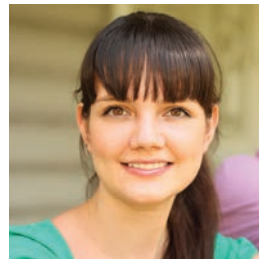




REGIONAL
AUSTRALIA
INSTITUTE

Regionalisation Ambition 2032

A Framework to Rebalance the Nation



REBALANCE THE NATION



2025
Year 3 Progress Report



Acknowledgement of Country

The RAI acknowledges all Traditional Owners throughout Australia and the continuing connections to Country, rivers, land and sea. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Traditional Custodians of this land.



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About the Regional Australia Institute

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) is the nation's first and only independent think-tank dedicated to empowering Australia's regions. We are a not-for-profit organisation that undertakes research to inform, educate and activate our rural and regional communities.

The RAI celebrates 14 years in 2025. We are proud of the vast array of research, data, and detailed insights the RAI has provided into many of the significant issues and challenges facing regional Australia. The work of the Institute is made possible through research partnerships with federal, state and territory governments, the national Regions Rising event series, regional consultancy projects, membership and philanthropic funding.

In 2022, the RAI launched the *Regionalisation Ambition 2032 - A Framework to Rebalance the Nation*. The Ambition is a 10-year plan for regional Australia that seeks balanced growth across our nation's regional towns and cities. It outlines key targets, actions and benefits that will contribute to building prosperous regional communities, and a stronger Australia.

The RAI exists so that decision-makers at all levels of government, not-for-profits, industry and community have the information they need to ensure the best outcomes for regional Australia. By replacing myths and stereotypes with facts and knowledge, the RAI seeks to build a more inclusive, unified and prosperous future for all Australians.

About the Regionalisation Ambition

The Regionalisation Ambition 2032 is a ten-year plan for regional Australia. Based on a decade of research, it is a plan with 25 targets across six vital pillars: Population, Jobs & Skills, Liveability, Health, Productivity & Innovation and Resilience & Sustainability.

Each year, the RAI reports on progress towards each of these targets and from this year, will make this data available at a national, state/territory and local level and via a new digital tool on the [RAI's website](#).

The Ambition is a tool designed to be used by all levels of government, industry and the community to achieve balanced growth across our nation's regional towns and cities.

Supporters

The Ambition was originally designed in consultation with RAI's members through the *Regional Activators Alliance*, more than 50 local governments, Regional Development Associations and community organisations and the *Regional Australia Council*, (and Associate membership) and thousands of regional champions right across the country. It is actively supported and championed by the National Alliance for Regionalisation, comprising 34 leading peak and non-profit bodies.

A particular thank you this year to the health peak organisations, the Australian Medical Association, the National Rural Health Alliance, Rural Doctors Association of Australia and the Royal Flying Doctor Service for their input and guidance in designing the new health pillar.

2025 RAC & RACA Members



2025 RAA Members



The National Alliance for Regionalisation



Foreword from the Minister

The Ambition's third annual progress report highlights valuable insights and case studies that showcase how regional Australia is rising to meet big national ambitions – like our housing, energy transition and our productivity agenda.

In our second term, the Albanese Government continues to be committed to ensuring the crucial evidence base that will underpin good governance and decision making. Data and insights on regional Australia help underpin informed and impactful investment. We are proud to continue to partner with the RAI to enable vital research to be undertaken each year on the biggest issues facing regional, rural and remote Australia through the Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program. This year, the RAI's reports on regional housing and net zero explore two of 2025's most critical issues and areas of significant government focus.

In housing, our Government has continued its work to deliver commitments under the National Housing Accord of 1.2 million new homes over the next five years. We have announced further support with a \$54 million investment to accelerate the uptake of modern methods of construction and an additional \$120 million from the National Productivity Fund to incentivise states and territories to remove red tape. Modern methods of construction are proving to be an effective and timely solution for housing supply in regions, particularly helping to address housing for critical workers.

Supporting our regions to manage the energy transition is the role of the new Net Zero Economy Authority and what this report also showcases is the significant efforts states and territories are making to enhance and grow regions supporting new renewable projects.

