

Canberra Visit Report

Tuesday, 20 March 2012

**Melbourne's Northern Region
Mayoral, CEO, RDA, Northlink
Delegation**

Feedback and Recommendations

Introduction

On advice from local Federal members at the council forum meeting in February it was recommended and agreed the seven councils of Melbourne's northern region, Northlink and the RDA should visit the Australian Parliament in the March sitting period to advocate and present a united view and argument for more investment outcomes for the region from the Federal Government.

Local members suggested the region needed to convey its issues to key Ministerial offices before the Federal Budget is handed down, after which Government will focus on its implementation. Local Members felt the region had a good chance to insert some of its views into final thinking around the budget, particularly in regard to proactive action in the manufacturing sector.

Following advice from Ministerial offices Tuesday 20 March was selected as the best day on which to secure meetings in the Parliament. Having committed to this date, the Prime Ministerial leadership challenge and resulting Ministerial reshuffle took place, which introduced some unforeseen dynamics on the visit – including new Ministers, new staffers and the putting back of the ERC committee process, which took place when the delegation was in the house.

The March 2012 combined regional visit to Canberra set six objectives:

1. Through convey/reinforce a clear sense of regional unity and a sense of the scale and importance of Melbourne's northern region to the Victorian and national economy, particularly in manufacturing;
2. Provide Ministerial offices with the new RDA regional manufacturing strategy for Melbourne North and speak to practical measures that could quickly make a positive difference in the region;
3. Inform Ministerial offices, particularly Minister Conroy's office, the region will soon complete its Regional NBN strategy being prepared in consultation with NBNC0. This will provide timelines for rapid implementation on pilots - assistance being sought to source expertise to make this happen.
4. Provide Ministerial offices with information kit on the region and 16 projects with a total spend of \$190M that are important to the region - of which \$65M is linked to one important road project.
5. Invite the Ministers and their advisers to visit the region to meet with industry and other important stakeholders and gain first hand understanding of how the RDA manufacturing strategy will make a positive impact, as well as gain a broader understanding of the region.
6. Connect with local Federal Members to thank for support and update on progress.

Moreland updated the information kit, making it more generic and flexible, and supplied copies for distribution on the day; and the RDA and Northlink completed and printed the manufacturing strategy in time to take to Canberra. Yarra provided information generated from the pre-planning day on 19 March.

On Tuesday 20 March the combined delegation visited Parliament House and participated in nine meetings involving senior ministerial staff, senior bureaucrats and local MPs representing Melbourne's northern region.

This document provides feedback and recommendations on the visit.

Terry Cuddy
Consultant

VISIT PROGRAM

Scheduled Meetings

A program of nine meetings was set for the day. Only the meeting with Adam Bandt was cancelled (although discussion was held with his adviser), some changed times and because of the exigencies of the day caused by the sitting of ERC committees, Ministers Combet, Conroy, Shorten, Albanese and Lundy were unable to personally attend – (although some were met in corridors). The completed meetings were with:

1. Allan Behm, Chief of Staff to Minister Combet – Climate Change, Industry, Innovation, Manufacturing
2. Adam Bandt adviser – (censure statement on brown coal precluded from meeting)
3. Bill Bolitho Senior Advisers to Minister Crean – Regional Development and Arts
4. Sean Sammon, Adviser to Minister Lundy – Sport and Innovation
5. Steve Michelson, Adviser to Minister Shorten – Employment and Workplace Relations
6. Andy Byrne Adviser and Andrew Rodgers Advisor to Minister Conroy – Telecommunications
7. Matt Vine Adviser to Treasurer Swan – Treasury
8. Nick Seow Adviser to Minister Albanese – Infrastructure
9. Local Federal MPs Rob Mitchell, Kelvin Thompson, Harry Jenkins and Maria Vamvakinou

In addition to these meetings delegates were able to attend Question time. The meeting schedule for the day was more intensive than the previous visit and left little time between meetings for other activity.

Local Members

Staff from local Federal Members offices were again very helpful in organising the day. A number of staff were brand new having been reshuffled/appointed as a result of the Cabinet reshuffle. Rob Mitchell's office was again the primary point of contact for the day. Thanks go to Gareth Jones as well as Anthony Cianfione.

