

Benefits and challenges of infrastructure investment in growth areas

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Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University.

RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.



Overview

- Project purpose
- Case studies
- Overview multi-criteria review
- Summary of benefits
- Reflections
- Recommendations





Objectives

- Understand quantitative and qualitative benefits of federal (and other) community and economic infrastructure investment in growth areas
- Point to future opportunities for research to better quantify benefits
- Identify opportunities for agreed baseline data relevant to growth areas
- Inform decision-making for future investment





What we did

- Identification of case studies in consultation with NGAA
- Collation of case study information and data
- Multi-criteria review of case studies, identifying benefits and challenges
- Information sessions with case study councils





Three types of investment projects

- Economic Development Infrastructure (5 case studies)
- Community Infrastructure (6 case studies)
- Transport Infrastructure (2 case studies)





Case study selection criteria

- Case studies nominated by NGAA member councils
- Diversity of projects
- Federal funding
- Impact/scale
- Information level
- Replicability/Comparability
- Implemented
- Partner support





Selected projects – Economic Development

- Stretton Centre, Playford, South Australia
- Business Station, Gosnells, Western Australia
- StartNorth Business Hub, Hume, Victoria

Economic and Community Development

- Casey Fields, Casey, Victoria
- Cranbourne West Community Hub, Casey, Victoria





Selected projects – Community Development

- Wallan Youth Services Hub, Mitchell Shire, Victoria
- Cockburn Integrated Health Facility, Cockburn, Western Australia
- Regatta Park Upgrade, Penrith, New South Wales
- Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre, Kwinana, Western Australia
- Sutherlands Park Upgrade of Hockey Fields, Gosnells, Western Australia
- Angle Vale Community Sports Centre, Playford, South Australia





Selected projects – Transport infrastructure

- Bald Hills Road Freeway Interchange, Mount Barker, South Australia
- Evans Road and Hallam Road Upgrade, Casey, Victoria



Case study presentation in the report

Community Profile

	City of Playford	Greater Adelaide
Location	20-37km north of the Adelaide CBD	
Population 2021	100,573	1,402,393
Forecasted population 2036	130,000	1,560,000
Population growth rate 2021	2%	0.5%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	15.2%	21.3%
Population under 15 years of age	22.9%	17.1%
Population over 65 years of age	12.8%	18.6%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	7.2%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	6.8%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	4.3%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	lowest decile	4th-lowest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	4th-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	2nd-lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population, SA Government (2020), Australian Urban Observatory

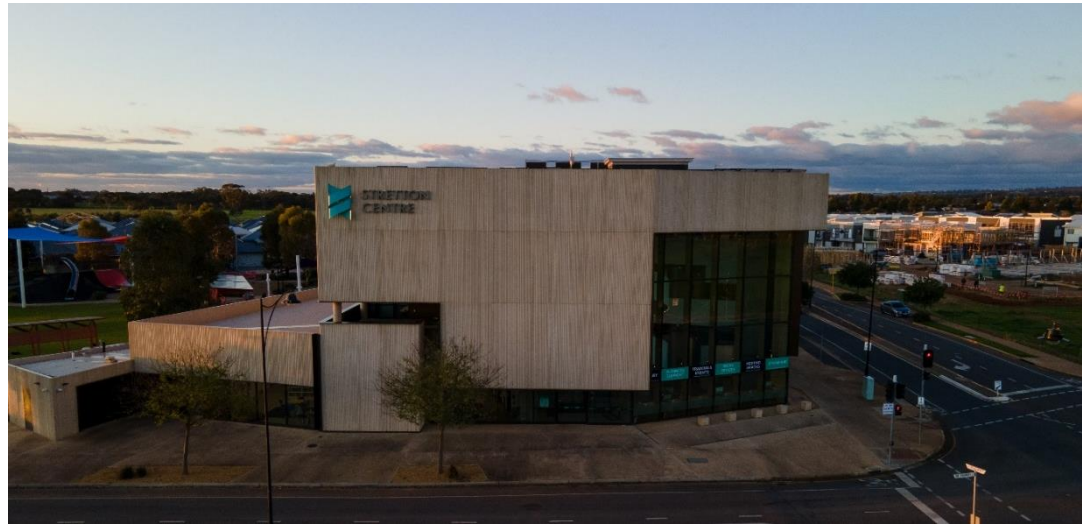
* Working Population Profile for the 2021 Census had not been released at the time of writing



