

Committee on Investment,
Industry and Regional Development



LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY

Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund



Report 1/58 – August 2024

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The motto of the coat of arms for the state of New South Wales is "Orta recens quam pura nites". It is written in Latin and means "newly risen, how brightly you shine".

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Membership

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Chair's foreword

Supporting regional businesses and industries is important in ensuring high-quality employment opportunities for everyone in NSW and supporting regional economic growth.

In 2020, a combined \$350 million in public money was allocated to the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) to support regional job creation, investment and industry activation.

In 2023, the NSW Parliament Standing Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development inquired into the effectiveness of these funds. We received 39 submissions from businesses, local councils, joint organisations, member associations, government agencies and members of the public. We also heard from 20 individual witnesses during public hearings held in Sydney and Wagga Wagga. The inquiry has highlighted where improvements in the design and administration of these two funds could have helped make them more effective.

For example, the exclusion eligibility criteria in RIAF and RJCF had unintended consequences and the co-contribution requirement was restrictive for small businesses.

Stakeholders also told us that the setting of milestone payment systems, milestone deadlines and job number targets could have considered the varying needs of businesses and industries more. We heard that businesses generally valued when grants administration provided reasonable adjustments. However, they also found it frustrating having to deal with red tape and unclear guidelines.

We have recommended that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider alternative funding frameworks, diverse and changing business needs and any unintended consequences in designing future grant programs. We have also recommended that the Department build more flexibility in program guidelines, cut down red tape and improve communication in future grants administration.

Apart from the design and administration of these funds, we also inquired into the allocation and effectiveness of RIAF and RJCF. We found that there was a concentration of grant funding and applications in existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and metro satellite areas such as the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie.

We also found that although RJCF was effective in delivering job creation and delivering long-term benefits, there was a lack of evaluation of grant outcomes. We also heard that the discontinuance of RJCF Round 3 and RIAF was costly to grant applicants as well as the local economy that could have benefited from the funds.

There is a need to improve evaluation of grants outcomes and support businesses impacted by the discontinuance of grants. We have recommended that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW evaluate the job creation data and long-term benefits of RJCF. We have also recommended that the Department develop a transition plan to help businesses navigate the discontinuance of grant programs in the future and explore alternative funding opportunities.

Throughout the inquiry, we noted that government support, such as departmental staff with local knowledge, the speedy processing of Development Applications by local councils and an effective Business Concierge service, were all critical in the successful delivery of the grants.

We have made several recommendations to support the delivery of better government support to grant applicants and recipients.

For example, we recommended that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW invest in staff retention and development in regional NSW to maintain institutional knowledge of local businesses and communities. We also recommended that the NSW Government allocate more funding and resources to local councils so they can process Development Applications more effectively. Finally, to improve the Business Concierge service, we recommended a one-stop access to this service, with a customer-centric approach.

Although the primary focus of the inquiry was on RIAF and RJCF, we also heard considerable evidence about the structural impediments to economic growth in regional NSW including labour shortages, the complex planning system, collaboration between regional and metropolitan councils, and logistics and infrastructure issues.

We have made recommendations ranging from leveraging existing programs, such as the Planning System Acceleration Program, to considering strategic solutions that touch on long-term government strategies. We hope these recommendations can address some of the key challenges facing businesses in regional areas.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank everyone who made a submission or appeared as a witness at one of our public hearings. I also thank businesses who have generously hosted site visits and shared their experience with the Committee.

The inquiry evidence, along with the site inspections, has given members a much deeper understanding of the issues and challenges faced by regional businesses and communities in NSW. We hope this report and its recommendations will translate into improved outcomes in future grant programs.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated and insightful team of Members of Parliament on this inquiry. I want to thank my Committee colleagues for taking a collegiate approach and making valuable contributions to this inquiry.

This work is made possible through the dedicated support of the secretariat. I want to thank and acknowledge the excellent work they do in supporting inquiries like this one. The public would probably not appreciate just how much work happens in between meetings and hearings. The public value delivered through inquiries supported by the secretariat is significant and inquiries like this form a key part of Parliamentary and democratic process.



Roy Butler MP

Chair

Findings and recommendations

Recommendation 1 _____ **1**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider the impact and unintended consequences of exclusion eligibility criteria while designing policies and guidelines for future grant programs.

Finding 1 _____ **5**

- The co-contribution funding framework, though aligned with the key principle of achieving value for money in grants administration, presents barriers for small businesses in regional NSW.
- The milestone payment system requires more flexibility to accommodate the varying needs of businesses throughout their lifecycles.

Recommendation 2 _____ **5**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development adopt alternative funding frameworks in future grant programs including interest-free loans, more flexible milestone payments and financial assistance similar to the HECS model.

Recommendation 3 _____ **8**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider diverse and changing business needs when setting milestone deadlines and targets in future grant programs.

Finding 2 _____ **11**

Funding from Regional Job Creation Fund Rounds 1 and 2 were mainly allocated to existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and coastal areas such as Central Coast and Lake Macquarie.

Finding 3 _____ **14**

Most applications to Regional Job Creation Fund and Regional Investment Activation Fund were from existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and coastal areas such as Central Coast.

Recommendation 4 _____ **18**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development include more flexibility in program guidelines including giving staff the power to make reasonable adjustments to better support businesses.

Recommendation 5 _____ **20**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development streamline and simplify the paperwork required from applicants and recipients during the grant process.

Recommendation 6 _____ **22**

- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW provide accessible and clear program guidelines in plain English and make available translation services or assistance in foreign languages where required.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW proactively communicate key updates including any delays and ceasing of funds to grant applicants and recipients.

Recommendation 7 _____ **24**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development collect, evaluate and publish both estimated and actual data of job creation and retention in the Regional Job Creation Fund.

Recommendation 8 _____ **26**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development evaluate the long-term benefits of RJCF on the regional economy.

Recommendation 9 _____ **28**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a transition plan to help businesses navigate the discontinuance of grant programs in the future and help them explore alternative funding opportunities.

Recommendation 10 _____ **31**

- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development invest in staff retention and development in regional NSW to maintain institutional knowledge of local businesses and communities.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a communication strategy to better engage with businesses with no pre-existing contacts with the Department.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development collaborate with local councils and relevant organisations, to promote grant programs.

Finding 4 _____ **33**

That local councils do not have sufficient resources and capacity to process Development Applications on time for businesses to meet deadlines in grant programs.

Recommendation 11 _____ **33**

- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment consult with local councils to develop a strategy on effective processing of Development Applications in regional NSW.
- That the Government consider allocating more funding to local councils to address the shortage of planning staff.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment provide training resources, skills development and staffing support, including employee secondment, to address the shortage of planning staff in local councils.

Finding 5 _____ **35**

Most Regional Job Creation Fund and Regional Investment Activation Fund applicants were not aware of, and did not use Business Concierge services during the grant application and administration process.

Recommendation 12 _____ **35**

- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau jointly conduct a gap analysis of Business Concierge services.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau collaborate to provide one-stop access to Business Concierge services with a customer-centric approach.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development work with Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy to increase awareness of Business Concierge services in regional NSW.

Finding 6 _____ **40**

Labour shortages in regional NSW are a major barrier for businesses and can prevent them from achieving the objectives of grant programs that target economic growth.

Recommendation 13 _____ **40**

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider working with TAFE to help relevant grant recipients leverage Jobs Connect, and training and apprenticeship programs.

Finding 7 _____ **42**

Delays in the planning system are a major barrier to investment and economic growth in regional NSW.

Recommendation 14 _____ **42**

That the NSW Government consider expanding the Planning System Acceleration Program to allow for fast-tracked assessments for projects that receive NSW Government grants.

Recommendation 15 _____ **44**

- That the Office of Local Government review and update the Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils – A Guidance Paper (2007) to promote collaboration between metropolitan and regional councils.
- That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development work with metropolitan and regional councils to implement the Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027 including grant opportunities for business expansion into regional NSW.

Recommendation 16 _____ **46**

That the NSW Government review the 2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps: New South Wales and in consultation with regional communities, develop a whole-of-government strategy to address the gaps.

Chapter One – Design of the funds

- 1.1 The NSW Government's \$110 million Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) was designed to provide co-investment for projects to activate new industries and drive productivity in regional NSW.¹
- 1.2 The \$240 million Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) aimed to support regional investment and job creation by providing co-funding to regional projects.²
- 1.3 Following the NSW Government's expenditure review in April 2023, both funds were ceased.³ More information about these funds including program design, outcomes and evaluation can be found in [Appendix One](#).
- 1.4 In April 2024, the NSW Government announced that the Department of Regional NSW will be renamed the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development from 1 July 2024.⁴ Therefore, whilst the body of the report refers to the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW), the recommendations are directed to the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

It is important that grant programs are well designed to achieve their objectives. This chapter examines how the following design features of RIAF and RJCF impacted grant applicants and recipients.

- Exclusion eligibility criteria,
- Funding framework, and
- Milestone deadlines and job number targets.

Impact of exclusion eligibility criteria

Summary

Exclusion eligibility criteria is a list of characteristics that define stakeholders who cannot apply for a grant. Both RJCF and RIAF had exclusion eligibility criteria. For example, businesses whose primary operation was in hospitality were not eligible for RIAF and RJCF. Although most grant programs use eligibility criteria to target particular groups, stakeholders said that exclusion eligibility criteria in RIAF and RJCF might have stopped the funds from fully achieving their purpose.

Recommendation 1

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider the impact and unintended consequences of exclusion eligibility criteria while designing policies and guidelines for future grant programs.

¹ [Regional Investment Activation Fund \(Closed\)](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

² [Submission 8](#), Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW), p 5.

³ [Regional Investment Activation Fund \(Closed\)](#); [Submission 8](#), pp 5-6.

⁴ The Premier, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional NSW, [Fresh focus for our regions](#), webpage, NSW Government, 19 April 2024, viewed 12 June 2024.

- 1.5 Evidence to this inquiry indicates exclusion eligibility criteria in RIAF and RJCF might have hindered the funds from fully achieving their objectives to support businesses to grow and increase productivity in regional NSW.⁵
- 1.6 The Committee acknowledges that grant programs need eligibility criteria to ensure that funding can be directed towards the most relevant stakeholders. However, the Committee is concerned that poorly designed eligibility criteria can have unintended consequences.
- 1.7 To minimise the negative impact of exclusion eligibility criteria, the Committee considers it important to analyse the unintended consequences of exclusion eligibility criteria in the grants design phase.
- 1.8 Therefore, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider the impact of exclusion eligibility criteria while designing policies and guidelines for future grant programs.
- 1.9 Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard a number of concerns with the exclusion eligibility criteria on project and industry types. For example:
- The exclusion eligibility criteria made it difficult for local small businesses to apply while more established businesses in metro or neighbouring LGAs could apply if they wished to 'expand, relocate or upgrade plant material or machinery'.⁶
 - Industries 'critical to economic prosperity in most regional areas' such as childcare and housing were excluded from the funds.⁷
 - Projects that sought to retain key workers were ineligible under RJCF despite labour retention being 'a much higher priority than job creation'.⁸
- 1.10 The Committee also received evidence from local councils that future grant programs should consider extending eligibility to local councils. Narrabri Shire Council stated that local councils should be eligible as local councils are well-equipped to manage grants and leverage public/private partnerships opportunities.⁹
- 1.11 The Bega Valley Shire Council also supported extending eligibility to local councils as local communities would benefit directly from improved service delivery provided by local councils.¹⁰

⁵ [Submission 2](#), City of Newcastle, pp 2-3; [Submission 14](#), Warrumbungle Shire Council, p 1; [Submission 18](#), Bega Valley Shire Council, p 1; [Submission 22](#), Wollongong City Council, pp 1-2; [Submission 24](#), Timber NSW, p 1; [Submission 28](#), Australian Association of Psychologists Inc, p 3; [Submission 30](#), Narrabri Shire Council, p 3; [Submission 33](#), Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra, pp 3-4; Central Coast Council, [Answers to Supplementary Questions](#) (SQs), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 8 January 2024, p 1, viewed 1 March 2024.

⁶ [Submission 14](#), pp 1-2.

⁷ Central Coast Council, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

⁸ Central Coast Council, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

⁹ [Submission 30](#), p 2.

¹⁰ [Submission 18](#), p 1.

- 1.12 The DRNSW in its Regional Job Creation Fund Process Evaluation Report outlined that some sectors were excluded due to competitive neutrality issues.¹¹
- 1.13 Competitive neutrality requires that NSW Government grants cannot provide an unfair advantage to a business within a competitive market. Under RIAF and RJCF guidelines, the DRNSW had sole discretion to assess whether the provision of grants could have a negative impact on NSW competition and NSW supply chains.¹²
- 1.14 However, it is unclear whether there was a study analysing the impact of such exclusion eligibility criteria on small businesses in regional NSW. It is also unclear why local councils were excluded from these funds.
- 1.15 Apart from exclusion criteria on project and industry types, the City of Newcastle Council and Wollongong City Council were also concerned with inconsistent definitions of regional and metropolitan areas in government grants.¹³
- 1.16 Despite being categorised as regional areas in Australian Government grants such as Building Better Regions Fund,¹⁴ the City of Newcastle Council and Wollongong City Council were excluded from RIAF and RJCF.¹⁵ This means that businesses in these areas might have missed out on grant benefits to stimulate growth and employment.¹⁶ The case study below highlights the inconsistent definitions of regional and metropolitan areas in government grant programs.

Case study: Inconsistent geographical categorisation of the City of Newcastle Council in grant programs

The City of Newcastle is the major economic hub of the NSW Hunter Region. As a metropolitan professional services hub that serves a regional population, it contributes almost 30 per cent of the NSW's state gross domestic product.¹⁷

An independent review of Newcastle's experience with various government grants showed inconsistencies in geographical classifications of Newcastle as a metropolitan or regional area.

The table below shows Newcastle's eligibility status for key regional funding from the federal and NSW Government.¹⁸

¹¹ DRNSW, [Regional Job Creation Fund Round 1 Process Evaluation](#), report, NSW Government, March 2022, p [7](#).

¹² DRNSW, [Regional Investment Activation Fund – Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), NSW Government, 5 October 2022, p [11](#); DRNSW, [Regional Investment Activation Fund - Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), NSW Government, 5 October 2022, p [10](#); DRNSW, [Regional Job Creation Fund Round Two – Program Guidelines](#), NSW Government, 2 February 2022, p [5](#); DRNSW, [Regional Job Creation Fund – Program Guidelines Round 3](#), NSW Government, 13 January 2023, p [8](#).

¹³ [Submission 22](#), p [3](#); [Submission 2](#), pp [1-2](#).

¹⁴ [Submission 2](#), Attachment – Hunter Research Foundation Centre, *City of Newcastle Classification for NSW Government Funding – Background Issues Paper*, The University of Newcastle, August 2020, p [3](#).

¹⁵ [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p [11](#); [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p [11](#); [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p [6](#); [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p [8](#).

¹⁶ [Submission 22](#), p [3](#).

¹⁷ [Submission 2](#), p [2](#).

¹⁸ [Submission 2](#), Attachment, pp [8-9](#).

Fundings that Newcastle was eligible	Fundings that Newcastle was ineligible
Building Better Regions Fund (federal)	Regional Growth Fund (NSW)
Resources for Regions (NSW)	Stronger Communities Fund (NSW)
Regional Tourism Fund – product development stream (NSW)	Snowy Hydro Fund (NSW)
Restoration and Rehabilitation Program (NSW)	Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund (NSW)
NSW Boating Now Program (NSW)	Regional Cultural Fund (NSW)
	Growing Local Economies Fund (NSW)
	Regional Skills Relocation Grant (NSW)

The City of Newcastle Council stated that the financial impact of Newcastle's ineligibility for grants due to geographical classifications could be as large as \$5.85 billion.¹⁹

- 1.17 During the public hearing, the DRNSW confirmed that under RIAF and RJCF, regional NSW was defined as 'all regional local government areas, excluding metropolitan Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle local government areas'.²⁰ However, it is unclear why Wollongong and Newcastle city councils were excluded from these funds. It is also unclear whether an analysis was conducted on the impact of such exclusion criteria.
- 1.18 Having heard from businesses and local councils, the Committee notes that exclusion eligibility criteria in RIAF and RJCF might have unintended consequences. The Committee is concerned that such consequences were not analysed while designing grant guidelines.

Exclusion criteria in RIAF and RJCF

A range of industries and projects were excluded from applying for RIAF and RJCF.

For example, businesses with primary operations in hospitality, retail, localised trades and administrative services that serve only the local or regional community were ineligible for RIAF and RJCF Round 2. In addition, residential housing construction that services the local or regional community, healthcare, childcare, social services and waste services were ineligible for RIAF and RJCF Round 3.²¹

There were also exclusion eligibility criteria on types of projects. For example, projects located in Greater Sydney (including Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly), Newcastle, and Wollongong LGAs were ineligible for RIAF and RJCF. Projects funding the day-to-day operations of the business were also ineligible for both funds.²²

¹⁹ [Submission 2](#), Attachment, p 13.

²⁰ Mr Jonathan Wheaton, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Regional NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 19.

²¹ [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 10; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 10; [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p 5; [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p 8.

²² [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 11; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 11; [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p 6; [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p 8.

Impact of funding framework

Summary

The funding framework of RIAF and RJCF was underpinned by co-contributions which required all applicants to provide an at least 50 per cent of the total project cost in cash unless there were exceptional circumstances. Grants were paid using a milestone system in line with the instalment structure instead of upfront. Most stakeholders expressed a preference for a more flexible funding framework with lower barriers for entry.

Finding 1

- **The co-contribution funding framework, though aligned with the key principle of achieving value for money in grants administration, presents barriers for small businesses in regional NSW.**
- **The milestone payment system requires more flexibility to accommodate the varying needs of businesses throughout their lifecycles.**

Recommendation 2

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development adopt alternative funding frameworks in future grant programs including interest-free loans, more flexible milestone payments and financial assistance similar to the HECS model.

Co-contribution requirements

- 1.19 Under the co-contribution framework in RJCF and RIAF, applicants were required to provide an at least 50 per cent of the total project cost unless there were exceptional circumstances.²³
- 1.20 The Committee found small businesses in regional NSW had difficulty meeting the co-contribution requirements.
- 1.21 For example, the Warrumbungle Shire Council noted that small businesses and rural LGAs might not have enough financial capital to meet the requirements.²⁴ This aligns with Service NSW's evidence that the co-contribution requirements were 'outside the capability of the majority of small businesses'.²⁵
- 1.22 The DRNSW explained that the co-contribution requirements could be helpful in 'testing the market' and 'identifying growth industries most likely to create jobs'.²⁶
- 1.23 However, the DRNSW also identified that most eligible projects under the funds were in the manufacturing sector. This concentration might be driven by the high

²³ [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 12; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 12; [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p 9.

²⁴ [Submission 14](#), p 1.

²⁵ Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 11 March 2024, pp 1-2.

²⁶ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 17.

project costs which were more 'geared towards purchasing or constructing new facilities or equipment'.²⁷

- 1.24 The Committee acknowledges the policy intent of the DRNSW in designing the co-contribution requirements. However, the Committee is concerned that small businesses in regional NSW might not have enough financial resources to meet the requirements and access the benefits of the funds.
- 1.25 The following case study demonstrates the impact of co-contributions on a regional business.

Case study: Impact of co-contributions on the Broken Hill Distillery

The Broken Hill Distillery is a multi-world award winning distillery, with an in-store distilling process and a range of products online.²⁸

The business was approached by the RJCF team about the opportunity to apply for the fund. However, the business had already 'spent approximately \$400,000 on renovations and infrastructure' by then and 'didn't have another spare bucket of cash'.²⁹

As RJCF did not recognise prior expenditure and the business could not meet co-contribution requirements, Broken Hill Distillery was not successful in obtaining RJCF.