We welcome inclusion of the new Health pillar and its five targets into the Ambition. Health is a critical enabler not only for prosperous communities in our regions and for those who live there but for those who aspire to live the regional dream. It is why more than half the government's committed 50 new Medicare Urgent Care Clinics will be in rural, regional and remote areas. We have also added 100 new Commonwealth Supported Places per year in medicine, specifically targeted at universities that encourage students to pursue general practice and to build the pipeline of regional health workers of the future.

A focus on productivity has underpinned much of the focus for Australia's immediate future and it is here that regional Australia will play its biggest role. Regional Australia already feeds the country, powers the country and delivers most of our top exports. It is the economic engine of Australia, and it's leading our country through one of its biggest transitions.

Continued focus by the RAI on productivity and population enablers in 2025 and 2026 will bring us new insights, data and solutions from regional communities. We learn so much from sharing the diverse range of experiences from across Australia. RAI's research and networks are integral in bringing these stories to the national table.

The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government
and Territories
Minister for Emergency Management



Letter from the CEO



When we launched the Ambition three years ago, we had a dream. Our dream was to rebalance the nation with 11 million people calling regional Australia home by 2032.

To achieve our dream, we knew we had to inspire the nation to think differently. Put simply, we needed the nation to re-imagine what was and is possible for regional Australia. To think about the modern and vibrant regional Australia of today – a place that is building careers, families and communities and to reimagine how more Australians could live ‘the good life’.

We needed people to think about how issues and opportunities interconnect like how health services can attract new workers, how childcare services impact local workforce participation, how big renewable projects impact housing.

The Ambition is our north star to achieve the dream and to help us all reimagine regional Australia.

I’m motivated by the momentum coming from many fronts.

This year, we have worked with the Commonwealth on several projects supporting the Ambition’s targets like Jobs & Skills Regional Roadmap (Phase One) and the future National Regional Migration Strategy. Through our Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program, we have also released two powerful reports addressing critical regional issues like housing in our [Answering the Call for Regional Housing](#) report and social licence factors for large-scale renewable energy projects through our [Net Zero: Building a Legacy](#) report.

We have seen incredible momentum again from regional communities. When we put out the call to the Regional Activators Alliance to share their big 2025 ideas and initiatives, we were inundated. From a town transforming rural health care delivery, with digital solutions and community ownership to an essential worker housing initiative delivering homes at 30% lower than market rate to a nation-first project boosting AI readiness across regional councils.

And we have seen increasing support from our National Alliance for Regionalisation. Alliance members the Australian Medical Association and the National Rural Health Alliance published important reports focusing on labour force and expenditure gaps in regional and rural areas respectively. They also joined Alliance members Royal Flying Doctors Service and Rural Doctors Association of Australia to help us design and set targets for the new Health pillar in the Ambition. This change has also received strong support from other Alliance members, Regional Activators Alliance and the Regional Australia Council.

Inspired by our members, we have made other changes to the Ambition and targets this year to expand the Ambitions reach and usage. We now report against the targets at a national, state and territory and LGA/local level via a new digital dashboard on our website allowing all regional communities to not only access how their community is progressing towards targets in the Ambition but how they measure against their state/territory and national average.

Of our 25 targets, I am delighted to report a positive result with 18 targets progressing, four targets going backwards and three targets due to be updated in the digital tool in November. The result includes continued progress across Jobs & Skills targets including recruitment difficulty and post-school completion rates. There was also positive results in the Resilience & Sustainability pillar targets for disaster resilience and emissions intensity. School completion rates unfortunately fell and rental vacancies continue to be an issue, although building approvals have improved.

I hope you can see from the data and policy momentum in Progress Report 3 that our dream is becoming a more likely reality. This is why we are supporting '40 for the regions'. 40% of Australians living in regional Australia contributing 40% of GDP if we continue to achieve against targets in the Ambition.

Regional Australia is already on track to reach between 36% and 38% of Australia's population by 2032, what this doesn't account for is the latent demand which we know can be unleashed when we address Ambition targets. And we also know that 40% of city dwellers are considering a regional move!

With the momentum we have seen in 2025, I am confident our dream can become a reality.

