



## **DISTRICT COUNCIL OF KIMBA**

# **FEDERAL ELECTION PLATFORM DOCUMENT**

**May 2022**

## INTRODUCTION

The Kimba area was first opened up for agriculture purposes in 1876, with the town of Kimba being proclaimed in 1915. The township became the centre of the 3,500 square kilometre District Council of Kimba.

The population of the district has been gradually declining over recent decades with it currently estimated at around 1,211 people with approximately 650 residing in the township. Recent growth strategies by the Council are actively addressing and reversing this decline and we anticipate strong population and economic growth in the coming years.

Pastoral leases were held over the area from 1872 until Pioneer farmers grew the first crops in 1908. The Kimba District is now one of the major wheat producers in South Australia.

Council has, and continues to be, actively involved in the investigations and progress for the establishment of a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility in Kimba. This project has been discussed and debated on the national stage for the past 6 to 7 years and has progressed with Napandee now named as the final site with legislation passing both houses of the Federal Parliament. It is estimated that design and construction will begin in the next few years and the facility will have a life of between 100 to 300 years. It is also anticipated that some initial works will commence in the next 1-2 years including the construction of a fit for purpose road network to the site. The community has actively engaged in the consultation processes of the Federal Government and the Council has played a vocal role in supporting those views, aspirations and concerns of its community. It continues to actively liaise with the Federal Government on the project.

The National Radioactive Waste Management Facility has brought a great deal of attention from around Australia to the Kimba Council and community. Council recognises that this facility will be a service benefiting all Australians and has managed to balance the needs of the nation to those of its community and region in its interactions on the project.

Council acknowledges that this facility will bring environmental management and public perception challenges as well as opportunities for economic and population growth. New opportunities for skills development and jobs for locals and contractors in the town and region are a real probability and Council wishes to foster and support this growth. It is mindful of the health, (including mental health), and social support needs that will come with this growth, particularly access to medical services. In addition, the required levels of housing considered necessary for the anticipated increase in population also poses an added challenge, and Council actively continues to seek ways to address this concern.

The Northern Eyre Peninsula (NEP) has some critical medical health needs demonstrated by the fact that the NEP has 1 GP per 3,094 population (January 2022) in comparison to Greater Adelaide with 1 GP per 902 people and the rest of South Australia having 1 GP per 1079 population. In terms of area coverage, as at January 2022, the NEP has 1 GP covering 11,253 km<sup>2</sup>, Greater Adelaide 1 GP covering 2.2km<sup>2</sup> and the rest of South Australia 1 GP covering 2,209 km<sup>2</sup>. Kimba is a remote community, in medical terms, with 500 kms of National Highway 1 without a resident doctor between Port Augusta and Ceduna. To address and remove these inequities of access to important medical services is a primary objective of the Council and its community and to do so alongside other stakeholders in the region. The risk for local residents as well as the thousands of travellers, trucks and caravans is unacceptable with potentially fatal consequences and must be addressed as an urgent priority.

Council has participated in a project funded by the Federal Minister for Health and completed in January 2022, which demonstrates the need for support at the Federal level to assure the community in the region including Kimba of access to GPs and base medical services on an ongoing and sustainable basis.

Kimba is also a transport corridor for the region and recognises that the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility build and ongoing operation will put increased pressure on the local road network.

Recent flooding in the region has seen the farming community impacted with some land likely to be unable to be remediated and the road network damaged. Funding has been received for these roads through the SA Local Government Disaster Recovery Assistance Arrangements, (includes Commonwealth funding support), towards Council's own costs for repair. Ongoing assessments estimate up to \$10M damage to Council infrastructure from this significant event.

Other issues of importance to the community are demonstrating its "green credentials" and vulnerable energy provision through participation in a regional project designed to create new models for energy delivery to remote areas. Various project partners are assisting in exploring solutions that will work for the region and will seek to provide security of energy provision. This includes a feasibility and design for a community microgrid with support of Federal Government funding.

The importance of internet access has not gone unnoticed to the Kimba community. Its residents, businesses and visitors to the town and region suffer with slow internet access and this is placing current and future constraints on the growth of the community and its participation in business expansion, education and access to on-line medical assistance. This right of connectivity that is enjoyed by metropolitan and other regional towns needs urgent attention to achieve equity of access. Council is collaborating with NBN on a co-contribution scheme with an application lodged to the Federal Government Regional Connectivity Program for the installation of Fibre to The Premise (FTTP), for the Kimba township. This would support business and future attraction strategies for business and economic growth in the community as a whole.

The Council is, and will continue to play an active role in addressing the economic, social and environmental issues facing its community with a small rate base and population. It is a strong participant and contributor in regional discussions on a range of issues and has a reputation of "punching above its weight" when it comes to airing issues of importance and working on solutions.

In the lead up to the Federal Election the Council is keen to ensure that candidates and political parties are aware of the key areas where Kimba needs support and engagement and this document sets these out.