If RJCF were available to Broken Hill Distillery, the business would have used the fund to employ eight staff members ranging from chefs to hospitality management.³⁰

Milestone payment system

- 1.26 Another key funding requirement under RJCF and RIAF was the milestone payment system where grant recipients were paid in line with the agreed instalment structure.³¹
- 1.27 The NSW Government has discretion on setting the timing and requirements of the milestone payment system, depending on the project scope and risk.³²
- 1.28 The Committee found that the milestone payment system could negatively impact businesses' cashflow.³³ The DRNSW also acknowledged that some businesses had cashflow challenges due to the lack of upfront payments.³⁴

²⁷ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 7.

²⁸ Broken Hill Distillery, [Awards](#), webpage, 2023, viewed 1 March 2024.

²⁹ [Submission 26](#), Broken Hill Distillery, p 1.

³⁰ [Submission 26](#), p 1.

³¹ [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 28; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 28; [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p 23.

³² [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 28; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 28; [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p 23.

³³ [Submission 6](#), RDA Southern Inland, p 3; InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 22 December 2023, p 1.

³⁴ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 49.

- 1.29 Throughout the inquiry, stakeholders advised the Committee that businesses have different needs and suggested different funding frameworks for the Committee's consideration.
- 1.30 The Committee recognises there are opportunities to explore alternative funding frameworks that better suit business needs. The Committee encourages the NSW Government to review these alternative frameworks with a view of potentially adopting them in future grant programs.
- 1.31 Regional Development Australia Southern Inland told the Committee about the survey they distributed to 17 RJCF recipients in late 2023. The survey results suggested that upfront payments could help businesses avoid financial hardship and project delays. This is because the initial phase of a project often requires a large capital expenditure, and upfront payments can help with the large expense.³⁵
- 1.32 The Central NSW Joint Organisation said that direct investment could be more helpful than competitive funding in stimulating investment in job creation.³⁶ The Joint Organisation also backed dedicated funds and incentives for businesses in regional NSW.³⁷
- 1.33 Having heard a range of suggestions, the Committee notes that the traditional milestone system in government grants can pose constraints to businesses. This is in contrast with a loan where businesses could spend the loan as they think fit as long as the loan is paid back in line with the loan agreement.
- 1.34 The Committee sought feedback from stakeholders on alternative grant models similar to loans. This included the option of giving businesses flexibility in grant expenditure and loan repayments that could allow the government to help more businesses in the long term.
- 1.35 Specifically, the Committee sought feedback on two loan options, firstly the interest-free loans and secondly, payment arrangements similar to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) model. Under the later model, grant recipients who have succeeded in their business ventures, and with the ability to make sustainable profits, would make regular payments back to the government.³⁸
- 1.36 Most stakeholders were open to these alternative models but noted that more consideration was required to ensure clarity, transparency and fairness.³⁹

³⁵ [Submission 6](#), p 3.

³⁶ [Submission 15](#), Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO), p 3.

³⁷ [Submission 15](#), p 3.

³⁸ Dr Maia Schweizer, Chief Commercial Officer, SunDrive Solar, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 13; Mr Andrew Oates, Business Advisor, Ironbox Pty Ltd, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 13.

³⁹ [Appendix Five –](#); InQuik, [Answers to Questions on Notice](#) (QoNs), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 22 December 2023, pp 1-2; Dr Ben Mullaney, Director and Chief Executive Officer, InQuik, [Transcript of evidence](#), 8 December 2023, p 10; Dr Schweizer, [Transcript](#), p 13; Mr Graham White, Sales Support Officer, Applied Virtual Simulation, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 13; Mr Oates, [Transcript](#), p 13.

- 1.37 On the interest-free loan model, stakeholders suggested small businesses with less financing opportunities would welcome government-provided interest-free loans. For example, regional businesses visited by the Committee supported the proposal due to its cost efficiency. For small businesses, the proposal would enable them to access finance at a lower cost compared to traditional financing channels.
- 1.38 However, more established businesses with more financing opportunities would prefer government grants over interest-free loans. For example, Ironbox, a manufacturer of mechanical components, stated that they preferred government grants to government-provided interest-free loans as they already have access to finance. Ironbox explained that they would typically go through the non-government financing channels first as the process is easier than the government grant process.⁴⁰ Flip Screen, a screening bucket manufacturer with a global market also expressed similar views to the Committee during site visits.
- 1.39 On the HECS payment model, InQuik stated that payment systems similar to the HECS model should consider businesses' circumstances in its design phase to support regional economic growth. InQuik also stressed that the expectation of future repayments should be communicated clearly to businesses and tied to their financial performance.⁴¹ Jamberoo Action Park told the Committee that businesses would need to consider the type of fund, percentage of refund and potential ramifications before application.⁴²

Lack of nuance in setting grant requirements

Summary

Both RIAF and RJCF had requirements on project timelines with RJCF having an additional requirement of at least five new jobs being created per project. These requirements presented obstacles for businesses during the grant application and project execution stage due to changing business needs over time.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider diverse and changing business needs when setting milestone deadlines and targets in future grant programs.

- 1.40 The Committee is concerned about the lack of nuance in setting timelines and targets in the grants design phase. Misaligned timelines and targets could lead to businesses self-selecting out of applications or cause businesses distress during project execution.
- 1.41 To improve grants design, the Committee recommends that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider diverse and changing business needs in setting deadlines and targets in designing program guidelines.

⁴⁰ Mr Oates, [Transcript](#), p 14.

⁴¹ InQuik, [Answers to QoNs](#), pp 1-2.

⁴² Mr Matt George, General Manager, Jamberoo Action Park, [Transcript of evidence](#), 8 December 2023, p 10.

Milestone deadlines

- 1.42 Both RIAF and RJCF required businesses to complete projects by a certain date. For example, capital works must be completed by May 2023 under RJCF Round 2 and by 30 May 2025 under RIAF Stream 1.⁴³ Businesses must also have all committed full-time equivalent jobs in place for at least six months within three years of signing a RJCF funding deed.⁴⁴
- 1.43 The Committee reviewed evidence from a range of stakeholders and found that the timeline set by the DRNSW lacked a grasp of the pressures and changes that businesses can experience. Businesses stated that the timeline did not take into account external factors impacting projects such as delays in the planning system and differing business needs.⁴⁵
- 1.44 Some projects required Development Application and Construction Certificate approvals which could take a long time and put pressure on project timelines. InQuik stated that 'the original milestone deadlines set by the Department were very ambitious to meet'.⁴⁶
- 1.45 InQuik further explained that businesses, especially those with capital-intensive projects reliant on government grants, often only proceed after the grant of funds. This means that a strict milestone deadline leaves businesses little time to complete the tasks required to initiate a project. These tasks are time-consuming and often include planning approvals, land and equipment purchase, contract finalisation and engagement with consultants.⁴⁷
- 1.46 Different industries also have different needs and timelines. For example, Applied Virtual Simulation raised that the planning phase for defence could be longer than the RJCF funding round. This meant that the grant provided limited benefits to the defence industry.⁴⁸ Applied Virtual Simulation in turn suggested greater flexibility in grants administration to accommodate project changes.⁴⁹
- 1.47 In evaluating the process of RJCF Round 1 in March 2022, the DRNSW acknowledged that 'milestones should be structured according to the needs of each grantee as different project types have different requirements'. However, the Department explained that the short timeframe for project completion in RJCF Round 1 'was a major design constraint' and 'a non-negotiable function of the funding profile imposed by NSW Treasury'.⁵⁰

⁴³ [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p 4; [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 7.

⁴⁴ [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p 4.

⁴⁵ [Submission 6](#), pp 6-7; [Submission 7](#), InQuik, p 1; [Submission 16](#), Applied Virtual Simulation (AVS), pp 1-2; [Submission 26](#), p 1; [Submission 32](#), Ironbox Pty Ltd (Ironbox), pp 1-2; [Submission 36](#), Australian Queen Bee Line, p 1; InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

⁴⁶ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

⁴⁷ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

⁴⁸ [Submission 16](#), p 1.

⁴⁹ AVS, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 19 March 2024, p 1.

⁵⁰ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), Executive summary, p iii; pp 13, 18 & 49.

- 1.48 In early 2024, the DRNSW informed the Committee that 'considerable flexibility has been shown to businesses that have found their milestones hard to reach'.⁵¹ They explained the process of setting RJCF project milestones as follows:

"RJCF project milestones are individually negotiated ... applicant through the execution of a funding deed. This process takes account of a number of factors including the published program timelines; complexity, scale and risk of the project; capabilities of the proponent and outcomes of the program."⁵²

Job number target

- 1.49 In addition to the project completion timeframe, stakeholders also expressed concerns with the minimum job number target in RJCF.
- 1.50 The Bega Valley Shire Council said that the requirement of having minimum of five new jobs created per project was too high and might restrict small businesses from applying.⁵³
- 1.51 Countrywide Industry stated that job number target was high for manufacturing businesses as new equipment and floor areas are usually required to accommodate new staff.⁵⁴ This issue was further complicated by the lack of labour and especially skilled labour in regional NSW, see chapter 6 for in-depth analysis.

⁵¹ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 26 March 2024, p 2.

⁵² DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

⁵³ [Submission 18](#), pp 1-2.

⁵⁴ [Submission 9](#), Countrywide Industries, p 1.

Chapter Two – Allocation of the funds

When grant programs are designed and their funds allocated, the money should go to as broad a range of businesses and areas as possible within the grants' remit. Infographics and analysis in this chapter show the unequal distribution of funding and the number of applicants under the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) and highlight the Local Government Areas (LGAs) that benefited the most from the funds.

Unequal distribution of funding across NSW

Summary

Data of RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 show that Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, and Central Coast LGAs received more RJCF funding compared to other LGAs while areas of far western, central or far north-eastern NSW received little. The analysis does not include RJCF Round 3 and RIAF as both funds were ceased before funding distribution.

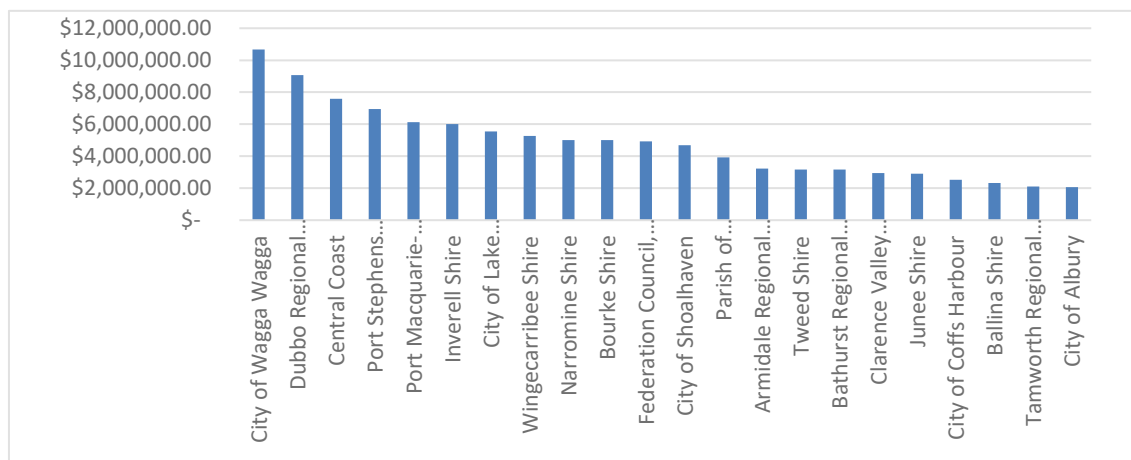
Finding 2

Funding from Regional Job Creation Fund Rounds 1 and 2 were mainly allocated to existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and coastal areas such as Central Coast and Lake Macquarie.

2.1 The Committee analysed location data of successful applicants to RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 and found an unequal distribution of RJCF funding across NSW.⁵⁵

The Committee acknowledges that not all areas of NSW were expected to receive the same amount of funding from RJCF.⁵⁶ However, the Committee considers it important to ensure that the unequal geographical distribution of grant funding was not due to a lack of access to support in grant programs.

Figure 1 – LGAs in receipt of \$2 million and above funding in RJCF Rounds 1 and 2⁵⁷

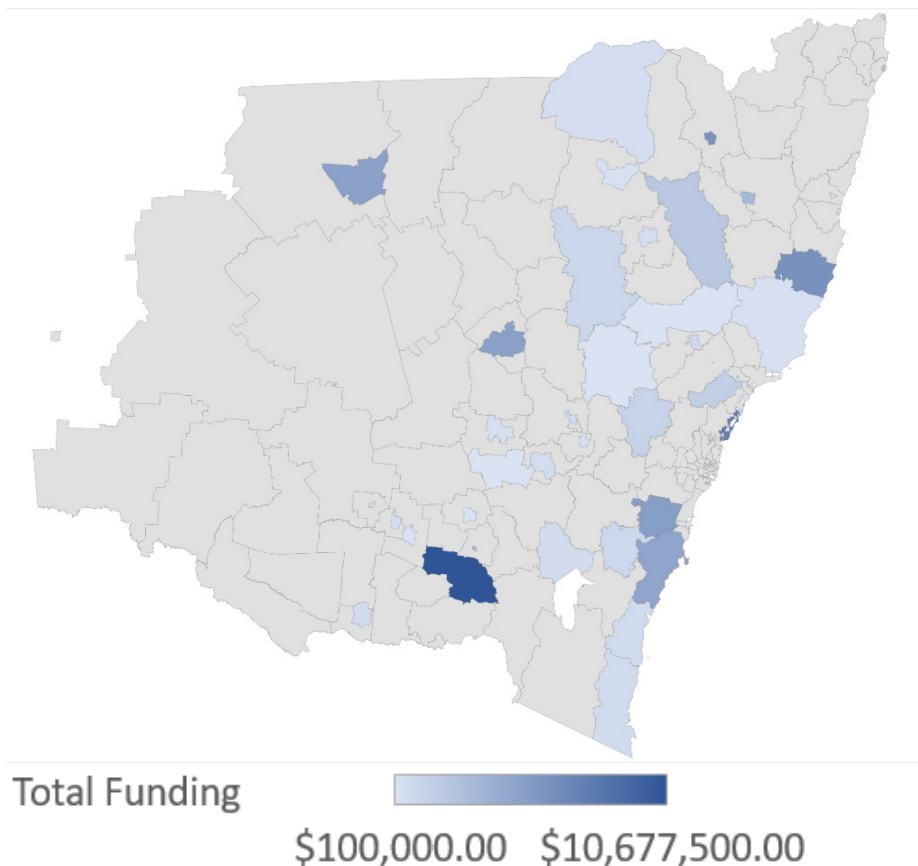


⁵⁵ See [Appendix Two](#) – for anonymised data from RJCF and RIAF, provided by DRNSW.

⁵⁶ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 44.

⁵⁷ Visual representation extrapolated from Appendix Two, [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#).

Figure 2 – NSW LGAs in receipt of RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 funding⁵⁸



- 2.2 The heat map above shows that RJCF funds were not equally distributed across regional NSW. There was a large concentration of funds along the east coast of NSW. For example, businesses and projects in the NSW Central Coast Council received \$7,580,621 of RJCF funding and the Port Stephens Council received \$6,940,000 of RJCF funding.⁵⁹
- 2.3 In its Process Evaluation Report, the DRNSW also acknowledged that the distribution of RJCF Round 1 was concentrated in growing locations. In particular, six out of the top 10 Functional Economic Regions (FERs) that received RJCF Round 1 funding were the Growth Centre FERs.⁶⁰ FERs are made up of one or more LGAs in regional NSW that work together to create smaller economies with strong economic links.⁶¹
- 2.4 The case study below shows the impact of RJCF funding on the Central West and Orana Region of NSW.

⁵⁸ Visual representation extrapolated from [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#).

⁵⁹ See [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#).

⁶⁰ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 8.

⁶¹ NSW Government, [Regional Economic Development Strategies](#), webpage, viewed 1 March 2024.

Case Study: Impact of RJCF on the geographic heart of NSW

The Central West and Orana Region sits at the geographic heart of NSW.⁶² It includes Bathurst, Blayney, Bogan, Cabonne, Coonamble, Cowra, Dubbo, Forbes, Gilgandra, Lachlan, Lithgow, Mid-Western, Narromine, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Warren, Warrumbungle and Weddin LGAs.⁶³

During the inquiry, the Committee received evidence about the positive impact of RJCF in this region. Dr Alfred Wong from the Charles Sturt University School of Business analysed projects funded by RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 in the Central West and Organa Region and the 2021 unemployment rate.⁶⁴ The analysis showed a 'positive relationship between the RJCF and the 2021 unemployment rate' with the 'median unemployment rate' dropping from 5.1 per cent for the Central West and Organa Region in 2021 to 2.5 per cent in June 2023.⁶⁵

Dr Wong further suggested that the positive relationship 'implies that larger RJCF (grants) are awarded to businesses located in regions where unemployment rates are higher'.⁶⁶

- 2.5 Examining the overall RJCF allocation, the Committee notes that the Central West and Orana region only shared a small percentage of successful applicants. Out of 205 successful RJCF applicants, only 30 were from the Central West and Orana region, or 14.63 per cent of the successful RJCF applicants.⁶⁷
- 2.6 Noting the positive impact of RJCF on the Central West and Organa region, the Committee is concerned that LGAs with little RJCF funding might have missed out on potential benefits. A more equal geographical distribution of the funding might have generated more positive impacts on employment in regional NSW.
- 2.7 The Committee questioned the DRNSW about the unequal geographical distribution of RJCF funding. The Department explained that they did not hold data on factors that led to LGAs receiving more or less applications or funding. The Department further assured the Committee that the program undertook a merit-based assessment of every application. It sought to have a geographical spread of projects with Economic Development Managers working with businesses to submit applications from every FER.⁶⁸

Unequal distribution of the number of applications across regional NSW

Summary

Geographical data of RJCF and RIAF applicants show that most businesses applying for these funds were based in existing regional hubs and coastal areas.

⁶² [Regional Economic Development Strategies](#).

⁶³ Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, [Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

⁶⁴ [Submission 39](#), Charles Sturt University, pp 1-2.

⁶⁵ [Submission 39](#), p 1.

⁶⁶ [Submission 39](#), p 1.

⁶⁷ See [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#).

⁶⁸ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

Finding 3

Most applications to Regional Job Creation Fund and Regional Investment Activation Fund were from existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and coastal areas such as Central Coast.

- 2.8 The Committee analysed RJCF and RIAF data and found an unequal distribution of the number of applications to both funds across regional NSW.
- 2.9 The Committee is concerned that the unequal geographical distribution of grant applications might be an indication of inequitable awareness of grant programs or access to support in regional NSW.
- 2.10 It might be possible that most applications to RJCF and RIAF were based in existing regional growth hubs and coastal areas because these areas had more regional development teams and resources. In-depth analysis on the importance of government support can be found in chapter 5 of this report.
- 2.11 The table below shows the LGAs that received the most applications for RJCF and RIAF.⁶⁹

Table 1 – LGAs that received the most applications for RJCF and RIAF by project delivery locations⁷⁰

LGAs that received the most applications for RJCF	LGAs that received the most applications for RIAF
Central Coast Council (33 applications)	Wagga Wagga City Council (11 applications)
Wagga Wagga City Council (23 applications)	Port Stephens Council (8 applications)
Dubbo Regional Council (19 applications)	Dubbo Regional Council (6 applications)
Shoalhaven City Council (19 applications)	Richmond Valley Council (5 applications)
Coffs Harbour City Council (18 applications)	Central Coast Council (5 applications)

- 2.12 The Committee notes that most applications to RJCF and RIAF were from existing regional growth hubs such as Wagga Wagga and coastal areas such as Central Coast.
- 2.13 The Committee acknowledges that a range of factors could contribute to the large number of applications concentrated in some areas.⁷¹ However, this unequal geographical distribution should only be acceptable when businesses in all regions have equal awareness of grant programs and equal access to support.
- 2.14 The Committee is concerned that the unequal distribution of the number of applications in RIAF and RJCF across regional NSW was driven by unequal access to public awareness campaigns and support in grant programs.
- 2.15 This concern aligns with the DRNSW 's comment in its RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report that some Business Development Managers (BDM) in regional

⁶⁹ See [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#); Appendix Two, [Regional Investment Activation Fund](#).

