



UPPER SPENCER GULF COMMON PURPOSE GROUP

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Era for Upper Spencer Gulf

The Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group has entered a new era, holding its first meeting in the Group's 15 year history with an independent chair.

Mr Lew Owens recently commenced in the role, following a 2012 review by the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies that first raised the concept of moving away from the long-held tradition of one of the three city Mayors chairing the Group, to an external, independent appointment.

Mr Owens is well known to South Australia and the Upper Spencer Gulf, having spent many years in a variety of high profile roles including ETSA Utilities, Essential Services Commission of SA, Funds SA and Workcover Corporation of SA.

In addition to taking the role with the Upper Spencer Gulf, Mr Owens is also the current Chair of SA Water Corporation and Country Arts SA, Director of Australian Gas Networks Ltd and an Ambassador for Reconciliation SA.

Port Augusta Mayor and Deputy Chair of the Common Purpose Group, Sam Johnson, says the appointment will complement the work of the three cities, noting the Upper Spencer Gulf is at a particularly vulnerable time, with widespread job losses across the traditional mining and energy sectors.

"But never has there been more opportunity for our region to reposition itself and capture the global trends and growth in renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and innovative agriculture", he says. "Having someone of Lew's capability and experience is very timely in helping us achieve our potential", said Mayor Johnson.

Mr Owens has wasted no time progressing a number of initiatives under development by the Common Purpose Group.

The 2015/16 strategic plan and priority actions have been endorsed, with a continued focus on raising the profile of the Upper Spencer Gulf at a state and national level, establishing the region as a hub for clean energy and technology, pursuing opportunities for growth and value-adding in agriculture, mining and Defence, attracting conferences and events to the three cities and expanding options for local delivery of higher education and research.

The Group will next meet in Port Augusta in early December.

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Photo (overpage): Mr Lew Owens, appointed as inaugural chair of the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group at his first meeting in Port Augusta recently.

