus says his day-to-day business practices have changed.

"This happened on two levels. Personally, I've delegated more and removed myself as roadblock, as a decision maker, which has been good. The second thing is, we have adopted technology. While our core business is still the same, the way that we're accounting for it and running delivery software have both changed.

"While you can't come away with every single tool, there were definitely points along the way where I thought, 'Why didn't I see that earlier? Why didn't I think of that and cut that tie loose and just concentrate on this?'

"Anyone who has the chance to participate in an Accelerator program like this should do it. It's a great thing to do. But remember, you have to give yourself time to do these things. To take the time with peers and mentors to examine your business and where it's headed, I mean, you can't put a price on that."

Supported by the NSW Government's Office of Regional Development and delivered by RDA Riverina between March and June 2017, the Regional SME (Small to Medium Enterprise) Accelerator combined leading edge online tools with mentoring support, two group workshops, and a graduation 'pitch' where participants showcased all they had learned during the program.

Borambola Wines

Perfect Timing
for Accelerator

For Tim McMullen, taking part in RDA Riverina's Regional SME Accelerator program was "perfect timing".



Tim is Managing Director of Borambola Wines, a family-owned business specialising in 100% locally grown and produced wine, beer and apple cider. Along with domestic sales, Borambola Wines exports their products to places like China, Singapore, Denmark and Norway, and runs events in Wagga Wagga and Albury, including the crowd-pleasing Cork & Fork series.

Since returning to Wagga from Sydney in 2015, Tim said they had reached a point in the business where they were just "steaming ahead without too much planning".

"We were going with a bit of a scatter gun approach – let's be involved in everything, let's create whatever we can to start to move our product – without really taking our time out of the business to look at what was happening.

"While the Accelerator was a bit of an unknown because it was the first one run by the RDA, the timing was perfect.

"It meant we could actually extract ourselves from the business and look at it to see what worked and what didn't. The really great thing about the Accelerator program was being able to break the business down into the different profit centres, and then allocate the time involved in making those different profit centres work."

Tim describes knowing where the real profit was in his business as an "aha moment".

"The highlight for us was finally getting to a point where we could actually look at our business and go, 'So that's where the least amount of work goes but the most amount of profit comes from' and be able to adjust the other parts of our business accordingly.

"It was a really important lesson, particularly with exporting. When we started pulling it all apart, our export business is very profitable and can be knocked over very quickly. In half an hour, I could sell 1100 cases of wine and have it paid for within a couple of weeks, done and dusted, yet we do many other things.

"At the end of the Accelerator, we were able to look at all the things we wanted to do with an accountant hat on and decide if it was just nice to have or if it was profitable."

Tim was paired with local business mentor Michael Harper, a match Tim said worked well.

"The mentoring was most beneficial – having someone from outside your business giving you perspective was really good. It helped that Michael is himself a winemaker.

"I felt we were really lucky to take part in this initiative as these sorts of things normally cost you a lot of money and they're very city-centric whereas Michael understood our business.

"For the cost, it was a no-brainer for us and from a time perspective, if you can make the time, you come out the other end with some great information for your business.

"Since being back in Wagga, I've learned that the calibre of businesses in country areas is very good and governments need to invest more to really focus on these amazing businesses, and the people working in them, because there's a lot to be gained in the regions in terms of jobs and business growth."

Program Helps Define What's Possible

When she decided to open a café in Tumbarumba, Laura Fraumeni wanted to make a place for all the things she loved – good food, great coffee, beautiful books and interesting conversation.



Laura created Nest, a café, bookstore and cinema that is now a hub for residents and visitors alike to enjoy seasonal produce and local events that highlight the Tumbarumba region.

While enjoying the many benefits of working and raising a family in the picturesque foothills of the Snowy Mountains, things haven't always run smoothly for Nest.

"I was happy to be achieving growth in our business and collaborating with lots of other people and growing our reputation in the community, but from a financial point of view, I needed to make it more profitable."

Laura heard about RDA Riverina's first Regional SME Accelerator in 2017 and decided to apply.

"The program looked like an opportunity to get some growth and development in my business.

