



Renewing our Regions

For too long our regions have been taken for granted.

For instance:

- Money raised for local hospitals through decades of volunteer fundraising effort have been ripped out of communities and now controlled by bureaucrats in Adelaide.
- Regional communities being literally left in the dark for days at a time due to a lack of forward planning to ensure an orderly transition of our electricity sector.
- Years of on ground action by Landcare and Coastcare groups replaced by NRM boards whose main job is to write a plan there is no money to implement – with the NRM levies collected from local communities and siphoned straight into city coffers.
- A backlog of rural road maintenance solved by reducing speed limits rather than fixing the problem.
- Country schools battling poor internet, a lack of support staff and limited access to professional development.
- Emergency services volunteers putting their lives on the line, and as a ‘thank you’, being slugged significant increases in their emergency services levy.
- Tertiary education through TAFE and universities being scaled back or centralised into the city, in some cases meaning young apprentices are driving up to 1000km to attend training in Adelaide.
- Country Councils being loaded with more and more paperwork and responsibility being shifted onto them by the state, but with no extra funding.
- Rural residents paying through the nose for mobile phone, internet and landline services that barely function.
- An EPA who, instead of protecting residents, is a toothless tiger.
- Our agriculture sector facing pressures with rising costs and red-tape, land-use conflict and workforce shortages.

- Limited and inadequate access to local drug and alcohol rehabilitation and support services.
- A public service now so centralised and disconnected from the communities their decisions impact on.
- A Labor Government that by admission of their leader, Jay Weatherill, has 'no votes in the country'.
- And an opposition who takes their traditional support base for granted and have become lazy, out of touch and driven more by factional warfare than by what is good for their constituents.
- Country communities deserve better.

Our Policy to Support Regions

The latest census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows there are now 30 regional cities in Australia with populations over 30,000 and 10 with populations over 100,000.

None are in South Australia.

Our regional cities and towns offer an affordable, safe and relaxed lifestyle with a strong sense of community.

There is existing capacity in regional schools and hospitals, for affordable housing, for job opportunities and a high level of local support for population growth.

According to the Regional Australia Institute, for every 100,000 Australians who choose to live in growing regional centres rather than our large capital cities, an additional \$50 billion will be released into the economy over 30 years in reduced congestion costs and increased consumption. Committing to actively growing our country centres offers a chance to stop the urban sprawl of metropolitan Adelaide, provide more workers for our rural industries and support a secure future for our regions and our state.

Solutions will need to be tailored for each region and will require both State and Federal Governments to work in strong partnership with Local Councils and communities.

But we must start with a commitment to, and a vision for, the future of our regions.

Royalties for our Regions

To help pro-actively support the growth of our regions, SA-BEST wants to see a stronger return of state income generated from country areas put back into new, catalytic infrastructure and initiatives to help develop our regional centres, activate local economies and improve services. A Royalties for Regions scheme, based on the Western Australian model of quarantining at least 25% of royalty revenue for country communities, will ensure an ongoing funding stream for new economic and social infrastructure that demonstrates confidence in our regions and will help facilitate and leverage certainty and investment by the private sector.

Based on lessons learned from other states, and unlike the Liberal party policy, SA-BEST's Royalties for Regions initiative will make additional investment in regional infrastructure, services and facilities - over and above existing State Government departmental core responsibilities.

Re-connecting Government with Regions

SA-BEST supports a strong, efficient, responsive public service, where decisions are directly connected to the communities, lives and livelihoods they impact upon. We don't support a centralised, bureaucratic administration.

This is particularly evident for country communities. The more the public service is centralised, the more policy decisions are formed through a 'city' lens and the more connection with the country is lost.

SA-BEST supports a more equitable share of taxpayer funded jobs being located in country communities. This provides new career options for our country kids, a broader mix of skills into local communities, and importantly - provides more efficient, practical and relevant policy and decision-making.

We need to look at improving the way incentives and job tenure for regionally-based public sector positions are implemented to make the option of living and working in country SA more equitable and sustainable. And we need to get more departmental decision-makers out of the city and into the regions where their decisions impact.

SA-BEST is committed to working with regional communities to:

Grow our Regions

1. Establish clear growth strategies and population targets for South Australian regional centres.
2. Establish a Royalties for Regions fund to leverage investment into new, catalytic infrastructure to help grow our regions and activate local economies.
3. Establish a \$15 million Regional Entrepreneurs Programme to encourage new businesses to start-up in regional areas.

Improve Rural Roads

4. Increase the share of arterial road maintenance budget to address the backlog of rural road repair and, in consultation with local authorities, reverse speed limit reductions on country roads.

Improve Regional Telecommunications

5. Increase Regional Telecommunications funding to \$30 million to leverage Federal and private investment into mobile phone, internet and internet blackspots.

Improve Local Access to Higher Education

6. Develop tertiary education study hubs that integrate university and vocational education pathways, tailored to meet the needs of local industry and communities.

Reform NRM

7. Review the NRM funding and delivery model to return the focus to local, on ground action.

Support Country Schooling

8. Review incentives and country loading support for country schools.
9. Reduce the centralised education department bureaucracy and administration and return more decision-making to the regions.

Boost Regional Health Services

10. Boost the role and function of regional hospitals and rehabilitation services to keep country patients closer to home.
11. Restore and maintain Country Health SA budgetary requirements for country hospitals,

including fast-tracking capital upgrades and maintenance that have been neglected by the centralised SA Health administration.

12. Establish a stronger network of drug and alcohol rehabilitation and support services in country communities.

Return Service Delivery, Policy and Decision Making to the Regions

13. Review incentives and job tenure for regionally-based Government positions and increase the level of front-line services and departmental decision and policy makers in the regions.

SA-BEST also supports a range of initiatives to ensure that the South Australian agricultural industry is sustainable and better positioned to take advantage of the big and growing export markets that will support our local economy.