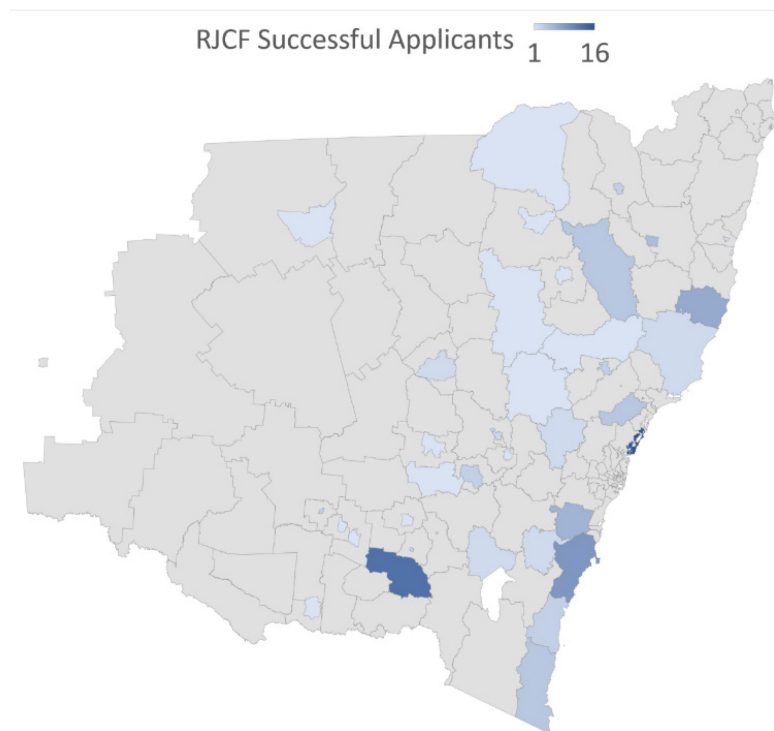
⁷⁰ See [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#); [Regional Investment Activation Fund](#).

⁷¹ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 43.

areas had to provide help with a large number of applications.⁷² Having recognised the importance of fair and equitable access to support, the Department made recommendations to ensure adequate program promotion and equal access to quality BDM support.⁷³

- 2.16 It is unclear whether these recommendations were fully implemented. Committee recommendations on improving government support for grant applicants and recipients are outlined in chapter 5.
- 2.17 The figures below further demonstrate the geographical spread of RJCF and RIAF applications by project delivery locations.

Figure 3 – RJCF successful applications by project delivery locations⁷⁴



⁷² [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 43.

⁷³ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 44.

⁷⁴ Visual representation extrapolated from [Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants](#).

Figure 4 – RJCF unsuccessful applications by applicants' locations⁷⁵

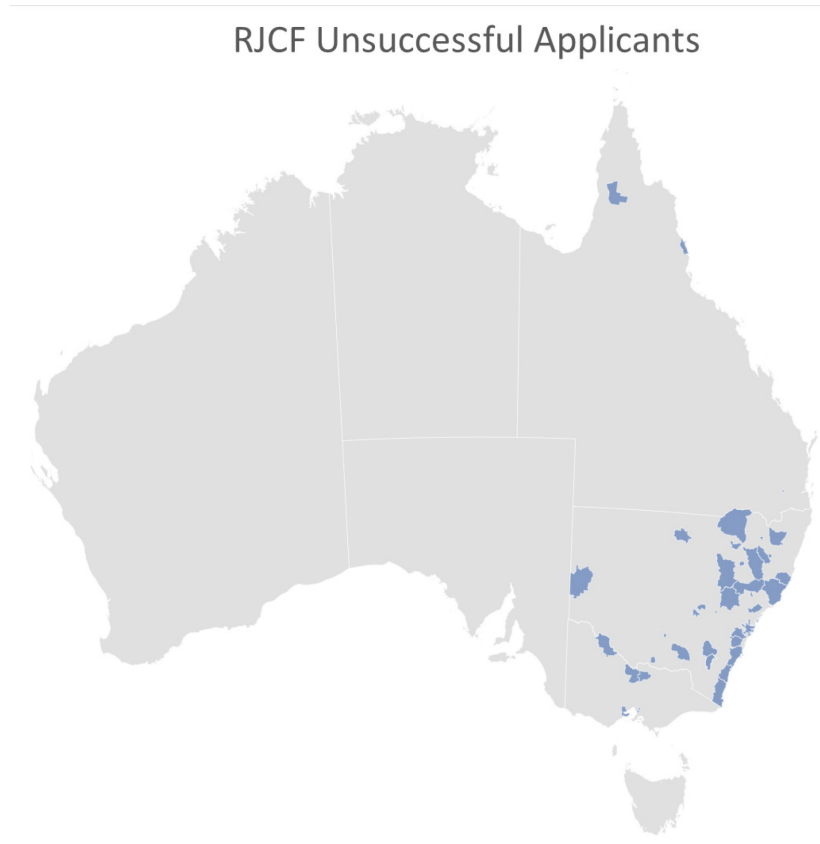
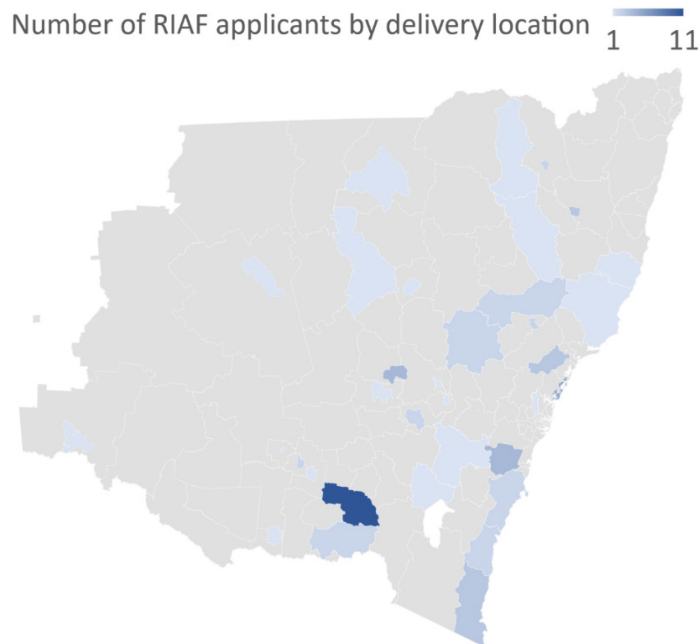


Figure 5 – RIAF applications by project delivery locations⁷⁶



⁷⁵ Visual representation extrapolated from Appendix Two, [Regional Job Creation Fund Unsuccessful Applicants](#). A number of applicants to the RJCF that were based outside the state of NSW, but the project delivery locations were within the state of NSW.

⁷⁶ See [Regional Investment Activation Fund](#).

- 2.18 The Committee also questioned the DRNSW about the unequal geographical distribution of the number of applications for RIAF and RJCF. The Department stated that they did not hold data on factors leading to LGAs receiving more or less applications.⁷⁷
- 2.19 The Department further stated that the Department's Regional Development group and Office of Regional Economic Development regularly engaged with regional businesses and that the Economic Development Managers worked with businesses to submit applications from every FER.⁷⁸ These regionally based managers work with regional communities and stakeholders to promote economic development and deliver state-wide programs.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

⁷⁸ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), pp 2-3.

⁷⁹ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), Executive summary, p iii.

Chapter Three – Administration of the funds

Grants administration refers to the process in place to deliver grants. This chapter focuses on the following key aspects of grants administration in the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF).

- Flexibility offered in grants administration,
- Red tape and its impact on small businesses, and
- Communication with fund applicants and recipients.

Importance of flexibility in administration

Summary

Both the NSW Grants Administration Guide and the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines highlight the importance of maintaining flexibility in grants administration in responding to changing circumstances.⁸⁰ The Committee found that rigid grants administration had negative impacts on applicants to and recipients of RIAF and RJCF.

Recommendation 4

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development include more flexibility in program guidelines including giving staff the power to make reasonable adjustments to better support businesses.

- 3.1 Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard evidence from stakeholders and witnesses about the importance of flexible grants administration. The Committee notes that grant applicants and recipients appreciated reasonable adjustments from the DRNSW.⁸¹
- 3.2 Evidence to this inquiry suggests that businesses often encounter unforeseen circumstances, requiring them to adjust timelines and adapt to changing business needs.⁸²
- 3.3 For example, Countrywide Industries stated that they were not able to complete the construction phase of the business expansion project due to external shocks such as Covid-19 pandemic, inflation, labour shortages and delays in the planning system.⁸³ This means that businesses need grant administrators to understand the changing environment and to work with them to achieve grant objectives.
- 3.4 The Committee notes that grant applicants and recipients appreciated reasonable adjustments from the DRNSW. For example, InQuik's cashflow improved when the Department split the RJCF grant into three payments instead

⁸⁰ NSW Productivity Commission and Department of Premier and Cabinet, [Review of grants administration in NSW - Final report](#), report, NSW Government, April 2022, pp 20 & 51.

⁸¹ [Submission 16](#), p 1; InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

⁸² [Submission 9](#), p 1; RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to QoNs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 13 December 2023, p 1.

⁸³ [Submission 9](#), p 1.

of two.⁸⁴ Applied Virtual Simulation also had a positive experience with RJCF when RJCF staff worked with them to resolve complications.⁸⁵

- 3.5 The Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries stated that flexibility should be provided not only in regard to timelines but also more broadly in grants administration to accommodate unforeseen changes.⁸⁶
- 3.6 The DRNSW also reviewed the flexibility in grants administration. In the RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report, the Department noted that the program 'demonstrated considerable adaptive management during the administration which in future could be better documented'.⁸⁷
- 3.7 While acknowledging the helpful adjustments provided by the DRNSW staff, the Committee is concerned that these adjustments were provided on an ad-hoc basis depending on staff discretion with few guidelines.
- 3.8 The Committee recommends that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development include more flexibility in program guidelines. The guidelines should also include giving staff the power to make reasonable adjustments to better support businesses. This will support flexible grants administration while ensuring consistency and transparency in discretionary decision making from the staff.
- 3.9 The case study below demonstrates the importance of flexibility in grants administration for businesses to avoid unintended consequences.

Case study: importance of flexibility in grants administration for Farm Door

Based in the Riverina food bowl, Farm Door works with local producers to cook healthy meals and then delivers them across the Riverina, Sydney and Canberra. Farm Door is a successful RJCF recipient.

The Committee visited Farm Door on 21 February 2024 as part of this inquiry and heard directly from the owners about their experience with the grant.

Farm Door experienced a range of external shocks during the project execution phase including Covid-19 pandemic, shipping delays, supermarket price gouging, connectivity issues and inflation. Farm Door quickly raised the risk of project delay with the Department of Regional NSW and was committed to working through the challenges with the Department.

For Farm Door, it was important for the Department to be aware of the changing environment that they operate in and provide flexibility in grants administration accordingly.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2; Dr Mullaney, [Transcript](#), p 9.

⁸⁵ [Submission 16](#), pp 1-2.

⁸⁶ Dr Mohammad Sharif Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries, [Transcript of evidence](#), 8 December 2023, p 15.

⁸⁷ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 20.

⁸⁸ See [Appendix Five](#).

Impact of red tape on small businesses

Summary

Red tape encountered by businesses in RIAF and RJCF include burdensome reporting and paperwork, complex regulations and changes in rules. The Committee found that red tape disproportionately impacts small businesses with less resources.

Recommendation 5

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development streamline and simplify the paperwork required from applicants and recipients during the grant process.

- 3.10 To help businesses navigate the grant process and reduce the negative impact of burdensome or excessive process requirements, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW streamline and simplify paperwork required from grant applicants and recipients during the grant process.
- 3.11 The Committee acknowledges that process requirements are essential to ensure transparency and consistency in grants administration. However, difficult and excessive processes can be a significant challenge for businesses with less knowledge and resources to deal with. For example:
- 3.12 Bega Valley Shire Council stated that 'rigidity of detailed grant applications ... and reporting are cumbersome for small businesses'.⁸⁹
- 3.13 Regional Development Australia Southern Inland noted that some businesses found the additional workload created by comprehensive reporting burdensome.⁹⁰
- 3.14 Feedback from businesses in Central NSW indicated that the criteria and paperwork of RJCF were burdensome and required businesses to employ consultants to complete applications.⁹¹
- 3.15 The Committee also notes that the compliance cost for red tape can be high. For example, Jamberoo Action Park considered red tape a significant resourcing and financial challenge for businesses.⁹² For them, the expert reports required for the RJCF application could take 12 months to obtain with a total cost of \$100,000 to \$200,000.⁹³
- 3.16 Evidence from academics further suggests that red tape can disproportionately affect small businesses and start-ups. The University of New England stated that

⁸⁹ [Submission 18](#), p 1.

⁹⁰ RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

⁹¹ CNSWJO, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 19 January 2024, pp 1-2.

⁹² Mr George, [Transcript](#), p 11.

⁹³ [Submission 3](#), Jamberoo Action Park, p 2.

small businesses feel the pressure of regulation more than larger businesses.⁹⁴ The start-up founders interviewed by the University were deeply concerned about red tape including 'associated paperwork, levels of regulation, lack of sufficient help and frequent changes in the rules'.⁹⁵

- 3.17 Dr Alfred Wong from Charles Sturt University School of Business stated that 'compliance is absolutely essential in terms of governance but there comes a cost in terms of all the paperwork and all the processes, delays in processing of documents and so forth'.⁹⁶
- 3.18 The DRNSW acknowledged that the Department could further streamline processes including clarifying program requirements and improving application forms in its Process Evaluation Report of RJCF Round 1.⁹⁷

Case study: Impact of red tape on the Australia Food and Pharmaceutical Industries

Australia Food and Pharmaceutical Industries (AFPI) produces innovative foods and nutraceuticals including cosmetics and pharmaceutical products.⁹⁸ AFPI was a recipient of RJCF.

AFPI spent a large amount of money navigating red tape during the grant process, including \$45,000 on a consultant and \$30,000 on accounting and building reports.⁹⁹

AFPI was also required to put up signage indicating the project was funded by the NSW Government. Since putting up the signage, AFPI observed a significant increase in service charges from contractors, leading to budget constraints.¹⁰⁰

Despite AFPI's best efforts to manage the situation, they were in a financially precarious position.¹⁰¹ AFPI suggested that advice and assistance from the Department of Regional NSW to help businesses navigate financial challenges would be valuable.¹⁰²

Need to improve communication with grant applicants and recipients

Summary

It is important to have effective communication with grant applicants and recipients throughout the grant process including having clear program guidelines and proactive notifications. Unclear or in some cases delayed communication can negatively impact business decision making and public trust.

⁹⁴ [Submission 1](#), University of New England – Faculty of Science, Agriculture, Business and Law, p 1.

⁹⁵ [Submission 1](#), p 1.

⁹⁶ Dr Alfred Wong, Senior Lecturer, Charles Sturt University, School of Business, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 4.

⁹⁷ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 45.

⁹⁸ Business Directory, [Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries](#), webpage, Shoalhaven Business Chamber, viewed 1 March 2024.

⁹⁹ Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries (AFPI), [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 19 January 2024, p 1.

¹⁰⁰ [Submission 25](#), AFPI, p 1.

¹⁰¹ [Submission 25](#), p 1.

¹⁰² [Submission 25](#), p 1.

Recommendation 6

- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW provide accessible and clear program guidelines in plain English and make available translation services or assistance in foreign languages where required.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW proactively communicate key updates including any delays and ceasing of funds to grant applicants and recipients.**

Program guidelines

- 3.19 The Committee considers it important to have clear program guidelines as they provide essential information and guidance for grant applicants.
- 3.20 The case study shows that unclear guidelines can adversely impact business decision making.

Case study: Impact of unclear guidelines on InQuik

Since its foundation in 2017, InQuik has supplied nearly 140 bridges across Queensland, NSW and Victoria with the bridge system patented across the world.¹⁰³ InQuik was a recipient of RJCF.

InQuik stated that the definition of Completion of Works was unclear in RJCF.¹⁰⁴ Despite being informed that a set of guidelines would be available to clarify the requirements to qualify for the Completion of Works, InQuik never received such guidelines.¹⁰⁵

The Completion of Works was linked to the final payment of RJCF. The lack of a clear definition led InQuik to make incorrect assumptions, which impacted their cashflow planning.¹⁰⁶ As a result, they needed other finances to cover the short fall and had to request multiple extensions from their finance partner.¹⁰⁷

InQuik suggested that future grant programs have clear requirements for different types of capital works projects to qualify for Completion of Works. This they argued would better manage stakeholder expectations.¹⁰⁸

- 3.21 The DRNSW in its Process Evaluation Report for RJCF Round 1 found that 'the program guidelines were generally clear and consistent'. However, the Department noted that they could make further improvements including clarifying program guidelines and redesigning application templates to be more user friendly.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ InQuik Accelerated Construction, [Our Reach InQuik](#), webpage, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁰⁴ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

¹⁰⁵ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

¹⁰⁶ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

¹⁰⁷ InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

¹⁰⁸ [Submission 7](#), p 1.

¹⁰⁹ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 25.

Proactive communication

- 3.22 The Committee considers proactive communication in grant programs essential and is concerned that communication about the ceasing of RIAF was delayed for some applicants.
- 3.23 When Government ceases to fund a grant program, there needs to be a sensitivity to the current applicants progressing through the application. Especially where funds have been spent on the application in good faith, on an expectation that application that would otherwise be eligible will be assessed for funding.
- 3.24 To ensure transparency and clarity in the grant process, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development proactively communicates key updates including any delays and ceasing of funds to grant applicants and recipients.
- 3.25 North Coast Recycling stated that they were not informed of the ceasing of RIAF until they called to ask for an application update.¹¹⁰ They described the RIAF experience as disappointing, expensive and disenchanting', noting the lack of communication, feedback and transparency.¹¹¹
- 3.26 SunDrive Solar also had a similar experience and described the grant process as 'not incredibly transparent'.¹¹² The business did not receive any feedback or updates about its application until the RIAF ended.¹¹³ SunDrive were officially told the RIAF had ended via an email days after they had read about it in the Budget Papers.¹¹⁴
- 3.27 The DRNSW noted that feedback from businesses about the dissolution of the RIAF and RJCF has not been formally captured.¹¹⁵ It is clear from the inquiry evidence that some applicants were not satisfied with the communication process.

¹¹⁰ [Submission 29](#), North Coast Recycling Pty Ltd, p [1](#).

¹¹¹ [Submission 29](#), p [1](#).

¹¹² Dr Schweizer, [Transcript](#), p [11](#).

¹¹³ Dr Schweizer, [Transcript](#), p [11](#).

¹¹⁴ SunDrive Solar, [Answers to QoNs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 7 March 2024, p [1](#).

¹¹⁵ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p [1](#).

Chapter Four – Effectiveness of the funds

This chapter examines the effectiveness of the funds on the following aspects:

- Job creation and retention,
- Long term benefits, and
- Impact of discontinuance of the RIAF and RJCF Round 3.

Job creation and retention

Summary

The RJCF was successful in delivering job creation in regional NSW. Evidence to the inquiry showed that the fund supported businesses to invest in new capabilities, expand capacities and meet employment goals of creating new Full-time Equivalent employees (FTEs). The Committee notes that the actual data of job creation was not available at the time of writing and the analysis was based on estimated job figures provided by businesses during the application stage.

Recommendation 7

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development collect, evaluate and publish both estimated and actual data of job creation and retention in the Regional Job Creation Fund.

