



RRR NETWORK

RRR Roundtable

ISSUES PAPERS

2021



RRR ROUNDTABLE

RRR Roundtable is a program that routinely collects the opinions and experiences of RRR Network members to inform a series of Roundtable conversations comprising of RRR women and key decision makers.

Through consistent and collective engagement, this program explores relevant issues with a primary focus on rural, regional and remote Western Australia to develop recommendations and affect change.

A program exclusively designed for women experienced in agriculture, the environment, economics, law and regional and community development, and how they intersect with government and policy.

Roundtables discussions and survey data are captured to inform a collection of Issues Papers to be shared with the RRR Network and key stakeholders.

The RRR Roundtable Major Program Sponsors are CSBP Fertilisers and Mid West Ports Authority.

Roundtable Discussions in 2021 -

- State Election Debrief: The Next Four Years for Regional WA.
- WA Tourism: Can the Regions cope with Increased Demand?
- Digital Connectivity: How Can Regional WA achieve Digital Equality?

Roundtable Discussions for 2022

- Building a Sustainable WA: How to attract Youth to the regions?
- Access to Child & Aged Care: What is the Regional Experience?



STATE ELECTION DEBRIEF: THE NEXT FOUR YEARS FOR REGIONAL WA

To what extent does the WA State Election outcome impact WA and how did regional WA respond? We sought perspectives shared from the Arts, Business and Health on what election outcomes were committed to support these sectors - if any? What can the regions expect for their communities within Arts, Business and Health in the next term? The conversation discussed projects and initiatives from these sectors and how can regional WA (women) support these projects.



Robyn Clarke, MLA - Robyn was elected to the West Australian Parliament as the Member for Murray-Wellington on March 11 2017. The electorate extends from the southern part of Keysbrook in the north to the northern part of Australind in the south, including the majority of the Shires of Murray and Harvey, and all of the Shire of Waroona.



Philippa Maughan, Program Officer for Regional Arts - Philippa grew up on a farm in Nukarni, north of Merredin. Joining Regional Arts WA in October 2007 Philippa arrived at her first day at work, suitcase in tow, to embark on a five hour road trip to Denmark with her new boss to attend Regional Arts WA's Pulse State Regional Arts Conference. Philippa is passionate about assisting regional communities have the best arts experience possible. Philippa is also a former Deputy Chair of the Blue Room.



Kitty Prodonovich, CEO of the RCCI - Kitty has been the CEO of the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of WA since 2012. Kitty previously held the positions of Presidents of both the RCCIWA (2005 – 2010) and the Kalgoorlie-Boulder CCI (2003-2005) and has owned two small businesses in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, the first one at the age of 21. Kitty's involvement with a regional Chamber of Commerce began in 1991, and she is a strong and driven advocate for regional business communities. Until November 2018 Kitty was the Chair of the board of the Small Business Development Corporation and currently sits on the General Council of CCIWA and is a Non – Executive Director on the board of Keystart Home Loans.



Tim Shackleton, Rural Health WA - Tim has extensive experience in the rural and regional health sector in Western Australia, previously working for rural health counterparts, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the WA Country Health Service. His current focus for Rural Health West is developing stronger links with partner organisations in the rural health sector and securing long-term funding for the company's recruitment, retention and outreach initiatives. Tim is experienced in strategy development, health service planning, stakeholder engagement and project management. He holds a Bachelor of Science (Human Movement) and Post Graduate Diploma in Health Services Administration.

At the end of March 2021, the State Election was over and we entered another four years with the returning government – what does this mean for regional WA? Before the State Election, the RRR Network conducted a survey that sought the perspectives of regional residents on health, business, entertainment and arts issues and the election outcomes and promises made to support work in these sectors in the regions. The survey explored missing issues relevant to the regions; speculated what the regions can expect for their communities in this next term, among other issues that could transform regional WA for the next four years.

