



Regional Capitals Australia

ANNUAL STATEMENT // 2023





Contents

Message from the Chair	3
The Year in Review	
• Key Activities and Achievements	5
• Reports and Submissions	8
• Strategic Relationships	8
• Stakeholder Engagement	10
• Media and Communications	14
Who We Are	
• Who We Are	18
• Membership	19
• Planning for Regional Growth	19
Financial Overview	
• Audit Report 2021/22	21
• Balance Sheet	22
• Profit and Loss	23



City of Karratha

Message from the Chair

I am pleased to present the Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) 2023 Annual Statement that outlines the work of our alliance to deliver a stronger future for regional capitals across Australia.

Regional Australia continues to thrive in the post-Covid era with city to regional migration rates still up by over 16 per cent on average, compared to 2018/19.¹

However, shortages of suitable housing, connectivity infrastructure and skilled and non-skilled labour continue to be a roadblock to growing regional economies and RCA is championing the case for appropriate support so the population boom is backed up by the right investment for sustainable growth.

This year, the RCA Board have taken our advocacy efforts to the nation's capital on a number of occasions as the Albanese Government shapes a broad range of policy and programs for future years.

In particular, we have worked hard to ensure that regional grant programs are fit for purpose and I'm pleased to see so many of our recommendations to government reflected in the final program guidelines.

We have also worked hard to highlight the critical role played by regional airports and press the case for funding of these important national assets as well as making sure that regions get their fair share of support to address the housing crisis.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of our member councils for their continued support, advocacy and commitment to the common goals and growth of regional capitals.

It has been a privilege to serve regional Australia during my tenure as Chair, and I look forward to supporting RCA to ensure a viable and secure future for the next generation.

Chair
Cr Kylie King



“Regional Australia continues to thrive in the post-Covid era with city to regional migration rates still up by over 16 per cent on average, compared to 2018/19.”

¹ https://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Files/Regional%20Movers%20Index/July%202023/July_2023_RMI_Report.pdf



Key Activities and Achievements

This year saw a particularly busy advocacy program as the Albanese Government undertook consultation on regional grant program guidelines and aviation.

In addition, shortage of suitable housing, labour and challenges in delivering infrastructure in an inflated market continued to be a challenge and RCA pressed the case for additional investment in these key areas.

The following areas were a key focus of RCA's advocacy:

Regional Initiatives

- **Regional Grant Programs:** The Federal Government has opened applications for two new regional funding programs totalling \$1 billion - the Growing Regions Program and the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program;
- **Regional Investment Framework:** New investment framework that establishes a regional development forum for Australian Government agencies to better inform government decisions.
- **Roads:** The extension of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (totalling \$500m for Phase 4);
- **Regional Arts:** The Federal Government's new arts and cultural policy provides \$8.5 million in increased support for regional arts and culture, through a boost to the Regional Arts Fund and continuation of the Festivals Australia Program;
- **Regional Housing:** \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund including a new housing enabling fund for local government to support the development of new housing across Australia. A regional stream will be included in this fund;
- **Migration:** Allocating around 70 per cent of the places in the 2023-24 permanent migration program to skilled migrants and providing an extra two years of post-study work rights to Temporary Graduate visa holders with select degrees.



Latrobe City Council

“... shortage of suitable housing, labour and challenges in delivering infrastructure in an inflated market continued to be a challenge and RCA pressed the case for additional investment in these key areas.”

Regional Funding Programs

RCA has advocated strongly that growing regional capitals need a reliable funding stream for investments in important community infrastructure, with program guidelines that are fit for purpose, efficient and not overly onerous on applicants.

We were pleased to see many of our recommendations accepted by the Government, across both of the new programs: Growing Regions Fund and the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program.

