

Regional Development Australia

Southern NSW & ACT

Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forum

February 2026

Regional Development Australia Southern NSW & ACT

Who are we?

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a national network of committees made up of local leaders who work across government, business and community groups to improve their region.

What do we do?

RDA members work to support economic and workforce development, local procurement, strategic regional planning and informing government programs and infrastructure investments.

Who funds us?

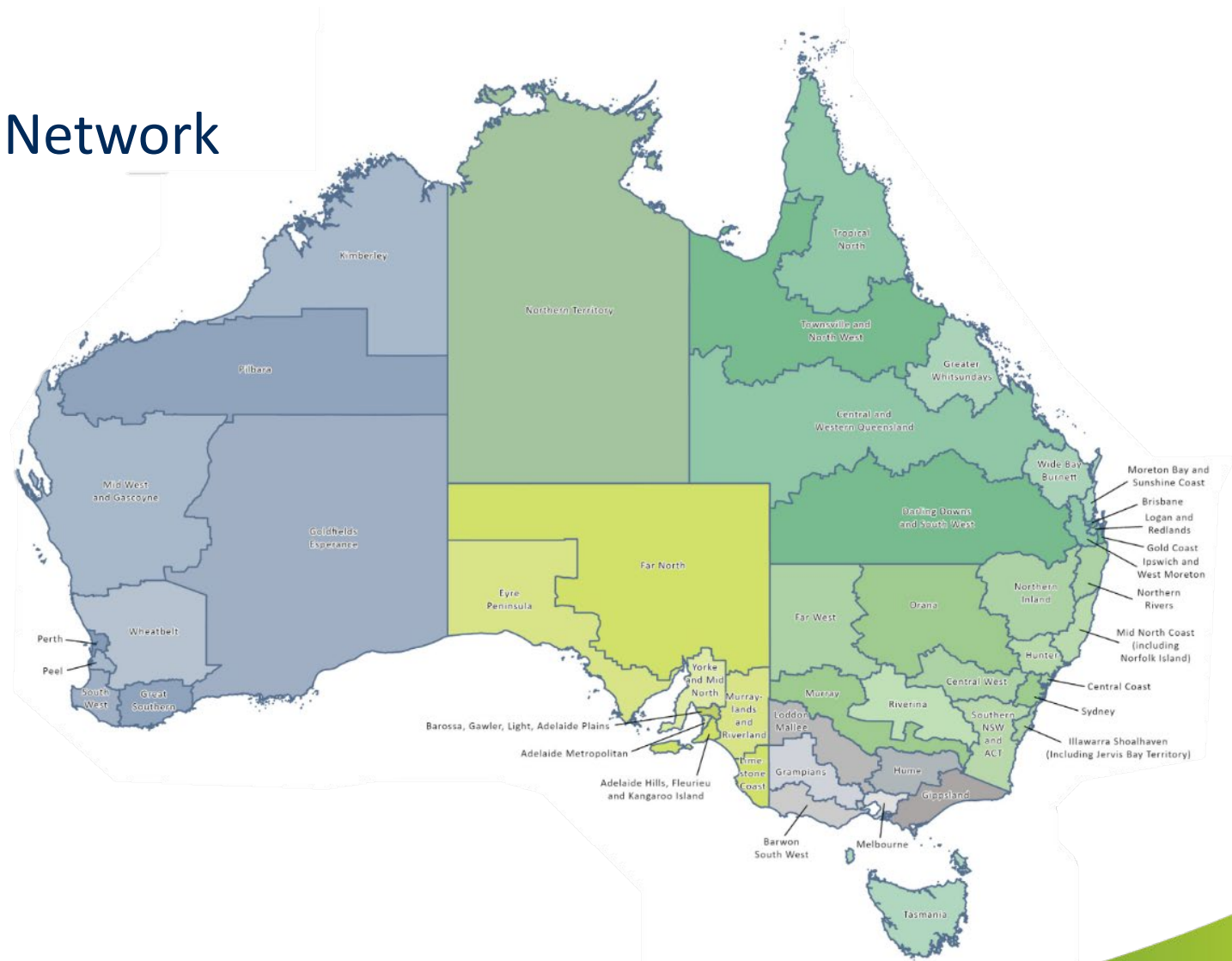
The RDA program is administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

The Minister with responsibility is the Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories.

Local people
creating local
opportunities



RDA Network



Our region encompasses 9 NSW LGAs including, Wingecarribee, Goulburn-Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Hilltops, Queanbeyan-Palerang, Snowy Monaro, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley, plus the Australian Capital Territory.