Harry Jenkins, Kelvin Thompson and Rob Mitchell all received positive confirmation from the ministerial offices that they believed the delegation was given a good hearing and there would be follow up on issues raised. They are keen to support action on implementation of the Manufacturing strategy and will support the proposed budget briefing in the region in May.

Visit Date

The decision to visit Canberra was validated by the number of senior staffers who saw opportunity to incorporate the manufacturing strategy into the Prime Ministers Manufacturing Taskforce and subsequent preparation of program by end of May. They also took a good deal of interest in the NBN strategy and the need to examine the O'Hern's road project. The visit has also prompted confirmation of the need for Ministers to visit the region. Harry Jenkins re affirmed that the visit was good timing.

Contingent Size

The region was represented by an overall contingent of 15 people:

Banyule:	Cr Tom Melican	CEO Simon Mcmillan
Moreland:	Cr John Kavanagh	CEO Peter Brown
Hume:	Cr Rosalind Spence	CEO Domenic Isola
Darebin:	Cr Steven Tsitsas	CEO Rasiah Dev
Whittlesea:	-	Griff Davies
Yarra:	Cr Geoff Barbour	A/g CEO Ivan Gilmore
Nillumbik:	-	-
Northlink:	Chair Chris Heysen	EO Mick Butera
RDA:		EO Tony Coppola
Consultant:		Terry Cuddy

The overall group was too large to accommodate in Ministerial offices, this necessitated the strategy of splitting the delegation in two and paralleling meetings, with three meetings occurring simultaneously at one instance. The Parliamentary staff cafe was again designated as the 'base' for the day.

Documentation

Staff from several ministerial offices remarked that the delegation's information package was of particularly high standard – the manufacturing strategy document and its immediate freshness was particularly noted. The information emphasised the point the region was working as a team and showed genuine commitment together (privately noted that very few regions have reached this level). This is giving confidence to further discussion and action with the region.

Approach to Meetings

The rigorous meeting program required mayors to rotate the responsibility of leading the different delegations. Mayors led each presentation, provided the regional overview and facilitated discussion. Meetings were relatively succinct and allowed for two way discussion with the ministerial representatives. This was well received by the representatives of the ministerial offices.

FEEDBACK

Despite concern about timing, the delegation visit to Canberra proved to be most successful and achieved some of the key objectives set by councils. The visit also received positive feedback from Ministerial offices.

What impressed

- Manufacturing Strategy – the first such document received by the Govt
- Progress on NBN strategy – and aim to achieve early outcomes fits with Govt objectives
- Clarity and unity of purpose shown by the delegation;
- size of the delegation, its combined seven council and industry make up;
- inclusion of RDA representative – seen as powerful;
- clear demonstration of a constructive partnering attitude;
- information package – consistency of message
- Region understands the 2012/13 budget will be tight in regard to infrastructure;
- Emphasis on 'shovel ready' projects that can be delivered quickly
- Partnering between councils, industry and tertiary institutions – way to go
- Cross boundary regional use nature of the selected projects

Observations

- Timely visit – opportunity to follow up and include the region's input in plans for 2012/13
- Manufacturing Strategy very timely – get it to PM Manufacturing Taskforce and the Departments;
- Need to define program actions to implement Manufacturing Strategy recommendations;
- Need to allocate regional priority to the shovel ready projects – what are the top 3?
- Need to link other policy outcomes to 16 projects – equity/social/age/multicultural values
- Need to find a way to engage Vic Gov in some projects
- Local members need to keep up support and advocacy for region

Opportunities

- Greg Combet offer to visit region with COS Allan Behm;
- Simon Crean offer to meet in Melbourne, meanwhile Bill Bolitho to visit Whittlesea/O'Herns Road;
- Bill Shorten to deliver post budget briefing in region on Friday 11 May (3 days after announced);
- Steve Michelson, Shorten employment adviser to visit region asap – incubators/talk to industry;
- Sean Sammon, Lundy sport adviser offer to visit the region to look at some sport projects;
- Andy Byrne and Andrew Rodgers, Conroy NBN advisers to be kept informed of strategy paper and arrange briefing soon as finished – Conroy meeting to discuss – upcoming announcements may assist
- Minister Burke offer to visit the region to discuss sustainability projects (from last November)