RCA Recommendation	Growing Regions Fund	Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program
Funds to be exclusively allocated to regional communities: excluding suburban and metro projects	Yes – capital cities excluded	Yes – capital cities excluded
Review the stated intention to allow State Governments to access federal regional grant programs	State Governments ineligible for funding	State Governments can apply provided they demonstrate a partnership with local government
That the Government commit to annual rounds of funding	Three rounds committed	Rolling fund – no open or close date
Implement a two-step application process to ensure resources aren't wasted filling in grant applications with little chance of success	Yes – EOI and then full application	No
Guidelines should support the development of a broad range of enabling infrastructure	Yes	Yes, with the exception of housing and emergency management
Funding caps should set Federal contribution at between \$10 and \$50 million and reflect an accurate population planning statistic	Yes – \$500,000 – \$15 million	Yes – \$5 million – \$50 million
Council resources should be used to carry out infrastructure delivery as an in-kind contribution	No	Yes – contributions can be cash or in-kind
Support for business case development	No	Stream 1 provides funding for business case development



Broken Hill City Council

Regional Airports

RCA led a delegation to Canberra to advocate for additional support for regional airports in the lead-up to the release of the Government's Aviation Green Paper.

Regional airports are hard-working national assets with a big role to play in the life of regional Australia, and our nation's broader economy and security.

An estimated 200 regional airports are owned and operated by local councils but rising operating, regulation and security costs means that many airports are operating at a loss and a burden on regional ratepayers.

To overcome these financial constraints and to support future growth, RCA is advocating for:

- **Implement a policy recognising the importance of regional airports** in increasing the connectivity of regional Australia and to consider future planning and funding of regional airports;
- **Provide recurrent funding for the Regional Airport Fund** to ensure that regional airports can be upgraded and maintained and that federally mandated security arrangements can be catered for in future years;
- **Upgrade the guidelines for the Regional Airport Fund** to allow for landside developments to be considered; and
- **Review the efficacy of Western Australia's Strategic Airport Asset and Financial Management Framework** (as recommended by the Productivity Commission) to assess the efficacy of the Framework and determine its suitability for application across all jurisdictions.

RCA was pleased to see the challenges facing regional airports acknowledged in the Aviation Green Paper and will be making a further submission for consideration in the forthcoming Aviation White Paper.

“Regional airports are hard-working national assets with a big role to play in the life of regional Australia, and our nation's broader economy and security.”

Renewable Energy

Australia's rapid escalation into renewable energy means that regional communities are now facing unfamiliar territory on the frontline of Australia's renewable energy transition.

RCA developed the Renewables Installation Consultation Paper and has advocated for greater regulatory oversight to ensure communities aren't adversely impacted by renewable energy installations.

RCA has called on the Federal Government to introduce new safeguards to ensure regional communities are appropriately consulted and protected, with a nationally consistent framework that delivers baseline standards for investment and consultation.

RCA is seeking a commitment from the Federal Government to ensure that two key commitments are met as renewable energy projects are rolled out across regional Australia:

- **Ensure that robust community consultation and best practice engagement** is established as a minimum standard and as a regulatory requirement. This should function as a requirement to any proponents seeking to build renewable projects and transmission lines; and
- **Guarantee a seat at the table for regional stakeholders.** It is of paramount importance that affected stakeholders are given a seat at the decision-making table to ensure social licence is obtained, and that benefits and costs are properly considered.

Housing

RCA has long advocated that a shortage of appropriate, affordable and available housing options has curtailed growth in regional cities. RCA has welcomed the work underway through the Commonwealth Government's National Housing and Homelessness Plan, the Housing Australia \$10 billion Future Fund and the National Accord.

RCA believes that investment is required in the following crucial areas:

- Enabling infrastructure: roads, water and land;
- Managing growth: support for regional planners;
- Maintain and improve existing housing stock; and
- Housing innovation program to recognise and support innovative local projects that can bring housing to market in a timely manner.

RCA was invited to participate in the Regional and Remote Housing Stakeholder Forum, as part of the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Reports and Submissions

RCA continued to inform and shape government policy and decision-making by representing its members' views in important policy areas.

RCA developed the following documents which can be viewed on our website <http://regionalcapitalsaustralia.org>:

- RCA Renewables Installation Consultation Paper;
- Regional Airports Policy and Case Studies;
- Housing Policy Paper; and
- Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25.

Strategic Relationships

RCA collaborates closely with government, partners and key advocacy bodies to advance the cause of regional capitals and regional Australia more broadly.