"I was at the lower level of the participating businesses in terms of financial size but through the process, I was able to identify what my business was, what I wanted it to be and how I needed to get there. At that stage, the importance for me was actually making a profit."

For Laura, one of the highlights of the program was engaging with other businesses.

"There's that saying, 'to be great, surround yourself with great people' and I think that's true of this program. Coming together with other business owners was a real benefit. We were all there to work on our businesses and it was helpful to be able to share personal insights and best practices.

"I think sometimes you recognise what you want to achieve by seeing what others are doing or not doing. Recognising that's someone else's bag and it's not really what you want to do helps you redefine things."

Laura saw her commitment to the Accelerator as an investment. "It came at an awkward time, as I'd just had my third baby, but I invested what time I had and having a structured program and needing to produce something at the end was great.

"I didn't go with a big growth idea in my pitch, but really focused on recognising the opportunity we have as a tourist destination and measuring our activities. It was about identifying ways to grow utilising what we have, and now we've got a framework for what we want to achieve and it's encouraging to know what's possible by putting some numbers around it."

Laura says it's important for businesses like hers to have access to programs like this.

"I think it's important to get outside of your own business and find ways to make it a continued success. It's very easy in regional places to be complacent, but things are changing quickly. What's going to happen if another business like yours opens up? Are you ready to handle that?

"Having some tools and a group of people you can check in with is useful. I'd recommend other businesses keep an eye on RDA Riverina for future programs like the Accelerator."



Funds to Build a Better Region

Building Better Regions Funding

Building Better Regions Rounds one, two and three provided organisations with grants of \$20,000 to \$10 million to support projects involving the construction of new infrastructure or upgrading or extension of existing infrastructure that provide economic and social

benefits to regional and remote areas. Round one results were announced at the end of 2017, Round 2 in 2018 and Round 3 in 2019. There were two streams: Infrastructure and Community.

The following Riverina projects were successful:

Fund	Applicant	Project	Grant	Total Project	Supported by RDA Riverina
Infrastructure					
2017	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Gundagai Sewage Treatment Plant Replacement Project	\$3.5m	\$7m	✓
2018	The Whiddon Group Temora	Expansion of Temora Aged Care Facility – construction of a two story building with resident rooms on each level.	\$3.6m	\$14.7m	✓
2019	Griffith City Council	The Griffith Regional Sports Precinct (Stage 1) - The project will establish a Regional Sports Hub facility through the expansion and revitalisation of the Westend Oval and Regional Aquatic Centre.	\$4.5M	\$24.8M	✓
2019	Temora Shire Council	Temora Airport runway, apron and taxiways upgrade	\$5,353,151	\$5,353,151	✓
Community					
2017	Coolamon Shire Council	Launch Pads and Modular Pump Tracks to support local skate/bicycle/scooter facility for youth events in four regional towns.	\$45,800	\$91,600	
	Eastern Riverina Arts	Eastern Riverina Community Arts Venues Audit and Database Project – audit of regional arts and community venues to create industry standard venue specifications for touring arts/performing organisations to access.	\$19,350	\$19,350	✓
	Griffith City Council	A range of free community events called the 'Festival of Lights'.	\$18.5k	\$18.5k	

