

RCCIWA Response

State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper

The Regional Chambers of Commerce & Industry of WA (RCCIWA) is a not-for-profit member driven organization made up of 43 individual regional Chambers, Business Networks and Business Associations all over this state. Our role is to promote, develop and support all regional Chambers, Business Networks and Business Associations in Western Australia, provide a voice for business in regional WA and act as a conduit for information and representation.

Our response to Infrastructure WA's Strategy Discussion Paper focuses on the posed questions of most importance to our members and regional business communities. We have formed these views through our strong and connected regional business community network. We recognize that this discussion paper takes a broader view and we look forward to contributing to the development of the Infrastructure Strategy over the next 18 months in more detail through our participation as a member of the IWA External Stakeholder Reference Group. We have not responded to all 22 questions.

1. What do you think the implications of the pandemic for infrastructure will be in the recovery phase and over the medium and long-term? Do you see any new opportunities or challenges?

- Loss of confidence by private investors for potential infrastructure investment
- Negative impact on our import and export markets
- More emphasis on Government built infrastructure with shorter lead times

Opportunities:

- Genuine local procurement and local content opportunities for regional businesses. Awarding work to local businesses
- Building regional populations – more residential workforces in the resource sector
- Broader deliver of a variety of services, including health and education on line
- Developing the digital presence and capability of regional businesses
- Removing regulatory burden and unnecessary processes
- Improved cross Government collaboration
- Flexible workplaces and more opportunities for remote working (for people living in Regional WA)

Challenges:

- Unreliable and unstable access to broadband throughout regional WA
- Unreliable telecommunications access
- Rising mental health issues and demand for those services
- Building confidence with business owners to invest and grow

2. Are there early learnings resulting from the pandemic around the resilience of our economy and our infrastructure that we should consider as we develop the Strategy?

- All stakeholders have understood their role in working towards our State Recovery and have looked at the broader view – this is a great opportunity to keep this culture of collaboration and also of understanding that some sectors will need priority over others.
- Online delivery of essential services such as health and education has been fast tracked because of COVID-19 and has been successful to some degree. We know that online delivery of so many services is key to ensure regional populations continue to grow and diversify. Reliable access to broadband to enable the growth of online delivery is essential to growing our whole state.
- Supporting our resource sector is critical

3. What elements should a well-developed 20-year Strategy include?

RCCIWA supports the elements included in the discussion paper, with a focus on being in front of demand, rather than being reactive for our state to be ready to take advantage of all opportunities for growth and development.

4. Are there any additional or alternative principles that should guide the development of the Strategy?

We are comfortable with the guiding principles being proposed.

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5. Are there other strategic issues that we have not addressed that should form part of these objectives?

We are comfortable with the strategic issues covered in the paper.

6. What are the macro trends that you see as important over the 20-year timeframe? What risks or opportunities do they provide to the Strategy?

- Remote working – allowing regional people to advance their career development or work from wherever they are located. This is a global macro trend that Western Australia should take advantage of.
- A more diverse and transient global population
- Developing clean renewal energy solutions – WA has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this

7. How can regions work together to identify and deliver large-scale opportunities, projects and programs which extend across regional boundaries?

- Utilising the development commission network to work collectively on projects and opportunities that take advantage of each regional advantages and assets
- Setting up a regional infrastructure reference group to ensure all nine regions are communicating and working in partnership
- Mapping each regions' economic advantages and linking each region in significant projects
- Appointing region wide advocates for large scale infrastructure developments from all three tiers of Government, community, and business
- Changing the structure of how funding is distributed. Across all three tiers of Government, the funding process sets each region and even each LGA area to be competitive. Incentives could be offered for regions that do collaborate for example.

8. What do you think are the greatest infrastructure needs and priorities across the regions and Perth?

- Linked road, rail and port freight and transport network
- Broadband and telecommunications
- Reliable power and water supply

9. How can declining population in some regions be slowed or reversed?

- Reliable access to broadband, meaning all services can be accessed in the regions
- Delivering strong local procurement and local content policies (that are enforced) to create regional jobs and grow local business communities
- Encouraging all Local Governments to prioritise “liveability” projects
- Delivering strong training and education programs that can be accessed by all in the regions
- Offering tax incentives for regional living – ie reduced stamp duty for regional purchases, a higher payroll tax threshold for regional businesses
- Develop remote working infrastructure – that is, allowing people to remain in the region of their choosing without having to compromise their chosen occupation or career development (see this platform of an example of how this could be established)
<https://www.pointerremoteroles.com.au/>
- Encourage residential workforces for the resource sector
- Improve residential and industrial planning and development processes
- Spread the word – develop regional communication strategies to highlight the advantages for regional living
- Support regional projects – easing excessive burden
- Delivering reliable power and water supply
- Delivering good access to health and education services
- Identifying and developing strong regional leaders

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10. Should Western Australia have a second major city of more than 200,000 people? Which of the State's existing centres should become a second major city and why?

Not responding to this question at this time

11. What, if any, other infrastructure sectors should be addressed in the Strategy?

Comfortable with the sectors in the paper

12. How should the Strategy address private sector infrastructure requirements?

Not responding to this question at this time

13. How can the Strategy assist to coordinate and integrate across infrastructure sectors? What interdependencies do you consider most important?

Not responding to this question at this time

14. Do the opportunities and challenges identified in this section reflect the most important and/or pressing matters in each sector?

Yes

15. Are there particular aspects of infrastructure provision in these sectors which you think IWA should focus on?

- Reliable broadband and telecommunications access
- Education and training
- Water and power

16. In what way do you think the core sectors may change (for example, emergence of new sectors, or shifts in the importance or significance of sectors) over the life of the Strategy?

Not responding to this question at this time

17. What are your thoughts on the proposed methodology to develop the Strategy?

RCCIWA supports the approach by IWA.

18. What approaches can IWA take to compare and assess priorities across different sectors, regions, and issues? What prioritisation criteria should be applied?

Not responding to this question at this time

19. To what extent should IWA consider the potential for infrastructure to directly promote new economic development and diversification (including in the regions), as opposed to improvements in core service delivery?

Whilst improvements to core service delivery need to be well planned, ensuring our state can be truly economically and socially diverse would be the priority for RCCIWA members.

20. What is an appropriate significance threshold to apply, to enable a focus on larger and more strategic infrastructure? Should it vary across different regions and/or sectors and, if so, how?

Not responding to this question at this time

21. What specific scenarios should IWA consider from a top-down perspective, particularly as part of its 11 to 20 year outlook?

Not responding to this question at this time

22. Do you have any comments about the proposed engagement approach?

RCCIWA commends IWA for its consultative and broad approach to date and its planned approach. We encourage IWA to engage strongly with all regional business organisations and offer our support to assist with this at all times. It is imperative that local regional communities are engaged and involved early and often.