Comments

- Need to submit manufacturing strategy to Prime Minister Manufacturing Taskforce asap
- Need to engage senior officers in respective departments on strategies and projects
- Need to develop relationship with NBNC
- Need to meet Minister O'Connor, (small business) re manufacturing strategy – and SME threshold
- Local MPs need to keep the pressure on the Ministerial offices (or NSW and Qld will get more)
- Need to find ways to promote Federal activity/outcomes locally

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the Canberra visit the following recommendations are provided:

Post-visit follow-up

Letters of thanks

Ministers

Forward letter of thanks to each respective minister for meetings held with their advisers. (Advisers were representing their ministers). The letter needs to confirm the outcomes of each meeting:

- provision of the regional information package, Manufacturing strategy, update on NBN;
- reference to projects being 'shovel ready';
- invitation to visit the region;
- intended follow up with department officers.

These letters should be directed to the Parliamentary address:

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Advisor contact details

- Allan Behm, Chief of Staff, The Hon Greg Combet AM MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Minister for Industry and Innovation allan.behm@climatechange.gov.au
- Bill Bolitho, Advisor, the Hon. Simon Crean MP, Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Minister for the Arts bill.bolitho@regional.gov.au
- Sean Sammon, Advisor, Senator Kate Lundy, Minister for Sport and Multiculturalism sean.sammon@innovation.gov.au
- Steve Michelson, Advisor, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation steve.michelson@deewr.gov.au
- Andy Byrne, Advisor, Senator Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy andy.byrne@dbcde.gov.au and andrew.rodgers@dbcde.gov.au
- Nick Seow, Advisor, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport nick.seow@infrastructure.gov.au

Local Members

A letter of thanks needs to go to each local Federal MP in the northern region to thank them for their support and assistance of their staff with the visit to the Parliament. This letter should be accompanied with a copy of the manufacturing strategy and advise that the NBN strategy will soon be completed.

Recommendations - Maintaining Momentum

The delegation visit to Canberra was warmly received and resulted in engaged dialogue with several ministerial offices and offers to visit the region – the Northern Melbourne Council Forum needs to respond to these opportunities to maintain momentum towards achieving outcomes from its lobby effort.

The following recommendations emerge from the March visit:

1. Local Federal MPs

Feedback from ministerial offices is that local MPs need to keep up advocacy for the region to ensure Victorian needs are presented as well as other states. The local MPs are interested in the manufacturing strategy – all need to receive a hard copy as well as soft copy. Similarly, they want to receive a copy of the NBN strategy.

Harry Jenkins, Kelvin Thompson and Rob Mitchell are particularly interested in small business and the opportunity to effect a dialogue with Brendon O'Connor the Minister for Small Business – need to move on this asap to ensure the region's needs are picked up in the PM Manufacturing Taskforce, which is due to report at end of May.

All local Federal ALP MPs need to be invited to the budget briefing function on 11 May.

Actions

- 1: letter of thanks to MP offices
- 2: provide copy of manufacturing strategy/or drop in
- 3: provide copy of NBN strategy
- 4: involve local members in meeting with Brendon O'Connor
- 5: involve all local ALP MPs in Budget briefing – hosting tables

2. Federal Budget Briefing

The Hon. Bill Shorten has confirmed he will deliver a post budget briefing in the region, slated for Friday 11 May (three days after the budget is handed down and earliest opportunity as Parliament sits up to Thursday 13 May). Advisor Steve Michelson is to be the contact point. Request is that the event involve guests from a broad cross-section of stakeholders:

- Employers – large, medium, small
- Industry groups
- Unions
- Councils
- RDA/Northlink – other economic groups
- Institutions – universities, TAFE, hospitals
- Significant community groups
- Local media

Actions

1. Formal invitation letter needs to go to Steve Michelson/Minister Shorten asap.
2. Northlink to coordinate the event
3. Invite broad cross-section of stakeholders – provide guest list to Ministers office
4. Invite local Federal MPs – each to host a table of organisations from electorate
5. Liaise with Ministers office re logistics and needs on the day – guest lists etc

3. Ministerial Visits

Offers were made and accepted for Ministers to visit the region. These visits would most likely occur after the budget is handed down – mid to late May onwards.

1. Minister Shorten

Committed to presenting a post budget briefing in the region days after it is announced. Target date is Friday 11 May. Employment Advisor Steve Sammon to visit the region asap to gain a grasp of incubators and meet with some employers.