- 4.1 Evidence to the inquiry shows that RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 were effective in creating new jobs in regional NSW. They helped businesses grow and expand at a faster rate.¹¹⁶ However, the Committee notes that the job creation benefits were measured based on estimated data not actual data.¹¹⁷
- 4.2 To better understand the impact on job creation and retention, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development collect, evaluate and publish both estimated and actual data of job creation and retention in the RJCF.
- 4.3 The Committee received evidence from multiple stakeholders about the positive impact of RJCF on job creation. For example, ABC Can stated that the funds enabled them to employ new staff from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Approximately 43 per cent of ABC Can’s 83 on-site staff are now from multicultural backgrounds.¹¹⁸
- 4.4 On a broader scale, the Central Coast Council stated that 10 local businesses received over \$5.5 million in RJCF Round 1 with a forecast of 268 jobs.¹¹⁹ In RJCF Round 2, \$1.7 million was granted to four businesses with an estimate of 112 jobs.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ [Submission 16](#), p 1; [Submission 10](#), EastCoast, p 1; [Submission 6](#), p 4.

¹¹⁷ Mr Wheaton, [Transcript](#), p 24.

¹¹⁸ [Submission 35](#), ABC Can (Australian Natural Therapeutics Group), p 4.

¹¹⁹ [Submission 21](#), p 1.

¹²⁰ [Submission 21](#), p 1.

- 4.5 Similarly, in the Illawarra region, RJCF Rounds 1 and 2 led to important new investment which created 280 new FTEs. This was enabled by the expansion and diversification of a wide range of enterprises such as food processing and manufacturing.¹²¹
- 4.6 Regional Development Australia Southern Inland also stated that RJCF funding enabled the employment of around 783 people and stimulated \$13 million in growth to local economies.¹²²
- 4.7 In addition to the wide-reaching effect of RJCF on job creation, businesses informed the Committee that jobs might not have been created if not for RJCF. They also advised that the funding allowed for a faster completion of business expansion plans.¹²³
- 4.8 For example, East Coast stated that the RJCF funding allowed them to increase their workforce by 18 people. Without the fund, the business might not have been able to create these jobs.¹²⁴
- 4.9 Applied Virtual Simulation stated that RJCF allowed them to accelerate the expansion of facilities and manufacturing capabilities.¹²⁵ A business surveyed by Regional Development Australia Southern Inland also said that instead of incremental growth, the funding allowed them to 'jump a bit bigger'.¹²⁶
- 4.10 The DRNSW noted the effectiveness of RJCF in its Process Evaluation Report. The report stated that RJCF was well aligned with key NSW Government strategies. It also stated that RJCF was an appropriate response to an identified need for sustainable employment opportunities in regional NSW.¹²⁷
- 4.11 Despite positive figures on job creation in RJCF, the Committee notes that the job creation figure was based on estimation. The actual data of job creation were not available at the time of writing.¹²⁸ This may affect the accurate assessment of RJCF's effectiveness in job creation.
- 4.12 The Committee also acknowledges that the benefits of RJCF were skewed towards job creation, as opposed to job retention. This is primarily due to the discontinuation of RJCF R3, which was focused on job retention.

Case study: Benefits of job creation on Jamberoo Action Park

Jamberoo Action Park ('Jamberoo') is a water-based theme park located on the NSW South Coast. Jamberoo is a seasonal operator and is open for 150 days of the year.¹²⁹

¹²¹ [Submission 33](#), pp 2-3.

¹²² [Submission 6](#), p 9.

¹²³ [Submission 10](#), p 1.

¹²⁴ [Submission 6](#), p 6; [Submission 10](#), p 2; [Submission 16](#), p 1.

¹²⁵ [Submission 16](#), p 1.

¹²⁶ [Submission 6](#), p 5.

¹²⁷ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 13.

¹²⁸ Mr Wheaton, [Transcript](#), p 24.

¹²⁹ Mr George, [Transcript](#), p 8.

Jamberoo received \$600,000 in RJCF funding which was invested in building new infrastructure and expanding business capacity for the development of Velocity Falls, a ride precinct.

Development of the precinct created new jobs and contributed to the local economy both during the construction phase and Jamberoo's business season.

More specifically, the project injected approximately \$6 million into the local economy during construction. Once completed, it provided employment opportunities to an additional 50 seasonal attendants, equivalent to 18 FTEs and led to a 25 per cent increase in visitors to Jamberoo.¹³⁰

Long-term benefits of the funds

Summary

Qualitative evidence in the inquiry highlights a range of long-term benefits of RJCF in regional NSW. These include direct benefits, such as expanding the expertise of regional businesses, and indirect benefits, such as boosting business confidence in regional NSW. However, no systematic assessment of the long-term benefits of RJCF has been completed by the NSW Government.

Recommendation 8

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development evaluate the long-term benefits of RJCF on the regional economy.

- 4.13 The Committee heard anecdotal evidence from stakeholders about the long-term benefits of RJCF. These include increased capability and expertise of regional businesses, expansion into new markets, and flow-on benefits to the local economy.¹³¹
- 4.14 To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of RJCF, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development evaluate the long-term benefits of RJCF on the regional economy.
- 4.15 A number of businesses told the Committee they used RJCF to expand their capacity or expertise.
- 4.16 For example, one business surveyed by Regional Development Australia Southern Inland used the RJCF grant to expand their management capability and production expertise. This allowed them to engage with 'international catalogues'.¹³² Another business stated that they leveraged the growth enabled through RJCF to attract international partners and funding.¹³³
- 4.17 Multiple submissions highlighted RJCF's flow-on effects on regional employment and the local economy.

¹³⁰ [Submission 3](#), p 1.

¹³¹ [Submission 3](#), p 1; [Submission 6](#), pp 4-5; [Submission 11](#), Birdon Group, p 1; [Submission 18](#), p 1; [Submission 31](#), NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd, p 1.

¹³² [Submission 6](#), p 5.

¹³³ [Submission 6](#), p 4.

- 4.18 For example, NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd stated that RJCF had a 'multiplier effect' beyond their creation of five FTE jobs. The company received \$100,000 in RJCF funding to restore the 11th ex-Southern Aurora Sleeping Carriage. The Carriage was used on regional rail tours and has enabled the company to distribute \$8.2 million to regional NSW communities since late 2020.¹³⁴
- 4.19 Another example of this multiplier effect was the Birdon Group. They used the grant to upgrade their Port Macquarie Facilities and regional dredging operations. The project led to a substantial uplift of employment not only within the company but also across the broader supply chain.¹³⁵
- 4.20 In addition to direct benefits, there were also indirect benefits to RJCF. For example, Jamberoo Action Park stated that the provision of RJCF funding in 2021 provided them with the confidence to continue investing, despite the uncertain macroeconomic climate.¹³⁶
- 4.21 SunDrive Solar stated that programs like RIAF and RJCF help 'position regional NSW as a competitive location for investment' and unlock investment from the private sector.¹³⁷

Case study: Long term benefits of RJCF funding on Grainline

Grainline is a manufacturer and supplier of grain handling equipment based in Wagga Wagga NSW. The Committee visited the business in February 2024 to understand the impact of RJCF funding.

As a recipient of RJCF funding, Grainline has created 79 FTEs as of 31 December 2023, exceeding its original target of 42 FTEs at the start of the RJCF project. At the time of the Committee visit, the business had invested in a wide range of business capabilities including delivery vehicles, enterprise resource planning, site development, and in IT and office upgrades.

The business entered into the Perth market in early 2024 and is working on research and development to enable products for global distribution.

Grainline told the Committee that these jobs and increased capabilities supported the business with their market expansion and future plans for global distribution. For example, Grainline entered into the Perth market in early 2024 and is working on research and development to enable products for international distributions distribution. Without the support from RJCF, it is likely that the scale and scope of Grainline's projects would be much smaller.

¹³⁴ [Submission 31](#), p 1.

¹³⁵ [Submission 11](#), p 1.

¹³⁶ [Submission 3](#), p 1.

¹³⁷ [Submission 5](#), p 4.

Impact of the discontinuance of the funds

Summary

RIAF and RJCF Round 3 opened for applications on 5 October 2022 and 13 January 2023 respectively. Both funds were paused in April 2023 while the NSW Government undertook a government spending review. At the time of the pause, Expression of Interests were under assessment and no offers of funding were made to applicants. The funding for both funds was reallocated in the 2023-24 Budget and applicants were advised of the discontinuance of funds by the Department of Regional NSW.

Recommendation 9

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a transition plan to help businesses navigate the discontinuance of grant programs in the future and help them explore alternative funding opportunities.

- 4.22 Evidence to this inquiry indicates that the discontinuance of RIAF and RJCF Round 3 had negative impacts on businesses. This included direct costs to businesses incurred in grant applications and indirect costs to the broader economy due to missed growth opportunities.
- 4.23 The Committee notes that the NSW Government is working on different programs to support the regional economy following the ending of RIAF and RJCF.¹³⁸ However, the Committee is concerned that businesses were not provided with adequate support to navigate the discontinuance of the grant programs.
- 4.24 To improve support for businesses, the Committee recommends that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a transition plan to help businesses explore alternative funding opportunities and navigate the discontinuance of grant programs in the future.
- 4.25 Businesses incurred costs such as time and resources in completing grant applications. For example, SunDrive Soar invested around \$30,000 to support their RIAF application. They said that they would not easily produce similar application materials again as they were a 'pre-revenue technology startup with competing priorities'.¹³⁹
- 4.26 The discontinuance of RIAF and RJCF Round 3 also had indirect costs to the local economy, for example, the lost opportunity to generate jobs and economic growth.¹⁴⁰
- 4.27 Australasian Agriculture Equities stated that projects would see loss of job creation and job retention as a result of the discontinuance of funds. This might

¹³⁸ Mr Wheaton, [Transcript](#), p 18.

¹³⁹ SunDrive, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

¹⁴⁰ [Submission 5](#), p 1; [Submission 10](#), p 1; [Submission 34](#), Australasian Agriculture Equities, p 1; RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to SQs](#), p 3.

lead to a slower rate of economic development, resulting in developers reconsidering locations in which they would operate.¹⁴¹

- 4.28 Regional Development Australia Southern Inland also stated that the discontinuance of RIAF would slow down the development of business capabilities in regional NSW.¹⁴²
- 4.29 It is unclear to the Committee whether the funds were reallocated to projects or areas that would have achieved similar outcomes to RIAF and RJCF Round 3.
- 4.30 The DRNSW stated at the time of public hearing in February 2024 that they 'don't have specific incentive grants that are for job creation and job growth in that area'.¹⁴³
- 4.31 The Committee subsequently inquired into the reallocation of RIAF and RJCF Round 3 in the 2023-24 Budget. The DRNSW stated that:
- "Funding in the 2023-24 budget focused on the delivery of the NSW government election commitments and included an initial investment of \$350 million into a Regional Development Trust Fund for sustainable and strategic investment with a focus on priorities that make a real difference to regional communities. As at March 2024, funding under the Regional Development Trust had not been committed to specific projects".¹⁴⁴
- 4.32 The Committee notes that the NSW 2024-2025 Budget has allocated \$400 million to the Regional Development Trust.¹⁴⁵ Programs funded under the Trust include the Engine and Merging Industries Loan Pilot. The Pilot offers loans to fund regionally-based food and beverage manufacturers to invest in new technologies and equipment.¹⁴⁶

Case study: Impact of the discontinuance of RIAF on SunDrive Solar

SunDrive is a solar technology company based in South Sydney, Australia. Grown from a small PhD project, SunDrive now produces some of the most efficient solar cells in the world.¹⁴⁷

SunDrive submitted a RIAF application in early 2023 for support to establish its advanced solar manufacturing facility in NSW.¹⁴⁸ They invested approximately \$30,000 in making the application including engaging a consulting firm to assist with necessary materials.¹⁴⁹ In September 2023 SunDrive received an email that the RIAF had been terminated.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ [Submission 34](#), p 1.

¹⁴² RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to SQs](#), p 3.

¹⁴³ Mr Wheaton, [Transcript](#), p 17.

¹⁴⁴ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 4.

¹⁴⁵ NSW Treasury, [2024-25 NSW Budget: Our Plan for Regional New South Wales](#), report, NSW Government, 18 June 2024, p 16.

¹⁴⁶ Regional NSW, [Regional Development Trust Fund](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 19 June 2024.

¹⁴⁷ [SunDrive Solar](#), Australian Solar Technology, webpage, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁴⁸ [Submission 5](#), p 1.

¹⁴⁹ SunDrive Solar, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

¹⁵⁰ SunDrive Solar, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

Funding from the RIAF would have assisted SunDrive to establish its advanced solar manufacturing facility in NSW. The project would have created more than 500 direct jobs in its initial phase.¹⁵¹

In the long term, the facility would create thousands of local, high-paid and secure jobs with the majority in regional areas. In addition to jobs, the facility would also deliver clean and cheaper energy for households and help reduce carbon emissions.¹⁵²

SunDrive advised that if they were to establish their manufacturing facility in NSW, the company would likely make the world's most efficient commercial solar module using Australian technology.¹⁵³ They advised the Committee that their project would benefit the renewable economy and job creation, as well as advancing and diversifying industry, and building supply chain resilience.¹⁵⁴

Since the discontinuance of RIAF, SunDrive has been awaiting further details about alternative programs that might support a similar outcome.¹⁵⁵ The Committee understands that DRNSW has been in contact with SunDrive and is prepared to have on-going conversations with other organisations to support their aspirations in NSW.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ [Submission 5](#), p 1.

¹⁵² [Submission 5](#), p 4.

¹⁵³ [Submission 5](#), p 4.

¹⁵⁴ [Submission 5](#), p 1.

¹⁵⁵ Dr Schweizer, [Transcript](#), p 14.

¹⁵⁶ Dr Schweizer, [Transcript](#), pp 11-12.

Chapter Five – Government support for the funds' applicants and recipients

Government support for grant applicants and recipients are important as the grant process can be complex. This chapter examines the following key areas of government support in the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF):

- Consistent and direct contact with local staff from the Department of Regional NSW,
- Resources in local councils, and
- Benefits the Business Concierge service.

Consistent and direct contact with local staff from the Department of Regional NSW

Summary

Businesses found consistent and direct contacts with local staff from the Department of Regional NSW helpful during the grant process. However, most businesses that received support from these staff already had pre-existing contacts with the Department. It is unclear whether businesses with less connections with the Department had access to the same level of support.

Recommendation 10

- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development invest in staff retention and development in regional NSW to maintain institutional knowledge of local businesses and communities.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a communication strategy to better engage with businesses with no pre-existing contacts with the Department.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development collaborate with local councils and relevant organisations, to promote grant programs.**

Support from local staff from the Department of Regional NSW

- 5.1 The Committee heard from a range of grant applicants and recipients and found that having direct contact with local staff greatly helped stakeholders throughout the grant process.¹⁵⁷ This was especially the case when local staff had knowledge of the local economy and communities.
- 5.2 Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development invest in staff retention and development in regional NSW to maintain institutional knowledge of local businesses and communities.

¹⁵⁷ [Submission 3](#), p 1; [Submission 6](#), pp 7-8; [Submission 7](#), p 1; [Submission 30](#), p 3; [Submission 31](#), p 2; [Submission 32](#), p 1; InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2 and [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

- 5.3 Feedback from a survey conducted by the Regional Development Australia Southern Inland suggested that the grant process was less challenging when local staff from the DRNSW were available to address queries about the process.¹⁵⁸
- 5.4 InQuik stated that their regional contact from the DRNSW helped them understand application requirements. They also reviewed applications to ensure InQuik clearly addressed relevant application requirements.¹⁵⁹ InQuik noted that the support was valuable as businesses, though great at communicating within their own sectors, might need help framing their growth goals from a government lens.¹⁶⁰
- 5.5 The Committee also found that stakeholders especially valued staff from the DRNSW with knowledge of the local economy and communities. Various businesses in Wagga Wagga told the Committee directly during site visits how much they valued consistent contact with staff. They welcomed working with staff who understood their businesses and the local environment they operated in.
- 5.6 The Narrabri Shire Council also stated that the Council has been supported by regionally based staff from the DRNSW. Particularly, the Council noted that these staff have an accurate understanding of regional needs and the unique selling points of regions.¹⁶¹

Awareness of government support

- 5.7 The inquiry evidence shows that most businesses that received help already had pre-existing contacts with the DRNSW. The Committee is concerned that businesses with less connections and resources did not access available assistance.
- 5.8 Recognising the importance of awareness in grant programs, the Committee recommends that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development develop a communication strategy to reach out to businesses with no pre-existing contacts with the Department. The Committee also recommends the Department collaborate with local councils and relevant organisations to promote grant programs.
- 5.9 InQuik noted that businesses without existing contacts with the DRNSW could be disadvantaged when trying to find out about grant programs. This could also impact their ability to prepare grant applications.¹⁶²
- 5.10 The DRNSW also expressed concerns about the equity of access to support in its RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report. They noted that applicants should have equal access to quality Business Development Manager (BDM). The Department suggested that application rates from different regional areas should be

¹⁵⁸ [Submission 6](#), p 3.

¹⁵⁹ InQuik, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁶⁰ InQuik, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

¹⁶¹ [Submission 30](#), p 3.

¹⁶² InQuik, [Answers to QoNs](#), p 1.

monitored. This could identify trends that might indicate a lack of awareness of the program or access to BDM support.¹⁶³

Lack of resources in local councils

Summary

Effective processing of grant applications relies on skilled and well-resourced local councils as they play a significant role in grants administration. This is because councils are responsible for resolving planning issues, infrastructure challenges and community engagement. However, local councils often lack resources or capacity to process documents quickly and manage stakeholder expectations, affecting project deadlines and business operation.

Finding 4

That local councils do not have sufficient resources and capacity to process Development Applications on time for businesses to meet deadlines in grant programs.

Recommendation 11

- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment consult with local councils to develop a strategy on effective processing of Development Applications in regional NSW.**
- **That the Government consider allocating more funding to local councils to address the shortage of planning staff.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment provide training resources, skills development and staffing support, including employee secondment, to address the shortage of planning staff in local councils.**

5.11 Evidence from the inquiry suggests that RIAF and RJCF applicants and recipients were not satisfied with the efficiency of local councils in processing and administering Development Applications and Construction Certificates.¹⁶⁴ For example:

- Jamberoo Action Park described their experience with the Development Application and Modification process as arduous, costly and timely.¹⁶⁵
- Feedback from the survey conducted by the Regional Development Australia Southern Inland suggested that councils were slow in processing Development Applications, acting as a handbrake on businesses.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), p 33.

¹⁶⁴ [Submission 6](#), p 6; [Submission 18](#), p 1; [Submission 21](#), p 2; Ironbox, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 9 March 2024, p 2.

¹⁶⁵ [Submission 3](#), p 1.

¹⁶⁶ [Submission 6](#), pp 6-7.

- Ironbox explained that a key reason for their failure to succeed with the RCJF process was because of delays in the planning system. They eventually moved their proposed project to Victoria instead.¹⁶⁷
- 5.12 Recognising impact of inefficient processing of planning approvals in local councils, the Committee recommends the NSW Government consider allocation more funding to local councils to address the shortage of planning staff. The Committee also recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment work together on effective processing of Development Applications and providing more support to local councils.
- 5.13 The Committee is concerned with the delay in local councils as the success of a grant project is often linked to the ability and expertise of councils to support the planning process.¹⁶⁸
- 5.14 The Committee heard from local councils that several factors contributed to the delay including insufficient resources in regional councils¹⁶⁹, high staff turnover¹⁷⁰, and a scarcity of planners.¹⁷¹
- 5.15 For example, Central Coast Council explained that local councils are constrained by 'rate caps, maximum fees / charges and cost shifting of NSW Government activities to the local level'. The resource constraint was further exacerbated by the requirement for local councils to deliver multiple grants from the NSW Government at the same time of delivering emergency recovery funding streams and stimulus.¹⁷²
- 5.16 Bega Valley Shire Council stated that there is lack of planners across NSW to assess Development Applications. This means it is vital that businesses engage councils early for any planning matters.¹⁷³ The Council also noted due to lack of resources, they had to cut down operating costs and reduce resources for the economic development team. This means that the Council now has limited capacity to support interested investors and needs to rely on the DRNSW and Investment NSW for assistance.¹⁷⁴
- 5.17 The Committee explored pathways to address the lack of resources in local councils with stakeholders throughout the inquiry.
- 5.18 Regional Development Australia Southern Inland told the Committee that a better collaboration and funding model can potentially address this issue. This includes providing councils with financial support, training resources, and

¹⁶⁷ [Submission 32](#), pp 1-2.

