

## Regional Capitals Australia – Key Activities

### About 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.

We are the only national organisation that advocates for the development of regional capital cities.

Our policy framework is supported by our three key policy positions:

1. [Liveability](#);
2. [Connectivity](#); and
3. [Productivity](#).

*\*These position papers have been included as an appendix for further information. Also included is a copy of our most recent annual statement.*

### Key Achievements

Over the last seven years, RCA has made significant progress securing a place for regional capital cities in federal policy. The following outline some of our policy achievement:

- The creation of City Deals;
- Continuation of Regional Deals;
- Increased investment in regional post-graduate education opportunities;
- \$100 million additional funding for fast rail business cases;
- \$170 million for a Regional Airports Program;
- \$160 million for the Mobile Black Spot Program.
- \$1 Billion Roads of Strategic Importance
- National Population Plan that recognises a role for regional cities
- Stronger regional digital connectivity package
- Building Better Regions Fund
- Regional Study Hubs program
- Regional Aviation Policy Statement and Regional Airports Fund
- Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program

Over the past 12 months, our advocacy efforts have contributed to:

### **COVID-19 Support**

- \$1 Billion Regional Coronavirus Fund;
- \$500 Million Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program; and
- \$1.3 Billion in advanced payments of the 2020-21 Financial Assistance Grants.

### **New Funding**

- \$100 Million for the establishment of the Regional Aviation Fund (Round 1 of this fund has been committed); and
- \$570 Million for regional universities and to improve educational attainment in regional students – this includes \$21 Million for Regional University Centres and the establishment of a Regional Education Commissioner.

### **Ongoing Regional Funding**

- \$200 Million for Round Four of the Building Better Regions Fund; and
- \$380 Million for Blackspots funding.

### **National Policy Development**

- RCA has continued to advocate for a policy framework that continues to attract and retain a more balanced share of Australia's growing population. This work has seen the needs of regional cities reflected in National Population Plan;
- RCA Chair has been invited to contribute to the Federal Treasury's - Centre for Population's development through membership to the Cities Reference Group and Policy Round table; and
- RCA has been invited to contribute to the development of the Federal Government's Decentralisation policy that will target both public and private sector investment in regional Australia.
- RCA has presented at a public hearing for the Inquiry Into Regional Australia.

### **Parliamentary Submissions**

- Standing Economics References Committee Inquiry into Indicators of, and impact of regional inequality in Australia;
- Inquiry into Regional Australia;
- Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee;
- Regional Growth Fund guideline development; and
- Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2019-2020.

You can view these submissions on our website: [www.regionalcapitalsaustralia.org](http://www.regionalcapitalsaustralia.org)

### **Strategic Relationships**

RCA has also continued to collaborate with key advocacy and research bodies that contribute to the development of regional cities, including:

- **Regional Australia Institute (RAI):** collaboration on the updated Regional City Hubs and Hinterlands and Spokes report, which was presented at the Regions Rising event in Canberra earlier this year;
- **Regional University Network (RUN):** joint advocacy for increased access to tertiary education funding outside of the major metropolitan cities, and new visas that provide additional incentives for international students to live and study in a regional city; and
- **Australian Airports Association (AAA):** RCA and the Australian Airport Association successfully collaborated on the need for more investment in regional airports. RCA will continue to look for ways to collaborate on projects that build air travel opportunities to and from regional capital cities.
- **Australian Local Government Association (ALGA):** information sharing in regard to the financial impacts of COVID-19 on local government in order to advocacy on Local Government financial assistance and population policy; and
- **Business Council of Australia (BCA):** joint calls for regional deals and collaboration on regional priorities.
- **National Farmers Federation (NFF):** joint calls for regional deals and collaboration on regional priorities.

### Stakeholder Engagements

To advance the interests of our members, in this financial year RCA has met with a long list of Ministers, Senators, and MPs, along with Ministerial Advisors and Chiefs of Staff, a count of these has been provided below:

- Department Meetings: 3
- Meetings with Ministers: 15
- Meetings with Shadow Ministers: 5
- Meetings with MP/Senators: 6
- Advisor Meetings: 10
- Two delegations has been completed (December and February)
- Two more Delegations have been planned for 2020 (on-hold: COVID-19)

Note: the secretariat meets with Ministerial advisers frequently to keep up to date on key issues and to maintain strong stakeholder relationships.

### Media Engagement

RCA is striving to keep stakeholders informed of our media activities as we work to influence the national conversation on regional cities.

This has been achieved over the last year through:

- The Week That Was (sent weekly, average 33.1% open rate, industry average is 26%);
- Quarterly Newsletters;
- Member alerts; and
- Media statements;
- Opinion Pieces (2020):

Regional Aviation- *Regional Capital Routes Must Soar Post COVID-19 Turbulence*

Featured in:

- The Northern Daily Leader
- Busselton Mail
- Kalgoorlie Miner
- The Daily Mercury

Rail- *Time to Fast Track Regional Rail*

Featured in:

- The Kalgoorlie Miner
- The Morning Bulletin

Regional Australia- *You're Invited*

Featured in:

- The West Australian
- The Kalgoorlie Miner
- Manjimup Bridgetown Times
- Sound Telegraph
- Kimberly Echo
- Midwest Times
- Broome Advertiser
- South Western Times
- North West Telegraph
- Harvey Reporter
- Narrogin Observer

Regional Deals - *Put Regional Deals on the Table*

Featured in:

- The West Australian
- The Kalgoorlie Miner
- Manjimup Bridgetown Times
- Sound Telegraph
- Kimberly Echo
- Midwest Times
- Broome Advertiser
- South Western Times
- North West Telegraph
- Harvey Reporter
- Narrogin Observer

*These opinion pieces can be found on our website.*

RCA's Chair frequently appears in local news, regional ABC news and current affairs around the country.

Our newsletters are opened and engaged with by the offices of: Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP; the Hon Michael McCormack MP, the Hon David Littleproud, the Hon Alan Tudge, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, and regional MPs.

### Member Engagement

This year RCA has been working more closely than ever with its members. The bushfires, drought and COVID-19 have had significant impact on all of our members and the support of our members is key to successfully advocate for regional matters during these consecutive crises. Some of the work we have been doing with our members is listed below:

- Housing affordability issues survey;
- Bushfire impact survey;
- COVID-19 revenue impact survey; and
  - o This survey looked at the projected revenue stream impacts caused by COVID-19 lockdowns on things like rate moratorium.
- RCA policy priorities survey:
  - o RCA is currently reviewing its priorities to ensure they align with the current issues impacting regional economies and communities.
- Member meetings to discuss priorities and concerns one-on-one

Prior to COVID-19, RCA was planning a national councillors summit in Canberra, where all regional city councillors were to be invited to hear from key Ministerial and Industry stakeholder. This event has been put on hold until travel restrictions are lifted.