

SEGRA 2026 Feedback (Direct Email or Social Media)

Commissioner Catherine de Fontenay - It was a great opportunity and I enjoyed all the conversations and workshops

Adam Mostogl - I'm genuinely thankful, energised, and encouraged by what you created in Lithgow.

- I spoke with a number of people who arrived unsure what to expect and left feeling so empowered, encouraged and connected. That matters

- I saw clearly that this edition was a high-value conference, and you should be proud of it.

- The SEG Talks, the case studies, the calibre of speakers, and the way you curated the community all landed strongly.

- I'm also deeply grateful that you backed the program again. While the cohort was smaller, I would confidently say it was a higher-quality group. They connected quickly, supported each other naturally, and multiple people went out of their way to say thank you before leaving. I walked away energised by them – and that's a testament to the environment you helped create. Ashley, Kellie and Andrew leaned fully into the format – unscripted, honest, and generous. It was humbling to witness, and it sparked a big question for me: how might SEGRA create more spaces - even imperfect ones - for that level of open, trusted conversation?

Michael Campbell - Thanks for another great SEGRA! I thought it was a great conference!

Ashley - It was a fantastic event and I know delegates got value from it

Keith McNaught - I have just returned from SEGRA, which was a genuinely energising experience. Across the summit, there were outstanding presentations, generous conversations in the breaks, and a strong sense that people working in regional and rural Australia are ready to move from ideas to implementation. Our Kalgoorlie Curtin Medical School rural research was very well received and sparked a number of thoughtful follow-up discussions that I am keen to continue.

One highlight was hearing from Tiffany Leahy on the use of AI in rural marketing. If you are interested in how AI can be used in regional settings in practical, cost-effective ways, I recommend checking out her LinkedIn flipbook, which offers a very accessible example of what is possible.

SEGRA has left me encouraged about the future of rural and regional innovation and even more committed to the partnerships needed to support it. I hope to have also made some enduring friendships, meeting exceptional rural people, imbued with a total generosity of spirit.

Julian Canny about his SEGTALK - We might be underestimating what's happening in Geraldton... and it took traveling across the country to start to see it.

Spent this week in Lithgow at the [SEGRA: Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia Summit](#) with [Minna Rankine](#) sharing the story of Geraldton Creative community rejuvenation with a focus on Blue Heelers Square.

What stood out in the many conversations we had following with people from around regional Australia wasn't just the interest, it was the genuine curiosity about how it actually came together.

People kept trying to piece it together, because it didn't follow the usual path. It wasn't a single big project with a clear start and finish. It was shaped over time, through different contributions, testing ideas, and building something alongside the community as it evolved.

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It was a good reminder that what's happening in the Geraldton City Centre right now is actually pretty rare. Not because it's polished, but because it's real, shared, and moving. Sometimes you don't see it when you're in it every day, but from the outside looking in, people are paying attention.

Tiffany Leahy - Just got back from SEGRA: Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia and one idea hasn't left me

What happens when you combine regional entrepreneurial mindset with AI?

You get speed
You get creativity
You get action

Building a business no longer requires big budgets
It requires clarity and the right tools

Huge opportunity ahead for regional businesses and I'm excited to be part of the journey.

Huge shout out to the SEGRA team on such an amazing event 🙌 Caroline Robinson, Ashley Bland

The Next Economy - This week, our Program Directors Saideh Kent and Jacqui Bell were in Lithgow for hashtag#SEGRA2026, participating in discussions on how regions can navigate the significant shifts unfolding across regional Australia.

📍 Jacqui noted that "as a region working through multiple overlapping transitions at once, Lithgow was a fitting place to host it. It brought a grounded quality to the conversations that you do not always get at these events, with the challenges and opportunities of regional transition very much present in the room."

⚡ The energy transition came up throughout, woven into broader discussions about what regional economies need to deliver and for whom. Reflecting on the event, a few things stayed with Jacqui and Saideh:

- Regions are at very different stages, some actively shaping renewable energy development, others just beginning to grapple with what is coming
- There is no one-size-fits-all pathway, and every place is navigating its own mix of industries, pressures and possibilities
- The regions doing this well tend to have started early, set a clear direction with their communities, and positioned themselves as a strategic partner rather than waiting to be consulted
- There is still a lot of work ahead to manage these transitions well, but the quality of thinking and the generosity of people sharing their experience all week was genuinely encouraging.

