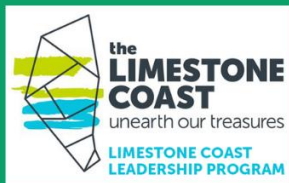


ATTRACTING & RETAINING A SKILLED WORKFORCE IN OUR REGION

HELEN DAILY, JOSH HARVEY, KRISTEN WILKS



newcomer

A SKILLED WORKER is a...

refugee, asylum seeker, foreigner,
a returning migrant, mobile worker,
new neighbour, new citizen, friend,
colleague, employee and valued,
welcomed community member.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When assigned the community action project of 'attracting and retaining a skilled workforce within our region' the task seemed quite daunting – a challenge that on the outside seemed simple in its nature, but in reality was multi-faceted and difficult to immediately diagnose.

The topic of attracting and retaining skilled workforce is not unique to the Limestone Coast, it is a common challenge globally for many rural townships and communities. Our task was to explore this topic in an adaptive capacity, to delve into the system and look beyond any technical solutions we found, to spark an idea or a thought that could create a possibility of some change for our community.

Our task was to explore:

- What role can the community play?
- Does the community understand the issue and are they willing to be part of the solution?
- Why do we have limited retention of those migrating to our region?
- Why do some stay?
- Tools and resources exist but how do we turn this into action within communities?

When assigned to work together as a team to explore the possibilities or to ask difficult questions when appropriate, it became clear that as individuals our strengths lay in varied areas and our homes and hearts in different communities. We began by researching our own backyard to discover why this was an issue for our own towns, and it soon became apparent that although the problem of attraction and retention was very common, the reasons why it is an issue was varying from town to town.

Because of the complex nature of the question it was hard to immediately reduce the scope of our project into something manageable, and we struggled to focus under the weight of information and published reports. We continued to ask ourselves how could we prioritise one community over another, when we are all facing the same challenge?

We were determined to learn what we could and to understand the complexity of the problem or polarity from many levels and to seek to attract more people, **'skilled newcomers or returning workers'** to our wonderful region.

We discovered many intersecting areas that could potentially play into and effect the Limestone Coast with the issue of attraction and retention of skilled workers.

- Lack of employment opportunities or large industry in regional Limestone Coast, particularly outside of Mt Gambier
- Lack of suitable services – i.e. Health & Disability, Childcare, Hospitals
- Lack of opportunity with trade, apprenticeships or training to keep youth engaged to stay within the area
- Lack of rental accommodation or suitable housing for newcomers
- Lack of public transportation within towns and connecting across the region
- Lack of retention of youth throughout the Limestone Coast
- Ageing population within the Limestone Coast
- Migration into the Limestone Coast, including secondary migration. An understanding the word migration, does not only refer to OS migrants.
- Working in silo's – ie working on only one part of the problem rather than looking at the problem across many levels as individuals.
- Collaboration on many levels between communities, local, state and federal government
- Are we a welcoming community – how do we welcome newcomers into the region?
- What does it take to make a newcomer want to stay, or for someone that is local to the region not to leave?
- How do we create an engaging community and respectful culture for all?

Part of the challenge for our CAP project team has been trying to determine which of the above we could best interpret and then intervene into, to suggest change within the system and in leadership.

Our project work has led us to many published documents and websites on this topic including the *Limestone Coast Regional Growth Strategy & Action Plan 2018*, *Welcoming Cities* website platform and Talia Stump's paper '*The Right Fit – Attracting and retaining newcomers in regional towns*'. These 3 key documents/ platforms were highly valuable to our learning and combined with the interviews we conducted with community, LCLP participants and key industry stakeholders, our survey of the 7 council CEO's & Mayors,

RDA and LCLGA we felt we had engaged on different levels via the dancefloor and the balcony methodology.

For the purpose of our project we chose to focus on the aspects of **Leadership** that is collaborative within the Limestone Coast; who is doing the work? And **Community**; is the Limestone Coast on a whole a welcoming community or could we improve?

