

2019 Federal Election Platform



To all candidates for the seat of Grey,

Our region - and our three cities – are experiencing a once in a generation economic transformation.

The Upper Spencer Gulf has some of the most significant mineral and renewable energy resources, natural biodiversity and landscapes in the world.

Substantial investment in renewable energy generation, mining and minerals processing, arid agriculture, defence and tourism is providing our region with a strong base from which we can continue to build on our comparative strengths and become cleaner, more innovative, liveable and economically diverse. Some exciting initiatives include:

- A wide range of renewable energy technologies, including the flagship Aurora concentrated solar thermal project near Port Augusta, along with pumped hydro, solar photo-voltaic, wind, hydrogen and battery storage proposals which are positioning the Upper Spencer Gulf as the powerhouse of the nation.
- Transformation and modernisation of the Whyalla steelworks to increase production, reduce costs and develop new products and markets.
- Redevelopment of the Port Pirie smelter into a new multi-metal and e-waste recovery facility.
- Sundrop Farms greenhouse facility near Port Augusta using solar thermal energy to desalinate seawater and produce heat for intensive 'arid land' horticulture operation.
- Expansion of the Cultana Defence Training Area to become one of the Australian Defence Force's largest training areas capable of supporting major joint exercises.
- National Sterile Insect Technology Centre in Port Augusta produces up to 50 million sterile male Queensland fruit flies each week for release into fruit fly affected horticulture growing regions across Australia.
- Growth in event, marine, nature based, cultural and industrial tourism across Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla.

We seek commitment from all candidates for the seat of Grey, along with potential Senators for South Australia, to support and strongly advocate for five key priorities we believe will maximise the flow-on benefits from this economic growth, build our capability and resilience and secure our region's transition for the benefit of both current and future generations:

1. Growing our Population - A skilled migration and decentralisation programme tailored to meet the specific needs of the Upper Spencer Gulf.

2. Strategic Transport Infrastructure - Investment into strategic road, rail, seaport and airport infrastructure to underpin the long term economic transition of the Upper Spencer Gulf.

3. Locally Supported, Industry Relevant Higher Education - Additional Commonwealth supported university places and operational funding for the Upper Spencer Gulf Regional Study Hub to enable students to stay, study and work locally.

4. Energy Transformation - A strong, credible and evidence-based national energy policy to provide stability and certainty for investment in the Upper Spencer Gulf.

5. City Liveability - Coordinated and collaborative investment into civic initiatives in Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie to foster well-planned city growth and liveability.



Mayor Leon Stephens
Port Pirie



Mayor Brett Benbow
Port Augusta



Mayor Clare McLaughlin
Whyalla

1. Growing our Population

There are 30 regional centres in Australia with populations over 30,000ⁱ. None are in South Australia.

The rapid growth in energy, mining and manufacturing in the Upper Spencer Gulf will require a substantial construction workforce over coming years, with long term potential for the population across the three cities to double.

Decentralisation and migration will play a vital role in supporting the development of the Upper Spencer Gulf, avoiding a 'fly-in fly-out' workforce, boosting the technical and professional services already in short supply and importantly, growing our permanent population.

International migration is responsible for over half the population growth in Australia, however, regional areas are attracting comparatively fewer migrants and our current immigration, employment and settlement services systems impose many barriers to rural settlementⁱⁱ.

In addition, the centralisation of the public service not only robs regional communities of much needed diversification and public sector career opportunities, but perpetuates policy development and decision-making that is inherently disconnected from the very communities it impacts upon.

We call on all candidates for seat of Grey and political parties to support:

- ✓ *A skilled migration and decentralisation programme tailored to meet the specific needs of the Upper Spencer Gulf.*

2. Strategic Transport Infrastructure

The Upper Spencer Gulf is, quite literally, the crossroads of Australia, where the Perth-Sydney and Melbourne-Adelaide-Darwin national highways converge and the east-west and north-south long-distance passenger and freight rail lines intersect. In addition, under-utilised sea ports at Whyalla and Port Pirie, commercial passenger airports at Whyalla and Port Augusta, and a fully serviced light plane and training aerodrome in Port Pirie all provide a solid base to underpin the wide range of economic growth sectors in our region.