Big thanks to the SEGRA team and to all the regional leaders who made it so worthwhile! We are looking forward to continuing these conversations.

SEGRA: Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia

📷 - Jacqui with fellow presenters from the Energy focused SEGTALK session Ben Hughes, Claudia Hodge from Community Power Agency and Julia Strang from Australian Rural Leadership Foundation

Kate Dunn - I was really impressed with the conference as a whole

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Tony Matchett - It was a great new network to engage with, build ideas and consider new approaches.

Jonathan Atkins - Huge respect you and your team for putting together such a thoughtful and engaging program that focuses on regional Australia.

I had a blast and wish I could have stayed longer to immerse myself more in the sessions.

Tom Measham - Regional transition at SEGRA conference in Lithgow

What a great few days at the #SEGRA conference in Lithgow this week! The venue for the plenary sessions was the iconic Union Theatre – a heritage building with great character. This year SEGRA focused particularly on the host region of Lithgow which is experiencing significant change with a shift away from coal mining. I gave a talk titled ‘Post-mining transition and regional development- challenges and opportunities’ and was part of a broader economic development session chaired by Professor Andrew Beer covering themes including new industry development, harnessing AI for rural businesses and health services in remote regions with fellow presenters Tony Matchett, Tiffany Leahy and Keith McNaught.

The conference program was excellent and our session connected well with themes across the conference. Some key takeaways from the conference:

- When you're in the middle of transition, it can be very de-stabilising. At these times, it's important to be guided by core values and draw on the strengths of the community

-It's also important to learn from other regions and the Lithgow region is actively learning from Latrobe Valley

-An inspiring group of youth leaders reminded us of the importance of mental health and the need to look after each other. Sometimes, change is the only constant

-Lithgow has had 30 years to consider its future beyond mining. The recent Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP) identifies key strategic areas for the region, taking a long term view and focusing on the collective capacity and skills of the region. Key sectors include renewable energy, manufacturing, education and aged care. The proximity to Sydney also offers key opportunities for remote workforces seeking an alternative to suburban sprawl.

- Energy Australia operates the Mount Piper coal fired power station that runs on locally mined black coal. A battery energy storage system is in development adjacent to the power station. Energy Australia is looking into a hydro power plant at nearby Lake Lyell.

-Lithgow has hosted manufacturing for small arms since 1912 and it continues to be an important part of the regions' economy today. Manufacturing techniques have evolved and the factory plays an important role in local training and skills development for precision machining.

-Zooming out to regional Australia more broadly, Kate Haycock emphasised that 'regional Australia does not have a shortage of opportunities: it has a shortage of implementation'. Better coordination across local/state/national scales would increase implementation.

-In thinking about a post-mining future it's crucial not to overlook the voice of youth. Johnathan Atkins from the ABC Heywire pointed out that despite being around 20% of the population young people are only represented in 1% of mainstream news stories and we need to hear more from them.

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-The conference included an amazing trip to Portland to visit the historic quarry, cement plant and coal mine. A great example of post-mining transition: these days the site is operating as wedding venue, micro-brewery and artist workshop. A proposal for residential subdivision at the site is in development.

It was also excellent to hear about change makers using CRC TiME project outputs such as Julian Canny from Euphorium using the CRC TiME post-mining land use tools.

Finally it was great to connect with colleagues including those from CRC partner organisations RDA South West WA, Energy Australia, Adelaide University, Curtin University, Flinders University, as well as Regional Development Victoria, NZEA and many more.

Ashley Bland [Rachelle Doyle](#) [Andrew Beer](#) [Sara Rhodes-Ward](#) [Julian Canny](#) [Charles Jenkinson](#)

Carolyn Buncle - Thank you for putting together such a well-organised and genuinely valuable event. Lithgow was a great choice of location! I had visited this area before a few times, but it was great to learn more about the region and to see it in a different light.

In terms of impact. The standout for me was Matt Pfahlert's workshop on community enterprise and the announcement of Community Owned Australia. As the Director of the IOT RDO, covering two remote external territories with a freight monopoly and significant supply chain vulnerabilities, this was a practical, innovative thinking opportunity that will hopefully have some great potential for the IOT. Professor Andrew Beer's session on adaptive capacity in mining-dependent communities also resonated strongly, particularly the distinction between resilience and genuine transformation. There are strong parallels for Christmas Island.

