



# The case for a Local Government Community Infrastructure Program

**Boosting productivity and creating jobs  
in every Australian community**

2015



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



# President's Message

In every town and every community across the nation, Australians are using council owned and managed community infrastructure. Facilities such as public pools, libraries, children's playgrounds, sports fields, youth drop-in centres, bike paths, arts centres and parks enhance the quality of life and enrich the experience of citizens every day.

Community infrastructure underpins community wellbeing and fosters social interaction and participation in sport, recreation and cultural endeavours.

While some of these facilities are relatively new, many were built decades ago and require significant maintenance and upgrades to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the community.

Nationally, economic growth is at relatively low levels, highlighting a need for enhanced investment by government to provide local economic stimulus and job creation in local communities. The most recent official economic data shows that the growth in the nominal GDP rate in 2014-15 was the weakest in over 50 years. The *2015 State of the Regions* report, commissioned by ALGA, shows increased unemployment rates and declining real earnings per hour worked, with unemployment across regional Australia ranging between 4 per cent in Darwin to 17.3 per cent in the Wide Bay region of Queensland.

Investment in community infrastructure through local government:

- will create jobs;
- can greatly assist communities to attract and retain key workers in local communities;
- improves community life; and
- enhances the experience of residents using these facilities throughout Australia.

The economic need for an infrastructure program is clear. As noted in the report *Localism: Learning from Federal Nation Building Projects* by Adelaide University's Centre for Economic Studies, local government has a large stock of existing (and in many cases ageing) assets, and there is a great deal of maintenance that could be accelerated. With 562 councils across Australia, local government is uniquely placed to identify and implement local infrastructure projects if funding is made available. In many cases, community infrastructure projects are either already planned, or planning is well advanced, and only funding is required for the projects to commence.

The need for a community infrastructure investment program is outlined in this document with examples of the ageing community infrastructure in our communities across Australia which would benefit from such a program.



**Mayor Troy Pickard**  
ALGA PRESIDENT

# The Program

According to ABS (2015) local government owns and manages an estimated \$355 billion in non-financial assets including local roads, land, and community infrastructure such as halls, recreational facilities, parks, water and sewerage, libraries, harbours and aerodromes, health clinics and youth facilities. The 2015 State of the Assets Report developed by JRA estimates that the gross replacement value of these local government assets is \$438 billion and that approximately 11 per cent or \$47 billion of these assets are in poor or very poor condition. Assets in poor condition require significant renewal or rehabilitation, and very poor assets being physically unsound or beyond rehabilitation.

Well-located, well-designed and properly-maintained community infrastructure helps produce better quality outcomes for Australian communities as well as facilitating greater social inclusion. This infrastructure also helps achieve other important social and regional policy outcomes, including attraction and retention of skilled workers, preventative health, social cohesion and tolerance, stronger social capital and community resilience and better access to broad-based education and learning.

