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Submitted via Webform

Gateway Cities Alliance submission – Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps Report 2022

The Gateway Cities Alliance is a partnership between the City of Newcastle, Wollongong City Council, the City of Greater Geelong and the Committee for Geelong.

The Gateway Cities Alliance was established to realise the latent population and economic potential of our three cities.

Gateway Cities share numerous features including large and diverse populations, critical assets and infrastructure and connectivity with state capital cities which allows these cities to act as a release valve for larger metropolitan areas.

These features, coupled with numerous others (see definition of a Gateway City, page 5), underscore Gateway Cities advocacy for the establishment of a new and consistent geographical definition that classifies Geelong, Newcastle and Wollongong (and potentially other mid-sized cities) as Gateway Cities, thereby creating a three-part dichotomy of Metro / Gateway / Regional. We believe this would provide a stronger approach to economic and urban development across Australia.

The Gateway Cities Alliance welcomes the release of the inaugural Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps Report 2022 and the briefing specific to our regions. The Alliance has a number of recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of the report and any subsequent reports. These recommendations have been endorsed by all Gateway Cities Alliance members.

1. Make the Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps Report (the Report) an ongoing feature.

The Report aims to identify the strengths of each region as defined by the Regional Development Australia (RDA) boundaries regarding both regional assets and key growth industries. It also aims

to identify common themes in infrastructure challenges and opportunities and by doing so, raise awareness of existing gaps and to assist in defining the infrastructure pipeline.

The Gateway Cities Alliance believes this is a detailed and independent analysis of the current status quo that will assist local, state and federal governments to determine priorities for strategic planning, funding allocation and resourcing.

However, the fabric of regions and cities is constantly changing due to external factors such as interstate and international migration and the COVID-19 pandemic. This leads to change in population, skills and industries in any given region and should be monitored and updated accordingly. Infrastructure spending as an outcome of the Report will also close existing gaps and lead to the opening of other opportunities in areas currently not a key focus of governments.

We believe regular and ongoing analysis of regional strengths and gaps will allow resources, funding and effort to be more focused and better prioritised. Drawing this analysis from budget and Census data and/or input from bodies such as the GCA and other leading planning and statutory organisations every three to four years will lead to improved strategic planning.

2. Consider a nuanced analysis of RDA regions.

Infrastructure Australia has used the existing RDA networks to collate the feedback and the existing resources for workshops and stakeholder engagement. While this approach is understandable in regard to efficiency and use of existing networks, in some cases the regional boundaries are too large to effectively determine strengths or gaps as they relate to a defined area.

In the example of the Barwon South West region, the existing issues facing the Barwon area, which covers Greater Geelong as well as the Bellarine Peninsula and the Surf Coast, are quite removed from the issues facing the South West area around Warrnambool and Portland.

The City of Greater Geelong is Victoria's second city and growing at a faster rate than any other regional area. The area and population it services significantly exceeds that of Warrnambool. Therefore, the strengths and gaps identified in the report aren't necessarily representative for each area.

A further dissection of the identified regions would provide a granulated view of issues to be addressed and improved outcomes for strategic planning and funding allocation than is currently the case. For example, Infrastructure Australia could engage with the Barwon Regional Partnership in the development of any new report for a more targeted policy approach.

As such the Gateway Cities and other fast-growing areas would benefit from a more detailed place-based analysis – an analysis that delivers a strengths/gaps report based on geographic classifications that align populations and economic activity.



3. Revise the four Place categories within Infrastructure Australia to include the Gateway Cities in the Fast-Growing Cities category or create a new category which reflects the unique attributes of the Gateway Cities.

Traditionally, towns and cities are defined as either metropolitan or regional areas. However, cities like Geelong, Newcastle and Wollongong do not fit neatly into either category. We are metropolitan centres that also service regional populations. We have many of the economic opportunities of metro centres, while also maintaining many of the lifestyle benefits of regional locations. We have both global gateways through our ports and airport and regional gateways through road and rail.

The unprecedented population growth within the three local government areas of the Gateway Cities (Newcastle 1.33%, Wollongong .85%, Geelong 1.78% in the year to June 30, 2021)¹, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, is placing a lot of pressure on the existing infrastructure and service provision. The lack of housing, jobs and service providers leads to congestion, housing affordability issues, pressures on the health and education systems of the cities and a general decrease of liveability for all residents.

To capitalise on current low unemployment and a booming housing market, Gateway Cities need to address the underlying issues of a lack of housing (both social and affordable housing) for prospective workers, and a skills shortfall. However, because Gateway Cities are in competition with the metropolitan centres, they often miss out on crucial funding for even the most basic infrastructure.

As the net migration from capital cities to the regions continues and population in the Gateway Cities increases, Infrastructure Australia's definition of fast-growing cities only including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth is being challenged by real life events.