Residents of the Wheatbelt, Mid West, South West and Peel regions shared their views. The majority of respondents were female (92%), 4% were male and 4% preferred not to say. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 20 to 50 years old who were mainly in full-time (50%) and part-time (25%) jobs.

In the context of an election, measuring optimism helps to reveal residents' state of mind and election expectations.

- On the whole, most of the respondents were very satisfied (17%) or satisfied (54%) with the life they were leading. Others were somewhat satisfied (21%) and a few were somewhat dissatisfied (8%).
- General optimism about 2021 was strong among half the respondents, with 46% thinking that 2021 will be better than 2020 and 4% thinking 2021 will be much better. On the other hand, 42% of respondents thought 2021 would be the same as 2020, while 8% were unsure about what 2021 will bring.
- Specific optimism about the economic situation in regional communities was strong among respondents. Over 67% of respondents thought that the economic situation in regional communities would be a lot better (13%), a little better (21%) or the same (33%) in 2021. Conversely, 25% of respondents thought it would be a little worse, while 8% were uncertain about the future economic situation in regional communities.
- When asked to speculate about the future, 2021 and 2022 economic situation in regional communities, a high percentage, 58%, thought it would get better (25%) or stay the same (33%).
- On the other hand, 29% of respondents thought the economic situation in regional communities would get a little worse (21%) or a lot worse (8%), while 13% were unsure.

In the context of an election, interactions with local political representatives can influence election outcomes and residents' levels of optimism.

- In the 12 months leading up to the March 2021 State Election, 79% of respondents had direct (75%) or indirect (4%) contact with their local political representatives. 21% of respondents had no interaction with their local political representatives.

- Residents' perception of actual election benefits is an essential indicator of the impact of government policies and programs.
- Taking everything into consideration, 67% of respondents said regional communities did not benefit equally as urban communities during the last four years.
- However, 21% of respondents noted that regional communities benefitted equally.
- When asked to speculate about the future, a high percentage (67%) of respondents said regional communities wouldn't benefit equally compared to urban communities over the next four (4) years.
- On the other hand, 17% of respondents said regional communities would benefit equally as urban communities, while another 17% were unsure.

Election commitments generally dominate pre and post-election discussions and is a significant indicator of the incumbent government's policies and programs.

When asked to list election commitments for regional development, the majority of respondents, 63%, noted that they were not aware of any election commitments for regional development. Of those who were aware (37%), most of the commitments related to sports, infrastructure and transportation. They specified awareness of the following election commitments:

- Money for railway station from Labor.
- More phone towers.
- They're all making lots of election commitment for roads, infrastructure and the like but none for inclusion.
- McGowan Government committed \$100 million to regional development.
- Trails upgrade.
- Additional funding for mental health services, expanded hospital services, new regional event, capital development.
- Sport and recreation infrastructure, educational system improvements.
- Basketball stadium upgrade in Geraldton.
- Solar panels in schools, basketball stadium in Geraldton.

Recommendation:

Regional WA continues with a sentiment, rightly or wrongly that election outcomes and expenditure into the regions has reduced in recent years. The arts sector was considered to be the most lacking investment in the regions compared to Health and Business. Regional attitudes are largely driven by their isolation and an idea that their experience is less valued than those in the city. Whilst it is very clear that regional investment particularly under the WA Recovery Plan is vast, and the RDC's are a direct conduit for regional people and grants, the 'Royalties for Regions' scheme remains a phrase that regional people claim ownership too. It is recommended that the WA State Government explore ways to realign or reimagine the Royalties for Regions initiative to current regional investment to cut through misunderstanding or negative discourse.

