



# NATIONAL GROWTH AREAS ALLIANCE

POLICY PLATFORM – 2020-21

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## Looking to the Future

The demographic and economic changes that are occurring in our cities are profound. With one in every five Australian citizens living in a fast-growing city, suburb or town,<sup>i</sup> the right investment in these areas will not only impact local communities, but the nation.

Our vision for communities in the outer suburbs of every city is clear – resilient, liveable and productive communities. Each citizen deserves access to safe, sustainable, high amenity places with the opportunity to work and study close to home or in connected centres that are regionally accessible.

## Building Blocks for Growth

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA or the Alliance) endorses four guiding principles as building blocks for future policy and investment decisions to support growth areas and the nation:

### 1. Rebalance Australian Capital Cities

Rebalancing the spatial structure of our capital cities needs better planning and investment that supports distributing infrastructure, jobs and housing more evenly across the metropolitan area, including bringing new jobs closer to where the growing population lives. This is a necessary shift in traditional metropolitan planning practices in Australia.

### 2. Invest in Places for People

As we rebalance the structure of our cities at a metropolitan scale to accommodate growth, innovative place-based and neighbourhood planning and design will bring together the critical elements required to support productive, liveable and resilient places for people to live and work and for businesses to invest.

### 3. Unlock Economic Growth

Unlock the value in the fast-growing cities, suburbs and towns on the outskirts of Australian capital cities and support the growth of new economies by matching skilled labour to new and emerging industry opportunities, fostering the growth of high amenity, industry and service led innovation precincts for knowledge intensive and small business jobs and expanding the opportunities associated with freight and logistics.

### 4. Prioritise Transport Solutions

Improve overall transport performance to service the outer urban growth areas of Australia's capital cities through integrated transport networks which connect people and jobs and support active, shared and public transport connectivity to lessen dependence on private vehicles.

## 1. Rebalance Australian Capital Cities

Managing population growth is a responsibility that is shared between the Federal, State, Territory and Local governments. Increasingly, as the closest level of government to the community, Local Governments are on the ground working with the community to respond to rapid growth. A key component of managing population growth is to consider the distribution of population so that it does not continue to overburden or outpace investment in infrastructure which supports liveable and sustainable communities.

### Population growth projections

Over the next 30 years, Australia's population is projected to increase by 11.8 million people, with 80 per cent of the growth in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. This is equal to adding a new city, roughly the size of Canberra, each year for the next 30 years.<sup>ii</sup> The 31 fastest growing cities, suburbs and towns around our capital cities are forecasted to be home to 8 million people by 2036<sup>iii</sup>, and continue to grow at three per cent per annum, significantly faster than the Australian growth rate (1.7 % per annum. between 2011 and 2016.<sup>iv</sup>)

## Implications for outer urban growth areas of unequal growth in capital cities

- *Long commutes and urban congestion:* Australia's larger capital cities are now experiencing the challenges that come with ever-expanding population and unbalanced growth distribution. The economic gains of concentrating economic activity in Central Business Districts are being outweighed by lost productivity in travel-time and congestion. In 2016, the job deficit position was 69 for every 100 workers living in the outer suburbs with up to 80 per cent of workers across the nation commuting from the outer suburbs.<sup>v</sup>

Well planned cities - where the location of jobs, homes and their supporting infrastructure networks are coordinated to maximise accessibility and liveability - will deliver the best outcomes for communities in growth areas on the outskirts of Australia's capital cities. Interventions that better align the distribution of new jobs growth, transport and social infrastructure to growth areas will support polycentric and better performing cities, with multiple activity hubs critical for the nation's economic and social sustainability.

- *Pressure on critical infrastructure for new communities:* Beyond transport solutions, servicing the demands of a growing population for water, energy and telecommunications is placing demands on the capacity of existing national infrastructure.

New technologies and business models for provision of water, energy and telecommunications infrastructure will influence how services can be delivered to growing communities. Meeting this challenge will require governments to anticipate these changes and plan to provide the regulatory environment to ensure supply is delivered efficiently, sustainable and maintained equitably.