SKILLED WORKER



NEWCOMER

OUR NEEDS / WANTS ARE THE SAME

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INTRODUCTION

Our CAP team consisted of;

Josh Harvey – Raised just across the border in Strathdownie, Josh is born, bred and schooled within the Limestone Coast, a skilled worker – Farming & Management – currently living and working in the area of Strathdownie. **RETENTION**

Kristen Wilks – Raised in Robe SA and schooled in Kingston SE, Kristen is also born and bred in the Limestone Coast and is a 4th generation resident. A skilled worker – Marketing, Sales and the Wine Industry – she left for a period of 17 years before returning to Kingston SE. **ATTRACTION & RETENTION**

Helen Daily – born and bred in the Limestone Coast near Lake Mundie. A skilled worker - Animal Science – Government – Management. Helen left for study and employment for 30 years before returning to the Limestone Coast to live and work in Mt Gambier. Since commencing the LCLGA leadership program Helen has since left Mt Gambier for employment opportunities in Adelaide and to seek a more welcoming community.

ATTRACTION

Ironically, we are **the skilled worker** that is at the very heart of the CAP question. We are different ages, with vast skills, in varied lifecycle stages, employed in separate industries and part of different communities. Two of us live in the Limestone Coast currently and one of us has moved out of the region for the second time. **We are attraction and retention of a skilled workforce in our region.**

OUR REGION – WHAT’S GREAT ABOUT IT

The Limestone Coast is located approximately 200-450km from Adelaide and approx. 500kms from Melbourne. The Limestone Coast region spans 21,329 square kilometres, is bounded by the Coorong and Southern Mallee District Council areas and by the Victorian border and Southern Ocean to the south and west.

The region's population accounts for approx. 3.9% of the state, with a population of more than 64,000 (*Training & Skills Commission 2020*) Approx. 27,000 people are based in the area of Mt Gambier city, which is 40% of our total.

The Limestone Coast region comprises seven local councils which in turn are part of the Limestone Coast Local Government Association also: District of Grant, Kingston District Council, City of Mt Gambier, Naracoorte Lucindale Council, District Council of Robe Tatiara District Council, and the Wattle Range Council. **With all councils experiencing upwards population growth except for the Robe District Council. Robe District Council did however have an increase of 112 dwellings.** (ABS Census of population & Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by profile .ID by .id)

POPULATION BY LGA

GRANT 8,584 KINGSTON 2371 CITY OF MT GAMBIER 27,275
NARACOORTE/LUCINDALE 8,555 ROBE 1,450 TATIARA 6,816
WATTLE RANGE 12,041

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016

The region contains a diverse mix of industry sectors resulting in a diverse business community. The Limestone Coast region also has access to significant natural resources in its stable groundwater and fertile lands. This availability gives the region a competitive advantage for horticulture and other farming activities and has led to strong economic activity in broad acre farming, horticulture, viticulture and forestry.

With predicted growth in the Health, NDIS and Aged Care sectors as well as any potential gains or upturn in local manufacturing and construction achieved through government subsidy and programs to help get the economy back on track post COVID-19 - the future of

employment opportunities for skilled workers currently living in the Limestone Coast or looking to relocate from the Adelaide, greater SA or Victoria potentially looks promising.

In the Limestone Coast region, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employer, generating 6,478 local jobs in 2018/19.

Data Source National Economics (NIEIR) - Modelled series

Currently the top industries within the Limestone Coast by employment share are:

- Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 19.8%
- Manufacturing 12.6%
- Retail Trade 11.3%
- Health Care & Social Assistance 10.4
- Education & Training 7.1%
- Construction 6.9%
- Accommodation & Food Services 6.8%

Tourism is a significant contributor to the regional economy with its rich environmental assets and the attractions of the Coorong National Park, Blue Lake, Naracoorte Caves, Sinkholes, the Coonawarra, Mt Benson, Padthaway, Robe and Mt Gambier wine regions, our spectacular beaches, local food, wine and music events and the local business community bringing more than half a million visitors each year to our region which spend around \$292 million locally within our region.

