

**Submission
No 2**

SUPPORT FOR START-UPS IN REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Regional Development Australia, Mid North Coast
Name: Ms Kerry Grace
Position: CEO
Date Received: 21 June 2017

21 June 2017

The Chair
Committee on Investment
Industry and Regional Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

To Whom it may concern

RE: Inquiry into support for start-ups in regional New South Wales - Supporting the silicon paddock in Regional NSW

Regional Development Australia, Mid North Coast (RDAMNC) works with communities from Woolgoolga in the North to Taree in the South and East to Lord Howe Island.

RDAMNC has worked alongside the start-up community, and promoted supporting initiatives and programs throughout our existence in the Mid North Coast. Several initiatives key initiatives in our region include the Six Degrees program operated by Coffs Harbour City Council and the Coffs Harbour Innovation Centre which is managed by Southern Cross University.

In the Mid North Coast start-up advice and business support has also been provided through Federally funded programs delivered by ETC Limited and now Nortec. NSW Chamber and the Edmund Barton Centre also provide support to members under fee for service structures.

All of the abovementioned programs have impacted on start-ups throughout the region offering services which range from business advice and support, access to networks, in some cases subsidised work space and a range of tools, templates and information aimed to ease the learning curve.

I have personally spoken with several start-ups owners who have accessed (or attempted to access) Jobs for NSW packages. These businesses have not found the Jobs for NSW packages to be helpful for reasons including, the dollar-for-dollar requirement, the lengthy application process and project reporting. Several businesses I spoke with decided not to apply for the funding as the process seemed overly arduous.

Despite this, I must commend our Department of Industry (now Premiers) contacts who have been a great support in sharing information and linking a broad network. It would be great to see more team members in this area to ensure greater geographic coverage and thereby further collaborative opportunities.

I thoroughly believe regional NSW offers a range of viable opportunities for start-ups including (but not limited to);

- Cost effective real-estate and other operational opportunities
- Access to staff
- A thriving university and higher education sector (this is certainly the case in the Mid North Coast)

Contact RDAMNC: [REDACTED]

- A healthy and affordable lifestyle
- Many of the communities in our region now have access to NBN offering a broader range of opportunities for technology start-ups

One gap noticed by RDAMNC is the lack of regional coordination for the start-up community. There is much scope to create a collaborative regional program which offers start-ups the following;

- A one-stop shop information portal to training, other learning opportunities, mentoring and collaborative purchasing
- Assistance to scale up
- Links to the broader business community introducing opportunities from mentoring to partnerships, tendering and other market opportunities and partnership development opportunities
- Information sharing and creating collaborative linkages between incubation hubs, start-up spaces and other place based spaces designed to support start-ups
- Development of collaborative region-wide events to both inform start-ups and provide market places for start-ups to reach new (local) customers
- Research

We have also noticed that the most visible start-up support is concentrated within local government areas. While this is admirable, a cross-regional approach would reduce the potential for silo thinking, and enhance overall opportunity for all.

RDAMNC is addressing this in part via the development of a SMART Region Strategy which will be completed in October 2017. Ongoing coordination would be enormously beneficial.

Having been a small business owner for 14 years prior to undertaking my role with RDAMNC I would be delighted to provide any further information that may assist this inquiry. I thoroughly believe supporting a viable start-up community is important to the future of our community and the stimulation of new industry opportunities.

I can be contacted via phone [REDACTED]

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Kerry Grace
CEO
Regional Development Australia, Mid North Coast

Contact RDAMNC: [REDACTED]