



REGIONAL
AUSTRALIA
INSTITUTE

REIMAGINE

7-8 OCTOBER 2025 // PARLIAMENT HOUSE // CANBERRA

EVENT PROGRAM



REGIONS RISING
NATIONAL SERIES PARTNER



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The RAI acknowledges Traditional Owners throughout Australia and acknowledges the continuing connections to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Traditional Custodians of this land.



welcome to

NATIONAL SUMMIT

Liz Ritchie
CEO Regional Australia Institute

Welcome to the Regions Rising National Summit 2025, the Regional Australia Institute's (RAI) annual flagship event.

This year, we invite you to *Reimagine* our regions. To reimagine is an invitation – and it's also a challenge – to think differently about the future of regional Australia.

Regional Australia stands at a turning point. The pressures we face are real: climate change, workforce shortages, housing stress and the need for critical infrastructure. But these pressures are also catalysts for creativity. They demand action – not waiting passively for the future to be upon us, but actively reimagine what our communities can become.

Regional communities are already innovating and creating new industries by trialling fresh business models of health, housing and education. New partnerships are being forged between governments, industry and local leaders to solve complex challenges. Regional Australia is not waiting to be told what its future will be – it is designing it.

Now is also the moment to reimagine how our nation sees its regions. No longer an afterthought, our regional cities, towns and communities are central to the country's prosperity. They are where the food is grown, the resources are produced,

the energy is generated, and the future workforce is being nurtured. A thriving regional Australia means a stronger, balanced nation.

At the RAI, our research continues to show what's possible when we dare to think differently. Our *Towards Net Zero: Building a Legacy* report demonstrates how the energy transformation can leave enduring benefits in regional communities - if we get the policy settings right. Our *Regionalisation Ambition* highlights how targeted investment and planning can end the trade-offs regional Australians too often face. These are not just reports – they are blueprints for reimagining.

This Summit is our opportunity to explore these ideas together. Over the coming days, you will hear from leaders across politics, business, community and industry who are challenging us to think beyond the status quo. You will meet people who are pioneering new approaches, and you will be part of conversations that spark fresh thinking about how we shape the next chapter for regional Australia.

I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our National Event Series Sponsors, nbn™, and all of our event partners. Your support ensures that we can gather the best minds in the room to imagine – and reimagine – our regional future.

Liz Ritchie



REGIONAL AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE BOARD

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Christian Zahra AM



Mr Andre Carstens



**Emeritus Professor
Sandra Harding AO**



**The Hon. Rob
Gerard Kerin**



**Professor Fiona
Haslam McKenzie**



The Hon Mark Vaile AO



Marnie Baker AM

NATIONAL SUMMIT WELCOME RECEPTION

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Date: Tuesday 7 October 2025

Time: 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Venue: Mural Hall, Australian Parliament House

Begin National Summit 2025 with the official welcome reception in Parliament House, Canberra.

Unwind from travel, catch up with old friends and make new ones over a drink and light refreshment.

OFFICIAL WELCOME



Madeleine Morris
Master of Ceremonies (MC)



Liz Ritchie
CEO, Regional Australia Institute

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

MINISTERIAL ADDRESS



Dr Rolf Gomes
Heart of Australia



Naomi Dallenogare
General Manager
Corporate Affairs,
Elders



**Hon David
Littleproud MP**
Leader of the
Nationals

WELCOME RECEPTION PARTNER

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CONNECTING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

We're committed to delivering a better nbn[®] network for regional Australia.



Improving technology

We're continuing to extend the reach and capability of the nbn network, to help bring competition and improved service further into rural and regional Australia.

Understanding local needs

Our dedicated nbn Local team works with your community, helping to provide localised solutions for a network better suited to your region.

Supporting digital innovation

We're working with industry groups to enhance what's possible in the fields of business, health, education, agriculture and more.



nbn.com.au/local



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Thank you to our dedicated supporters and sponsors for your unwavering commitment to empowering regional Australia. Your support is instrumental in making the Regions Rising National Summit a success and ensuring the future prosperity of our regions.



