

## Mayors Look Ahead to New Year

13 December 2017

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The Mayors of Port Pirie, Whyalla and Port Augusta held the final Spencer Gulf Cities meeting for 2017 at the spectacular Australian Arid Lands Botanic Gardens.

The meeting reflected on a number of achievements over the past year and discussion about future priorities.

Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities, Port Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson said the Upper Spencer Gulf has had a roller-coaster of a year.

“Undoubtedly, the highlight for Port Augusta was the announcement of the Aurora Solar Thermal project. We have been fighting for years to make this a reality. The benefits are already starting to flow into the region.”

Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer agrees the year has been one of substantial change.

“At the start of this year, we had no certainty about our future. The sale of the steelworks and the renewed vision and confidence in Whyalla has been a fantastic outcome”.

Mayor of Port Pirie, John Rohde said the transformation of the Port Pirie smelter is also flowing through the community, with a renewed level of vibrancy in the town.

“Our ‘ComeSeeChange’ campaign has captured the growing pride and optimism in Port Pirie, underpinned by the smelter redevelopment and initiatives such as our CBD and sporting precinct upgrades. We are also finally starting to see our unemployment rate drop, which is great news”.

The Mayors say one of the biggest priorities for 2018 is to keep pushing forward with plans to establish university study centres in both Port Pirie and Port Augusta, so as the economy of the Upper Spencer Gulf transitions, the region has a strong local workforce with the right qualifications.

“The evidence shows that providing face to face student and tutorial support can increase university completion rates from less than 20% to well over 80%”, explains Mayor Johnson. “We can’t keep relying on a ‘fly-in, fly-out’ professional and technical workforce. We need to have the facilities and support so we can grow our own local talent”.

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Photo: Port Pirie Mayor John Rohde, Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer and Port Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson at the final Spencer Gulf Cities meeting for 2017.