- **Regional Australia Institute (RAI):** RCA continues to work closely with the RAI to highlight the potential of regional capitals and address the issues hampering regional growth. RCA was pleased to take a key role in the RAI's Regions Rising National Summit 2023, participating in a panel of keynote speakers discussing progress on the Regionalisation Ambition 2032.
- **National Alliance for Regionalisation:** RCA was one of the founding members of this new national alliance, to progress key targets in the Regionalisation Ambition 2023. The Alliance is the first of its kind for regional Australia, with more than 30 CEO's working together to provide national leadership.

Members include:

Regional Australia Institute;
Australian Industry Group;
Australian Local Government Association;
Regional Arts Australia;
Master Builders Australia;
Insurance Council of Australia;
Business Council of Australia;
Small Business Organisations of Australia;
National Farmers Federation;
Planning Institute of Australia;
National Rural Health Alliance;
Royal Flying Doctors Service;
Regional Universities Network;
Australian Regional Tourism;
Australian Rural Leadership Foundation;
Engineers Australia;
Minerals Council of Australia;

Australian Medical Association;
Migration Institute of Australia;
National Catholic Education Commission;
Rural Councils Victoria;
Real Estate Institute of Australia;
Royal Far West;
National Rural Women's Coalition;
Welcoming Australia;
Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia;
Independent Schools Australia;
Regional Aviation Association of Australia;
Australian Communications Consumer Action Network;
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth;
Country Education Partnership;
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute; and the
Rural Doctors Association of Australia.



Regional Airports Policy and Case Studies



Ballarat City Council



City of Greater Geraldton

Stakeholder Engagement

RCA is pleased to represent our members' interests at a number of important national forums including:

- **Ministerial Regional Roundtable:** To discuss the strategic challenges facing regional Australia, and provide feedback on key government initiatives in the regional development portfolio.
- **Australian Government Urban Policy Consultation Network:** To provide advice and feedback to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts on urban policy issues including the development of a new National Urban Policy which will shape the direction of Australia's cities.
- **Regional and Remote Housing Stakeholder Forum:** The Australian Government invited RCA to participate in this forum as part of the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, a 10 year strategy outlining a shared vision for housing policy in Australia.
- **Regions Rising National Summit 2023:** RCA Chair Kylie King was a keynote speaker in the opening panel session of the Regions Rising National Summit 2023 in Canberra.
- **SEGRA:** Cr Mathew Dickerson represented RCA at the SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia) Summit in Toowoomba, participating in the opening panel session and also presenting a speech on "Investment and Planning for Regional Cities".



RCA Chair Cr Kylie King presenting at the Regions Rising National Summit 2023



RCA Chair Cr Kylie King at the first meeting of the National Alliance for Regionalisation



Cr Kylie King at the launch of the National Alliance for Regionalisation in Canberra



Cr Mathew Dickerson representing RCA at the SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia) Summit in Toowoomba

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

RCA continued to advocate for members' interests, meeting with a long list of Ministers, Senators and government representatives. These include:

Government

- Hon Catherine King MP Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government;
- Hon Kristy McBain MP Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories;
- Hon Andrew Giles MP Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs;
- Senator the Hon Carol Brown Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport;
- Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy;
- Senator Anthony Chisholm Assistant Minister for Regional Development;
- Office of the Hon Michelle Rowland MP Minister for Communications; and
- Office of the Hon Julie Collins MP Minister for Homes, Homelessness and Small Business.

Opposition

- Hon Darren Chester MP Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and Regional Education; and
- Hon Michael McCormack MP Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific.

Department

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; and
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.



Mr Brett Stonestreet General Manager Griffith City Council, Cr Doug Curran Mayor of Griffith City Council, Hon Michael McCormack MP Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Mr Frank Zaknich Chief Executive Officer Albury City Council, Cr Kylie King Mayor Albury City Council, Cr Russell Webb Mayor Tamworth Regional Council



Cr Kylie King ahead of a busy day of advocacy in Canberra



Cr George Seymour Mayor Fraser Coast Regional Council, Cr Mathew Dickerson Mayor Dubbo Regional Council, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development the Hon Catherine King MP, Cr Kylie King Mayor Albury City Council, Cr Kellie O'Callaghan Mayor Latrobe City Council



Tim Ellis, General Manager, Latrobe City Council, Cr Kellie O'Callaghan Mayor Latrobe City Council, Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Cr Kylie King Mayor of Albury City Council, Cr Mathew Dickerson Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council and Cr George Seymour Mayor of Fraser Coast Regional Council



Cr Kellie O'Callaghan Mayor Latrobe City Council, Hon Darren Chester MP Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and Regional Education, Cr Kylie King Mayor Albury City Council and Cr George Seymour Mayor Fraser Coast Regional Council



RCA meets with the Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and Hon Andrew Giles MP Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs.