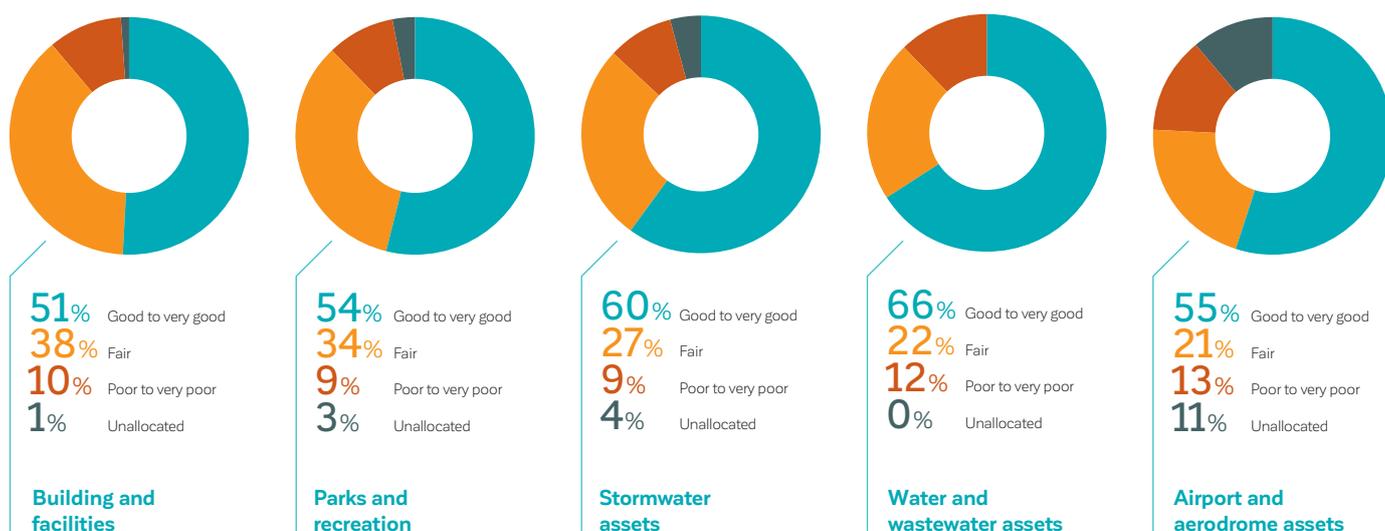
ALGA is proposing a Local Government Community Infrastructure Program of \$300 million per annum for five years to fund the renewal and maintenance of existing community infrastructure.

The purpose of the program is to:

- create more than 5,000 jobs and stimulate local economic opportunities;
- improve local infrastructure around Australia; and
- specifically target infrastructure that is ageing or that requires improvements to ensure it can meet the needs of communities.

Investing in a local government community infrastructure program would provide the Australian Government with a mechanism to stimulate the economy as well as promote economic development opportunities where they are needed, particularly in rural and regional communities. Local government has highly experienced staff with high-quality project management skills who can ensure projects are delivered on time and within budget. This was evident during the Global Financial Crisis when local government delivered in excess of 5,000 projects under the National Building and Jobs Plan through the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program.

# State of the Assets 2015 Community Infrastructure Report



ALGA commissioned the *2015 State of the Assets Community Infrastructure Report* from Jeff Roorda and Associates to gain a greater understanding of the condition of the community infrastructure held by local government. The report is based on a survey of 230 councils reporting on the condition, capacity and function of their community infrastructure assets.

The council survey looks at the condition of community infrastructure, categorising assets requiring significant renewal or rehabilitation as poor, and assets that are physically unsound or beyond rehabilitation as very poor.

The following assets were reported by the councils participating in the survey as being in poor or very poor condition:

- Building and facilities – 10% or \$3.1bn
- Parks and recreation – 9% or \$691m
- Stormwater assets – 9% or \$3bn
- Water and wastewater assets – 12% or \$4bn
- Airport and aerodrome assets – 13% or \$95m

The Report shows that councils identified an average of 10 per cent or approximately \$11 billion of their community infrastructure as being in poor or very poor condition. These assets need immediately attention. The Local Government Community Infrastructure Program would provide councils with the financial support to address this issue.

# Local Opportunities

This section features projects taken from ALGA's Community Infrastructure Ideas Register. This register has hundreds of projects vital to meet community needs as well as to create local jobs and stimulate the local economy. The register includes upgrades, replacement and maintenance projects that would be of benefit local communities around Australia. These projects are ready to commence if additional funding support for councils becomes available.

## NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL

VICTORIA



### Renewal of Leisure Centre

\$1.2-2 million • real potential

Stawell Leisure Complex was built in 1970 and since then has had no major upgrading work. The facilities are intensively used by Stawell's young and adult population. This complex has number of issues such as rusty steel steps, substandard netball courts, deteriorating tiles in swimming pools. Council is only able to carry out minimum maintenance works due to budget constraints. There are approximately 6000 people who live in Stawell and this is the only leisure complex available for the community. This Leisure complex is part of the North Park Recreation Reserve.