Fund	Applicant	Project	Grant	Total Project	Supported by RDA Riverina
	Leeton Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council development of a Community Directed Placemaking Plan for two new Town Improvement Committees (TICs) at the villages of Yanco and Whitton..	\$15k	\$15k	
	Snowy Valleys Council	Hume & Hovell Track Mountain Bike Trail Master Plan. Preparation of a master plan for mountain biking on the Hume and Hovell Track identifying opportunities for trail improvements.	\$25k	\$50k	✓
	Snowy Valleys Council	Economic Development Masterplan. The development of a masterplan to establish a vision and five year strategy for the region with emphasis on supporting new industries and building regional social identity.	\$45k	\$90k	
	Wagga City	Fusion Festival Strategic Plan consisting of research, analysis and assessment for the redevelopment of the festival, from its current format to a sustainable Regional Festival.	\$18.4k	\$18.4k	
2018	Griffith City Council	Griffith Housing Strategy. Development of an affordable housing strategy for the region of Griffith addressing the focus areas of affordability, diversity, accessibility and innovative design to improve the market.	\$35k	\$17.5k	✓
	Griffith City Council	MYSKATE: Murrumbidgee Youth Skate Festival	\$20k	\$40k	✓
	Destination Riverina Murray	Riverina Murray Tourism Business Accelerator Program The leadership program will provide businesses with the methods to enable fast and efficient growth to increase revenue and employment in the region.	\$25k	\$50k	✓
	Griffith District Football Association	A Soccer Expo and High Needs Development Program. The project will deliver a regional NSW and ACT soccer sporting event, which includes many sporting clubs and associations, aimed at attracting participants from minority demographics	\$15,606	\$15,606	✓
2019	Griffith & District Citrus Growers Incorporated	Strategic plan to support a Riverina citrus centre of excellence	\$19,990	\$19,990	
	Matriark Theatre Incorporated	The Secret World: Cootamundra, a night festival hosted by young people	\$15,000	\$20,000	✓
	Griffith Shed For Men Incorporated	Griffith Shed for Men Strategic Plan for the Future	\$17,500	\$19,500	
	Bland Shire Council	Bland Shire Council Business Workshop Program	\$18,170	\$18,170	✓
	Carrathool Shire Council	Local Supply Chain Multiplier Opportunities - A Strategic Approach	\$60,000	\$60,000	

Workforce Development Plan

In 2018 RDA Riverina brought together several existing programs under the banner of Workforce Development for the Riverina. As Executive Officer, Rachel Whiting said, "Our Workforce Development Plan is all about getting the people we need in the region and encouraging economic development. It's exactly what we've been doing all along, but now it's coming together in a centralised plan."

This four-pronged plan is a response to the anticipated shortage of 10,000 workers in the next 3-5 years. The RDA Riverina workforce development plan acknowledges

this shortage is due to industry growth, aging workers and increased service industry positions that align with increased population.

RDA Riverina also continue to closely monitor the impact that Snowy Hydro 2.0 will have on existing workforce demands and where relocation to the region will be necessary. "RDA Riverina help employers find the right people for their business and potential employees to find careers that suit them as we build our local economy." Rachel Whiting, CEO and Director of Regional Development, RDA Riverina

The four quadrants of RDA Riverina's Workforce Development Plan are:



Collaboration

RDA Riverina serves as a conduit between government, business and local communities across 14 local government areas in the Riverina.

Our role is to facilitate networks and partnerships, in addition to providing information, economic and social support to these communities. In this role we support business development and growth across the Riverina region and are



committed to providing business operations with helpful resources, advice and expertise. RDA Riverina supports start-up businesses, provides regional networking opportunities and assists established businesses looking to expand.

Renewable Energy

There are over twenty large scale solar PV developments at various stages of development in the Riverina-Murray region. Amongst this growth and development are the Neoen Solar projects at Griffith (36 MW) and Coleambally (150MW) and other renewable energy projects in the process of planning approval. This rapid growth and expansion provided an opportunity to build awareness of the power produced for local energy users and energy traders in the region.

In 2018 RDA Riverina in collaboration with RDA Murray, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Industry Capability Network (ICN) and Griffith City Council facilitated two energy awareness forums connecting those working in developing renewable or sustainable energy projects. The forums were held in Albury and Griffith with total attendance of 69, and covered the following topics:

- How can large energy users take advantage of the power produced?
- What are the options for power purchase and offtake agreements?
- How can large scale renewables benefit large energy users to lower power cost and meet corporate sustainability goals?

NSW Government, RDA Riverina, AgInnovators and NSW Farmers also collaborated in the development of two publications designed to inform and assist farmers in the decision-making process when converting to solar pumping. Two checklists were distributed at workshops, forums and field days:

- Grid Connected Solar Pumping Checklist
- Solar Diesel Hybrid Pumping Systems Checklist

Other Forums and Workshops

RDA Riverina also held Development Forums in collaboration with local councils, businesses, marketing agencies, research institutes and industry. A Workforce Futures forum was held in Griffith (43 attendees) and an Economic Development forum was held in Temora (33 attendees).