This diverse region spanning from the Snowy Mountains, across the Southern Tablelands and Highlands, to the Sapphire Coast includes a land mass of over 56,000km² with a population of over 750,000.



Our Region





How we can help

- Grant Assistance

In partnership with our councils, we offer a FREE online grant finder to identify current opportunities. This resource connects business and community groups with available funding from local, state and federal government, plus private foundation sources.

- Regional Data

We have a suite of regional reports and data tools designed to support informed decision-making across government, industry and community.

How we can help

- Migration




RDASNA administers the Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) Visa (Subclass 494) - Employer Sponsored Stream visas for Southern NSW. As the regional certifying body (RCB), we provide the Department of Home Affairs with information about local labour market conditions and other relevant regional matters.

- Advocacy

Our insights combine robust evidence, local intelligence and practical analysis to help stakeholders understand challenges, identify opportunities and plan for the future. We regularly make submissions to all levels of Government on key issues.

Planning for regions we live in


New reports

Transport  Housing  Workforce 



Thrive Strategy

Call to Action to Thrive

- **Policymakers** must align regulatory frameworks and funding strategies with strategic regional objectives to create conducive environments for sustainable growth.
 - **Investors and Businesses** are encouraged to engage with and explore opportunities within our prioritised growth sectors, contributing to the economic diversification of Southern NSW and the ACT through innovative and sustainable investments.
 - **Community Leaders and Stakeholders** should foster partnerships across public, private, and community sectors to synergise efforts in implementing actionable strategies that ensure equitable growth, sustainable development, and community wellbeing.
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Southern NSW & ACT Tourism Roundtable: Outcomes & Implications for Canberra

What we heard | What it means | Where coordinated action matters

Why RDASNA convened the Roundtable

Why this conversation was needed

- Visitors experience Canberra + surrounding regions as **one journey**
- Tourism outcomes are shaped by **transport, workforce, housing and coordination**
- Need to move beyond siloed, place-based responses



Who was in the room

A genuinely cross-border conversation

- Operators, destination orgs, councils, industry bodies
- ACT Government, NSW Government, regional stakeholders
- Coverage: Canberra, Snowy Mountains, South Coast, Southern Tablelands





The core message

A strong visitor economy — constrained by fragmentation

- Strong assets, events and experiences
- Fragmented systems limit dispersal, length of stay and confidence
- Seasonality amplifies workforce and viability challenges

The Central Solution: Establish a coordinated regional visitor economy framework



Coordinated governance and shared priorities

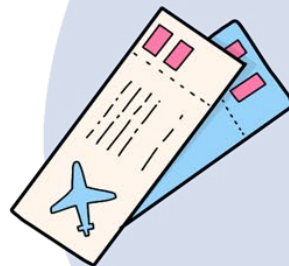
"Grant funding to encourage business collaboration."

"Local and state governments to seed fund local opportunities."

"Bring the stakeholders to the table to connect and collaborate."

"Lobby both Destination NSW and Visit Canberra to align messaging and investment."

"Empowering businesses to work with each other rather than compete."



"Opportunity is to aggregate experiences and transport together."

"Cross border buses that facilitate stops through multiple destinations."

Integrated experience, transport and activation planning

"Itinerary development that trickles down to encourage business cluster collaboration."

"Identify experience clusters that can be better connected."

"ATDW itinerary builder with realistic transport times and connection options. Industry, LTO & RTOs."



Enabling investment, workforce and policy settings.

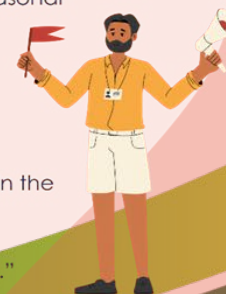
"Apprenticeships expanded to many more trades and tourism roles."

"Collaboration between the regions for seasonal workforce."

"Work experience attractions to learn a new skill."

"Positive experiences and pathways of many within the tourism workforce."

"Free training opportunities (micro credentials)."



What we heard: Key challenges

The challenges shaping the visitor economy

- Fragmentation & seasonality
- Transport & experience connectivity
- Workforce instability
- Inconsistent planning and investment signals

Challenge

Action

Table 1: Transport & Visitor Linkages

Developing a strong end to end transport experience for all visitors and stakeholders

VOTES: 23.9%

Developing itinerary's in co-design with businesses to encourage positive tourism outcomes & collaboration

VOTES: 25.7%

Table 2: Communication & Connectivity

Signage & wayfinding - connectivity with wifi and lack of notification for major road projects

VOTES: 4.2%

Collaboration or partnerships at a regional level

VOTES: 17.1%

Table 3: Investment & Partnerships

Lack of marketing investment and the complexity & inequality of partnerships

VOTES: 19.7%

Create a working group across industry to investigate & develop plan. RDA & destination networks to collaborate to identify stakeholders

