

## **Inquiry into Infrastructure and Development of Australia's regional areas.**

### **Preface:**

The Yorke Regional Development Board (YRDB) encompasses an area of concern which incorporates the Yorke Peninsula and Wakefield Plain in South Australia. The Board represents the four councils in the region, namely the Wakefield Regional Council, the District Council of Barunga West, the District Council of Yorke Peninsula, and the District Council of the Copper Coast.

The regions prosperity depends mainly on diversified arable farming activities based on cereal grains, some oilseeds, pulses, together with livestock. The region suffers from an acute lack of basic infrastructure despite being a two hour drive from Adelaide.

### **Roads:**

Across the Yorke region road length totals some 8,369km, of which only 676km are sealed, 5,735 km are formed surfaced, 1, 338 km natural surface and 620 km unformed<sup>1</sup>. The roads in the region are heavily traversed by freight, especially at harvest time. The roads tend to be narrow and of poor quality making it difficult to overtake.

### **Rail:**

There is no rail service for freight or passengers on the peninsula, but Wakefield regional council is traversed by the national Sydney-Perth line as well as the State rail network that connects the grain silos at Balaklava, Owen, Nantawarra and Long Plains to Adelaide. There exists a tourist train between Kadina and Wallaroo but no passenger service between Kadina and Adelaide making it difficult to entice tourists to the area (as Victor Harbour & the Barossa Valley have done with direct connections to Adelaide).

### **Electricity/Energy:**

The access to three phase power across the Yorke region is limited to the major towns. For instance, many of the newly developing land based aquaculture sites usually need to be located near a coastal location for access to water (and away from effluent outfalls). This poses a dilemma for many developers as they are then situated away from access points to three phase power. The cost of three phase power is approximately \$30-40,000 per km making medium to large scale development (and hence job creation) prohibitive.

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<sup>1</sup> VCG Australia Pty Ltd "Field Crops Value-Adding Study"; Dec 1997

**Water:**

Mains water is available across the region except for the region south of Warooka. This leaves many small communities isolated from mains water. For some people across the region sufficient water pressure has become an issue for those seeking to diversify their farming practices. The Southern Yorke Peninsula has useful stock groundwater supplies but useful groundwater North of Curramulka and South of Port Broughton is non-existent. Likewise, the Wakefield plain has stock quality water mainly within in a ten kilometre radius of Balaklava.<sup>2</sup>

**Telecommunications:**

As telecommunications lines are the highways of the future a great deal of concern has been raised over the adequacy of the infrastructure. As the internet becomes increasingly content laden the speed and efficacy of rural telecommunication lines to deliver adequate services to disparate farming communities is decreasing.

Likewise, as the major carriers are driven by commercial imperative there appears to be no incentive to provide sufficient mobile phone coverage.<sup>3</sup> This raises a serious issue of safety for drivers on country roads.

**Migration:**

With good quality infrastructure and services in place there is a strong case for developing migration policies that attract skilled migrants to rural Australia<sup>4</sup>. Just as skilled migrants replenish the cities with new skills so would those appropriately skilled migrants in aquaculture, and diversified farming practice help develop and strengthen rural industries. Special invitation packages could be developed to target certain migrants.

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<sup>2</sup> Yorke Regional Development Board "Water Resources Report"; March 1998

<sup>3</sup> ETC & Gibson Quai "Yorke Region-Telecommunications Project"; April 1999

<sup>4</sup> The SA Centre for Economic Studies "The Provincial Cities" Part A, B, C; June 1998

**Education:**

By increasing the retention rates at rural schools and offering more local educational opportunities through TAFE and Universities there is a corresponding need to provide increased educational resources<sup>5</sup>. New and innovative courses need to be offered such as the development of entrepreneurial skills.

Further detailed infrastructure information can be provided upon request. The YRDB also endorses the submission made by the South Australian Regional Development Association (SARDA).

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.