



November 2021

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Welcome from the Chair

Dear Northern Inlanders,

It's hard to believe that Christmas is now less than a month away, and another year is almost over.

Doing our Christmas shopping locally is a great opportunity to support our local businesses, as many are still doing it tough. There are many local products and experiences in our region that make ideal gifts for your family and friends. Why Leave Town gift cards are also available for many of the communities in our region, and they can be redeemed at participating local businesses.

Small business owners have faced many challenges over the last couple of years, which have taken a toll. It is vital that small businesses owners take care of their mental health and wellbeing during this time of uncertainty and stress. The new Ahead for Business digital hub is a great project and provides a wide range of information and tools to help small business owners.

Being able to fill vacant positions continues to be a challenge for businesses in our region. Initiatives to provide skilled workers, such as the Skilled Work Regional 491 Visa, are crucial for the viability and growth of our local businesses. Four years ago, we launched our Skilled Migration Jobs Board initiative. Since then, it has continued to grow to more than 1,600 members and has connected many skilled migrants with employers. I encourage employers experiencing skill shortages to utilise this free service.

Regards,

Russell Stewart
Chair

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Connecting Employers with Skilled Workers

It has been four years since the launch of our [Northern Inland Skilled Migration Jobs Board](#). With over 1,600 active members and numerous success stories, it continues to be an important tool for employers in our region.

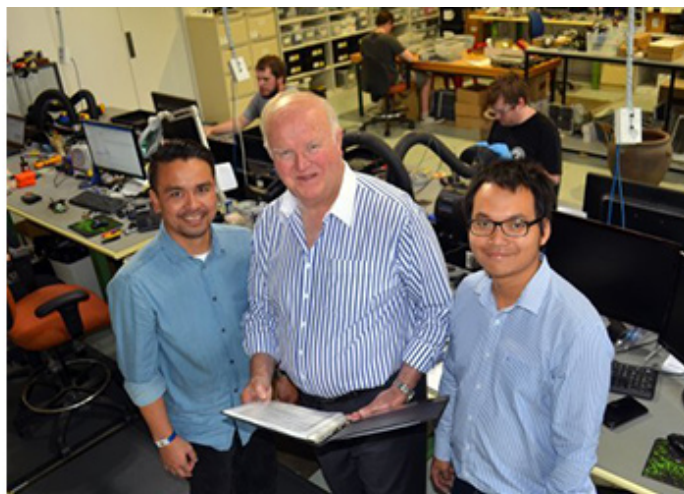
As the Regional Certifying Body for the 491 Skilled Work Regional Visa, and its predecessor, the 489 Visa, we play a key role in attracting migrants with skills that our region's employers need. Our Skilled Migration Jobs Board builds upon this and helps connect employers with the Skilled Migrants in the region.

"The skilled migrants who have come to our region are highly skilled individuals who have a lot to provide for our businesses and communities. To receive a 491 Visa, they have to pass a range of tests, including high levels of English and tertiary qualifications. These people, and their families, have committed to being part of our communities and will be here for several years, working towards obtaining permanent residency." said our Skilled Migration Officer, Gary Fry.

The jobs board is a free service for employers and skilled migrants. Employers are encouraged to utilise the ability to post details of their available positions within the group. Employing a skilled migrant does not require any additional commitment or paperwork from employers, with employment conditions and payroll being the same as Australian citizens. Further [information about the 491 Visa for employers](#) is available on our website. We also have a range of [Skilled Migration case study videos](#) that demonstrate the program's

potential for employers and skilled migrants.

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Supply Chain Benchmark Data to Help Businesses

The [Supply Chain Benchmarking Dashboard](#) is a joint project between the CSIRO and the Australian Government which provides detailed and interactive modelling of Australian transport and logistics supply chains. This newly available data captures Australia's freight and supply chain performance for road and rail. It has the potential to help freight operators and the businesses they support to improve their operations, save on costs and grow as our economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.



The dashboard covers 130 commodities and uses data taken from 65% of road and 95% of rail freight trips over the last five years to outline:

- Freight task costs and value, including cost per payload tonne or kilometre
- Travel distances and durations
- Supply chain movements between businesses

Helping freight operators and businesses to understand freight and logistics costs better and evaluate freight performance across the network will help drive productivity and efficiency gains across various sectors.

"The more informed industries and businesses are, the better they perform," said Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce. "It provides industry with a comprehensive understanding of Australian supply chain performance that we can benchmark against international comparators to drive improvements and reduce costs across supply chains."