The AgriTech, Agrifood and Advanced Manufacturing Innovation and Workforce Forum (45 attendees) was held in Griffith in February 2019.

Two Introduction to Grantwriting Workshops were held in Tumut and Tumbarumba in March 2019. Over 40 attendees represented 35 community organisations in the Snowy Valleys Local Government Area.

National Ag Day

Three local organisations who drive agricultural innovation joined forces on National Agriculture Day to recognise the contribution of our farmers and the role of research and innovation as key ingredients to ensure the long-term viability of our rural industries. More than 100 people gathered at Charles Sturt University (CSU) for the annual event, embracing the theme 'Grow For Good'. AgriFutures Australia, the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation and RDA Riverina fired up the BBQ and celebrated alongside farmers, producers, researchers, students and all who contribute to our agricultural industry.

AgriHack

Agrihack is a two-day Hackathon that focuses on building solutions to some key challenges faced by the agriculture sector. Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship that enhances agriculture and the rural lifestyle, this annual event brings innovation to regional Australia and further connects the entrepreneurial ecosystem of metro areas to rural developers and disruptors.

Riverina Murray Tourism Business Accelerator Program

Following our successful Business Accelerator Program from 2017 RDA Riverina partnered with Destination Riverina Murray to design, develop and commence the delivery of the Riverina Murray Tourism Business Accelerator program.

This initiative was supported by funding from the NSW State Government Building Better Regions round two Community Stream. Ten businesses from across the Riverina-Murray region were chosen from a competitive Expression Of Interest process.

The Riverina Murray Tourism Business Accelerator ran from November 2018 – May 2019, starting with Engagement Clinics (54 SMEs) and culminating in a Graduation Showcase (9 SMEs). The program was designed to assist businesses identify opportunities for growth through:

- Assisting established tourism-related businesses to transition towards the next stage of growth;
- Focussing attention on growing interstate visitation to the region;
- Focussing attention on improving the product offering, distribution, customer service and overall visitor experience;
- Creating regional Ambassadors and case studies, to be used in Destination Riverina Murray promotional content.

Graduating companies displayed a high level of new learning about effective growth processes, together with well thought-out growth plans, and sound levels of confidence about executing these.

Results

Measure	Y3	Change 3 Yrs (\$, no)	% Change 3 Yrs	% Change pa
Sales (\$, %)	17,538	5,065	40.6	12.0
Jobs (no, %)	109.5	17.5	19.0	6.0
Additional visitor room nights capacity	20,410			
Additional visitors (no)	37,350			
New Investment (\$M)		3.45		

Table 1: Summary Results

In addition to new, healthy rates of sales and employment growth (12.0% pa, 6.0% pa respectively) there is a substantial increase to forecast capacity (new and through increased utilisation) and projected increased visitor numbers. New investment is projected at \$3.45m over the three years.

The Voyager Accelerators are based on experiential, project-based learning on developing growth plans. Thus, businesses learn and plan as they go. This is a highly effective way of economically accelerating good businesses. This accelerator provided an opportunity to further evolve this methodology.





Thrive Riverina Board of Directors 2018

RDA Riverina hosts PNG Dignitary

RDA Riverina hosted The Hon Dr Willian Tongamp MP, Governor of Jiwaka, Papua New Guinea, during his trip to Wagga Wagga in February 2018. As well as agriculture, Dr Tongamp was interested to learn from RDA Riverina CEO Rachel Whiting about how different levels of government work together, early childhood and primary education, women’s programs for remote areas and distance education. Dr Tongamp was also interested in attracting skilled workers to his region.

Keeping Up With Technology the Key to Online Connectivity

A 2018 research project, conducted by Director of Regional Development and CEO of RDA Riverina, Rachel Whiting as part of her Master of Communication at Charles Sturt University, explored telecommunication and internet use in the Coolamon Shire and how it impacts community connectedness. Using a series of interviews with five people who represented a cross section of community members in the Coolamon Shire, a unique collective case study emerged about this rural community’s technology use and connectivity, and the results have come as a bit of a surprise.

