

NGAA



June 2010

Supporting More Sustainable Growth Areas



Outer Metropolitan Growth Areas

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) represents 25 of Australia's fastest growing municipalities with over 3.3 million residents.

Over the next 20 years the population of these municipalities will grow at double the national rate.

Growth areas play an integral role in accommodating growth in metropolitan regions across the nation. People are attracted to these areas for the house prices and the lifestyle. But growth areas also struggle to be equipped with the necessary public transport, social infrastructure and services and employment opportunities to meet the significant demands that rapid growth places on these communities.

The NGAA believes that to support more sustainable growth areas, current and future residents need greater access to the basics, such as safe roads, public transport, local employment, recreational facilities and community and youth services, as enjoyed by residents in established suburbs.

Growth areas contain centres which serve wider catchments and house major regional transport links and areas of environmental and heritage significance. All these assets are under pressure from urban expansion.

Growth areas on the fringes of Australian cities are significantly disadvantaged in regard to access to jobs and services.

The interest in growth areas from the Federal Government and funding received by growth Councils to date has been very welcome. There is, however, still much that needs to be done.

What Does NGAA Want to Achieve?

The NGAA wants to improve outcomes for our member communities. By closing the gap between growth areas and metropolitan averages, we believe we can develop more sustainable growth areas.

The NGAA wants:

- Improved access to employment opportunities
- Better personal mobility
- More local community services; and
- More diverse housing opportunities.

This will require policies that support these outcomes and investment in the infrastructure and services to drive their implementation.

Growth area Councils will continue to play their part in planning sustainable communities and contributing their share of funding for local facilities and services. They want a new deal on sharing of responsibilities across all levels of Government for funding, coordination and delivery of infrastructure and services. They particularly need certainty about the higher order infrastructure and services traditionally provided by State and Federal Governments.

The NGAA is able to provide a range of data and research to inform government policy and wants to partner with the Australian Federal Government to establish a more equitable funding model that ensures the needs of communities in fast-growing areas are met now and in the future.

Issues and Opportunities

Improved Access To Employment Opportunities

Economic opportunity is highly unevenly distributed throughout Australian cities. The outer suburban and peri-urban zones (those locations between urban and rural zones) of Australian cities have long been recognised as containing some of the most economically vulnerable communities in Australia, known as "red alert suburbs" (Baum and Mitchell) ¹.

NGAA's research indicates that these areas have:

- An imbalance in the number of residents and the number of jobs
- A lower skills profile than the national average

¹ Baum, S and Mitchell, W, Centre for Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle and Urban Research Program Griffith University, *Red Alert Suburbs: An Employment Vulnerability Index for Australia*, March 2009.





- Relatively low accessibility to jobs and services
- Higher levels of unemployment than metropolitan averages; and
- Lower school retention and tertiary entrance levels than metropolitan averages.

The focus should be on improving education and training outcomes and on supporting concentrations of employment in strategic centres with high accessibility to growth area residents. Improved school retention and tertiary entrance rates will assist young people to access employment. This will have a personal and societal benefit.

Reduced commuting time and costs will allow additional time for non-work pursuits, reduced expenditure on travel and less traffic congestion, air pollution and expensive road costs will result. Local employment opportunities also reflect services for local residents. For example, employment in health occupations is usually a good indicator of a high quantity of health services. Therefore success in attracting employment will simultaneously address the element of service accessibility.

Pathways to Education, is a highly successful stay in school program based in Toronto. It is responsible for dramatically reducing high school dropout rates and quadrupling post-secondary enrolment in a Toronto neighbourhood by working at the community level to deliver academic tutoring, group and career oriented mentoring, student and parent advocacy and support and financial support. Pathways to Education is an initiative of United Way of Greater Toronto and Pathways to Education Canada. The Provincial Government has since provided significant funding to expand the program into other neighbourhoods.

