



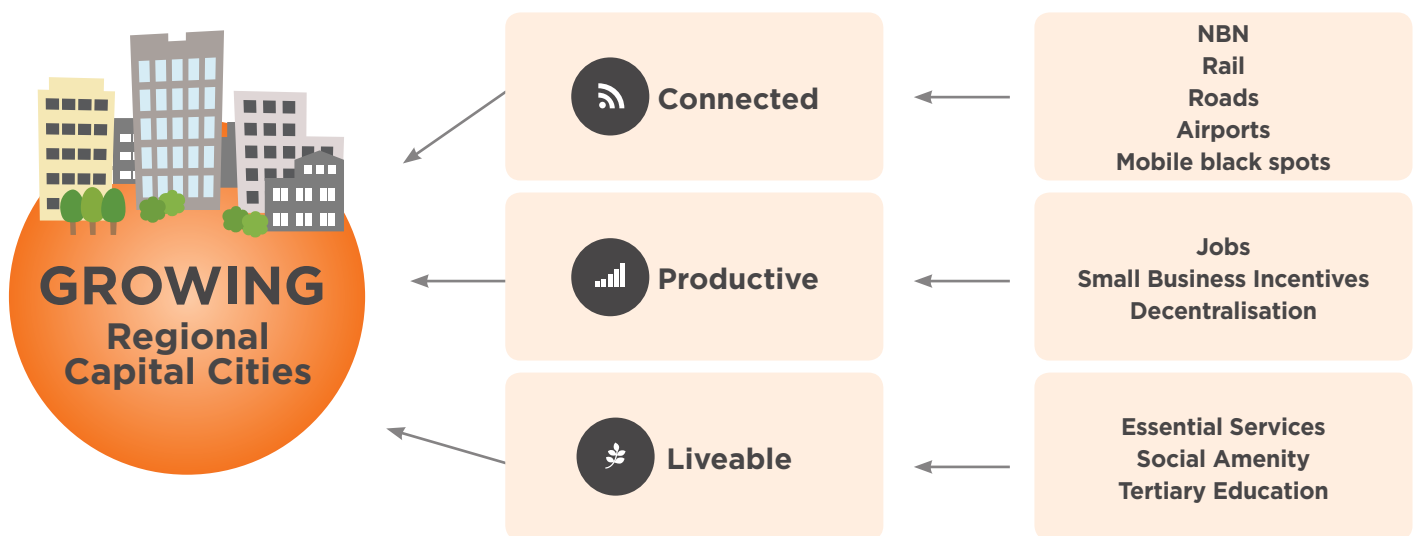
Regional Capitals Australia

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 bare - 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 Capitals 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.



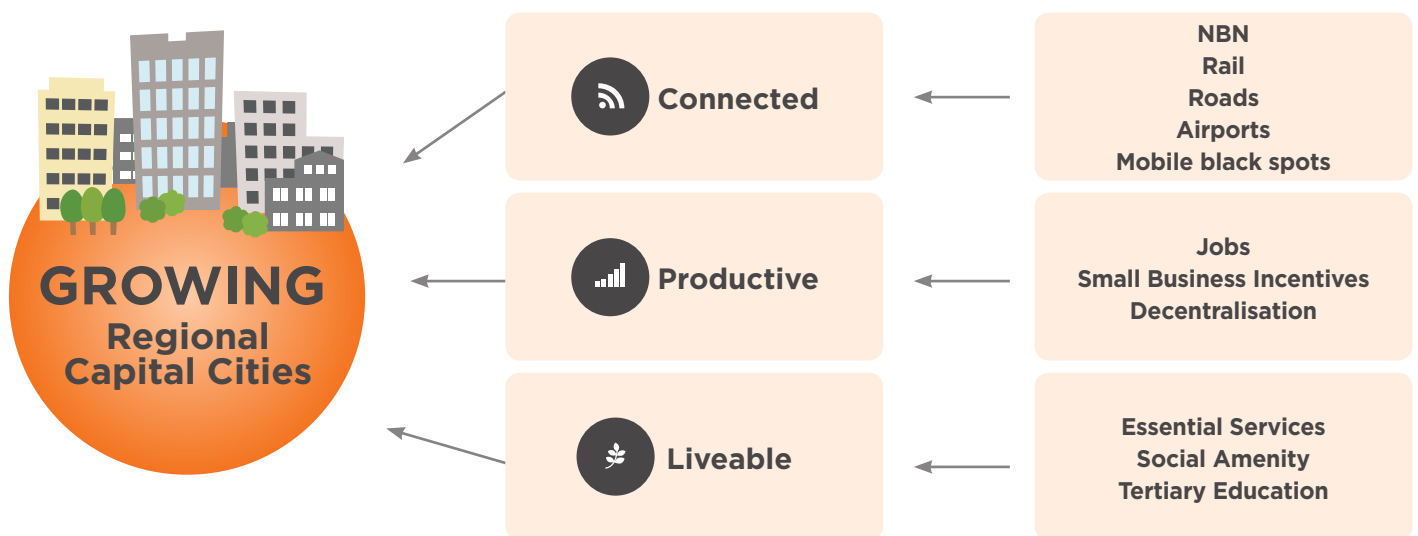
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Liveable Regional Capital Cities

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 re-establishment 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.