Case study presentation in the report

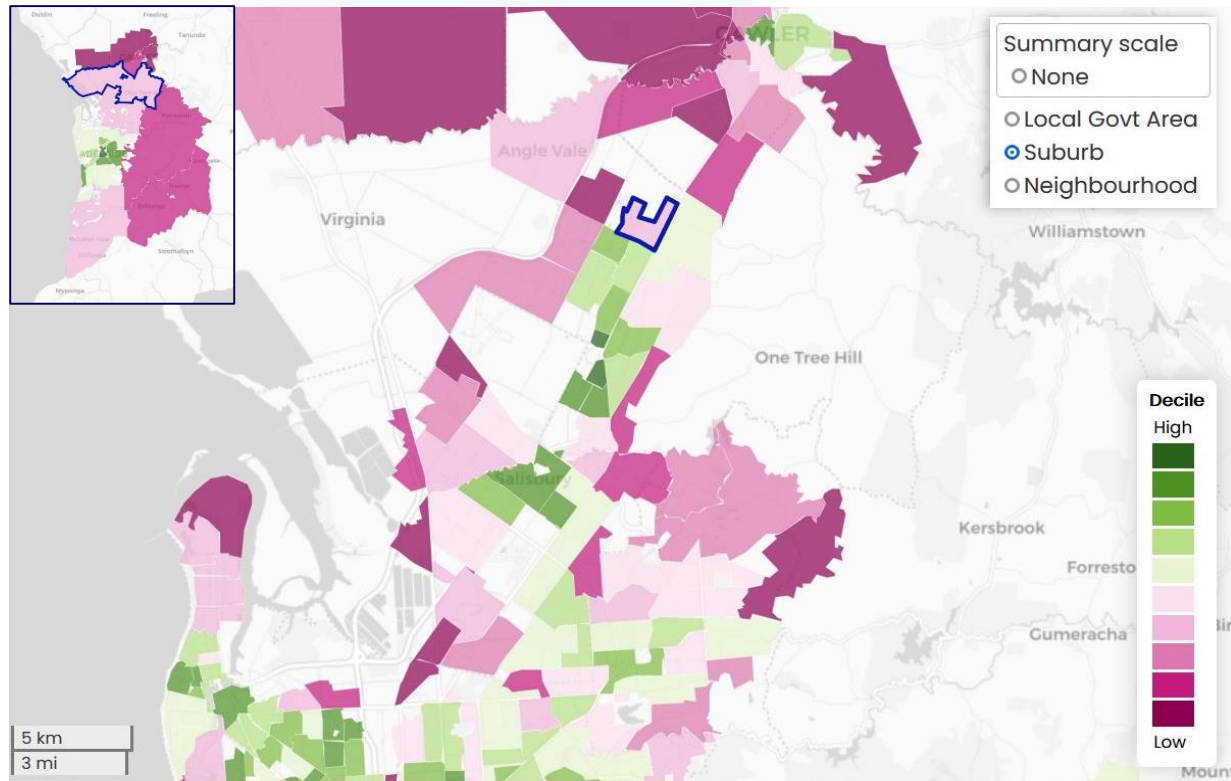
Project description

The Stretton Centre is a regional business hub that offers business support, co-working and office spaces and venue hire of function and meeting rooms for workshops and training. Co-working spaces include business support services, postal facilities and opportunities for networking with the City's Economic Development Team being located within the Centre.



Case study presentation in the report

Social Infrastructure Index 2021 from the Australian Urban Observatory



Source: Australian Urban Observatory (© RMIT 2022, Open Street Map, CartoDBI, Esri), auo.org.au





Case study presentation in the report

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The Stretton Centre aims to...