2. Minister Conroy

Interested in the development of the Region NBN Strategy. Would be prepared to receive a personal briefing at Commonwealth offices in Treasury Place – liaise with adviser Andy Byrne, also with local MP Kelvin Thompson.

3. Minister Combet

Will visit the region in context of manufacturing strategy – probable best window of opportunity is before the end of May and before the PM Manufacturing Taskforce concludes its review. Urges the region to submit its RDA manufacturing strategy to both the Dept and the Taskforce for review before the visit. RDA needs to identify how the recommendations might be implemented - either within existing programs, modified program criteria or with proposed new programs. Need to explain logic of why govt should relax SME selection criteria for some programs? What would be contemplated in relation to additional or expanded incubators? Chief of Staff Allan Behm prepared to visit separately if needed – has greater flexibility of availability than the minister.

4. Minister Crean

Offer to meet a regional delegation in his Commonwealth office at Treasury Place. Understands the catch 22 nature of problem with O'Herns Road project. Bill Bolitho to visit the site separately before the meeting. (Thinks would be useful to invite Nick Seow road and rail adviser from Albanese office to also visit).

5. Minister Lundy

While newly appointed, the Senator is willing to visit the region to take a briefing of sports needs and multicultural issues – notes has an influence on infrastructure spend, but does not make that decision. Very important to understand the broad range of issues that can be met by projects – region needs to give priority to its projects. Adviser Sean Sammon to visit ahead of Ministerial visit.

6. Minister Albanese

While the Minister has not yet committed to visiting the region, the suggestion is that road and rail advisor Nick Seow be invited to the region to gain a personal understanding of the O'Herns Road project and the Moreland Grade Separation projects – needs to gain a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved. When more progress is made a Ministerial visit could be arranged.

7. Minister O'Connor

When more work is done on Manufacturing Strategy re how to benefit small business, and once NBN strategy is complete, work through Harry Jenkins office to meet Brendon O'Connor in Melbourne to achieve whole of government response in region. Possibly invite the Minister to the budget briefing on 11 May.

Actions

- 1: remain in dialogue with the ministerial offices – follow through with written invitations
- 2: liaise with the identified advisors and organise their visits asap
- 3: liaise with Harry Jenkins office to arrange meeting with Brendon O'Connor when ready

4. Advisor Follow ups

Most of the advisors made offers to engage with and make follow up visits to the region on behalf of their Ministers – these need to be followed up relatively quickly.

1. Allan Behm – Chief of Staff Minister Combet

Offer to visit the region to discuss the RDA manufacturing strategy and recommendations on how it could be implemented. This could be achieved with a senior department head. Made particular reference to issues of equity and social capital building aspects of actions as these are of deep interest to the minister.

- A visit to the incubators and meet some employers
- Discuss regional manufacturing strategy and implementation
- Speak to Brendon O'Connor Small Business Minister
- Take on board issue of unfair advantages imported goods have over local products on things such as quality requirements; safety etc – need examples
- Discussions with RMIT University re Food Technology Department re-locating to Bundoora (City of Whittlesea)
- Interested in ideas of whole of government approach to business sector

2. Steve Michelson – Employment Advisor Minister Shorten

Offer to visit the region as soon as practicable to visit the Brunswick incubator and meet with some employers.

- Keen to get an understanding of how RDA manufacturing strategy could be achieved locally. Steve is from the region and understands the issues.
- Has suggested a brokering a linkage with Minister O'Connor (Small Business) re the manufacturing Strategy.
- Minister Shorten has interest in supporting job outcomes from small business and therefore local initiatives that could make a difference.
- Steve will be in Melbourne for the next six weeks and would be interested in spending an afternoon in the north including a visit to a Business Incubator.
- Steve will be the point person for Budget briefing.

3. Andrew Rodgers/Andy Byrne – Advisors Minister Conroy

Keen to follow the development of the Region NBN Strategy – it is the most sophisticated approach they have yet seen from local government/regions.

