

Productive Regions

Australian Infrastructure Plan

February 2016

The Australian Infrastructure Plan outlines a program of reforms to maximise growth in regional economies and better respond to regional Australians' needs.



Our regions are home to one-quarter of the population, but long distances and sparse populations make the delivery and operation of quality infrastructure costly.



Regional economies produce key exports such as minerals, energy, agriculture and tourism. In the next 15 years the growth of Asian consumer wealth will increase demand for these products.



The quality of infrastructure in regional Australia is generally good but some areas lag behind. Some road networks are unable to support productive freight vehicles. Mobile coverage is patchy and there are fewer service providers. Drinking water does not always meet accepted standards.



Actions



Transport

- A National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy should be developed that identifies efficient routes from farm to market, and informs strategic infrastructure projects.
- States and territories should develop long-term plans and coordinate public and private investments to support fast-growing regional hubs to be as productive as possible.



Energy

- The Australian Government and regulators should review energy market rules to ensure they support de-centralised energy sources, such as micro-grids, to provide alternatives for regional towns.



Telecommunications

- The Australian Government should redirect the approximately \$300 million per annum of the telecommunications Universal Service Obligation – paid by taxpayers and industry – from fixed-line services towards improving mobile infrastructure.



Water

- More information on water resources is needed to identify water infrastructure priorities to support agricultural opportunities, particularly in north.
- States and territories should review the current capacity of regional drinking water providers, and commit to more sustainable, cost-effective models that deliver safe and reliable water. For example, where multiple council providers exist, measures such as shared services, council amalgamations, government-owned regional corporations, franchising or privatising utilities should be considered.