¹⁶⁸ [Submission 21](#), pp 1-2.

¹⁶⁹ [Submission 21](#), p 2.

¹⁷⁰ [Submission 6](#), p 6.

¹⁷¹ [Submission 6](#), p 6.

¹⁷² [Submission 21](#), p 2.

¹⁷³ [Submission 18](#), p 2.

¹⁷⁴ [Submission 18](#), p 2.

partnership with the DRNSW to optimise the Development Application processing.¹⁷⁵

- 5.19 Central Coast Council suggested that the NSW Government could support local councils with more resources to assess Development Applications. This includes funding, training and development for planners, and secondment of planners from the Department of Planning and Environment.¹⁷⁶
- 5.20 Central NSW Joint Organisation also stated that the NSW Government should provide local councils with extra funding. They also suggested that the Government explore collaboration with Joint Organisations to support skills development and resource sharing in planning activities.¹⁷⁷
- 5.21 Recognising the lack of resources in local councils and having heard suggestions from stakeholders, the Committee recommends the NSW Government consider allocation more funding to local councils to address the shortage of planning staff. The Committee also recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Planning and Environment work together on effective processing of Development Applications and providing more support to local councils.

Benefits of the Business Concierge service

Summary

Grant processes can be complicated, costly and time-consuming for businesses to manage. Business Concierge services help businesses navigate such processes by providing personalised support across different stages in grant programs. The following section provides an overview of available Business Concierge services across different states in Australia and examines the benefits of Business Concierge services in NSW in a government grant context.

Finding 5

Most Regional Job Creation Fund and Regional Investment Activation Fund applicants were not aware of, and did not use Business Concierge services during the grant application and administration process.

Recommendation 12

- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau jointly conduct a gap analysis of Business Concierge services.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau collaborate to provide one-stop access to Business Concierge services with a customer-centric approach.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development work with Investment NSW and Service NSW Business Bureau to develop a**

¹⁷⁵ RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to SQs](#), pp 1-2.

¹⁷⁶ Central Coast Council, [Answers to SQs](#), pp 2-3.

¹⁷⁷ [Submission 15](#), pp 2 & 7.

stakeholder engagement strategy to increase awareness of Business Concierge services in regional NSW.

- 5.22 The Committee received little evidence on the benefits of Business Concierge services. The lack of evidence might suggest that most RJCF and RIAF applicants were not aware of and did not use the services.
- 5.23 To increase awareness and ensure a seamless experience for businesses when accessing Business Concierge services, the Committee recommends the relevant departments work together to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy and provide one-stop access to Business Concierge services with a customer-centric approach.
- 5.24 Throughout the inquiry, several stakeholders explicitly stated that they were not aware of or did not use the Business Concierge services in RIAF and or RJCF.¹⁷⁸
- 5.25 For example, the Warrumbungle Shire Council stated that they had not been approached by any Business Concierge service teams and were not aware of any usage of the service in their Local Government Area.¹⁷⁹
- 5.26 However, the Committee notes that when Business Concierge services were provided, it was helpful and well received. For example, ABC Can Pty Ltd found the service provided at the Wynyard Station in Sydney helpful. The regional landing pad at the station brought together experts from science to executive management to provide valuable insights in strategy meetings.¹⁸⁰
- 5.27 The Committee is concerned with the lack of awareness and utilisation of the Business Concierge services. NSW Government agencies were questioned about the provision and promotion of service offerings.
- 5.28 The Committee received evidence that the DRNSW, Service NSW and Investment NSW all provide Business Concierge services, but with different focus areas.
- The DRNSW engaged with businesses and industries through the Office of Regional Economic Development and economic development managers. These teams worked with businesses through RIAF and RJCF programs.¹⁸¹
 - Service NSW Business Bureau provides one front door for businesses to Government information, services and support with a focus on disaster recovery and small businesses.¹⁸² The Bureau was not involved in promoting or working with businesses, councils or stakeholders to implement RIAF and RJCF.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ [Submission 14](#), p 2; [Submission 16](#), p 2; [Submission 30](#), p 4; [Submission 37](#), Liverpool Plains Shire Council, p 4.

¹⁷⁹ [Submission 14](#), p 2.

¹⁸⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 3.

¹⁸¹ Mr Wheaton, [Transcript](#), p 16.

¹⁸² Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1; Ms Katrina Carroll, Director Planning, Performance and Portfolio Management, Business Bureau, Service NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, pp 16 & 22.

¹⁸³ Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1; Ms Carroll, [Transcript](#), p 16.

- Investment NSW provides a Business Concierge service for individuals and businesses with trade and investment inquiries about programs, support and services available through Investment NSW. Investment NSW works with Service NSW to ensure queries relating to trade and investment are referred to Investment NSW, if required.¹⁸⁴ Investment NSW also works with the DRNSW to support investment opportunities seeking to establish in regional NSW.¹⁸⁵

- 5.29 Regarding promotion of the Business Concierge services, both Investment NSW and Service NSW stated that they use a range of measures to raise awareness. This includes publications on the Department's website, direct stakeholder communications and targeted outreach.¹⁸⁶ The DRNSW also stated that they engage and consult with communities through client meetings, targeted sessions and online engagement platforms.¹⁸⁷
- 5.30 Having learnt the Business Concierge services in NSW, the Committees sought to understand the benefits of Business Concierge services in other jurisdictions.
- 5.31 The Committee questioned Service NSW about comparative studies and received evidence that there had been no evaluation of Business Concierge services across Australia.¹⁸⁸ However, Service NSW noted that regular ministerial meetings have been set up to ensure sharing of information and learnings between states and territories.¹⁸⁹
- 5.32 Given the lack of available comparative analysis, the Committee canvassed Business Concierge services across key states in Australia and summarised insights in the table below.

Table 2: Comparative analysis of Business Concierge services across Australia – types of available Business Concierge service offerings by states

	NSW	Victoria	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland	Tasmania
Responsible agency for Business	Department of Regional NSW ¹⁹⁰ , Service	Business Victoria ¹⁹³	Small Business Development Corporation ¹⁹⁴	Office for Small &	Business Queensland ¹⁹⁶	Business Tasmania ¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁴ Investment NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 11 March 2024, p 1.

¹⁸⁵ Ms Katie Knight, Deputy Secretary, Investment NSW, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade, [Transcript of evidence](#), 20 February 2024, p 23; Investment NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁸⁶ Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2; Investment NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁸⁷ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁸⁸ Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁸⁹ Service NSW, [Answers to SQs](#), p 1.

¹⁹⁰ [Department of Regional NSW](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹³ [Business Victoria](#), webpage, Victoria State Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹⁴ [Small Business Development Corporation](#), webpage, Government of Western Australia, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹⁶ [Business Queensland](#), webpage, Queensland Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹⁷ [Business Tasmania](#), Department of State Growth, webpage, Tasmanian Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund
Government support for the funds' applicants and recipients

Concierge service	NSW ¹⁹¹ , Investment NSW ¹⁹²			Family Business ¹⁹⁵		
Personalised business support	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unsure
Business recovery support following an incident, crisis, disaster, or significant event.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Financial assistance and grants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Licenses and permits assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disaster and emergency support	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Programs to support business growth such as leadership, mentoring etc.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wellbeing support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

5.33 The table above shows that the Business Concierge service offerings in NSW are comparable with other states. However, the effectiveness of services across different states and any service gaps in NSW require further research. The Committee recommends relevant departments jointly conduct a gap analysis of the Business Concierge services to inform better policy making in the future.

¹⁹¹ [Service NSW](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹² [Investment NSW](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

¹⁹⁵ [Office for Small & Family Business](#), webpage, Government of South Australia, viewed 1 March 2024.

- 5.34 It is also notable from the table above that NSW administers Business Concierge services through three distinct departments, more than other states. The scattered service delivery approach might have led to stakeholder confusion.
- 5.35 The Committee notes that collaboration across government departments can improve service delivery and better support businesses. For example, Central NSW Joint Organisation suggested that all levels of government should work collaboratively to address challenges for businesses in regional NSW through a concierge or case management approach.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ [Submission 15](#), p 3.

Chapter Six – Impediments to growth in the regions

The Committee recognises that there are deep structural issues holding back economic growth in regional NSW. It is also recognised that specific grant programs may not be able to address all these issues. This chapter examines the following underlying impediments to regional economic growth.

- Labour shortages,
- Complexity of the planning system including Development Applications,
- Collaboration (or the lack of) between regional and metropolitan councils, and
- Logistics and infrastructure issues.

Labour shortages

Summary

While grants with a focus on regional job creation and retention can assist businesses to some extent, labour shortages in regional NSW are a major barrier for businesses to find and retain apprentices and suitable staff. The Committee found that many small businesses do not have resources to train and retain apprentices compared to large and established businesses. Grant programs that partner with TAFE could potentially improve this issue.

Finding 6

Labour shortages in regional NSW are a major barrier for businesses and can prevent them from achieving the objectives of grant programs that target economic growth.

Recommendation 13

That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider working with TAFE to help relevant grant recipients leverage Jobs Connect, and training and apprenticeship programs.

- 6.1 Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard from stakeholders stating that labour and skills shortages in regional NSW was a major barrier for businesses to complete projects and support regional growth.¹⁹⁹
- 6.2 To help future grant recipients navigate labour shortages and best achieve grant objectives, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development consider working with TAFE to help relevant grant recipients leverage Jobs Connect, training and apprenticeship programs.

¹⁹⁹ [Submission 1](#), p 1; [Submission 6](#), pp 6 & 9; [Submission 8](#), p 11; [Submission 9](#), p 1; [Submission 11](#), p 1; [Submission 15](#), p 3; [Submission 20](#), NSW Farmers' Association, Attachment – Research Report, *Stronger ag sector, stronger region*, Australian Farm Institute, August 2021, pp [10-11](#); [Submission 30](#), p 3.

- 6.3 For example, Countrywide Industries spent \$9,500 on advertising to recruit people for their Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) project but only received about two applications.²⁰⁰
- 6.4 Australasian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries also stated that it is hard to find suitable people, with small regional businesses losing employees to large and established businesses such as mining companies.²⁰¹
- 6.5 The experience of businesses echo the findings from industry organisations and academics.
- 6.6 For example, NSW Farmers Association stated that the struggle to find labour goes beyond the job recruitment process.²⁰² They advised that it is linked to other structural issues. These include 'regional amenity, connectivity (physical and digital) and the basic needs of housing and health services within proximity of the place of employment'.²⁰³
- 6.7 The University of New England's research found retention of skilled employees was one of the greatest challenges for regional economic growth.²⁰⁴ Many of the regional business owners interviewed by the University identified the limited availability of specialist skills as hindering day-to-day operations and plans for growth.²⁰⁵
- 6.8 The DRNSW also acknowledged that access to skilled labour is a critical enabler for regional economic growth and remains an ongoing issue in regional NSW.²⁰⁶
- 6.9 The Committee is concerned about the impact of labour shortages on grant program. For example, grant programs that fail to consider the labour shortages issue may not achieve program objectives such as job creation and regional economic growth.
- 6.10 The Committee heard suggestions from a range of stakeholders on how the government could tackle these labour shortages. Key themes of these suggestions include:
- Government support to strengthen educational infrastructure and skills building in regional NSW.²⁰⁷
 - Strengthening TAFE programs to attract people into industries.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁰ Mr Rodney Carr, Director, Countrywide Industries, [Transcript of evidence](#), 8 December 2023, p [13](#).

²⁰¹ Dr Sharifi, [Transcript](#), p [13](#).

²⁰² [Submission 20](#), Attachment, p [10](#).

²⁰³ [Submission 20](#), Attachment, p [11](#).

²⁰⁴ [Submission 1](#), p [1](#).

²⁰⁵ [Submission 1](#), p [1](#).

²⁰⁶ [Submission 8](#), p [11](#).

²⁰⁷ [Submission 1](#), p [3](#).

²⁰⁸ Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 8 December 2024, p [4](#).

- Financial assistance such as bonuses for apprentices upon completion of apprenticeship, payable by the government, to attract labour.²⁰⁹
- 6.11 The Committee also heard about the Group Training Organisations (GTOs). This is used by the NSW Minerals Council to attract and retain people in the mining industry.²¹⁰
- 6.12 The GTOs employ apprentices and trainees and place them with host employers. They also provide additional support to ensure that apprentices complete their training contracts. GTOs also rotate apprentices among host employers to enhance the quality and range of their experience. A number of NSW Minerals Council member companies work collaboratively to nurture a pipeline of skilled tradespeople entering the mining workforce through GTOs.²¹¹
- 6.13 While financial support such as targeted grants from the government is important, the Committee notes it is critical that recipients of grant programs are not hindered from achieving grant objectives due to labour shortages.

Complexity of the planning system including Development Applications

Summary

The current planning system in NSW is complex, and slow, hindering investment and economic growth in regional NSW. Grant applicants and recipients also find that delays in the planning system, especially Development Applications (DAs), have a negative impact on businesses.

Finding 7

Delays in the planning system are a major barrier to investment and economic growth in regional NSW.

Recommendation 14

That the NSW Government consider expanding the Planning System Acceleration Program to allow for fast-tracked assessments for projects that receive NSW Government grants.

- 6.14 Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard criticism of the DAs process and found that delays in the planning system are a major barrier to economic growth in regional NSW.
- 6.15 To help grant recipients navigate the planning system, the Committee recommends the NSW Government consider expanding the Planning System Acceleration Program to allow for fast-tracked assessments for projects that are recipients of NSW Government grants.
- 6.16 As previously stated, Jamberoo Action Park told the Committee that the DAs process discourages investment because it is arduous, costly and timely.²¹² For example, Jamberoo could not make minor amendments to designs under the

²⁰⁹ Countrywide Industries, [Answers to SQs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 21 January 2024, p [2](#).

²¹⁰ Mr Abbey, [Transcript](#), p [6](#).

²¹¹ NSW Minerals Council, [Answers to QoNs](#), webpage, Parliament of New South Wales, 23 January 2024, p [1](#).

²¹² [Submission 3](#), p [1](#).

current legislation. As a result, Jamberoo had to make a modification to the development consent which took seven months to approve, delaying the project and its economic benefits.²¹³

- 6.17 Businesses surveyed by Regional Development Australia Southern Inland also ranked planning approval delays as the top challenge they experienced in RJCF.²¹⁴
- 6.18 The DRNSW stated that they work with the NSW Government's Planning Delivery Unit to resolve issues relating to Development Applications. The Department also regularly engage local government, businesses and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on various regional development matters, including barriers to project delivery.²¹⁵
- 6.19 The Committee acknowledges the steps taken by the DRNSW to address delays in the planning system but is concerned that there is no pathway for government grant recipients to speed up project assessments.
- 6.20 One potential solution suggested by Regional Development Australia Southern Inland is to accelerate the DAs process when applications are connected with approved public funding projects.²¹⁶
- 6.21 The Committee notes that the Planning System Acceleration Program was brought forward during the COVID-19 pandemic to fast-track assessments, support councils and increase productivity.²¹⁷ However, the Program was not offered to approved public funding projects.
- 6.22 The Committee notes that the NSW 2024-2025 Budget includes \$253.7 million to 'bolster the State's planning system, including to assess more Development Applications'.²¹⁸ The Committee welcomes the initiative and notes that a more efficient planning system is essential to regional economic development.

Case study: Impact of the complex planning system on Ironbox Pty Ltd

Ironbox is a small business offering design, prototype and manufacturing services of mechanical components and machines.

As a grant recipient, Ironbox's experience with the Regional Development Fund was stymied by red tape. The business experienced extensive delays with the DAs, putting huge pressure on project timing.

Later, the business encountered further delays with the Construction Certificate approval process with ineffective communication between engineers and local councils.

²¹³ [Submission 3](#), p 2.

²¹⁴ [Submission 6](#), pp 6-7.

²¹⁵ DRNSW, [Answers to SQs](#), pp 3-4.

²¹⁶ RDA Southern Inland, [Answers to SQs](#), p 2.

²¹⁷ Planning, [Planning System Acceleration Program](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

²¹⁸ [2024-25 NSW Budget: Our Plan for Regional New South Wales](#), p 13.

Ironbox observed that the current building system is based on one-off approvals. Any minor modifications and/or usage changes make the original approval invalid.

For context, the Department of Planning requires the building to be consistent with the Construction Certificate and development consent before any building works start. Changes inconsistent with the approved plans would need to be assessed on whether a modification application is required.²¹⁹

The delays caused business stagnation and uncertainty for Ironbox, with resources and efforts going into the planning process with no outcomes. In the end, Ironbox decided to abandon the project in NSW and refund the grant. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Ironbox later moved the project to Victoria.

Ironbox suggested a holistic and customer focused approach to planning with all levels of government working together to streamline the bureaucratic process.

Collaboration between regional and metropolitan councils

Summary

Collaboration between regional and metropolitan councils such as through the 'sister cities' programs can allow knowledge and resource sharing and help address impediments to regional economic growth.

Recommendation 15

- **That the Office of Local Government review and update the Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils – A Guidance Paper (2007) to promote collaboration between metropolitan and regional councils.**
- **That the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development work with metropolitan and regional councils to implement the Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027 including grant opportunities for business expansion into regional NSW.**

- 6.23 The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders and noted a broad consensus on the benefits of regional and metropolitan councils collaboration.
- 6.24 Some stakeholders noted the benefits of 'sister cities' programs. For example, the Liverpool Plains Council had a longstanding sister city relationship with Blacktown City Council. This brought benefits both in cultural exchanges and exploring economic development opportunities.²²⁰
- 6.25 The Narrabri Shire Council also recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port of Newcastle, exploring potential collaboration opportunities through exports and agricultural value-adding.²²¹
- 6.26 The City of Ryde Council highlighted the economic interdependence between regional and metropolitan areas. The Council also noted the benefits of

²¹⁹ Planning, [Stage-5-Get your Construction Certificate](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

²²⁰ [Submission 37](#), p 5.

²²¹ [Submission 30](#), p 4.

collaboration including enhanced productivity, economic diversification, and improved wellbeing.²²² For example, knowledge and technologies originating in metropolitan cities often spread to regional cities.²²³

- 6.27 Some stakeholders were more critical of the lack of collaboration between regional and metropolitan councils. For example, the University of New England stated there is limited evidence in Australia on collaboration between regional and metropolitan councils to increase productivity.²²⁴
- 6.28 Central NSW Joint Organisation also stated that the friendly relationships between regional and metropolitan councils do not usually explore productivity and economic development.²²⁵
- 6.29 The Committee notes that there is guidance in place on partnership and collaboration between councils. The most recent Guidance Paper on Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils was published in 2007.
- 6.30 Considering the importance of councils collaboration, the Committee recommends the Office of Local Government review and update the Guidance Paper.
- 6.31 In addition to collaboration, the Committee also notes the important work of the DRNSW in working with all local councils on investment attraction.
- 6.32 For example, the Department stated that they undertook a range of activities with local government in financial year 2022-23 on investment attraction, including training for regional councils. However, the Liverpool Plains Shire Council stated in its submission that they were not aware of these activities.²²⁶
- 6.33 The Committee is concerned that some local councils may not be aware of the strategy and support from the Department of Regional NSW. As a result, these councils lose out on investment opportunities.
- 6.34 To help councils attract investment opportunities, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development work with all councils to implement the Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027.²²⁷ This includes providing grants opportunities to help businesses expand from metropolitan areas into regional NSW.

Logistics and infrastructure

Summary

As more grants focus on regional economic growth and investment, there will be an increasing pressure on supporting infrastructure in regional NSW. The Committee found that regional NSW lacks fundamental infrastructure such as housing, roads, reliable energy and internet

²²² [Submission 23](#), City of Ryde Council, pp 4 & 6.

²²³ [Submission 23](#), p 4.

²²⁴ [Submission 1](#), p 2.

²²⁵ [Submission 15](#), p 7.

²²⁶ [Submission 37](#), p 2.