The enforced state border closures because of COVID-19 have impacted the tourism sector hard, but it is bouncing back from a \$9 million deficit compared to the same period 2019.

(I.D. the population experts)

As many South Australians visit the Limestone Coast for the first time, or are reacquainting themselves after many years, we are seeing many happy tourists and potential newcomers visiting our wonderful region. **This is clearly an opportunity to make a lasting impression and show off the region for more than just the tangible aspects but to really highlight the sense of community that already exists within the Limestone Coast.**

The Limestone Coast has many available and well supported services that make our region attractive as an area to live, work and to engage with as part of a broader community. Education providers such as the University SA (Nursing Degree) and Tafe SA in Mt Gambier, Limestone Coast Training in Naracoorte/Mt Gambier, along with excellent secondary

education services throughout the region there is opportunity to advance skills through education.

There is possible opportunity to attract Registered Training Organisations (RTO) that specialise in the areas of hospitality, tourism, marine, sustainability & environment, sales & customer service, management, work health & safety, information & digital technology.

RTO's could potentially provide educational services to upskill mature workers, or to encourage younger residents to gain qualifications and aid in the retention of a skilled workforce within the region.

The Limestone Coast has many other significant selling points that could potentially make it attractive for a skilled worker.

- Affordable housing (compared to the city of Adelaide)
- Low unemployment rate
- Lower crime rate (compared to Adelaide)
- Wide open spaces, natural beauty and environment
- Covid19 safe
- Arts & Culture
- Lifestyle
- Sport & Recreation
- Community

TOTAL EMPLOYED = 32,808 =4% OF SA'S WORKFORCE

Limestone Coast Regional Profile - Skills for Future Jobs 2020 Series

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Limestone Coast has a richness of positives so what is happening within our region and our broader state on the topic of attraction and retention of a skilled workforce, that could turn this challenge around? Our research led us to an abundance of published reports, government papers, information, and research with many key stakeholders involved.

We found eight Australian studies regarding the integration of newcomers, particularly migrants into Australian communities as humanitarian responses or to address labour shortfalls in certain industries (Vitartas et al. 2009; Piper 2017; Welcoming Cities 2018; Regional Australia Institute 2019; Stump 2019; Volunteering Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2019; Bourne et al. 2020; van Kooy et al. 2020) and a further three studies that have focused on or included the Limestone Coast including Feist et al. (2014), AMRC and University of Adelaide (2019), and Regional Australia Institute(2020)

With so many authors, for various government departments across the globe, it is an area of growing interest and a concern for many regional communities. We started to question as we interpreted these reports **'if the work has been done to understand the issue and the recommendations or suggestions are there for adoption, then by whom and how is it being implemented into the system, if at all?**

Our dissection via the methodology of the pizza in Figure 1.1 helped us to ascertain the key stakeholders involved within the Limestone Coast.



Figure 1.1 The Key Stakeholders – Limestone Coast

The Limestone Coast Regional Growth Strategy (LCRGS) June 2018 highlights '*that a well-coordinated collaborative, and strategically focused effort*' could set our region on the path to deliver a 20% lift in economic performance, which would add \$700 million in growth annually and more than 5,700 new jobs by 2026.

This key document outlines 6 priority areas of focus, strategic direction and potential actions to instil confidence and clear direction for our leaders to walk this path of growth for success. According to the LCRGS no single organisation can possibly achieve these economic targets individually but with a shared commitment and shared leadership the Growth Strategy will be achievable and successful. **How is the LCLGA working collaboratively together to implement and adopt a coordinated, strategically focussed effort?**

Knowing what to do is one thing, but galvanising the commitment, focus and resources required to actually do it and follow through to excellence is an entirely different proposition.

Limestone Coast Regional Growth Strategy – A Pathfinder Initiative – June 2018

Feist et al's (2014) study focussed on the role that Local Government could play. The most recent study encourages councils to minimise social isolation for newcomers and has a wide range of recommendations (Regional Australia Institute 2020).

