

USING TRANSPORT IN REGIONAL COMMUNITIES TO ENABLE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA **PROJECT BRIEF**



Executive Summary

Regional South Australia continues to present significant economic and employment opportunities across a range of industries; however, long-standing transport barriers have limited the ability of many residents to access and sustain work. Transport disadvantage, including the ability to obtain and maintain a driver's licence, has consistently emerged as one of the most significant and entrenched barriers to workforce participation. Limited public transport options, financial and regulatory barriers, instructor shortages, fines and debt, and fragmented service delivery systems combine to create complex and cumulative challenges for regional jobseekers.

Recognising the opportunity to unlock workforce potential across regional communities to ensure individuals and communities can benefit from the economic opportunities available, regional stakeholders have increasingly called for a more coordinated, evidence-based response. Workforce Australia- Local Jobs (Mid North and North West Country) initiated work to consolidate existing regional intelligence and bring together key partners to explore practical solutions. This included convening a Regional Drivers Licence and Transport Solutions Workshop in Adelaide in December 2025, facilitated by the Australian Community Transport Association, with participation from state government agencies, community organisations and regional and workforce stakeholders.

Discussions and supporting reports confirmed that transport and licensing barriers are systemic and interconnected, spanning multiple service systems including transport, licensing, employment, fines and community services. Stakeholders strongly endorsed the need for a coordinated, place-based approach that brings these elements together, improves access to vehicles and licensing pathways, and strengthens collaboration across sectors.

This project, instigated by a consortia of regional organisations and partners and delivered by the Australian Community Transport Association in partnership with Adelaide University and supported by iMOVE CRC, seeks to design, pilot and evaluate an integrated, place-based solution. The project will systematically map transport and licensing barriers, align community transport services with employment demand, strengthen regional driver-licensing pathways, and explore practical approaches to resolving fines-related licence suspensions.

The work is structured in three stages over seven months:

1. Evidence and system mapping to identify priority gaps and opportunities;
2. Structured co-design with regional stakeholders, government, employers and service providers to develop pilot-ready models across transport, licensing and fines pathways; and
3. Delivery and evaluation of selected interventions to assess feasibility, effectiveness and value-for-money.

By generating real-world evidence on what works, at what cost, and under what conditions, the project will deliver a scalable model to strengthen workforce participation, address transport disadvantage and support regional economic resilience in South Australia. The findings will inform future policy settings and cross-sector coordination across transport, employment and licensing systems.

The Challenge:

Transport & Licensing as Workforce Barriers

Across the Mid North and North West Country regions of South Australia, workforce participation is shaped by skills and job availability, and mobility. For many residents, the ability to travel reliably and hold a valid driver licence is a prerequisite for accessing employment, training and education.

Transport Gaps in Regional Contexts

Regional labour markets are geographically dispersed. Employment sites in health care, agriculture, retail, renewables, mining and manufacturing are often located across multiple towns or at significant distance from where people live. Public transport options are limited or non-existent in many areas, and where available - service frequency may not align with shift start and finish times. Early-morning, late-evening and cross-regional travel needs are particularly difficult to accommodate.

Community transport services play an essential role in regional mobility, yet they are often designed primarily around health and social service access rather than workforce participation. Where services do exist, they may not be aligned with employment corridors, training locations or licensing appointments. As a result, individuals without access to a private vehicle face structural mobility constraints.

Licensing Barriers and Administrative Constraints

In regional South Australia, holding a current driver licence is frequently an implicit condition of employment. Even where driving is not a core job requirement, employers often expect workers to demonstrate reliable transport. However, obtaining or reinstating a licence can present significant barriers.

Challenges include limited availability of accredited instructors and assessors, long waiting times for Vehicle On-Road Tests (VORT), lack of supervised driving opportunities, and financial barriers associated with training and testing. For young people and adults alike, these constraints can delay progression from learner to provisional licences and restrict access to employment pathways.

Fines-related licence suspensions further compound the issue. Individuals who lose their licence due to unpaid fines or administrative penalties may be unable to reinstate it without navigating complex processes or addressing accumulated debt. In the absence of accessible resolution pathways, this can result in prolonged exclusion from the labour market.

The Challenge: Transport & Licensing as Workforce Barriers

Fragmented Systems, Shared Consequences

Transport, licensing, justice and employment systems operate across different portfolios, funding streams and administrative frameworks. While each serves a legitimate function, the interaction between them can produce unintended workforce barriers.

The result is a structural mismatch: job vacancies remain unfilled, while capable and willing individuals are unable to access work due to mobility and licensing constraints. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated, cross-sector solutions rather than isolated service adjustments.

Project Objectives

The overarching objective of this project is to develop and test a scalable, evidence-based model that strengthens workforce participation by addressing transport and driver-licensing barriers in regional South Australia.