Warrnambool City Council



Dubbo Regional Council

Media and Communications

RCA uses a wide range of platforms including a website, social media, stakeholder alerts and media releases to communicate our message.



Regional Capitals Australia website

This year, RCA has also developed a new newsletter to keep our stakeholders informed about the policy issues impacting regional capitals.

We have continued to engage in the national debate, driving a conversation through the media about regional capital cities and the role they play in the Australian economy.

We have engaged in the policy debate at the local and national level, participated in keynote speaking roles at conferences and provided commentary in the lead up to and post the federal budget. RCA continues to be trusted as a voice of reason on regional issues.

RCA has appeared on a range of different media outlets including:

- ABC Radio (various local and national channels)
- ABC TV
- 2SM Radio
- Canberra Times
- Daily Telegraph
- The Courier Mail
- Triple M Victoria
- Warrnambool Standard
- Farm Online
- Border Mail
- Ballarat Courier
- 4CCC Cairns



Regional Capitals Australia Newsletter



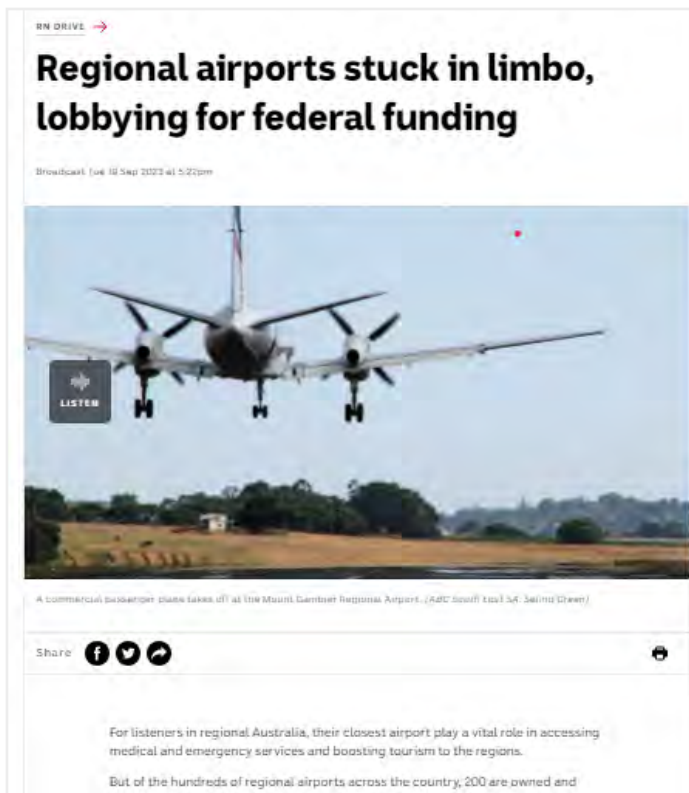
Terzon, E. Cruise Control. ABC [The Business TV and online](#) . 18 September 2023