NATIONAL EVENT SERIES SPONSOR



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WELCOME RECEPTION



NATIONAL SUMMIT ATTENDEES

Interested in finding out who else is at the 2025 Regions Rising National Summit - REIMAGINE?

Scan the QR code to get a full list of attendees.





NATIONAL SUMMIT SPEAKERS



Madeleine Morris
MC



Aunty Violet Sheridan
Senior Ngunnawal Elder



Liz Ritchie
CEO, Regional
Australia Institute



The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
Minister for Regional
Development, Local Government
& Territories, and Minister for
Emergency Management



Michael Poulton
CEO, Committee
for Ballarat



Giaan Rooney
Former Olympian, Television
Presenter & Commentator



The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh
Assistant Minister for Productivity,
Competition, Charities & Treasury

NATIONAL SUMMIT DINNER SPEAKERS



**The Hon Senator
Tim Ayres**
Minister for Industry
& Innovation, and
Minister for Science



Susan Wheeldon
Airbnb Country
Manager,
Australia and
New Zealand



Jamie Durie
Host of *Jamie
Durie's Future
House*

Reimagining stronger regions

For over 70 years, we've been part of regional communities.

We're proud to connect not-for-profit organisations at the heart of these communities with grants of up to \$5,000 for projects that strengthen education, environment, health, and regional tourism.

This is about more than funding. It's about building a better future together.

In just two years, about 250 organisations have received more than \$1 million in grants to strengthen local connections.

Next round opens September



Scan the QR code to find out how to apply.





NATIONAL SUMMIT REIMAGINE

NATIONAL EVENT
SERIES SPONSOR



Date: Wednesday 8 October 2025
Time: 7.30am – 4.30pm
Venue: The Great Hall, Australian Parliament House

7.30am REGISTRATION

Networking & Refreshments 40 mins

WELCOME TO REIMAGINE

- 8.10am Introduction**
Madeleine Morris, MC 10 mins
- 8.20am Welcome to Country**
Aunty Violet Sheridan, Senior Ngunnawal Elder 5 mins
- 8.25am Ministerial Introduction**
Christian Zahra AM, Chair, Regional Australia Institute 5 mins
- 8.30am Ministerial Address**
The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government
and Territories, and Minister for Emergency Management 15 mins
- 8.45am Q&A** 10 mins
- 8.55am RAI Address**
Liz Ritchie, CEO, Regional Australia Institute 15 mins
- 9.10am Q&A** 10 mins
- 9.20am Keynote Address**
Michael Poulton, CEO, Committee for Ballarat 15 mins

SESSION 1

NET ZERO IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA: DRIVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

9.40am Opening Remarks
Tony Mahar, Commissioner, Australian Energy Infrastructure 10 mins

9.50am PANEL

FACILITATOR

Maryanne Graham, Executive General Manager
of Corporate & Stakeholder Affairs, Transgrid

David Shankey, CEO, Net Zero Authority

Sabiene Heindl, CEO, The Energy Charter

Will Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council

Sarah Robin, Research Manager, Regional Australia Institute

Cr Margot Davis, Mayor, Glen Innes Severn Council 50 mins

10.40am Q&A 15 mins

10.55am MORNING TEA

Networking & Refreshments 20 mins

SESSION 2

WORKFORCE SKILLS & DIGITAL FUTURES

11.15am Introduction

Marnie Baker AM, Board, Regional Australia Institute 5 mins

11.20am Keynote Address

The Hon. John Brumby AO, Chancellor, La Trobe University 15 mins

11.35am Q&A 10 mins

11.45am PANEL

FACILITATOR

Sam Dimarco, General Manager Regional and Remote, nbn™

Susie Bower, CEO, Bell Bay Advanced

Justine Campbell, Regional Development Australia - Orana

Professor Barney Glover AO, Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia

Scientia Professor Veena Sahajwalla AO, UNSW SMaRT Centre

Mark Glazbrook, MD, Migration Solutions 35 mins

12.20pm Q&A 15 mins

SESSION 3

POPULATION, PLANNING AND HOUSING

12.35pm Keynote Address

Stephen Yarwood, Northern City Plan 15 mins

12.50pm Q&A 10 mins





1.00pm LUNCH

Networking & Refreshments 45 mins

SESSION 3 *Continued*

1.45pm Keynote Address

Giaan Rooney, Former Olympian, Television Presenter & Commentator 15 mins

2.00pm PANEL

FACILITATOR

Simon Pryor, Research & Policy Director, Regional Australia Institute

Barbara Norman, Emeritus Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Canberra

Scott Langford, CEO, Housing Australia

Anne Champness, CEO, Tatiara District Council

Malkah Lara Muckenschnabl, Associate Partner, YoBou 35 mins

2.35pm Q&A 15 mins

SESSION 4

LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

2.50pm Keynote Address

Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote, nbn™ 15 mins

3.05pm Q&A 10 mins

3.15pm PANEL

FACILITATOR

Madeleine Morris, MC

Dr Luke Craven, CEO, Partnerships for Local Action & Community Empowerment (PLACE)

Melina Morrison, CEO, Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals

Andrew Taylor, CEO, Regional Circularity Co-operative in Bega

Cassandra Beeck, Director, GNP 360 Co-operative 35 mins

3.50pm Q&A 15 mins

4.05pm Ministerial Introduction

Emeritus Professor Sandra Harding AO, Board, Regional Australia Institute 5 mins

4.10pm Ministerial Address

The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh, Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities and Treasury 15 mins

4.25pm Vote of thanks and closing remarks 5 mins



JOIN OUR MEMBER COLLECTIVE

The strength of RAI's member collective enables us to advocate for better policy solutions and investment that delivers tangible benefits for regional communities. By becoming a member of RAI, you are actively supporting the enhancement of prosperity in regional Australia.

RAI members enjoy many benefits including:

- Exclusive member-only workshops and webinars
- Nation-wide branding
- Speaking and case study opportunities
- Collaboration opportunities; and much more.

We have three tiers of membership designed to suit the needs of our diverse partners that help shape our regions.

To find out more, please contact us or scan the QR code.

E. membership@regionalaustralia.org.au





PANEL // SESSION 1 // 9.40AM - 10.55AM

NET ZERO IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA: DRIVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

As Australia accelerates its transition to net zero, regional communities are at the forefront of renewable energy development. This panel will explore how regional Australia can harness the energy transition to drive sustainable growth, build resilience, and leave a lasting legacy.



OPENING REMARKS

Tony Mahar
Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner



David Shankey
CEO, Net Zero Authority



Sabiene Heindl
CEO, Energy Charter



William Churchill
Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council



Sarah Robin
Research Manager, Regional Australia Institute



Cr Margot Davis
Mayor, Glen Innes Severn Council



FACILITATOR
Maryanne Graham

Executive General Manager of Corporate & Stakeholder Affairs, Transgrid



PANEL // SESSION 2 // 11.15AM - 12.35PM

WORKFORCE SKILLS & DIGITAL FUTURES

The future prosperity of regional Australia depends on a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, and equipped to thrive in an increasingly digital economy. This session will explore how strategic investment in education, training, and lifelong learning can unlock opportunities across the regions.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Hon. John Brumby AO
Chancellor, La Trobe University



Susie Bower
CEO, Bell Bay Advanced



Justine Campbell
Regional Development Australia, Orana



Professor Barney Glover AO
Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia



Scientia Professor Veena Sahajwalla AO
UNSW SMaRT Centre



Mark Glazbrook
MD, Migration Solutions



FACILITATOR
Sam Dimarco

General Manager Regional and Remote, nbn™



PANEL // SESSION 3 // 12.35PM - 2.45PM (Including Lunch)

POPULATION, PLANNING AND HOUSING

Regional Australia is at the centre of the nation's population growth and housing challenge. This panel will examine how strategic planning, affordable housing solutions, and population policy can create vibrant, sustainable, and liveable regional communities. The discussion will focus on the opportunities and challenges of growth, from infrastructure and services to housing supply and workforce attraction.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Stephen Yarwood
Northern City Plan