## BREAK O'DAY COUNCIL

TASMANIA



### St Helens Sports Complex

\$100,000-200,000 • real potential

The St Helens Sport and Recreation Ground is an important community hub providing both recreational and social opportunities for the residents and visitors of the Break O'Day Municipality and surrounds. Sporting activities currently based at the Ground include: football, netball, basketball, athletics, tennis, equestrian, pony club and cricket.

Through extensive consultation with the community, the need to upgrade the current facilities at the St Helens Sport and Recreation Ground has been identified as high priority.

**CITY OF SWAN**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**LOCKHART SHIRE COUNCIL**  
NEW SOUTH WALES



## **Midland Junction Arts Centre**

*\$4-5 million • ready to proceed*

Midland Junction Arts Centre (MJAC) was formerly the Old Midland Junction School building, gifted to the City of Swan by the Midland Redevelopment Authority in 2013. This heritage building needs extensive conservation work to preserve the building fabric for future generations and to upgrade amenity to make it accessible for all. This project will increase utilisation of what is now a tired old building and reinvigorate the Midland Town Centre and surrounding regions with a vibrant Arts and Culture facility. Once completed MJAC will offer a performing arts space, art gallery, workshop space, arts related tenancies and a small café on site.

It is anticipated that outputs of the revitalised Midland Junction Arts Centre will include increased immediate employment opportunities through the construction project, and also longer term opportunities through the continued patronage of the café, gallery, workshops, performance spaces and through larger scale events. Café lease returns will be used to fund ongoing repair work and to assist in funding arts initiatives provided at the Centre, establishing Midland Town Centre as a key precinct for professional arts and cultural industries and increasing tourism and regional investment.

## **Renewal of recreational facilities**

*\$2 million • real potential*

Lockhart Shire Council currently has two community pools within the Shire – at Lockhart and The Rock. Lockhart pool was constructed in 1955 and has reached the end of its useful life. The Rock pool was constructed in 1971 and is in need of refurbishment, and its amenities block needs modernising. Council undertook a condition report last year and both pools are in need of refurbishment.

Both pools do not have disabled access, thus do not comply with the Disability Act, but the refurbishment would see access ramps added. Both pools have outdated filtration equipment which demand high energy usage. Currently both pools are only open for four months of the year (Nov – Feb), however when the pools are refurbished they will have solar heating blankets added to extend the usage period to minimum of six months. Council is currently preparing concept plans with a few different options to be considered during community consultation.

**CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
QUEENSLAND



**Drain improvements**

\$50,000–\$100,000 • ready to proceed

The drain covers a large catchment area because of the large water volumes, naturally steep terrain and narrow flow past the ground that has been subject to severe erosion.

The drain flows into a natural creek discharging at Trinity Inlet and directly out to sea and on to the Great Barrier Reef.

The proposed project includes the shaping of the drain by removing rock and river gravel to a depth of 300mm, levelling with suitable clay fill material and the placement of a high performance Turf reinforcement mat and turf.

The turf root system will grow through the reinforcement mat penetrating to the soil to create a seamless mat. Areas immediately on the outlet of pipes require a concrete lining and rock check structures to improve and better control flow velocities.

**CITY OF HOLDFAST BAY**  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



**Extension of water recycling scheme**

\$2-4 million • ready to proceed

The City of Holdfast Bay currently irrigates their reserves and parks using a combination of potable water, bore water and recycled wastewater provided from the Glenelg Wastewater Treatment Plant.

At present, recycled wastewater is utilised to meet approximately 40 per cent of the total irrigation demand in the council area. Council's current agreement with SA Water allows the use of recycled water with a total allowance 820 kilolitres per day. The recent capacity upgrade of the Treatment Plant has provided the ability to supply water to a larger number of reserves/open spaces within the council area.