- Andrew Rodger keen to receive updated regional NBN digital strategy
- Early objectives to achieve action and outcomes is of particular interest
- Keen to see ideas on how region can use public infrastructure to deliver content to increase take up of NBN – particularly by the 'punters'.
- Achieving connection/take up by 'punters' of great value and interest to Ministers office.
- Interested in obtaining advice on any obstacles to public infrastructure providers seeking to achieve connection with users – particularly if locked into telco deals that inhibit them.
- Keen to visit and discuss Moreland plans and progress
- Willing to collaborate with councils to spread information, plans and achievements, including participation in local workshop that involves different stakeholders
- Urged the region to pursue and press NBN satellite ground station with NBNSCo.
- Would be prepared to arrange a personal briefing for Minister Conroy at Commonwealth offices in Treasury Place.

4. Bill Bolitho – Advisor, Minister Crean

Offer to visit Whittlesea at earlier convenience to get a personal understanding of the O'Hern's Road issue in relation to the Epping Melbourne Fruit and Vegetable Market.

- Has some visibility on the market project.
- Understands catch 22 nature of problem - demonstrating Regional value;

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- Suggests get maps of regions and look at how issue may impact on other regions;
- Understands the project is under the threshold for Infrastructure Australia funding;
- Understands the Federal road status of Hume Hwy and Western Ring Road;
- Region needs to look at strategy to gain support from other stakeholders;
- Thinks would be useful to invite advisor from Albanese office to also visit;
- After Bill visits the site, gathers information, organise a meeting with Minister Crean at the Melbourne office at Treasury Place.
- Support for development of Central Activity Districts to provide local jobs and reduce transport congestion
- State Government back track on Office Commercial Accommodation building in Broadmeadows Shopping and Commercial Precinct causing problems – takes on board need for funding for project

5. Sean Sammon – Sports Advisor Minister Lundy

A local who lives in the region, Sean is prepared to visit the region to get a better understanding of projects and needs.

- Region needs to consider order of priority
- Minister Lundy does not control spend for infrastructure but can influence
- Community issues, equity, multicultural issues, aged, youth etc is all important to argue the case for funding;
- Useful to visit with Local Member;
- Can arrange for Minister to visit the region – possibly in context of both responsibilities of sport and multiculturalism. Could be linked to an Olympic context;
- Portfolio feeds into Minister Crean's Regional super portfolio

6. Nick Seow, Rail and Road Advisor Minister Albanese

The advisor foreshadowed change to program criteria and funding formula – moving to a 50:50 model with States, which will have an impact on infrastructure delivery.

- Understands significance of O'Hern's Road and that scale does not meet IA criteria;
- Understands State reluctance given traditional Federal Road status of Hume Hwy and Western Ring Road;
- Will speak to VicRoads re priority given to O'Herns Road;
- Thinks mounting a case through Regional Development would be easier given scale;
- Interested in the grade separation plan – would need to look at how Feds can participate in funding a study;
- Will take advice on a new model that would see a grade separation project undertaken between Local, State and Commonwealth government and potentially private industry funding – not a usual arrangement;
- Nick could visit the region to gain a personal understanding of the O'Herns Road project and the Moreland Grade Separation projects;
- Need more information before a meeting with Minister is arranged.

5. Local Member Follow up

The session with local Federal resulted in local members offering support on several issues including:

- Kelvin Thompson to follow up Trade Minister, Industry Minister and Small Business Minister the Issue of unfair advantages imported goods have over local products on issues such as quality compliance requirements; safety etc - needs evidence.
- Harry Jenkins to work with Mick Butera and Tony Coppola on achieving a whole of government approach small business via Minister O'Connor portfolio - support for small business including business incubators; review Austrade approach of picking winners rather than developing winners; reduce SME criteria to less than \$2M.
- Rob Mitchell supportive of locating NBN satellite ground station in the north
- All local members to get manufacturing and digital strategy – and discuss with group
- All will participate in the proposed post budget briefing

- Harry Jenkins to assist with discussions with RMIT University re status and action to relocate Food Technology Department to Bundoora (City of Whittlesea)

6. Recommendations – RDA Manufacturing Strategy

The region's RDA manufacturing strategy was well received and several comments, suggestions and advice was provided by ministerial offices. These include:

Actions

- 1: provide copy of manufacturing strategy to each local Federal MP in the region;
- 2: provide copy of strategy to each key portfolio – innovation, employment, regional
- 3: provide copy of strategy to Prime Ministers Manufacturing Taskforce
- 4: engage PM Taskforce in dialogue – provide detail on how to implement recommendations either with existing programs, modified programs or new programs
- 5: offer PM Taskforce staff a personal briefing
- 6: provide Minister for Small Business a briefing – and his department officials
- 7: use local MPs to lobby to have the Taskforce Recommendations/Strategies announced in the region – most likely to be in August/September
- 8: use local MPs to advocate that the Manufacturing Strategy announcement be made in the north in the context of a community cabinet.

