

**Submission
No 20**

ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Organisation: RAMROC Councils
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Attention: Mr David Elliott MP (Chair)
Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email to: economicdevelopment@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Submission to Inquiry into the Establishment of Special Economic Zones

The Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC) represents the interests of eighteen Member Councils in the Murray and Western Riverina regions of south west New South Wales and welcomes the opportunity of making this brief submission into your Inquiry into the establishment of special economic zones in regional and rural New South Wales.

RAMROC Profile

The RAMROC region covers an area of 126,595 sq km and has a total population of 168,485 (2010 ABS Statistics). The southern part of the region extends along the Murray and Lower Murray-Darling Valleys, from Greater Hume Shire and Albury City at the eastern end through to the South Australian border in the west.

The northern and western part of our region extends generally within the Murrumbidgee and Lower Lachlan Valleys, westward from Narrandera Shire.

The RAMROC region has a mix of large regional centres, medium sized irrigation based towns and urban shires, through to a number of predominantly dryland farming shire areas, large in size but with a low population base.

The major regional centres are Albury City (pop 50,522) and Griffith City (pop. 25,703). A large proportion of the region contains significant irrigation areas, the largest and best known ones being Murray Irrigation, Murrumbidgee Irrigation and Coleambally Irrigation. There are also an extensive number of smaller private irrigation schemes and individual farm irrigators,

The region is an important food and fibre source for Australian consumption and for export purposes. The region produces a wide range of summer and winter grain crops, fruit, vegetables, horticulture, viticulture, dairy and livestock

In 2005-2006, the Annual Gross Value of agricultural production was \$2.2 billion at the farm gate and \$9 billion value added. This represents 10% of the National and 25% of the NSW total agricultural production.

Agriculture directly employs 30,000 in the region, which is 37% of the total regional employment. Processing and transport employs an additional 17,000 people. Communities and businesses are therefore highly dependent on the agricultural sector – it is the key driver of most of the region's rural economies.

Issues for consideration by the Inquiry

MEMBER COUNCILS Albury ,Balranald, Berrigan, Carrathool, Conargo, Corowa, Deniliquin, Greater Hume, Griffith, Hay, Jerilderie, Leeton, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Urana, Wakool and Wentworth

The RAMROC Executive Committee, which comprises the Chairman Cr Terry Hogan AM (Mayor of Jerilderie Shire), the Deputy Chairman Cr Mike Neville (Mayor of Griffith City), Secretary Greg Murdoch (General Manager of Murray Shire Council) and the Executive Officer Ray Stubbs, would very much welcome the opportunity of meeting with your Committee to discuss in detail a range of issues associated with the economic sustainability and future growth of our region, including the following:-

- The size and structure of the RAMROC region and the potential opportunities to establish four specific economic zones, eg an Upper Murray Zone (4 LG areas), a Central Murray Zone (6 LG areas), a Western Murray Zone (3 LG areas) and a Western Riverina Zone (5 LG areas).
These areas align with the cluster zones formed by RAMROC under the Commonwealth Government's Strengthening Basin Communities Program and considerable planning work has been carried out in relation to future economic growth opportunities for each of the zones;
- The major Government policy issues that are impacting across the region, including the Proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan, the establishment of additional Redgum National Parks by the former NSW Labor Government and the resultant adverse impacts on the redgum timber industry and the respective communities;
- Opportunities for the NSW Government to provide special assistance packages, including Payroll Tax concessions, as well as other areas of state taxation which currently place NSW in a non-competitive economic development situation compared to the neighbouring northern Victorian regions;
- Opportunities to assist the establishment of new industries in the region, or the expansion of existing industries and businesses, for example with grants or low interest loans for infrastructure, employment, professional development, workforce training, relocation costs etc;
- The opportunity to work with the Federal Government and NBN Co to facilitate the earliest possible rollout of high speed broadband services to the region, particularly in those towns and communities that require special assistance to grow and prosper;
- Opportunities for Infrastructure NSW to prioritise major infrastructure projects, such as freight and passenger rail services, the road transport network, water and sewerage etc

