

## Coalition plans regional strategy to take into next state election

# Guy assembles his team

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BUSINESS figures and community leaders including former mayor Darryn Lyons have been recruited for the Coalition's population taskforce.

State Opposition Leader Matthew Guy revealed the new team on a visit to Geelong yesterday, with Surf Coast mayor Brian McKitterick, Geelong Chamber of Commerce chief executive Bernadette Uzelac and civic leader Helene Bender also signing up.

The business community will be well represented with



Opposition Leader Matthew Guy, fourth from left, with Bernadette Uzelac, Russell Malishev, Darryn Lyons, Wendy Maloney, MP Andrew Katos, Helene Bender and MP Tim Smith.

Cartel Coffee's Nathan Johnston, Malishev Homes chief Russell Malishev and Moore

Stephens business director Wendy Maloney rounding out the seven-member panel.

"Every government talks about regional growth, every government puts money towards regional growth, but that is the way of the past," Mr Guy said.

"The approach of putting a few projects here and there, as the current government is doing, is the old way of doing business. We need a whole-of-government approach to decentralisation — that is the big difference between the current government and the government I would lead."

The committee is set to meet periodically, with South Barwon MP Andrew Katos to

act as chairman. It will report at the end of the calendar year and the Coalition will use its findings to formulate its 2018 state election agenda.

"In Melbourne's west and north, Labor have created suburbs without the necessary infrastructure," Mr Katos said. "It's plonked these houses in paddocks without the necessary schools, hospitals, rail stations and other infrastructure. This taskforce will ensure that Geelong avoids these problems that Labor is creating."

Mr Lyons said his involvement in the taskforce did not necessarily indicate a return to

the political fray but added that "all options were open".

"I am really excited about this taskforce and once again look at the work that has been swept under the carpet by the current government and the commissioners," the former mayor said.

Mr Guy announced his Ballarat population taskforce last month, with the city's mayor Samantha McIntosh set to take part. Similar committees will be set up in other regional centres and report back to an overarching body chaired by Opposition population spokesman Tim Smith.