Specifically, the project aims to:

- Improve access to transport for employment, training and education, particularly in geographically dispersed regional labour markets.
- Strengthen driver-licensing pathways for young people and adults, reducing delays and structural barriers to licence attainment and reinstatement.
- Address fines-related licence suspensions through practical, coordinated resolution pathways that support workforce re-engagement.
- Demonstrate feasibility, effectiveness and value-for-money through structured pilot implementation and evaluation.
- Deliver a transferable model that can be scaled across other regional communities in South Australia and adapted nationally where appropriate.

The Model:

A Three-Stage Integrated Approach

This project applies a structured, evidence-driven approach that moves from diagnosis to design to real-world testing. The aim is not simply to analyse the problem, but to develop and validate an integrated, place-based solution.

Stage 1: Evidence & System Mapping (Mar – May)

The project begins by establishing a robust evidence base across the Mid North and North West Country regions. This includes:

- Surveying unemployed and underemployed residents to identify mobility and licensing barriers.
- Mapping job locations against where people live to identify spatial mismatches.
- Analysing transport services, licensing pathways and fines-related constraints.
- Engaging transport providers, driving instructors, legal services and government agencies.
- Reviewing relevant national and international models.

Outcome: A clear, system-wide understanding of where and why workforce access breaks down.

Stage 2: Co-Design & Pilot Readiness (May – Jun)

Using Stage 1 findings, the project works with stakeholders to develop pilot-ready models across three interlinked pillars:

- Transport to Employment & Training: Align community transport services with employment corridors and training locations.
- Community Licensing & Driver Education Pathways: Strengthen access to supervised driving, testing capacity and school-based or adult licensing support.
- Fines & Debt Resolution Pathways: Develop practical mechanisms to address licence suspensions that restrict workforce participation.

Outcome: An integrated model with clear governance, eligibility pathways and implementation settings.

The Model:

A Three-Stage Integrated Approach

Stage 3: Pilot Delivery & Evaluation (Jul – Sep)

Selected interventions are implemented and evaluated within the project timeframe. The evaluation assesses:

- Implementation feasibility
- Participant engagement and progression
- Workforce access outcomes
- System coordination and value-for-money

Outcome: Real-world evidence to inform scaling, policy refinement and broader regional rollout.

This staged approach ensures that solutions are grounded in evidence, shaped by stakeholders, and validated through practical testing rather than theoretical design.

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What Will Be Delivered

At the conclusion of the seven-month project, partners and stakeholders will receive a comprehensive Final Report that sets out:

- A system-wide analysis of transport, licensing and fines-related workforce barriers across the Mid North and North West Country regions.
- The design and implementation details of selected pilot interventions.
- Evaluation findings assessing feasibility, effectiveness, coordination and value-for-money.
- Practical policy and operational recommendations for government and service providers.
- A clear roadmap for scaling and adapting the model across other regional communities.

Beyond the written report, the project will also generate:

- A tested, place-based integrated model linking transport, licensing and workforce systems.
- Strengthened cross-sector partnerships and governance arrangements.
- Implementation-ready tools and frameworks to support future rollout.

The final output is designed not simply as a research document, but as a practical blueprint for coordinated action.

Why This Matters

Transport and driver-licensing barriers are not marginal issues in regional South Australia; they are structural constraints on workforce participation, economic growth and social inclusion. Addressing them delivers benefits across government, industry and communities.

For Regional Communities

- Increases access to employment, apprenticeships and education.
- Reduces long-term exclusion linked to licence suspensions and mobility disadvantage.
- Strengthens youth workforce readiness and adult re-engagement.
- Improves economic participation and community stability.

For Government

- Strengthens regional workforce participation and reduces structural unemployment.
- Improves alignment between transport, employment, education and justice systems.
- Provides evidence to inform licensing reform, service commissioning and policy design.
- Demonstrates value-for-money through tested, scalable interventions.
- Supports regional economic resilience in priority industries.

For Employers

- Expands the pool of work-ready candidates.
- Improves reliability of workforce attendance.
- Reduces recruitment friction caused by transport constraints.
- Supports apprenticeships and training pathways in dispersed labour markets.

For Community Transport & Service Providers

- Creates stronger integration with employment and training systems.
- Identifies sustainable commissioning pathways aligned with workforce strategies.
- Enhances coordination across transport, licensing and support services.

By treating mobility as workforce infrastructure, rather than as a standalone service, the project positions transport and licensing as enablers of regional productivity and inclusion.

Governance & Partnerships

This project is delivered through a collaborative governance model that reflects its cross-sector nature.

