

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ECONOMIES, INCLUDING THROUGH BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND TOURISM

Local government is a major contributor to regional economic development through the provision of local and regional infrastructure, the delivery of local services and local planning.

Local councils also play an important role in responding to the impact of drought and its devastating effect on families, employment and the community.

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening regional economies through a series of initiatives, including the \$176 million Better Regions Program and the new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. This new program will deliver investments in local and regional community and recreational infrastructure initiatives.

We have also established Regional Development Australia (RDA) to provide strategic advice about regional needs and to build strong links between the Commonwealth and local government.

Tourism has a strong impact on regional Australia with around 46 cents in every dollar of tourism expenditure spent in local communities. In recognition of the economic importance of the tourism industry, a National Long-Term Tourism Strategy is being prepared which will consider tourism investment, infrastructure, labour and skills, tourism quality, and climate change.

In addition, the Australian Government recognises the fundamental importance of broadband to our long term prosperity, and is committed to ensuring all Australians have access to affordable, high speed broadband services.

By increasing connectivity, we can help expand our content creation industries, increase the work force in regional Australia and create efficiencies for local government.

What are some of the innovative ways that councils support and boost regional economic development?

How important is tourism to the local economy for councils, and how can the national programs support the investments that local government make?

What are some of the opportunities that broadband will provide for local government and their local government area?

How can all key players in regional and local economic development better integrate and coordinate their planning and implementation?



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Regional Development

The Australian Government has committed to fund community infrastructure projects across regional Australia through the \$176 million Better Regions Program. Local government will receive the largest share of funding through this program.

In addition, the Australian Government will establish a new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program to invest in local projects which encourage economic development and improve the quality of life for communities. The new program will be aligned closely with local government.

The Australian Local Government Association is also represented on the Regional Development Council, which includes federal, state and territory ministers.

Tourism

In recognition of the economic importance of the tourism industry, the Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson, announced the development of a National Long-Term Tourism Strategy on 8 May 2008.

This strategy will provide a long term vision for the tourism industry and a platform for a consistent long term strategy for this important sector. It will focus on the productive capacity, or the supply side, of the industry. Key issues likely to be considered include tourism investment, infrastructure, labour and skills, tourism quality, and climate change. More information on the strategy, including a Discussion Paper, can be found at www.ret.gov.au.

Broadband

The Australian Government is committed to providing up to \$4.7 billion to facilitate the roll-out of a new open access, high speed, fibre-based broadband network. This network will provide downlink speeds of at least 12 megabits per second to 98 per cent of Australian homes and businesses.

Through the \$118.6 million Clever Networks Program, the Australian Government is working collaboratively with state, territory and local governments to improve broadband-enabled service delivery in rural, regional and remote areas, particularly in the education, health, local government and emergency services sectors. The Australian Government has also allocated additional funding of \$270 million over four years for the Australian Broadband Guarantee to continue to operate until 2011 – 2012, with the aim of enabling access for all Australians.

The Australian Local Government Association is an active member of the Online and Communication Ministerial Council. All members of the Council have committed to a *Framework for the collaborative development and use of Broadband in Australia* to guide future programs and activities.



An Australian Government Initiative

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