

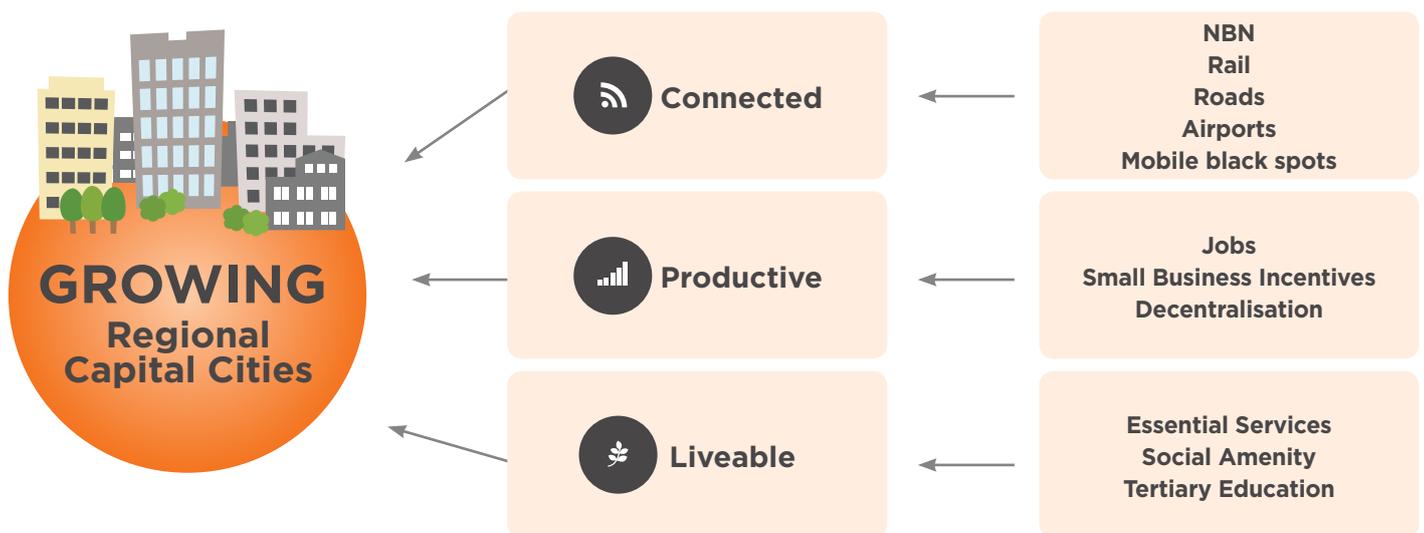
## Regional Capitals Australia

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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## Liveable Regional Capital Cities

Regional capital cities are “10 minute cities” offering a great lifestyle, affordable housing and no congestion. This liveability can act as an attractor to people and businesses seeking to escape congested metropolitan cities. Regional capital cities also stand to benefit from those making the switch, particularly when those people are an educated and mobile workforce, bringing a diverse range of skills and innovative business models with them.

To continue to build on the liveability of regional capital cities, greater investment in the amenity of these cities is required. This will ensure the cities can not only attract new people but also retain these workers and their families.

## Tertiary Education

Universities produce skilled students who are not only qualified in their chosen field but also better prepared to meet the future challenges of a continual diversifying economy.

Whilst regional Australia accounts for almost 40 per cent of the population, young people aged 15-24 years from rural and regional Australia are almost half as likely to be enrolled in tertiary education as young people in metropolitan areas. Thriving regional universities are essential to overcome this discrepancy.

Ensuring that tertiary study, including higher education, vocational education and training opportunities exist in regional capital cities will work to address the gap in educational attainment, and will also assist communities in retaining their leaders of the future.

## Recommendations

1. Provide ongoing funding for the Regional Study Hubs initiatives;
2. Provide more scholarship opportunities for regional students who study at regional campuses in order to cover the costs of education, accommodation and living expenses; and
3. Establish a fund that will allow the recommendations of the Regional Higher Education Expert Advisory committee to be delivered.

## Social Amenity

At the core of liveable regional capital cities are assets and services that build the amenity of communities, including arts centres, sporting facilities as well as thriving community spaces and Central Business Districts.

Existing funds such as the Building Better Regions Fund and the Regional Growth Fund do not sufficiently match needs, nor do they provide certainty through long-term fund allocations. Both funding streams should be expanded in terms of funds available and extended to match the growing need for investment in regional areas.

## Recommendations

Continued investment in the Building Better Regions and the reestablishment of the Regional Growth Fund (over 4 years) will meet the various productive and liveability needs of regional Australia. These funds should:

- Have flexible guidelines that target regional economic and population growth;
- Support the development of business cases;
- Serve as a funding mechanism for projects identified as part of any Regional Deals; and
- In the case of the Regional Growth Fund provide a source of matched funding for projects valued over \$20m.