The Welcoming Cities organisation and program addresses the challenge for newcomers into regions. It is a national network of cities, shires, towns and municipalities who are committed to an Australia where everyone can belong and participate in social, cultural, economic and civic life. Their role is to support local governments to advance their communities and regions in these areas. Currently only one of the seven LGA's within the Limestone Coast is a participating member of this program.

We asked CEOs and Mayors of Limestone Coast councils along with leaders from LCLGA and RDA to respond to our survey. We received only 6 responses to our survey, i.e. 38% return. This response covered 4 councils and 1 non-council entity.

The responses were constructive and optimistic, which is to be expected in a cohort of responders who actually took the time to answer the survey.

Migrants vs “Australian” relocation. The general tone of the responses focussed on migrants as the source of skilled workers, but there was a sense that COVID-19 was providing opportunities for the region in attracting workers from within Australia.

Attraction vs Retention. The responses largely demonstrated the region’s effort in attraction, in attempting to position holiday experiences as incentive for resettlement. Retention was not specifically addressed except for one respondent who summed it up by saying “Retention comes from experience-based opportunities”, so therefore the experiences of those who settle, must be good ones.

Confusion on Leadership. There seemed to be confusion across the responses in terms of responsibility for attraction and retention of skilled workers, with business, state and federal government, community and the RDA all being nominated as needing to take a leading role.

Benefits of community investment should flow through to everyone. There is some work being done in this space, around generally community development, improvements to social, training and community infrastructure, to benefit the whole of community, but it was also acknowledged that community engagement or development positions needed to be fitted in amongst other council priorities, and that a solution might involve addressing many issues that were highly inter-related, such as some of the CAP projects of this year and last.

Receptive to new ideas. Responses to our introduction of schemes such as The Welcoming Cities network, were positive, which suggests that many council leaders are eager to do more in this space, but may have been time-poor, and not be in a position to do the research for themselves. One response noted that this topic had been assigned as a university project, which indicates that particular council is addressing the topic at least in an introductory and presumably affordable manner.

The sentence ‘migrant skilled workers moving into the Limestone Coast’ could be classified as not just exclusively people moving into a region from other cultures or nationalities with a visa. Currently this could apply to many different types of skilled workers in the Limestone Coast – returning workers, relocating workers, mobile workers, remote workers. Covid19 will drastically impact skilled workers looking to move to Australia on immigration visas, so we need to explore the possibility of ‘newcomer as a whole’ in attraction and retention from other regions and cities within Australia.

Studies of retention are limited and require further work. Feist et al. (2014) studied intentions around future mobility of skilled and humanitarian migrants to the Limestone Coast, but this appears not to have been followed up. Michalski (2020) indicated that retention of medical trainees into rural and regional areas was an area of further work for the Greater Green Triangle Parallel Rural Curriculum Project.

An AMRC and University of Adelaide study (2019) reported that **retention depends on social connectedness and integration into the community**, as well as access to jobs, especially skilled jobs, housing and services.

These studies and the Welcoming Cities organisation show what has worked well in various areas, but there seems to be little coordination, awareness or adoption of these strategies across our region. **What is the potential loss to our community if Local Government does not act to utilise these strategies or available tools to advance in the areas of social and cultural for newcomers?**

The Mission of the Limestone Coast Local Government Association is: 'To lead the Local Government in the region and to advocate the Limestone Coast communities through effective advocacy, facilitation and innovation'.

The more we engaged adaptively the more we began to move between two possible theories within the key stakeholders; 1. The information and priorities have been clearly outlined in the LCRGS and the strategies certainly exist, but what is not happening in this system to move this forward and 2. Who or where are the people or organisations that are leading this collaborative, proactive and co-ordinated regional effort within the Limestone Coast? **Is this topic even really front and centre on the radar of the LCLGA or the broader community at present?**

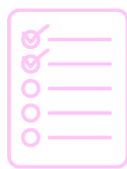
WHAT'S POSSIBLE – OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many suggestions, areas or ideas that could be implemented to improve attraction and retention within the Limestone Coast, and the reality is that this is a complex polarity with many interdependent alternatives. It's not easily fixed and probably can only be managed, it's large in its nature, with too many parts that need solving, therefore it continues to remain in its current status quo.