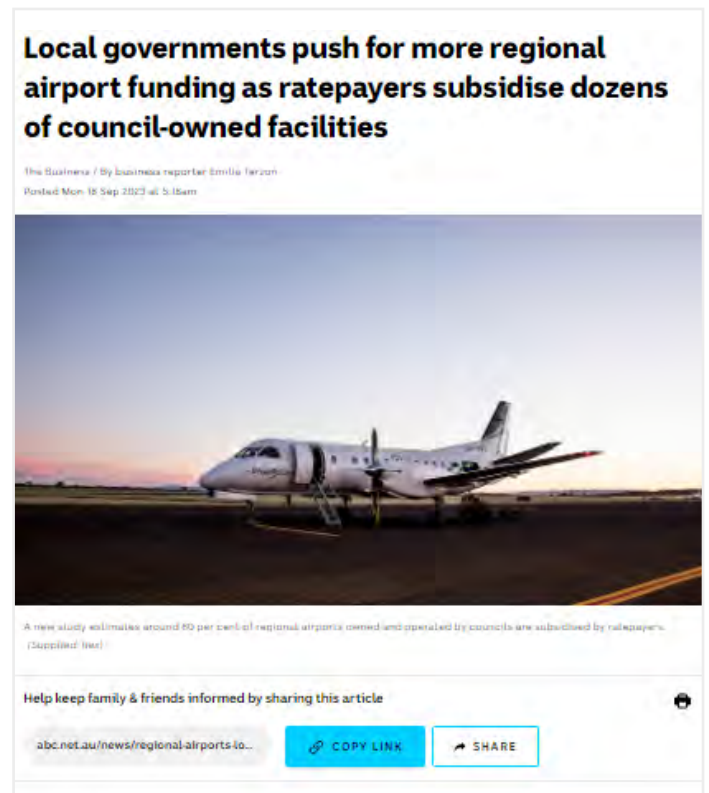
Quirk, C. Regional Capitals Australia wants new safeguards to protect regional communities. [The Standard](#). 12 July 2023



Greater Geelong City Council



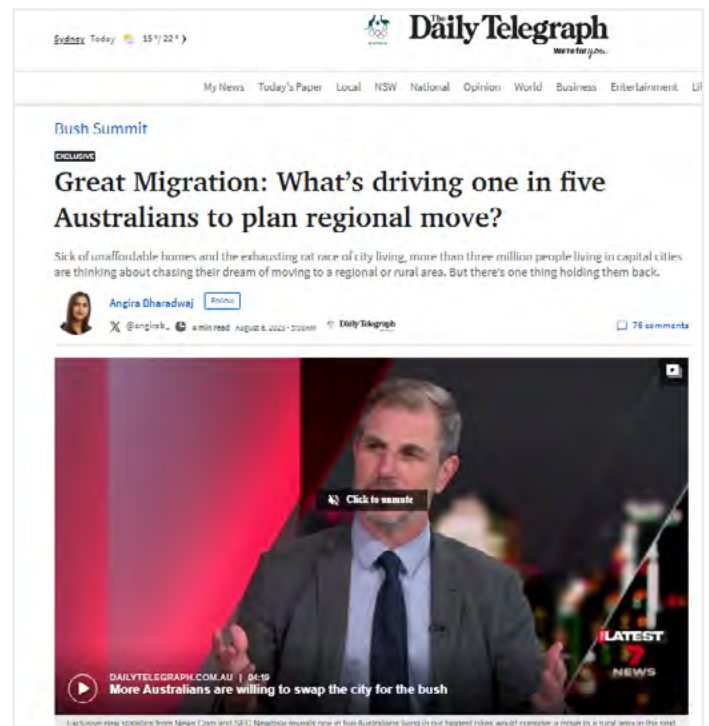
Price, K (Producer). Regional airports stuck in limbo, lobbying for federal funding. [ABC RN Drive](#). 19 September 2023



Terzon, E. Local governments push for more regional airports funding as ratepayers subsidise dozens of council-owned facilities. [ABC The Business TV and online](#). 18 September 2023



O'Shea, B (Presenter). Why regional airports matter. [ABC Radio Melbourne](#). 20 September 2023



Bharadwaj, A. Great Migration: What's driving one in five Australians to plan regional move? [The Daily Telegraph](#). 8 August 2023.



Albury City Council



Griffith City Council

Who we are

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.

Through the executive and representatives of each member council, RCA advocates to the Federal Government and agencies on issues that are specific to the regions.

The governance team is made up of a national forum of Mayors and CEOs and is governed by a board of nine councils and led by the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Executive Board Governance

- **Chair:** Cr Kylie King, Mayor Albury City Council;
- **Deputy Chair:** Mayor Jaysen de San Miguel, Mayor City of Bunbury;
- **Secretary:** Mayor Mathew Dickerson, Mayor Dubbo Regional Council; and
- **Treasurer:** Mayor Shane Van Styn, City of Greater Geraldton.

