

Plan is road map for the region

■ **Kendall O'Connor**

The vision for the Great Southern was presented to local government staff and councillors in the region as Regional Development Australia officially launched its 2013-18 plan in Cranbrook last Wednesday.

Key priorities presented in the regional plan include a focus on infrastructure development, education and training, natural resource management and social inclusion development.

Regional Development Australia Great Southern executive officer Simon Lyas said previous regional plans have been used as a basis for the RDA Committee and Australian Government in determining successful funding applications for the Katanning Saleyards, Albany's Centennial Park Precinct and the Riverside Project in Denmark.

"The regional plan is a roadmap for the Great Southern, it gives a snapshot of the region and some of its key features," he said.

"It looks at big picture issues and discusses where organisations like ours can help develop the region."

WA Senator Dean Smith officially launched the regional plan and said it identified key issues and opportunities in the region.

Senator Smith highlighted a growing Asian middle class demanding products grown in the Great Southern, the need for improved communication infrastructure and an ageing population as challenges and opportunities for the region.

"These are three critical issues in my mind that deserve attention and focus strong input from local government associations," he said



Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson, Regional Development Australia Great Southern executive officer Simon Lyas, chairman Milton Evans and WA Senator Dean Smith with the latest Regional Development Plan. Picture: Kendall O'Connor

"We can be confident that there is a strong connection between local people in the region and this plan."

It took six months of consultations with local government offi-

cials and organisations in the Great Southern region to compile the regional plan.

Shire of Kojoonup chief executive Rick Mitchell-Collins attended the launch and said the plan looks at

both the opportunities and threats that face the region in the future.

"I compliment the RDA on how they have assessed where we are now and collectively where we are in the future," he said. Mr Mitch-

ell-Collins said the plan addressed the opportunities in tourism and economic diversification as well as challenges such as an ageing workforce.