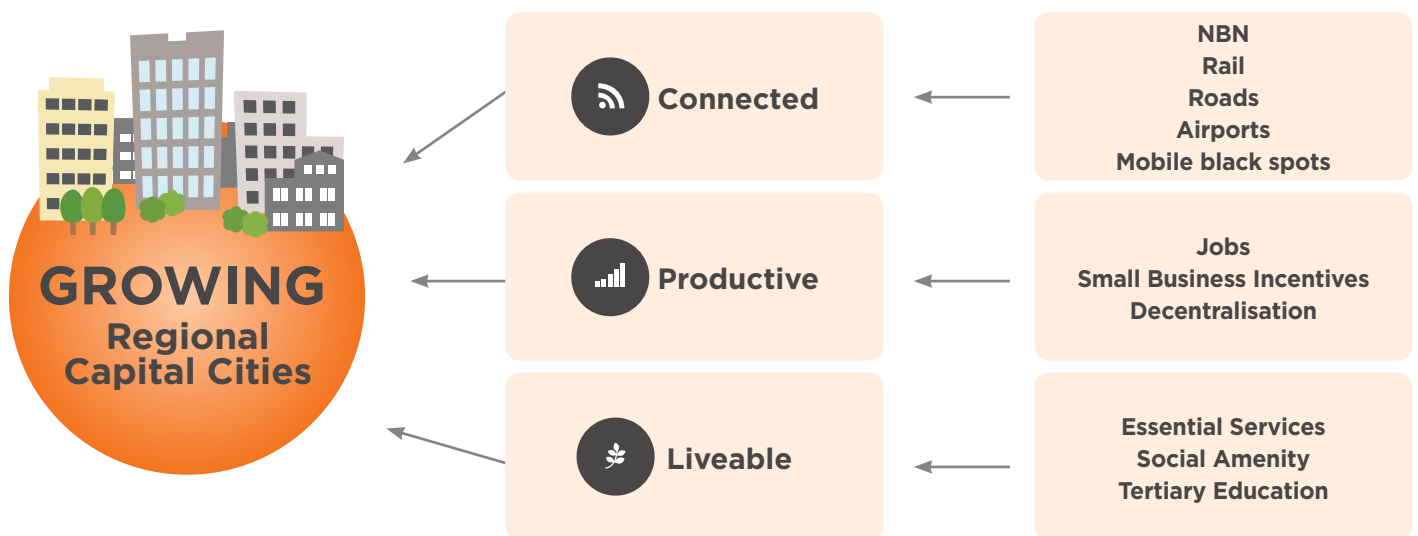
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Productive Regional Capital Cities

Australia's regions account for around 40 per cent of total national economic output and have a stabilising effect on Australia's economy.

Regional capital cities are the hubs through which the majority of Australia's primary production exports move. These cities are also employment hubs particularly for the service sector where demand is growing based on the needs of a growing population.

Regional capital cities will continue to be a key contributor to Australia's global competitiveness, but more must be done to ensure the cities are able to adapt to structural economic change and capitalise on emerging markets. Programs that attract a diverse range of employment options should be the investment priority of every level of government.

Decentralisation

Building productive regional capital cities requires investment to maintain liveable and affordable cities. It also requires a partnership with private investors and businesses that are committed to decentralise their operations.

The decentralisation of government departments and the corporate sector offers a unique opportunity to build on the economic capability of Australia's regional capital cities, while providing a new form of economic diversification.

There are numerous benefits of decentralisation for employees and employers including cost-savings, greater workforce participation, workforce diversity and increased business resilience.

Recommendations

- Continued identification of Federal departments (or segments of departments) that can relocate staff to regional capital cities;
- Provide a teleworking budget for the Australian Public Service and set yearly targets for each department, corporate entity and statutory authority to offer teleworking opportunities;
- Ensure corporate decentralisation is a key priority of new Regional Deals; and
- Explore tax incentives for businesses that aim to attract and retain operations in regional capital cities.



Regional Deals

In total, regional capital cities generate \$225 billion per annum, or more than 15 per cent of national economic activity. With the appropriate levels of investment and commitment by the three tiers of government via Regional Deals, there will be scope to expand upon economic output while having a long-term positive effect for Australia across a number of indicators.

Regional Deals represent an opportunity for genuine partnerships between the three levels of government, the private sector and the community to work towards a shared vision for productive, connected and liveable cities. By aligning planning, investment and the governance required to accelerate growth and job creation, stimulate urban renewal and drive economic reforms, Regional Deals stimulate prosperity and increase the liveability of regional capital cities.

Regional Deals are a new paradigm and investment model that has a proven track record of bringing regional stakeholders around the table to meet the challenges of growth as well as contributing to improvements for metropolitan cities.

As the nation's productivity continues to decline, the development of a network of socially and economically thriving regional capital cities should be the objective of all levels of government. Regional Deals should be seen as a mechanism to achieving this outcome.

Recommendations

1. Assign appropriate funding for the Department of Regional Development, Infrastructure and Cities to design a process to allow for the next round of Regional Deals; and
2. Commit to deliver 10 new regional deals over the period 2019-2023