The project has been initiated by Workforce Australia – Local Jobs (Mid North and North West Country), and initiative of the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). Workforce Australia – Local Jobs oversees the strategic direction and coordination across relevant portfolios and stakeholders and have coordinated funding and support from a range of partners to enable delivery of this project in regional South Australia.

The Australian Community Transport Association (ACTA) serves as the coordinating delivery partner, facilitating engagement between government, regional stakeholders and service providers, and supporting alignment across transport, licensing and workforce systems.

Adelaide University leads the research, system mapping, pilot design and evaluation components, ensuring the project is underpinned by rigorous evidence and structured assessment.

The project is supported by iMOVE CRC as a major funding partner, strengthening the initiative's alignment with national priorities in mobility, workforce participation and regional development. Other funding partners include:

- BHP
- Career Employment Group
- Care in Motion
- Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
- Construction Industry Training Centre (CITC)
- Department of Human Services
- OneSteel
- Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula
- Regional Development Australia Yorke & Mid North
- Resources & Engineering Skills Alliance (RESA)
- South Australian Skills Commission
- Workforce Australia – Local Jobs
- Workforce Extensions
- Workskil Australia
- Whyalla Coordinator

There are also significant in-kind contributions through Uniting Country SA and Spencer Gulf Cities.

A Project Advisory Group comprising representatives from partner organisations, transport and driver training providers, education and training organisations and relevant government agencies supports implementation, oversight and co-design throughout the project lifecycle.

- Adelaide University
- Australian Community Transport Association
- Department for Infrastructure & Transport
- Department of Employment & Workplace Relations
- Department of Human Services
- Get Home Safe Foundation
- RAA
- Resources & Engineering Skills Alliance
- Uniting Country SA
- Workforce Australia - Local Jobs