This definition also places Gateway Cities in direct comparison and competition with other capital cities like Adelaide and Hobart, without having the status or infrastructure, like state buildings and institutions, that go with being a capital city.

The populations of Gateway Cities are growing while the likes of Sydney (-0.1% in the 12 months to June 30, 2021) and Melbourne (-1.2% in the 12 months to June 30, 2021)² are in decline. This rapid growth needs to be affirmed and the special needs of Gateway Cities as 'fast-growing cities' acknowledged with appropriate attention given to integrated, strategic planning. Only then will Gateway Cities achieve the status they deserve.

¹ <https://www.population.net.au/newcastle-population/>;
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>;
<https://profile.id.com.au/geelong/population-estimate>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>

4. Consider the resilience capability of regions and cities in the analysis.

The 2022 floods in Queensland and northern NSW have highlighted the importance not only of human resilience but also that of critical infrastructure for the impacted communities.

With vital transport and telecommunication infrastructure inundated and subsequently impacted due to repairs, whole areas have been left cut off from the vital support they need and industries have struggled to continue to operate. With extreme weather events such as bushfires and floods expected to increase in severity and frequency due to the impact of climate change, these situations will become a more regular occurrence.

In the strengths and gaps analysis, the ability of a region to be resilient in the light of increased natural disasters and the impact to the regional and national economy needs to be equally considered and measured.

Resilience gaps in and around critical national assets, such as sea and airports, major freeways, hospitals etc need to be identified so rectification and a build-up of resilience can occur.

5. Consider housing availability and diversity

Lack of housing and high costs of living, lead to more and more people remaining in the rental housing market, putting pressure on availability. This applies pressure on the rental market for lower income households. A national rental and social housing gap analysis will provide clearer data where housing pressures occur.

With high-income people moving from the capital cities to the regions and the Gateway Cities, they are pricing local households out of their areas and further out from the cities. This leads to gentrification and loss of community identity in established suburbs and generally downgrades the liveability of Gateway Cities.

Analysis of areas of high needs and regional housing gaps will enable the development of a national housing strategy that includes the role of Gateway Cities in supporting a decentralised population and easing population pressures in the major capitals.

Gateway Cities have always supported their populations by providing affordable quality accommodation but this is becoming increasingly difficult as populations increase rapidly. Hence the need for a national planning and population strategy that caters to social, affordable and 'key worker' housing.

Context of Gateway Cities Alliance:

Founded in early 2020, the Gateway Cities Alliance (GCA) is a collaboration between three key regional cities - City of Newcastle, City of Greater Geelong and Wollongong City Council and the Committee for Geelong. Forming the Alliance was one of the key recommendations of Australia's Gateway Cities: [Gateways to Growth Report](#), in order to collaborate, share information and develop a timeline for advocacy to state and federal governments on shared opportunities and challenges for these cities.

The Alliance is guided by a charter and is an inclusive platform to advocate on behalf of its members for strategic government assistance in core economic, social and environmental policy and investment. The Alliance considers Deakin University, the University of Wollongong and the University of Newcastle as strategic partners in achieving its objectives.

The priorities of the Gateway Cities Alliance include:

- Recognition of Gateway Cities in cities policy frameworks for population planning on a national level
- Transport infrastructure
- Development of ports and supply chains
- Infrastructure for the future of work
- Migration and population planning
- Medical research including opportunities for regional health agencies and universities (led by universities)

Definition of a Gateway City:

- Large and diverse populations exceeding 250,000
- Critical assets and infrastructure, such as ports and airports and network integration
- Connectivity with state capital cities, acting as a release valve for larger metropolitan areas
- A diverse industrial economic base and demonstrated capacity for economic transformation and regeneration
- Logistical and trading functions which complement and reinforce the economic performance of state capital cities and the nation
- A history of significant contribution to national and regional growth, often as a site for manufacturing and heavy industry
- First-class health and education facilities

Why Gateway Cities?

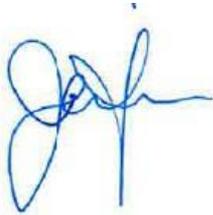
The Alliance has taken a pro-active approach to identifying and meeting the challenges posed by the underlying problems exposed by COVID-19 in the areas of supply chains and logistics, and in embracing the opportunities posed by moving populations and how and where people will work in a post-pandemic world.



By focusing on diversification and development of ports and airports, on increasing existing expertise in areas such as technical service, and on skills for industries of the future and by ensuring people have the ability to connect, the cities are confident they can have a substantial impact on the nation's recovery and ongoing growth.

If you have any questions regarding the Gateway Cities Alliance submission, please contact Ms Jennifer Cromarty, CEO Committee for Geelong on 0413 241 033 or jennifer.cromarty@committeeforgeelong.com.au.

Yours faithfully,



Jennifer Cromarty

CEO Committee for Geelong

Chair, Gateway Cities Alliance