

LOCAL ROADS
AND COMMUNITY
INFRASTRUCTURE
POLICY



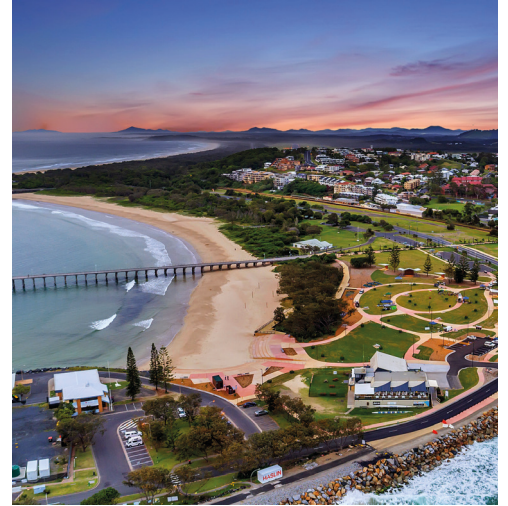
Regional Capitals Australia

Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) was formed in 2012 to represent the interests of Australia's regional capital cities. Our objective is to ensure these needs are reflected in national policy and funding priorities.

Regional capital cities perform a 'capital city' role within their regions, providing a central point of access to essential services, commerce, employment and education. These services are accessed by local residents as well as those in surrounding towns and rural areas.

Regional capital cities also provide a liveable alternative for people and businesses wishing to escape Australia's congested metropolitan cities. Every year regional capital cities generate \$225 billion, or more than 16 per cent of national economic activity.

All RCA members have a growth agenda and stand ready to ensure a growing Australia means a stronger and more equitable regional Australia.



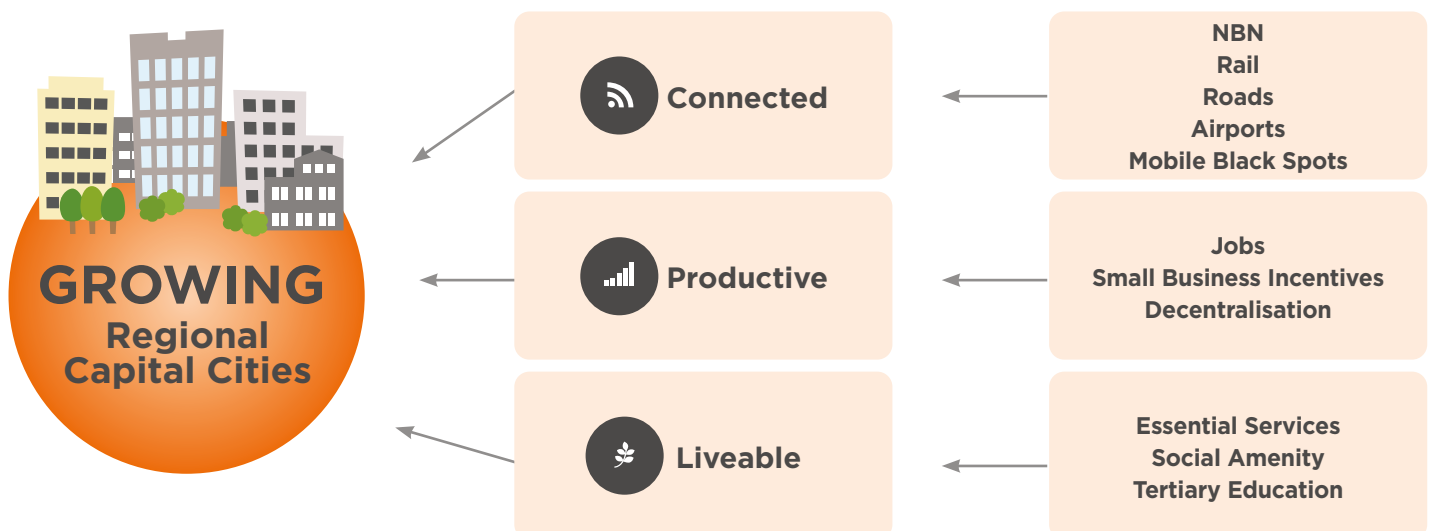
Policy Platform

The following outlines Regional Capitals Australia's framework to grow regional capital cities that are:

1. **Strong service centres:** that continue to be a central point to access essential infrastructure, services, business, employment and education;
2. **Easing the metropolitan congestion:** encouraging regional migration and decentralisation options for new and existing residents and businesses can take the pressure of major metropolitan capitals; and
3. **An affordable alternative:** providing affordable housing and industry industrial land options for families and business seeking to avoid the inflated housing markets of the major metropolitan capitals.

To achieve this vision we must continue to build regional capital cities that are:

1. **Connected:** with roads, rail, airports (and services), broadband and mobile telecommunications;
2. **Productive:** with diverse economies that can be built with government and private sector decentralisation and skilled labour shaped through strong tertiary and continuing education opportunities; and
3. **Liveable:** with high levels of essential services, social amenities and a continued supply of affordable housing options.



Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Policy

The continuance of the Local Road and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program was a very welcome and much required stimulus in regional Australia. This is particularly true at a time when the impacts of sustained weather events are creating a crisis for the maintenance of local roads.

The Need

The 2021 Infrastructure Australia Plan notes that for Smaller Cities and Regional Centres, quality, fit-for-purpose and adaptive social infrastructure, appropriate to the needs of each community, is central to their ability to attract and retain residents and businesses. Regional councils are best positioned to strategically plan for and prioritise appropriate social infrastructure, then sequence it according to local community need.

In this regard the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program will continue to support Australia's growing regional centres by enhancing local assets. It has helped to fund programs such as local road and footpath repairs and renewal, disability upgrades at community halls and centres, walking trail improvements, playgrounds, swimming pool and sporting facility upgrades as well as school crossing upgrades.

The program has delivered numerous direct and indirect benefits to regional communities and has allowed councils to invest in important road and community infrastructure that would have previously struggled to secure sufficient funding.

By removing the competitive element of the funding, significant burden has been taken off councils in having to prepare lengthy, expensive, and complex applications. Understanding the amount of money allocated to each council from the outset allows for better planning and prioritisation of projects.

Growing Maintenance Bill

RCA was pleased to see a decision for the scheme to continue with the Australian Government, announcing \$750 million for Phase 4 of the project in the 2022-23 budget.

RCA notes however that regional councils are experiencing a significant financial strain on the asset maintenance of roads due to the recent weather events across the nation and sustained periods of rain throughout 2021-22.

These events have severely impacted the local road network in our member cities creating unsafe driving conditions. Councils have little ability to address this issue in council budgets and as such RCA is recommending the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program be increased to assist in the task of addressing this challenge.



Recommendations

Increase Round 4 of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program to \$1 billion (up from \$750 million) to support maintenance of the local road network across regional Australia.



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