



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

**Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Riverina**

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Hon Peter Ryan
Chair
Strategic Regional Growth Expert Panel
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Peter

Dear Mr Ryan

I am writing to advise you of the Australian Government's release of the report *Australia's Regions: Investing in Their Future* (the Report). It is available on my Department's website infrastructure.gov.au/expert-panel-report.

As Chair of the Panel, you played a vital role in delivering this piece of work and I would like to thank you for your efforts.

Given these unprecedented times, I have decided to release the report now, recognising the need to have a dynamic discussion around how to help regional Australia emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, drought and bushfires to recover stronger than ever. The Panel's report is an important part of this much wider discussion.

The Government is committed to ensuring regional Australia can remain strong and resilient as it recovers from these events.

The Government's primary concern for regional Australia right now is to keep regional Australians in jobs and businesses operating as we face the continuing effects of COVID-19.

We have taken decisive action to support regional Australia at this critical time, including establishing the \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund to support industry sectors that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and are key to regional economies, including agriculture, the arts, fisheries, tourism and transport.

We have just recently invested in a range of initiatives benefiting our regions including:

- \$41.2 million for upgrades to regional airports
- \$207 million for Round 4 of the Building Better Regions Fund, with projects recently announced focused on supporting drought-affected regional communities
- \$500m for the Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program, investing in local government projects to bolster road networks or upgrade key community infrastructure

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Regional Australia will also continue to receive one-third of our Government's \$100 billion infrastructure pipeline.

The Expert Panel's recommendations are thoughtful and diverse in their scope and continue to inform our policy considerations for Regional Australia.

The Government is awaiting the findings of a number of inquiries including the House Select Committee on Regional Australia's Inquiry into Regional Australia, which is chaired by Mr Tony Pasin MP and is currently holding public hearings.

The Government is also working through the newly established Regional and Rural Reform Committee, announced in May this year by the Prime Minister as part of the Government's decision to establish the National Federation Reform Council, to improve coordination and collaboration to deliver strong outcomes for regional Australia.

My Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Hon Nola Marino MP and I have today formalised the Statement of Intent for the Albury Wodonga Regional Deal on behalf of the Australian Government. This will set the course for the region to identify key priorities for economic and regional development across three levels of government and is the third pilot Regional Deal the Australian Government has committed to delivering with respective state and local government partners. Given the significant challenges facing the Albury Wodonga community at this time, all levels of government must continue to work together to support the entire region in both the immediate and longer term.

Ms Marino has also worked especially hard to elevate the role RDAs have had in ensuring feedback, policy ideas and regional priorities from each RDA have fed into our national COVID-19 emergency response and recovery plans.

Thank you again, and I look forward to engaging with you on issues facing regional Australia in the future.

Yours sincerely



Michael McCormack

Cc Ms Nola Marino, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories