

The benefits and challenges of Australian Government investment in infrastructure in outer suburban growth areas

Final Report

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The **National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA)** is the peak body for local governments in Australia's outer metropolitan growth areas and advocates to state and federal governments on growth area challenges and opportunities. Member Councils are united by shared experiences of population growth rates at double the national average and long-term under-investment in vital infrastructure and are home to more than 5 million people. The NGAA works with, and on behalf of, our Councils to achieve our vision for communities where residents have equitable access to housing, jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where they live.

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Executive Summary

The fast-growing outer suburbs of Australia's capital cities are home to around 20 per cent of the national population. Time lags in infrastructure provision for these rapidly expanding outer suburban areas persist, despite increased investment by the Australian Government in recent years, as the rate of infrastructure and service delivery has not kept up with rapid population growth. This time lag leads to poorer living conditions in the growth suburbs in comparison to the established suburbs, with the need for new residents to travel further for employment, medical and mental health services, education and other activities, leading to car dependency and other access barriers.

Understanding the benefits of federal infrastructure investment in growth areas can assist decision-making for new and timely investment. This report seeks to show how and where benefits accrue from infrastructure projects in new growth areas, and to identify future opportunities for research and policy to better quantify benefits, relative to agreed baseline data that is relevant to growth areas. This includes insight into the timing of infrastructure provision and the potential for early intervention in such provision to avoid longer term costs in other portfolio areas, such as health and social support services, as well as economic policy, and across other tiers of government.

Benefits and impact of federal and state funding

The report analyses real world examples of what is possible in the growing outer suburbs and highlights benefits from these interventions. The analysis includes a variety of case study projects in outer suburbs, across three categories: economic development, community infrastructure and transport infrastructure.

The case studies presented in this report show that a wide range of community infrastructure projects in growth areas can contribute to positive outcomes for residents. Such positive benefits include health benefits, community cohesion, more equitable access to services, enhanced economic development, new local employment opportunities and increased community and business networking and connection.

Commonwealth and State Government funding has enabled these projects to proceed. The majority of projects would have not been feasible or would have been greatly delayed without this additional funding. Commonwealth funding was provided across all three categories, though some case studies received only state government funding.

All projects demonstrated community benefits. Some of these benefits are difficult to quantify due to their qualitative character, data limitations, the complexity of understanding causal relationships at local scales, and the rapid pace of change in growth areas. There is an urgent need for nationally comprehensive and consistent data collection and reporting at the local scale that can inform future project identification, prioritisation and to support improved analysis and insights into community needs and project impacts and outcome assessment.

A common problem across the projects was inconsistent funding availability to ensure timeliness of infrastructure and service delivery in relation to population growth. Rapidly expanding growth area populations need infrastructure and services, yet delivery was often not matched to population arrival. Rather it was dependent on local governments to assemble the requisite internal funds and then identify and obtain additional state and federal funds through various schemes. While the projects necessarily deliver community benefits, the current planning and funding approach continues to generate lags and gaps between population need and infrastructure and service delivery. This reflects persistent recognised weaknesses in growth area planning over many decades. The national scale and distribution of these issues indicates that this is not solely a particular problem of inadequate local

administration or of weak state planning and service delivery frameworks. Rather the problem of weak infrastructure and service planning and provision in growth areas is a national problem that requires national effort to address. A national reform agenda is needed to resolve the chronic problems of infrastructure and service deficits in growth areas.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – National growth areas planning framework and coordination arrangements

A new national growth areas planning framework is needed to support a consistent approach to funding and delivery of infrastructure and services in growth areas. The purpose of such a framework would be to establish nationally agreed standards for growth areas setting out expected levels of infrastructure and service provision relative to population and timing of residential occupation and to support planning for timely delivery of this infrastructure. This framework would include a growth projection component to identify the scale and timing of population arrival in growth areas in relation to urban development rollout. The national growth areas planning framework would be developed in conjunction with federal, state and territory governments and current and future growth area local governments, plus development and community sector groups and academia. It would clarify areas of responsibility for planning, delivery and funding of growth area services and infrastructure, and delegate actions across these levels of responsibility. The framework would enable and operate a five-year national growth areas plan, reviewed annually for progress.

Clear national coordination arrangements for planning growth areas and delivering services and infrastructure are required to ensure the needs of rapidly growing populations is matched by adequate delivery. National coordination arrangements could operate similar to City Deals involving support for coordination between federal, state and local government to identify key infrastructure needs, but with a specific focus on growth areas. Such ‘Suburban Deals’ could overcome the current temporal mismatch between local service and infrastructure needs in rapidly growing communities, funding regimes, and state and federal provision of services. The Cities and Suburbs Unit proposed by the new government could be a suitable vehicle to oversee a program that surveys growth area community needs and coordinates policy, planning, priority assessment, financing and delivery in collaboration with state and local government and Infrastructure Australia, along with improved data and information provision.

Recommendation 2 – National growth areas infrastructure fund

Delivering high-quality and timely services to meet rapid population growth in outer-suburban areas is a pressing national challenge. A national growth areas infrastructure fund that specifically addresses the urgent needs of fast-growing outer suburbs would be an important policy reform with benefits across multiple spatial scales, from the local community, local government, metropolitan, state and national levels and across portfolios such as welfare, health, education, sports, and economic development. While Commonwealth funding has supported a large part of the case study projects in this report, this funding was sourced across a range of different federal programs and schemes. A coherent, systematic and targeted growth areas infrastructure fund could help to redress the chronic lag of infrastructure and services in growth areas which is common problem across Australian cities and is recognised as a long-standing urban policy challenge.

Recommendation 3 – National growth areas infrastructure standards and assessment, including data collection

A future national growth area infrastructure funding program should be based on an analytical framework with clearly defined national standards and needs and benefits assessment model. State government requests for federal infrastructure funding are currently assessed and prioritised by Infrastructure Australia using standardised national assessment practices established by agreement with state and territory infrastructure bodies. Such standards and assessment frameworks could be established for community infrastructure in growth areas, including a benefit-cost analysis model. Infrastructure Australia could be a suitable agency for the development of this framework given its role in major infrastructure project assessment and prioritisation.

Recommendation 4 – National research program for growth areas

Greater research into social, economic and community outcomes in growth areas is needed to improve knowledge of infrastructure demand and the benefits arising from early infrastructure provision and to support an improved data collection. This should start from new advanced fundamental analysis and modelling of the planning and sequencing of land-development and dwelling construction processes to inform new growth area focused projections of population growth and housing demand, with detailed demographic profiling to test expected arrival of populations against infrastructure plans. Such a research agenda could then inform better and more timely planning of growth areas to capture the benefits of infrastructure provision earlier and avoid extended deficits in infrastructure provision. This national research effort should involve partnership between growth area local governments and relevant peak bodies, state and federal planning and infrastructure agencies, and universities with urban research capabilities, to ensure close research-policy linkages. A dedicated funding stream to support this agenda would be required and could be a component of the National Growth Areas Infrastructure Fund identified in Recommendation 2 above.

Benefits of a national coordinated approach for growth area infrastructure

A new, coordinated approach for growth area infrastructure would shift the emphasis from reacting to growth after it has occurred to planning ahead and enabling early delivery of infrastructure and services, which is important to avoid deficits and disadvantage to become entrenched. Given the constraints on local and state government fiscal capacity there is a Commonwealth role in resolving the 'rollout gap' which currently sees infrastructure provided after certain population thresholds have been met, rather than at the time of community formation when such infrastructure can be especially beneficial. Focusing on growth areas with a specific suburban infrastructure program is necessary to enable growth areas to catch up on service and infrastructure provision and to enhance liveability for new residents. Too often growth as realised exceeds projections.

In sum, there is a national role for the Australian Government in planning, coordination and funding to achieve positive community liveability outcomes in the growth areas. Such coordination could achieve outcomes that cannot be met by local government alone, or through existing mechanisms for capturing private sector development contributions. This is especially critical in areas where rapid population growth means that the absence of infrastructure, particularly social and economic services, or the legacy of older infrastructure from a pre-metropolitan period, cannot easily be provided in a timeframe that meets the needs of residents, leaving critical stages in the lifecycle of new communities without the services afforded to other areas in these cities.

1 Introduction

Investment in infrastructure in outer metropolitan suburban growth areas by the Australian Government has increased in recent years. Yet, there remains a lag of community facilities and infrastructure provision for these areas, as infrastructure and services have been failing to keep pace with population growth. Despite moderated national population growth in the last few years due to immigration restrictions adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pace of residential development in growth areas did not slow down and population growth still exceeds metropolitan and national rates. For example, Mitchell Shire Council, Victoria, experienced population growth of 3.5 per cent in 2021, while metropolitan Melbourne's population declined by 1.6 per cent and the national population grew just 0.5 per cent.

About 20 per cent of the Australian population now lives in NGAA member councils, and this proportion is likely to increase as migration returns to pre-pandemic levels. Repeated studies and reports have shown that infrastructure and services are lagging in these growth areas (Brain et al. 2019, Infrastructure Victoria 2021, Kroen et al. 2021, SGS Economics and Planning 2015). The federal Infrastructure Australia has also acknowledged such deficits (Infrastructure Australia 2019, 2021). The time lag between population arrival in growth areas and the provision of key community infrastructure results in poorer liveability in these suburbs in comparison to the established suburbs, with the need to travel further for employment, counselling and health services, education and other activities, leading to car dependency and being a barrier for accessing those activities. A wide range of research has documented that poor transport options are linked to reduced participation in higher education and training, reduced access to health services, higher rates of unemployment, lower involvement in social activities and less engagement with social networks, often resulting in isolation (Awaworyi Churchill & Smyth 2019; Lucas et al. 2016; Mackett & Thoreau 2015). Furthermore, if people do not access or delay accessing these activities this can lead to higher costs for government due to potentially a higher number of acute and expensive medical problems, higher welfare dependency and unemployment, and higher care facility costs through poor conditions for living independently.

Understanding the benefits of new infrastructure in growth areas can inform future policy and decision-making to guide investment. This report seeks to demonstrate examples of how and where community benefits accrue from infrastructure investment. The report points to future opportunities for research to better quantify benefits, relative to agreed baseline data that is relevant to growth areas. This includes appreciating the importance of timely infrastructure provision and the potential for an early intervention in one policy area to avoid costs in others. For example, earlier provision of social infrastructure could assist to moderate levels of family violence by enabling access to community services that support pathways out of family violence situations and also offering alternative community activity options.

The report aims to answer the following research questions:

Q1 What benefits, financial and non-financial, accrue to communities due to Commonwealth and state government investment in infrastructure in growth areas?

Q2 How could federally funded projects be developed and delivered differently, from the viewpoint of councils, and why?

Q3 Is there adequate data that is distinct and relevant to outer suburban growth areas to support robust business cases that support investment?

Purpose

RMIT was engaged by the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) to assess the quantitative and qualitative benefits of federal and state investment in growth areas. The NGAA is an alliance of outer metropolitan Councils around Australia whose areas are experiencing rapid and sustained population growth.

The purpose of this report is to provide real world examples of infrastructure and services projects that are being developed in the growing outer suburbs and to highlight the benefits that federal and state funding for different projects can support.

This report reviews a range of projects in growth areas, organised through three investment categories: economic development, community infrastructure and transport infrastructure. The case studies are located in member councils of the NGAA.

The research provides a resource for growth area councils to draw on when considering similar projects. The outputs of the research can be used inform future business cases as well as provide evidence for Council and the NGAA to inform their advocacy.

Range of benefits

The analysis of the projects identified benefits for the councils, their residents and to some extent also the broader region. These benefits can be grouped into the following categories:

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

These categories have been used for the multi-criteria review of the projects with detail described below.

Methods

The project invited submissions from NGAA member councils for projects meeting set criteria. Information about the selected case studies was supplied by local governments. This information included project description, funding, governance arrangements and stakeholders. In consultation with the NGAA the project team identified a set of case studies relevant to the project aims and objectives. A total of 21 projects were assessed as relevant to the study of which 13 were selected for extended analysis and discussion, providing a mix of project types and locations. For the projects not selected to proceed to further assessment, this is not a reflection on the worthiness of these types of projects, rather it reflects the focus of this research, the level of information available and the method used to categorise the submissions.

The selection was based on three broad categories of community infrastructure, economic development, and transport infrastructure. The following selection criteria were applied:

- Diversity of projects
- Commonwealth funding or state funding
- Impact/scale
- Information level
- Replicability/Comparability
- Implemented
- Partner support

After selecting relevant projects, the project team collated existing information provided by council and additional public and grey literature such as media releases, government and agency reports and documentation and further available information. Additionally, the councils were contacted and asked to supply further information where available, particularly in relation to project business cases, relevant reports and evaluations.

Three online information sharing sessions were held with local governments, with each session organised around one of the three categories. In these information sessions the attendees provided additional material on the observed benefits arising from the project, any flow-on investments, the impact of federal or state funding and recommendations for other growth councils.

The information collected was analysed in a multi-criteria review using the broader benefit domains identified above. The review differentiates between *achieved* and *anticipated* benefits. Data collected differed between the case studies due to their diverse nature, implementation status and differing reporting practices. Ideally further statistical data would have been analysed; however, this would have been methodologically complex and offer only limited identification of causal relationships between the case study and community changes. Many of the changes would have been too small to be captured in Census or other data. Therefore, available local indicators are used instead of uniform indicators in most cases. Nonetheless consistent *criteria* have been used to understand the achievable benefits for each of the categories.

The Projects

The following projects were selected for detailed evaluation:

Economic Development Infrastructure

- Cranbourne West Community Hub, Casey, Victoria
- Stretton Centre, Playford, South Australia
- Business Station, Gosnells, Western Australia
- StartNorth Business Hub, Hume, Victoria
- Casey Fields upgrade of AFL and soccer facilities, Casey, Victoria

Community Development Infrastructure

- 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

Transport Infrastructure

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

Project Team

This report was prepared by the RMIT research team of Dr Annette Kroen, Professor Jago Dodson and Associate Professor Andrew Butt, working with Nicola Ward and Bronwen Clark of the NGAA. The team recognises the assistance of Associate Professor Melanie Davern with provision of Australian Urban Observatory data.

2 Analysis

This section of the report provides an overview of the results of the analysis for the three categories of economic development, community development and transport infrastructure. A more detailed description of each of the case studies can be found in the Appendix.

Economic Development Infrastructure

Economic development infrastructure case studies include the Cranbourne West Community Hub (Casey, VIC), the Stretton Centre (Playford, SA), Business Station Gosnells (Gosnells, WA), the StartNorth Business Hub (Hume, VIC), and an upgrade of AFL and soccer facilities of the Casey Fields sports and recreation precinct (Casey, VIC).

These case studies include business hubs and an incubator, co-located with other services, such as community centres, libraries, as well as the upgrade of a regionally significant sports complex. The business hubs and incubator offer business support, low-cost co-working and office spaces, venue hire of function and meeting rooms as well as advisory services, training, networking opportunities, and support with grant applications and tenders, mostly for small or micro-businesses in the region. Casey Fields is different to the business hubs, but also important for economic development. It is a hub for regional sport and recreation in South-East Melbourne, offering facilities for a large range of sports and home to the Casey Soccer Centre of Excellence and sporting clubs such as the Melbourne Football Club's AFLW team, Casey Demons VFL team, and the Melbourne City Football Club. The regional and national significance of the clubs and events at Casey Fields support economic development.

Funding

The economic development case study projects were funded through different grants and governance levels (council, state and federal) as well as other organisations, such as the Lotteries Commission Grant or the AFL. Federal grant programs included the Australian Government Suburban Jobs Program (for the Stretton Centre) and an Incubator Grant (for Business Station Gosnells). State grant programs included the Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund (for the Cranbourne West Community Hub), an urban renewal grant (for the StartNorth Business Hub), funding out of the Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) fund – a developer contribution for state-funded infrastructure in Victoria's growth areas – and a sports grant (for the Casey Fields upgrade). Casey Fields has also received Commonwealth funding for other elements of the sports complex, but not for the AFL and soccer upgrades which were the focus of this report.

The Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund

The Growing Suburbs Fund was established in 2015 to support critical local infrastructure in Melbourne's ten fast-growing interface councils. In 2020 the fund was expanded to include six peri-urban councils that experience similar population growth and infrastructure needs. Population growth in these areas has exceeded the State's average for over two decades and this trend is forecasted to continue. (<https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/grants/growing-suburbs-fund>)

The focus in this report is on the funding of infrastructure, but operation of services is also funded by federal, state and/or local government for some case studies. For example, for the Gosnells Business Station some programs are funded by federal and state government, such as the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS) Digital Solutions and the Small Business Development Corporation workshops. For the StartNorth Business Hub three different grants from state government made it

possible to run master classes, an Accelerator program and start-your-business classes. Grants came from the Office for Suburban Development and LaunchVic, an independent agency responsible for developing Victoria's start-up ecosystem. State government funding for those classes encompasses \$193,600, with an additional \$57,200 provided from Hume City Council.

Benefits

A large part of the benefits of the economic development case studies are, not surprisingly, economic development benefits, as well as employment and networking benefits. However, there are also health benefits, community cohesion benefits and social equity benefits of those case studies.

Economic development benefits include an improved knowledge and success of local small businesses, which come from events, training programs and workshops that are provided to businesses in the business hubs. For example, the Stretton Centre has facilitated more than \$87 million in local investment and about 40 businesses are currently located in the Centre. StartNorth now has grown to 70 members from 15 members when they opened in October 2019. The Gosnells Business Station offered about 60 advisory sessions to small businesses from October to December 2021 with 100% of participants agreeing to one or more actions with their business advisor. This is of particular importance for the City of Gosnells as a large part of its 8,000 businesses are sole traders. Economic development benefits of the Casey Fields upgrade include the increased opportunity for regional, national and international sports events and their attraction of visitors to the region.

Networking benefits come from the provision of office space for local businesses, enabling networking between occupant businesses, facilitating meetings with customers, and providing opportunities for networking with the council's economic development team. For example, the Cranbourne West Community Hub's facilities were booked by 26 commercial hirers in the first half of 2022 (294 bookings overall), and 257 people used the business zone. Council staff at Playford highlighted the success of quarterly events for networking and information about NDIS business opportunities, creating a professional network where businesses can meet other providers and increase their client base.

“Several of our earlier co-workers have now left and expanded to each employ over 100 people. Now the additional success of the NDIS networking is creating a growth pathway between the coworking and business support services through to a professional network where they can meet other providers and increase their client base.” (Stretton Centre’s Manager for Business and Industry growth)

The facilitation of access to council support services and the direct contact in the buildings also leads to a better image of council and council staff, as they are easy to contact and enable access to support programs and grants. Conversely, the interaction is also valuable for council, as often there is not much contact with small businesses and their needs are not well known. In Casey Fields the connection and coordination between council and grassroots sports clubs has increased through the sports complex.

Employment benefits come from increased local job opportunities and diversification of employment conditions as local business that have been supported and grow create new jobs. For example, through the Stretton Centre 843 jobs have been created since its opening in September 2015, 340 of which were created via co-worker's business growth. The StartNorth Business Hub has supported the creation of 16 local jobs since its opening in October 2019, despite its opening coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing restrictions for work places and networking. Furthermore, programs in the hubs improve the employability of local residents. For example, the Stretton Centre in partnership with Flinders University offer the “Flinders Foundation Studies program”, a three-months course which provides a pathway to further education for high school leavers and others seeking a career change. In Casey Fields there have been increased local employment opportunities through the administration of larger sports clubs, such as the Melbourne City Football Club, moving to the complex.

Health benefits of the case studies include an improved work-life balance for small business owners, as they have access to office spaces outside of their home, enabling a clearer separation of work and home and providing a space where they can meet clients outside of their home. Moreover, more local jobs mean reduced travel times for local employees, impacting positively on mental health, work-life balance and offering the opportunity for active transport and with this increased physical activity. For Casey Fields, increased physical activity is a central benefit, as through the upgrade more people can take part in sport, access to sport is easier for local residents, and the recreational part of the complex also offers opportunity for increased physical activity through walking for leisure and other activities.

Community cohesion benefits: As most of the case studies are either a meeting space in themselves or are co-located with meeting spaces, such as libraries or parks, this provides community cohesion benefits because people can interact, meet on purpose or incidentally and have a local place to go to. This is of particular importance in growth areas where often meeting spaces are scarce. Specific programs also support community cohesion. For example, the Stretton Centres offers programs for children for reading and singing in their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) program.

“The Cranbourne West Business Hub being located within a shopping centre has increased the profile of the hub and the centre. Having uses other than retail being offered within our shopping centres helps provide a one-stop-shop experience and reduces the need for residents to travel to multiple locations. The community centre and hub has helped reinforce a sense of community for the residents of Cranbourne West.” (Senior Economic Development Officer, City of Casey)

For the Casey Fields site people taking part in sports together offers community cohesion benefits, which is also supported by the broad range of sports offered. Furthermore, the larger sports clubs offer community development activities. The Melbourne City Football Club has a non-for-profit arm ‘City in the Community’ which engages with the local community, such as through clinics and programs. Similarly, the Melbourne Football Club’s annual contribution to community activities has an estimated value of more than \$800,000 per year.

Social equity benefits occur through improved access to business support, services, local employment, qualification programs and in the case of Casey Fields an improved quality and quantity of sports facilities and improved access to sports programs in general and also to elite sports programs. For example, a higher proportion of local residents takes part in the Academy of the Melbourne City FC since it has moved to Casey Fields, increasing from 8% of players living within 30km of Casey Fields to nearly 20%. The improved access to services improves social equity, as in most growth councils access to these services has been poor or non-existent before the establishment of the business hubs, incubators and also the sports complex. Having this access available locally makes it easier for businesses and residents to take part in courses, ask for advice and get support.

Table 1 provides a broad overview of the results of the multi-criteria review for the economic development case studies. Achieved benefits refer to benefits that have either been measured in the case studies or have been observed by council staff or other stakeholders. Anticipated benefits refer to benefits that have been formulated in business cases, feasibility assessments and other documents that have been developed previous to implementation, but have not been explicitly measured or can be clearly pinpointed.

Table 1: Multi-criteria review of the Economic Development Case Studies

Criteria/Categories	Achieved benefits	Anticipated benefits
Health	<p>Members of business hub and staff living locally, improving work-life balance and reducing travel times</p> <p>Increased physical activity for new members of sports clubs</p> <p>Physical activity through informal recreational activities</p>	<p>Improved work-life balance through transition from a home office</p> <p>Reduced work travel times through local jobs and local co-working spaces, improving work-life balance</p>
Community cohesion	<p>Community is engaged in STEAM programs (programs for children for reading and singing)</p> <p>Programs from the Melbourne City FC's non-for-profit arm 'City in the Community' + community programs from Melbourne FC</p>	<p>Stronger sense of belonging and social connection</p> <p>Increased social interaction through participation in sport, spectator sport and informal recreation activities</p>
Social equity	<p>Improved access to services</p> <p>Improved quality and quantity of sports facilities</p>	<p>Facilitating local jobs for local people</p>
Economic development	<p>High attendance at events, workshops and one-one advisory sessions (according to KPIs)</p> <p>100% occupancy of hubs</p> <p>High diversity of businesses (e.g. marketing, legal, recruitment, counselling, NDIS, debt recovery, construction, finance)</p> <p>Improved opportunities to attract visitors through regional and national events</p>	<p>Improved knowledge and success of local small businesses</p> <p>Providing access to business training and supporting access to grant programs</p> <p>Supporting growth and sustainability of small businesses</p>
Employment	<p>Creation of local jobs through co-workers, advice to businesses</p> <p>Online jobs portal for the Northern Adelaide Region</p> <p>Increased employment opportunities through administration of Sport Clubs</p> <p>Employment during construction</p>	<p>Community members learn new skills which supports employment opportunities</p> <p>Diversification of employment conditions, increased local job opportunities</p> <p>Improved pathways and access for local job seekers</p> <p>Local jobs facilitated or supported through procurement policy</p>
Networking and connection	<p>Improved networking between businesses that use the facility</p> <p>Interaction between council and businesses. Positive image of council and council staff, as enabler and easy to contact</p> <p>New links between council and grassroots sport clubs</p>	<p>Supporting business connections through networking programs</p>

Community Development Infrastructure

Community development infrastructure case studies include the Wallan Youth Services Hub (Mitchell Shire, VIC), the Cockburn Health and Community Facility (Cockburn, WA), the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre (Kwinana, WA), the Regatta Park Upgrade (Penrith, NSW), the Sutherlands Park Hockey Field Upgrade (Gosnells, WA) and the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre (Playford, SA). While the Cranbourne West Community Hub and the Casey Fields Sports Grounds have been analysed mainly under economic development infrastructure, they are also community development infrastructure and have also been considered for this section.

These case studies cover a broad range of areas and include a youth services hub, a health and community facility, a library and resource centre, the upgrade of a regionally significant park and sports centres. The youth services hub offers children, youth and family support services for people aged 12-24 as well as social spaces where people can spend time. The health and community facility provides access to a not-for-profit entity offering health services, and incorporates a library, a Medicare/Centrelink facility, other service providers, a café, a lecture theatre and meeting and tutorial rooms. The library and resource centre is a one-stop shop for community service providers, such as early childhood development, education and skills building, family and relationship counselling and financial counselling, and also houses a public library, a café, a crèche and rents out function and meeting rooms. The park upgrade improves the amenity and quality of open space in the area with new infrastructure and landscaping, and also increases environmental protection for the adjoining river. The sports centres offer access to a range of sports and active open space and also function as a community hub. The upgrade of the hockey fields particularly improved access to this sport and opened up the opportunity for higher grade games. The upgrade and expansion of the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre responds to the population growth and the increase in demand for local sports facilities.

Funding

The community development case study projects were funded through different grants and governance levels (council, state and federal) as well as other organisations, such as the Lotteries Commission Grant, Lions Club and the local sports club. Commonwealth grant programs included the Commonwealth GP Super Clinics Program (for the Cockburn Health and Community Facility), the Better Regions program (for the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre), the Western Sydney City Deal (for the Regatta Park upgrade) and sports grants (for the Sutherlands Park Upgrade and the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre). State grant programs included the Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund (for the Wallan Youth Services Hub), the Grassroots Football, Cricket and Netball and Facility Program (for the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre) and other sports grants (for the Sutherlands Park Upgrade and the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre).

While the focus in this report is on the funding of infrastructure, operation of services is sometimes also funded by federal, state and/or local government. For example, the operations of the Wallan Youth services hub are funded by federal and state government, plus philanthropic and privately delivered services.

The Western Sydney City Deal

The City Deal is a collaborative approach to building and coordinating investment between federal, state and local government. The Western Sydney City Deal was signed on 4 March 2018. It is a partnership between the Australian Government, NSW Government and eight local councils of the Western Parkland City (Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool Penrith and Wollondilly). (<https://www.wscd.sydney/>)

Benefits

Many benefits of the community development case studies come from health benefits, community cohesion, networking and social equity benefits. However, there are also economic development and employment benefits. Two general characteristics are of particular importance: a) the case studies improve access to services which previously were either difficult to reach/a long distance away for residents or if they existed were in high demand and not easily available and b) the case studies provide meeting places, e.g. as a central hub or as accessible open space, which again are often scarce in growth area councils.

Health benefits of the case studies include improved mental wellbeing and physical health. Mental wellbeing is improved as access to counselling and treatment is easier for residents through the spatial proximity and also through the better integration and coordination of different health services, counselling services and other relevant services through the co-location of those services. For example, the Cockburn Health and Community Facility houses twelve different service providers and a Medicare/Centrelink facility and is also located in a central area with a youth centre in proximity. Another positive impact on mental health that has been observed by council staff in Kwinana is the co-location of a crèche and counselling and other services. Having the opportunity to visit counselling services without their children or to have some personal time has had a positive impact on the wellbeing of parents, and particularly single parents. Similarly, the offer of a public shower in the building has a positive health impact for people who do not have access to a shower, such as homeless people, and at the same time provides an avenue for letting users know about other available services.

“The crèche facilities at Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre have resulted in parents’, particularly Mums’, ease of access to social services while children are in a safe and nurturing environment. The crèche team have also noted that the service has been invaluable for the mental health and wellbeing of parents, with children attending the crèche for a short break or to access the library for study.”
(Manager Community Services, City of Kwinana)

Physical health has been improved through integrated health services and specific health programs. For example, the Cockburn Healthy Lifestyle Service (CHLS) is a free service aimed at supporting adults seeking to improve their health and wellbeing. Between July and December 2021 210 clients attended 418 health consultations, with about half of the clients that completed review consultations reducing their weight (52%) and/or reducing their waist circumference (48%). Also, 35% had increased their intake of vegetables, 29% had increased their daily fruit consumption and 22% had increased their total physical activity. This is of particular importance as there are high levels of obesity, circulatory systems disease, Type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal diseases and osteoarthritis in the local community.

A positive impact on physical activity comes also from the upgrade of sports centres as more people have the opportunity to take part in sport, access to sport is easier for local residents, and the improvement of the sports grounds also offers improved amenity for leisure activities, such as going for a walk. Similarly, the upgrade of the Regatta Park offers improved opportunity for physical activity through better infrastructure for leisure activities and a positive impact on mental health through improved access to green open space.

Community cohesion benefits come from the case studies being meeting places which facilitates social interaction, either purposefully or incidentally. The centres or sports grounds provide a local place to go to for meeting people, using services or simply hanging out. As mentioned under economic development, this is of particular importance in growth areas where often meeting spaces are scarce. The integration of different services furthermore provides improved support networks for the community. Specific programs also support community cohesion, for example social groups, such as board games or knitting groups, family and children programs, such as playgroups, cultural programs,

and also mental health support that facilitates social and economic participation. The Cranbourne West Community Hub reports over 5,000 people attending monthly to participate in their programs in 2022. In 2021, which was disrupted through the Covid-19 pandemic, they counted about 20,500 participants in their programs, while in 2022 with an increased offer in programs about 50,700 participants came from January to October.

A sense of belonging towards the hub or a sports club has also been observed by council staff, as well as an improved reputation of the local area through a state-of-the-art and inviting building. Sport also facilitates social connection as team members come together to train and play and other people come to watch sport. New or improved sports programs outside the more 'standard' sports of football and cricket also improve the diversity of sports and social connection between different parts of the population as more people may become interested in taking part in sports programs. As mentioned under the economic development category, at Casey Fields larger sports clubs have also offered specific community development activities. A potential for decreased youth crime has also been anticipated through an improved offer in sports programs and an improved provision of youth services. However, this has not been evaluated in the case studies.

"From a LGA perspective, the provision of infrastructure that addresses issues of equity and access is paramount. One of the most remarkable outcomes of this project is the sense of pride exhibited by the Club members and community at having access to quality facilities and being loud and proud about Club success stories; including home grown and nurtured national representatives."

(Community Facilities Advisor, City of Gosnells)

Social equity benefits occur through improved access to services, such as health care, counselling and youth services, as well as open space and sport programs. For example, the upgrade of the hockey grounds in Sutherlands Park provided the first hockey grounds in a disadvantaged area in Perth useable for higher grade games. Previously, these state-of-the-art hockey grounds were only located in advantaged areas of the Perth region, so that teams from other areas had to travel to those grounds.

The improved access to services improves social equity, as in most growth councils access to these services has been poor or non-existent before the establishment of the centres and hubs. Having this access available locally makes it easier for residents to use these services and get support. For example, in Wallan youth and families had to travel about an hour by car or 1.5-2 hours by public transport to access dedicated acute or crisis mental health support before the local Youth Services Hub was established. In Kwinana, residents had to travel up to 20km for accessing services, such as Centrelink, individual and family counselling, Medicare and health insurance, crisis accommodation for domestic violence and legal services before the establishment of the Library and Resource Centre. Further social equity benefits occur through programs geared to young or new parents and are mostly used by mums so that they also support gender equity. For example, the Youth Services Hub in Wallan offers future parenting and young parents' programs and a service provider in the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre offers services in early parenting and early childhood development.

"Being able to access mental health support locally means young people can get the help they need without having to travel hours on public transport or wait months for appointments. This support will change lives and set young people up for a positive future." (Youth Mayor Mitchell Shire Youth Council, Thomas Starkey)

Networking benefits come from the co-location of services, providing the opportunity for cross-agency collaboration as well as cooperation between providers in a similar field, such as health services. For example, the Cockburn Integrated Health (CIH) not-for-profit entity that was established as part of the Commonwealth GP Super Clinics Program works closely with the other service providers in the building. Council staff at Kwinana highlighted that the cross-agency collaboration which developed

through co-location and cooperation in the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre has enabled a cross-agency approach to developing the Kwinana Recovery Plan during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in no duplication of services and a quick response to any gaps in the community support. The Cranbourne West Community Hub has entered 15 partnerships with diverse organisations and businesses, such as the SHE Campaign (supporting women from culturally diverse backgrounds), Dandenong & District Aborigines' Cooperative (supporting young aboriginal people disengaged from school), Narcotics Anonymous (supporting people living with a drug addiction), Job Advocates (assisting people to explore employment pathways), OC Connections (supporting people living with a disability). For the sports centres, the upgrades provided the opportunity to improve the communication between council and the sport clubs, and to involve them in decisions about the upgrades. For example, the master plan for the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre was developed in consultation with the Angle Vale Sports and Community Association.

Economic development benefits include the improved amenity of the surrounding area which attracts new businesses and can support an emerging night-time economy through pubs and restaurants. For example, for the area of Regatta Park there is an emerging hospitality district on both sides of the river which includes craft breweries and restaurants. This development has led council to support pre-vocational hospitality training as there is such a high demand for hospitality workers. The case study hubs are fully occupied and some of them also rent out rooms for external functions which on one side brings income for the centre, but also puts the location on the map for businesses and residents from other areas.

Further economic development benefits from counselling and health services include an increased potential for economic participation of clients and a decreased pressure on the public health budget if clients are treated earlier, e.g. through less hospitalisation but also through the lower potential for comorbidities later in life. Economic benefits of the sports centre upgrades include a higher self-sustainability of the sport clubs due to increased income from increased membership, and in the case of the hockey field upgrade reduced costs as the need to hire other suitable venues for higher grade games or training does not apply anymore. There is also the potential for hockey higher grade hockey competitions at the sports centre which can attract visitors to the area, similarly to the regional and international events that can be held at Casey Fields now.

Employment benefits come mostly from jobs that are created in the centre and from jobs created during construction. For example, the Sutherlands Park Upgrade of the Hockey Fields provided 1.5 ongoing full-time jobs and 48 full-time jobs during construction, and the Wallan Youth Services Hub provided 2 ongoing full-time jobs and 30 jobs during construction. For some small businesses, particularly in the health and wellbeing industry and career counselling, the centres provide the opportunity to offer their services and classes. For example in the Cranbourne West Community Hub five small businesses offer sport classes such as Bollywood dancing, Zumba, Pilates, Yoga and general fitness sessions. Some of the programs offered in the centres will improve the employability of local residents and staff. These programs include short courses and qualifications, English classes, career counselling, and support for job seekers. The Cockburn Community and Health Facility also includes an education and training component for staff members through cooperation with local universities. For Regatta Park there has been an increased demand for hospitality workers, as cafés and restaurants have opened in the surrounding area.

Table 2 provides a broad overview of the results of the multi-criteria review for the community development case studies. Achieved benefits refer to benefits that have either been measured in the case studies or have been observed by council staff or other stakeholders. Anticipated benefits refer to benefits that have been formulated in business cases, feasibility assessments and other documents that have been developed previous to implementation, but have not been explicitly measured or can be clearly pinpointed.

Table 2: Multi-criteria review of the Community Development Case Studies

Criteria/Categories	Achieved benefits	Anticipated benefits
Health	<p>Improved mental health treatment (referral pathways)</p> <p>More accessible and integrated health care plus better integration of health and counselling services</p> <p>Improved health results for clients of a health program</p> <p>Crèche offers opportunity to visit services and for personal time and thus improves mental health</p> <p>Increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing through improved access to sports programs and open space</p>	<p>Avoiding mental health problems in adulthood and further disease and comorbidities through early identification and treatment of ill health</p> <p>Addressing high levels of certain non-communicable diseases in the local community</p> <p>Improved community health and wellbeing through improved access to green and opportunity for physical activity</p>
Community cohesion	<p>Locations as meeting places facilitating social interaction</p> <p>Increased social connections through sports offers</p> <p>Sense of pride and belonging towards the centre or hub</p> <p>Better support networks</p> <p>Improved local reputation through new centre or hub</p>	<p>Increased social participation and social connectedness</p> <p>Stronger sense of belonging</p> <p>Decreased youth justice issues</p> <p>Improved gender equity through programs for young mums</p> <p>Improved inclusion through inclusive playground</p>
Social equity	<p>Improved access to services, health care, counselling, open space, sport</p> <p>Decreased need for travel to access sports programs</p> <p>Supporting gender equity through programs for (new/young) parents</p>	<p>Improved access to green open space regardless of socio-economic status</p>
Economic development	<p>High occupancy of centres</p> <p>Improved amenity of the area, attracting new businesses</p> <p>Emerging night-time economy through pubs and restaurants</p> <p>External functions in the centre</p> <p>Increased membership increases income for sport clubs</p>	<p>Less demand on health budget</p> <p>Increased economic participation</p> <p>Potential for hockey competitions at Sutherlands Park</p>
Employment	<p>Ongoing operating jobs that are created</p> <p>Jobs during construction</p> <p>Demand for hospitality workers with more cafés and restaurants</p>	<p>Increased youth employment</p> <p>Education and training component improves employment opportunities for the Cockburn Health and Community Facility</p>
Networking and connection	<p>Co-location of services and cross-agency collaboration, e.g. different health services</p> <p>Coordinated COVID-19 response</p> <p>New partnerships between service providers</p> <p>Improved collaboration between council and service providers</p> <p>Increased communication between council and sport clubs</p>	<p>Partnerships with service providers</p> <p>Partnerships with the academic sector to provide training and education</p> <p>Improved integration of service providers</p>

Transport Infrastructure

Transport infrastructure case studies include the Bald Hills Road Freeway Interchange (Mount Barker, SA) and the Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade (Casey, VIC). The Freeway Interchange added four new interchange ramps to the South Eastern Freeway in Adelaide and three new roundabouts to the surrounding roads to respond to the increase in road traffic due to population growth and to increase safety. The Road Upgrade in Casey removed a railway level crossing on Evans Road and added extra lanes and an improved intersection with the South Gippsland Highway for Hallam Road. New cycling and walking paths and bus infrastructure were also built on Hallam Road. Although both case studies are primarily road infrastructure projects, public and active transport infrastructure projects are obviously also beneficial to fast-growing suburbs. The reasons for the focus on road infrastructure in this report lies in the suggestions of case studies from councils, and in the fact that public transport infrastructure upgrades in growth suburbs are mostly of larger scale and happen less often, while active transport infrastructure generally is of smaller scale and is often implemented in conjunction with other infrastructure upgrades. For a theoretical analysis of costs and benefits of public and active transport infrastructure and services in new suburbs see Kroen et al. (2021).

Funding

The transport infrastructure case study projects were funded through different government levels. The Freeway Interchange was funded by the Australian Government, state government and council, while the Evans and Hallam Road upgrade was funded solely by State government.

Benefits

The transport infrastructure case studies include a number of benefits related to health, community cohesion and social equity as well as economic development, employment and networking and connection.

Health benefits of the case studies include the increased potential for physical activity through the active transport infrastructure implemented during the road upgrade (and future active transport infrastructure enabled through the freeway interchange work). Reduced travel times through improved traffic flow impact positively on mental health and work-life balance, particularly for commuters. Improved access to *local* jobs offers the opportunity for active transport and with this increased physical activity. Improved road safety and improved access for emergency services is also important for the health of residents.

Community cohesion is impacted positively through the restoration and opening up of local connections. For example, in Casey a north-south connection has been re-opened after 15 years through the level-crossing removal, as the road had been closed for safety reasons. This is of particular importance as due to the railway line not many other north-south connections exist, and the main alternative connection is the busy South Gippsland Highway. Also, a number of schools and community centres are located on both sides of the railway crossing. Less through traffic and reduced congestion in certain locations due to changed traffic conditions improves the amenity in those areas which can also impact positively on community cohesion.

“The completion of the Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade has allowed the Cranbourne West community to connect to schools, shops, employment, healthcare and train services. New direct bus services and paths will encourage a mode shift to active and public transport.” (Principal Transport Planner, City of Casey)

Social equity benefits occur through improved access to locations in the metropolitan area and to employment and also through the response to transport demand which has developed due to the increased population growth. While building more and more roads is not the final solution for our transport issues, particularly as Australia needs to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions from transport, there needs to be a functioning road network that responds to the increased transport demand through the fast and strong population growth to avoid spatial equity issues. Additional bus routes that are facilitated through the road upgrades and increased active transport opportunities will also improve social equity, as additional public and active transport improves accessibility and with this opportunities for social and economic participation for people without access to a car.

Economic development benefits come from the improved traffic flow for freight and other traffic and improved access to local businesses. For example, in Casey some industrial sites experienced increased development as access to them improved. In Mount Barker the improved access also had an effect on tourism, as access improved to wineries and other businesses. The improved traffic flow and in the case of the level crossing removal a more reliable train network contribute to economic development benefits as productivity is improved by freight and workers reaching their destination quicker and less time is 'lost' in congestion or due to train network issues.

“Anecdotally, we know that the new interchange has been of considerable benefit to adjacent businesses, including a winery cellar door and restaurant which has seen increased trade and a horticultural business which now has a faster and less congested route to intra and interstate markets” (Manager Sustainability and Corporate Planning, Mount Barker District Council)

Employment benefits come from the improved access to jobs (however, those jobs can also be outside the local government area) and the improved access to local businesses and their subsequent improved development potential.

Networking and connection benefits include the restoration or opening up of local connections and also the cooperation between local council and state government that is necessary for building the transport infrastructure.

Table 3 provides a broad overview of the results of the multi-criteria review for the transport infrastructure case studies. Achieved benefits refer to benefits that have either been measured in the case studies or have been observed by council staff or other stakeholders. Anticipated benefits refer to benefits that have been formulated in business cases, feasibility assessments and other documents that have been developed previous to implementation, but have not been explicitly measured or can be clearly pinpointed.

Table 3: Multi-criteria review of the Transport Infrastructure Case Studies

Criteria/Categories	Achieved benefits	Anticipated benefits
Health	Improved access of emergency services Improved road safety	Improved community health and wellbeing through reduced travel/commuting times Future active transport connection with the potential for increased physical activity
Community cohesion	Improved amenity through less 'through' traffic on some roads Restoration of local connections	
Social equity	Improved spatial equity through improved access	Meeting transport demand caused by strong population growth Future bus routes
Economic development	Improved access for freight, local businesses and tourism Further development of industrial sites	A more reliable train network Better traffic flow
Employment	Improved access to jobs Jobs during construction New job opportunities through development of industrial sites	
Networking and connection	Restoration of local connections Cooperation between council and state government	

3 Discussion

Benefits and impact of federal and state funding

The case studies show that a broad range of infrastructure projects in growth areas contribute to positive outcomes for residents. Commonwealth and state government funding allows for infrastructure provision that would otherwise not be possible or would take a long time to materialise.

The provision of infrastructure and services that is enabled through Commonwealth and state government funding means that community benefits can be achieved earlier, including the prevention of potential community harms, because for example counselling and other community services are provided locally, eliminating the barrier of long distances to access services elsewhere.

While the benefits of early service provision are not exclusive to growth areas, in these councils often there are no such locally accessible services, or they are over capacity so that residents have to travel elsewhere or simply cannot access the services. This is why these projects are so beneficial to fast-growing suburbs and why it is important to implement them sooner rather than later. Additionally, as can be seen in the case studies, due to the mostly large geographical extent of the growth area councils and the fast population growth, there is a need for a number of these 'projects' in the whole local government area, such as community hubs or sports fields, in order to provide *local* access to them and catch up with growth.

The case study councils also mention that the presence of the community and business centres offers opportunities to receive further funding for programs and increases the ability of councils to offer more programs to communities. For example, the Wallan Youth Services Hub in Mitchell Shire enables council and service providers to apply for funding for programs, as a space exists where to offer those programs, whereas the program delivery would have been difficult beforehand. Similarly, the StartNorth business hub in Hume was able to apply for funding for an Accelerator Program and master classes and had the infrastructure and organisational capacity to offer and advertise those programs in a targeted way.

Enhanced spatial equity is one of the big benefits of each of the case studies. As the infrastructure and services catch up with growth, the divide in provision between the growth suburbs and inner and middle suburbs decreases. The maps from the Australian Urban Observatory shown in the case study descriptions in the appendix clearly show that LGAs on the urban fringe are lacking in social infrastructure in comparison to most of the more established LGAs so that each of the projects improves access to the services and programs. There are some logical reasons for the lack of infrastructure and given the lower densities in outer areas some service provision is more difficult and less efficient, but there is the need for growth councils to be able to catch up in order to enable comparable living conditions to all residents of a region. As it is not possible for growth councils to fund all the required infrastructure out of their budgets, Commonwealth and state government funding is highly needed.

Table 4 provides an overview of the funding sources for the case studies, which are explained in more detail in the case study descriptions in the appendix. Commonwealth funding was provided across all three categories of infrastructure, however not all projects received federal funds. While the focus of the report was initially *federal* funding assistance, projects with state funding were included as some relevant and beneficial infrastructure projects that were suggested by councils did not receive Commonwealth funding, and these case studies may point to a divergence of or an opportunity for Commonwealth funding. The Regatta Park in Penrith, the two sport projects in Angle Vale and Gosnells, and the Bald Hills freeway interchange received funding from both federal and state governments, while the other projects received funding from one or the other level. Commonwealth grant programs for the case studies included the Australian Government Suburban Jobs Program, an Incubator Grant,

the Commonwealth GP Super Clinics Program, the Better Regions program, the Western Sydney City Deal and sports and road grants. State grant programs included the Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund, an urban renewal grant, funding out of the Victorian Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) fund, the South Australian Grassroots Football, Cricket and Netball and Facility Program and other sports grants. This shows that, particularly on the federal level there is a number of grants which can be applied for, however there is no specific grants program for fast-growing suburbs.

Table 4: Overview of case study funding sources

Case Study	Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
Cranbourne West Community Hub, Casey, VIC		\$2,533,000	\$2,533,000	
Stretton Centre, Playford, SA	\$11,000,000			\$4,000,000
Business Station, Gosnells, WA	\$538,500		\$828,000	\$50,000
StartNorth Business Hub, Hume, VIC		\$7,000,000	\$18,000,000	
Casey Fields upgrade AFL/soccer facilities, Casey, VIC		\$5,000,000 (for AFL upgrade) \$5,000,000 from GAIC (soccer)	\$2,500,000 (for AFL upgrade) \$13,000,000 (soccer)	\$500,000 (for AFL upgrade)
Wallan Youth Services Hub, Mitchell Shire, VIC		\$645,789	\$1,090,400	
Cockburn Integrated Health Facility, Cockburn, WA	\$7,315,000		19,000,000	
Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre, Kwinana, WA	\$3,300,000		\$11,000,000	\$7,700,000
Regatta Park Upgrade, Penrith, NSW	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000	\$9,000,000	
Sutherlands Park Upgrade Hockey Fields, Gosnells, WA	\$1,300,000	\$828,000	\$828,000	\$472,000
Angle Vale Community Sports Centre, Playford, SA	\$3,000,000	\$1,150,000 \$125,000 \$475,000 \$590,000	\$7,447,000	\$19,000
Bald Hills Road Freeway Interchange, Mount Barker, SA	\$16,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$3,000,000	
Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade, Casey, VIC		\$54,000,000 (Evans Rd) \$38,400,000 (Hallam Rd)		

Note: See appendix for further detail

The need for a new federal approach to growth area infrastructure

Commonwealth funding has played a crucial role supporting the case study projects overall. For the majority of projects, councils stated that implementation would have not proceeded or would have been substantially delayed without this (or the state) funding. Yet, the projects have been funded from different funding programs, and some of the projects did not have Commonwealth funding but were supported by state government only. Currently, there is no specific federal program that supports fast-growing councils explicitly, such as exists for example in Victoria with the Growing Suburbs Funds. This means that there is limited coherence in the planning and delivery of growth area infrastructure across Australia, despite growth areas being nationally significant sites of new community formation.

At the same time, the challenges faced by growth area councils in keeping up with population growth can be seen as warranting a specific national governance, coordination and funding regime to support the building of high-quality and liveable new suburbs, as councils – and to a certain extent state governments – are not able to fund these infrastructures and services on their own. Given the scale and extent of the problem and the patterns of population distribution across Australia's settlements, questions of growth area infrastructure provision should be viewed as a national policy challenge tied to overall national population and migration policy, and not simply a local issue to be grappled with by local municipalities with limited funding.

Improved coordination between government levels

Apart from the need for federal and state funding and support, the information sessions with councils also showed that better cooperation and coordination between the federal and state government level and their funding priorities is an important point. Reducing the politicisation of funding regimes and agreeing on what is needed is what councils desire from federal and state government. Similarly, improved coordination between local governments, and local government and state and federal government will achieve improved outcomes and enable needs-based funding regimes. A response to this need could include a uniform funding allocation program, or a City Deals model for growth area community infrastructure.

Current City Deals involve a collaborative approach to building and coordinating investment between federal, state and local government. However, City Deals are a specifically federal scheme operating without clear and systematic nationally agreed principles and rollout is fragmented and patchy across the nation, nor necessarily targeted to growth areas. In this research some councils provided information about the long timelines of current City Deals so that a more efficient coordination may be necessary, given community infrastructure is needed at the time of residential occupation, not at timing dictated by federal City Deal prerogatives.

Challenges of current grant programs

Further funding issues identified in the information sessions with councils were that required co-contributions can become difficult for growth councils to source if a large expenditure of infrastructure and services is required to respond to high population growth and multiple growth fronts. The option to leverage off different funding pools for the same project was seen as helpful in this regard. Additionally, supporting programs for operating expenses were desired. While some programs for specific service provision exist (e.g. the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS)) councils stated that there is often a focus on infrastructure and that funding for the operating expenses of sporting clubs is sometimes more useful than funding for a stadium.

The councils also identified 'competition' against established suburbs as challenging because growth councils often respond to the demand of a future population rather than an existing population. In contrast more established areas might have a higher current demand as they have a higher existing population. The latter is more consistent with the current standard of infrastructure being provided after certain population thresholds have been met, so that growth area councils may 'lose out' against

more established areas. However, the population thresholds for service delivery can be reached very suddenly, given that the population grows quickly, while planning for, funding and building infrastructure may not keep pace with that growth. A specific grants program for growth areas would be one option to respond more clearly to the needs at the time of community formation.

Further opportunities for supporting growth areas lie in the spatial decentralisation of regionally relevant infrastructure, such as art galleries or venues for concerts or other events. The case study of Casey Fields is a good example of a regionally important sports venue which brings regional, national and international sports events to the fringes of the metropolitan region, benefiting residents of the growth area in which it is located. Such a model could be applied to other metropolitan-level civic infrastructure.

While the analysis was looking for desired or necessary changes to the development and delivery of federally funded projects, the question of changes to or development of overarching planning frameworks and programs at the national scale was not anticipated at the outset of the project. However, the complexity of accessing consistent and coherent information across the projects and jurisdictions investigated made salient the wider national problems with growth area planning.

Essential infrastructure

The problems of growth area infrastructure provision lags are not new and there have been federal responses before. During the rapid expansion of Australian suburbia in the 1950s and 1960s, roads in new greenfield suburbs were often left ungraded or paved and footpaths, electricity or sewerage not provided, leading to lower amenity than in established suburbs. In the mid-1970s the Whitlam federal Labor Government established a national sewerage program completing the connection of unserved suburban growth areas to metropolitan sewerage systems, as it saw the need for improved suburban infrastructure. Similarly, state government planning in the 1970s – such as the 1971 *Planning Policies for Metropolitan Melbourne* – introduced development plans which ensured that essential services such as transport networks, schools and hospitals, water supply, sewerage, drainage, gas and electricity were integrated in newly developed areas. Thus, federal and state government saw the need to plan for and financially support essential basic infrastructure in the new suburbs.

The case studies in this report may not be considered essential infrastructure in the sense of the definition of the development plans such as water, energy, sewerage, basic roads and telecommunications. However, their delivery in the new suburbs is also crucial, as community, sports, health and business services provide important benefits for the community. The benefits from these services and the disbenefits from a deficit of these services means that they need to be planned for, funded and implemented as early as possible. Yet, current funding regimes mean that the first residents moving to a new suburb may not have local access to these services for many years. Given the increasing recognition of the need for social and economic infrastructure in addition to basic services, there is a strong case for federal involvement to provide national coordination to address existing growth area infrastructure gaps and to avoid future lags between population arrival and the catch-up rollout of new community services.

The growth area community infrastructure hubs and centres with costs between \$3 to \$20 million may seem like minor projects for Commonwealth funding in comparison to major projects worth hundreds of millions or billions that are typically presented to Infrastructure Australia for federal funding assessment. Yet, the sheer number of the community hubs, centres, sport fields and parks that are needed in the growth area councils across Australia and the proportion of population that is currently missing out on them, makes such projects a national infrastructure challenge. Thus, a dedicated federal infrastructure framework and funding program for community, sports, health and business services would be highly beneficial, rather than the current fragmented project-focused model where each project is applied for under varying local state and federal funding schemes.

Standards and defined needs and requirements

A further topic discussed in the information sessions with councils, was that that a growth areas community infrastructure program should be based on an analytical framework with clearly defined needs and requirements that is able to make robust comparable assessments of priority across the national growth areas. This includes developing national minimum standards as to community needs, while also considering a more sub-regional view rather than focusing on LGA boundaries. A more systematic program that aligns community infrastructure funding with robust independent assessment procedures, could also avoid the politicisation of funding allocations and ad-hoc decisions about community need.

Improved standards and analysis in turn would require clear data collection and reporting at local and state levels around the extent and character of community need as well as clear standards on timeliness of infrastructure provision relative to population demand and methods that can effectively evaluate project impacts.

Data availability

As indicated in the previous section and as it became clear during this research, the data collected and reported on for the case studies differed quite a lot, due to reporting practices and requirements, as well as their diverse nature, context, and implementation status. A fulsome evaluation of the benefits of growth area infrastructure is limited by the fragmentation of information and reporting systems as well as governance and funding frameworks. Furthermore, data for outer suburban growth areas with regard to benefits and changes in specific topic areas are not readily available. Thus a clear and easily comparable overview of all projects in relation to specific benefits was not possible. However, the data collected could be used to understand the benefits of the infrastructure to a certain extent. Yet, agreed standards and reporting practices would support a better understanding of the benefits and the particularities of growth areas.

An issue with existing data bases, such as data available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is that for fast growing councils some of these data bases are not updated frequently enough to observe and track changes in community behaviour and cohesion. Census data, for instance, provides a high level of detail about local communities but is collected every five years so that local impacts of infrastructure interventions as well as the strong population growth are difficult to track. For example, the City of Wyndham grew by nearly 70,000 residents between the 2016 and 2021 Census to just under 300,000 residents in 2021, an increase of about 30%. Therefore, there is a need for wider and more regular local data collection to understand benefits and the specific situation of growth areas better.

Some business cases or project applications use data comparing the availability of certain services relative to the population in their area compared to the metropolitan average or other comparable areas. These comparisons are useful for highlighting stark differences and the clear lack of services. Yet again this data is not always readily available or collected in a regular manner. Furthermore, it is important to consider the data in context, including wider reasons for some of the differences in relative levels of infrastructure provision, and what could address the discrepancy.

Efforts to understand the benefits of new infrastructure and services often also face difficulties in understanding the causality and the magnitude of infrastructure impact in comparison to the spatial scale of analysis. For example, the number of businesses using a business hub and the number of new jobs created by those businesses can relatively easily be attributed to the business hub and its impact. However, networking that occurs between businesses located within a hub and those not located there are harder to capture. Moreover, when looking at unemployment data for a local government area the impact of new infrastructure may not be discernible within the wider labour market context even if the benefit for the businesses involved has been notable. Similarly, counselling or health services can

enumerate the number of clients they consulted, but to understand the difference the consultation has made to client outcomes requires qualitative data which is more complex and time intensive to collect.

Overall, a more sophisticated and comprehensive approach to data collection would be valuable to better understand the situation in Australia's urban growth areas. The Australian Urban Observatory's Social Infrastructure Index that has been used in this report and the indicators for Social Infrastructure for Health, Culture, Education, and Community & Sport Infrastructure contribute in part to this task. Further data that may be useful include access to employment, education, health care, parks/open space and cultural, entertainment and sporting facilities, the number of businesses working from home, and the provision of open space and sport fields per resident. While some of this data is currently collected its collation and publication is highly fragmented and often gathered solely for specific projects or individual reports, with little standardisation of variables or reporting. If data about suburban growth areas was collected and published more regularly, this would make understanding the position and experience of growth councils easier to assess in a timely way.

An option to understand the benefits of new infrastructure and services better is to ask councils that have received funding for projects to provide standardised information on intended and unintended direct and indirect benefits as a condition of the funding arrangement. While this would take some effort at first, such an approach will help build knowledge of the benefits of those investments better, which can then provide the basis for further investments. By establishing a body of reporting on project outcomes such an approach would enable more systematic evaluation of infrastructure funding programs and inform improved infrastructure planning and funding decision-making in future.

Additionally, greater research into development and outcomes in growth areas is needed to improve data availability and knowledge of infrastructure demand and the benefits arising from early infrastructure provision. Such a research agenda could inform better and more timely planning of growth areas to capture the benefits of infrastructure provision earlier and avoid extended deficits in infrastructure provision.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The case studies show that a broad range of infrastructure projects in growth areas partially funded by federal and state government contribute to positive outcomes for residents. Benefits include better health and wellbeing, community cohesion, improved spatial equity, economic development, local employment opportunities and also increased networking and collaboration. Commonwealth and state government funding has assisted these projects to be implemented and implementation would have not proceeded or would have been substantially delayed without this funding.

Many of the projects respond to issues of high population growth and a lack of infrastructure and particularly services – in other words catch up with growth – while some also respond to issues of a concentration of disadvantage.

While many benefits can be observed arising from the projects, some of these benefits are difficult to quantify due to their qualitative nature, the difficulty of obtaining data that can reveal causal relationships between the projects and improvements in local community outcomes, and the quick pace of change in growth areas. Improved data collection for projects both before and after intervention, plus improved community data overall, could help to some extent and implemented projects could be used for this.

The complexity of accessing consistent and coherent information across the projects and jurisdictions investigated made salient the wider national problems with growth area planning. This question of planning frameworks and programs at the national scale was not anticipated at the outset of the project which was focused on evaluating specific growth area infrastructure projects, but the analysis showed that a fulsome evaluation of the benefits of growth area infrastructure is limited by the fragmentation of information and reporting systems as well as governance and funding frameworks.

About 20 per cent of the Australian population now lives in NGAA member councils, and this proportion is likely to increase as migration returns to pre-pandemic levels. As growth areas receive a large proportion of national population growth and are nationally significant sites of new community formation there is considerable opportunity for improved national frameworks that can support better planning for infrastructure in growth areas.

This report makes four recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – National growth areas planning framework and coordination arrangements

A new national growth areas planning framework is needed to support a consistent approach to funding and delivery of infrastructure and services in growth areas. The purpose of such a framework would be to establish nationally agreed standards for growth areas setting out expected levels of infrastructure and service provision relative to population and timing of residential occupation and to support planning for timely delivery of this infrastructure. This framework would include a growth projection component to identify the scale and timing of population arrival in growth areas in relation to urban development rollout. The national growth areas planning framework would be developed in conjunction with federal, state and territory governments and current and future growth area local governments, plus development and community sector groups and academia. It would clarify areas of responsibility for planning, delivery and funding of growth area services and infrastructure, and delegate actions across these levels of responsibility. The framework would enable and operate a five-year national growth areas plan, reviewed annually for progress.

Clear national coordination arrangements for planning growth areas and delivering services and infrastructure are required to ensure the needs of rapidly growing populations is matched by adequate

delivery. National coordination arrangements could operate similar to City Deals involving support for coordination between federal, state and local government to identify key infrastructure needs, but with a specific focus on growth areas. Such 'Suburban Deals' could overcome the current temporal mismatch between local service and infrastructure needs in rapidly growing communities, funding regimes, and state and federal provision of services.

A federal policy unit for growth areas that supports coordinated growth area planning and develops a long-term view of how Australia plans growth areas could be established as part of the proposed 'Cities and Suburbs' unit of the new government and oversee the program. The Cities and Suburbs Unit proposed by the new government could be a suitable vehicle to oversee a program that surveys growth area community needs and coordinates policy, planning, priority assessment, financing, and delivery in collaboration with state and local government and Infrastructure Australia, along with improved data and information provision. This unit could undertake development of a growth area data and infrastructure needs assessment program as well coordinating funding arrangements between the three tiers of government.

Recommendation 2 – National growth areas infrastructure fund

Delivering high-quality and timely services to meet rapid population growth in outer-suburban areas is a pressing national challenge. A national growth areas infrastructure fund that specifically addresses the urgent needs of fast-growing outer suburbs would be an important policy reform with benefits across multiple spatial scales, from the local community, local government, metropolitan, state and national levels and across portfolios such as welfare, health, education, sports, and economic development. While Commonwealth funding has supported a large part of the case study projects in this report, this funding was sourced across a range of different Commonwealth programs and schemes. A coherent, systematic and targeted growth areas infrastructure fund could help to redress the chronic lag of infrastructure and services in growth areas which is common problem across Australian cities and is recognised as a long-standing urban policy challenge. This could be similar to the Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund and could be in part funded via a once-off whole or partial single-year bring-forward of future GST revenue to the states such that funds arrive before or at the same time as population arrives rather than after (Dodson 2016).

Recommendation 3 – National growth areas infrastructure standards and assessment, including data collection

A future national growth area infrastructure funding program should be based on an analytical framework with clearly defined national standards and needs and benefits assessment model. This would include establishing new nationally agreed principles and standards for growth area infrastructure provision as well as an information base that can inform assessment.

State government requests for federal infrastructure funding are currently assessed and prioritised by Infrastructure Australia using standardised national assessment practices established by agreement with state and territory infrastructure bodies. Such standards and assessment frameworks could be established for community infrastructure in growth areas, including a dedicated community infrastructure benefit-cost analytical model. This could be informed by the current Australian Transport Assessment and Planning (ATAP) guidelines which provide a nationally agreed consistent approach to transport project analysis and benefit-cost assessment. Guidelines for cost-benefit analysis also help local government as well as state government with assessing the costs and benefits of a project. New assessment procedures could aim to establish agreed cost-benefit evaluation practices for growth areas that are able to account for the non-market needs-based demand for such

infrastructure (see Denham, Dodson and Lawson 2019). Infrastructure Australia may be a suitable agency for the development of this framework given its role in major infrastructure project assessment and prioritisation.

Recommendation 4 – National research program for growth areas

Greater research into social, economic and community outcomes in growth areas is needed to improve knowledge of infrastructure demand and the benefits arising from early infrastructure provision and to support an improved data collection. This should start from new advanced fundamental analysis and modelling of the planning and sequencing of land-development and dwelling construction processes to inform new growth area focused projections of population growth and housing demand, with detailed demographic profiling to test expected arrival of populations against infrastructure plans. Such a research agenda could then inform better and more timely planning of growth areas to capture the benefits of infrastructure provision earlier and avoid extended deficits in infrastructure provision. This national research effort should involve partnership between growth area local governments and relevant peak bodies, state and federal planning and infrastructure agencies, and universities with established urban research capabilities and growth area expertise, to ensure close research-policy linkages. A dedicated funding stream to support this agenda would be required and could be a component of the National Growth Areas Infrastructure Fund identified in Recommendation 2 above.

Concluding observations

Better cooperation and coordination between the federal and state government levels and their funding priorities has been an important point in the information sessions with councils. Reducing the politicisation of funding regimes and agreeing on what is needed is what councils desire from federal and state governments. Similarly, improved coordination between local governments, and local government and state and federal government will achieve improved outcomes and enable needs-based funding regimes. As discussed above this could include a uniform funding allocation program, or a City Deals model for growth area community infrastructure.

There is an advocacy role for local government to pinpoint the needs and to highlight where needs are not responded to. However, sometimes this advocacy role becomes difficult for local government when growth pressures are so strong that their main focus is to react to growth rather than to plan ahead. Developing guidelines on what benefits to include for project assessments, including broader benefits from infrastructure and services, would be helpful for local government, as they can then use standardised assessments. The development of these guidelines could be based on the results and experience of funded projects, by asking them to provide standardised information on intended and unintended direct and indirect benefits as a condition of the funding arrangement. Such an approach would enable more systematic evaluation of infrastructure funding programs and improved infrastructure planning and funding decision-making in future.

Delivering infrastructure and services in growth areas to catch up with growth is a challenge of national significance, and not 'just' a local problem. Many growth areas are receiving new migrants establishing life in Australia and who have limited connections and support networks to draw upon. As the crucibles where Australia's future is forged, growth areas need levels of infrastructure provision that is commensurate with their national role. Growth councils cannot fund all necessary infrastructure and services because need exceeds structural funding streams. A national approach to growth area planning with a defined framework of necessary infrastructure and services and a program that supports growth areas in their infrastructure provision is essential. This program should be coordinated between federal, state and local government, in order to respond to local needs and to achieve a joint effort.

This approach will achieve a change from reacting to growth to anticipatory planning and enable early delivery of infrastructure and services which is important to avoid disadvantages to become entrenched. While level of services will depend on urban density as well as population numbers, there is the need for defining a basic service level, not only for equity reasons but also to avoid that those areas develop into poor and disadvantaging places to live.

Focusing on growth areas with a specific support program does not mean to disregard established areas and the need for containment in urban development but is necessary to enable the new areas to catch up on growth and to provide residents with a high level of amenity and liveability.

Commonwealth funding and leadership can contribute to achieving positive outcomes in the growth areas.

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Appendix: The Case Studies

This section of the report provides descriptions of the 13 projects selected from the overall submissions. These projects are from New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria. It gives an overview of each with information drawn from council submissions and a desktop analysis.

Australian Urban Observatory indicators

This report uses 'Social Infrastructure Index' maps from the Australian Urban Observatory (AUO) located within the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University. The AUO is a digital platform that presents urban liveability data in maps that provide an easy-to-understand overview of the current status of Australian local government areas, suburbs and neighbourhoods. The AUO platform maps 48 indicators of liveability across Australia's 21 largest cities for 2018 and 2021, providing the opportunity to compare areas to the national level, as well as to cities and local government areas. The data and indicators allow for detailed understanding of inequities within cities and communities.

The Social Infrastructure Index presented in this report is calculated based on a range of different measures that include: Community Centres; Culture and Leisure; Early Years; Education; Health and Social Services; and Sport and Recreation. They include 16 individual service types and are based on the presence of service mix within threshold distances. Further explanation can be found on the AUO website. There are further sub-domain indicators of the Social Infrastructure Index which can also be explored on the AUO website: Community and Sport Infrastructure, Health Infrastructure, Cultural Infrastructure, and Education Infrastructure.

The AUO can be accessed via: <https://auo.org.au/>

City of Casey, Victoria

Community Profile

	City of Casey	Greater Melbourne
Location	28-60km south-east of the Melbourne CBD	
Population 2021	369,453	4,976,157
Forecasted population 2036	522,000	6,884,100
Population growth rate 2021	1.7%	-1.6%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	41.8%	34.1%
Population under 15 years of age	22.7%	18.1%
Population over 65 years of age	10.8%	15.0%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	7.4%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	6.6%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	3.1%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	5th-lowest decile	5th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	5th-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	5th-lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population, Victoria in Future (2019), Australian Urban Observatory
 * Working Population Profile for the 2021 Census had not been released at the time of writing

Cranbourne West Community Hub – Community and Economic Development Infrastructure

Project description

The Cranbourne West Community Hub was opened in early 2021 and is a multi-use community space with several multi-purpose rooms of different sizes and amenities which supports and offers programs and services for the community, e.g. through facility hire for local service organisations to deliver programs and services. It also includes a local business hub. Adjacent to the building is an urban park area of about 3,000m². Programs and services offered include social groups, children’s activities, health and wellbeing activities, training and skills, health and support services.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

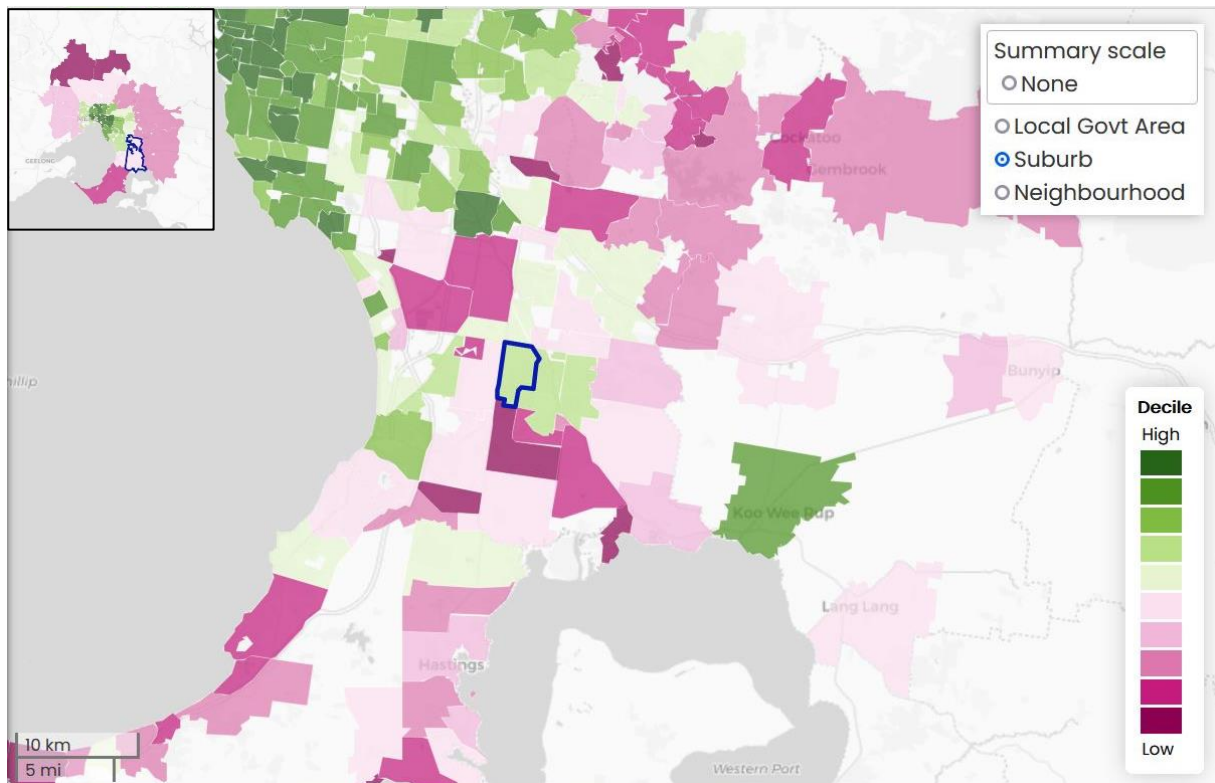
The hub aims to support Cranbourne West’s growing community and address issues of social isolation; lack of access to facilities, services and information; support and complement home-based businesses and offer access to learning and skill development. It aims to offer safe and inclusive spaces and services for all genders, children, young people, seniors, community groups and business groups to interact and build connections.

Figure 1: Cranbourne West Community Hub



Source: Provided by the City of Casey – Lloyd Group Tatjana Plitt

Figure 2: Cranbourne West Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South-East Melbourne (Cranbourne West highlighted) and Melbourne (Casey LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Funding and governance

The hub is run by council with programs offered by council and community service providers. Construction of the hub was jointly funded by state government and the local council. State government provided \$2,533,000 through its Growing Suburbs Fund, while Casey City Council also contributed \$2,533,000.

The integrated business hub was a modification of a previous proposal to facilitate a Business Incubator within the LGA, which was deemed to be beyond the affordability of council without the support of a partner. Funding constraints and the lack of surety as to the level of usage also meant that council decided to provide more generic meeting spaces that could be used by businesses.

Table 5: Funding contributions to Cranbourne West Community Hub

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
	\$2,533,000	\$2,533,000	

Benefits and outcomes

Expected benefits from the community hub and its services include improved community health and wellbeing, a stronger sense of belonging and social connection, improved access to services, community members learning new skills and acquiring knowledge which supports employment opportunities and also improves opportunities for volunteering, and also an improved understanding of changing community needs. In its first year, 2021, which was impacted by closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Hub offered 3,225 program hours with 20,578 program participants. In 2022 the Hub was able to offer more programs, partly because Covid-19 restrictions were eased and partly because more service providers and organisations were interested in offering services. Therefore from January to October 2022 10,472 program hours have been offered with 50,696 participants. This means that now 5,000 people attend programs every month.

Since its opening the Hub has rented out spaces to 53 groups and individuals to host private celebrations or cultural events, such as birthday celebrations, weddings, wakes and cultural events like EID, Diwali and Nowruz. Overall, this enabled 6,347 people to celebrate and meet with family and friends.

For home-based businesses the hub offers the opportunity to meet clients outside their home. The City of Casey found that the business spaces are highly used, and there is a demand for such spaces. For example in the first half of 2022 the hub's facilities were booked by 26 commercial hirers (294 bookings overall), and 257 people used the business zone. Accordingly, council is considering how further community centres with integrated business hub could be provided, to respond to demand in other areas of Casey, particularly in the newly established areas with high growth. In the experience of the City of Casey, the combination with a community centre and the location next to a shopping centre contributed to the awareness of the existence of the business spaces.

“The Cranbourne West Business Hub being located within a shopping centre has increased the profile of the hub and the centre. Having uses other than retail being offered within our shopping centres helps provide a one-stop-shop experience and reduces the need for residents to travel to multiple locations. The community centre and hub has helped reinforce a sense of community for the residents of Cranbourne West.” (Senior Economic Development Officer, City of Casey)

The Hub has entered into 15 partnerships with community organisations and businesses that now deliver diverse programs and service opportunities for the community. These include Dandenong & District Aborigines' Cooperative (supporting young aboriginal people disengaged from school),

Liberty for all Nations (supporting newly arrived immigrants), Lions Club Cranbourne, Narcotics Anonymous (supporting people living with a drug addiction), MAS National (supporting workforce employment, development and growth opportunities for individuals), South East Community Links (providing social support for Afghan women), OC Connections (supporting people living with a disability), Anglicare ParentZone, Casey Cardinia Libraries.

Furthermore, other organisations and local businesses hire spaces at the hub to deliver their own programs and activities. These include Aries Bolly Dance School, Zumba with Trudy, Pillar of Strength Pilates, Namaste Yoga, Terminator Fitness, Cire Training, Chisholm Institute, Sterling Institute of Australia, Blairlogie Living and Learning Inc, Campbell Page Disability Employment Services, Touchstone International Church and Shree Jalaram Mandal Victoria.

Current expression of interest for bookings for 2023 from businesses and organisations means that rooms will be nearly fully booked during the week from 9 am to 4 pm.

Sources:

<https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/facilities-hire/cranbourne-west-community-hub>;

Growing Suburbs Fund information sheet -

https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/167757/Casey-City-Council-2018-19-Cranbourne-West-Community-Hub-and-Urban-Heart-Flyer.pdf

What we do Flyer: <https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/user-files/cranbourne-west-community-hub-what-we-do.pdf>

Cranbourne West Community Hub Review 2022

Cranbourne West Community Hub Term 2 Program 2022

Monthly Report May, August, September 2022

Id. Consulting: *National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile*: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

Casey Fields upgrade of AFL and soccer facilities – Economic Development and Community Infrastructure

Project description

Casey Fields is a hub for regional sport and recreation in South-East Melbourne. It is located in Cranbourne East and offers facilities for a large range of sports, such as Australian football, soccer, netball, athletics etc. with nine sporting precincts, multiple open space areas for recreation and play, and a network of paths for walking, running and cycling. The site is owned by the City of Casey and situated on 84 hectares with only few sporting venues of this size in Victoria. Casey Fields opened in 2005 with several upgrades and additions since then. The upgrades of the AFL and soccer facilities which are the focus of this report occurred between 2019 and 2022 with some more upgrades still to occur. The venue is home to a host of sporting clubs that includes Melbourne Football Club's AFLW team, Casey Demons VFL team, and the Melbourne City Football Club. The Casey Soccer Centre of Excellence at Casey Fields is of regional significance and comprises a community facility with four floodlit pitches (three synthetic, one hybrid turf), training tablet and associated pavilion. The future stadium facilities will feature a high-quality hybrid turf pitch and covered spectator seating, capable of catering to high level competition to support the activities of Melbourne City Football Club and other elite-level events. In its configuration the stadium will support other rectangle sports, such as rugby union and league.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

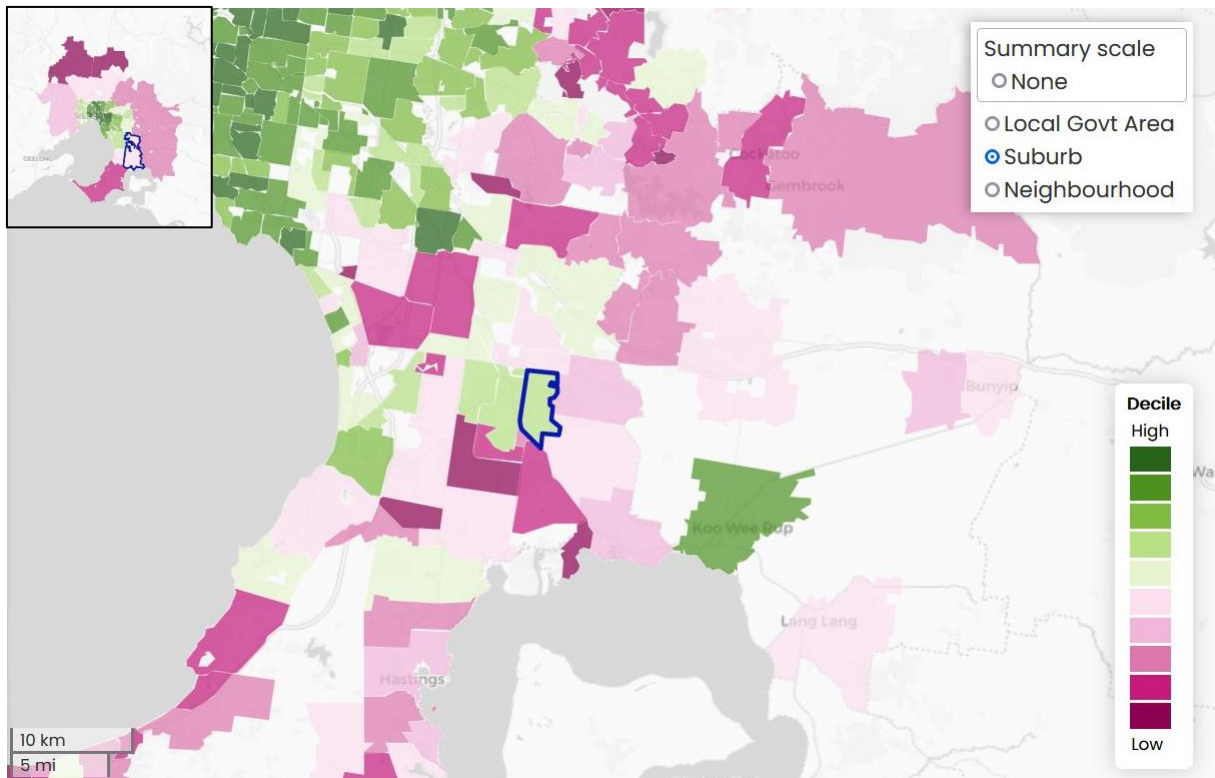
The hub aims to cater to Casey's growing population and to become a regionally significant sports destination for Melbourne. With this it aims to provide amenities to Casey residents, encourage physical activity and also to bring economic development to the city through high level sporting clubs and events.

Figure 3: Sports grounds at Casey Fields



Source: Provided by the City of Casey

Figure 4: Casey Fields Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South-East Melbourne (Cranbourne East highlighted) and Melbourne (Casey LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

The following principles underpin the development of the site:

- Develop and maintain each sporting precinct and its surrounds to a high quality.
- Provide a pleasant, comfortable and inviting public domain that will enhance connectivity and ease of access.
- Maintain and enhance a complementary mixture of activities that encourage users to be actively engaged.
- Preserve and enhance the landscaped parkland setting.
- Utilise universal design, environmentally sustainable design and smart city principles and practices.
- Attract and host regional, state and national sport related and non-sporting events to Casey Fields.
- Build on partnerships to create and contribute to the success of Casey Fields.
- A planned approach to new and existing sport precincts, informal spaces and the road and path network.

Funding and governance

The Casey Fields site is owned and managed by council. The council bought the original site of 70 hectares in 2001 with additional land (about 14 ha) being acquired in 2018. The initial purchase and establishment of Casey Fields was a very significant undertaking for a Local Government entity.

A council-internal management group is responsible for the management and development of Casey Field. The Casey Fields Steering Committee is facilitated by council staff and provides input into the ongoing implementation and review of the Casey Fields Master Plan. It comprises representatives of sporting user groups and local community members. Sporting User Groups operate under varying agreements with the City of Casey for allocation to their facilities at Casey Fields.

A state government grant of \$5 million was provided in 2019 for the improvement of the AFLW facilities, providing new facilities for Melbourne Football Club’s AFLW team and grassroots pathway programs. The AFL and the City of Casey also provided funds to this upgrade.

Four soccer outdoor pitches were funded through \$5 million towards the \$18 million project from the Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) fund, which is a developer contribution for state-funded infrastructure in Victoria’s growth areas.

Table 6: Funding contributions to the upgrade of AFL and soccer facilities at Casey Fields

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
	\$5 million (for AFL upgrade) \$5 million out of GAIC fund (for soccer upgrade)	\$2.5 million (for AFL upgrade) \$13 million (for soccer upgrade)	\$500,000 (for AFL upgrade)

Benefits and outcomes

Benefits from the Casey Fields site include community development activities, major events and improved amenities for residents, such as high-quality open space and leisure facilities leading to health benefits through increased physical activity.

The Casey Fields site and the AFL and soccer upgrade have led to employment opportunities during the construction but also ongoing opportunities. For example, the Melbourne City Football Club has moved its administration to Casey Fields which provides local employment opportunities. The development has also led to professional development opportunities for council staff.

The opportunity to hold regional, national and international events due to the upgrade brings economic benefits as it brings visitors to Casey with subsequent spending. It also holds the opportunity to promote the region overall. Examples of large events that take place are State and Regional Little Athletics Championships; Melbourne Storm and NRL Victoria Junior Representative trials and competitions; Cricket Victoria Regional Competitions; and Casey Demons VFL and VFLW

rounds. Other annual events are Cancer Council Victoria Cranbourne-Narre Relay for Life; Melbourne Stars All Abilities Cricket Carnival; and Make-A-Wish Australia, The Field of Wishes Family Fun Run & Walk.

Social and community benefits are achieved through improved opportunities in participating in sports, as well as the availability of high-quality open space. The high-quality open space includes a playground and park, landscaping, interaction and connectivity between precincts, pedestrian and cycle paths, wayfinding signage, trees for shade, principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) so that users feel safe, and public art. Furthermore, the Melbourne City FC has a non-for-profit arm 'City in the Community' which engages with the local community, such as through clinics and programs.

"We are building a facility that belongs to everyone who is passionate about football and we want to work closely to with the local football community to develop the game in the S.E. We would love to see the kids who come down after school and play on the pitches, one day running out for Melbourne City." (CEO Melbourne City FC)

Melbourne Football Club has been developing the individual football talent, resilience and leadership skills of Casey's young players, and provides a wide range of community activities. The Club's annual contribution has an estimated value of more than \$800,000 per year.

There is a particular focus in Casey on the participation of women and girls, and also on working with recent migrants. This work has also supported links with grassroots clubs in the region. Health and Wellbeing programs are provided during Community Camps, 'The Festival of Football' brings families and supporters together, and programs and clinics offer new experiences for women and girls.

The project furthermore has improved spatial equity in sports, with improving the quality and quantity of sports facilities in south-eastern Melbourne and also inner regional Victoria. For example, a higher proportion of local residents now takes part in the Academy of the Melbourne City FC, increasing from 8% of players living within 30km of Casey Fields to nearly 20%.

Sources:

<https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/casey-fields-masterplan>; <https://edgearchitectural.com.au/projects/casey-fields-melbourne-football-club-aflw-upgrade/>

<https://sport.vic.gov.au/news/articles/new-designs-showcase-casey-fields-aflw-transformation>

<https://melbournecityfc.com.au/news/melbourne-city-fc-officially-opens-elite-training-pitch-at-casey-fields>

Cost-Benefit Analysis and Economic Impact Assessment

Id. Consulting: *National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile*: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade – Transport Infrastructure

Project description

In October 2020 Evans Road was reopened after having been closed since 2005 for community safety reasons which inhibited north-south movement in the municipality. The Evans Road Level Crossing Removal and Hallam Road Upgrade are both Victorian state government projects. For Evans Road the existing railway level crossing was replaced with a road bridge. Hallam Road was upgraded between Evans Road and Ormond Road which included an intersection with the South Gippsland Highway. Extra lanes were added between Ormond Road and South Gippsland Highway, and new traffic lights installed at the intersection with the highway and Evans Road. New cycling and walking paths were built, as well as bus infrastructure, including new and upgraded stops and new bus queue lanes to give buses priority. The upgrade was finished in 2020.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The Hallam Road upgrade aimed to improve traffic flow, safety and access to the South Gippsland Highway. Furthermore, it included public transport infrastructure to facilitate bus priority and cater for future bus routes. Similarly, the level crossing removal aimed at increased road safety, reopening the north-south connection between Thompson Road and Cranbourne West, and also improved reliability of the train network.

Funding and governance

Both projects were undertaken and funded by the state government and were timed to be undertaken at a similar time.

Hallam Road and Evan Road were part of a broader advocacy by the City of Casey, which aimed at highlighting missing links in the road network.

Table 7: Funding contributions to Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
	\$54 million – Evans Road \$38.4 million – Hallam Road		

Figure 5: Map of Hallam Road Upgrade



Source: <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/mrpv/hallam-road-upgrade>, © State of Victoria (Major Transport Infrastructure Authority) 2020

Benefits and outcomes

The improved road connections have facilitated meeting transport demand that has developed in the area due to increased population growth. This has also enabled the further development of industrial sites in proximity to the roads benefiting economic development. This development also offers new local employment opportunities.

Further benefits include improved active and public transport infrastructure, facilitating walking and cycling and improving public transport services and leading to potential health benefits through increased physical activity. The opportunity for introducing new bus routes and active transport infrastructure support improve social equity as people not able to drive or without access to a car have the opportunity to travel independently and this opportunities for social and economic participation. For others the increase in transport options also provides benefits as there is less reliance on the car.

Removing the level crossing has restored local connections and improved accessibility for residents, including access to the Merinda Park train station. The restoration of the local north-south connection impacts positively on community cohesion, as due to the railway line not many other north-south connections exist, and the main alternative connection is the busy South Gippsland Highway. Also, a number of schools and community centres are located on both sides of the railway crossing. The level crossing removal also enables a more reliable train network which impacts on productivity and economic development.

The projects also assisted in enabling future declaration as a state arterial road. Evans Road has not been declared a state arterial road yet, but this will be important for council as this will take the road out of their responsibility. This would also acknowledge the role the roads are already playing in the broader transport network.

“The completion of the Evans and Hallam Road Upgrade has allowed the Cranbourne West community to connect to schools, shops, employment, healthcare and train services. New direct bus services and paths will encourage a mode shift to active and public transport.” (Principal Transport Planner, City of Casey)

Sources:

<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/level-crossing-removal-project/projects/evans-road-lyndhurst>

<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/mrpv/hallam-road-upgrade>

<https://www.felix.net/project-news/contractor-announced-for-vics-54m-evans-road-level-crossing-removal-project>

<https://roadsonline.com.au/contract-won-to-deliver-38-4m-hallam-rd-upgrade-vic/>

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Personal communication and information provided by council

City of Cockburn, Western Australia

Community Profile

	City of Cockburn	Greater Perth
Location	13-26 km south-east of the Perth CBD	
Population 2021	122,211	2,192,229
Forecasted population 2036	170,000	3,370,088
Population growth rate 2021	2.5%	1.2%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	21.6%	20.9%
Population under 15 years of age	19.5%	19.0%
Population over 65 years of age	13.5%	15.8%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	5.6%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	5.4%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	4.9%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	4th-highest decile	4th-highest 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 & Population Projections, Australian Urban Observatory

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

Cockburn Health and Community Facility – Community Development

Project description

The Cockburn Health and Community Facility is a health and wellness facilities precinct which incorporates a library, a Medicare/Centrelink facility, a café, a lecture theatre and various meeting/tutorial rooms. Within the Cockburn Health and Community Facility, Cockburn Integrated Health (CIH) is a Not-for-Profit entity established in 2011 as part of the Commonwealth GP Super Clinics Program, proposed by the City of Cockburn in partnership with the Fremantle GP Network Ltd (FGPN). Services started in October 2014. CIH works closely with the other service providers in the building. Service providers include for example GP Cockburn Central, St John of God Mental Wellbeing Services, Azure Psychology, Hardy Nutrition Dietary Consulting, Child and Adolescent Community Health, Multicultural Futures, Cockburn Support Service, Cockburn Financial Counselling, Forrest Personnel (employment assistance for people with disability), Bridging the Gap and Cockburn Wellbeing. The Cockburn Health and Community Facility is located in a central area with a large shopping centre and also a youth centre in proximity.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

CIH's vision is to "improve the health and wellbeing of the Cockburn population by providing coordinated multi-disciplinary primary health care services that are responsive to the needs and priorities of the local community." The four key services are clinical; chronic disease management; health prevention/promotion; and training. The facility aims to support the provision of health services especially to the medically, socially and financially disadvantaged; encourage preventative

care; support integrated, multidisciplinary, culturally appropriate patient-centred care; work with other service providers to integrate existing local programs and initiatives, address health inequality across the Cockburn community; and invest in research initiatives and programs focused on local health issues and prevention and management of chronic health conditions.

The Cockburn Healthy Lifestyle Service (CHLS) was established in June 2017 as a free service aimed at supporting adults seeking to improve their health and wellbeing. The CHLS offers clients free health consultations and referrals to free or low-cost programs and services designed for adults to achieve or maintain a healthy weight and improve their healthy eating, mental health or physical activity behaviours. The service specifically seeks to engage vulnerable individuals. This includes collaboration with organisations such as Life without Barriers, Multicultural Futures and Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation.

Figure 6: Cockburn Health and Community Facility



Source: Provided by the City of Cockburn

Funding and governance

The Commonwealth’s contribution to the Cockburn Health and Community building was \$7,315,000. According to available documentation the Council contributed about \$19,000 to the building.

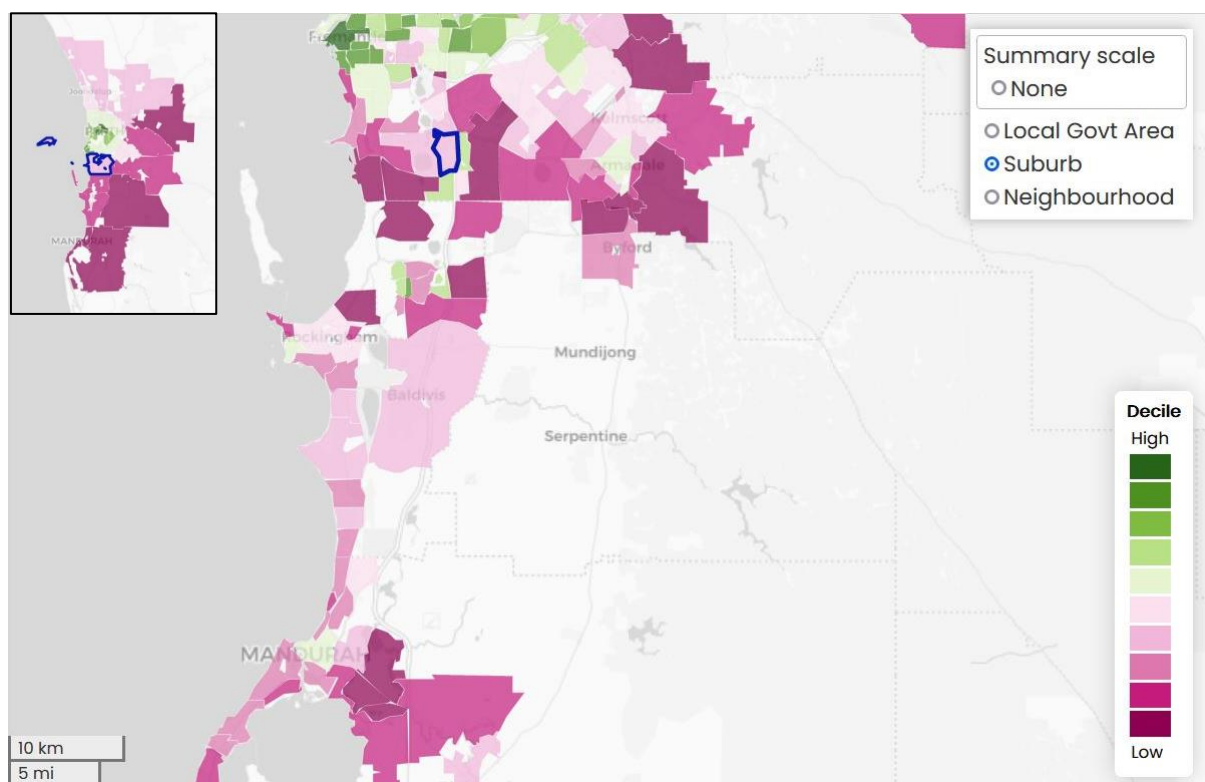
Funding for the establishment of Cockburn Integrated Health – the Not-for-Profit entity located in the building – was provided by the Commonwealth Government, the City of Cockburn and Lotterywest. Detailed information on the funding is not publicly available.

Cockburn Integrated Health as a Not-for-Profit entity is overseen by a Board of Management.

Table 8: Funding contributions to the Cockburn Integrated Health Facility building

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$7,315,000		19,000,000	

Figure 7: Cockburn Health and Community Facility Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South Perth (Success suburb highlighted) and Perth (Cockburn LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Benefits and outcomes

The overall benefit of the Cockburn Health and Community Facility is an improved and more accessible health care for Cockburn’s residents, which responds to previously unmet GP/primary health care needs, supports health prevention and most importantly provides a ‘one-stop-shop’. This also means that the services are not simply co-located in the building but cooperate with each other. The facility also provides training and education through partnerships with the academic sector which improves employment opportunities. It is currently fully occupied.

Programs that are offered through the CIH contribute to improved health and to prevention for the local community. Between July and December 2021 210 clients attended 418 health consultations of the Cockburn Healthy Lifestyle Service (CHLS) . Of those who completed review health consultations, 52.4% reduced their weight and 48.2% reduced their waist circumference. Nearly one quarter (22%) increased their total physical activity and 48.2% improved on their six-minute walk test. With regard to eating habits, 35.4% had increased their intake of vegetables and 29.3% had increased their daily fruit consumption. This is of particular importance as high levels of obesity, circulatory systems disease, Type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal diseases and osteoarthritis are found in the local community. Clients either self-refer or are referred through their GP, an allied health professional or social care professional.

A strong population growth led to an increased need for GP and primary health services so that the facility helped to catch up with this growth and to provide necessary services before the provision in the surrounding newly established suburbs had caught up.

“The Cockburn Health and Community Facility was built as a response to rapid population growth and development along the Kwinana Freeway. As early steps were taken to meet this growth, the facility has been able to respond dynamically to evolving healthcare needs in the City of Cockburn, and in the broader southern metropolitan region.” (Lead Advocacy and Engagement, City of Cockburn)

Sources:

<https://cihealth.com.au/about-cihealth/>

Application form

Final Cockburn Schedule 2021

Cockburn Healthy Lifestyle Services Report 2021

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

City of Gosnells, Western Australia

Community Profile

	City of Gosnells	Greater Perth
Location	16-21 km south-east of the Perth CBD	
Population 2021	131,381	2,192,229
Forecasted population 2036	170,048	3,370,088
Population growth rate 2021	1.1%	1.2%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	35.6%	20.9%
Population under 15 years of age	20.8%	19.0%
Population over 65 years of age	13.6%	15.8%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	6.0%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	6.0%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	2.9%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	4th-lowest decile	4th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	fifth-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	2nd-lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population & Population Projections, Australian Urban Observatory

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

Business Station, Gosnells – Economic Development Infrastructure

Project description

The Gosnells Business Station is an incubator offering low-cost business accommodation, in-house advisory services, strategic growth planning, networking opportunities and targeted introductions. Office and co-working space, training and board rooms are provided for hire. Free advisory sessions are available to small business owners located within the City of Gosnells and include topics such as business planning and strategy, marketing, financial management, and entrepreneurial skills development. The incubator was opened in 2005 and is run by ‘Business Station’ a not-for profit

provider. It is part of a City of Gosnells complex called the Agonis, located in Gosnells Town Centre. The Agonis also houses the Knowledge Centre Library, the Lyl Richardson Hall (which can be booked for functions) and the Gosnells Community Lotteries House.

Figure 8: Business Station, City of Gosnells



Source: Provided by the City of Gosnells

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

In 1997 Gosnells Town Centre was in decline and commercial vacancies were at 49%. In response to a customer satisfaction survey, the City of Gosnells developed a vision document to address the physical, social and economic decline of the town centre. The Gosnells Town Centre Revitalisation Scheme, Australia's first local government-driven urban regeneration scheme, saw the establishment of the Civic Complex Project, including the Business Incubator.

The incubator aims to support small local businesses in their establishment and growth, by providing free advice – a program that is funded by the City of Gosnells. The aim is to develop small businesses in the City of Gosnell and diversify local employment and business conditions.

Funding and governance

The incubator is managed by Business Station on behalf of the City of Gosnells. The City of Gosnells funds the advisory services program, co-hosts small business focused events and promotes other relevant local events.

The incubator is funded by the City of Gosnells with some programs funded by federal and state government, such as the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS) Digital Solutions and the Small Business Development Corporation workshops. Annual sponsorship of Business Station by the City of Gosnells is \$28,360.

The Civic Complex, built on a centrally located city-owned site (with an estimated land value of \$406,000), cost the City of Gosnells \$828,000 along with funding from an Australian Government Incubator Grant of \$538,500 and a Lotteries Commission Grant of \$50,000.

Table 9: Funding of the Civic Complex, housing the Gosnells Business Station and annual sponsorship of the Business Station

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$538,500		\$828,000 \$28,360 (annual sponsorship)	\$50,000

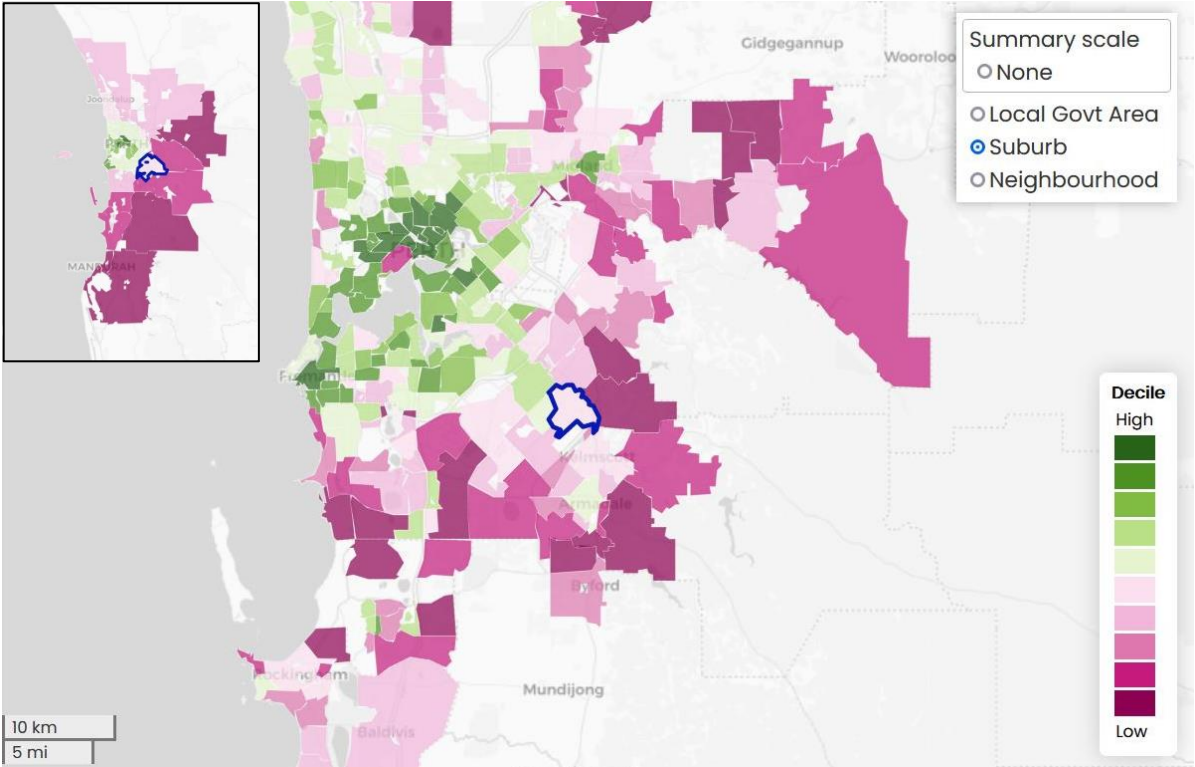
Benefits and outcomes

Expected benefits from the incubator include improved knowledge and success of small businesses in the Gosnells area and diversification of employment conditions with increased local job opportunities. This is important to the City of Gosnells as a large part of its 8,000 businesses are sole traders.

The City of Gosnells business development staff report much positive feedback from businesses that are using the facility and see how the co-working space leads to improved networking, sharing of ideas and businesses working together.

In July 2022, all rentable offices (35 offices) in the business incubator were occupied by tenants, while for the co-working space two of four desks available were occupied. The occupancy rate for the financial year 2021/22 was between 94% and 100%, meaning that 1 office was available in the first quarter, and two offices were available in the third quarter. This shows that there is a sufficient demand for offices to rent, while there is also fluctuation. Fluctuation of businesses is typical for an incubator and part of the concept as businesses are supported in their early stages. Businesses leaving are mostly moving to commercial premises, while some also move back to working from home or are given up.