## Future directions to rebalance Australian cities and reduce the burden on growth areas

1. *Integrated Strategic Planning:* With unprecedented population growth forecast for our capital cities, we call on all levels of government to work with Local Government to rebalance the spatial structure of our cities through evidence-based metropolitan scale planning which integrates population growth, land use, transport and social infrastructure more responsibly and more equitably.

To prevent the continued isolation of growth communities already burdened with poor access to the right job opportunities, infrastructure and services, metropolitan planning must adopt an integrated and place-based approach to development and infrastructure sequencing, with local government - representing the communities - at the centre of this process.

2. *Planning Systems and Governance Frameworks:* Improved planning systems and governance frameworks, are critical to streamline the actions of all three levels of government. Continued reform of the responsibilities shared between the three levels of government for planning, funding and delivery of strategic transport, economic and community development infrastructure is the only way forward. Sector-led infrastructure at state level leads to uncoordinated outcomes and assets, with communities suffering from delivery lags in critical community and social infrastructure.

By accelerating the Planning and Investment Collaboration frameworks, such as the City Deal program, all stakeholders including state agencies, landowners and developers, business and industry representatives are brought together in the planning and delivery framework to deliver well-sequenced high amenity places.

3. *National plan for energy, water and digital infrastructure to meet growing population needs:* Federal government to work with State governments (COAG) to review and establish the appropriate regulatory environment and demand forecasts, in partnership with local government, to support efficient and sustainable urban infrastructure delivery including water, energy and telecommunications.

4. *Innovative Funding and Financing mechanisms:* With increasing budget pressure on funding competing infrastructure priorities across the nation, continued dialogue is needed at COAG and across sectors to build the capacity and mechanisms within local governments for private/public partnerships in infrastructure, including the role of developer contributions, institutional investment and value capture projects.

### **NGAA Policy Priorities 2020:**

- As part of the Australian Government's Planning for Australia's Future Population<sup>vi</sup>, implement the Centre of Population objectives to promote deliberate and collaborative planning for population growth and infrastructure investment.
- Strengthen the 'voice' of outer urban growth areas within the National Population and Planning Framework and Treasurer's Forum on Population, to support the Federal Government's national population growth and infrastructure planning.
- In the context of the 'City Deal' model, recognise the central role of local government in guiding the place-based sequencing and delivery of agreed infrastructure investments.
- Invest in a capacity-building program for collaborating local governments to identify and prepare suitable proposals for consideration for a 'City Deal' project.
- Leverage the learnings from the current 'City Deals' to inform improved and replicable models to enhance future deals for local government, including, but not limited to, Planning Partnerships and Governance and Collaboration models.
- In partnership with state governments (COAG), commit to a review of the planning and development of greenfield developments in outer urban growth areas, with a focus on the alignment between forecast population growth, housing development, transport and community infrastructure and the necessary funding models, including developer contributions.

## **2. Invest in Places for People**

As we rebalance the structure of our cities at a metropolitan scale to accommodate growth, at the local level, place-based and neighbourhood planning and design will bring together the critical elements required to support productive, liveable and resilient places for people to live and work and for businesses to invest.

The Alliance calls on federal and state governments to take a renewed focus on planning for places at the local and neighbourhood level, ensuring that metropolitan scale plans are sequenced with development to support growth<sup>vii</sup>, investing in places where people want to live.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Consequences of unequal growth for people and place**

- *Shortage of public open space and sports facilities;* With rapid growth there has been an historic undersupply of facilities. Over time the increasing demand that is associated with fast population growth -- compounded by funding constraints of local and state government - has led to these communities having a significant shortage of public open space and sports facilities. Faced with long commutes to sporting precincts, many forgo active recreation, entrenching a pattern of disadvantage, resulting in reduced quality of life and increased health costs. The cost of addressing this issue in Western Australia alone is estimated to be \$70 million in 2019, growing to \$108 million in 2026.<sup>ix</sup>
- *Poorer health and social isolation;* Outer urban growth areas have relatively higher rates of obesity (the Penrith rate is 33%<sup>1</sup>), death from heart disease, and psychological distress. Social isolation is also a significant concern. Loneliness can affect all ages and is exacerbated by long travel times for work or recreation.<sup>x</sup>

These health and wellbeing outcomes are directly related to poor social and environmental conditions, and result in reduced quality of life, increased healthcare costs and increased productivity costs to local businesses. By providing and supporting education pathways, a

diversity of local employment, good quality affordable housing, and the other infrastructure needed for people to be active, eat healthily and form and maintain social connections, we invest in a healthier community with more social and economic resilience.

