

Regional Development Australia – Tasmanian Committee



Response to Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Arts

Economic Development Plan (EDP)

Discussion paper

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Contact:

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Consultation Points

The Strategy

Question:

Feedback on the vision and goals of the EDP

Response:

RDA Tasmania supports the vision and goals of the EDP. We note that there is strong alignment with the long term vision and goals of the RDA Tasmania Committee for Tasmania.

Goal 1 – To support and grow business

Question:

Feedback on the proposed approach (you may wish to focus on the overall direction or particular toolkit elements).

Response:

The EDP discussion paper identifies the challenges that currently exist within the Tasmanian economy and community more generally. Whilst implementation of the Skills, Infrastructure and Innovation strategies are important actions, these must be underpinned by an investment environment that actively supports private sector investment in industry sectors that are identified by business, rather than community aspiration. The sectoral analysis will enable a more informed response.

Question:

Are there any significant gaps in the proposed approach?

Response:

A link between economic development and a land use planning regime, which provides certainty for private sector investment, should also be included. The land use strategies should cater for growth in transport infrastructure, retail growth, population settlements and locations that identify the various types of sector growth.

Further, an understanding of the age profile, sector skill levels, sector skill requirements, particularly in identifying possible future gaps/opportunities, and industry make-up (e.g. competition of business sizes) within sectors would further enhance and direct government intervention and/or response to support growth or prevent decline.

Question:

What should be the role of grants?

Response:

Strategically targeted grant programs that can act as enabler to private sector growth can play an important role facilitating jobs and regional economic expansion. Grant programs should target evidence-based problems and opportunities. For example, the EDP discussion paper indicates that skills shortage is constantly being cited as the 'greatest constraint to growth'. Ongoing investment to identify and narrow the skills gaps should therefore remain a priority. With this, there is a need to align identified future industry growth with timely development and delivery of the required skills training.

Similarly, infrastructure grants that act as enabler for private sector investment should also be considered a priority, particularly targeted to industry growth sectors.

Grants to small business, particularly around skill development, should be flexible in their delivery to facilitate participation and involvement by the small business owner (recognising that participation may require the small business owner to leave the business for the purpose of study, and the difficulties, particularly around loss of productivity due to absence from the workplace, which this presents).

Grants provided to support businesses in decline should be avoided. Support should be to assist a transition of that economic output to alternate sources. Grants to support how businesses plan transition would in this instance be warranted.

Question:

Concrete and innovative ideas on how to implement strategy elements

Response:

Further analysis at the completion of the sectoral profile should inform this area.

Goal 2 – To maximise Tasmania's economic potential in key sectors

Generally, in response to this goal, further analysis at the completion of the sectoral profile should inform this area. In addition, there may be opportunities for growth in the knowledge sector to support the health and aged care sector, particularly with the building of the NBN.

Goal 3 – To improve the social and environmental sustainability of the economy

Question:

Feedback on the proposed approach?

Response:

The approach proposed with the EDP Discussion Paper appears reasonable. However, the responsible agency to support this goal should generally remain within those identified (e.g. Social Inclusion Unit, Skills Tasmania etc).

Question:

Are there any significant gaps in the proposed approach?

Response:

DEDTA have resources to extend and support the work being undertaken by lead agencies (such Social Inclusion Unit, Skills Tasmania etc). For example, extend the role of the Business Enterprises Centres to support business planning advice for social enterprises.

Question:

What more could be done to support workers and communities affected by structural change.

Response:

The Tasmanian Government has initiated a number of programs through agencies such as the Social Inclusion Unit, Skills Tasmania and the Education Department to specifically work within areas that are of social disadvantaged. These activities through these agencies should be continued.

Generally, DEDTA should understand the issues around the social and environmental sustainability, however, they should not be the lead agency in these areas.

Question:

Concrete and innovative ideas on how to implement strategy elements

Response:

It will be challenging to undertake these strategies when there is multiple government agencies (state and federal) involved in the implementation, particularly when each agency will have varying levels of responsibility for each strategy element. Clarity and agreement around roles and responsibilities, from with each entity, will be required, so to minimise duplication and maximise efficiencies in resources.

Goal 4 – To support and grow communities within regions

Question:

Feedback on the proposed approach

Response:

The approach identified within the discussion plan is reasonable (ie the focus on liveable regions, retain and attracting people, and growing communities).

Question:

What are the challenges in developing regional economic development plans and how could they be overcome?

Response

The key ingredient within this goal is to ensure employment opportunities exist to ‘attract and retain highly skilled, productive and creative people who drive innovation and economic growth.’

Regardless of charm and positive values contained within a community, without employment opportunities that enable people to earn an income to meet their desired standard of living, growing communities within a region will be difficult to achieve.

Question:

Is geospatial data a priority?

Response:

Quality data, across multiple information systems, to support informed decision making, is extremely important. Reasonable data, including processes to provide access and maintain the currency and accuracy of the data, should be undertaken and available across and outside of Government agencies.

Question:

Should the EDP support community-level economic development plans for communities facing particular stress such as those affected by the changes in the forestry industry?

Response:

Yes, to the extent that they have a consistent approach to recognising and supporting any industry that experiences a downturn.