SGS has measured 'accessibility to employment opportunities' for growth area municipalities via both primary modes of travel - car and public transport. It is evident from their analysis that growth areas are clearly disadvantaged in terms of access to employment opportunities and services. The situation is much worse when taking a public transport only perspective. ²

² SGS Economics and Planning for the National Growth Areas Alliance, Cost Benefit Analysis of Investment in Growth Areas, November 2009.

Investment by Government in growth areas would be cost effective. Recent research by SGS for NGAA has shown that the benefit of investment (half closing the gap between NGAA municipalities and metropolitan averages) in jobs, transport and community services nationally outweighs the cost, creates jobs, boosts national productivity and generates tax revenue. The benefits continue well after the investment has been made.

Benefits stem from improved:

- Education, health, workforce participation and other social benefits
- Local job opportunities, both directly and indirectly as a result of improved social service provision
- Centralisation of jobs in growth areas, as development is channelled into strategic centres well serviced by public transport; and
- Access to jobs and services outside the municipality.

Opportunities:

- Providing a package of services to assist young people to stay in school. NGAA has a recommended model
- Locating more tertiary campuses and courses in outer metropolitan growth areas ³
- Locating the regional offices of government agencies in outer metropolitan growth areas to stimulate office accommodation provision and bring needed services to residents ⁴
- Investing in agribusiness such as food production which provides opportunities to add significant value through more sustainable practices 'from the paddock to the plate'
- Government using land use regulation and infrastructure commitments to ensure that local employment centres in growth areas can:
 - Accommodate their rightful share of population induced jobs
 - Act as hubs for social service delivery
 - Be developed in a way that encourages scale and a diversity of employment types over the long term.

³ Member Councils have identified suitable sites for tertiary campuses.

⁴ Member Councils have identified suitable sites for Government offices.



SUCCESS STORIES

- 1 Trade Training Centres such as those at Armadale (WA) and Blacktown (NSW) provide improved opportunities for young people in growth areas to gain the skills needed to access employment.
- 2 Seventeen of the 25 NGAA municipalities are within designated Priority Employment Areas for targeted assistance. This recognises that outer metropolitan growth areas need help to close the gap in employment access.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Package of services to assist young people to stay in school
- Member councils have identified suitable sites for education and training facilities and regional offices of Government agencies
- Lang Lang Truck Bypass (Cardinia, VIC)
- Mitchell Freeway Extension (Wanneroo, WA)
- Gnangara Road (Swan, WA)
- Traffic Bridge Cockburn Central (Cockburn, WA)
- Old Mandurah Traffic Bridge (Mandurah, WA)
- Ranford Road (Armadale, WA)
- Freeway Interchange, Bald Hills Road (Mt Barker, SA)
- CBD Streetscape (Palmerston, NT)
- Beenleigh Inner Ring Road (Logan QLD)

Better Personal Mobility

Better mobility means that the requirement to travel is reduced through jobs and services being located closer to home (addressed under 'Improved Access to Employment Opportunities' and 'More Local Community Services') as well as provision of transport infrastructure to ensure people can get to where they need to go.

Having better access to employment, education, health, leisure and other services is important for people of all ages and abilities and reliable public transport is vitally important to those without a car who need to go about their daily lives.

Unfortunately access to public transport infrastructure in Australian cities is not fairly distributed. Outer suburban zones are typically poorly served by rail and bus services compared to middle and inner areas, resulting in heavy reliance on private motor vehicles and greater cost to families.

These deficits have increased over time as transport infrastructure and services have not been expanded to keep pace with the rate of outer suburban development. There is also evidence that institutional design and management of public transport can impact on the quality of outer suburban services. Good public transport access is critical to individual and household capacity to access employment opportunities and services.

Opportunities:

There is a potential for Government to bring forward planned public transport infrastructure including rail extensions and new bus links in outer areas. Reducing the disparity in access to high quality public transport in Australian cities through new suburban public transport investment would meet a number of government objectives such as access to employment and reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

There is also a considerable opportunity without major budgetary expenditure to improve the quality of outer suburban public transport and the efficiency and integration of operations by changing the institutional and governance arrangements in some jurisdictions.