7. Recommendations – Regional Digital Strategy (NBN)

Minister Conroy and his office are keen to follow the evolution of the region's digital strategy and the prospect of achieving early outcomes in the region. We are advised that the Minister will shortly make statements in near future that may be helpful. The following actions are suggested

- \$3M available through DBCDE to support local digital initiatives
- \$24M available through NBNCo to support development of local take up initiatives
- Region should seek funding to acquire the skills needed to develop/implement action
- Region should engage regional stakeholders in strategy
- Region should promote its activity relating to digital strategy
- Consult NBNCo in the development of the digital strategy
- Press NBNCo on locating satellite control centre in the region
- Continue to motivate local Federal MPs to advocate on regions behalf to the Minister
- Provide an opportunity for the Minister to visit and talk up the region's leadership

Actions

- 1: stay in contact with Andy Byrne and Andrew Rodgers in Minister Conroy's office
- 2: keep Jonathon Chowns Dep Sec in DBCDE informed
- 3: Provide Andrew Rodgers with copy of digital strategy at every step of evolution
- 4: invite the advisers and DBCDE officials to the region for strategy briefing
- 5: invite the Minister to a local event relating to the digital strategy
- 3: keep NBNCo closely engaged and informed

8. Recommendations - Departmental Officers

In addition to engaging with MPs, Ministers and their staff, it is important to also engage with senior officers within key departments. These are the people who interpret, assess, recommend and implement action and spend by departments in accordance with delivering policy. If interpretation is required, the region needs to ensure these people are informed and also aware of political thinking.

- 1: Key target departments: Regional, Industry-Innovation, Infrastructure, Small Business, Broadband Communications and Digital Economy
- 2: Invite senior officers to the region on visit program – brief and inform
- 3: identify gaps in information that they may require
- 4: brief local MP offices on senior bureaucrat visits and outcomes

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4: visit departmental officials in Canberra when region next visits Parliament.

8. Recommendations – Upcoming Event Opportunities

1. 2012 Federal Budget

Steve Michelson adviser to Bill Shorten, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation has confirmed the Minister is keen to provide a post budget briefing in the region and meet with a cross section of small, medium and large business operators and other important regional stakeholders.

- This event could promote the RDA manufacturing strategy and regional digital strategy and provide an opportunity to bring local Federal ALP MPs together on the day with a number of their constituents – creating the chance of the event to be used to strategic advantage.

2. Prime Ministers Manufacturing Strategy

We are advised by Minister Combet's office that the review period for the strategy will be completed at end of May 2012, four months will be dedicated to completing a comprehensive response to the manufacturing sector, which will be announced later in the year – most likely August/September.

- Minister Combet's office has strongly recommended the region submit its strategy to the Taskforce and engage in the taskforce process. Through engagement some if not all of the region's initiatives could be integrated into the national strategy.
- It is recommended that Local Federal MPs be encouraged to advocate to the Prime Minister's office and key ministers in relation to the region's manufacturing strategy and needs – an effort should be mounted to have the national strategy announced in the region later in the year.

3. Community Cabinet

The Federal government places tremendous importance on hosting cabinet meetings in different communities and anchoring the event around significant announcements.

- The region should mount an effort through local Federal MPs to host community cabinet in the region and have the announcement of the national manufacturing strategy as the anchor for the visit. The bid would need to parallel discussions with the Prime Minister's Manufacturing Taskforce.

4. Next Visit to Canberra

The third visit to Canberra would aim to be a 'working' visit that is organised well in advance and makes provision to meet with departmental officers as well as Ministers and their advisors. If the timing is right, the delegation could be discussion the release of the national manufacturing strategy in the region as well as a potential community cabinet. There is also scope that further traction has been achieved on the regional digital strategy and local infrastructure projects.

The objective of the third visit is to entrench the region as a can do leader that is acting in a more unified and pragmatic way than others. This visit would aim to meet with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer. It would also be prudent at this time to brief some Opposition members on the region and the proactive steps it is taking to support manufacturing and gain access to the broadband network.