Our recommendations to help move this issue forward in a collaborative, co-ordinated, strategically focussed effort for our communities is as follows.

Recommendation 1.

Adoption of the framework created by **Tahlia Stump** in her 2019 paper “**The Right Fit**” across all 7 LGA's within the Limestone Coast.



PLAN



CONNECT



WELCOME



GROW

This paper highlights attraction and retention of newcomers to regional towns and sets a clear framework for best practice to welcome newcomers for long term gains to transform communities into vibrant thriving places. Stump's paper highlights how secondary migration can be a win-win for both newcomers and regional communities and details how success looks when it is the right fit for all. Embrace the word newcomer rather than migrant and overlay this theory to skilled workers.

Implementation of this framework via the 7 councils would explain the current situation and realities facing their towns and the broader region to the community, and help to promote a mentality that newcomers are an asset, a resource and not a threat. It would build strong community consensus which is critical in attraction and retention of a skilled workforce.

Newcomer attraction and retention requires active involvement from the whole community and government working together.’ Tahlia Stump

Recommendation 2.

Adoption and implementation of the **Regional Australia Institute Steps to Settlement Success - A toolkit for rural and regional communities** by the 7 LGA's in the same joint initiative style approach as per the Limestone Coast Regional Health and Wellbeing Plan.

This toolkit was developed to respond to the information needs of rural and regional communities looking to settle migrants locally, be they migrants coming in from big Australian cities or overseas, entrants to Australia on skilled working visas or on humanitarian grounds. Another exceptional framework that has the capacity to foster community consensus in a collaborative, cohesive approach.



The 7 Building Blocks of Settlement Success – RAI Toolkit 2019

Recommendation 3.

That the 6 remaining LGA's join the **Welcoming Cities Platform**.

The Tatiara Council is currently the only council within the LCLGA that has signed on to this platform of networking cities to help foster standards on welcoming and inclusion within their community.

Membership of the Welcoming Cities network is a measurable step towards becoming a thriving community and it is a platform that is available to both council and community stakeholders that could be easily implemented.

This is a statement. A lead from the front type example that shows what type of community we are looking to create. This would help the LGA's to find the voices of community leaders and promotes the community champions to work together with LGA's to foster change at that community level.

Setting the National Standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in Local Government.

www.welcomingcities.org.au

MANY OTHER THOUGHTS

Throughout our research journey we had many thoughts, or observations as to how our nominated key stakeholders could potentially play a role in advancing the challenge of attraction and retention of a skilled workforce within the Limestone Coast.

STAKEHOLDERS – LOCAL COMMUNITIES / COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS / FAMILIES

- As residents we need to understand what the problem is; hollowing out of the population so that we lose people of working age (Regional Australia Institute 2020), and that migration into the region is a means to addressing this. 151 of 550 local governments have offset population decline with migrants, but there is also strong out-migration back to cities also (AMRC and University of Adelaide 2019). The numbers needed should also be articulated.
- Being mindful of our language and labels; “refugee” describes a past, whereas “newcomer” allows for a future (Stump 2019). Murray Bridge has adopted the term “new neighbours” (AMRC and University of Adelaide 2019), whereas Dalwallinu (WA) uses “new residents” (Regional Australia Institute 2020). We need to avoid and combat divisive and incorrect rhetoric regarding migrants e.g. (Black 2020). We need to recognise our own migrant history (Feist et al. 2014; Stump 2019).
- Factors considered important for relocating to regional areas included a good community with a sense of connection for both adults and children, a variety of activities for children, good food and wine culture, good services including schools and health, arts and sport culture, a sense of community and pride, good transport, internet and support networks for WFH (work from home) such as co-working spaces or meetings, and good retail options. One respondent suggested that knowing the demographics of the town would aid in gaining potential social connections while another looked for a community that was forward thinking, welcoming of diversity and had a curious culture (Palmer 2020).