Investment in strategic infrastructure is needed to enable the Upper Spencer Gulf to take full advantage of the many and varied economic growth opportunities, grow as a national transport and logistics hub and manage the increasingly complex and conflicting industrial, tourist and commuter transport needsⁱⁱⁱ.

Optimising transport links for rapidly expanding renewable energy, defence, event and nature-based tourism, agriculture/horticulture and mining operations is required, along with strategies to increase utilisation of the Port Pirie and Whyalla ports, upgrade major heavy vehicle routes and provide solutions to address increasing road user conflict in relation to the impacts of localised freight movements on business, tourism, cycling and pedestrian traffic.

We call on all candidates for seat of Grey and political parties to support:

- ✓ *Investment into strategic road, rail, seaport and airport infrastructure to underpin the long term economic transition of the Upper Spencer Gulf.*

3. Locally Supported, Industry Relevant Higher Education

As the Upper Spencer Gulf moves into a significant economic transition we need to grow our own skilled workforce.

Only 8% of Upper Spencer Gulf residents hold a bachelor level or higher degree, compared to the national average of 22%. Only 4% of Upper Spencer Gulf residents are currently undertaking university study, compared to the national average of 16%.

The lack of technical and professional skill within the Upper Spencer Gulf has long been identified as a major threat to our prosperity. Our three cities have suffered from decades of 'fly-in fly-out' expertise that has contributed very little to building our own regional capacity.

'Uni Hub Spencer Gulf' is a regional university study hub, owned by the community and based in the community. Uni Hub has partnered with Flinders University, University of Adelaide and CQ University to locally deliver the bachelor and post-graduate degrees our industry needs for the future.

The current cap on Commonwealth supported university places is a significant risk to the viability of the Uni Hub, which was established to overcome the market failure that exists in many regional areas.

We call on all candidates for seat of Grey and political parties to support:

- ✓ *Additional Commonwealth supported university places and operational funding for the Upper Spencer Gulf Regional Study Hub to enable students to stay, study and work locally.*

4. Energy Transformation

The Upper Spencer Gulf is rapidly emerging as the 'powerhouse' of the nation.

The wide range of renewable energy technologies proposed in the Upper Spencer Gulf, including concentrated solar thermal, pumped hydro, solar photo-voltaic, wind, hydrogen and battery storage, makes our region an ideal location for commercial deployment, along with research and testing of new energy technologies.

As a region reliant on energy-intensive enterprise and with a competitive advantage for generating renewable energy^{iv}, we support calls from industry leaders^v for our next Federal Government to implement a credible national energy policy that will lower prices, improve reliability, reduce emissions and encourage new investment.

We call on all candidates for seat of Grey and political parties to support:

- ✓ *A strong, credible and evidence-based national energy policy to provide stability and certainty for investment in the Upper Spencer Gulf.*

5. City Liveability

Our transition to cleaner, more innovative and economically diverse regional cities must be underpinned by strengthening the role of Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla as regional service centres and improving community confidence, capability and capacity.

All three cities have already invested heavily in initiatives including town entrance and foreshore redevelopments, rejuvenation of sporting and library facilities, park, garden and streetscape upgrades, bike and walking tracks, water reuse schemes and community events that foster civic pride and vibrancy.

The rapid pace of economic change across the region means the three cities will need to make further investments to provide the services and lifestyle to attract and, importantly, retain new skilled workers and their families.

We call on all candidates for seat of Grey and political parties to support:

- ✓ *Coordinated and collaborative investment into civic initiatives in Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie to foster well-planned city growth and liveability.*

ⁱ Australian Government; 2016; Census Data

ⁱⁱ Regional Australia Institute; May 2018; *The missing workers - Locally-led migration strategies to better meet rural labour needs*, Policy paper

ⁱⁱⁱ AECOM; February 2018; *Regional Transport Infrastructure Plan Whyalla, Port Pirie, Port Augusta*; Prepared for the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group

^{iv} USGCPG; July 2015; *Opportunities for Growth - Renewable Energy and CleanTech Sectors*; Upper Spencer Gulf, South Australia

^v Including the Australian Industry Group, SACOME, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia, the Electrical Trades Union and the Australian Energy Council