The District Council of Kimba stands ready to continue to work shoulder to shoulder with the Federal Government and local MP to ensure the voice of the Kimba community is heard and responded to by the government resulting from the May 2022 election.

## **THE PRIORITY ISSUES**

### **1. Access to General Practitioners (GPs)**

The District Council of Kimba has for many years had a permanent presence of GPs in the town but is now, alongside other communities on the Eyre Peninsula, facing a health crisis now and into the future.

Council and its community have participated in a Northern Eyre Peninsula Health Alliance (NEPHA) formed in 2019 to address the critical shortages of medical professional services in the area covering Streaky Pay, Wudinna, Elliston, Kimba, Cleve and Cowell.

The Board of the NEPHA, through the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network (EFNLHN), and with the financial assistance of the Federal Minister for Health engaged a project officer from January 2021 to undertake research on the current health crisis. The project's primary aim was to develop options that could be put in place in the Region and could be duplicated in other remote areas of Australia.

The report from this work is entitled *"Proposal to Address Failure of Medical Services on Northern Eyre Peninsula, South Australia – December 2021"*.

The research report indicates that in January 2022, there is GP coverage of 4.3 fulltime equivalent resident GPs to service an estimated population of 8662, an area of 31,511 km and afterhours on-call services for 6 hospitals. Kimba is home to one of these 6 hospitals.

The report advises that in January 2022, the NEP has 1 GP per 3,094 population in comparison to Greater Adelaide with 1 GP per 902 people and the rest of South Australia having 1 GP per 1079 population. In terms of area coverage, as at January 2022, the NEP has 1 GP covering 11,253 km<sup>2</sup>, Greater Adelaide 1 GPL covering 2.2km<sup>2</sup> and the rest of South Australia 1 GP covering 2,209 km<sup>2</sup>.

These statistics are a stark reminder of the inequity of access to GPs being experienced by Kimba and other areas in the region.

To address the demand for GP services and supplement the lack of resident GPs in the regions the EEPLHN employs locums, a model which is expensive, void of any level of continuity of care and not sustainable into the future. There is considerable dissatisfaction and burnout experienced by the existing resident GPs and if not addressed promptly, experience tells us that they will leave, worsening an already desperate situation.

Local and State Governments have contributed (and Kimba Council continues to contribute) significant time and resources into attracting GPs to the NEP, including undertaking the ownership, operation and funding for many general practices and engaging in extensive advocacy on the issue, including representations to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs in September 2021.

Despite these considerable efforts the Region has not seen progress towards the creation of a long-term and sustainable GP workforce that is commensurate with the cumulative efforts of the various stakeholders.

A needs assessment conducted by the NEPHA in 2021 identified several barriers in relation to the recruitment and retention of GPs in the NEP with most barriers related to the

- structure of the service model, such as the structure of the afterhours on-call system;
- remuneration, working conditions and the lack of achievement of work-life balance;
- long working hours and high workloads without access to locum GPs;
- lack of support from other medical practitioners due to isolation;
- lack of capacity of NEP Medical Practices to host non-vocationally recognised trainee GPs to create a recruitment line;
- shortage of suitable accommodation to house GPs with the rental market scarce..

Although NEPHA is committed to designing and proposing a new service model, it will be difficult for this model alone to provide adequate incentive for GPs to work and stay in the NEP.. It is therefore equally important for the Federal Government to continue to provide incentives under the Stronger Rural Health Strategy Initiative. The Workforce Incentive Program is an important program which is based on the Modified Monash Model classifications and greatly benefits the towns, including Kimba, in the NEP which are classified as MM6 and MM7.

The business model proposed is outlined the NEPHA project report.

Primary health care, including GP services are a Federal Government responsibility, however Kimba Council has been forced to step into the void, with many recruitment efforts using ratepayer funds being undertaken. In contrast to the Region and our state, Kimba Council has funded a Council owned medical practice building, with a recent upgrade and extension just shy of \$1M. It has solar power, auto start emergency backup generator and state of the art tech included, with video conferencing facilities and a training room. Council also provides accommodation, with two houses supplied, rent free and is committed to work with the Federal Government as an active partner to implement the recommendations of the NEPHA research report.

Kimba Council and the NEPHA are currently developing a partnership with Rural And Remote Medical Services, (RARMS), a charity board working with rural communities to develop sustainable medical practices to address the current GP shortage.

Kimba Council is also undertaking an extensive branding project designed to highlight the benefits of living and working in Kimba with a particular focus on attracting GPs to the town. Council will continue to invest time, energy and resources into fixing this long-standing problem and are actively seeking co-operation and assistance to deliver solutions. Council also wishes to highlight that the cost of providing a solution to this crisis, will be highly likely well under the current budget expended on locum doctors. The added benefit of a healthier community will also significantly lower overall health provision costs. It is also relevant to highlight that it is highly likely that the cost of providing a solution to this crisis, will be well under the current budget expended on locum doctors. The added benefit of a healthier community will also significantly lower overall health provision costs and enable a proactive approach to the delivery of health services within the community.