Figure 9: Business Station Gosnells Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South Perth (Gosnells suburb highlighted) and Perth (Gosnells LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Business Station delivers one-to-one business advisory services and workshops for the City of Gosnells Sponsorship Program. This is an annual program sponsored by the City of Gosnells to support development and growth of small businesses within its area. In the financial year 2021/22 Business Station delivered 208.5 hours of one-to-one business advisory sessions and 9 workshops, against a target of 138 hours and 12 workshops for the City of Gosnells. The businesses that participated in advisory sessions and in the subsequent client satisfaction survey rated the service good or higher, agreed to implement one or more actions suggested by their business advisors and agreed that they would recommend Business Station. The demand for advisory sessions exceeded the initial target and budget allocation in 2022. Thus, the sessions were capped towards the end of the financial year to avoid exceeding the budget. However, some advisory sessions could be delivered further through specific arrangements. This shows the high demand for one-on-one advisory sessions for businesses.

Business Station also delivers further programs and events which are funded through other grant programs and organisations.

The Civic Complex Project was the first major capital expenditure in the town centre in some years and is now an important hub for the City.

“The quality of the built form of the Civic Complex became a model and a standard for which future development within the town centre would be measured. Its overall impact on the town since its establishment has been highly beneficial in terms of space activation, visual aesthetics and its contribution to the economic development of the area.” (Business Development Officer, City of Gosnells)

Sources:

Media Kit Business Station - https://www.businessstation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_Media-Kit.pdf

<https://www.businessstation.com.au/location/gosnells-incubator/>

Business Station Quarterly Reports Financial Year 2021/2022

Annual Report 2019/2020

<https://www.businessstation.com.au/program/city-of-gosnells-advisory-program/>

City of Gosnells Sponsorship Attachment Form

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

Sutherlands Park Upgrade of Hockey Fields – Community Infrastructure

Project description

The hockey fields at Sutherlands Park in Gosnells were upgraded to international standards with synthetic turf, an irrigation system and floodlighting between 2017 and 2018. This offers the opportunity to play higher grade games at the location so that the local hockey team does not need to travel to other venues for games. For other hockey clubs in the area this also means that they can access a state-of-the-art hockey field in close proximity. Sutherlands Park is the largest active open space in the City of Gosnells. Apart from the hockey fields, it comprises an indoor cricket training facility, seven sports reserves (soccer, cricket, teeball, softball and AFL), two pavilions, two clubhouses, a community centre, two playgrounds and an environmentally significant Bush Forever site. The site was initially developed in the early 1970s, with much of the original infrastructure coming to the end of its useful life and no capacity for any new sporting activities or clubs to be accommodated or for existing groups to expand.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

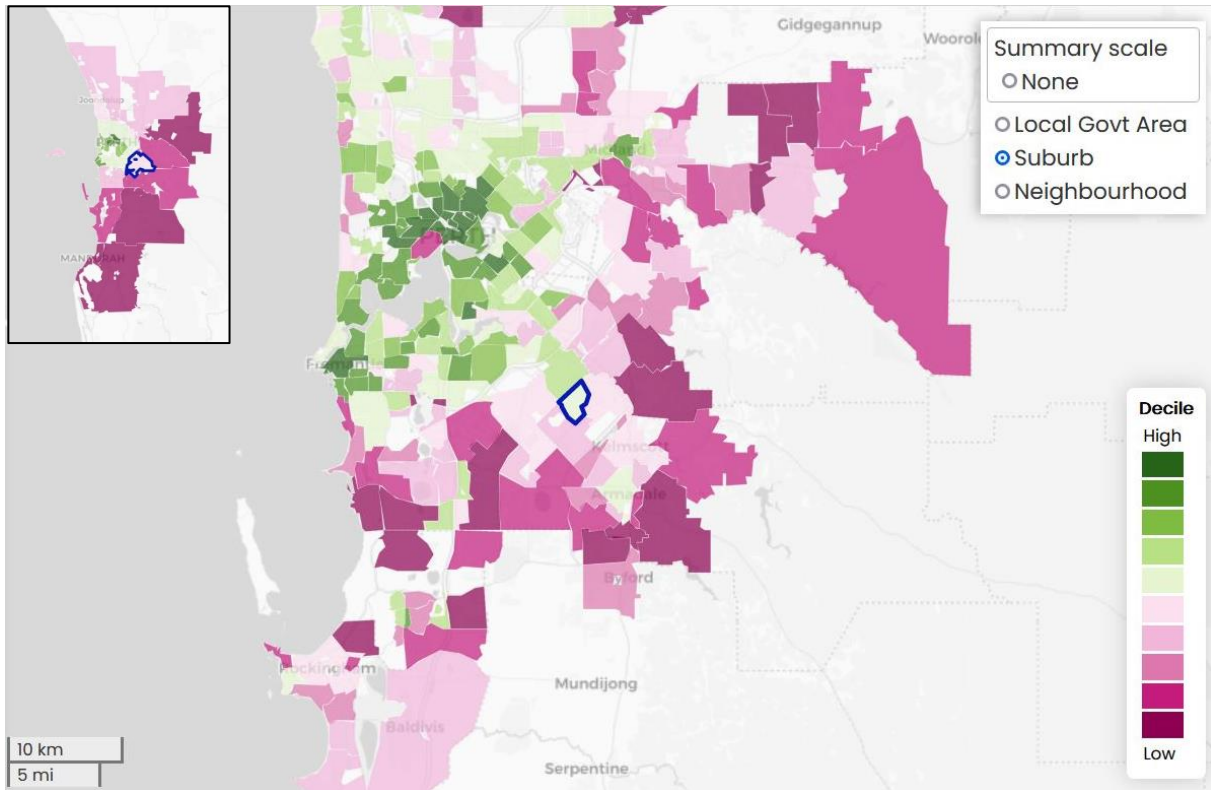
The upgrade of the hockey fields aimed to improve the standard of amenities for local residents, meaning that the local hockey club would be able to play and attract higher grade games at their home facility. This was not previously possible due to the lack of a synthetic playing field, which is a requirement for the sport to be played at a higher grade.

Figure 10: Hockey field at Sutherlands Park



Source: Provided by the City of Gosnells

Figure 11: Sutherlands Park Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South Perth (Huntingdale highlighted) and Perth (Gosnells LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Additionally, the upgrade aims to improve the quality of active open space in Gosnells. A 2012 study of active open space across the Perth-Peel area estimated a shortfall of 30 hectares of active open space in the south-eastern corridor in which the City of Gosnells is located and estimated the gap to increase to 42.8 hectares by 2031.

Funding and governance

The land of Sutherlands Park is owned by the City of Gosnells. The upgrade of the hockey fields received Commonwealth funding of \$1.3 million through the Community Development Grants Program with the remainder funded by the City of Gosnells, Southern River Hockey Club and the Western Australian Department of Sport and Recreation.

The synthetic pitch is owned by the City of Gosnells and operated under a lease arrangement with the Southern River Hockey Club. The Club is responsible for the regular ongoing maintenance and the City for structural maintenance, such as floodlighting maintenance the regular upkeep of the surrounding grounds and landscaped areas.

Table 10: Funding contributions to the upgrade of hockey fields

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$1.3 million	\$828,000	\$828,000	\$472,000

Benefits and outcomes

Benefits from the hockey turf upgrade include improved accessibility to good quality sport grounds and amenity for local residents. The new synthetic hockey turf is a first in the south-east of Perth and contributes to improved equity, as the existing adequately provisioned playing fields were located in advantaged areas. Thus, it does not only benefit residents in the City of Gosnells, but also residents of other municipalities.

As the areas in the south-east are home to socio-economically disadvantaged households, the costs of travel and hire fees made the sport inaccessible. As an example, the local hockey club had to travel for more than ten years across Perth to play home games at locations with synthetic hockey fields. This was previously reflected in lower-than-average participation rates and club membership in the southern areas of Perth. Increased accessibility has led to increased membership with new members experiencing the health benefits associated with physical activity. The higher membership also helps the local hockey club to increase its income and viability.

Furthermore, the City of Gosnells expected that with the better accessibility an additional 35 children could receive a sponsored hockey club membership through the KidSport initiative which sponsors underprivileged children unable to afford a sport club membership. The project also helped support the development of elite level athletes. As hockey is one of the few sports that have transitioned to the fulltime use of synthetic playing fields at elite levels, the provision of appropriate playing surfaces is of particular importance.

The project allowed for an additional 280 hockey players in Sutherlands Park which also supports more diversity in sports. This can also improve social capital, as research has shown that sports clubs can create a sense of community as well as a reduction in youth crime.

Additional wider benefits include the use of the grounds for recreational pursuits by the wider community, which is made possible year-round and outside of daylight hours because of the floodlights that have been installed. The project has activated the area and created a safe and inviting community hub. As more residents go for a walk or undertake other recreational sport the increased physical activity leads to health benefits for the community.

During construction of the Sutherlands Park synthetic playing fields, 48 jobs were created, and 1.5 full-time jobs were retained as a direct result of the project.

“From a LGA perspective, the provision of infrastructure that addresses issues of equity and access is paramount. One of the most remarkable outcomes of this project is the sense of pride exhibited by the Club members and community at having access to quality facilities and being loud and proud about Club success stories; including home grown and nurtured national representatives.”

(Community Facilities Advisor, City of Gosnells)

Sources:

<https://yoursay.gosnells.wa.gov.au/sutherlands>

<https://www.gapp.org.au/Projects/Sutherlands-Park>

<https://www.yourlocalexaminer.com.au/work-begins-sutherlands-park/>

<https://www.perthnow.com.au/community-news/comment-news/huntingdale-new-international-standard-hockey-facility-open-at-sutherlands-park-c-866991>

Community Development Grants Programme Requestion for information

Regional Hockey Facilities NSRF Business Case, 2016

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Personal communication and information provided by council

City of Hume, Victoria

Community Profile

	City of Hume	Greater Melbourne
Location	14-45km north-west of the Melbourne CBD	
Population 2021	246,850	4,976,157
Forecasted population 2036	343,989	6,884,100
Population growth rate 2021	1.5%	-1.6%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	48.8%	34.1%
Population under 15 years of age	22.5%	18.1%
Population over 65 years of age	10.9%	15.0%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	5.0%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	4.4%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	4.4%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	2nd-lowest decile	5th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	5th-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	5th-highest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population, Victoria in Future (2019), Australian Urban Observatory

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

StartNorth Business Hub – Economic Development Infrastructure

Project description

StartNorth is a business hub in the City of Hume catering to Melbourne's North. It is located in the redeveloped Town Hall Broadmeadows, occupying about 700m² and opened in October 2019. The hub offers co-working spaces, workspaces, private offices, events, networking opportunities and start-up and entrepreneur support through accelerator and masterclass events, as well as small business training. StartNorth is managed by Hume Council.

Figure 12: Desk at the StartNorth Business Hub



Source: Provided by StartNorth Business Hub

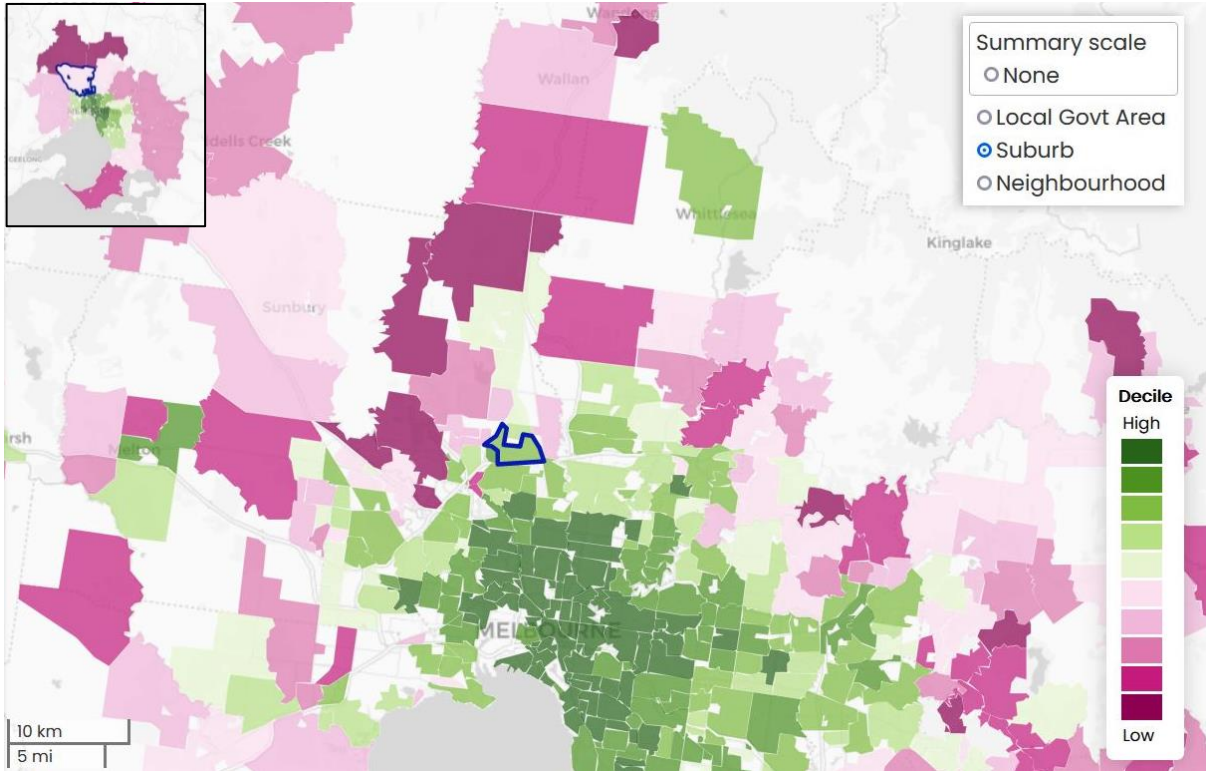
Project objectives, business case and programs offered

As part of the early Town Hall Broadmeadows redevelopment discussions in 2015, a Business Incubator Report was commissioned and in 2016 accepted by Council including the recommendation to open a business hub within the facility. StartNorth was established based on the strategic objective of Hume Council to support business growth and create local jobs for Hume residents. Further aims were to contribute to growth in higher wage jobs, attract capital for start-ups and entrepreneurs and to drive the entrepreneurial culture within Hume.

Hume made a conscious decision to operate the business hub directly as it wanted to support accessibility and affordability of the business hub for local residents. While private sector business hubs are usually focused on renting out rooms and on profitability, Council was looking for a business hub that also offered business development and networking opportunities, supports an entrepreneurial culture, could attract state government funding and had an objective of creating jobs.

StartNorth aims to offer office and co-working spaces that are similar to the offer in the CBD, but closer to home for Hume residents and also more affordable. The hub has organised an Innovation Festival, offered an Accelerator Program and also offers master classes and start your business classes, as well as information about relevant grants.

Figure 13: StartNorth Business Hub Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for North Melbourne (Broadmeadows highlighted) and Melbourne (Hume LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Funding and governance

The business hub is managed by council out of their Economic Development team. The Town Hall Redevelopment was funded by council (\$18 million) and the Victorian Government (\$7 million) and offered the opportunity to establish the hub. Operations and programs are funded through a mix of council funds, membership fees, other fees, and external grant funds. Three different grants from state government made it possible to run master classes, the Accelerator program and start-your-business classes. The funding from state government adds up to \$193,600, with an additional \$57,200 provided from Hume City Council. Grants came from the Office for Suburban Development and LaunchVic, an independent agency responsible for developing Victoria's start-up ecosystem. The Office for Suburban Development provided \$100,000 for the Start and Grow Program and \$40,000 for the StartNorth Innovation Festival.

The state funding for the establishment of the hub and for many of the programs has been highly critical for council to be able to offer support to the small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Table 11: Funding contributions the Town Hall Redevelopment which included StartNorth

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
	\$7 million	\$18 million	

Benefits and Outcomes

Expected benefits from the business hub are the creation of local jobs, job diversification and the increase of strong and resilient smaller businesses in the municipality, as well as creating a sense of belonging for local businesses. Supporting the growing entrepreneurial and start up community in Hume is seen as beneficial for the city and its residents, offering a place for aspiring business starters so that they do not need to travel to the city or work from home in isolation. Furthermore, the hub is seen as providing the opportunity to transition locals identified as 'under employed' by job agencies from the unregulated economy into self-employment through small or micro business ownership. In the long-term supporting start-ups and microbusinesses is also seen as a pathway for attracting investment.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on early operational outcomes with the hub opening in October 2019, it now has 70 members which work in different areas, such as marketing, legal, recruitment, counselling, NDIS, debt recovery, construction, and finance. These businesses have created 16 new local jobs. Due to the creation of these jobs, the return on investment is positive. While currently the income of StartNorth is lower than the expenses, the creation of the 16 jobs has created an additional economic value of \$209,150 for Hume as the people working in these jobs will spend a portion of their income in Hume so that overall the return on investment is positive (Final Service Review 2022).

For council, the hub offers the opportunity to interact with microbusinesses and understand their needs better, as often those businesses do not necessarily interact with council.

“LaunchVic's support of StartNorth programs were critical to helping grow the local start-up and new business community. Programs that were delivered assisted in the development of a highly skilled, diverse, and sustainable workforce within Hume City Council.” (Business Manager StartNorth)

Sources:

<https://www.startnorth.com.au>

<https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Businesses/Starting-and-Managing-a-Business/StartNorth>

Victoria in Future (DELWP 2019)

Information provided by DJPR

Final Service Review 2022

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

City of Kwinana, Western Australia

Community Profile

	City of Kwinana	Greater Perth
Location	25-37 km south of the Perth CBD	
Population 2021	47,658	2,192,229
Forecasted population 2036	85,158	3,370,088
Population growth rate 2021	2.9%	1.2%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	21.4%	20.9%
Population under 15 years of age	22.7%	19.0%
Population over 65 years of age	9.7%	15.8%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	2.2%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	2.0%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	1.5%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	3rd-lowest decile	4th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	2nd-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population & Population Projections, Australian Urban Observatory

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

Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre – Community Infrastructure

Project description

The Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre (DWLRC) is a community hub in Kwinana Town Centre. It opened in 2013 and comprises the Kwinana Public Library, a café, the Toddler Town Crèche and several community service providers, such as employment counselling, early childhood development, education and skills building, family and relationship counselling and financial counselling. The Centre also hires out rooms for functions, meetings and conferences, and also offers IT training rooms, art and activity spaces, and a shower. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the facility. The Resource Centre is located in the city centre of Kwinana with the regional community centre, Kwinana Marketplace, library, recreation centre and youth centre located in the same precinct.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

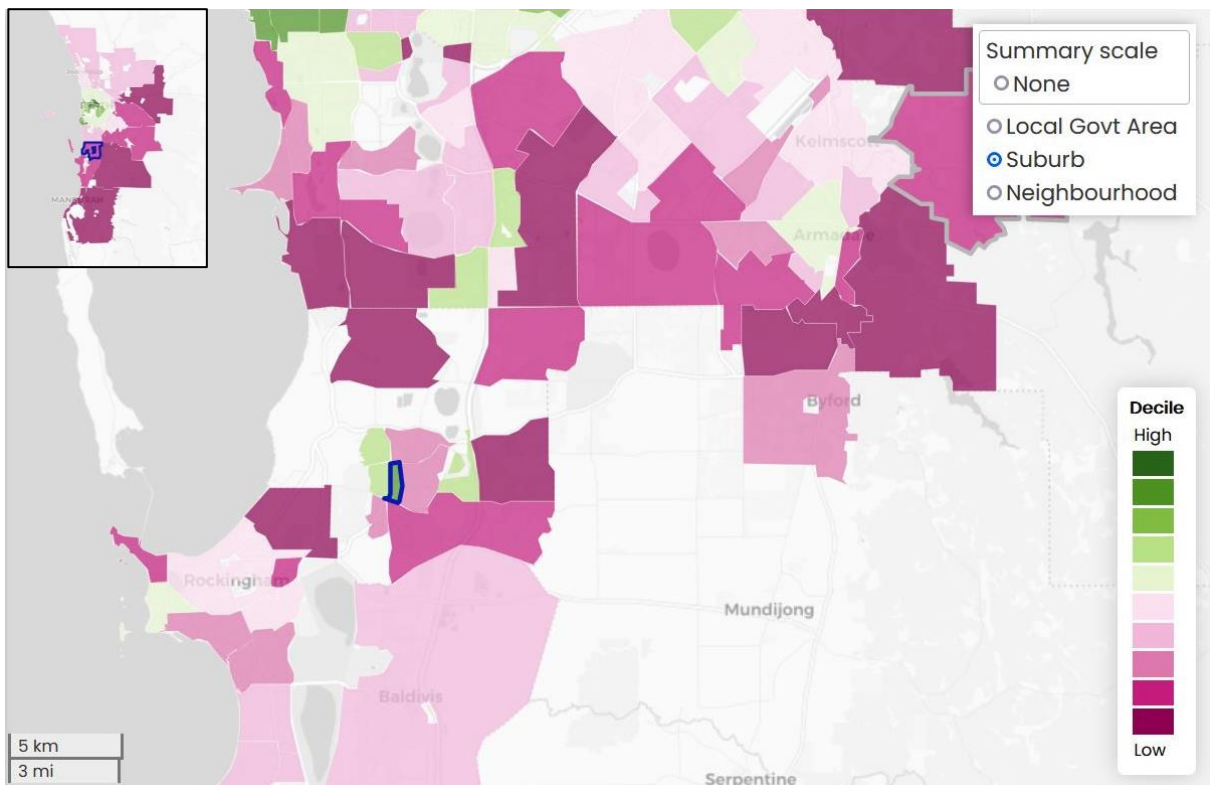
The Centre was developed as a one-stop-shop for community services at a local, state and national level, as well as for other needs of residents. The idea is to counter the previous dispersal of agencies throughout the community and to establish opportunities for information sharing, inter-agency cooperation and peer support. The vision is a centralised Community and Knowledge Centre providing office accommodation for community organisations, meeting and special purpose rooms, shared equipment, and a large community Library to meet the needs of the Kwinana population.