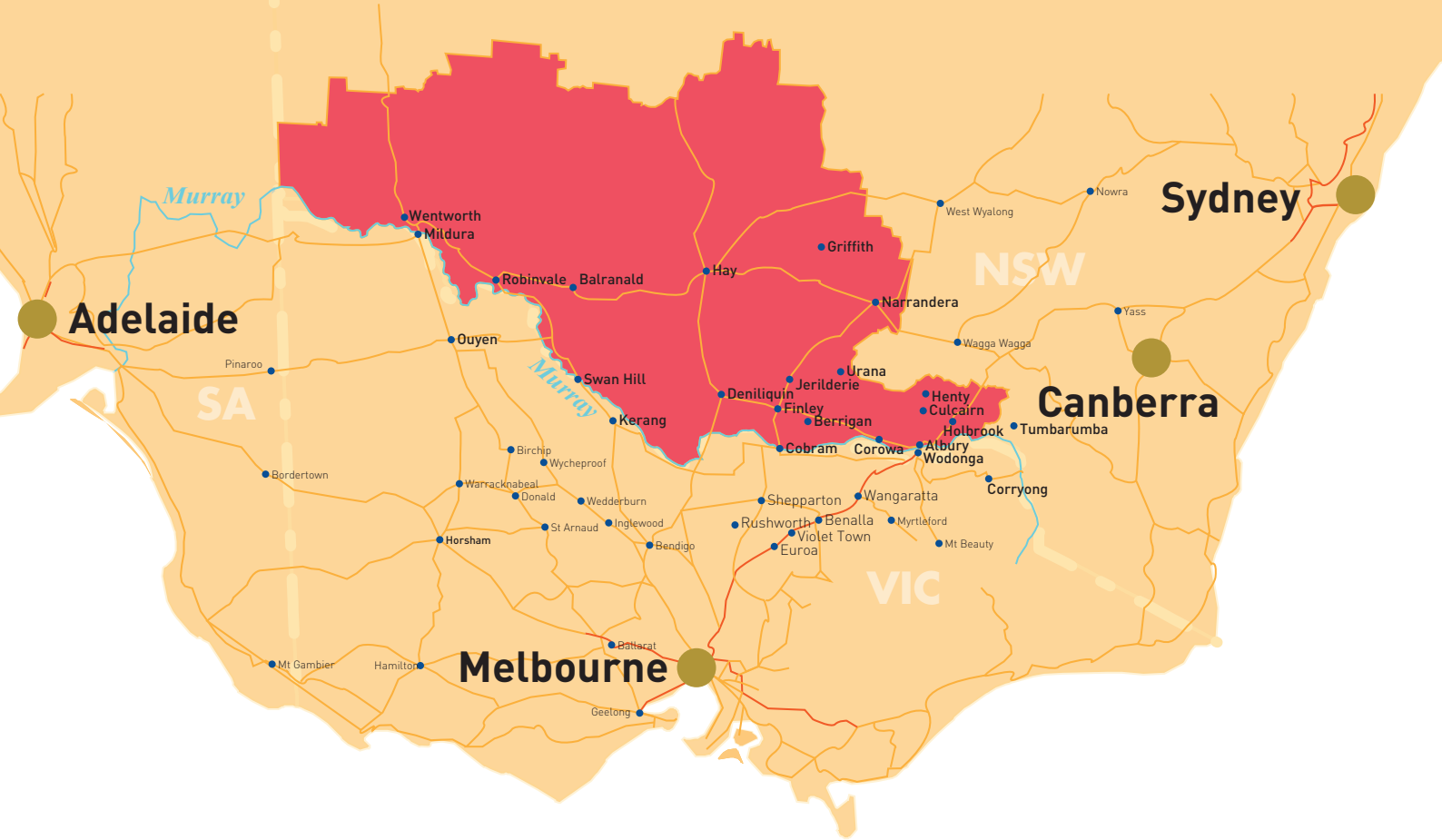
RAMROC Councils really welcome your Parliamentary Inquiry at this critical point of time and will be pleased to co-operate with you in every way possible to examine ways and means by which your Government can work with us to ensure the future of our regional cities, towns and communities.

We look forward to an opportunity to meet with your Committee at an appropriate time.

Yours faithfully,



Ray Stubbs
Executive Officer



RAMROC Councils, NSW

Total Area 126,595 sq km - Total Population 165,474