"From grains and construction materials to apples to zinc, the dashboard shows how we get regional exports to port, goods to market and supplies to communities across the nation. Access to these insights also provides exciting opportunities for research, cost-efficiencies and targeted planning, improving the overall performance of Australia's freight system."

Future planned developments of the [Supply Chain Benchmarking Dashboard](#) include adding maritime and air freight data and more commodities.

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Give Twice by Buying Local This Christmas

Christmas is just around the corner, and as many of us finalise our Christmas lists for family and friends, it provides a unique opportunity to give twice. By buying locally, you can share some of the fantastic products and experiences our region offers while also supporting our local businesses, which is particularly important as many are still doing it tough.

If you would like to give a gift that provides a great range of choices for the recipient, consider giving a [Why Leave Town local gift card](#). Created in 2010 by Narrabri locals Ashley Watt and Justin Smith and now available for over 70 communities, these gift cards are redeemable at participating local businesses. This innovative idea was the Retail, Tourism and Leisure category winner at our [Northern Inland Innovation Awards in 2015](#).

Why Leave Town gift cards are available for the following communities in the Northern Inland:

- [Armidale](#)
- [Glen Innes](#)
- [Gwydir](#)
- [Gunnedah](#)
- [Moree Plains](#)
- [Narrabri](#)



New Funding for Unsealed Roads

Early this month, the Federal Government announced \$150 million of funding under the Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot Program, targeting unsealed roads in remote Australia.

Maintaining the many kilometres of local roads in our region is often a difficult task for Councils due to the high cost and low cost-benefit ratios for funding. This new program will offer councils between 80% and 100% funding to upgrade unsealed roads and improve safety. Works will include resurfacing, removing dangerous corners and managing vegetation.

"This is not about sealing roads; it is about making them safer. It is about putting down gravel to stop parents getting bogged in the rain when they drive their kids to school; it is about removing dangerous corners. Many of these remote roads haven't been touched since the Great Depression," said Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce.

"There are 2.2 [road related] deaths per 100,000 people in the major cities; 10 deaths per 100,000 in regional areas; and 25.1 deaths per 100,000 in remote areas. Our regional towns are the lifeblood of our nation, and every Australian deserves safe and efficient roads regardless of where they live. It is critical we ensure everyone has equitable access to local community centres including schools and medical care and that citizens are not cut off from their local townships due to the condition of roads."

The guidelines for the new program are expected to be released by the end of the year and will target unsealed roads that are more than 20km long. The Australian Government will work with local councils and state and territory jurisdictions to identify projects for funding under the new commitment.

Support for the Mental Health of Small Business

Developed by Everymind with funding from the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, the [Ahead for Business](#) digital hub for small businesses provides a wide range of information and tools. The digital hub includes various new features to assist small businesses and those who support them to take action on their mental health and wellbeing.



"Being a small-business owner comes with a unique set of pressures and responsibilities such as isolation, financial stress and workload pressure," said Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Michaelia Cash. "We are also seeing the enormous impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having, with many small businesses forced to close their doors and facing uncertainty about their future. Now, more than ever, we are reminded how vital it is that we help small businesses manage their mental health. Providing access to trusted information in this difficult time is crucial."

The digital hub includes:

- **Interactive toolkits** - Designed with small business owners and policy makers in mind, these toolkits provide practical guidance on how to support small business owners and how small business owners can make the most of their existing networks.
- **Adverse events spotlight** - A centralised hub of support, information and resources for small business owners and those who support them to assist in navigating adverse events like COVID-19, drought and bushfires.
- **Voices and stories from small business owners** - A blog space featuring the voices and stories from small business owners across multiple settings and industries.
- **Personalised dashboard** - A secure, private portal where small business owners can save resources, results and information and track their progress over time.
- **Connect and chat online** - Access an anonymous, peer-focused online forum featuring topics and issues that matter to small business owners.

- **Directory of support** - A section which connects to service providers and organisations that provide mental health, business and industry support for small business owners.
- **Identify your stressors** - Access a range of digital tools and plans to identify personal and business stress points and understand current mental health and wellbeing status, including personalised resources.
- **Tailored multimedia resources** - A series of podcasts, videos and case studies designed to empower small business owners, and those who support them, to take action on their mental health and wellbeing.

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Featured Grants and Funding Opportunities

Below are some featured grants and funding opportunities from the multitude of open grants listed in our [Grants and Funding Opportunities Database](#) on our website. Our website is updated weekly with new listings and updates and all are applicable to our region, so it is a great resource if you are looking for funding for a specific project.