RCA Executive Board

State	Representing Local Government
Victoria	Latrobe City Council
Western Australia	City of Busselton
New South Wales	Griffith City Council
Queensland	Fraser Coast Regional Council
Northern Territory	Alice Springs Town Council



*Cr Kylie King,
Chair*



*Mayor Jaysen de San
Miguel, Deputy Chair*



*Mayor Mathew
Dickerson, Secretary*



*Mayor Shane Van Styn,
Treasurer*

Membership

RCA member councils are at the forefront of setting our policy agenda and shaping our strategy for advocacy to the Federal Government.

Throughout each financial year, members are invited to contribute to a wide range of advocacy opportunities where councils can have their say on behalf of their city and region.

This includes:

- Input into policy submissions;
- Participation at RCA networking events;
- Participation at delegations to Canberra (non-board members can attend one per year);
- Involvement in surveys and evaluation;
- Participation in case studies; and
- Engagement with research partnerships.

Membership is \$10,000 plus GST per financial year.



RCA board meeting in Canberra

The following cities are members of RCA

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Albury City Council; | • Dubbo Regional Council; |
| • Armidale Regional Council; | • Fraser Coast Regional Council; |
| • Ballarat City Council; | • Greater Geelong City Council; |
| • Broken Hill City Council; | • Griffith City Council; |
| • City of Busselton; | • Latrobe City Council; |
| • City of Greater Geraldton; | • Shire of Broome; |
| • City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder; | • Tamworth Regional Council; |
| • City of Karratha; | • Town of Port Hedland; and |
| • City of Wagga Wagga; | • Warrnambool City Council. |

“Regional cities are the most liveable and desirable destinations in Australia...”

Planning for Regional Growth

Regional cities are the most liveable and desirable destinations in Australia, with people continuing to choose regional living in record numbers.

Looking ahead, RCA's policy priorities for 2024 are:

1. Continue to advocate for a national population plan that recognises and plans for the growth of regional capital cities;
2. Continue to participate in consultation for the design of the National Urban Policy to ensure the urban design of regional cities are planned for;
3. Continue to advocate for regional airports in the whitepaper development and the 2024 budget;
4. Continue to advocate for regional housing in the National Housing and Homelessness Policy development;
5. Continue to participate in consultation and advocate for regional migration in the Migration Review and associated design of any new system.