Jonathan Atkins' session was another highlight, a great reminder of the leadership potential sitting in our regional communities, and something I'll be exploring further.

Beyond the sessions, the conversations I had and the inspiration I got out of these couple of days were just as valuable as the sessions themselves.

Well done to everyone involved!

RDA Pilbara CEO Daiva Gillam GAICD was in Lithgow last week for the 29th **SEGRA** Summit. It was a valuable opportunity to share learnings about what is working in the regions (and sometimes what isn't!) and assess where the Pilbara is positioned nationally.

Highlights included:

- ◆ Catherine de Fontenay (**Australian Productivity Commission**) reflecting on the importance of addressing capability, connectivity and skills shortages.
- ◆ Regional AI Co. making the case for artificial intelligence being underused in regional Australia (even if most of us are experimenting with it)
- ◆ Keith McNaught's (Curtin University) insights on rural health in Carnarvon and challenges that will be familiar to the Pilbara (including rising insurance premiums)
- ◆ Examples of genuine community ownership, with regions taking control of their own economic future rather than waiting for funding.

A lot of important food for thought and, as always, very enjoyable and productive to catch up with other RDAs from around the country.

Last week, the **Gardens of Stone Alliance** was at the **SEGRA** Summit, joining conversations about the future of regional communities, energy transition, and what sustainable development really looks like on the ground in Lithgow.

For those who haven't yet heard, this is Steph, the campaigner working with the Alliance to protect the Gardens of Stone region and the Sydney drinking water catchment. Also in attendance was Julie from Alliance member the Lithgow Environment Group.

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A key theme at the conference was how communities like Lithgow navigate change – balancing jobs, industry, and long-term wellbeing. What came through strongly is that a thriving future depends on protecting the fundamental assets communities rely on – and clean water is at the top of that list.

Right now, mining in the Lithgow region is putting that at risk. Despite growing expectations around environmental protection, large volumes of mine-affected water are still entering the catchment that feeds Sydney's drinking water.

The Alliance's campaign is focused on fixing this by reinstating a strong, durable water quality test (the NorBE test) so that all projects must genuinely protect water, not just manage pollution after the fact.

Being at SEGRA reinforced that this isn't just an environmental issue – it's about the long-term future of regional communities, public health, and ensuring that today's decisions don't leave lasting costs for future generations.

Thanks to everyone we connected with at the conference – and to those continuing to stand with us. Pictured here are Julie and Steph with friends from Lithgow City Council and the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP).

Linda Tilman - Bold thinking for regional events was certainly what we got from the group that joined our workshop at the **SEGRA** Summit in Lithgow this week.

We challenged the group with the 3 systemic challenges for regional and rural events - Volunteers, Funding, Compliance - and they had to come up with bold long term solutions to create change, and support the future of regional events.

After 90 minutes of robust discussion, deep conversations and pitching of solutions we have three very solid long term solutions to take forward for further pressure testing before we create a white paper and commence the advocacy.

Thanks to everyone that contributed 🙏

NEW HORIZONS Feedback

LEEP - What an inspiring beginning to the SEGRA National Regional & Economic Development Summit here in Lithgow – a celebration of ideas, connection and the power of regional Australia.

Thanks to those who took part in the New Horizons workshop, setting the tone for a Summit focused on bold thinking and future-focused regional leadership, along with our Emerging Champions group, who brought together passionate local and visiting leaders who explored what it means to step up, collaborate and drive change in their communities.

Throughout the afternoon, delegates headed out across the LGA on a series of immersive tours, experiencing everything from our First Nations cultural sites and industrial heritage to energy innovation, manufacturing, and the natural beauty of Hassans Walls and the Glow Worm Tunnel. It was a privilege to share the stories, landscapes and history that make Lithgow unique.

We wrapped up Day One with Welcome Drinks at the iconic Blast Furnace, where delegates gathered at sunset for a warm community welcome, a stunning backdrop, and conversations that will carry through the week.

Thank you to everyone who joined us today – the energy, curiosity and collaboration already emerging are exactly what this Summit is all about.

Here's to an inspiring week ahead in Lithgow.

Adam Mostogl - about the Emerging Champions - I walked away from our time together feeling energised, encouraged, and honestly pretty fired up- because you are exactly the kind of people

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regional Australia needs more of. The way you showed up for each other, checked in on each other, asked the deep questions, and shared the good *and* the hard... that's rare.

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