²²⁷ DRNSW, [Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027](#), report, NSW Government.

connection, to support economic and labour growth. Without consideration of infrastructure, grants aimed at regional economic growth may not be successful in achieving their objectives.

Recommendation 16

That the NSW Government review the 2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps: New South Wales and in consultation with regional communities, develop a whole-of-government strategy to address the gaps.

- 6.35 Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard about a range of logistic and infrastructure issues in regional NSW that impede business expansion and regional economic growth. These issues include:
- Lack of affordable housing,²²⁸
 - Unreliable connectivity including transportation and digital connections,²²⁹
 - Lack of social services including healthcare,²³⁰
 - Water and energy insecurity,²³¹ and
 - Complex Biodiversity Offsets Scheme.²³²
- 6.36 To help regional communities overcome these structural impediments, the Committee recommends the NSW Government review the 2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps: New South Wales. The Committee also recommends the NSW Government develop a whole-of-government strategy to address these gaps, in consultation with regional communities.
- 6.37 For example, Liverpool Plains Shire Council stated that the lack of rental accommodation is a real impediment to attracting staff to the region. They also said that developers are reluctant to invest in regional areas due to rising costs and low rates of return on investment.²³³ The Council highlighted that the lack of access to adequate healthcare may deter people who may have carer responsibilities from moving to the regions.²³⁴
- 6.38 NSW Farmers' Association stated that inefficiencies in freight movements add costs to businesses, decreasing productivity gains.²³⁵ Connectivity also remains a barrier for regional areas to leverage the benefits of digital technology.²³⁶
- 6.39 The water and energy security issue was highlighted by Central NSW Joint Organisation. They explained that poorly managed water strategies do not include proper cost and benefit analysis and are problematic for regional

²²⁸ [Submission 8](#), p [11](#); [Submission 11](#), p [1](#); [Submission 15](#), p [3](#); [Submission 20](#), Attachment, p [11](#); [Submission 37](#), p [2](#).

²²⁹ [Submission 1](#), p [3](#); [Submission 20](#), p [2](#).

²³⁰ [Submission 20](#), Attachment, pp [19-20](#); [Submission 23](#), p [7](#); [Submission 37](#), p [3](#).

²³¹ [Submission 8](#), p [12](#); [Submission 15](#), pp [3-4](#); [Submission 20](#), Attachment, pp [17-18](#) & [21](#).

²³² [Submission 8](#), p [12](#); [Submission 15](#), p [4](#).

²³³ [Submission 37](#), pp [2-3](#).

²³⁴ [Submission 37](#), p [3](#).

²³⁵ [Submission 20](#), Attachment, p [16](#).

²³⁶ [Submission 20](#), Attachment, pp [8-9](#).

development.²³⁷ They also suggested that the Biodiversity Assessment Method and credits are expensive and opaque, hindering project progress.²³⁸

- 6.40 Some stakeholders suggested that better strategic planning for regional communities should include a co-design approach with local communities.²³⁹ Others suggested targeted stimulatory spending to address structural issues including digital capability and physical infrastructure.²⁴⁰
- 6.41 The Committee notes that the NSW Government is working to address these issues through programs such as the 'Build to Rent' pilot and the Regional Economic Development Strategies.²⁴¹
- 6.42 The Committee also notes that the NSW 2024-2025 Budget outlines initiatives to improve infrastructure and digital connectivity gaps in regional NSW.²⁴² The Budget also commits funding to attract essential services workers to and improve healthcare access in regional NSW.²⁴³ The Committee welcomes these initiatives and notes that a whole-of-government approach is critical to address structural issues.
- 6.43 The Committee notes that the Australian Government completed an analysis on regional strengths and infrastructure gaps in NSW in 2022 which may provide further insights into structural issues in regional communities.

²³⁷ [Submission 15](#), pp 3-4.

²³⁸ [Submission 15](#), p 4.

²³⁹ [Submission 15](#), p 5; [Submission 20](#), p 2.

²⁴⁰ [Submission 20](#), Attachment, p 22.

²⁴¹ [Submission 8](#), pp 11-12.

²⁴² [2024-25 NSW Budget](#), pp 14-16.

²⁴³ [2024-25 NSW Budget](#), pp 21-23.

Appendix One – Background of the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF)

Overview and fund objectives

The Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) was a \$110 million fund created by the DRNSW with the following objectives.

1. Drive increased productivity, innovation and business competitiveness in regional NSW.
2. Activate new industries.
3. Promote industry cluster developments.
4. Deliver new and sustainable employment opportunities.²⁴⁴

Funds could be used for a range of purposes such as the purchasing of land, constructing or installing new plant equipment, fitting out new facilities or hubs or purchasing technology or intellectual property required to undertake the project.

Fund design

The RIAF was designed with two funding streams, providing options for businesses to access the package most suitable to them.

Stream 1 was an open and competitive program with a two-staged application process. Eligible applications were assessed on their comparative merits against the established eligibility and assessment criteria.²⁴⁵

Stream 2 was an open and non-competitive program, with applications assessed individually by the DRNSW without reference to the comparative merits of other applications. Stream 2 aimed to provide increased flexibility to secure investments that were time-sensitive and strategically significant for a priority industry or location.²⁴⁶

RIAF also used a co-funding structure to encourage investment, with the NSW Government matching up to 50 per cent of monetary commitments for eligible projects.²⁴⁷

Timeline of RIAF

The following table outlines the timeline of project stages in the two streams of RIAF funding.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ [Regional Investment Activation Fund \(Closed\)](#).

²⁴⁵ Regional Investment Activation Fund, [Eligibility](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 1 March 2024.

²⁴⁶ [Eligibility](#).

²⁴⁷ [Submission 8](#), p 4.

²⁴⁸ [RIAF Stream 1 Fund Guidelines](#), p 7; [RIAF Stream 2 Program Guidelines](#), p 7.

	Project stages					
	Expressio n of Interest (EOI) open	Industry Briefing	EOI Outcome	Detailed applications close	Notification of outcome	Project completion for successful applicants
Stream 1 <i>Available funding \$2 million to \$20 million</i>	5 October 2022	11 October 2022	19 December 2022	24 February 2023	1 May 2023	30 May 2025
Stream 2 <i>Available funding \$1 million to \$10 million</i>	5 October 2022	N/A	Within 7 days of application	When program funding exhausted or 31 December 2024	Within 14 days of the detailed application	30 May 2025

Fund governance

RIAF had governance measures to ensure integrity and accountability in the grant process. These included a set of guidelines and assessment methodology administered by an independent probity advisor. The independent probity advisor oversaw the design and delivery of RIAF, ensuring fairness and transparency throughout the program lifecycle.

The program had four key components of governance:

1. Multi-stage assessment and decision-making points, including approval pathways to manage risk.
2. Consultation with subject matter experts from NSW Government agencies and accredited third-party consultants where relevant.
3. Assessment Panels which ensured a broad and merit-based review of each application.
4. An independent probity advisor who was required to be present at all panel meetings.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ [Submission 8](#), pp 4-5.

Fund outcomes

The RIAF was paused in April 2023 following a review into NSW Government spending. At the time, no formal offers of funding had been made and assessments were at the expression of interest stage.

In the 2023-24 NSW State Budget, the funding committed to RIAF was discontinued and reallocated towards new ways of investing in regional communities.²⁵⁰

Fund evaluation

There was no evaluation of the fund as the fund was ceased before allocation.²⁵¹

Background of the Regional Job Creation Fund

Overview and fund objectives

The \$240 million Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) aimed to support job creation and regional investment by providing co-funding to regional projects. Grants were available for capital or other expenses for eligible projects that supported job creation or retention.²⁵²

Fund design

There were three rounds under RJCF with the first two rounds focused on job creation and the last on job retention.

- Round 1 aimed to create at least 5,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs over a three-year period. It focused on regional projects in engine, enabling or emerging engine industries. Proposed projects were required to create at least five FTE new jobs.²⁵³
- Round 2 aimed to create an additional 2,000 FTE jobs and entice new investment from Australian and international businesses. Proposed projects were required to create at least five FTE new jobs.²⁵⁴
- Round 3 aimed to support existing regional NSW businesses, or those seeking to relocate to regional NSW, in adapting to technological change or evolving supply chain distribution demands. It was intended to lead to more sustainable employment and more resilient regional economies. Funded projects could create or maintain regional jobs.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ [Submission 8](#), p 6.

²⁵¹ [Submission 8](#), p 5

²⁵² [Submission 8](#), p 5.

²⁵³ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), Executive summary, p [iii](#) & p [1](#). **Engine industries:** are key industries which employ a higher proportion of people compared to other regions, service markets beyond their local region and are often a key driver of population growth in the community. **NSW engine industries include:** agribusiness and forestry; resources and mining; tourism and hospitality; tertiary education and skills; health and residential care; freight and logistics; defence. [Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027](#), p [21](#).

²⁵⁴ [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), pp [3](#) & [6](#).

²⁵⁵ [RJCF Round 3 Guidelines](#), p [4](#).

Successful applicants were required to submit project progress reports that included status of project activities and the number of FTE positions created. RJCF grantees had three years following the execution of the funding to create the FTE jobs.²⁵⁶

Timeline of RJCF

The following table outlines the key dates and application process of three rounds of funding in RJCF.²⁵⁷

Round	Available funding	Application Process	EOI/Preliminary Application Timing	Grant Value
Round 1	\$100 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling application period Two-stage, merit-based assessment 	Opened: 25 October 2020 Closed: 14 May 2021	\$100,000 to \$10 million
Round 2	\$40 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed application period Two-stage, competitive merit-based assessment 	Opened: 2 February 2022 Closed: 18 February 2022	\$100,000 to \$5 million
Round 3	\$100 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed application period Two-stage, competitive merit-based assessment 	Opened: 13 January 2023 Closed: 6 March 2023	\$100,000 to \$10 million

Fund governance

RJCF guidelines and assessment followed similar methodology to RIAF, including the independent probity advisor, multi-staged assessment processes and consultation with subject matter experts and senior representatives from NSW Government agencies.²⁵⁸

Fund outcomes

Funding was granted under Rounds 1 and 2. Round 3 opened for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) in January 2023, but was reallocated in the 2023-24 NSW State Budget, while EOIs were being assessed. No offers of RJCF funding were made in Round 3.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), pp 48 & 54.

²⁵⁷ [Submission 8](#), p 5; [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), Executive summary, p iii; [RJCF Round Two Guidelines](#), p 4; Regional Growth Fund, [Regional Job Creation Fund](#), webpage, NSW Government, viewed 14 June 2024.

²⁵⁸ [Submission 8](#), p 4.

²⁵⁹ [Submission 8](#), p 6.

The following table outlines the outcome of RJCF Rounds 1 and 2.²⁶⁰

Round	Projects Funded	Estimated FTE Jobs Created	Job outcomes reporting
1	119 approved for funding. 11 projects subsequently withdrew or declined offers of funding.	4,458 FTE jobs	2023-2026
2	86 projects approved for funding. 12 projects withdrew or declined offers of funding.	1,260 FTE jobs	2023-2026

Fund evaluation

The Regional Programs Evaluation Team in the DRNSW evaluated RJCF Round 1 in March 2022 and produced a process evaluation report.

The report determined that the fund was well designed to meet its objective of creating 5,000 new FTE jobs over three years. Their findings were used to shape improvements in RJCF Round 2 and 3.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ [Submission 8](#), p 6. Figures on program outcomes are current as of 25 August 2023.

²⁶¹ [Submission 8](#), pp 6-7; [RJCF Round 1 Process Evaluation Report](#), Executive summary, p iii.

Appendix Two – RIAF and RJCF data

Regional Job Creation Fund Successful Applicants

RJCF Round	Project name / function	Recipient name	Recipient location (Local Government Area)	Project delivery location (Local Government Area)	Funding amount	Project term (3 years from date of execution of funding deed)	Ministerial discretion (yes/no)
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council	\$600,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	\$4,000,000.00	23/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Unincorporated ACT	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	\$3,000,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council	\$500,000.00	09/03/2023-2026	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	\$140,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cowra Shire Council	Cowra Shire Council	\$220,000.00	15/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$330,000.00	27/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Albury City Council	Albury City Council	\$325,000.00	11/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$100,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$260,000.00	13/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council	\$400,000.00	10/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council	\$740,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Newcastle City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	\$800,000.00	14/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$980,000.00	20/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council	\$1,800,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$350,000.00	06/06/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Murray River Council	Murray River Council	\$100,000.00	26/04/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Yarra Ranges Council - VIC	Federation Council	\$500,000.00	16/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$240,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$4,160,000.00	10/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$300,000.00	10/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council	\$600,000.00	11/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cabonne Council	Orange City Council	\$350,173.00	27/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$840,000.00	11/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Newcastle City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	\$100,000.00	04/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council	\$240,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council	\$100,000.00	14/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council	\$240,000.00	11/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Griffith City Council	Griffith City Council	\$120,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$2,000,000.00	22/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Federation Council	Federation Council	\$500,000.00	06/06/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$437,065.00	11/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$360,000.00	17/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council	\$1,000,000.00	10/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$100,000.00	24/08/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council	\$400,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Berrigan Shire Council	Berrigan Shire Council	\$600,000.00	26/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Bathurst Regional Council	Bathurst Regional Council	\$300,000.00	03/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Lismore City Council	\$500,000.00	10/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$180,000.00	16/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Albury City Council	Albury City Council	\$434,000.00	21/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$850,000.00	11/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$2,230,000.00	16/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$180,000.00	28/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$4,500,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$6,640,000.00	16/06/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council	\$135,000.00	07/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	\$100,000.00	17/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$300,000.00	20/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$625,000.00	03/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Narrandera Shire Council	Warrumbungle Shire Council	\$1,000,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Junee Shire Council	Junee Shire Council	\$560,000.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council	\$100,000.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$300,000.00	07/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council	\$1,500,000.00	14/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$240,000.00	17/12/2021-2024	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Albury City Council	Albury City Council	\$100,000.00	16/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$180,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Sydney, Council of the City of	Port Stephens Council	\$1,000,000.00	22/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	\$600,000.00	01/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	City of Boroondara - VIC	Mid-coast Council	\$240,000.00	10/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Snowy Valleys Council	Snowy Valleys Council	\$100,000.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Sydney, Council of the City of	Port Stephens Council	\$5,000,000.00	03/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council	\$100,000.00	16/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council	\$100,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Gunnedah Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council	\$500,000.00	24/08/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wodonga Council - VIC	Bathurst Regional Council	\$160,000.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Nambucca Valley Council	Nambucca Valley Council	\$285,515.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Griffith City Council	Griffith City Council	\$140,000.00	15/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lismore City Council	Lismore City Council	\$820,000.00	11/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Narromine Shire Council	Narromine Shire Council	\$200,000.00	24/08/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lismore City Council	Lismore City Council	\$200,000.00	26/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$170,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Council	\$200,000.00	10/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council	\$280,000.00	21/02/2022-2025	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	\$400,000.00	26/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$120,000.00	31/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council	\$900,000.00	20/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$400,000.00	10/05/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Narrabri Shire Council	Narrabri Shire Council	\$240,000.00	07/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$760,000.00	07/04/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council	\$1,440,000.00	12/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$200,000.00	15/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$200,000.00	08/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$220,000.00	20/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Hills Shire Council, The	Narromine Shire Council	\$4,807,000.00	15/03/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	\$300,000.00	06/06/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$130,000.00	01/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$200,000.00	11/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Mid-western Regional Council	Mid-western Regional Council	\$100,000.00	17/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$160,621.00	09/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Federation Council	Federation Council	\$3,720,000.00	10/01/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$600,000.00	01/12/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council	\$460,000.00	08/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cabonne Council	Cabonne Council	\$131,000.00	26/05/2022-2025	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	City Of Busselton - WA	Central Coast Council	\$900,000.00	27/10/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$160,000.00	03/11/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$500,000.00	01/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Forbes Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council	\$300,000.00	01/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council	\$100,000.00	02/02/2022-2025	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Snowy Valleys Council	Snowy Valleys Council	\$140,000.00	09/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Unincorporated ACT	Narrandera Shire Council	\$140,000.00	01/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$600,000.00	17/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council	\$300,000.00	23/08/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$600,000.00	16/09/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$2,660,000.00	15/06/2021-2024	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council	\$4,000,000.00	Funding deed not yet executed	No
Round 1	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$120,000.00	17/03/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$ 100,000.00	03/07/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Armidale Regional Council	\$ 600,000.00	08/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings	Port Macquarie-hastings	\$ 160,000.00	27/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council	\$ 400,000.00	22/06/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Albury City Council	Albury City Council	\$ 197,500.00	06/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cabonne Council	Cabonne Council	\$ 126,000.00	02/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council	\$ 340,000.00	16/01/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Byron Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council	\$ 800,000.00	23/02/2023-2026	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Council	\$ 200,000.00	07/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council	\$ 445,000.00	28/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$ 810,000.00	05/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Orange City Council	Orange City Council	\$ 200,000.00	15/05/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$ 200,000.00	06/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council	\$ 180,000.00	17/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Campbelltown City Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$ 1,700,000.00	19/06/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council	\$ 250,000.00	27/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council	\$ 300,000.00	05/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council	\$ 1,400,000.00	25/08/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	\$ 137,500.00	06/06/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Weddin Shire Council	Weddin Shire Council	\$ 100,000.00	26/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cootamundra-gundagai Regional Council	Cootamundra-gundagai Regional Council	\$ 110,000.00	24/11/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council	\$ 306,800.00	08/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council	\$ 140,000.00	26/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Blayney Shire Council	Blayney Shire Council	\$ 380,000.00	08/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council	\$ 135,000.00	26/09/2022-2025	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Greater Dandenong Council - VIC	Richmond Valley Council	\$ 500,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$ 400,000.00	07/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$ 1,000,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Yass Valley Council	Yass Valley Council	\$ 500,000.00	07/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$ 493,800.00	24/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	\$ 820,000.00	28/02/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	\$ 174,667.00	17/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Indigo Shire Council - VIC	Albury City Council	\$ 300,000.00	19/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Murrumbidgee Council	Murrumbidgee Council	\$ 200,000.00	07/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Richmond Valley Council	Richmond Valley Council	\$ 200,000.00	02/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$ 1,300,000.00	05/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$ 200,000.00	02/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Kempsey Shire Council	Kempsey Shire Council	\$ 100,000.00	19/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lithgow Council, City of	Lithgow Council, City of	\$ 196,087.00	26/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	\$ 240,000.00	30/05/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Singleton Council	\$ 120,000.00	12/05/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Richmond Valley Council	Richmond Valley Council	\$ 170,000.00	05/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cootamundra-gundagai Regional Council	Junee Shire Council	\$ 355,500.00	12/05/2023-2026	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council	\$ 440,000.00	14/02/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council	\$ 150,000.00	15/11/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Kyogle Council	Kyogle Council	\$ 100,000.00	07/12/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$ 150,000.00	10/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$ 140,000.00	15/11/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$ 140,000.00	18/11/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Bellingen Shire Council	Bellingen Shire Council	\$ 200,000.00	20/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$ 280,000.00	09/08/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council	\$ 120,000.00	02/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council	\$ 220,000.00	24/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council	\$ 120,000.00	20/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council	\$ 540,000.00	26/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Murray River Council	Murray River Council	\$ 300,000.00	17/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Council	\$ 1,300,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Greater Dandenong Council - VIC	Albury City Council	\$ 500,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council	\$ 400,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Temora Shire Council	Temora Shire Council	\$ 130,000.00	02/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council	\$ 100,000.00	05/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$ 400,000.00	19/06/2023-2026	No

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lachlan Shire Council	Lachlan Shire Council	\$ 100,000.00	08/08/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Penrith City Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	\$ 640,000.00	19/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Yass Valley Council	Yass Valley Council	\$ 120,000.00	28/02/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cowra Shire Council	Cowra Shire Council	\$ 180,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lithgow Council, City of	Lithgow Council, City of	\$ 1,120,000.00	27/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	\$ 100,000.00	19/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Griffith City Council	Griffith City Council	\$ 260,000.00	17/10/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	City Of Burnside - SA	Bourke Shire Council	\$ 5,000,000.00	N/A	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council	\$ 100,160.00	27/09/2022-2025	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Northern Beaches Council	Hay Shire Council	\$ 1,516,000.00	21/06/2023-2026	No
Round 2	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Federation Council	Federation Council	\$ 200,000.00	05/10/2022-2025	No