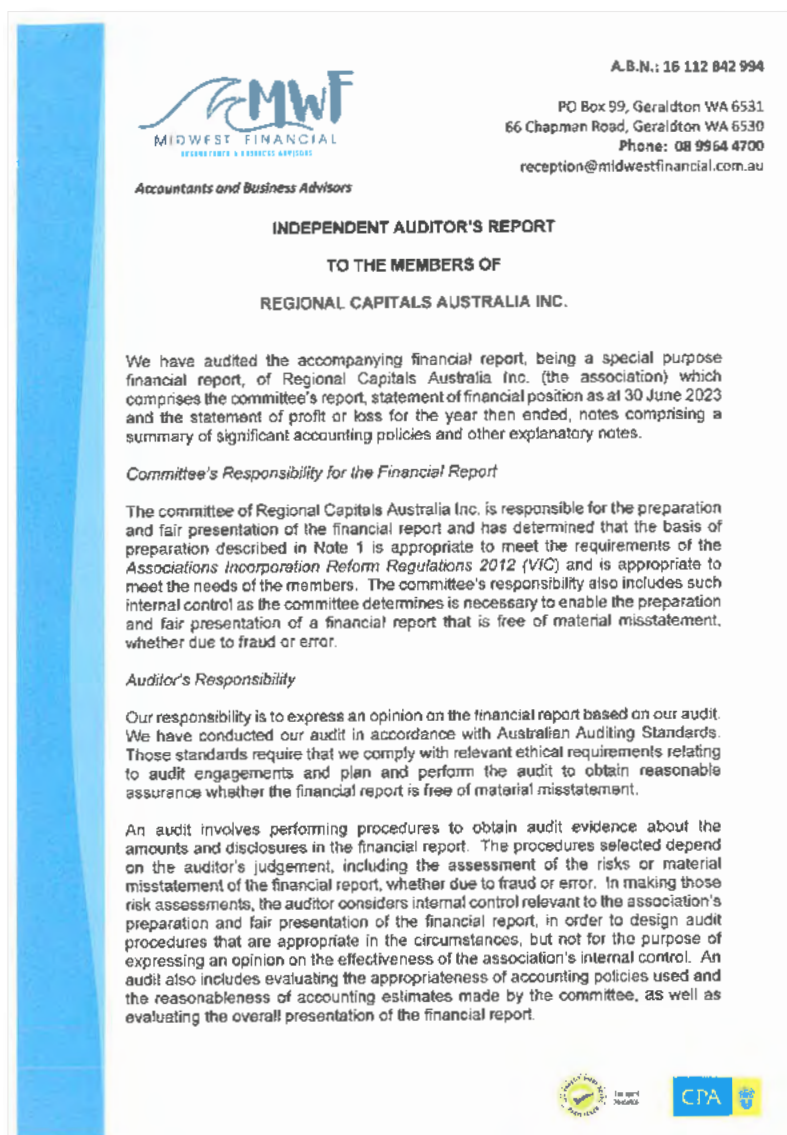


City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder



Town of Port Hedland

Audit Report 2022/23



We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with applicable independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report of Regional Capitals Australia Inc. presents fairly, in all material respects the financial position of Regional Capitals Australia Inc. as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Regulations 2012 (VIC).

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Regional Capitals Australia Inc. meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Regulations 2012 (VIC). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

JIM DILLON – CPA 699724
GERALDTON

Dated this 10th day of August 2023

Balance Sheet

REGIONAL CAPITALS AUSTRALIA INC.			
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
AS AT 30 JUNE 2023			
	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS			
BANK			
Regional Capitals Australia Inc		9,883	32,124
Regional Capitals Saver		35,408	45,106
TOTAL Bank		45,291	77,231
CURRENT ASSETS			
Accounts Receivable		154	-
Prepayments		-	-
GST		4,130	9,937
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		4,284	9,937
TOTAL ASSETS		49,575	87,168
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable		-	44,598
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		-	44,598
TOTAL LIABILITIES		-	44,598
NET ASSETS		49,575	42,560
EQUITY			
Current Year Earnings		7,005	(20,978)
Opening Bal Equity		3,310	3,310
Retained Earnings		39,260	60,228
TOTAL EQUITY		49,575	42,560

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

Profit and Loss

REGIONAL CAPITALS AUSTRALIA INC			
PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023			
	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
INCOME			
Interest Income		302	4
Other Revenue		3,151	-
Memberships		190,000	165,750
		<u>193,453</u>	<u>165,754</u>
LESS EXPENDITURE			
Accounting & Bookkeeping Fees		5,900	5,698
Advertising & Social Media		106	-
Audit Fees		1,250	1,250
Bank Fees		195	125
Delegations & Representatives		13,000	29,000
Events		3,594	5,000
Filing Fees		122	-
Freight & Courier		457	-
Meetings		3,771	-
Member communications & media		33,500	46,020
Policy & Research		31,000	30,000
Printing & Stationery		997	-
RCA Meetings Costs		24,888	-
Reports & Publications		-	5,895
Secretarial & Advocacy Services		66,124	58,060
Subscriptions		887	585
Telephone & Internet		-	291
Travel – National		38	-
Website & hosting		619	7,000
		<u>186,448</u>	<u>186,722</u>
NET OPERATING PROFIT (LOSS)		7,005	(20,978)
Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation			



Fraser Coast Regional Council

For more information on Regional Capitals Australia, please contact the Secretariat:

Regional Capitals Australia

PO Box 320, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Rachael Sweeney – Project Manager

Email: secretariat@regionalcapitalsaustralia.org

www.regionalcapitalsaustralia.org

 [regionalcapsaus](https://twitter.com/regionalcapsaus)  [RegionalCapitalsAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/RegionalCapitalsAustralia)

Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) is compliant with the Copyright Act 1968 (Cwlth) (the Act) as all included works are either owned by RCA and all other original works' authors have been sufficiently acknowledged by providing the title, name of the original author and link to the original work. RCA has provided sufficient acknowledgement of all works included in the Annual Statement. RCA has not reproduced a significant part of any of the included works in the Annual Statement and is compliant with the Copyright Act 1968 (Cwlth).