Figure 1:Regional priorities in health based on 2021 State Election promises

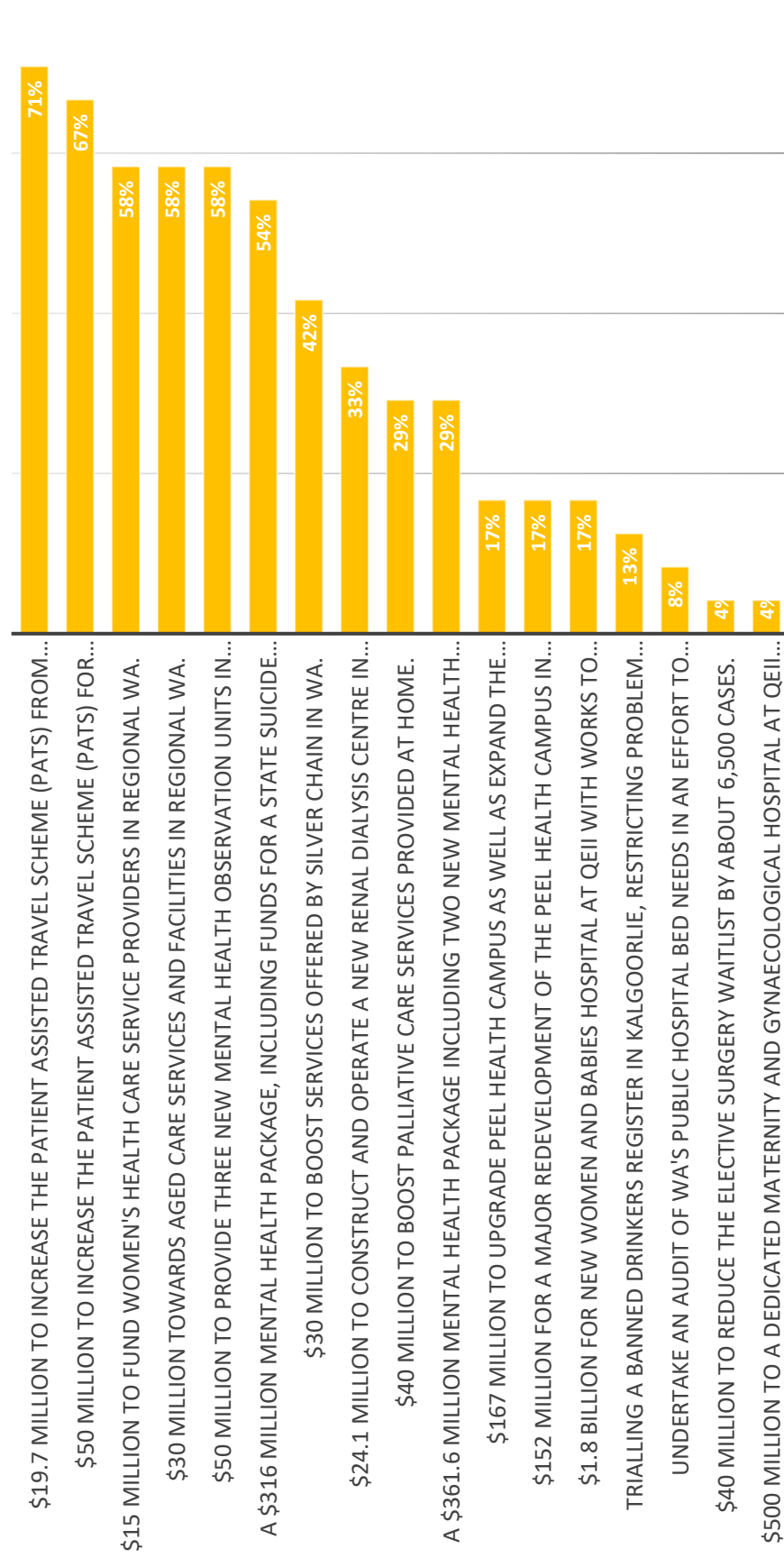


Figure 2: Regional priorities in business