Commitment sought from candidates and political parties:

- *To work with the District Council of Kimba and NEPHA to review and implement the recommendations of the report “Proposal to Address Failure of Medical Services on Northern Eyre Peninsula – December 2021”, including supporting the business model outlined in the report*
- *To provide funding to secure 2 full time GPs for Kimba recognising Council’s efforts with upgrading the medical centre and providing accommodation, rent free.*
- *To support the District Council of Kimba’s already established projects with relevant universities to attract students and practitioners*
- *Establish appropriate systems and support to enable the hosting of non-vocationally recognised trainee GPs as an attraction strategy, once VR GP’s are in place.*
- *Examine PESCI availability to enhance International Medical Graduate placement into rural communities.*

**2. National Radioactive Waste Management Facility**

The announcement to progress the establishment of a national radioactive waste facility in Kimba has seen the Council undertake intensive community engagement and consultation and work directly with the Federal Government to understand the implications and opportunities for Kimba.

It is noted that the facility will have a life of between 100 - 300 years and it is anticipated that design and construction will begin shortly.

Having in place the appropriate social and human services, including an adequate level of housing, to support a growing population will be critical. Putting in place appropriate education and training skills development opportunities for a workforce and contractors drawn from Kimba and the surrounding region is supported by the Council.

Council has negotiated with the Federal Government to put in place a \$31M support package. This package comprises:

- \$20m community fund, to be paid once the facility is licensed and operational;
- \$8M fund which is anticipated to be used towards skills development/contractor awareness ( \$2m per year over 4 years); plus
- \$3m for projects directly supporting Aboriginal Communities and other identified priorities, for use by traditional owners, the Barngarla people.

Council recognises that it is providing a service to all Australians in having the facility in Kimba. It also recognises the infrastructure build, impact on its roads, job and contractor opportunities for locals and the importance of environmental management in the build and ongoing operations of the facility will be key issues.

Council stands ready to work alongside and partner with the government elected in 2022 to progress the build of the facility with appropriate ongoing community engagement and support.

Commitments sought from candidates and political parties:

- *To continue to engage with the Kimba Council and its community as aspects of the project are progressed*
- *To work with the Kimba Council to ensure appropriate social and human services supports and adequate levels of housing are in place for the workers, contractors and population growth that will result in its town and surrounding areas, having regard to the demographic profile changes likely to occur.*

**3. NBN Roll Out**

The Kimba community, like any community in Australia, seeks to have access to fast speed internet to keep it informed, grow businesses, participate in educational opportunities and to support access by medical practitioners to quick and reliable professional advice and skills.

A growing tourism population to Kimba and the region continues to be reliant on internet access, especially where youth are involved.

Kimba currently has fixed wireless NBN internet which is unreliable, with bandwidth failure occurring on a regular basis and it is essentially not up to standard.

The lack of reliable connectivity is increasingly frustrating to the community, including businesses. This level of frustration will continue into the future and be further exacerbated as the radioactive waste facility project rolls out and changes in the population and demographics occurs.

Neighbouring towns of a similar size include; Cleve with access to FTTP internet and Wudinna having secured an upgrade to 5G technology.

Kimba has been overlooked and is at a significant disadvantage because of this.

Commitments sought from candidates and political parties:

- *To provide connectivity through the installation of secure and reliable NBN for the community of Kimba.*

**4. Energy**

Kimba Council is participating in a project entitled “*Fringe-of-Grid Futures South Australia Eyre Peninsula*” funded under the Australian Government’s Region and Remote Communities Reliability Fund – Microgrids 2020-21.

Other partners in the project include SA Power Networks, Ener-g, University of South Australia, Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula, Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association and the Koonibba Community Aboriginal Corporation.

It is widely acknowledged that the NEP faces various challenges in accessing electricity such as:

- **Reliability** – the networks are often on the end of a series of extensive and at times inaccessible radial networks and often prone to severe weather events
- **Distributed energy** – typically weak networks which are sensitive to the reverse power flows and intermittency resulting from distributed generations such as solar PV
- **Safety** – the networks that supply many regional and remote communities pass through areas of increased bushfire risk and investment in maintaining the network and specific

operational procedures are required including the potential connection of power due to the risk of fire start or fire damage to the assets

- **Cost** – regional and remote area networks comprise a significant volume of the overall installed asset base, but often have sparse customer density, which may result in a high cost to serve that must be recovered through network tariffs for all customers

This project is exploring the feasibility of both community microgrids and household-scale standalone power systems and to consider the optimal mix of connections that works best for the region. The project will be completed in December 2022.

*Commitments sought from candidates and political parties:*

- *Recognition of the energy challenges of the Kimba community and to consider and implement the final recommendations of the “Fringe-of-Grid Futures South Australia Eyre Peninsular” project report and recommendations.*