SUCCESS STORIES

The Regional Rail Link with funding from Infrastructure Australia Building Australia Fund will benefit the growth areas of Werribee, Sunbury and Craigieburn in Melbourne's Western Growth corridor as well as boosting regional services.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- North West Rail Link (The Hills, NSW)
- Edmondson Park Release Area Town Centre Road Infrastructure (Liverpool, NSW)
- Dual track extension, South Morang to Mernda (Whittlesea, VIC)
- Extension of rail to Byford (Serpentine-Jarrahdale, WA)
- Rail Link (Moreton Bay, QLD)



More Diverse Housing

NGAA municipalities have less housing diversity (type and affordability) and higher levels of housing stress than their host metropolitan areas. This means that they will attract a less diverse population and create an inefficient boom and bust cycle in terms of community needs for services. A less diverse population does not support a robust labor market.

Lack of housing options also means that households may either over commit to or leave the area if they can no longer afford their housing or it is no longer suitable. This undermines social connectedness.

Opportunities:

Support more diverse housing in growth areas by:

- Requiring higher density housing for residential sites immediately adjacent to town centres
- Developing other measures to attract diverse housing around activity centres in growth areas and including these in activity centre policies and programs
- Introducing tax incentives to developers to provide affordable housing for private sale to specific buyers (e.g. key workers, first home buyer housing)
- Providing more social housing investment and associated support services into those outer metropolitan growth areas which have little such housing.

SUCCESS STORIES

\$10.5m from the Housing Affordability Fund is paying for infrastructure and planning reforms in Morayfield, Moreton Bay to deliver homes earlier and with savings on the purchase price of an estimated \$15,000 per home. A number of these homes will be reserved for key workers.

More Local Community Services

Inclusive societies give a sense of belonging and support to their members. They are more productive and safer, and offer better opportunities for their residents. Growth areas are characterised by levels of disadvantage and unemployment higher than those of metropolitan Australia. There are lower levels of education, and higher incidences of risk behaviors. The combination of these risk factors with the lack of appropriate and accessible services means that families and children in growth areas are more likely to experience problems.

Outer metropolitan growth areas have significantly less community services than the metropolitan average. This means families do not have the same levels of support as do families in inner metropolitan areas making them more vulnerable and less resilient than their inner metropolitan counterparts.

The Australian Early Developmental Index (AEDI) results for NGAA areas are a case in point. AEDI measures five areas, or domains, of early childhood development.

There are 55 suburbs within NGAA areas with higher levels of children who are vulnerable on two or more domains. Some of these suburbs have more than double the Australian proportion of vulnerable children.

Services to support families before problems arise is the sensible and most cost effective approach. Service priorities for NGAA members are:

- Early years services
- Services for young people
- Family support services

Community facilities to house these and other services such as recreational and cultural programs are also required. NGAA members acknowledge the funding by the Federal Government for community facilities. There is, however, more that needs to be done.

Opportunities

NGAA proposes a suite of programs. They have been developed through the research and experience of member Councils, and what will work best in growth area communities:

- They have a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention
- They are designed to build and strengthen relationships, develop skills and support parents, children and young people
- They are also designed to provide intensive and coordinated support for vulnerable and at risk families.

They include:

- Parent-child assistance programs
- Individual support and family counselling
- Youth support services
- Helping young people stay connected to school and learning
- Mental health services for young people.



SUCCESS STORIES

1 FAHCSIA's Family Support Program aim is to provide the early support that NGAA believes is needed in outer metropolitan growth areas. One component, Communities for Children, has been funded in a number of NGAA municipalities including Blacktown (NSW), Palmerston (NT), Casey (VIC) and Kwinana (WA).