STAKEHOLDERS – INDUSTRY / BUSINESSES

- Finding a way to make the unfilled skilled positions in the Limestone Coast more visible. Job vacancy growth was higher in regional areas (16%) than in cities (9%). National projected needs are far excess of 80,000 health workers and 20,000 education workers in the next 5 years (Regional Australia Institute 2019a).

However, many city-based migrants are unaware of the jobs available in regional and rural locations, nor is there any systematic support for migrants moving to regional areas (Regional Australia Institute 2020).

- Questioning how well our workplaces really foster social and support networks. The RAI Steps for Settlement toolkit suggests that migrants who are not eligible for the support offered to humanitarian migrants may never successfully settle without the intervention and support of their employers (Regional Australia Institute 2019b). A number of successful examples of community and workplace supports for newcomers are cited in the report.
- Understanding that people engaged in DDD - dirty, dangerous or degrading work, or being under employed can be a cause of dissatisfaction for newcomers, and an incentive to look elsewhere, especially in city areas where there is a perception of more opportunities (Feist et al. 2014).
- Not all skilled roles are with large employers, nor for large numbers of employees. Identifying vacancies is difficult when they are not advertised. Word of mouth might work for people already in the area, but it is difficult to make the silent job market visible, which might be what is needed to allow spouses get employment, and be the trigger for skilled workers to contemplate working in the region (Scriven 2020).
- Opportunities coming out of COVID-19, such as the attraction of a safe place (Vitartas et al. 2009), greater flexibility in remote working arrangements (Palmer 2020; Purtill 2020), and a greater understanding of the need to invest in social and economic wellbeing of the region and ensure people stay connected (City of Mount Gambier 2020).

STAKEHOLDERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- AMES Employment services include supporting job seekers relocating to regional areas of Victoria and southern NSW to take up employment opportunities (Ames Australia 2019). The LCLGA and significant industry and employer groups should consider promoting the region within AMES programs.
- LLENs (Local Learning and Employment Networks) in Victoria are facilitators, brokering partnerships with key stakeholders, to develop networks and community groups, build capacity for teachers and professionals, and provide professional and personal development for young people in terms of being work ready, and having

life skills (Regional Australia Institute 2019a). Could this model work for new entrants to our region?

- Formal supports such as Warrnambool's Migrant Liaison Officer (Piper 2017), the MRC (Migrant Resource Centre) – on going case management of refugees was important for success (Piper 2017), however support for migrants other than those resettling for humanitarian reasons was more ad hoc and depended on individual circumstances (Feist et al. 2014; AMRC and University of Adelaide 2019; Grosser 2020). MRC in conjunction with Local Government and the media is seen as key to supporting integration through events such as Harmony Day, Refugee Week, Thank You Day, etc. (Feist et al. 2014). Limestone Coast Volunteer Resource Centre (Naracoorte), Local Area Coordination/Committee (LAC) allowed local organisations (community groups, schools, churches, business/industry) to work together along with local government and the Migrant Resource Centre (Feist et al. 2014). Do these LAC's still exist or operate? And the Skilled Migrant Friendship Group in Mount Gambier (Feist et al. 2014), how active and visible is this?
- Understanding the psychology underpinning developing an attachment to the Limestone Coast as home. Depending on their attachment to their homeland, migrants who consider Australia to be home may be more likely to put down roots in new communities. Skilled migrants are less likely to regard Australia as home than humanitarian migrants who have little to go back to or younger migrants who have fewer memories of their homeland and have an easier integration path through formal education (Feist et al. 2014). Single people, including migrants are more mobile than families (Feist et al. 2014). Re-joining community with similar language, culture and food is sometimes more important than the provision of jobs, housing, and training and jobs for partners (Clutterbuck 2020).
- Understanding that newcomers to a regional areas are subject to the same forces around movement as everyone else, and having moved once, may have fewer barriers to moving again. Migrants may also see regional areas as a starting point to their relocation in Australia (Feist et al. 2014).