Regional Job Creation Fund Unsuccessful Applicants

Round	Applicant Name	Stage	Recipient location (Local Government Area)	Project delivery location (Local Government Area)
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cumberland Council	Port Stephens Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Newcastle City Council	Maitland City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Broken Hill City Council	Broken Hill City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	City Of Salisbury - SA	N/A

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	City of Greater Dandenong - VIC	Cootamundra-gundagai Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Campaspe Shire Council - VIC	Murray River Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Swan Hill Rural City - VIC	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Clarence Valley Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	International - USA	Port Macquarie-hastings Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lane Cove Municipal Council	Armidale Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Byron Shire Council	Sutherland Shire Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Canada Bay Council, City of	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Bellingen Shire Council	Bellingen Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Bathurst Regional Council	Bathurst Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Broken Hill City Council	Broken Hill City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Snowy Valleys Council	Snowy Valleys Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Moree Plains Shire Council	Moree Plains Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Orange City Council	Blayney Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Albury City Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	North Sydney Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Tweed Shire Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Yass Valley Council	Yass Valley Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Willoughby City Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Randwick City Council	N/A

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	City of Gold Coast - QLD	Tweed Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Mid-western Regional Council	Mid-western Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Edward River Council	Edward River Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Goulburn Mulwaree Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Kempsey Shire Council	Kempsey Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cabonne Council	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Mid-western Regional Council	Lithgow Council, City of
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Federation Council	Federation Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Berrigan Shire Council	Berrigan Shire Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Murrumbidgee Council	Murrumbidgee Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Byron Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Orange City Council	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cabonne Council	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Greater Shepparton City Council - VIC	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Gunnedah Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cairns Regional Council - QLD	Gunnedah Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Singleton Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Canterbury Bankstown Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Tweed Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Griffith City Council	Griffith City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Redland City Council - QLD	Goulburn Mulwaree Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	City of Knox - VIC	N/A

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	City of Knox - VIC	Gilgandra Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Brisbane City Council - QLD	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cabonne Council	Cabonne Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hornsby, The Council of the Shire of	Mid-western Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hornsby, The Council of the Shire of	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Forbes Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	North Sydney Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Maitland City Council	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Junee Shire Council	Junee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Gunnedah Shire Council	N/A

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Berrigan Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Mansfield Shire Council - VIC	Balranald Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hilltops Council	Yass Valley Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Hornsby, The Council of the Shire of	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Toowoomba Regional Council - QLD	Narromine Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lismore City Council	Kyogle Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Broken Hill City Council	Broken Hill City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Glen Innes Severn Council	Glen Innes Severn Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Gladstone Regional Council - QLD	Kempsey Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Lismore City Council	Lismore City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Orange City Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at preliminary application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Sutherland Shire Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Whittlesea - VIC	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Snowy Valleys Council	Snowy Valleys Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Knox - VIC	Albury City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Knox - VIC	Albury City Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Forbes Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Hornsby, The Council of the Shire of	Albury City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Leeton Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Dungog Shire Council	Dungog Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Woollahra Municipal Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	N/A
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Brisbane City Council - QLD	Moree Plains Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Canterbury Bankstown Council	Temora Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Hobsons Bay - VIC	Parkes Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Hills Shire Council, The	Narromine Shire Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Woollahra Municipal Council	Walgett Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Clarence Valley Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Lachlan Shire Council	Lachlan Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Orange City Council	Orange City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Northern Beaches Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Ryde, Council of the City of	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Strathfield Municipal Council	Clarence Valley Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Bathurst Regional Council	Bathurst Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Bathurst Regional Council	Bathurst Regional Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Unincorporated - ACT	Goulburn Mulwaree Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Northern Beaches Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-coast Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Uralla Shire Council	Uralla Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Murrumbidgee Council	Leeton Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Murrumbidgee Council	Leeton Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Narrabri Shire Council	Narrabri Shire Council
Round 1	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Hilltops Council	Hilltops Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Gunnedah Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wollondilly Shire Council	Shellharbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Greater Dandenong Council - VIC	Cootamundra-gundagai Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Kingston - VIC	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Brewarrina Shire Council	Brewarrina Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shellharbour City Council	Shellharbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council

Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Willoughby City Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Lachlan Shire Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Griffith City Council	Griffith City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Port Macquarie-hastings Council

Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-western Regional Council	Mid-western Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Orange City Council	Orange City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Port Macquarie-hastings Council	Cowra Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Gunnedah Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Hornsby, The Council of the Shire of	Mid-western Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Forbes Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Gunnedah Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Parkes Shire Council	Parkes Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	City of Greater Geelong - VIC	Moree Plains Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Moreton Bay Regional Council - QLD	Wagga Wagga City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shellharbour City Council	Narrabri Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Bellingen Shire Council	Bellingen Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Newcastle City Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of	Kiama, The Council of the Municipality of
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

RIAF and RJCF data

Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Coffs Harbour City Council	Coffs Harbour City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council	Queanbeyan-palerang Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Sydney, Council of the City of	Dubbo Regional Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Maitland City Council	Maitland City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Mid-coast Council	Mid-Coast Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Campbelltown City Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Brisbane City Council - QLD	Byron Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Singleton Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Round 2	[Redacted]	Unsuccessful at detailed application stage	Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council

Regional Investment Activation Fund

Project delivery location (Local Government Area)	Applicant location (Local Government Area)
Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council
Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Richmond Valley Council	North Sydney Council
Murray River Council	Carrathool Shire Council
Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Dubbo Regional Council	Dubbo Regional Council
Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council
The Hills Shire Council	Northern Beaches Council
Richmond Valley Council	Richmond Valley Council
Oberon Council	Central Coast Council
Leeton Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	Bayside Council
Bathurst Regional Council	City of Sydney
Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Greater Hume Shire Council	Greater Hume Shire Council
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Redland City Council, Qld
Cowra Shire Council	Port Macquarie - Hastings Council
Port Macquarie - Hastings Council	Port Macquarie - Hastings Council
Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Mid-Western Regional Council	Mid-Western Regional Council
Clarence Valley Council	Byron Shire Council
Albury City Council	City of Brisbane, Qld
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	Port Macquarie - Hastings Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
Dubbo Regional Council	Kiama Municipal Council
Ballina Shire Council	Ballina Shire Council
City of Sydney	City of Sydney
Gwydir Shire Council	Gwydir Shire Council

Wagga Wagga City Council	City of Perth, WA
Leeton Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council
Upper Hunter Shire Council	City of Brisbane, Qld
Lismore City Council	Lismore City Council
Singleton Council	City of Sydney
Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
TBC	Muswellbrook shire
Albury City Council	Albury City Council
TBC	Tamworth Regional Council
Armidale Regional Council	Armidale Regional Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Parkes Shire Council	City of Sydney
Berrigan Shire Council	Berrigan Shire Council
Murray River Council	Rural City of Mildura, Vic
TBC	Leeton Shire Council
Tweed Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
TBC	Coolamon Shire Council
Hay Shire Council	Hay Shire Council
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council
Mid-Coast Council	North Sydney Council
TBC	Wollongong City Council
TBC	Central Coast Council
Central Coast Council	Hawkesbury City Council
Richmond Valley Council	City of Brisbane, Qld
Clarence Valley Council	North Sydney Council
Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council
TBC	Maitland City Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
TBC	City of Sydney
Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Parkes Shire Council	City of Perth, WA
TBC	Sutherland Shire
TBC	City of Perth, WA

Singleton Council	Singleton Council
Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council
TBC	Murray River Council
TBC	City of Sydney
Dubbo Regional Council	City of Perth, WA
Walgett Shire Council	Walgett Shire Council
Parkes Shire Council	City of Perth, WA
Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
TBC	City of Melbourne, VIC
Wagga Wagga City Council	Liverpool City Council
Dubbo Regional Council	City of Sydney
Shoalhaven City Council	Shoalhaven City Council
TBC	Lithgow City Council
TBC	City of Sydney
TBC	Lane Cove Municipal Council
Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council
Byron Shire Council	Byron Shire Council
Central Coast Council	Gold Coast City Council, Qld
Upper Hunter Shire Council	City of Newcastle
Murrumbidgee Council	Murrumbidgee Council
TBC	City of Whittlesea, VIC
Cobar Shire Council	Central Coast Council
Lake Macquarie City Council	City of Lake Macquarie
TBC	City of Willoughby
Port Stephens Council	City of Newcastle
Warren Shire Council	Warren Shire
TBC	Inner West Council
TBC	Mornington Peninsula Shire, VIC
Blayney Shire Council	City of Orange
TBC	City of Wollongong
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	Upper Lachlan Shire Council
Cowra Shire Council	Cabonne Shire Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	City of Wagga Wagga
TBC	Central Coast Council
Lismore City Council	Lismore City Council
Tamworth Regional Council	North Sydney Council

Yass Valley Council	Yass Valley Council
Albury City Council	Albury City Council
Cessnock City Council	City of Melbourne, VIC
Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
TBC	Hornsby Shire
Parkes Shire Council	City of Perth, WA
Mid-Western Regional Council	Mid-Western Regional Council
Armidale Regional Council	Byron Shire Council
Forbes Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council
Griffith City Council	City of Griffith
Ballina Shire Council	Northern Beaches Council
Singleton Council	City of Newcastle
Bland Shire Council	Bland Shire Council
TBC	North Sydney Council
TBC	Berrigan Shire Council
Dubbo Regional Council	Unincorporated ACT
Byron Shire Council	Lake Macquarie City Council
Bega Valley Shire Council	City of Melbourne, VIC
Greater Hume Shire Council	Greater Hume Shire Council
Wentworth Shire Council	Wentworth Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Oberon Council	Oberon Council
Central Coast Council	Central Coast Council
TBC	Dubbo Regional Council
Clarence Valley Council	Clarence Valley Council
TBC	City of Wollongong
Snowy Valleys Council	City of Parramatta
Central Coast Council	City of Sydney
Shoalhaven City Council	City of Sydney
TBC	Swan Hill Rural city council, VIC
Cabonne Shire Council	Gladesville - Hunter's Hill Council
TBC	Tweed Shire Council
Bega Valley Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council
Snowy Monaro Regional Council	City of Sydney
TBC	City of Melbourne, VIC
TBC	Brisbane City Council, QLD

Shellharbour City Council	Brisbane City Council, QLD
Albury City Council	City of Maroondah, VIC
Port Stephens Council	City of Sydney
Wagga Wagga City Council	City of Wagga Wagga
Albury City Council	Albury City Council
Coffs Harbour City Council	City of Coffs Harbour
Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council	ACT
Bathurst Regional Council	City of Canterbury-Bankstown
Snowy Valleys Council	Tumut Shire
Bega Valley Shire Council	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Port Stephens Council	Penrith City
Port Stephens Council	Port Stephens Council
Richmond Valley Council	Ballina Shire Council
TBC	Cabonne Shire Council
Port Stephens Council	Penrith City
Port Stephens Council	Penrith City
Wagga Wagga City Council	Alpine Shire Council, VIC
Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council	North Sydney Council
TBC	Province of Bulacan, Philippines
TBC	Sutherland Shire
City of Orange	City of Orange
Armidale Regional Council	Clarence Valley Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Inverell Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council
TBC	Ballina Shire Council
Carrathool Shire	Tweed Shire Council
Maitland City Council	The Hills Shire
Narrandera Shire Council	Cumberland City Council
Wagga Wagga City Council	City of Wagga Wagga
Gilgandra Shire Council	Randwick City Council
TBC	Redland City Council, Qld
Leeton Shire Council	Leeton Shire Council
TBC	City of Canterbury-Bankstown
Albury City Council	Albury City Council
TBC	Greater Dandenong City Council, VIC
TBC	City of Melbourne, VIC

Albury City Council	Albury City Council
Richmond Valley Council	Inner West Council
TBC	Mid-Western Regional Council
TBC	The Hills Shire
TBC	City of Melbourne, VIC
Clarence Valley Council	Noosa Shire Council

Appendix Three – Terms of reference

That the Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development inquire into and report on the performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund, including:

- a) the allocation and administration of these funds
- b) the effectiveness of these funds in achieving their aims
- c) council and agency support for private investor enquiries and proposals in regional areas
- d) impediments to growth in regional NSW, including challenges in the planning system
- e) the effectiveness of the Business Concierge service and a comparison to other States' performance
- f) opportunities for regional and metropolitan councils to work together to promote productivity and economic development
- g) any other related matters.

Appendix Four – Conduct of inquiry

Terms of reference

On 21 August 2023 the Committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into the performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund. The full terms of reference are at [Appendix Three](#).

Calls for submissions

The Committee called for submissions and wrote to key stakeholders inviting them to make a submission. A media release was issued and information about the inquiry posted on the Legislative Assembly's social media accounts.

Deadline for submissions was 27 October 2023, and was extended to 1 December 2023. The Committee received 39 submissions from a range of stakeholders including: regional councils, regional development organisations, joint organisations, NSW Government departments, and successful and unsuccessful applicants of the funds. A list of submissions is at [Appendix Six](#) and copies of the submissions are available on the Committee's [webpage](#).

First public hearing

The Committee held its first public hearing at Parliament House on 8 December 2023. Members and witnesses attended either in person or via videoconference.

Site visits and regional public hearing

At its meeting on 27 November 2023, the Committee resolved to write to the DRNSW to request the LGA details of applicants to the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund. The Committee used the LGA details provided by the DRNSW to inform its decision on appropriate LGAs where the Committee would conduct site visits and hold its regional public hearing.

At its meeting on 8 December 2023, the Committee resolved to hold a second public hearing in Wagga Wagga and use Wagga Wagga as a base to attend site visits from 19 to 21 February 2024.

Regional public hearing

The Committee held a second public hearing at the International Hotel, Wagga Wagga on 20 February 2024. All Members attended in person, and witnesses attended either in person or via videoconference.

A list of witnesses who appeared at the hearings is at [Appendix Seven](#). Transcripts of evidence at the hearings are available on the Committee's [webpage](#).

The Committee thanks all witnesses who participated in the Committee's hearings, and the International Hotel, Wagga Wagga for their assistance in the regional hearing.

Visit to Wagga Wagga, Junee and Bomen – 19 to 21 February 2024

Between Monday 19 February and Wednesday 21 February, the Committee travelled to Wagga Wagga, Junee and Bomen to meet with applicants of the Regional Job Creation Fund and discuss issues raised.

The site visit reports are at [Appendix Five](#).

The Committee thanks all participants who met and assisted the Committee during its regional visit.

Appendix Five – Site visits

Between Monday 19 February and Wednesday 21 February 2024, members of the Committee conducted five site visits, in and around Wagga Wagga, to support its inquiry into the performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund (RIAF) and Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF).

Members visited the following businesses:

- Flip Screen Australia
- Green Grove Organics
- Farm Door Riverina
- Grainline; and
- Bidgee Strawberries and Cream.

The site visits allowed the Committee to hear first-hand from both successful and unsuccessful applicants to RJCF and learn more about the impact of the fund. Members heard about the fund application process, businesses' experience with staff from the DRNSW as well as the impact of the fund. A number of businesses were able to show members the new infrastructure RJCF contributed to. They also explained how the fund helped them to hire more workers and expand their capabilities.

The Committee toured Flip Screen, a manufacturer of screening buckets in Wagga Wagga, and the seven new warehouses being built to accommodate the manufacture of a new product. The Committee heard about the importance of training and apprenticeship programs, for example, Grow Your Own, in addressing labour shortages in regional NSW. Flip Screen also told the Committee that the business would benefit from more Computer Numerical Control (CNC) businesses operating in the area. CNC enables machines to produce items more quickly and precisely through automated computer control of tools.

In Junee, the Committee toured the Junee Licorice and Chocolate factory, operated by Green Grove Organics. Members saw the renovations being made to the business, partly funded by the RJCF, to create new function and hospitality spaces. The Committee also heard about the value of domestic tourism to regional businesses. The business told the Committee that local producers struggle to compete with foreign owned 'mega-corporations', and that the grant process needs to be more efficient to give small and medium businesses the confidence to invest in regional areas.

In Bomen, members visited the Farm Door Riverina (formerly My Chef Cuisine) plant. The Committee was given a tour of the factory and heard about the importance of using local suppliers for sustainability. Members heard about the disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic caused to the businesses' plans to buy equipment and expand operations. They also heard about the impact of external shocks on reaching milestones in the grant process.

When visiting Grainline in Wagga Wagga, members learnt about the businesses' plans for growth and exporting internationally. Grainline told the Committee that since the commencement of the RJCF, they have grown from 42 full time equivalent staff to 74 staff at the completion of the grant. The Committee also heard about the difficulty of keeping

apprentices in the metal-working industry, who might choose to leave their employer to gain more experience in other fields.

The Committee also visited Bidgee Strawberries and Cream, an unsuccessful applicant to the RJCF. The Committee was given a tour of the farm, the café and events space, and the newly constructed warehouse that was their proposed RJCF project. The Committee heard about the challenges the business faced in the grant-writing process and setbacks caused by zoning issues with the local council. The business said that they spent between \$5000 and \$10,000 on the unsuccessful application. They also said that the co-contribution requirement was a challenge for smaller businesses in applying for these funds. Bidgee Strawberries and Cream commented that they would like to see greater transparency in the feedback process for the grants.

A common theme that emerged during the site visits was the importance of flexibility in grants administration. Most businesses expressed concerns with the strict grant requirements of the RIAF and RJCF and stated that grant programs should allow leeway for unexpected economic factors. Most businesses also commented that the application process for RIAF and RJCF was too complicated. Completing an application required a high level of education, hands-on assistance from the staff at the DRNSW, or the resources to hire a professional grant-writer.

Apart from RIAF and RJCF, the Committee also heard about many structural challenges faced by regional businesses including labour attraction and retention, a lack of access to infrastructure, and logistics issues with exporting and distributing goods. Many businesses also mentioned that council regulations and inefficiencies were a major impediment to growth.

The Committee would like to thank the owners and staff of Flip Screen, Green Grove Organics, Farm Door Riverina, Grainline, and Bidgee Strawberries and Cream for hosting the Committee. The Committee is very grateful to them for sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Appendix Six – Submissions

No.	Author
1	University of New England - Faculty of Science, Agriculture, Business and Law
2	City of Newcastle
3	Jamberoo Action Park
4	Confidential
5	SunDrive Solar
6	Regional Development Australia Southern Inland
7	InQuik
8	Department of Regional NSW
9	Countrywide Industries
10	EastCoast
11	Birdon Group
12	Confidential
13	NSW Minerals Council
14	Warrumbungle Shire Council
15	Central NSW Joint Organisation
16	Applied Virtual Simulation
17	Confidential
18	Bega Valley Shire Council
19	Finance Sector Union
20	NSW Farmers' Association
21	Central Coast Council
22	Wollongong City Council
23	City of Ryde Council
24	Timber NSW
25	Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries
26	Broken Hill Distillery
27	Team Spirit Sports
28	Australian Association of Psychologists Inc
29	North Coast Recycling Pty Ltd
30	Narrabri Shire Council
31	NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd
32	Ironbox Pty Ltd

No.	Author
33	Regional Development Australia Illawarra
34	Australasian Agriculture Equities
35	ABC Can (Australian Natural Therapeutics Group)
36	Australian Queen Bee Line
37	Liverpool Plains Shire Council
38	Confidential
39	Charles Sturt University, School of Business

Appendix Seven – Witnesses

8 December 2023

Parliament House, Preston Stanley Room, Sydney, NSW

Witness	Position and Organisation
Mr Andrew Abbey	Mr Andrew Abbey
Dr Ben Mullaney	Director and Chief Executive Officer, InQuik
Mr Matt George	General Manager, Jamberoo Action Park
Mr Rodney Carr	Director, Countrywide Industries
Dr Mohammad Sharif Sharifi	Dr Mohammad Sharif Sharifi
Ms Jenny Bennett	Executive Officer, Central NSW Joint Organisation
Dr Alice Howe	Director, Environment and Planning, Central Coast Council
Ms Carisa Wells	Chief Executive Officer and Director of Regional Development, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland

20 February 2024

International Hotel Wagga Wagga, Wagga Wagga, NSW

Witness	Position and Organisation
Professor Sujana Adapa	Head of UNE Business School, University of New England
Dr Alfred Wong	Senior Lecturer, Charles Sturt University, School of Business
Ms Kathy Rankin	A/Head of Policy and Advocacy, NSW Farmers' Association
Mr John Lowe	Chair – Business, Economics and Trade Committee, NSW Farmers' Association
Dr Maia Schweizer	Chief Commercial Officer, SunDrive Solar
Mr Andrew Oates	Business Advisor, Ironbox Pty Ltd
Mr Graham White	Sales Support Officer, Applied Virtual Simulation
Mr John Welsh	Chief Executive Officer, Applied Virtual Simulation
Mr Jonathan Wheaton	Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Regional NSW

Ms Katrina Carroll	Director Planning, Performance and Portfolio Management, SNSW Business Bureau, Service NSW
Ms Katie Knight	Deputy Secretary, Investment NSW, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade

Appendix Eight – Extracts from minutes

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 2

3.06 pm, 21 July 2023

Videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali, Ms Kaliyanda, Ms Stuart and Mr Williamson

Apologies

Mr Whan (Deputy Chair) and Mr Clancy

Officers present

Rohan Tyler, Alison Buskens, Kate McCorquodale and Nicolle Gill

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda: That the minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2023 be confirmed.