- *Youth Disengagement*; Disengagement by youth from schooling and higher unemployment rates is a challenge for all growth area councils. In 2016, 11.6% of 15 to 24-year olds in National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) areas were disengaged with employment and education, compared to 9.6% in Australia. (.id 2018). For some growth areas like the City of Playford, South Australia, the rate is as high as 61 percent, impacted by intergenerational unemployment and poverty.<sup>xi</sup>
- *Environmental impact of rapid growth*; The rate of new development in growth areas places pressure on the decision-making cycle within local governments, forcing rapid planning and approval cycles which can lead to removal of tree canopy, housing stock which can be poorly sited and designed to account for local climatic factors such as flood, heat and fire and exacerbation of urban heat island on communities.

### **Future directions to create places for people in growth areas:**

1. *Place-based urban planning and design*: Place-based planning integrates leadership and design excellence to create high amenity places for people that respects the natural resources our future relies upon, incorporating good street design, green and blue space.<sup>xii</sup> It also demands an urban configuration where residents can access work, study, cultural, recreational facilities and essential services such as healthcare within minutes of their home - reducing congestion and emissions and returning time to residents for greater social and family connectivity, health and well-being.
2. *Unlock transport hubs*: Planning and design of transit-oriented development around urban rail and other mass-transit options is a valuable planning tool for unlocking the value around transport corridors in the outer urban growth areas, leading to increased densification and access to amenity and jobs and the potential creation of great places. Neighbourhood transport and “last-mile” solutions including active and shared transport options to fill the last-mile gap are a priority in neighbourhood layout and early transport interventions, before long term dependency on private vehicle use becomes entrenched.
3. *Place-based planning for social infrastructure*: Looking beyond transport, improving ‘place’ liveability, productivity and resilience of outer urban growth areas will rely on the transformation to high amenity, dense and thriving activity hubs and precincts, with critical social infrastructure where residents have local access to schools, sporting, business and cultural facilities. This is where place-based planning and design can work to overcome sector-led infrastructure development and ensure that social infrastructure is sequenced with development.
4. *Housing diversity*: Thriving and desirable places also rely on intergenerational housing stock, diversity of density types which is climate resilient and situated with good street design. Outer urban growth areas are already home to a range of age groups, with opportunities for a diverse mix of first homebuyers, upgraders and retirees. More residents live in medium and higher density housing than ever before, renting is becoming more common and the population is becoming more culturally diverse. Place-based planning and design will support the creation of thriving, diverse and desirable places.

## NGAA Policy Priorities 2020:

- Co-invest in critical community, recreational and social infrastructure projects for thriving communities such as the Growth Areas Perth and Peel (GAPP) Sport and Recreational Facilities proposal.
- Federal and State governments leverage the work of local governments (Turn Down the Heat, What we Build/Where we Build<sup>xiii</sup>) in a joint planning response to extreme heat and other climate related impacts on growth areas including essential services infrastructure including water and energy.
- Equal access and opportunity for higher education pathways in fast growing cities, towns and suburbs

### Social Infrastructure

“Social infrastructure is comprised of the facilities, spaces, services and networks that support the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities. It helps us to be happy, safe and healthy, to learn, and to enjoy life. The network of social infrastructure contributes to social identity, inclusion and cohesion and is used by all Australians at some point in their lives, often on a daily basis and includes the following social sectors: Health and aged care; Education; Green, blue and recreation; Arts and culture; Social housing; Justice and emergency services.”

*Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019, p388*

## 3. Unlock Economic Growth

The shift towards a service and knowledge-based economy has a major impact on the location of jobs across Australia, with employment in large metropolitan cities accounting for almost 87% of national job growth.<sup>xiv</sup>

The fast-growing cities, towns and suburbs of Australia’s capital cities play a pivotal role in the nation’s economy by providing affordable housing to a large resident base and also employment land for export industries such as manufacturing, freight and logistics. They account for more than 11 per cent of GDP, despite making up only six per cent of Australia’s LGAs.<sup>xv</sup>

The jobs analysis in the *State of Australia’s Fast Growing Outer Suburbs 2018*, suggests that the traditional economic role of outer urban growth areas is transitioning. Several indicators show early signs of entrepreneurial activity and an increase in knowledge intensity and high-tech job activity.<sup>xvi</sup> The rate of growth of high-tech jobs in outer urban growth areas is outpacing the national average.