“When we think of technology use in rural communities, we think lack of access in the form of mobile broadband blackspots and similar are holding people back from making the most of online connectivity,” Rachel said.

“However, my research shows that not being able to keep up with technology changes is actually what’s hindering people’s ability to connect to their community online.”

Some of the key themes emerging from the research included:

- Technology provides a way to connect to others and develop a sense of community,
- Non-digital communication is still important to make sure people without skills in technology aren’t excluded,
- Social media is a way to connect with the community and is especially popular with millennials, and
- The local library is a hub of community connectedness.

Rachel found that the biggest issue in the Coolamon community isn’t lack of network or technology availability, but lack of understanding of how best to use it.

For more information on this research, contact Rachel Whiting on ceo@rdariverina.org.au

Working with individuals, community groups, organisations, businesses and local government to achieve economic and social prosperity is RDA Riverina’s top priority. Our very existence relies on our ability to develop partnerships, share information and resources, support and collaborate with others, fostering networks and connections within the region, and running specific programs that build capacity with the community to collaborate, lead and adapt to change.

Thrive Riverina & Taste Riverina

RDA Riverina have a long history with the Taste Riverina festival: a promotion of local food and beverage producers and agritourism. RDA Riverina partnered with THRIVE and Destination Riverina Murray in Taste Riverina’s progression to a marketing platform for Riverina food events. RDA Riverina’s CEO now holds a director’s position on the THRIVE board and are sponsoring participants on Destination Riverina Murray’s event management program. Our new professional services that have capacity to deliver Economic Impact Analysis for tourism events adds further value to tourism in the Riverina.



Country Change

The Riverina offers a diverse range of facilities, services and jobs with affordable housing, low congestion and a good work/life balance. Despite these factors, many people in metropolitan Australia are unaware of the opportunities available in regional areas.



In 2018/2019 Country Change continued to expand and build on the reinvigorated format of 2017, marketing the Riverina as a great place to live, work and play. 2018/2019 brought further engagement with industry and linkages with employment opportunities to drive workforce and economic development to the Riverina.

Local Government Areas supporting the Country Change campaign in 2018/2019:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| • Coolamon Shire Council | • Snowy Valleys Council |
| • Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council | • Temora Shire Council |
| • Junee Shire Council | • Greater Hume Council |
| • Lockhart Shire Council | • Griffith City Council |
| • Leeton Shire Council | • Narrandera Shire Council |
| • Murrumbidgee Council | |

Country Change Marketing Campaign



Over 1,100,000 separate touch points



779,286 Facebook views



2,400 Facebook fans and followers



158,981 minutes of video viewed



Country Change Expo in Cootamundra

Promoting the Region

Regional Resettlement of Refugees



A group of agencies led by RDA Riverina, Multicultural NSW, The Department of Jobs and Small Business, the NSW Department of Industry and The Australian Red Cross (the Department of Social Services Humanitarian Support Program Provider) collaborated to develop a pathway of programs and supports to assist refugee job seekers to relocate from Western Sydney to the Riverina-Murray region and be trained for new employment, as well as being supported into the new community with assistance with such essentials such as housing, health and community engagement.

This project led to an opportunity to present selected regional towns at an Expo for migrants and refugees. The communities of Leeton, Temora and Walla Walla were selected for the opportunity based on their

particular needs for workers, community support and housing availability. Employers, community groups and local government officials from each town attended the "Pathways to Employment Expo" held in Western Sydney in May 2019. The expo attracted thousands of refugee and migrant job seekers who were keen to learn more about the Riverina and Murray regions as a great place to work and live. The project will continue through engagement with Western Sydney agencies working with refugees and migrants to determine the best methods of attracting, relocating and retaining refugees and migrants in our region.

The expo attracted **thousands of refugee and migrant job seekers** who were keen to learn more about the Riverina and Murray regions as a great place to work and live.



Skilled Migration Service

As a gazetted Regional Certifying Body (RCB), appointed by the Minister for Immigration, RDA Riverina invites skilled migrants to enjoy the lifestyle of regional Australia by applying for sponsorship to live and work in the Riverina region under two specific visas:

Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) (Subclass 187)

RDA Riverina provides an assessment for the RSMS visa which enables regional employers to sponsor overseas skilled workers and employ them to work in skilled vacant positions which cannot be filled using the local labour market. The program aims to attract young, skilled, English speaking migrants to areas of Australia where they are most needed.