Barbara Norman
Emeritus Professor of
Urban and Regional
Planning, University
of Canberra



Scott Langford
CEO, Housing
Australia



Anne Champness
CEO, Tatiara
District Council



**Malkah Lara
Muckenschnabl**
Associate Partner,
YoBou



FACILITATOR

Simon Pryor
Research & Policy Director, Regional Australia Institute



PANEL // SESSION 4 // 2.50PM - 4.30PM

LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

Regional communities thrive when local leadership, partnerships, and cooperatives are effectively harnessed. This panel will explore how collaboration across government, business, cooperatives, and community organisations can empower regional communities to address local challenges, drive innovation, and build resilient and sustainable futures.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Gavin Williams
Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote, nbn™



Dr Luke Craven
CEO, Partnerships for
Local Action and Community
Empowerment (PLACE)



Melina Morrison
CEO, Business Council of
Co-operatives and Mutuals



Andrew Taylor
CEO, Regional Circularity
Co-operative in Bega



Cassandra Beeck
Director,
GNP 360 Co-operative



FACILITATOR

Madeleine Morris
MC



REGIONAL AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE

REGIONAL AUSTRALIA HUB

Your Virtual Community for Connection, Knowledge & Collaboration

Access to RAI research

Collaborate in topic-driven forums

Harness the power of regional expertise

Network with regional change-makers

Access online education courses

Join the Regional Australia Hub and connect with an online community dedicated to building a prosperous regional Australia



Australian Government

BUILDING AUSTRALIA

The Regional Australia Hub was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.



FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Elders is proud to partner with the Regional Australia Institute to help bring to the forefront agenda setting conversations and tangible actions, that advocate for the prosperity and sustainability of the regional and rural communities in which we live, work and grow.



for Australian agriculture



To learn more about how we're investing in our communities through our new Community Giving Project, visit elders.com.au/community or scan the qr code



NATIONAL SUMMIT DINNER

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Date: Wednesday 8 October 2025

Time: 6.30pm – 10pm

Venue: The Great Hall, Australian Parliament House

DINNER PARTNER

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6.30pm DRINKS SERVICE

.....

Networking & Refreshments

7.00pm WELCOME

.....

Madeleine Morris, MC

7.05pm REGIONAL AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE WELCOME

.....

Christian Zahra AM, Chair, Regional Australia Institute

7.10pm KEYNOTE ADDRESS

.....

The Hon Senator Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry & Innovation and the Minister for Science

7.30pm DINNER SERVICE

.....

8.10pm IN CONVERSATION

.....

Susan Wheeldon,
Airbnb Country Manager, Australia and New Zealand

Facilitator: Liz Ritchie, CEO, Regional Australia Institute

8.30pm KEYNOTE ADDRESS

.....

Jamie Durie, Host of *Jamie Durie's Future House*

8.50pm Q&A

9.00pm DESSERT SERVICE

.....

Networking & Entertainment

10.00pm EVENT CONCLUSION



Preparing for local events just got easier, thanks to the Event Hosting Toolkit.

Free planning tools at your fingertips.

Built for local councils and event organisers to help expand accommodation capacity, Airbnb's Event Hosting Toolkit is a free resource that provides step-by-step planning guidance and insights, helping you manage and engage visitors to the regions whilst supporting local businesses.



Access the toolkit at airbnb.com.au/eventhostingtoolkit



MID-LEVEL MANAGERS COURSE



30 NOVEMBER 2025

Build the skills to lead, adapt, and thrive in regional Australia.

This professional development program equips mid-level managers with the leadership, strategic, and adaptive skills needed to drive sustainable growth, innovation, and resilience in regions.