You can also sign up to our free Business and Infrastructure Funding Opportunities and the Community Grants and Award Programs newsletters through the simple form located in the footer of our website, www.rdani.org.au, to receive monthly summaries of current grants.

Recycling Modernisation Fund

Closes: 31st of January 2022

Value: \$10,000 to \$1 Million

Run By: Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Managing waste in regional and remote locations presents a range of additional challenges including isolation through seasonal weather changes and a lack of connection to major roads or towns. These challenges mean that regional and remote areas often lack kerbside waste collection and access to recycling and remanufacturing centres.

A key target of the 2019 National Waste Policy Action Plan is to achieve an 80 per cent average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030. The National Action Plan recognises that to achieve this target, regional and remote areas require better access to waste management and processing capabilities.

To help reach this target, the Australian Government will co-fund additional projects under RMF that increase the sorting, processing, and manufacturing or remanufacturing capacity of regional and remote locations. Co-investment for these projects will be delivered through the National Partnership on Recycling Infrastructure (NPRI) and existing terms and conditions for funding under the NPRI will continue to apply for these projects.

Tourism Product Development Fund – Refresh and Renew

Closes: 9th of December 2021

Value: Up to \$30,000

Run By: Destination NSW

This fund is available to businesses based in regional NSW that operate a medium size accommodation property i.e. more than 10 rooms and less than 100 rooms. Grants are intended to assist the accommodation provider improve their facilities and accommodation to better meet consumer expectations with particular emphasis on addressing issues that have been identified by consumers through their feedback.

Work could include, but is not limited by:

- Fresh paint
- New linens
- Upgrades to the reception area
- New beds
- Soft furnishings
- Awnings or shade structures to expand all-weather outdoor dining/seating
- Improved Wi-Fi
- Contactless customer service technologies, such as, keyless entry and automated check-in.

Recreational Fishing Trusts - Habitat Action Grants

Closes: 10th of December 2021 - 5:00 pm

Value: Up to \$40,000

Run By: NSW Department of Primary Industries

All money raised by the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee paid by recreational fishers is placed into the Recreational Fishing Trusts and spent on improving recreational fishing in NSW. The Habitat Action Grant program is a devolved grant program directing money raised from the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee toward projects that improve local fish habitats across NSW. Rehabilitation of fish habitat provides long-term sustainable benefits for native fish stock and in turn provides substantial benefits for NSW recreational fishers.

Anyone who is interested in rehabilitating fish habitat in NSW can apply for a Habitat Action Grant including individual recreational fishers, fishing clubs and organisations, educational institutions, councils, community groups, individuals and natural resource managers. Joint applications are also encouraged.

Habitat rehabilitation projects which may be funded include:

- removal or modification of barriers to fish passage
- rehabilitation of riparian lands (river banks, wetlands, mangrove forests, saltmarsh)
- re-snagging waterways with timber structure
- removal of exotic vegetation from waterways and replace with native species
- bank stabilisation works

Matching funding is a requirement for funding; however, this does not need to be a cash contribution.

Regional Australia Microgrid Pilots Program

Closes: 31st of December 2026 or until expended

Value: \$1 Million to \$5 Million

Run By: Australian Government: Australian Renewable Energy Agency

The Regional Australia Microgrid Pilots Program (the Program) aims to support pilot projects for microgrids in Regional Australia that:

- Have demonstrated Project viability through a Feasibility Study.
- Include the deployment of equipment and technology solutions that enable the coordinated use of distributed renewable energy technologies and the microgrid demonstration.
- Demonstrate improved resilience and reliability of microgrids in regional areas; and
- Demonstrate capability of resolving one or more of the remaining barriers to final investment and full deployment of microgrid solutions.

Small Business Month Event Grants

Closes: 10th of December 2021

Value: Up to \$3,500

Run By: NSW Government

Grants of up to \$2,500 for local councils and \$3,500 for chambers of commerce, industry associations and not-for-profit groups are available to help them organise events for the fifth NSW Small Business Month in March 2022.

The grants can be used to help host activities for business communities across the state from 1 to 31 March 2022.

Applicants must design and produce an activity that support small businesses in their local area and aligns to our 2022 theme 'Rebuild, Recharge, Renew'. Some suggested categories of activities include

- Focusing on your Customers
- Working with Digital Technology
- Leading your Team
- Managing Money
- Branding and Marketing
- Growing your Business
- Upskilling your Staff
- Creating New Products and Services
- Recruiting the Right Staff
- Maintaining Mentally Healthy Workplaces, and
- Building your Supply Chain.

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An Australian Government Initiative