based on 2021 State Election promises

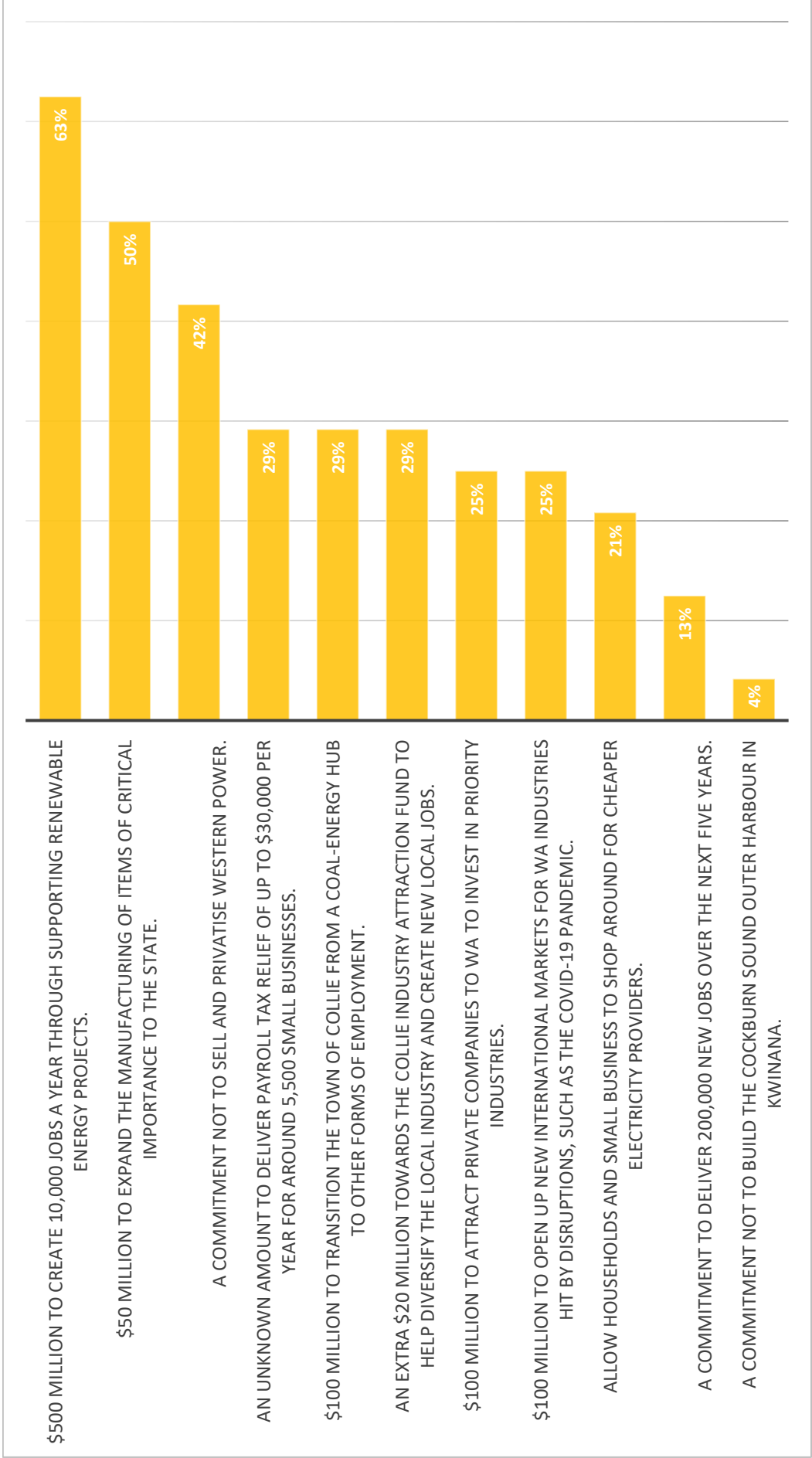
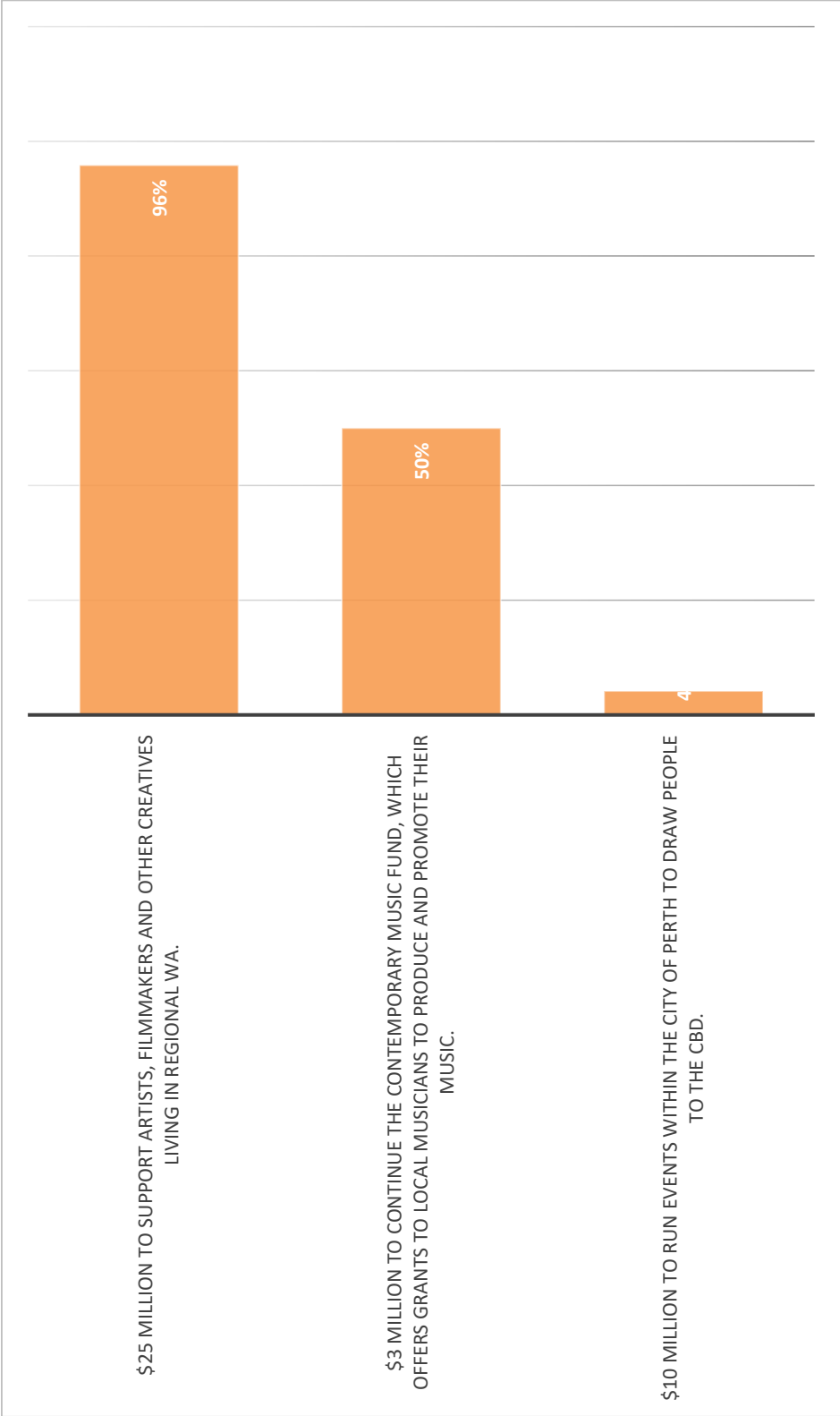


Figure 3:Regional priorities in entertainment and arts based on 2021 State Election promises



The majority of respondents contributed to the election outcome as voters (92%) and election workers (4%).