

# Parties promise country cash

By **Peri Strathearn**

REGIONAL development is becoming an election battleground, but judging by the dollar amounts involved, the Liberal Party has Labor outnumbered.

A Liberal government would increase allocations under the Regional Development Fund from \$1.6 million to \$15 million per year, Opposition Leader

Steven Marshall has announced.

He estimated the injection of funding would support up to 6000 jobs and \$1.5 billion in regional investment over the next four years.

"It is vital that we invest in our regional communities, develop their infrastructure and grow their capabilities as a foundation for future jobs and economic growth," he said.

The Liberals would also increase funding to South Australia's seven Regional Development Australia (RDA) organisations from a total of \$1.4 million to \$3 million per year to encourage economic growth and investment.

Liberal Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said the funding would benefit the Murraylands and Mallee.

"The local RDA, which has an office in Murray Bridge, provides a great service to our region, providing advice to local business, interested investors and primary producers to name a

few," he said.

The news gladdened RDA Murraylands and Riverland chief executive officer Brenton Lewis.

"It's good to know that at least one side of politics sees the strength in engaging with the regional development framework," he said.

The Liberals had already pledged to develop separate trade strategies for each of South Australia's seven RDA regions to reinvigorate the export market, and would increase funding to address "black spots" on State roads - a decision Mr Pederick said would benefit country highways.

While Labor has ruled

out increasing the Regional Development Fund, Employment Minister Grace Portolesi has pledged to spend \$213,000 per year re-training 1000 older South Australians for regional jobs and to promote the benefits of hiring experienced heads.

Labor would also provide \$200,000 in grants for boutique food manufacturers to develop and promote their produce.

Meanwhile, Family First has renewed its

push for a "royalties for regions" program that would redirect 15 per cent of mining tax dollars - \$30 to \$40 million per year - into regional infrastructure.

The party would also ask for improved oversight of agriculture and foreign farm ownership, restrictions on the government's ability to

impose slower country speed limits, and the relocation of 30pc of public service jobs to regional centres.

## REGIONAL PROMISES

### Liberals:

- \$13.4 million more per year for major regional projects
- \$1.6 million per year to encourage regional growth and investment
- More funding to fix "black spots" on roads

### Labor:

- \$213,000 per year for regional job training projects
- \$200,000 for regionally-based food producers

### Family First:

- \$30-40 million per year for regional infrastructure