Figure 14: Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre



Source: Provided by the City of Kwinana

Figure 15: Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for South Perth (Kwinana Town Centre highlighted) and Perth (Kwinana LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

The DWLRC runs term and school holiday programs throughout the year for adults and children of which many are free or low cost. Service providers in the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre include Bridging the Gap, Ngala (support for new parents and families), Citizens Advice Bureau, Kwinana Early Years (integrated range of early years services), Relationships Australia, Australian Red Cross, The Smith Family, Communicare WA (counselling), Volunteer Resource Centre.

Funding and governance

The Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre was part of the City’s \$340m Kwinana City Centre Revitalisation project in late 2000’s and early 2010’s and was built in 2013. The development of the Resource Centre cost \$22 million, with the Australian Government providing \$3.3 million through its Better Regions Program, the City of Kwinana paying \$11 million and additional support of \$7.7 million from the Lotteries Commission Grant.

The Resource Centre is run by council.

Table 12: Funding contributions to building the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$3.3 million		\$11 million	\$7.7 million

Benefits and outcomes

One of the main benefits of the DWLRC is that it provides a central hub to residents and has brought together several community services into one building. This co-location but also the more inviting character of the Resource Centre in comparison to the previous facilities has improved access to community services and acceptance by community. Previously, residents had to travel up to 20km to Rockingham for accessing services, such as Centrelink, individual and family counselling, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Medicare and health insurance, crisis accommodation for domestic violence for women and children and legal services.

Furthermore, the Centre with its different services and the café facilitates social interaction between community members, supporting the building of social capital. Having a Dome Café franchise moving into the building has also helped with more people attending the building and this has increased potential for visiting other services in the building. The opportunity to access a contemporary library, information and family educational facilities improves educational aspects. According to council staff, the Centre being a meeting place and having an inviting character has also improved the reputation of the town centre overall.

The Centre has also made a positive difference in how the City of Kwinana works with the community and the service providers. Cross-agency collaboration and information sharing has improved through the co-location. Council staff emphasise that this has supported the coordinated cross-agency approach to developing the Kwinana Recovery Plan during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in no duplication of services and a quick response to any gaps in the community support.

The council also points to the opportunity provided by the shower in the building for council staff and community services to approach people experiencing homelessness informally and provide information about available services.

In a similar manner, the crèche in the facility offers the opportunity for its staff to provide parents with information about services available. This can include reference to counselling on domestic violence or financial abuse issues where the potential need is seen. This informal approach is in some cases more successful than a direct report or more official approach. Furthermore, the crèche offers the opportunity for parents to go to services without their children. The crèche services are also considered positive by organisations hiring function rooms.

“The crèche facilities at Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre have resulted in parents’, particularly Mums’, ease of access to social services while children are a in a safe and nurturing environment. The crèche team have also noted that the service has been invaluable for the mental health and wellbeing of parents, with children attending the crèche for a short break or to access the library for study.”
(Manager Community Services, City of Kwinana)

Sources

<https://www.spacetoco.com/space/darius-wells-library-and-resource-centre>

<https://www.kwinana.wa.gov.au/city-life/facilities-and-public-spaces/venues-and-facilities-for-hire/darius-wells-library-and-resource-centre>

<https://www.kwinana.wa.gov.au/city-life/facilities-and-public-spaces/community-centres/darius-wells-centre>
Feasibility Assessment and Business Case

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication

Mitchell Shire Council, Victoria

Community Profile

	Mitchell Shire Council	Greater Melbourne
Location	30-90km north of the Melbourne CBD	
Population 2021	49,684	4,976,157
Forecasted population 2036	97,688	6,884,100
Population growth rate 2021	3.5%	-1.6%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	11.4%	34.1%
Population under 15 years of age	20.9%	18.1%
Population over 65 years of age	15.0%	15.0%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	1.0%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	0.9%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	0.5%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	5th-lowest decile	5th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	2nd-lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population, Victoria in Future (2019), Australian Urban Observatory

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

Wallan Youth Services Hub, Mitchell Shire, Victoria – Community Development

Project description

The Wallan Youth Services Hub is an integrated community hub for the provision of children, youth and family support services for people aged 12-24 living in and around Wallan. About 17% of Mitchell Shire’s population fall into this target age group with the proportion being expected to increase with

more families moving into the growth areas planned to be established over the next decades. Operations are funded by federal and state government, and there are also philanthropic and privately delivered services. The Hub is a one stop shop and delivers services and support to young people and their families with a particular focus on those from marginalised and/or disadvantaged backgrounds. It opened in March 2021 and offers youth social spaces, consulting rooms, intake rooms, a GP room, reception and waiting area, landscaped open space, seating and shade and an open plan kitchen. In addition an Orange Door Access Point (help for people experiencing family violence or require family and child support) is located in close proximity.

Figure 16: Opening of the Wallan Youth Services Hub



Source: Provided by Mitchell Shire Council

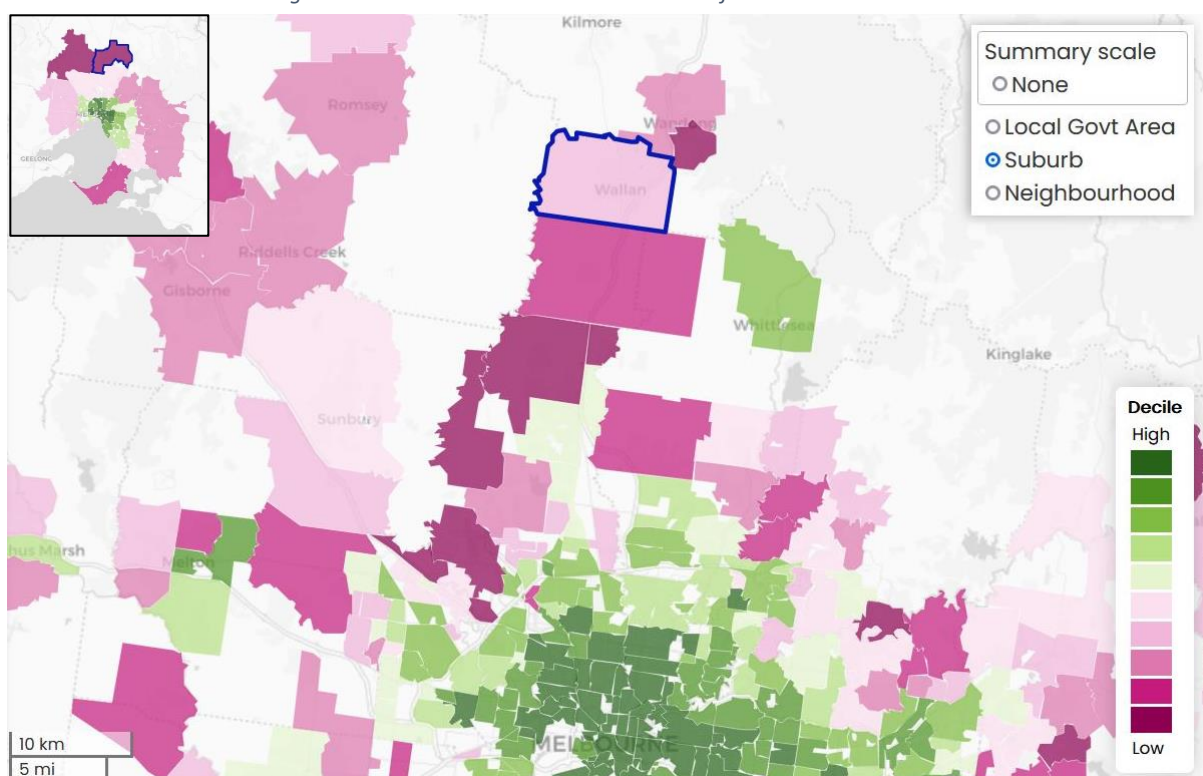
Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The hub aims to promote, develop and encourage the wellbeing of young people through supporting young people’s health, social inclusion, skill development and leadership, and providing them with opportunities to engage in arts and culture, youth development, community and civic life. Further aims include assistance to re-engage in employment opportunities or return to participation in social, recreational, or volunteering prospects. Programs include early intervention programs such as family reconciliation, adolescent support, links to education, future parenting programs and school disengagement.

Programs focus on a diversity of issues and services include placement prevention (child protection), family reconciliation, family mediation, antenatal, parenting, housing support, mentoring and re-engagement in education.

Mitchel Shire sees the need for the Youth Services hub because, although Mitchell Shire is only at the beginning of its anticipated rapid growth, there is already limited access for some communities to human services. The Shire has experienced an increase of at-risk youth and child protection investigations are substantially higher than in metropolitan Melbourne. Furthermore, the 2021-2025 Mitchell Shire Health and Wellbeing background paper identified that only 38.8% of people older than 15 years had completed Year 12 schooling (or equivalent) in comparison to a rate of 54.4% for Victoria. Additionally, Mitchell Shire ranks poorly in terms of mental health, with the percentage of people within Mitchell Shire who feel valued by society (46.5%) amongst the lowest in the state.

Figure 17: Wallan Youth Services Hub Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for North Melbourne (Wallan highlighted) and for Melbourne (Mitchell LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Funding and governance

The Bridge Youth Service manages the hub, providing their services and assisting other providers, while the building is owned and managed by Mitchell Shire Council. The initiative has been a key focus for the Mitchell Shire Youth Council who worked alongside Mitchell Shire Council to highlight the need for increased youth services, particularly mental health support in the area.

Redevelopment of the former kindergarten building into the Youth Services hub was funded by state government and the local council. State government provided \$645,789 through its Growing Suburbs Fund, while Mitchell Shire Council contributed \$1,090,400 of in-kind contributions.

Table 13: Funding contributions to the renovation for the Wallan Youth Services Hub

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
	\$645,789	\$1,090,400 (in-kind)	

Benefits and outcomes

Expected benefits from the Youth Services Hub include essential, timely and appropriate responses to the needs of young people aged between 12-24 years, and crisis prevention through early intervention. The co-location of services facilitates synergies and enables a better coordinated response. An important benefit is that services are closer to home for many young people than previously, which makes them more accessible, and thus also used more. Before the hub was established youth and families had to travel about an hour by car or 1.5-2 hours by public transport to access dedicated acute or crisis mental health support.

Further expected benefits of the early identification and treatment of mental health problems

include the avoidance of mental health problems in adulthood as well as further disease and comorbidities, such as substance use disorders and chronic physical conditions. Additionally, counselling (e.g. financial counselling) and treatment of youth mental health issues can lead to a decrease in youth justice issues, an increase in youth employment and also increased social participation and social connectedness. This leads to less demand on the public health budget overall and also increased economic participation.

The Youth Services Hub has led to improved collaboration between the Council and Bridge Youth Services as the operator of the hub, and also to new partnerships in primary prevention work and with this better support networks for the community.

Further benefits include the use of a previously unused council building and additional funding for programs that is provided because the Youth Services Hub exists and can implement the funded services.

“Improving access to services is crucial and we need to provide effective and easy pathways, closer to the young people’s homes and their families” (CEO The Bridge Youth Service, Melinda Lawley)

“Being able to access mental health support locally means young people can get the help they need without having to travel hours on public transport or wait months for appointments. This support will change lives and set young people up for a positive future.” (Youth Mayor Mitchell Shire Youth Council, Thomas Starkey)

Sources:

https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/167805/Mitchell-Shire-Council-2018-19-Wallan-Youth-ServicesHub.pdf

<https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/news/doors-open-on-new-youth-hub>

<https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/services/youth-services>

Final Report for Growing Suburbs Fund; Application for Growing Suburbs Fund

Id. Consulting: *National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile*: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Personal communication and information provided by council

District Council of Mount Barker, South Australia

Community Profile

	District Council of Mt Barker	Greater Adelaide
Location	27-45 km south-west of the Adelaide CBD	
Population 2021	39,627	1,402,393
Forecasted population 2036	46,835	1,560,000
Population growth rate 2021	3.6%	0.5%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	5.1%	21.3%
Population under 15 years of age	19.5%	17.1%
Population over 65 years of age	17.7%	18.6%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	2.8%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	2.6%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	1.9%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	lowest decile	4th-lowest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	2nd-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

Bald Hills Road Freeway Interchange – Transport Infrastructure

Project description

The Bald Hills Road freeway interchange project added four new interchange ramps and three new roundabouts to improve the transport capacity and increase safety. Construction commenced in 2014 and the new ramps were opened in August 2016. The project also incorporated an upgrade of the Bald Hills Road / Old Princes Highway junction. The previous T-junction has been replaced by a roundabout, which is safer and more efficient to accommodate the increased traffic volumes anticipated on Bald Hills Road. The project also incorporated significant landscaping works, including trees and shrubs and grassing of embankments and verge areas.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The construction of the new interchange aimed to improve the productivity of the local road network and to respond to the increase in road traffic due to population growth. Increased safety was also an objective with the junction of Old Princes Highway and Bald Hills Road being a known black spot.

Funding and governance

The overall costs of the Mt Barker Bald Hills Road Interchange were \$27 million with the Australian Government contributing \$16 million, the South Australian Government \$8 million and the Mount Barker District Council \$3 million.

Figure 18: Aerial view of the Bald Hills Road freeway interchange



Source: Provided by Mount Barker District Council

The council's role was mostly advocacy, land acquisition and funding via developer contributions. The council prepared concept designs for the freeway interchange inclusive of community consultation; secured funding from the Special Local Roads Program to contribute to the cost of the upgrading of Bald Hills Road; secured Black Spot funding to contribute to the cost of the roundabout at the intersection of Bald Hills Road and Springs Road; declared a separate rate on land within the 2010 Ministerial DPA area to secure contributions from developers to required transport infrastructure including the freeway interchange; and committed to advance funding of up to \$3 million to the project (to be recovered from the transport infrastructure separate rate payable by developers of land within the 2010 Ministerial DPA area). The aim of preparing concept designs was to highlight the need for the interchange brought about by population growth in the areas rezoned to residential in the district.

The project and the asset were delivered and owned by state government (Department for Infrastructure and Transport).

Table 14: Funding contributions to the Bald Hills Freeway Interchange

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$16 million	\$8 million	\$3 million	

Benefits and outcomes

Benefits include improved travel times and road safety for commuters travelling to the east side of Mount Barker, reduced congestion in Mount Barker, and improved commuter access for residents of Nairne, Blakiston and eastern Mt Barker with a reduction in ‘through’ traffic along the main street of Littlehampton. Benefits of decreased travel times are improved quality of life with more time for socialising and being more productive at work due to lower stress from travelling. The reduction in ‘through’ traffic improves local amenity and can impact positively on community cohesion. The improved access for residents and visitors also leads to improved spatial equity, as no direct access existed before.

The new interchange has lifted pressure from the Adelaide Road interchange which is located further to the west which allowed the deferral of works to upgrade its capacity. The interchange also provides improved access for freight traffic from the industrial precinct on Alexandrina Road, for construction traffic for land development and for other smaller businesses in the area, including for tourism, and thus provides economic development benefits. Emergency services also have better access and can provide faster and more reliable services.

While active transport was not included in the project, it has made it easier to build a trail between Nairne and Littlehampton in the future.

“Anecdotally, we know that the new interchange has been of considerable benefit to adjacent businesses, including a winery cellar door and restaurant which has seen increased trade and a horticultural business which now has a faster and less congested route to intra and interstate markets” (Manager Sustainability and Corporate Planning, Mount Barker District Council)

Sources

https://dit.sa.gov.au/infrastructure/completed_projects/bald_hills_road_interchange

Mount Barker 2035 District Strategic Plan

https://www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/116045/District-Matters-201604-Spring2016-web.pdf

<https://tonkin.com.au/projects/bald-hills-road-interchange>

Id. Consulting: *National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile*: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Personal communication and information provided by council

Penrith City, New South Wales

Community Profile

	Penrith City	Greater Sydney
Location	35-57 km west of the Sydney CBD	
Population 2021	219,149	5,259,764
Forecasted population 2036	253,969	5,814,649
Population growth rate 2021	1.2%	-0.5%
Population speaking a language other than English at home	19.6%	37.4%
Population under 15 years of age	21.2%	18.4%
Population over 65 years of age	13.0%	15.2%
Share of metropolitan population 2021	4.2%	
Share of metropolitan population 2016	4.0%	
Share of metropolitan jobs 2016*	3.1%	
SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	5th-lowest decile	5th-highest decile
Social Infrastructure Index – Australian Urban Observatory (AUO)	5th-lowest decile	
Social Infrastructure Index for Community and Sport Infrastructure 2021 – AUO	5th-lowest decile	

Source: ABS Census 2016/2021, ABS Estimated Resident Population, NSW Dept of Planning, Australian Urban Observatory

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

Regatta Park Upgrade – Community Infrastructure

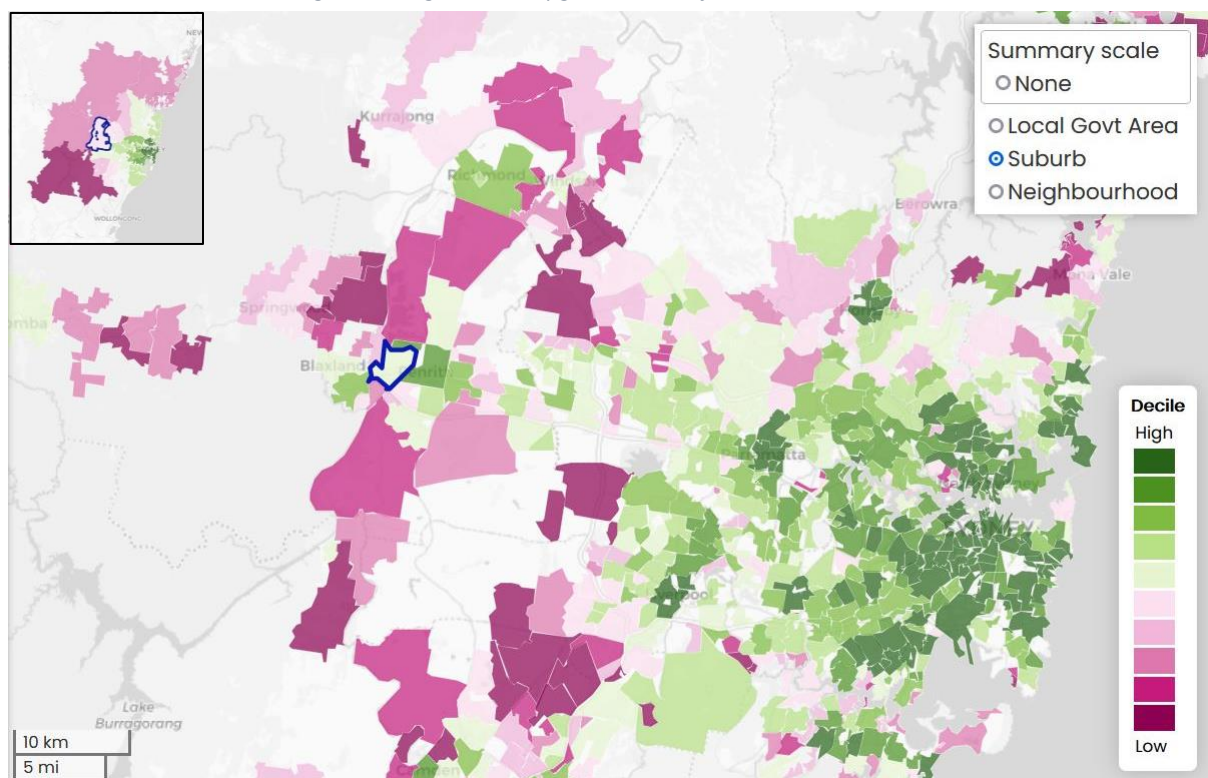
Project description

Penrith is in a state of transformation with many new suburbs being established and older established areas experiencing renewal with urban densification. The Regatta Park is located along the Nepean River in the west of Penrith. Its upgrade provides a better quality of open space for Penrith's residents but also for the broader regional area. It includes a new 112-metre pavilion, undercover play space with water activities, a new amenity building, an accessible pathway to the river foreshore, and several over-water viewing platforms. Stage 2 is not finished yet but will additionally provide an adventure play space, outdoor exercise stations, a cricket oval, landscaping, and a centralised car park. The Old Police Cottage a heritage building located in the park will be restored and there are plans for a café and restaurant to be located in the building. Furthermore, environmental protections have been planned to improve water quality and protect the river foreshore from erosion. The project capitalises on the existing gallery and new pedestrian bridge across the Nepean River connecting Regatta Park with the city centre.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The upgrade aims to provide better amenities to Penrith's residents and to increase the appeal of the park by improving access and creating more opportunities for locals and visitors to experience and enjoy the area. The park was previously divided by a road which has now been moved.