Council is aiming to reduce the reliance on traditional irrigation options, such as potable water, and develop a more structured irrigation program. An extension of the current water recycling system will increase water reserves from 30 per cent to 90 per cent, saving 180 mega litres per year.

# History of Success

As part of the economic stimulus measures responding to the Global Financial Crisis, the Australian Government developed a \$1 billion Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. This program saw the biggest financial injection into local government since the 1970s, putting the funding and the decision making into the hands of our local communities.

The program saw the delivery of more than 5,000 projects which stimulated local economies and created jobs in communities across Australia. A selection of the projects from this program are outlined in the following pages.

## PHILLIP

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



### Eddison skate park

**SNAPSHOT** A youth precinct including a skate park, events stage and half-sized basketball court

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$1.4 million

With a fast-growing population in Canberra's Woden Valley, the ACT Government was keen to meet the needs of the area's youth with the construction of a skate and BMX park with bowl and street skating facilities.

The ACT Government contributed \$750,000 to the Federal Government funding.

## TWEED HEADS

NEW SOUTH WALES



### Visitor information centre

**SNAPSHOT** The construction of permanent facilities to support tourism in the area

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$150,000

Tourism is big business in the Tweed Shire, contributing \$295 million annually to the economy. Over the past ten years, the Visitor Information Centre in Tweed Heads had been hosted in four temporary locations. The project for a permanent, purpose-built centre was collaborative, with the Tweed Shire Council contributing \$300,000 and Tourism NSW giving \$178,000.

## MANINGRIDA, WEST ARNHEM LAND

NORTHERN TERRITORY



### Playground and toilet block

**SNAPSHOT** *Public facilities in the town centre for Maningrida residents*

**FUNDING** *Australian Government Funding: \$130,000*

The Federal Government funding enabled the construction of a new male and female toilet block with disabled access. A new playground was built with a shade sail, fencing and washed sand soft-fall to comply with Australian Standards. The project was completed in September 2009.

## NORTH BURNETT REGIONAL COUNCIL

QUEENSLAND



### The mobile kitchen

**SNAPSHOT** *A council-owned kitchen caravan for use by community groups*

**FUNDING** *Australian Government Funding: \$69,519*

The North Burnett Regional Council's inspiration for the Mobile Kitchen came from the number of inadequate kitchens within the North Burnett Region. Aware of the substantial costs to small groups and clubs in repairing or replacing these kitchens, the council applied for Federal Government funding to purchase a mobile kitchen which could be transported to any venue within the region for a function. Council contributed \$65,000 to the project.

## ROCKHAMPTON QUEENSLAND



### Seven projects providing 7.5 km of bikeways

**SNAPSHOT** *An integrated cycleway network linking residential areas to schools, shopping centres, open areas and other community facilities*

**FUNDING** *Australian Government Funding: \$1.14 million matched by council funding*

Bikeways are an important infrastructure for non-motorised transport, informal recreation and fitness training. Community benefits of bikeways include improved health and safety, reduced vehicle exhaust and green house gas emissions, reduced expenditure on road maintenance, tourism appeal and improved freedom of mobility and quality of life. This project is assisting Council to develop an integrated bikeway network.

## WILMINGTON SOUTH AUSTRALIA



### Playground upgrade

**SNAPSHOT** *Purchase and installation of shade sails over Wilmington playground*

**FUNDING** *Australian Government Funding: \$15,000*

The playground built in the 1960s needed a facelift and safety upgrade. The Federal Government funding of \$15,000 for the shade sails enabled work to begin on the playground revamp and replacement of equipment. The local community was involved from the start contributing 100 hours of labour, with volunteers sandblasting and repainting the rusty and dilapidated playground sign. Responding to a community application, the State Government put in \$11,900, the District Council of Mt Remarkable contributed \$18,700 and the Rural Health Team chipped in with \$1,500 in funds.

