

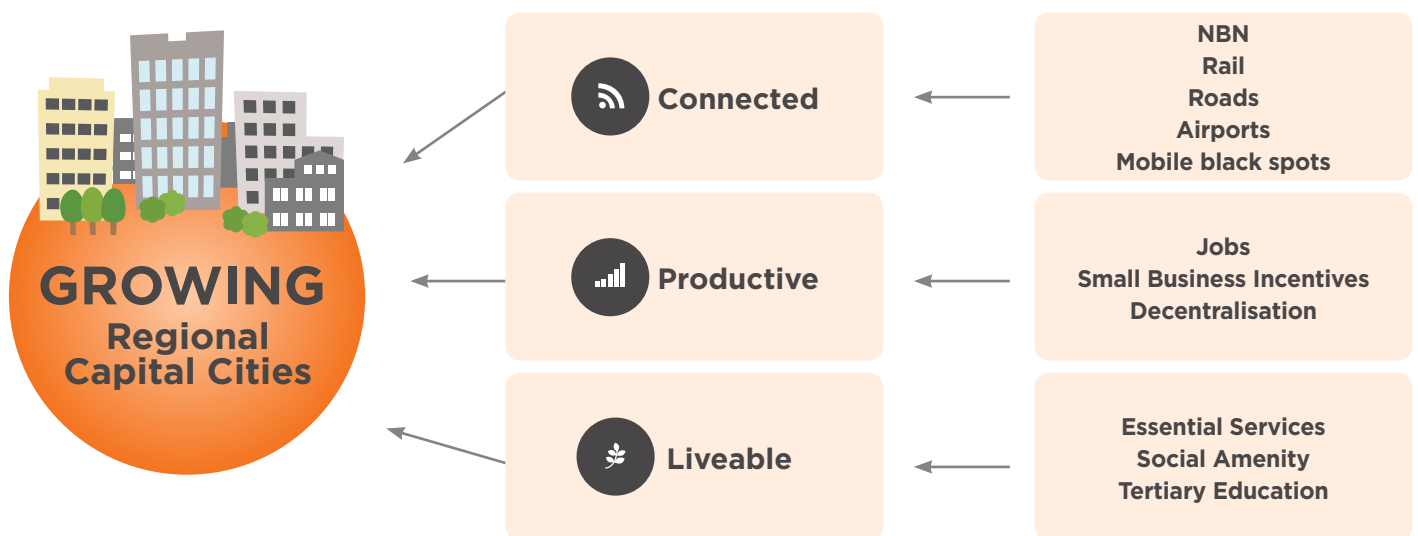
Regional Capitals Australia

Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) was formed in 2012 to represent the interests of Australia's 51 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 to 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. These cities are growing and an extra one million people will live in a regional capital city in the 5 years to 2020.



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



RCA's vision is to grow regional capital cities that are:

Strong service centres	Easing metropolitan congestion	An affordable alternative
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To achieve this vision we must build regional capital cities that are:

 Connected	 Productive	 Liveable
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Connected Regional Capital Cities

Connectivity that provides flight services, faster rail, high-speed broadband and mobile access is key to overcoming the disadvantage of distance.

Consistent and reliable services in regional capital cities provide the private and public sectors with the enabling tools required to increase productivity and create more jobs. These services also work to increase the liveability of these cities.

To maximise the potential of regional capital cities, connecting infrastructure needs to be prioritised for investment.

National Broadband Network (NBN)

The rapid acceleration of e-commerce provides a fundamental platform to connect cities and their residents to the world. As regional capital cities seek to increase their population, economic diversity and move past the historical over-reliance on primary production, the right digital infrastructure must be provided. The NBN is a platform for narrowing the economic and social inequity between regional capital cities and those in metropolitan areas. While the rollout of the NBN is well underway, the success of this project in delivering high quality broadband must be evaluated, and where gaps are found in delivery of infrastructure, investment must take place to close these gaps.

Recommendations

1. Undertake an annual review of the quality of broadband service across regional capital cities to establish connectivity gaps; and
2. Fund service and infrastructure gaps left in regional capital cities as the rollout of the NBN is finalised.

Rail

High-speed rail that connects regional capitals to metropolitan cities supports a mobile workforce and aids in public and corporate decentralisation.

Rail infrastructure also allows more Australians to choose the affordable and relaxed lifestyle of a regional capital city. As the nation battles unprecedented levels of unaffordable housing and urban congestion, prioritising the development of faster rail through business cases development and project funding must be a key priority for all levels of government.

The resources required to build assessable business cases is a financial burden and regional capital city councils are not able to bear - further funding by the Australian Government should be made available to ensure regional rail projects can be identified and assessed.

Recommendations

1. \$100 million (over four years) in additional funding to support the development of regional city rail connectivity projects under "faster-rail" program; and
2. Prioritisation of regional capital city faster rail projects under the National Rail Program.





Roads

Regional roads are enabling connectors, which provide access to national and international markets while creating opportunities for employment, tourism and access to key services in neighbouring regional towns.

The scheduled investment over the next decade through the new Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) and the Roads to Recovery Program are a significant step forward in meeting the existing gaps in road infrastructure. As the funding for these programs are exhausted, RCA recommends that the Federal Government continue to invest in these programs so that the crucial infrastructure required to connect Australian's metropolitan cities, region capital cities, and rural and remote towns is built.

Recommendations

- Continue to increase investment in the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) and the Roads to Recovery Program; and
- Increase the flexibility of available funding in road programs to develop feasibility studies and business cases that will allow for potential upgrades of roads between regional capital cities.

Regional Airports

Airports in regional capital cities play a crucial role in connecting individuals, accelerating trade, providing access to a diverse range of employment opportunities and driving tourism. Regional airports are also important hubs for facilitating emergency and medical services.

The cost of urgent upgrades to regional capital city airports, which suffer from World War II infrastructure as well as the increasing burden of on-going security upgrades, is onerous. Nearly 40% of regional airports expect persistent budget deficits over the next 10 years.

Recommendations

1. Ensure the guidelines for the \$100m Regional Airports Fund allow Regional Capital Cities to target the development of their airports through appropriate infrastructure upgrades; and
2. Provide increased flexibility for programs like the Building Better Regions Fund to include funding for feasibility studies and business case development to allow regional airports to diversify their operations.

Mobile Black Spots

Mobile connectivity has moved simply beyond a necessity for daily commercial and social activity, and is now seen as the last line of defence to protect lives in emergency situations. These emergency situations are highly prevalent in regional communities.

Regional capital cities have welcomed the on-going investment in the Mobile Black Spot Program and recommend that continued investment in this important program be prioritised to ensure the safety of regional and remote communities.

Recommendations

- Invest an additional \$500 million over three years to enable the prioritisation of regional capital cities in the roll out of the Mobile Black Spot Program; and
- Set aside funding for monitoring and evaluation post program rollout and a contingency of funding to undertake additional work as required.