Funding and governance

Table 1: Funding contributions to building the Stretton Centre

Federal	State	Council	Other
\$11 million			\$4 million

Benefits and outcomes

Results of the multi-criteria review





Multi-criteria review

Considered criteria:

- Health benefits
- Community cohesion
- Social equity
- Economic development
- Employment
- Networking and connection





Multi-criteria review – some caveats

- Data collected is diverse, often not publicly available, often not recent enough
- Some benefits easier to measure than others
- Some measurements are proxies which do not convey the whole situation (e.g. direct job creation)
- Often difficult to prove/understand causality, particularly on a broader spatial level – broad range of influences
- Many benefits are long-term rather than short-term
- Some benefits may only be understood through qualitative and more in-depth research





Health Benefits

- **Reduced travel times** – due to more local employment and services; potential to improve work-life balance and reduce time spent sitting
- **Improved active transport connections** – potential to increase physical activity
- **Improved access to sports grounds** – increased physical activity for new sport club members, informal recreational activities
- **Improved access to health care** – earlier treatment and prevention, better integration of health and counselling services, consultation services for mental health and non-communicable diseases
- **Improved access to green open space** – influencing mental health and physical activity
- **Improved access of emergency services** through better connectivity





Community cohesion

- Provision of **specific programs for the community**, e.g. reading or sport programs for children
- **Facilitation of social interaction** and stronger sense of belonging through local hub and open space
- **Increased social connection** through sport programs
- **Increased potential for social participation** through counselling services
- **Better reputation** of the local area through the new hub, centre or sport fields, contributing to **local pride and sense of belonging**
- **New & improved connections** through new transport options/routes
- **Consultation with community** increases feeling of community





Social equity

- **Improved access to services, levelling the field** (health, sport, employment, green open space, counselling)
- Services (better) accessible by **transport modes other than the car**
- **Improved gender equity** (specific focus on women of some programs, also women are sometimes less mobile)
- **More local jobs**, levelling the field
- **Catching up with transport demand**, improving local congestion and amenity





Economic development

- **Improved knowledge of local small businesses** through programs/support > skills, access to other businesses, decision makers, grants programs
- **Potential for diversification of local business** through hubs and programs
- **Location** for small businesses
- **Improved skills and economic participation of local community** through programs > new skills, counselling, learning environment
- Local centres or other locations support **hospitality industry**
- **Attraction of visitors** through regional sport events, function rooms, improved accessibility
- Improved accessibility leads to **more potential customers** for local business, improved freight access
- **Better economic outcome for sports clubs** due to higher membership





Employment

- **Creation of jobs** through business support
- **Diversification of employment** conditions through new jobs
- **Jobs for the respective hubs** and programs provided
- **Improved access to jobs** due to better connectivity
- **Improved access to local business** looking for employees





Networking and connection

- **Improved interaction between council and community, local businesses, sports clubs etc.**
- Hubs improve **(perceived) accessibility of council**
- **Co-location of services** (in the hub and adjacent to it) leads to networking and connection
- **Cross-agency collaboration, networking between businesses, new partnerships of service providers** (community and health)





Reflections

Benefits

- Broad range of benefits with spatial equity a consistent benefit
- Benefits have a particular impact on fast-growing communities
- Early provision increases benefits

Infrastructure gap

- National extent of challenge indicates that not a local problem of inadequate administration or weak state frameworks
- Closing the infrastructure gap requires national effort
- Disbenefits from deficits in social and economic infrastructure





Reflections

Federal (and state) funding

- Funding support enabled projects to proceed
- Inconsistent funding availability, no specific federal program for fast-growing councils

Data availability

- Currently difficult to understand benefits in a coherent and comparable way – quantification, causality, comparability
- Growth areas change fast, but data is slow; some benefits are long-term
- Opportunity to collect standardised data from funded projects and use these insights for future projects





Recommendations

- Acknowledge growth area infrastructure gap as national challenge
- Establish a national growth areas framework
- Establish a national growth areas infrastructure fund
- Develop national growth areas infrastructure standards and assessment model
- Develop national coordination arrangements between federal, state and local governments





Thank you

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