



Regional Cities Join Forces for Growth

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Following the first release of 2016 census data, Upper Spencer Gulf Mayors have joined other regional leaders from across South Australia to consider opportunities to grow the state's regional centres.

Chair of the Spencer Gulf Cities Association and Port Augusta Mayor, Sam Johnson said the data really highlights the need for vision and political will to focus on growing South Australia's regions.

"The latest census shows that nationally, one third of the population live in a regional area ", explained Mayor Johnson.

"In South Australia, only 17% live outside the "Greater Adelaide Planning Region", so we are way behind."

"The data also shows that there are now 30 regional cities with populations over 30,000 and 10 with populations over 100,000 – and there are still none in South Australia."

"We think it is time to redress the population split between regional areas and Adelaide."

"Our long-term aspiration is for SA to be on par with the national average - with around a third of the population based outside the metropolitan area. We were actually there until about the 1970's, but have lost ground over the last half century as Adelaide has continued to sprawl.

However, Mayor Johnson cautioned that a blanket approach to regional growth wasn't the answer.

"There are some good lessons learned from the last big decentralisation push across the 1950s-1970s that you just can't send people out from the city into country towns with no employment opportunities", he said.

"We are keen to see a policy in place that focuses particularly on the provincial cities that have employment shortages, industry growth and infrastructure/service capacity. "

"The argument that there are no jobs in the country is quite frankly wrong."

"Across the three Upper Spencer Gulf Cities alone we have shortages in everything from greenhouse, retail and hospitality workers through to engineers and medical professionals. And that doesn't include the hundreds of short-term jobs needed for the construction of the new Aurora solar thermal plant and a number of solar PV and windfarms."

Mayor Johnson explained that data from the Regional Australia Institute also shows that for every 100,000 Australians who choose to live in growing regional cities rather than our big five cities, an additional \$50 billion will be released into the economy over 30 years in reduced congestion costs and increased consumption.

"Having a clear and proactive approach to growing our regional centres is not only good for country communities, but it benefits the capital cities as well."

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Photo: Regional representatives from the Upper Spencer Gulf, Eyre Peninsula, Riverland and Murraylands, Limestone Coast and Yorke Peninsula with political scientist Emeritus Professor Dean Jaensch, Dr Kim Houghton (Regional Australia Institute) and Heidi Hodge (Charles Darwin University)

