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RDA NORTHERN RIVERS WELCOMES BUDGET COMMITMENT TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

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Don Page Chairman of Regional Development Australia in the Northern Rivers today welcomed the Commonwealth Budget and in particular the continued support for the RDA Committees program.

"We are happy that we can continue our initiatives to strengthen the Northern Rivers economy and drive job opportunities for the community"

Along with the ongoing commitment to the Regional Development Australia Committee program, the Budget also provides a boost to funding for regional infrastructure and continued support to strengthening regional communities.

This includes an ongoing commitment and additional \$200 million to the Building Better Regions infrastructure fund, bringing the total funding to \$497 million.

Alex Smith CEO of RDA Northern Rivers commented that " it is important that the Commonwealth regional development initiatives continue to underpin the Northern Rivers economy.

"Our projects and programs in infrastructure and industry support will continue to add to the resilience of the Northern Rivers.

"In particular our close working relationship with Local Councils to act as one of their voices to the Commonwealth and the NSW Government will continue to deliver on funding programs for the benefit of the whole Northern Rivers Community" he said.

Highlights from the budget that affect regional development include the continuation and boost to the Building Better Regions Fund and a third round of the Stronger Regional Communities program, with \$22.5 million available in 2017-18.

Other highlights are

- *\$9.1 million for Medicare funded psychological services via telehealth, providing better access to Medicare funded psychological services for rural and remote locations.*
- *A process for Public Sector decentralisation to create local jobs, enhance career paths, increased economic diversification and the stimulation of regional economic growth.*

- *\$15 million for regional study hubs to improve access to higher education in regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *\$24 million for Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships to support 1,200 regional and remote students to undertake STEM studies*

- ***A Plan for Manufacturing in Regional Australia to create the conditions for investment in manufacturing industries that generate employment in rural, regional and outer suburban areas.***

(ENDS)

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