

Regional Development Rebuff

12 September 2018

Upper Spencer Gulf Mayors have expressed frustration over difficulties meeting with the new Minister for Regional Development, Tim Whetstone.

Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities, Sam Johnson said the region wrote to every Minister after the March election to provide an update on the challenges and opportunities.

"Last year we identified 30 strategic initiatives to help pave the way for transition of our economy and our communities. We have provided every Minister with a copy of this '*Transforming the Upper Spencer Gulf*' report and have sought their support and commitment to help us continue to pursue these goals."

"We have already had very positive meetings with State Treasurer, Hon Rob Lucas and we have also met with Trade and Investment Minister David Ridgway and of course Minister for Mining and Energy, Dan van Holst Pellekaan."

"However, it is disappointing that, some six months after the election, we have still not been able to meet with the new Minister for Regional Development."

After raising the issue repeatedly with the Minister's office, the Group was recently offered one timeslot, but, with less than a week's notice, the Mayors all had prior commitments.

Mr Johnson said that compounding the Mayors frustration is that requests to meet with other Ministers on key issues around skills, education and training have all been referred to Minister Whetstone, creating a stalemate.

"Arguably there is no other region in South Australia that is facing such a massive economic transition and contributes as much to the state economy as the Upper Spencer Gulf", said Sam.

"We have a significant workforce and skills issue looming in the Upper Spencer Gulf, we have the Uni Hub commencing next year and we have a number of key initiatives that we are seeking support from Government on."

Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer said whilst the future Upper Spencer Gulf is looking positive, now, more than ever, a strong partnership with Government is required.

"We have a number of fabulous economic investments in our region and we now need to make sure we do everything we can to provide the workforce, services and infrastructure at a community level to support them. That will require a strong level of engagement and partnership effort by all levels of Government"

Port Pirie Mayor John Rohde agrees, saying the three cities are also keen to understand Minister Whetstone's vision for regional SA and for the Upper Spencer Gulf.

"We have a strong foundation in the Upper Spencer Gulf to build on but need Government to work with us to keep that momentum going and to make sure we are all heading in the same direction".

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