Health, education and professional services are driving most of the high skilled growth in the outer suburbs, with 40 percent of the jobs growth over the last 5 years in high skilled occupations.<sup>xvii</sup> High skilled jobs are important to the outer suburbs as they offer higher incomes and generate higher economic multipliers, with other economic sectors benefitting from their activity. Given the historic reliance on population and construction-based employment and the constraints on greenfield development, it is critical to support these seeds of transition to ensure that outer urban growth areas secure a growing and equitable share of high-tech jobs. They are important catalysts for economic transition and offer better distribution of agglomeration hubs and precincts to the outer suburbs.

However there is a significant deficit in educational attainment in outer urban growth areas, with the percentage of residents who have completed Year 12 or a Bachelor degree trailing the national average<sup>xviii</sup>. Current geographic distribution of Commonwealth Supported Places for Bachelor Degrees is heavily weighted to inner city University campuses, thereby lowering the viability of new campuses being established in outer urban areas, where large numbers of university students reside and curtailing future career choices.<sup>xix</sup>

## Future directions to unlock economic growth

1. *Transformational Infrastructure:* To successfully transition to the service and knowledge-based economy and match labour markets to high value jobs, investment in transformational infrastructure including transport, digital and economic assets such as airports, universities and hospitals is needed. From 2011 to 2016, the outer suburbs captured a growing labour pool with 35 per cent population growth but only received 13 per cent of the asset growth (non-dwelling).<sup>xx</sup>

Research by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) shows that capital investment such as transport, telecommunications, community and social infrastructure including universities, hospital and cultural assets is a core driver of economic activity and growth in a region.

Securing catalyst institutions such as universities, hospitals, recreational and cultural assets in the places where one in five Australians live is critical because they:

- attract more knowledge intensive jobs for residents
- attract higher skilled workers
- can play an 'anchor tenant' role in precinct development and further agglomeration – all strengthening economic performance and productivity.

2. *Incentivise Precinct Development:* Domestic and international evidence shows that innovation precincts are increasingly important in driving agglomeration and economic growth. The Australia Government through the *Statement of Principles for Australian Innovation Precincts* supports place-based innovation ecosystems.<sup>xxi</sup> The Alliance seeks collaboration between government, business, research and education sectors to develop precincts that support growth.
3. *Leverage Urban Freight Task for Good Growth:* Looking to the expanding freight and logistics sector within outer urban growth areas, there is an increasing urban freight task. According to the *2015 Australian Infrastructure Audit* Australia's containerised freight task is projected to increase by 165% by 2031,<sup>xxii</sup> with cities and outer urban growth areas being the primary location for this growth. The outer suburbs provide freight corridors, together with first- and last-mile transport and handling operations, warehousing and storage - all of which impact the structure and function of our cities.

The potential impacts of freight movements on local and regional road networks need to be planned for and managed to ensure that local liveability and the performance of transport networks are not unduly compromised.

4. *Catalyse Higher Education and Research Institutions where people live:* Improve access through decentralization of vocational and university campuses and the spatial distribution of commonwealth supported places, to create education student pathways close to home, grow local skills to support job growth and transition to the knowledge economy. Strengthen the role of university campuses in creating research capacity in growth areas to support economic development, industry attraction and targeted skills development of local communities
5. *Growth areas as service nodes for regions:* As a part of the population strategy, re-position the role of growth areas as 'service nodes' for growing regional areas and smaller cities and towns.

## NGAA Policy Priorities 2020

- Provide direct funding via a co-investment model with local and state governments to accelerate targeted precinct development and industry attraction in line with the Australian Government's *Statement of Principles for Australian Innovation Precincts*<sup>xxiii</sup>.
- As a part of the Federal Government's industry-led Growth Centre Strategy<sup>xxiv</sup>, fund a planning review which aligns targeted investments to connect growing labour markets in the outer suburbs to the Industry Growth Centre initiative, across the six industry sectors of cyber security, advanced manufacturing, food and agribusiness, medical and pharmaceuticals and Mining Equipment, Technology and Services (METS).

