20/11/2017

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Brand New England**

COUNTRYMINDED candidate for New England Pete Mailler said he would like to see a generic New England branding initiative established to give the electorate’s diverse range of local goods and service providers better access domestic and international markets.

He said New England had a fantastic variety of goods and services ready for the opportunity to be showcased through a branding campaign, at a time when it was essential for regional Australia to strive to maximise the value capture of goods and services through value adding.

“We are all familiar with the concept of shopping local to support small business in our community. CountryMinded’s branding proposal is about taking that notion and putting it on steroids,” Pete said.

“It is all about better enabling small and local businesses to compete in the domestic and global markets. The proposal is to develop a virtual shop front to enhance local business marketing capacity well beyond our own community.

“If elected, I would facilitate a strategic conversation with the aim of establishing a generic New England brand to provide a vehicle for diverse local goods and service providers to better access domestic and international markets.”

Pete envisaged initial conversations would include the NSW Government’s Centre for Economic and Regional Development and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as well as key Local Government personnel to identify resources available to support the initiative before private sector engagement.

“It would be a practical way to support existing and proposed investment in value adding, processing and manufacturing in the region and would extend to supporting start-ups and provide leverage for them to fast track market access and development,” he said.

“Initially the proposal would seek to develop the opportunity for agricultural products and capitalise on identity preserved and locally produced and processed goods. The strategy would provide a complimentary branding tool to promote existing and emerging processing capacity in the region.

“The primary target for the initiative would be small and niche operations that do not normally have the scale or expertise to undertake an extended branding exercise. The objective is to foster private sector investment in the processing and manufacturing sector to increase competition for primary products and increase the value capture of our agricultural products in the region.”

Pete said it was essential to the future of regional communities that they engaged proactively and sought to create their own opportunities.

“This initiative is a novel approach to support local business and drive economic growth in the region, which would provide a significant stimulus to increase business confidence that will flow through to increased employment opportunities.” he said.

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