The *SEGRA* Story

The 1990's was a period of significant macro and micro economic policy reform. There was a gradual move away from centralised wage -fixing arrangements to more decentralise enterprise-based focus. This transition had implications for real wages and unemployment and to a degree drove the case for further deregulation of the labour market. These had significant public policy impacts and implications for regional Australia which weren't always anticipated and sufficiently compensated or adjusted for in advance. A clear example of this was the superannuation policy which drew 10% of cash out of the regional economy into centralised businesses where investment tended to be outside of regional Australia.

In the microeconomic reform program, regional Australia likewise felt inadequate attention was given to the impact on their future social economic wellbeing.

It was in this climate that **SEGRA** was formed, meeting in Geelong, Victoria in 1997 as a community of practitioners, government, business, researchers, regional development organisations, not-for-profit groups and regional communities. **SEGRA** was envisioned to provide a forum for people passionate about the future of regional Australia and a place where new ideas could be formed and shared and in particular:

- what the economic and social effects of the policy reforms on rural and regional Australia including how the effects of policy reform might impact differentially on metropolitan and rural and regional Australia.

- putting forward ways in which people living in regional Australia might act to facilitate the opportunities for people in regional Australia, in particular the unique regional advantages has in innovation, greenfield development, environmental stewardship, and community strength.

SEGRA has continued to be a voice for regional Australia on a range of government policy and program reforms based on the principles:

- People in regional Australia have know-how, ideas and innovations – **SEGRA** reflects what is happening on the ground in regional Australia.
- Regions are systems – environmentally, socially, economically and politically, regional solutions must be interrelated and interconnected across all these spheres.
- Good policy is derived from research and evidence as well as the knowledge, expertise and professional judgments of practitioners. Proposed policy actions will draw on the wide range of advice from researchers and practitioners shaped by professional input from policy experts.

- The historically strong participation of practitioners, government, business, researchers, regional development organisations, not for profit groups and regional communities in regional development within the **SEGRA** network ensures 360^0 representations in all aspects of discussion and solutions proposed.

Goals of *SEGRA*

SEGRA acts to provide end to end value to regional Australia using a systems approach to:

- Raise the profile of regions as essential parts of Australia's national outlook.
- Empower regions to be responsible for their own destinies.
- Identify ideas, regional issues and opportunities.
- Influence policy by encouraging evidence based responses and supporting practice-based research and projects.
- Promote regional connectivity.