## PORT SORELL

TASMANIA



### **Panatana Rivulet footbridge replacement**

**SNAPSHOT** Replacement of Panatana Rivulet footbridge at Port Sorell

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$196,000

The original footbridge was built in the 1930s. It had been patched up over the years but was gradually becoming rickety and unsafe. An upgrade was required to ensure the footbridge continued to serve its purpose of connecting the township to the rural and residential area on the other side of the Panatana Rivulet.

Latrobe Council topped up the Federal Government funding, contributing \$150,000 to the project and work was completed by September 2009.

## MOONAMBEL

VICTORIA



### **Moonambel mixed use pavilion**

**SNAPSHOT** Construction of a mixed facility pavilion at the Moonambel Recreation Reserve for use by community groups and local business groups

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$101,074

The building of the pavilion was a joint venture with the Pyrenees Shire Council, the Federal Government and the State Government contributing towards the initiative. Local residents deserve a large slice of the credit for driving the project and raising more than \$10,000 towards construction. The new pavilion, which is fitted with solar roof panels, provides space for local community groups to meet for celebration and community events. It includes a large multi-purpose space, meeting room, commercial kitchen and a community office.

## WARRNAMBOOL

VICTORIA



### Warrnambool Airport infrastructure upgrade

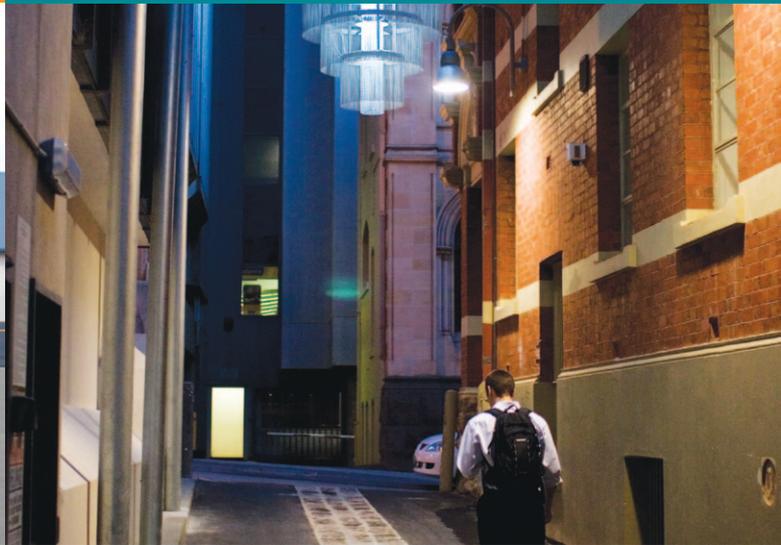
**SNAPSHOT** Infrastructure upgrade, including improved power supply connections, enhanced telecommunications cabling and an enlarged apron area with an increased capacity to accommodate more aircraft

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$100,000

Regional airports provide vital links between communities. They are used to transport patients to hospital, freight goods, bridge distances and connect with the cities and other regions. The council owned Warrnambool Airport was in need of modernisation to better meet the needs of the people of south-west Victoria. The \$100,000 in Federal Government funding and \$492,000 from the State Government has provided physical infrastructure to enable the emergency ambulance helicopter base to become operational, provided infrastructure to underpin future growth for the airport, and contributed towards enhanced air ambulance and search and rescue capabilities.

## PERTH

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



### Howard Lane upgrade

**SNAPSHOT** The Howard Lane upgrade includes feature lighting, public art and exposed heritage paving

**FUNDING** Australian Government Funding: \$137,000

The Howard Lane project recently won an Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Award for design. Prior to the extensive upgrade it was a neglected asphalt laneway with tagged walls and piles of rubbish; indicators that the space was undervalued and forgotten. After the design plans had been drawn up, a small bar opened up and the laneway has added to the city's vibrancy with its heritage paving, public art and feature lighting.