Figure 19: Regatta Park Upgrade Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for West Sydney (Emu Plains highlighted) and Sydney (Penrith LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Funding and governance

The \$24 million project is being jointly funded by the Australian and New South Wales Governments and the Penrith City Council under the Western Sydney City Deal Liveability Program. This includes \$9 million from Penrith City Council and a total of \$7.5 million from the Australian and NSW Governments each. Penrith’s Economic Development team manages the Regatta Park project. The refurbishment of the Police Cottage sits outside the City Deal and is funded by the NSW Government with \$1.5 million and Penrith City Council with \$1 million.

The City Deal is a collaborative approach to building and coordinating investment between federal, state and local government. The Western Sydney City Deal was signed on 4 March 2018. It is a partnership between the Australian Government, NSW Government and eight local councils of the Western Parkland City (Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool Penrith and Wollondilly).

The park enhancements were identified during community consultation on the Our River Masterplan in 2013 and community engagement was undertaken for the park design.

Table 15: Funding contributions to Regatta Park Upgrade

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$7.5 million	\$7.5 million	\$9 million	

Benefits and outcomes

The overall benefit of the Regatta Park upgrade is an improved access to recreation and leisure facilities for residents and visitors alike, as well as a stronger sense of belonging and social connection. The upgrade provides amenities that previously were not available, such as an inclusive play space for children. Moving the road that previously divided the park has improved the amenity of the park. The increased access to recreation and leisure facilities benefits physical activity levels as residents may use the facilities and walk through the park. The upgraded park also provides improved access to green and 400 additional trees provide shade and contribute to cooling the area, relieving regional urban heat and climatic pressures. Access to green open spaces is also known to improve mental wellbeing.

As council has identified, co-benefits exist with the Yandhai Nepean Crossing as a pedestrian and cycle bridge which connects to the other side of the river, the east bank dining precinct and the redevelopment of Emu Hall into a restaurant and bar. Co-benefits of this emerging hospitality district and night-time economy are the increased employment opportunities for hospitality workers and that the area is more attractive to younger people who might then also stay in the area rather than moving away.

“Regatta Park is already a favourite destination at the Nepean River and this upgrade will further strengthen its appeal by improving access, useability and creating more opportunities for people to experience and enjoy the beautiful location.” (Mayor of Penrith)

Sources:

<https://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/news/ground-breaking-milestone-for-new-24-million-regatta-park>
<https://www.wscd.sydney/liveability-program>; <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/cities/city-deals/western-sydney-city-deal>
<https://www.stuartayres.com.au/media/media-releases/city-deal-transformation-regatta-park>
<https://www.facebook.com/penrith.city.council/photos/a.10150124612174862/10156425681199862/?type=3>
<https://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/index.asp?id=669>; <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/populations>
<https://yoursaypenrith.com.au/regatta-park>
https://hdp-au-prod-app-penr-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/1416/4445/7946/Delivery_Program_Additional_Information.pdf
<https://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/building-development/revitalise-penrith/police-cottage>
id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>
Information provided by council and personal communication

City of Playford, South Australia

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

Stretton Centre, Playford, South Australia – Economic Development Infrastructure

Project description

Launched in 2015, 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. The team offers support with applications for grants, initiatives and tenders, provides networking and training opportunities, local market analysis and facilitates connections with Council, government agencies and other organisations. The Centre also includes the Playford Library with free public Wi-Fi which is also offering STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) courses. It is next to the Playford Alive Town Park, close to the Playford town centre and the building has been based on sustainable building design.

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

The Stretton Centre aims to create positive economic and social outcomes for northern Adelaide through collaboration, innovation, economic development, advocacy, research, workforce training and development. It offers business support services and access to education to upskill and grow local businesses by increasing qualifications.

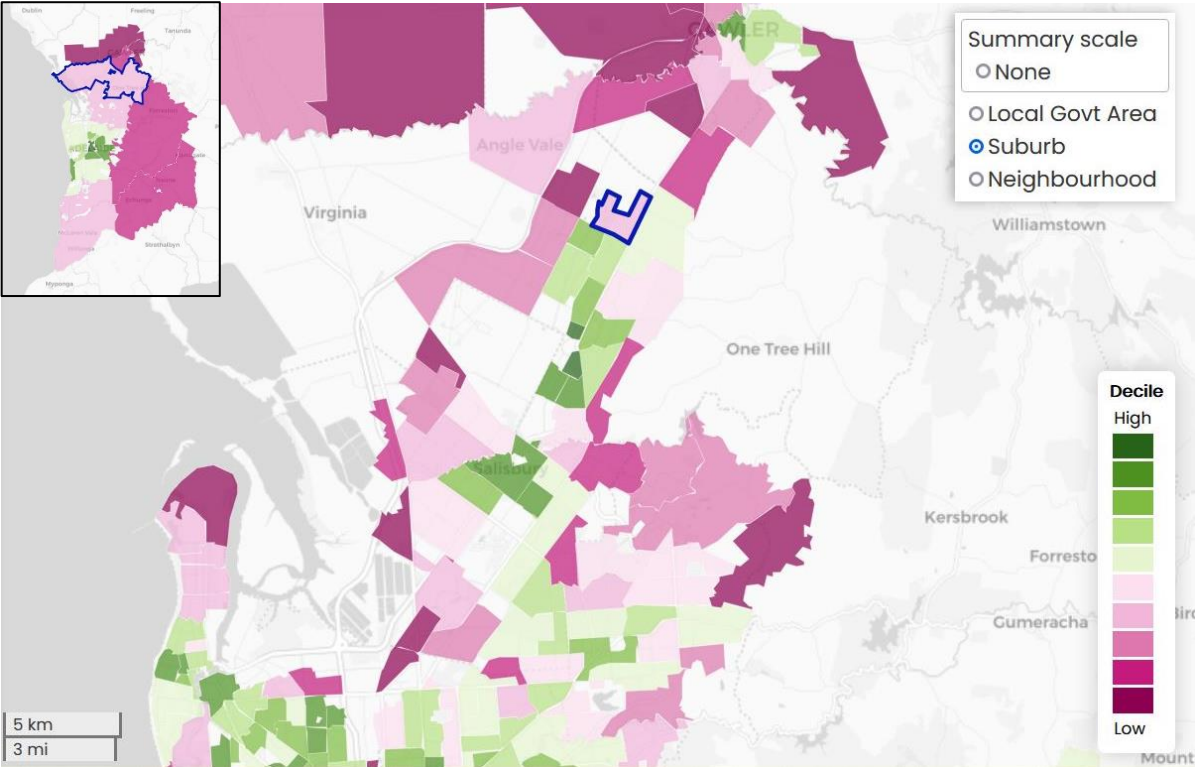
In 2019/2020 topics of events and workshops included: SA Export Accelerator Grant Information Session; Disability industry forum: how can we shape the local disability workforce?; Disability Workforce Forum: how traineeships can work for your business; Stretton Centre's Horticulture and Ag Tech Meetup; How to protect your Intellectual Property; How to Create Video for Business Series; Navigating the Government Stimulus Packages; Tax Benefits for Working from Home.

Figure 20: The Stretton Centre in the City of Playford



Source: Provided by the City of Playford

Figure 21: Stretton Centre Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for North Adelaide (Munno Para suburb highlighted) and Adelaide (Playford LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

Education pathways include STEAM courses offered by the library, including coding, robotics, computer-aided design (CAD) and 3D-printing. The “Flinders Foundation Studies program” offered by the Stretton Centre in partnership with Flinders University provides a pathway to further education for high school leavers and others seeking a career change as a free three-month course including topics such as critical thinking and analytical skills, digital literacy and reading skills, and academic communication skills.

Funding and governance

The Stretton Centre was founded by the City of Playford, the University of Adelaide and Renewal SA, and funded by the Australian Government and the Playford Alive Initiatives¹ Fund. Over \$11 million was awarded to the Stretton Centre under the Australian Government Suburban Jobs Program with other partners contributing a further \$4 million of cash and in-kind support. With the contract finalised between the Commonwealth and City of Playford November 2012, the Centre was officially launched in September 2015. The Stretton Centre is maintained and operated by the City of Playford.

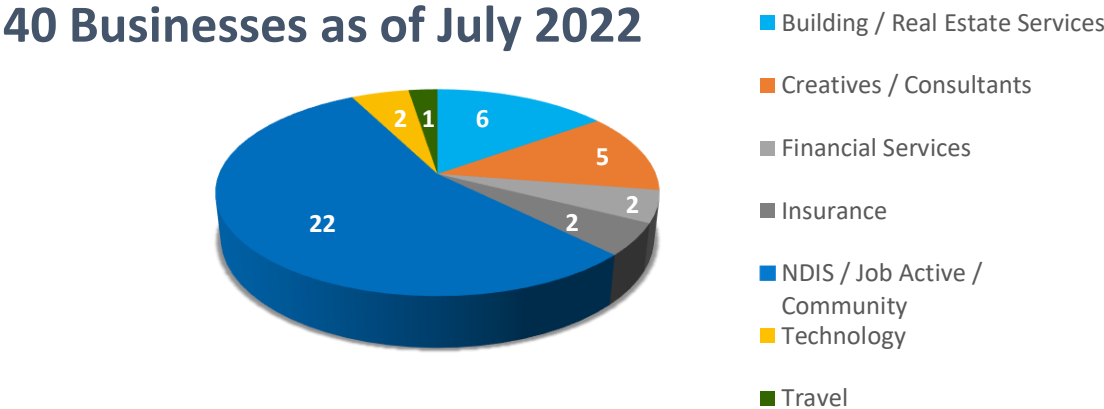
Table 16: Funding contributions to building the Stretton Centre

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

Benefits and outcomes

The City of Playford views business investment as key to the region’s prosperity and growth. The Stretton Centre supports northern Adelaide businesses and provides a focal point for the development of regional economic, industry and employment strategies through its venue hire and co-working facilities. It has facilitated more than \$87 million in local investment and about 40 businesses were located in the building at the time this report was prepared (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Business areas of businesses located in the Stretton Centre



Source: Provided by the City of Playford

¹ Playford Alive is a residential and mixed-use development with an anticipated population of 40,000 people and a planned town centre and healthcare, educational and recreational facilities. It is a partnership between the City of Playford, Renewal SA and the Government of South Australia. The Stretton Centre is located within the development area.

Through its courses it provides residents with an entry point to university studies and other qualification opportunities while the support of small businesses increases local job opportunities and services for City of Playford residents. After a high of 10,500 people attending events, trainings and workshops in 2017/18, numbers in 2018/19 and 2019/20 were lower with 487 and 228 people respectively. However, numbers in 2019/20 were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as the Stretton Centre had to close its facilities to the general public and no events were held between March and June 2020. An additional service is the Northern Adelaide Jobs portal. From its launch in 2016 to June 2020, 25,000 jobs have been posted with 1.82 million views.

Some of the businesses were able to build and expand their business and due to that employ more staff. Since its opening 843 jobs have been created since through the Stretton Centre, 340 of which were created via co-worker's business growth. According to council staff, particularly the quarterly events for networking and information about NDIS business have proved successful networking events.

“Several of our earlier co-workers have now left and expanded to each employ over 100 people. Now the additional success of the NDIS networking is creating a growth pathway between the coworking and business support services through to a professional network where they can meet other providers and increase their client base.” (Stretton Centre’s Manager for Business and Industry growth)

STEAM programs in 2019/20 included the Children's University Adelaide (offering educational experiences for children aged 7-14); Book Bugs (offering a play-based program for birth-2 years old); Story Time (offering programs for 2-5 year old); and Sing and Grow: (a music therapy program for birth-4 years old). Collectively 102 programs have been held and 2,492 people have attended in 2019/20.

The level of interaction between co-workers, Stretton Centre staff and visitors has been one of the key features and the Centre contributes to a positive image of the City through the opportunity to contact council staff easily. As council staff explained, the Stretton Centre has become a “brand” of its own and is not seen as a council building only. The design as an iconic building with sustainability features and high architectural quality contributes to this.

As of 30 June 2020, the Stretton Centre’s social media following is Facebook: 1,742; LinkedIn: 362; Twitter: 397; Instagram: 301. Furthermore, over 980 stakeholders are signed up receiving news via email.

Sources:

Annual report Stretton Centre

<https://www.playford.sa.gov.au/explore/venues-and-facilities/venues/stretton-centre>

<https://strettoncentre.com.au/>

https://www.facebook.com/StrettonCentre/about/?ref=page_internal

Id. Consulting: National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Government of South Australia (2020) Local Area Population Projections for South Australia, 2016 to 2036

Information provided by council and personal communication

Angle Vale Community Sports Centre – Community Infrastructure

Project description

The Community Sports Centre is the main community hub for Angle Vale. It includes six netball courts, one football oval, two soccer pitches and cricket nets, as well as a shared multi-purpose clubroom and a new community playground. Outside facilities such as the cricket nets and sports fields are available for public use, however priority access is given to official club training and competition, or for groups with a temporary permit. The Angle Vale Sports Complex opened in 2013 after a first stage of construction with a football oval, a soccer pitch and a club room. New facilities were opened in March 2022 after an expansion of the centre. The expansion includes a new junior and senior soccer pitch and a floodlit oval for football and cricket, coaches' boxes, an additional 98 car parks, landscaping and footpaths. Five similar facilities will need to be built across the city to cater for the forecasted population growth.

Figure 23: Angle Vale Community Sports Centre



Source: Provided by the City of Playford

Project objectives, business case and programs offered

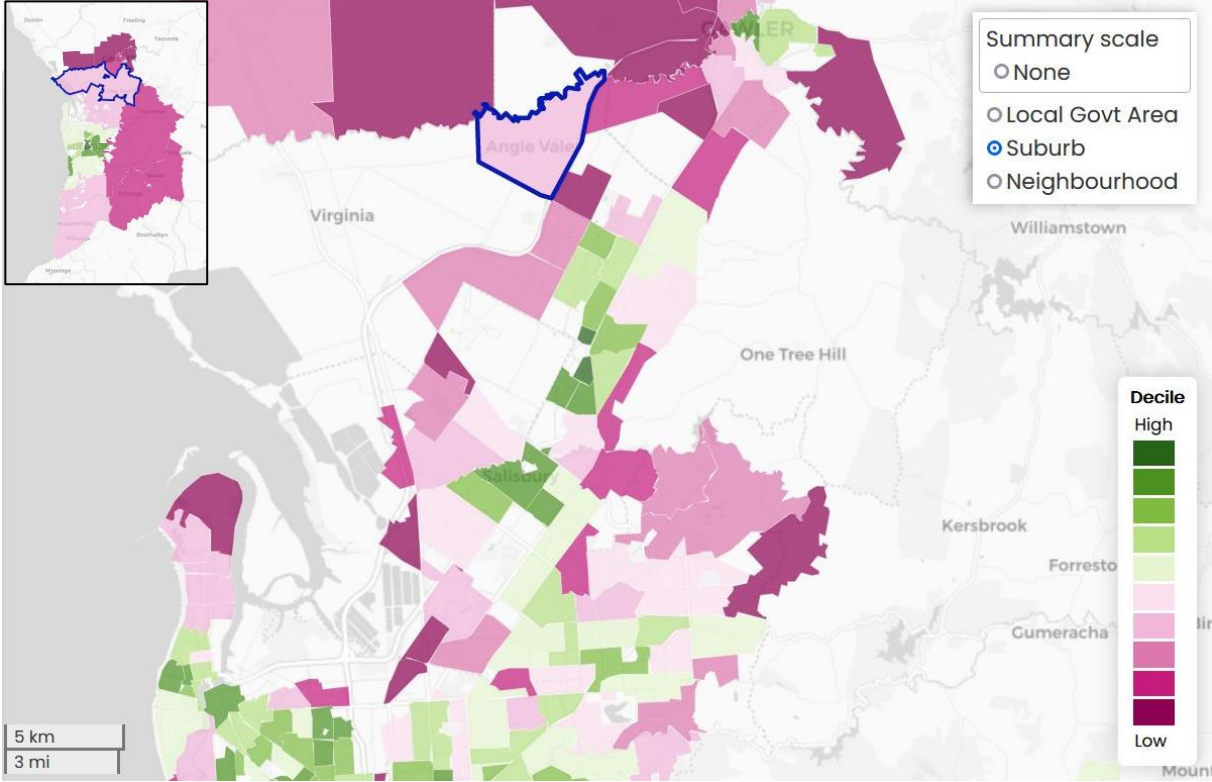
The expansion of the sports centre aims to respond to the needs of Playford's growing population. Current facilities are not sufficient to cater for the population. The council aims to create more opportunities for local sports for people of all ages.

Funding and governance

The first stage of the expansion of the sports centre was enabled by Commonwealth funding of \$3 million, plus state government funding of \$1.15 million. Building the cricket nets and playground (Stage 2) received \$125,000 state government funding and \$19,000 from the Lions Club and the female change rooms (stage 4) received another \$475,000 from state government. Stage 5 has recently been completed with overall costs at about \$17 million. The South Australian state

government has supported the extension with a \$590,000 grant through the Grassroots Football, Cricket and Netball and Facility Program. Furthermore, the council has received limited developer contributions to support the development of the facility.

Figure 24: Angle Vale Community Sport Centre Social Infrastructure Index 2021



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

Note: Social Infrastructure Index for North Adelaide (Angle Vale highlighted) and Adelaide (Playford LGA highlighted), based on national comparison.

The City of Playford owns the Angle Vale Community Sports Centre and the complex is managed by the Angle Vale Sports & Community Association, which is comprised of three member clubs, the Angle Vale Soccer Club, Angle Vale Football Club and Angle Vale Cricket Club, as well as having community representation on the committee. The Angle Vale Netball Club is also an active tenant of the complex.

Table 17: Funding contributions for the expansion of the Angle Vale Community Centre

Commonwealth	State	Council	Other
\$3 million	\$1.15 million \$125,000 \$475,000 \$590,000	\$7,447,000	\$19,000

Benefits and outcomes

Benefits of the expansion include improved accessibility to sport and improved quality and quantity of sporting opportunities. This is important as the community is growing and new residents want to join the sporting clubs. For many residents in lower socio-economic groups transport and finance are the main barriers for participation in sport so that they are likely not to participate in sport, if they are not able to join a local club.

Due to the upgrades of the sports centre and the continuing population growth, the membership of the local clubs has increased from 990 members in 2018 to 1,373 members in 2022 with additional members from Angle Vale and neighbouring growth suburbs, and a particular increase in female participation from 360 female members in 2018 to 605 in 2022. As new members are likely to increase their physical activity, they experience health benefits. Increased membership also leads to increased revenue for the clubs, and the opportunity to train locally reduces hiring costs of using a facility at an external location. This leads to increased self-sustainability for the clubs. It has to be noted that since 2019 the venue has been operating over capacity so that the added infrastructure has mainly responded to an already existing need, enabling better maintenance of the grounds, and that there is a potential for even higher membership numbers.

The grounds are open to the community and thus add to the availability of open space, which is beneficial as there are limited open space options and footpaths in the area. The grounds are used by residents for a range of informal recreational activities, such as dog walking. This leads to health benefits through physical activity.

The sports hub also leads to an increased feeling of belonging and social connection. People know each other through the sports clubs and the centre is a local destination where people meet each other. Local businesses as well as developers of surrounding land have approached the clubs to sponsor them. The master plan for the centre was developed in consultation with the Angle Vale Sports and Community Association (AVSCA) which also improved a sense of local pride for the centre and improved the connection between council and the sports clubs.

Sources:

<https://www.playford.sa.gov.au/explore/venues-and-facilities/parks-reserves-and-playgrounds/angle-vale-community-sports-centre>

<https://www.miragenews.com/5m-sports-boost-for-angle-vale-745335/>

https://www.facebook.com/AngleValeSportsAndCommunityAssociation/about/?ref=page_internal

<https://www.bunyippress.com.au/community/further-upgrade-to-sports-hub>

Id. Consulting: *National Growth Areas Alliance Community Profile*: <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa>

Information provided by council and personal communication



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