STAKEHOLDERS – STATE GOVERNMENT

- There is evidence that more people are already moving from cities to regions than in the other direction (Bourne et al. 2020). The former report suggest millennials are more likely to move to the city, however in the face of COVID-19 they are expected

to be the main re-locators to regional areas, hence the barriers they face, particularly fear of isolation need to be considered in planning (Purtill 2020).

- However, in SA, there is still a greater outflow from local government areas than into them (Bourne et al. 2020). The pervasive Adelaide-centric government and media may be why SA is trending differently in this regard. Therefore, there is a role for State government to lead in investment in regional cities and towns, and to decentralise government jobs that can be moved to the regions.

STAKEHOLDERS – RDA

- We are competing with every other regional area for newcomers! And we are not close to capital cities (90-120 minute travel arc), and many of the higher-level services (health, education, cultural?) are centred on Mt Gambier, with limited public transport services within the region. However, in other regional areas such as Tasmania, this extra space and distance is not a disadvantage to people relocating. We may need to look to the Tasmanian model to find a marketing edge.
- Look to capitalise on the existing membership of the South East Young Professionals Group that exists, perhaps via formalisation or marketing through the RDA or LCLGA to see if this group could play a role in the retention of skilled workers.

THE NEW BLISS

What would success look like?

Skilled workers, newcomers from a variety of backgrounds (and their families) come and or return to the Limestone Coast to meaningful jobs and supportive workplaces, are and feel welcomed by a whole community, experience a range of people and cultural diversity, activities, and events, new and established.

Secondary migration from within the country to regional areas needs to be **planned**. This includes informing and engaging the community and embracing the past, including newcomers in the planning and taking a regional approach to ensure social participation and inclusion of newcomers. Everything that happens outside of work (sport, volunteer and community organisations) is of high importance to people wanting to reside in an area in the long term (Stump 2019).

Connecting our region to newcomers, by developing targeted promotional campaigns and engaging community influencers, supporting newcomers to make individual decisions, including helping them visit the region prior to decision making. This is followed by a **welcoming** step to underpin retention and allow newcomers to build social connections through their social, cultural, economic and civic life. This includes getting to know each other, growing goodwill and creating meeting spaces, and sharing stories. The focus of jobs and skills should engage with employers and use and value the skills of newcomers. An inclusive approach builds the capacity of services to help newcomers navigate the system.

The final step is **growth**, to allow families to put down roots, by investing in children and young people, including spouses, providing safe spaces to hear concerns, and manage community expectations and acknowledging that the needs of the newcomers and the community will change over time (Stump 2019). These inclusion steps are important to all newcomers, regardless of their origin. Welcoming and hosting newcomers needs to happen quickly after their arrival, and include family members, for them to feel integrated, and be more inclined to stay, and community development activities must include existing members, to foster community cohesion (Regional Australia Institute 2019b).

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As part of our observation and interpretation we have engaged with the following people and stakeholders:

Natalie Traeger Kingston District Council CEO – 21/2/20

Tatiara Business Association Meeting – Business SA guest on Employer Sponsored Visas for Regional Australia 24/2/2020.

Rachel Ashman – RDA 2/3/2020

Tina Clutterbuck, Casterton 21/3/2020

Caroline Menzel – LC Volunteer Resource Centre, Naracoorte, 24/3/2020

Anelia Blackie – Migrant Resource Centre, Mt Gambier, 28/3/2020

Jacqui Michalski, Flinders University Rural Health Parallel Rural Community Curriculum, 15/6/2020

Clare Scriven MLC, 23/6/2020

Tracey Grosser – Multicultural Community Service Co-ordinator - Migrant Resource Centre and Community Development Officer – Tatiara District Council, Bordertown, 24/6/2020

Andrew Meddle – Outgoing CEO City of Mt Gambier

Terry Buckley – Potato Grower, Pleasant Park

Belinda Anderson – August 2020

Fiona Rasheed - October 2020

Katie England - October 2020

7 LGA CEO's & Mayors

RDA

LCLGA

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