2017 - 2018

- In 2017-2018, there were 134 applications for the employer nominated RSMS (Subclass 187) visa
- The top five occupations were Chef/Cook, Registered Nurse, Enrolled Nurse, Fitter, Agricultural Technician, and Agricultural Consultant
- The top six countries of origin were India, China, South Africa, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan
- In 2017-2018, there were 106 applications for the Independent Skilled Regional (Provisional) Visa (Subclass 489)
- The top six occupations were Chef/Cook, Registered Nurse, Enrolled Nurse, Fitter, Agricultural Technician, and Agricultural Consultant
- The top six countries of origin were India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Nepal, Iran, and Kenya

2017/2018 Applicants were trained in over 50 occupations and came from 30 countries, bringing 146 spouses and 110 children. 69 (29%) applicants were already working with the business at the time of assessment.

Skilled Regional (Provisional) Visa (Subclass 489)

RDA Riverina welcomes Skilled Migrants who live in Australia or overseas to apply for regional nomination to come to the Riverina. The long-term objective is to encourage these people to stay in the region - to live and work and enjoy the lifestyle.

2018 - 2019

- In 2018-2019, there were 22 applications for the employer nominated RSMS (Subclass 187) Visa
- The top three occupations were Management Accountant, Diesel Motor Mechanic and Retail Manager
- The top three countries of origin were India, South Africa and China
- In 2018-2019, there were 105 applications for the Independent Skilled Regional (Provisional) Visa (Subclass 489)
- The top six occupations were Production or Plant Engineer, Registered Nurse – NEC, Registered Nurse – CC&E, Accountant, Social Worker and Motor Mechanic
- The top five countries of origin were India, Nepal, Nigeria, China, Phillipines
- In 2018-2019, RDA Riverina processed a total of 127 visa applications, a decrease of 47% on the previous year. Changes to the application requirements for the RSMS (subclass 187) Visa made by the Department of Home Affairs led to this avenue becoming less accessible to local business, contributing to a decrease in applications.
- Applicants were skilled in over 48 occupations and came from 29 countries, bringing 83 spouses and 67 children, 33 (26%) applicants were already working with the business at the time of assessment.

De Bortoli Wines

Skilled Migrants Bring Much to Workforce

De Bortoli Wines are invested in regional Australia. The fourth-generation family-owned wine business started in 1928 in Bilbul, near Griffith, making small amounts of dry table wine. Today, the company operates in 12 locations, including three wineries, multiple vineyards, and warehouse distribution sites spread across Australia. Exporting to 75 countries, De Bortoli employs more than 350 people with staff fluctuating during vintage periods. As IT Manager Bill Robertson explains, because the De Bortoli family is so invested in regional areas, the company's head office is still located in Bilbul, population 300.

"To maintain a regional head office in this day and age, you need enterprise level connectivity and enterprise level systems. To maintain those, you need access to skilled staff and sometimes those skills are not readily available in country areas. In fact, some of the skills we require are barely available in Australia.

"To address this, we do a combination of everything – from nurturing skilled locals, to bringing in locals who have moved away and returned, to supplementing our workforce with people from overseas through the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme. We have a multi-pronged approach because it's not one size fits all. We need a variety of tools in the toolkit." Having been with De Bortoli Wines for more than 20 years, Bill was responsible for hiring the first skilled migrant worker into his team and remembers requiring assistance from the local Federal member to make that happen. Since then, the company has hired staff from Singapore, Chile, India and South Africa to work in a variety of roles, and often calls on support from RDA Riverina to help with the process.

"RDA Riverina has been critical in terms of facilitating the regional migration piece, and the regional visas. The visa processes need to be understood and you may need experts to help understand how this all fits together. RDA Riverina has been a critical part of that process for us.

"Once we find someone promising, we work with the RDA to make sure that their skills meet the visa criteria.

