



Senator Richard Di Natale
Chair, Senate Select Committee Inquiry
Jobs for the Future in Regional Areas
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6th September 2019

RE: SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY - JOBS FOR THE FUTURE IN REGIONAL AREAS

Dear Senator Di Natale,

The Upper Spencer Gulf – and our communities of Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla – are in the midst of a once in a generation economic transformation.

Over \$15 billion investment and potentially several thousand jobs across a wide range of renewable energy, mining and minerals processing, arid agriculture, Defence, tourism and public service developments are providing our region with a strong base from which we hope to build on our competitive strengths and become cleaner, more innovative, liveable and economically diverse.

This renewed economic interest in the Upper Spencer Gulf is most welcome and follows a particularly difficult time for the region and our communities following the closure of the Port Augusta Power Station and various periods over the past decade that saw major local employers in the Whyalla Steelworks and Port Pirie Smelter enter into voluntary administration.

Despite the strong economic potential now unfolding for our region, the Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla communities also face a number of intractable challenges including:

- Vulnerability to large, single industries subject to global influences
- Negative external perception and image of the three cities
- High unemployment and socio-economic disadvantage
- Duplication and lack of coordination across agencies

With this in mind, and in order to leverage lasting benefits from this latest wave of commercial investment activity for our local communities, governments must plan for and invest in the enabling infrastructure and services to underpin the economic growth.

This includes optimising our strategic transport infrastructure across the road, rail, air and sea port network; providing locally supported access to higher education; improving liveability of our three regional cities; protecting our natural assets and landscapes and strengthening regional decision making and governance.

As one particular example, the Upper Spencer Gulf will require strong government collaboration around workforce, infrastructure and development planning to ensure flow-on impacts and any unintended consequences of this new investment are managed and positive benefits for the local community are maximised.

Specific considerations include, for example: balancing access to short-term construction and longer-term permanent workforce; ensuring the right mix of worker and family accommodation; strengthening local input into state development planning processes; allowing Councils to rate major development and thus contribute towards local infrastructure and services; managing waste and circular economy opportunities from this growth; ensuring enough local recreation, community and health services to service the increased workforce; managing the increase in construction and commuter traffic; and minimising impact of short term workforce on existing sectors such as tourism and defence.

Furthermore, the Upper Spencer Gulf is already facing a skills shortage for a wide range of skilled and unskilled roles. The scale of new development activity in the Upper Spencer Gulf means our region will likely face additional and substantial workforce shortages over coming years and will be very heavily reliant on migration to fill this need. Pro-active and coordinated planning for this needs to occur as a matter of urgency, involving all levels of Government and key industry leaders.

Whilst this short-term focus on migration will be critical, it must also be supplemented by a longer-term investment into improving locally delivered and industry relevant higher education and training that assists our community to grow our own local workforce and build our regional capacity for the future.

There are 30 regional centres in Australia with a population of over 30,000 – none are in South Australia. The three Upper Spencer Gulf cities have strong local support and capacity to grow. We now require a strong partnership and genuine effort from all levels of Government to ensure this can be achieved and the benefits for our communities maximised.

For further information, please contact me on _____ or email:

Yours sincerely

Anita Crisp
Executive Officer

Upper Spencer Gulf – Top Five Industries of Employment:

- **Port Augusta** - Correctional and Detention Services (4.6%), Hospitals (4.1%), Primary Education (4.0%), Supermarkets (3.6%), Takeaway Food Services (3.0%)
- **Port Pirie** - Copper, Silver, Lead and Zinc Smelting and Refining (10.1%), Aged Care Services (4.4%), Hospitals (4.2%), Supermarkets (3.5%), Social Assistance Services (3.2%)
- **Whyalla** - Iron Smelting and Steel Manufacturing (12.3%), Iron Ore Mining (7.3%), Hospitals (4.2%), Supermarkets (3.9%), Primary Education (3.4%)

Upper Spencer Gulf – Data Snapshot:

2016 Census	SA
Total residents	1,676,649
Aboriginal population	2.0%
Unemployment	7.5%
Bachelor level qualifications	18.5%
Current university study	16.2%
Vocational level qualifications	25%
No motor vehicle	7.5%
No internet at home	17%
Homeless rate per 10,000 people	37
SEIFA Index of socio-economic disadvantage (state decile)	
SEIFA Index of education and occupation (state decile)	
Employment in Professional Roles	20.3
Council Data	
Rate income 2020	
Rateable properties	
Infrastructure Assets	

PORT AUGUSTA	PORT PIRIE	WHYALLA
13,808	17,364	21,828
18.3%	3.6%	4.7%
9.7%	10.7%	12.4%
7.9%	7.1%	8.6%
3.1%	4.3%	5.7%
24%	25%	28%
9.6%	9.5%	12.7%
27%	28%	25%
77	39	40
1	1	1
1	1	1
14.7	13.7	14.7
\$19.9m	\$18.4m	\$21.1m
7,740	10,286	12,034
\$187m	\$258m	\$259m