Through a mix of pre-reading, interactive live workshops and reflective learning, you'll gain:

- Practical tools to tackle adaptive challenges
- Knowledge of migration, housing, and economic transitions
- Insights on navigating regional and net zero transitions
- Systems thinking approaches to manage complexity
- A national network of peers and collaborators

Facilitator



Nigel Collin, MBA

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

by contacting info@regionalaustralia.org.au

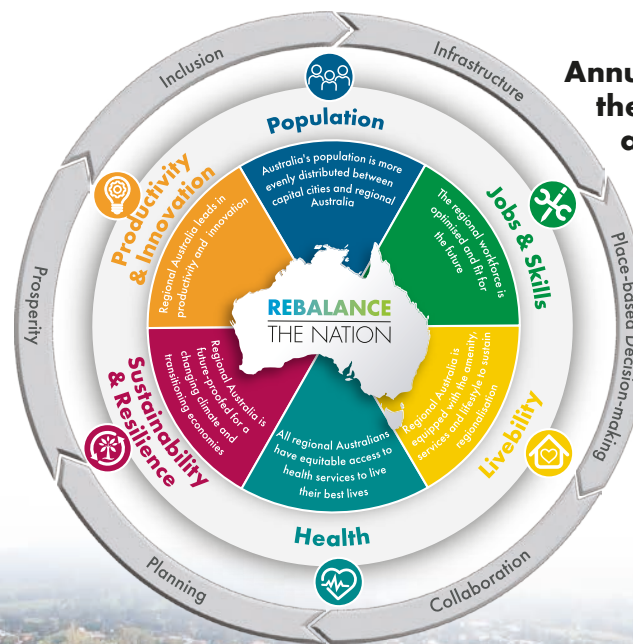


Australian Government

BUILDING AUSTRALIA

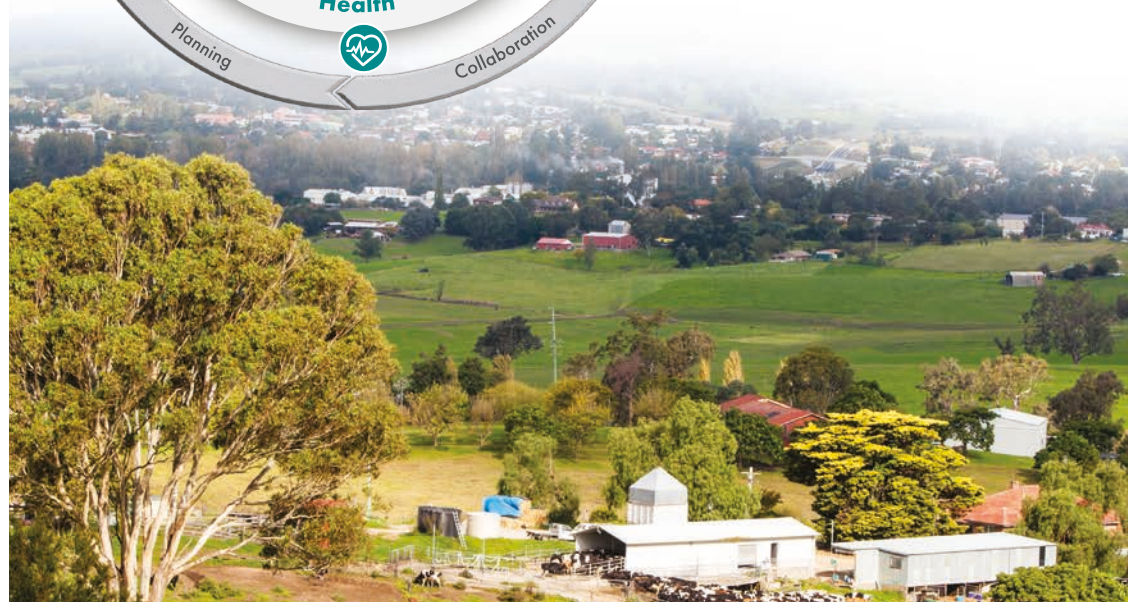
This Mid-Level Managers Course is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.

How is your community tracking towards targets in the Ambition?



Annual results for the 25 targets in the Ambition 2032 are now available online at a national, state and territory and local level.

The new dashboard contains three years of data. Users can now see how their regions are tracking towards the Ambition targets and how it has been trending over time. The new tool is designed to give regional leaders data and insights to help continual progress across all the pillars.



Visit regionalaustralia.org.au to access your results



Regional Australia Institute

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www.regionalaustralia.org.au

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