"We've also found that the people who have come out on regional migration visas have loved the area so much that they've converted to permanent residency, and

RDA has been amazingly helpful in facilitating that process as well." De Bortoli Business Analyst Janine Harper relocated to Griffith from South Africa in 2009. While it wasn't an easy decision, Janine says moving to the Riverina was a new beginning for her family.

"The huge attraction of De Bortoli and Griffith is that they have provided a stable and safe environment to raise our children. We can enjoy our day-to-day activities without fear, to live a normal life. "It is great that we have had the opportunity to do this here with De Bortoli Wines."

Bill adds that sometimes he has hired one fantastic, professional member of staff only to find that they have brought a very capable partner with them to Australia. "In several cases, those partners have gone onto be employed by De Bortoli in other areas of the business and have grown to become important and valued parts of the business in their own right.

"And you often get people that are willing to put down roots and become enthusiastic parts of your community. Griffith has got some great, capable, professional, enthusiastic people who have, at multiple levels, added real value to the community since moving here."



Some of the team at De Bortoli Wines (from left) Bryan Mahlknecht (Engineering), Sheline Mahlknecht (IT), Tony Harper (Export Logistics), Janine Harper (IT), Derick de Waal (IT), Chantell de Waal (Ops Planning) and Bill Robertson (IT).

Forough Ataollahi

From Iran to Wagga Wagga Forough Calls Riverina Home

Each year, **RDA Riverina** assists skilled migrants like Forough Ataollahi and her husband Azim to relocate to the region.



Each year, RDA Riverina assists skilled migrants like Forough Ataollahi and her husband Azim to relocate to the region.

Originally from the small farming village of Eshkour in Iran, Forough studied Veterinary Medicine in Iran and Biomedical Science in Malaysia where she lived for 30 years before moving to Wagga Wagga in August 2015 to complete a PhD at Charles Sturt University.

In September 2018, Forough was named NSW International Student of the Year in the state government's StudyNSW International Student Awards for her work advocating for the rights of female students.

"When I first came to Wagga, I was alone. My husband was still in Malaysia. It was really hard because I felt isolated.

"I met an Australian couple and they showed me much support. They took me shopping, invited me for dinner and it changed my life. It really helped my confidence and I realised how important it is to get support from the community. I wanted to do the same thing.

"Being named International Student of the Year was a great honour and validation that following my heart always works. It encourages me to work more in this area and, if I can, make bigger change in the society."

It was while completing her PhD that Forough realised she wanted to remain in regional Australia.

"My husband is a mechanical engineer working with Proway and we both enjoyed living and working here.

"I came to Australia through a student visa and one of our friends explained there was another option called

regional skilled migration. He suggested we contact Faye Anderson at RDA Riverina to discuss the Skilled Regional Visa (Subclass 489).

"Faye advised us how the system works, and what the procedure is. She gave us a list of occupations we could apply for and all her advice really helped us to have a clear picture of what kind of the documents we needed to provide to be eligible for this visa subclass."

Forough is now a research officer in the Department of Primary Industries where she works to improve the health and welfare of farm animals.

"My background was veterinary science related to animal disease and animal health and this job is exactly what I want. My dad is a farmer and I always liked to work with the farmers because I know what sort of challenges they face. It is good to be helpful in their business."

To anyone in a similar position looking to relocate the regions, Forough recommends people reach out to RDA Riverina.

"They are friendly, approachable and are happy to advise how you can apply. Talking to Faye will give you a clear picture what you need to do.

"And the Riverina is the perfect place to live. It's more affordable in the regions and the infrastructure here in Wagga especially is very good. The community is very inclusive, too, so you don't need to be worried whether you will be accepted. The people here are welcoming and will make you feel comfortable and at home."

Education and training



Cassandra Cadorin
Grow Our Own and SISP
Industry Liaison Officer



Grow Our Own

Grow Our Own is an industry driven innovative regional workforce initiative, established as a pilot program by Deakin University and Bendigo Bank in 2016, to support our existing and future workforce. It provides information to potential students, on-the-job trainees, business and industry in the western Riverina region.

Grow Our Own aims to encourage people to build a career while living locally, and to encourage local business to invest in local people through employment, training, mentoring and motivation to ensure a sustainable workforce.

