Cross Border Commissioner

Strategic Priorities 2025-26

Government of South Australia
Cross Border Commissioner

Cross Border Commissioner

Vision
Thriving and resilient cross border communities.

Purpose
Support improved access to, and seamless delivery of, government services and infrastructure for cross border residents and businesses.

Approach
We will foster an engaged cross border community, which has their value and challenges recognised.

Working with all tiers of government, service providers, residents and businesses we will:

- Identify and resolve barriers to economic development.
- Advocate for simplified regulations to support business growth and labour mobility.
- Facilitate access to services and improve planning for future infrastructure and service requirements.
- Ensure cross border communities are considered when new policies and regulations are developed.
- Build strong, respectful relationships with neighbouring jurisdictions for shared outcomes.

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Premier's Foreword

Our border communities are the beating heart of South Australia's regional life—vibrant, interconnected, and full of promise.

Home to over 109,000 residents who live, work, and play across our five borders, these communities collectively contribute significantly to the state, representing more than a fifth of South Australia's regional population. From the economic vitality of the Green Triangle to the iconic Outback and the Murray River Tri-State zone, the cross border regions are a tapestry of innovation, culture, and collaboration.

Recognising the critical nature of cross border matters, the South Australian Government established the Office of the Cross Border Commissioner under the *Cross Border Commissioner Act 2022 (SA)* as part of its election commitments.

The Cross Border Commissioner plays a crucial role in navigating the complexities of relationships, ensuring that South Australians living, working, and doing business near our borders have a voice and a champion for their interests. This strategic plan outlines a bold vision for addressing the challenges faced by border communities while unlocking the potential for shared growth and cooperation.

From improving access to essential services, streamlining regulatory processes, and fostering economic development, this plan is grounded in a commitment to equity, fairness, and opportunity. It reflects the Commissioner's dedication to building partnerships that transcend borders and deliver tangible benefits to all South Australians.

As Premier, I am proud to support this vital work. Together, we will ensure that South Australia continues to lead the way in building collaborative and inclusive relationships that strengthen our communities and drive our shared future forward.

Hon Peter Malinauskas MP
Premier of South Australia

South Australia's Cross Border Communities

Key Attributes

109,613
POPULATION

$7.01B
IN GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

55,441
JOBS

12
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

11,585
LOCAL BUSINESSES

$6.017B
IN EXPORTS

Note: Only population data has been included for cross border areas of Outback Communities Authority, Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and Maralinga Tjarutja.

Our cross border communities also support major transport, water and electricity infrastructure corridors to all neighbouring jurisdictions including:

- Dukes Highway from Melbourne to Adelaide.
- Princes Highway and Glenelg River Road linking the Limestone Coast to the Port of Portland.
- Sturt Highway from Adelaide to Mildura and Wagga Wagga.
- Eyre Highway from Adelaide to Perth.
- Barrier Highway from Adelaide to Broken Hill.
- Stuart Highway from Adelaide to Darwin.
- The Strzelecki Track which is currently being sealed, to link Port Augusta to Outback Queensland.

Image credit: South Australian Tourism Commission

Acknowledgement of country

The Office of the Cross Border Commissioner acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to country and commit to working with the First Nations People of the cross border communities.

Strategic Context

Establishing a cross border function was championed by local MPs and the Limestone Coast Local Government Association to elevate the unique challenges and opportunities within cross border communities.

In response, the Office of the Cross Border Commissioner was established under the *Cross Border Commissioner Act 2022 (SA)*, with the inaugural Cross Border Commissioner appointed in 2023. The current Commissioner is based in Mount Gambier, and is part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

While the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the complexities facing cross border communities, it also highlighted the ability of governments to work collaboratively on cross border matters. With Commissioner roles newly established in South Australia and Queensland, joining Victoria and New South Wales, there is a unique opportunity to explore a synchronised approach across Australia's border communities and align initiatives to deliver a seamless national economy.

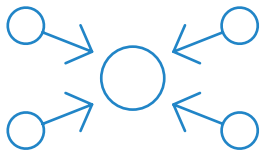

Image credit: South Australian Tourism Commission

Strategic Context

The legislated functions of the Cross Border Commissioner include:

- Facilitating collaboration between governments and service providers to address issues involving cross border communities.
- Working and engaging with all tiers of government, businesses and the community to ensure the needs of cross border communities are considered in the development and implementation of policy, procedures and legislation.
- Identifying key barriers for economic development in the cross border regions.
- Advocating for a simplified regulatory environment for business growth and labour mobility in the cross border regions.
- Facilitating better access to services for cross border communities by working with other jurisdictions and service providers to improve planning for and access to a range of education, justice, health and community services for those communities.
- Updating and informing cross border communities and businesses on issues and progress.

The Commissioner's strategic priorities will be updated annually, reflecting a deliberate, transparent and flexible approach to delivering outcomes on cross border matters.