Governance Framework

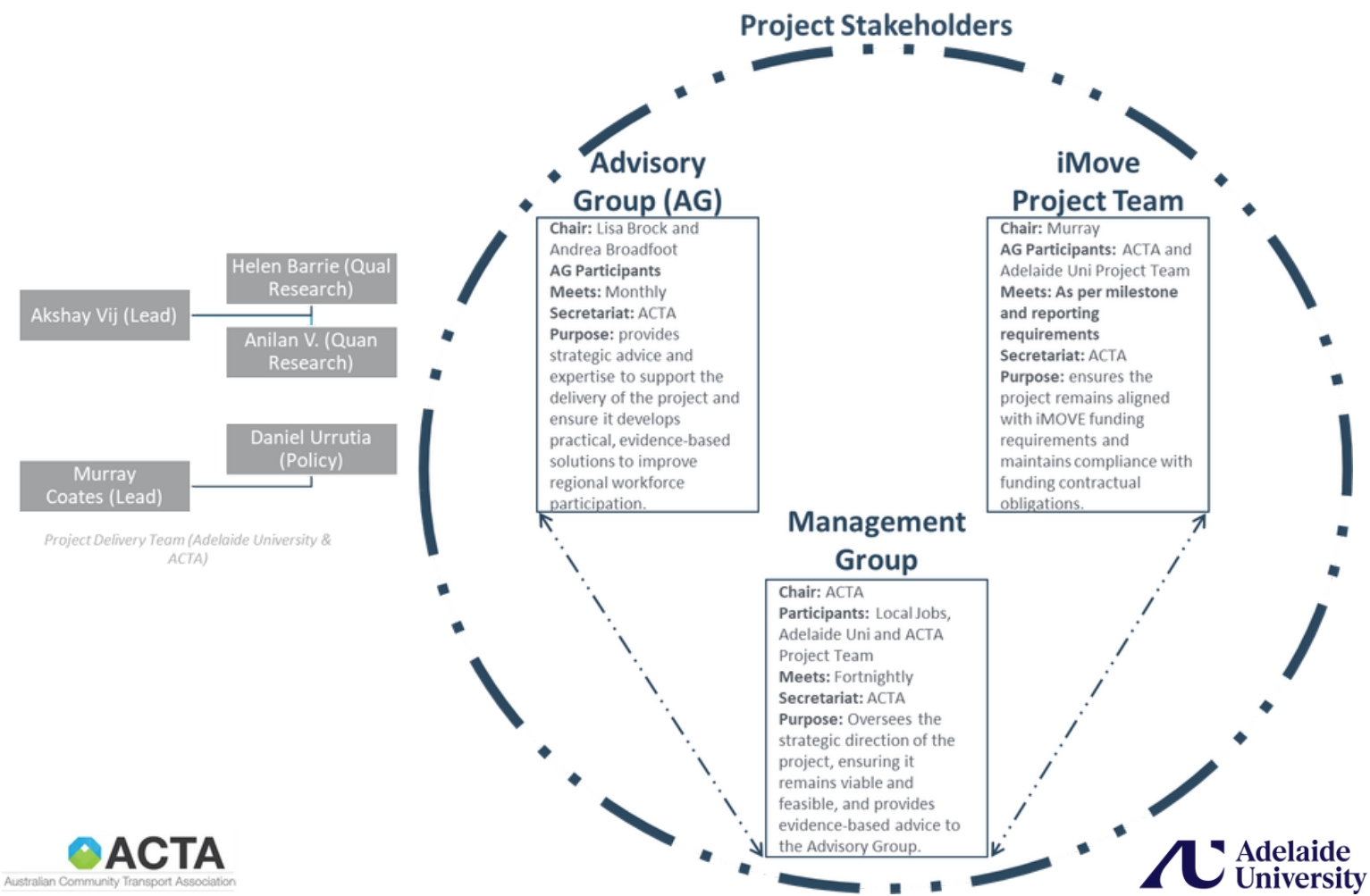
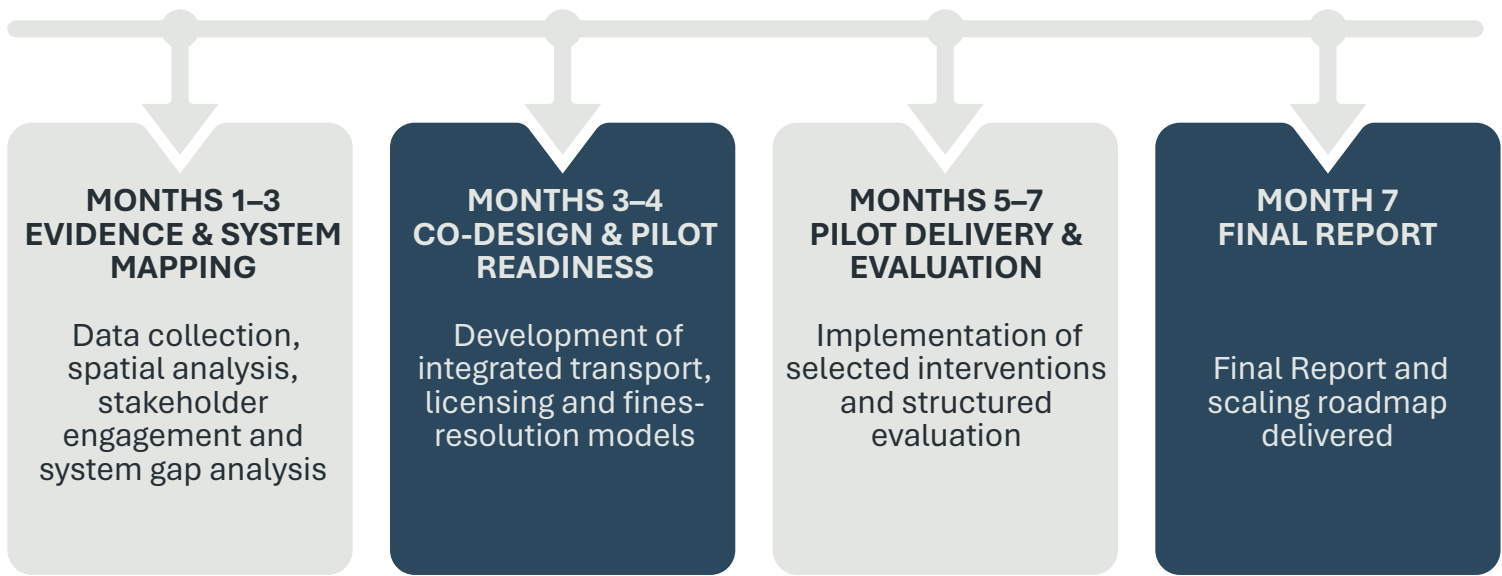


Figure 1: Project Governance Framework

Timeline Overview



Get Involved

This project is designed to be collaborative. Its success depends on active participation from regional stakeholders across transport, employment, education, industry and community sectors.



SHARE LOCAL INSIGHTS

Provide data, operational knowledge and lived experience to strengthen system mapping and identify priority barriers.



PARTICIPATE IN CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Contribute to the development of integrated transport, licensing and fines-resolution models that are realistic and locally appropriate.



SUPPORT PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Assist in testing coordinated transport services, licensing pathways or referral mechanisms within your organisation or network.



CONTRIBUTE TO EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Provide feedback, service data and practical insights to help assess what works and where refinement is needed.



SUPPORT FUTURE SCALING

Engage in discussions on long-term commissioning, funding models and cross-sector integration beyond the pilot phase.

By participating, stakeholders can help shape a model that reflects regional realities and delivers tangible workforce outcomes.

For further information or to express interest in participating, please contact:

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DELIVERY PARTNERS



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