As Grow Our Own stakeholders grew to over 26, RDA Riverina agreed to take on a coordination and development role in 2018 dependent on access to extra

funds. This required a reinvigorated governance model that could account for financial investment by industry and government to advance the vision of the network.

At the end of 2018, it was announced by the Dept Education NSW that RDA Riverina were successful in a bid to pilot a STEM Industry School Partnerships (SISP) Program with a focus on Agritech. This offer has set the scene to take Grow Our Own to a new level in 2019.



Local Talent Encouraged to Remain in the Region

The Grow Our Own initiative seeks to retain local talent by increasing awareness of the diverse range of jobs available across the Western Riverina and developing pathways into growth industries. RDA Riverina has appointed Industry Liaison Officer, and Entrepreneur for Tourism in the Riverina, Cassandra Cadorin (pictured above), to improve local access to tertiary education, support scholarships for under-represented groups and promote access to training that leads to sustainable jobs.

Based in Griffith, Cassandra joins RDA Riverina with a range of industry experience under her belt, including six years in brand marketing international brands in Sydney and five years managing brand marketing and digital strategy teams in London. Operating Bella Vita Riverina Tours, Cassandra was a 2018 State Finalist for Outstanding Young Entrepreneur in the NSW Business Awards and the 2019 Excellence in Micro Business winner and Regional Finalist for the Riverina Murray Business Awards. As part of her role, Cassandra liaises with the Department of Education on the STEM Industry School Partnerships (SISP) program, which

focuses on promoting STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics – from kindergarten to Year 12.

In June 2019 Cassandra also represented Grow Our Own with other stakeholders at the Western Riverina Careers Expo held at Leeton High School, attracting over 1,000 parents, teachers and students across western Riverina.

“Our current students will be our future workforce, and the rise of technology means they need to have STEM skills. “We are presently focusing on Agri-tech, developing excursions and incursions for students to showcase industries and job opportunities across our region.

“Recognising the low numbers of women working in STEM roles, we’re also hosting a Women in STEM event for both girls and local business leaders to be held in Term 4, 2019.” Grow Our Own is a partnership lead by Bendigo Bank and Deakin University in conjunction with RDA Riverina, TAFE Riverina Institute, local councils and other organisations and networks across Western Riverina.

Jobs Riverina



New Platform Connects Workers to Jobs

RDA Riverina has invested in a new employment platform in 2018 to provide free access for potential job seekers and employers in the Riverina. The platform – Jobs Riverina (www.jobsriverina.com.au) – is a one-stop-portal allowing job seekers to easily find work opportunities and apply online. It also gives employers a cost-free way to expand their recruitment activities to an audience specifically interested in working in the region.

RDA Sponsorship

RDA Riverina is a strong advocate for youth leadership. In 2018 RDA Riverina called for Expressions of Interest to sponsor four delegates in total – two delegates to attend the 2018 Event Development Workshop held in Griffith and two delegates to attend a workshop in Wagga. This program was designed to provide them with the skills required to:

- Develop a business and strategic plan
- Successfully apply for grants and funding
- Become an expert on cost effective event marketing
- Measure event impact and success

Successful candidates were:

Wagga Wagga
Ruby Riethmuller &
Hannah Ritchie

Griffith
Monique Peisley &
Kristy Lee Agresta

RDA Riverina is
a strong advocate
for youth leadership.

RDA Riverina is committed to workforce development in the Riverina

Jobs Riverina is a new employment platform to provide free access for potential job seekers and employers in the Riverina.

To find out more, visit
www.jobsriverina.com.au



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RDA support for Riverina projects

RDA Riverina is involved in the development and implementation of projects across the region. This involvement may be as initiator, facilitator, supporter or implementer depending on the nature of the project.

RDA Riverina values community driven, innovative, inclusive and sustainable initiatives.

We develop close partnerships with many stakeholders from the three tiers of Government, business, industry and communities when working on projects in the Riverina.

If you wish to enable this support for a regionally significant project, go to www.rdariverina.org.au/projects and complete the Project Outline Form.

All correspondence

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