VOTES: 20%

Table 4: Cultural Tourism

Build better connections between the arts/culture and tourism sectors

VOTES: 7%

Better engagement between destination networks, RADOs and regional creative communities

VOTES: 12.9%

Table 5: 24-Hour Economy

Working with government council and regulators to remove the barriers for business

VOTES: 33.8%

VEAP - Visitor Economy Advisory Panel - Local community people

VOTES: 4.3%

Table 6: Branding & Regional Identity (1)

The size and diversity of regional identity - the various brands; Visit Canberra, Visit NSW, Southern Tablelands & LGAs

VOTES: 15.5%

Joint pilot project between NSW & ACT Govt led by a representative committee of Govt & industry & community

VOTES: 12.9%

Challenge

Action

Table 7: Branding & Regional Identity (2)

Linking diverse offerings whilst managing seasonality and regional borders

VOTES: 16.9%

Define the major stakeholders in the project

VOTES: 0%

Table 8: Seasonality & Dispersal (1)

Smoothing seasonality and better dispersing visitation to maximise growth in peak period, while developing offerings to grow off season

VOTES: 28.2%

Stay, play & eat vouchers for use in regional NSW. Small, non-franchise businesses only

VOTES: 22.9%

Table 9: Events & Experience Sustainability

Collaboration between council, event organisers and local business

VOTES: 18.3%

Tourism levy to provide sustainable funding for tourism industry

VOTES: 18.6%

Table 10: Workforce (1)

Changing the perception that a career in tourism is only for young people and a temporary job

VOTES: 5.6%

Government incentives - Industry development with government funding for app for workforce

VOTES: 11.4%

Table 11: Workforce (2)

The changing expectation of what a 'career' in the tourism/hospitality industry looks like in today's workforce

VOTES: 14.1%

Marketing & promotion, industry awareness & business collaboration

VOTES: 20%

Table 12: Seasonality & Dispersal (2)

Driving demand for travel in off peak - expectation that marketing will solve seasonality problems

VOTES: 9.9%

Identify off-season benefits and create new products/experiences and promote via visitation triggers

VOTES: 30%

Why this matters for Canberra

Implications for the ACT visitor economy

- Canberra is the **gateway** for regional tourism
- ACT workforce underpins surrounding destinations
- Events, aviation and accommodation benefit from longer stays & dispersal

The Central Problem: A fragmented and highly seasonal visitor economy system

Poor transport connectivity and weak integration of visitor experiences



"Lack of transportation options from leaving the city and accessing regional tourism destinations"

"Developing a strong end to end transport experience to link people, places and experiences"

"Signage for tourism destinations – cost and local council approvals"

"How to make Canberra and the region more connected to take advantage of the tourism and business opportunities which exist within it"



"The disconnect between experiences, transport and information for visitors."



"Understanding and learning how to adapt and change to the market demands across the year, creating demand and new experiences."

A highly seasonal pattern of demand that undermines stability and growth

"How to maintain/increase visitation through seasonal challenges?"

"Creating demand to meet the seasonality challenges"



"Seasonality limits the ability for businesses to remain viable year round."

"How do we smooth seasonality and better disperse visitation throughout the region, while developing new product offerings to grow off season"



Limited capacity to sustain a skilled and stable workforce

"Increasing numbers in workforce."

"How to attract and retain staff"

"Changing the perception that a career in tourism is only for young people and a temporary job."

"Lack of coordination across the region in driving seasonal employment and enticing year round employment experience for younger workers"

"Disconnect for the need to connect and feelings of not being able to live in place without having training and not being able to get to work"





A shift in thinking

From place-based to journey-based planning

- Visitors don't follow borders
- Journeys start in Canberra
- Need for integrated experience, transport and information planning

The three strategic directions

What participants said will make the biggest difference

- Stronger regional coordination & shared leadership
- Year-round experiences & better connectivity
- A more stable, mobile tourism workforce



Where ACT leadership matters most

Key opportunities for ACT–regional coordination

- Transport and airport-to-region connectivity
- Workforce mobility and training pathways
- Event-led dispersal and shoulder-season growth
- Shared visitor information and wayfinding

What RDASNA is doing next

From insights to action

- Using findings in advocacy and policy input
- Aligning with workforce, transport and economic development work
- Supporting cross-border conversations and evidence-based decisions

A call to collaboration

A shared opportunity

- Shared evidence
- Shared priorities
- Shared responsibility





29 April 2026

9:30-4:00

The Shine Dome
CANBERRA



An Australian Government Initiative



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