2. ***

3. Discussion of the Committee's forward work plan

The Committee discussed topics for potential inquiry.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That committee staff prepare a briefing note, draft inquiry terms of reference and a draft stakeholder list on the following topic for the Committee's consideration:

- Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

4. ***

5. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 3.41 pm until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 3

2.02 pm, 21 August 2023

Room 1254 Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Whan (Deputy Chair), Mr Clancy, Ms Kaliyanda, Ms Stuart and Mr Williamson

Apologies

Mr Bali

Officers present

Rohan Tyler, Alison Buskens, Kate McCorquodale and Nicolle Gill

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the minutes of the meeting of 21 July 2023 be confirmed.

2. Proposed inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund

The Committee noted the briefing paper on the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund.

The Committee considered adopting an inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund.

The Committee considered an indicative timeline for the Committee's work programme for 2023 to early 2024.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Whan, seconded by Mr Williamson:

- That the Committee conduct an inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund in accordance with the draft terms of reference circulated.
- That the Secretariat circulate a list of stakeholders to members, and that members have 3 business days after receiving that list to provide further input.
- That the Committee call for submissions and advertise the inquiry on the Committee's webpage.
- That the closing date for submission be Friday, 27 October 2023.
- That key stakeholders identified by the Committee be informed of the inquiry and invited to make a submission.
- That the Chair issue a media release and promotional video announcing the inquiry

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Whan, seconded by Ms Kaliyanda: That the Committee write to the Department of Regional NSW to request information on successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund.

3. ***

4. Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 2.19 pm until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 4

2.05 pm, 6 November 2023

Room 1043 Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Ms Kaliyanda, Mr Kirby and Mr Williamson

Apologies

Ms Stuart and Mr Clancy

Officers present

Rohan Tyler, Kate McCorquodale, Abegail Turingan and Yann Pearson

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Bali: That the minutes of the meeting of 21 August 2023 be confirmed.

2. Committee Membership

The Chair reported to the Committee that Mr Steven Whan has been discharged from the Committee and Mr Warren Kirby has been appointed in his place.

3. Election of the Deputy Chair

The Chair conducted the election of the Deputy Chair.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Kirby: That Mr Bali be elected as Deputy Chair of the Committee.

4. Inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund

4.1 Correspondence

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Butler, seconded by Ms Kaliyanda: That the Committee write to the remaining successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Regional Job Creation Fund not yet contacted, inviting them to make a submission to the inquiry.

4.2 Publication of submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Butler, seconded by Ms Kaliyanda:

- That the Committee authorise the publication of submissions Nos 1 to 3, 5 to 11, 13 to 14, 16, and 18 to 23 in full, with standard redactions as set out in the publication table.
- That the Committee authorise the publication of submission No 15 as partially confidential after redacting an image on page 6 that may inadvertently disclose private information.
- That submissions Nos 4, 12 and 17 remain confidential.

4.3 Submission extension requests

The Committee noted and supported that *** had requested an extension to the deadline for making a submission to the inquiry to 1 December 2023.

4.4 Ongoing inquiry plan

The Committee discussed forward planning for the inquiry.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Butler, seconded by Mr Bali: That the Committee extends the deadline for receiving submissions to the inquiry to 1 December 2023.

The Committee discussed potential site visits in February/March 2024, inquiry timelines, and preparations for the public hearing on 8 December 2023.

The Committee agreed to consider witnesses for the public hearing at its next meeting.

5. ***

6. ***

7. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 2.29 pm until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 5

10.06 am, 27 November 2023

Room 1136 Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Mr Clancy, Ms Kaliyanda, Mr Kirby, Ms Stuart and Mr Williamson

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Alison Buskens, Shanshan Guo, Kate McCorquodale, Abigail Turingan and Yann Pearson

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Bali: That the minutes of the meeting of 6 November 2023 be confirmed.

2. Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

2.1 Publication of submissions

Committee considered submissions numbered 24 and 25 for publication.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the Committee authorise publication of submissions numbered 24 and 25 in full, with standard redactions.

2.2 Public hearing witnesses

Committee considered arrangements for public hearings and site visits.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Kirby, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the Committee invite the witnesses listed in Attachment B to attend a public hearing on 8 December 2023 to give evidence to the inquiry into Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the Committee write to the Department of Regional NSW to request the LGA details of applicants to the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund.

3. ***

4. ***

5. **Next Meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 10.18 am until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 6

9.15 am, 8 December 2024

Preston Stanley Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Mr Clancy (via videoconference for post hearing deliberative), Ms Kaliyanda, Mr Kirby, Ms Stuart and Mr Williamson

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Alison Buskens, Shanshan Guo, Kate McCorquodale and Abegail Turingan

1. **Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Bali: That the minutes of the meeting of 27 November 2023 be confirmed.

2. **Correspondence**

Committee noted the correspondence to the Department of Regional NSW sent on 27 November 2023 and the reply received on 8 December 2023.

3. **Publication of submissions**

Committee considered submissions numbered 26 to 37 for publication.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the Committee authorise publication of:

- submissions numbered 26 to 28, 30 to 33, and 35-37 in full, with standard redactions;
- submission numbered 29 as partially confidential with names redacted;
- submission numbered 34 as partially confidential with client names, project details and locations redacted.

4. **Pre-hearing deliberative meeting**

4.1 Procedural resolutions

Resolved on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded Ms Kaliyanda, that:

- the Committee invites the witnesses listed in the notice of the public hearing for Friday, 8 December 2023, as amended, to give evidence in relation to the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund;
- the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 8 December 2023, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly
- the Committee adopt the following process in relation to supplementary questions:
 - Members to email any proposed supplementary questions for the witnesses to the Secretariat by 4 pm, Wednesday 13 December 2023;
 - Secretariat to then circulate all proposed supplementary questions to the Committee, with members to lodge any objections to the questions by 4 pm, Friday 15 December 2023.
- witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions by 4 pm, Friday 19 January 2024.

5. Public hearing: inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9.39 am. Witnesses attended the public hearing in person and via videoconference. The Chair made a short opening statement.

The following witness was admitted:

- Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council, appearing in person, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Dr Ben Mullaney, Director and Chief Executive Officer, InQuik, appearing in person, was affirmed and examined.
- Mr Matt George, General Manager, Jamberoo Action Park, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Clancy joined the proceeding at 11.15 am.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Mr Rodney Carr, Director, Countrywide Industries, appearing in person, was sworn and examined.
- Dr Mohammad Sharif Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries, appearing in person, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Ms Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer, Central NSW Joint Organisation, appearing via videoconferences, was affirmed and examined.
- Dr Alice Howe, Director, Environment and Planning, Central Coast Council, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was then admitted:

- Ms Carisa Wells, Chief Executive Officer and Director, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, appearing via videoconference, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 12.50 pm.

Mr Bali left the meeting at 12.50 pm.

6. Post-hearing deliberative

The Chair opened the meeting at 12.52 pm.

6.1 Procedural resolutions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Kirby, that:

- the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website;
- Future work plan and secondary public hearing.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Kirby, that the Committee:

- conduct a public hearing and possible site inspections in regional NSW in early 2024 for the inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund;
- seek funding approval from the Speaker to undertake a regional hearing and site inspections in 2024 as part of the inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund
- authorise the Chair and Committee staff to make arrangements for the regional hearing and possible site inspections.

Committee discussed potential locations for second public hearing and site visits.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Ms Kaliyanda, that the Committee hold a second public hearing at Wagga Wagga and use Wagga Wagga as a base to attend site visits from 19 to 21 February 2024.

7. General business

Committee discussed local government areas of successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Regional Job Creation Fund.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Mr Kirby, that the Committee secretariat prepare a graphic representation of the data received from the Department of Regional NSW to show the distribution of successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Regional Job Creation Fund.

Ms Stuart left the meeting at 12.58 pm

8. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 1.01 pm until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING 7

9.02 AM, 20 February 2024

The International Hotel Wagga Wagga and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Mr Clancy, Ms Kaliyanda, Mr Kirby, Ms Stuart and Mr Williamson

Apologies

None received

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Shanshan Guo, Kate McCorquodale, Abegail Turingan (via videoconference) and Yann Pearson

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the minutes of the meeting of 8 December 2023 be confirmed.

**2. Inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund
Pre-hearing deliberative**

2.1 Correspondence

Committee noted the following correspondence received from:

- Department of Regional NSW on 21 December 2023
- Service NSW on 7 February 2023

2.2 Publication of submissions

Committee considered submissions numbered 38 to 39 for publication.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee authorise publication of:

- submission numbered 38 as confidential to the Committee;
- submission numbered 39 in full, with standard redactions.

2.3 Publication of answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions

Committee considered answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions for publication.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee authorise publication of:

- Answers to questions taken on notice in full, with standard redactions from the following witnesses:
 - Regional Development Australia, Southern Inland.
 - InQuik.
 - Central NSW Joint Organisation.
 - Jamberoo Action Park.
 - NSW Minerals Council.
- Answers to supplementary questions in full, with standard redactions from the following witnesses:
 - Australian Food and Pharmaceutical Industries.
 - Countrywide Industries.
 - Central NSW Joint Organisation.
 - Jamberoo Action Park.
 - Central Coast Council.
 - InQuik.
 - Regional Development Australia, Southern Inland.

2.4 Procedural resolutions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded Mr Kirby: That:

- the Committee invites the witnesses listed in the notice of the public hearing for Tuesday, 20 February 2024, to give evidence in relation to the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund;
- the Committee authorise the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 20 February 2024, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly;
- the Committee adopt the following process in relation to supplementary questions:
- Members to email any proposed supplementary questions for the witnesses to the Secretariat by 4 pm, Tuesday 27 February 2024;

- Secretariat to then circulate all proposed supplementary questions to the Committee.
- witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 10 business days of the date on which the questions are sent to the witnesses.

2.5 Site visits

Resolved on the motion of Ms Kaliyanda, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee

- visit Flip Screen Australia Pty Ltd, Bidgee Strawberries and Cream, Green Grove Organics, Farm Door and Grainline outlined in the attached site visit schedule for the inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund.
- authorise the Chair to send thank-you letters to Flip Screen Australia Pty Ltd, Bidgee Strawberries and Cream, Green Grove Organics, Farm Door and Grainline.

2.6 Public hearing – Wagga Wagga: inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9.11 am. Witnesses attended the public hearing in person and via videoconference. The Chair made a short opening statement.

The following witnesses were admitted:

- Dr Alfred Wong, Senior Lecturer Charles Sturt University School of Business, appearing in person, was sworn and examined.
- Professor Sujana Adapa, Head of University of New England School of Business, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Mr John Lowe, Chair of Business, Economics and Trade Committee, NSW Farmers' Association, appearing in person, was affirmed and examined.
- Ms Kathy Rankin, A/Head of Policy and Advocacy, NSW Farmers' Association, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Mr Andrew Oates, Business Advisor, Ironbox Pty Ltd, appearing in person was sworn and examined.
- Dr Maia Schweizer, Chief Commercial Officer, SunDrive Solar, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

- Mr John Welsh, Chief Executive Officer, Applied Virtual Simulation, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.
- Mr Graham While, Sales Support Officer, Applied Virtual Simulation, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were then admitted:

- Mr Jonathan Wheaton, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Regional NSW, appearing in person, was affirmed and examined.
- Ms Katrina Carroll, Director, Planning Performance and Portfolio Management, Service NSW, Department of Customer Service, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.
- Ms Katie Knight, Deputy Secretary, Investment NSW, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade, appearing via videoconference, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 12.17 pm.

Post-hearing deliberative

2.7 Procedural resolutions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Kirby: That:

- the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website.

3. ***

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 12.31 pm until a time and date to be determined.

Post site-visit deliberative

The Chair opened the meeting at 5.58 pm.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Bali, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee write to the Department of Regional NSW:

- inquiring into details of the Regional Job Creation Fund application outcomes.
- requesting the publication of anonymous data of Regional Job Creation Fund and Regional Investment Activation Fund applications.

The Chair closed the meeting at 5.59 pm.

MINUTES OF MEETING 8

9.00 am, 28 March 2024

Room 1043, Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Clancy (via videoconference), Ms Kaliyanda, Ms Stuart

Apologies

Mr Bali (Deputy Chair) and Mr Williamson

Officers present

Stephanie Mulvey, Shanshan Guo, Kate McCorquodale, Abegail Turingan and Yann Pearson

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2024 be confirmed.

2. ***

3. Inquiry into the Regional Investment Activation Fund and Regional Job Creation Fund

3.1 Correspondence

Committee noted the correspondence received from the Department of Regional NSW received on 12 March 2024 and circulated to Committee members on 14 March 2024 by email.

Committee noted that the Chair forwarded the relevant section of the correspondence from the Department of Regional NSW received on 12 March 2024 to the chief of staff of The Hon. Tara Moriarty with Committee approval.

Mr Kirby jointed the proceeding at 9.12 am via videoconference.

4. ***

5. General business

Resolved on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the Committee write to Bidgee Strawberries & Cream on the opportunity to seek feedback from the Department of Regional NSW regarding their application to the Regional Job Creation Fund.

6. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 9.19 am until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING 9

10.04 AM, 27 May 2024

Room 1254, Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Mr Clancy, Mr Kirby, Ms Stuart, Ms Kaliyanda (all via videoconference)

Apologies

Mr Williamson

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Shanshan Guo, Naomi Parkinson, Oliver Sinclair, Abegail Turingan (via videoconference) and Yann Pearson

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the minutes of the meeting of 28 March 2024 be confirmed.

2. Inquiry into the Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

2.1 Publication of answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Kirby, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee accept the responses to the following questions taken on notice at the public hearing on 20 February 2024 and supplementary questions, as listed in the agenda, and publish them on its website with contact details redacted.

- Department of Regional NSW, answers to questions on notice, received 26 March 2024.
- SunDrive Solar, answers to questions on notice, received 7 March 2024.
- Applied Virtual Simulation, answers to supplementary questions, received 19 March 2024.
- Charles Sturt University, answers to supplementary questions, received 8 March 2024.
- Department of Regional NSW, answers to supplementary questions, received 26 March 2024.
- Investment NSW, answers to supplementary questions, received 20 March 2024.
- Ironbox Pty Ltd, answers to supplementary questions, received 9 March 2024.
- Service NSW, answers to supplementary questions, received 11 March 2024.
- SunDrive Solar, answers to supplementary questions, received 7 March 2024.
- University of New England, answers to supplementary questions, received 19 March 2024.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the secretariat write to NSW Farmers' Association requesting a response to the supplementary questions by 15 June 2024.

3. ***

4. ***

5. **Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 10.19 am until a time and date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING 10

11.07 am, 17 June 2024

Room 1254, Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Mr Butler (Chair) (in person), Mr Bali (Deputy Chair), Ms Kaliyanda, Mr Kirby, Ms Stuart, Mr Williamson (all via videoconference)

Apologies

Mr Clancy

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Shanshan Guo, Naomi Parkinson, Oliver Sinclair, Abegail Turingan, and Yann Pearson

Recording of deliberative meetings

Resolved on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Kirby: That the Committee agree to record the meeting for the purposes of Committee staff preparing the minutes and report amendments, and that the recording be deleted when the report is tabled.

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Kirby, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the minutes of the meeting of 27 May 2024 be confirmed.

2. Inquiry into the Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Kirby, seconded by Mr Williamson: That the Committee accept NSW Farmers' Association's response to supplementary questions, and publish it on the website with contact details redacted.

2.1 Consideration of Chair's draft

Committee considered the Chair's draft report. Discussion ensued.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali, seconded by Ms Kaliyanda: That:

- the Committee defer the consideration of the report to a date to be determined in August 2024.

- Committee members circulate any proposed amendments to the entire Committee and Committee staff no later than one week prior to the report deliberative meeting date.

3. ***

4. ***

5. **Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 11.33am until a time and date to be determined.

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF MEETING 12

4.01 pm, 5 August 2024

Room 1043, Parliament House and via videoconference

Members present

Roy Butler (Chair), Stephen Bali (Deputy Chair) (via videoconference), Richie Williamson, Warren Kirby (via video conference), Charishma Kaliyanda (via videoconference), Maryanne Stuart (via videoconference), Justin Clancy

Officers present

Kieran Lewis, Shanshan Guo, Oliver Sinclair, Naomi Parkinson, Abegail Turingan, Yann Pearson

Resolution permitting recording of video meeting

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the Committee agree to record the meeting for the purposes of Committee staff preparing the minutes and report amendments, and that the recording be deleted when the report is tabled.

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy, seconded by Ms Stuart: That the minutes of the meeting of 5 July 2024 be confirmed.

2. ***

3. ***

4. Inquiry into the Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Williamson, seconded by Mr Bali: That the Committee consider the report *in globo*.

The Committee considered the Chair's draft report.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That the following paragraphs be amended:

- Paragraph 3.19 be amended by omitting the words "Therefore, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

provide accessible and clear program guidelines in plain English and the top 10 languages spoken in NSW."

- Paragraph 3.21 be amended by omitting the words "To ensure clarity and accessibility of grant guidelines, the Committee recommends the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development provide accessible and clear program guidelines in plain English and other languages."
- Recommendation 6 be amended by omitting the words "the top 10 languages spoken in NSW." and insert instead the words "make available translation services or assistance in foreign languages where required."

The Committee agreed to the amendments.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That the following paragraph be inserted after paragraph 3.23:

- "When Government ceases to fund a grant program, there needs to be a sensitivity to the current applicants progressing through the application. Especially where funds have been spent on the application in good faith, on an expectation that application that would otherwise be eligible will be assessed for funding."

The Committee agreed to the amendment.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That paragraph 4.32 be amended by omitting:

- "It is unclear at this time whether the Trust will fund projects that would achieve similar outcomes to RIAF and RJCF".

The Committee agreed to the amendment.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That the "case study" after paragraph 4.32 be amended by inserting the words:

- "The Committee understands that DRNSW has been in contact with SunDrive and is prepared to have on-going conversations with other organisations to support their aspirations in NSW." after "Since the discontinuation of RIAF, SunDrive has been awaiting further details about alternative programs that might support a similar outcome."

The Committee agreed to the amendment.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Stuart, seconded by Mr Kirby:

1. That the draft report as amended, including the cover page and its photo, be the report of the Committee and that it be signed by the Chair and presented to the House.
2. That the Chair and Committee staff be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors.
3. That, once tabled, the report be posted on the Committee's webpage.

The Committee agreed that the Chair write to the Secretary of the Premier's Department, to encourage the Government to ensure all future funding related information is made available in way that complies with relevant international accessibility standards.

5. ***

6. **Next Meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 4.36pm until the 17 October 2024.