

MAKING OUR MAJOR CITIES MORE LIVEABLE, PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE

Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world with over 16 million, or 80 per cent, of Australians living in our cities and towns. Our cities are still growing – ABS data indicates that the proportion of the national population living in our major cities will continue to increase over the next 50 years. However, it is the scale of growth that is striking, with the populations of capital cities expected to almost double in size over the next 50 years.

Australia's capital cities are also the engine rooms for economic growth and innovation. Capital cities contributed 78 percent of the nation's growth between 2001 and 2006.

The economic, social and environmental prosperity of the nation is therefore dependant in part upon the ability of our cities to successfully provide for growing populations and manage critical issues such as urban congestion, climate change, and housing.

In the case of rising urban traffic congestion, the growth in the number and usage of vehicles has out-paced increases in road capacity. Many working parents are now spending longer in their cars commuting to and from work than time at home with their children. We know that urban congestion alone will cost nearly \$20 billion *per year* by 2020 if we fail to respond appropriately to this issue.

The spatial distribution of our cities can exclude significant populations from the benefits and opportunities of transport, employment, education, and access to services. Such dislocation puts at risk the cohesive fabric of our society. As a prosperous nation, we have a responsibility to reduce the inequalities experienced by many of our urban populations.

The response to these challenges requires integrated and coordinated action across all levels of government. Local governments are a key resource in understanding the needs and concerns of local communities in urban areas.

The Australian Government has established a Major Cities Unit to bring a coordinated and integrated approach to urban policy development. The Major Cities Unit will lead a whole of government response by the Commonwealth to contribute to outcomes that improve the sustainability, livability and productivity of Australia's major cities. The Major Cities Unit will work closely with Infrastructure Australia to contribute expertise on urban infrastructure issues including public transport.

What innovative ways do local government use to provide liveable, productive and sustainable cities?

What options are available to local governments to work together to improve public transport, water and other infrastructure to make our cities more liveable?

How can local government achieve a balance between maintaining the natural and cultural identity of their cities with the need for economic growth?

Using this innovation, what ways could be suggested for local government to provide input into decisions the Australian Government will be making on investment into city infrastructure over the next few years?



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Major Cities Unit

The Major Cities Unit will provide advice to the Australian Government and Infrastructure Australia on infrastructure and planning issues of relevance to major cities. This includes:

- Providing advice on productivity, sustainability and liveability issues, such as congestion;
- Focussing on ensuring a more integrated and coordinated approach to policy development across the Australian Government in relation to major city issues;
- assisting the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council on policy development in relation to major cities;
- consulting with industry and governments on infrastructure and planning matters; and
- commissioning research on specific city issues.

Infrastructure Australia

The Australian Government established Infrastructure Australia in April 2008 to lead a new, national approach to planning and developing the nation's infrastructure needs. Infrastructure Australia will provide strategic advice to governments on infrastructure gaps that hinder economic growth, as well as identifying priorities for investment and regulatory reform.

It will provide an interim priority list to Government in December 2008 to inform government decisions on investment in infrastructure of national significance.

Building Australia Fund

The Australian Government announced the Building Australia Fund (BAF) in the 2008-2009 Budget. The BAF will be used to fund critical economic infrastructure such as roads, rail, ports, water and energy infrastructure, and broadband. The Australian Government's decisions on allocations from the BAF will be guided by the findings of a National Infrastructure Audit and Infrastructure Priority List being developed by Infrastructure Australia.

Other Initiatives

In 2008 – 2009 the Australian Government provided \$75 million under AusLink to State governments to fund a series of extensive feasibility studies of projects in our major cities specifically aimed at reducing congestion and improving traffic flow.



An Australian Government Initiative

phone 1800 065 113

email localgovernment@infrastructure.gov.au

internet www.aclg.gov.au