Image credit: Adam Bruzzone

Key Focus Areas

Workforce skills and education

Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce is a major challenge for regional communities that rely on it for economic and social development. Supporting labor mobility through mutual recognition of occupational licenses and accreditation enables cross border operations, business growth, and reduces unnecessary red tape. Making lifelong learning more accessible and investing in education and training are key to securing the social and economic future of cross border communities.

Areas in focus:

- Explore the use of mutual recognition of qualifications/ accreditations.
- Assist agencies in their efforts to attract in demand skills.
- Advocate for equitable access to training and education opportunities.
- Examine skills mobility and enabling policy settings.

Integrated programs, service and infrastructure planning

A seamless approach to service delivery will benefit cross border communities. In the field of healthcare, there are opportunities to improve planning and delivery of services and build a cross border system with a shared workforce. Opportunities to improve alignment of policing and child protection arrangements in cross border communities will also be explored. In the area of infrastructure, collaboration will continue under existing mechanisms including the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan.

Areas in focus:

- Help agencies and communities advocate for access to health services and integrated health service planning.
- Support infrastructure planning focusing on opportunities in freight, transport and energy transmission, planning and digital connectivity.

Image credit:
South Australian Tourism Commission

Key Focus Areas

Ease of doing business and promoting economic outcomes

The Commissioner will focus on cross border economic precincts including the Murray River tri-state area, the Green Triangle and the Outback by supporting business development, tourism marketing, and seamless policy settings to deliver greater economic returns. Businesses in cross border regions inherently factor in multiple jurisdictions and systems, and improvement in seamless government processes will support the ease of doing business. Current collaborative initiatives including the Cross Border Industry Taskforce, supported by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (NSW) and Tri-State Economic Zone Working Group (supported by Regional Development Australia and Regional Development Victoria) provide a catalyst to align industry needs and government initiatives.

Areas in focus include:

- Examine options to streamlining occupational licensing.
- Communicate a clear understanding of different economic and policy settings in key industries including forestry, agriculture and manufacturing.
- Examine the opportunities for deemed consent where businesses have achieved registration in a neighbouring jurisdiction for specific functions.

Resilient and connected communities

Cross border communities already collaborate across government services to achieve proactive outcomes in emergency management events, national resource management and matters relating to social justice. By supporting key emergency services agencies in embracing a cohesive approach to incident management and ongoing training and skill development we will continue to build a highly skilled staff and volunteer base. There are opportunities to maximise government and business management of bio-security and waste management for greater environmental and economic outcomes through alignment of programming and resources.

Areas in focus include:

- Partner with leading agencies to ensure consistency of cross border policing and justice settings.
- Assist in advocating for seamless access to child protection services.
- Support mutually beneficial biosecurity measures to address emerging risks.
- Identify practical solutions to cross border issues in emergency management with a particular focus on collaborative recovery efforts.

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Deliverables

The work of the Office of the Cross Border Commissioner is designed around four key determinants, developed and executed contemporaneously. In the development of these priorities the current Commissioner has undertaken over 250 specific visits to understand a wide range of community, business and industry perspectives:

Genuine engagement with all stakeholders in cross border communities, from individuals to business owners and leaders in education, health, agriculture and transport, to identify cross border issues. This includes ongoing forums with key stakeholders in health services, tourism and local government. It also includes developing structured engagement mechanisms to continually and transparently confirm that the Commissioner's work is aligned with community need.

Developing a robust approval environment with our neighbouring jurisdictions. The ability to work collaboratively with our five neighbours, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory will be essential to achieving seamless cross border interfaces. The recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) executed between the State Government and Victoria to support cross border communities, alongside the development of an MoU with New South Wales will be key to enabling this approval environment. A priority for 2025-26 will be developing agreed Priority Focus Areas with Victoria and New South Wales Governments and executing actions under these Memoranda.

Deliver on the core functions through case management, issues and opportunity monitoring and providing regional intelligence and situational analysis to key decision makers. We will deliver this work through efficient, effective and accountable administration. At all times the Commissioner will embrace the role as a champion for cross border communities.

Undertake targeted cross border inquiries which delve into areas of cross border interest informed by ongoing consultation and engagement. Delivering targeted inquiries which provide clear recommendations for structural reforms is vital to understanding trends and emerging issues and informing government and maintaining positive relationships. In 2025-26 we will benchmark the flow of economic and service activity across South Australia's borders. Additionally, the Commissioner will focus on the challenges surrounding skills availability and labour mobility.

Image credit: South Australian Tourism Commission

Deliverables

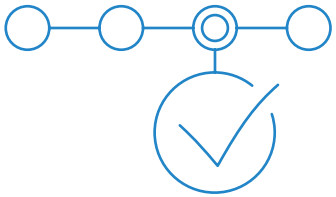
2025-26 Key Activities

Deliver on MoU arrangements with Victoria and New South Wales through agreed priorities.

Work with the Cross Border Commissioners Forum to co-operate on common opportunities and challenges across jurisdictions.

Examine skills and labour mobility covering mutual recognition of skills, exempted professions, occupational licensing, technical colleges, VET and TAFE access for cross border communities.

Conduct a stocks and flow analysis of cross border economies, including service mapping of catchment areas across South Australia's borders.



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