- Federal government to implement the recommendations of the *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Australian Government's role in the development of Cities*,<sup>xxv</sup> to provide financial support, in the form of grants, to projects which demonstrate potential to generate significant employment growth in the rapidly expanding, outer suburban communities of Australian cities.
- Federal and state government to kick start the distribution of employment from CBD's of the capital cities to growth areas through a targeted co-investment model for suburban jobs.
- Federal Government create a policy setting which incentivises the decentralisation of tertiary educational institutions and smart ways of learning for students.

### Member Projects 2020

- Support the alignment of jobs to skills, by establishing a “suburban growth fund” which provides targeted co-investment for major transformational projects to support economic growth and jobs in the fast growing cities, suburbs and towns of Australia’s capital cities:
- Federal government to co-invest in the listed projects and unlock economic value by accommodating freight movement corridors and intermodal hubs, whilst preserving the efficiency and performance of local transport networks which support liveability:

## 4. Prioritise Transport Solutions

The outer suburbs of Australian cities expanded rapidly with increased private car ownership and the desire for affordable living away from inner-city congestion. However, access to services, jobs and leisure facilities is a growing challenge. New ways of working, supported by high quality digital infrastructure are starting to transform the skills and job profile of outer suburban communities, but families still rely on access to roads, rail and public transport to connect to the jobs, facilities and services far from home.

Life in most outer urban growth areas is not a 30 Minute City experience. Nationally, the story is a consistent one with up to 80 per cent of residents commuting from their suburb every day.<sup>xxvi</sup> Given the gaps in public transport infrastructure and the “last-mile” challenge, community reliance on the private car to get to jobs located far from home is significant, and the demand for improved roads and road performance is now critical. As reported by the Australian Automobile Association, road performance is deteriorating nationally, with reliability and congestion worsening. The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimated that congestion cost Australia \$16.5 billion in 2015. Without major policy changes, congestion costs are predicted to reach between \$27.7 and \$37.3 billion by 2030.<sup>xxvii</sup>

There are three problems with public transport for residents of outer urban growth areas, described by Infrastructure Australia’s Reform Series, *Outer Urban Public Transport; Improving Accessibility in lower density areas (2018)*<sup>xxviii</sup>. They are: lower levels of access, poor frequency and longer travel times. The Alliance firmly believes that these challenges go to the heart of the health, well-being and resilience of our communities.

### Future directions to fix transport

1. *Transport solutions:* Outer urban growth area communities need better roads with reliable travel times, better public transport, commuter parking and pathways for active transport. Transport is critical to growing healthy and productive cities where people are connected to jobs.
2. *New transport models to support mode shift:* The Alliance calls for reform and practical, cost-effective actions by Government which look to new integrated models of transport provision – such as on-demand and sharing models – to overcome the policy challenges of low ridership and cost recovery due to slow mode shift by commuters who have historically relied on private vehicle transport.

New transport models coupled with a polycentric approach to activity and jobs centres, will work together to transform the quality of life of outer urban growth area communities.

3. *Future-proof transport solutions*: Build next generation infrastructure by embedding digital enablers in all new infrastructure projects funded by the federal government so local and state government can optimize vehicle movements using sensors, devices and software.

### **NGAA Policy Priorities 2020**

- Fund research collaboration with the private and academic sectors to understand how new transport modes, including sharing models, can enhance connection in outer urban growth areas.
- Federal government to dedicate funding to catalyse investment in smart infrastructure which supports last mile solutions, smart parking infrastructure and smart street retrofits

### **Member Projects 2020**

- Federal government to work with state and local governments and other agencies to prioritise investment in transport and road networks and pinch points which cause significant congestion for the residents and workers of outer urban growth areas.
- Target infrastructure investment in key projects which Connects Communities, unlocks productivity and brings jobs close to home including roads of significance, commuter rail, commuter hubs, grade separation and digital infrastructure.
- Federal government to prioritise passenger rail construction and upgrades and other mass transit services with higher capacity, higher frequency services to outer suburbs, coupled with commuter hub planning to aid the mode shift for private car commuters.

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