

Greater Access to Business Opportunities for Firms in the City of Wangaratta

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Businesses in the Rural City of Wangaratta can now benefit from greater access to business opportunities with council projects, including the \$3 million Wangaratta Showgrounds redevelopment.

The Rural City of Wangaratta will use 'Regional Industry Link' (RIL) to identify local businesses and contractors to provide goods and services to projects throughout the region.

Regional Industry Link is a program managed by the Industry Capability Network (ICN) that matches businesses and contractors listed on its database with relevant supply opportunities.

Registration with RIL is free of charge and registered businesses will be able to record their interest against projects and opportunities listed on the site by the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Tammy Atkins, ICN Hume Regional Manager, encourages businesses in the region to register with RIL:

"This is a positive step that will allow the council to support industry in its municipality and benefit from using local suppliers, while providing businesses in the region with greater access to the many opportunities with local projects."

To date Regional Industry Link (RIL) has helped secure more than \$320 million in contracts for businesses in Victoria.

"We've had a number of local successes with the program including a recent \$1 million win for Wangaratta's Fitweld Engineering and \$5 million of contracts for Wodonga's Kiewa Valley Engineering." said Ms Atkins.

RIL provides registered businesses with automatic notification of relevant business opportunities. This includes a heads up on council tenders as well as regional and state-wide projects.

Shivaun Brown, Council's Economic Development Coordinator at Wangaratta Unlimited, encourages local businesses to take advantage of this free service:

"With a budget of \$50 million, Council is one of Wangaratta's largest organisations and we are aware of the economic benefits of having local businesses participate in our expenditure program." said Ms Brown.

"In addition to ensuring local businesses are aware of relevant Council tenders, RIL's register of local businesses will become a tool for the Council to promote the region's industry capability to developers from outside the region."

Ms Brown highlighted the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre development, which focused on engaging local suppliers and is estimated to have generated millions of dollars for the local economy and created 283 direct and an additional 385 indirect jobs.

Businesses to have benefited directly from work with this project include OP Industries, Aggenbach's, Classic Cabinets, Fitweld Engineering and North East Glass.

According to Ms Brown, the development's direct and indirect economic boost helped insulate many local businesses through the economic downturn:

"Small and regional businesses are the economic and social drivers of the community," Ms Brown said. "We know that each dollar spent in a locally owned business returns three times more money to our local economy. This is because local businesses use local staff, local consultants, local accountants and local advertising and are more likely to purchase locally produced goods."

The Performing Arts Centre's builder, Hansen Yuncken, engaged local contractors and material suppliers wherever possible. Hansen Yuncken's Regional Manager Jason Cox said it makes sense to use local businesses and that ICN provides a valuable service to identify local capability and Australian-made products:

"Hansen Yuncken enjoys a strong relationship with the Industry Capability Network. Being a border business, we are already familiar with many local companies however we do access ICN's Regional Industry Link resource where necessary."

Stanko Kalcic from local building contractor Brown's Wangaratta agreed:

"Our firm has been successful in winning fourteen school upgrades within the region as part of the Building Education Revolution and we've turned to Regional Industry Link to identify local suppliers and sub-contractors wherever possible."

Businesses can register online at www.regionalindustrylink.com.au

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