2 The Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) RLCIP has been very helpful for NGAA members. Strategic projects funded under this program have included:

- Regional netball facility, Campbelltown (NSW)
- Craigieburn Library and Community Centre (VIC)
- Regional Riverside Park, Midland (WA)
- Entertainment Centre, Logan (QLD)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Package of services for children, young people and families as outlined in NGAA's 2010/11 Federal Budget Submission ⁵
- Regional Community Services Project (Penrith, NSW)
- Werribee Sports and Fitness Centre Redevelopment (Wyndham, VIC)
- Broadmeadows Leisure Centre (Hume, VIC)
- Casey Community Resource Centre (Casey, VIC)
- Calder Park Drive Youth and Community Centre (Melton, VIC)
- Youth Centre (Kwinana, WA)
- Str8 Talk'n Youth Safety Program (Gosnells, WA)

Population Policy

Population Growth

NGAA members are at the forefront in dealing with the consequences of rapid population growth in their areas. Infrastructure and service deficits have left a legacy of inequality compared to average metropolitan performance on a number of key measures. These consequences and the environmental impacts of growth mean that new approaches are required.

NGAA is pleased that the Federal Government has recognised the need for a population growth strategy and has appointed a Minister to work across portfolios to take a considered approach to it.

Opportunities:

In this context, NGAA calls for:

- The opportunity for Local Government to input into the scope of the population strategy at an early stage
- Comprehensive research into the impacts of different patterns of development
- The development of service and infrastructure standards that all communities should expect in order to be sustainable, economically, socially, culturally and environmentally
- A thorough consultation process, including with local government as key partners in managing growth
- A requirement that all Federal departments plan for population growth and include estimates for servicing it in budget proposals
- The introduction of population growth as a standing item on the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) meeting agenda, and the establishment of a working group or dedicated officer at ACLG to facilitate this.

There is a need for both emerging and existing communities to have equitable access to essential services and amenities to accommodate population growth. These include: housing, retail and community facilities, services and infrastructure and employment. (UDIA National Policy Statements)

⁵ NGAA 2010/11 Federal Budget Submission, December 2009 (can be found on NGAA's website: www.ngaa.org.au)

National Urban Policy

NGAA believes that the scale of the infrastructure required to support population growth and environmental protection requires an all of Government approach to urban planning.

This means a National Urban Policy that recognises, acknowledges and supports the role of growth areas as they relate to local and regional catchments and to CBD's.

The Policy should include a section on growth areas that highlights the need to plan for:

- Economic development of greater metropolitan areas
- Outer metropolitan activity centres
- Diverse employment in close proximity to where people live
- Regional community facilities
- Standards for infrastructure and services and their implementation.

There should be a requirement that implementation plans such as the South East Queensland Implementation Plan accompany strategic land use plans.

How Can Government Support Sustainable Growth Areas?

- While NGAA supports ALGA in seeking an increased allocation of grants to all Australian communities, the Financial Assistance Grants (FAG) system of funding does not provide for the particular needs of growth communities and does not address the infrastructure and capital expenditure requirements in urban growth areas. An allocation to growth areas outside this model is advocated.
- All programs funded by the Commonwealth Government but administered by local government should include a funding allocation for population growth projections for the life of the project.
- A commitment to the ongoing funding of the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) at a cost of \$300 million pa each year for the next 4 years (\$1.2 billion) is recommended. Outer metropolitan councils with 30,000 or fewer residents and high projected population growth should be included in the category of councils to receive the additional growth component that larger growth councils have received.

- A Sustainable Cities (refined Building Better Cities) Program which would fund infrastructure in accordance with growth area strategic plans should be established.
- A program for regional level infrastructure in urban areas under the Infrastructure Australia structure is recommended. The program should be open to applications from local government for funding these major projects.
- Interest-free loans should also be available to growth area councils to enable the timely provision of infrastructure.

Further information available

NGAA has available a number of research documents and submissions as well as bulletins of NGAA activities, available on NGAA's website www.ngaa.org.au

Contact

General enquiries can be made to info@ngaa.org.au Ruth Spielman, Executive Officer, can be contacted at ruth.spielman@ngaa.org.au or by phone on **0407 324 178**.





info@ngaa.org.au
www.ngaa.org.au