Liz Ritchie
CEO
Regional Australia Institute

40 for the regions

40% of Australians living in regional Australia is a reality if we can meet the demand for regional living with the jobs, services, housing and lifestyle to support this great Australian dream.

Which is why the RAI is calling for **40%** for the regions.

40% of total Australian population.

With **40%** of international migrants settling in regional Australia.

Producing **40%** of our Australia's GDP.

40% of Australians living regionally would help rebalance the nation. Current trends have the population of regional Australia on track to reach between 36% and 38% of the total population by 2032.

With **40%** of city dwellers considering the regional dream, progress and policy momentum have the potential to turn this dream into reality for millions.

To reach **40%** of the population, the RAI is advocating that national policies need to focus on a **40%** future. For example, the RAI recommends **40%** of the 1.2 million homes under the National Housing Accord are built in regional Australia.

We recommend a minimum of **40%** of activity generated by the Future Made in Australia program is based in our regions for long term skills development. And at tables discussing national policies, we call for regional Australians to occupy **40%** of the seats.

A focus on **40%** for our regions will not only ensure that no one is left behind, it gives regional Australia the focus it needs to reach its full potential.

Reflections on Year 3 Progress

The Regionalisation Ambition 2032 – a Framework to Rebalance the Nation is a set of 25 targets across six pillars – Population, Jobs & Skills, Liveability, Health, Sustainability & Resilience and Productivity & Innovation.

Each year, annual data is collated and assessed to track progress towards these targets. Targets that are showing positive movement from last year are considered to be progress.

This year, of the Ambition's 25 targets, 18 have shown progress, four have fallen behind and three are awaiting new data.

While the top-line result is positive, it includes a range of outcomes. Some targets, while showing progress, still face a large gap between metropolitan and regional outcomes. As we know only too well, the rural, remote and regional picture can and does vary greatly.

For example, the target on recruitment difficulty continues to show, solid year on year improvement. When we launched the Ambition in 2021, recruitment difficulty was 65%. It has since come down to 58% and in 2024, 50%. We are on track to hit under 40% by 2032.

According to the Australian Disaster Resilience Index, the proportion of regional Australians living in an area of moderate or high resilience has positively moved from 63.3% when we created the Ambition, to 71% in 2024.

Regional Australia's share of total overseas arrivals has increased but just a 0.2% increase on last year at 16.7% and well short the target of 40%.

And while there is positive movement across the Health pillar, it's nowhere near far enough to bridge the large gap between metropolitan outcomes and access. For example, while the number of medical practitioners are growing faster in regions, our regional areas still have 117 fewer medical practitioners per 100,000 than in our metro areas. Australians in our outer regional areas use Medicare services at half the rates of our cities and in remote and very remote areas, services per person are just a quarter of the cities.

Progress is not significant or fast enough for a number of targets to reach 2032 goals, which is why continued focus on both the annual data and the policy enablers is important.

Analysing target data at national, state/territory and LGA/local levels is integral to understanding both the gap that currently exists between metropolitan and regional areas across the same measures plus annual progress.

The digital dashboard including LGA data is available at regionalaustralia.org.au and this will offer regional communities of all sizes the ability to make the Ambition their own. Using this unique data set and establishing what is also critical to specific regions to tailor this work will provide regions with the greatest advantage.



2025 Key Policy Recommendations

Findings in this year's report support the following policy priorities to advance each pillar of the Ambition.



Population

- Creation of a National Regional Population and Settlement Strategy that models future population distribution to deliver optimal social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- Investment in focused awareness and attraction programs to increase settlement and retention strategies for migrants to key regional areas.
- Review of the skills recognition process for overseas migrants.



Jobs & Skills

- Continued and greater investment in placed-based workforce development initiatives to match regional Australians with job vacancies.
- Enact the policy considerations in the Regional Roadmap from Jobs and Skills Australia.



Liveability

- 40% of the 1.2 million homes (480,000) under the National Housing Accord to be built in regional Australia.
- Appoint a National Regional Housing Commissioner and dedicated regional housing offices in each state and territory.



Health

- Coordinate investment and service delivery by the Commonwealth, State and Territories under the National Health Reform Agreement.



Sustainability & Resilience

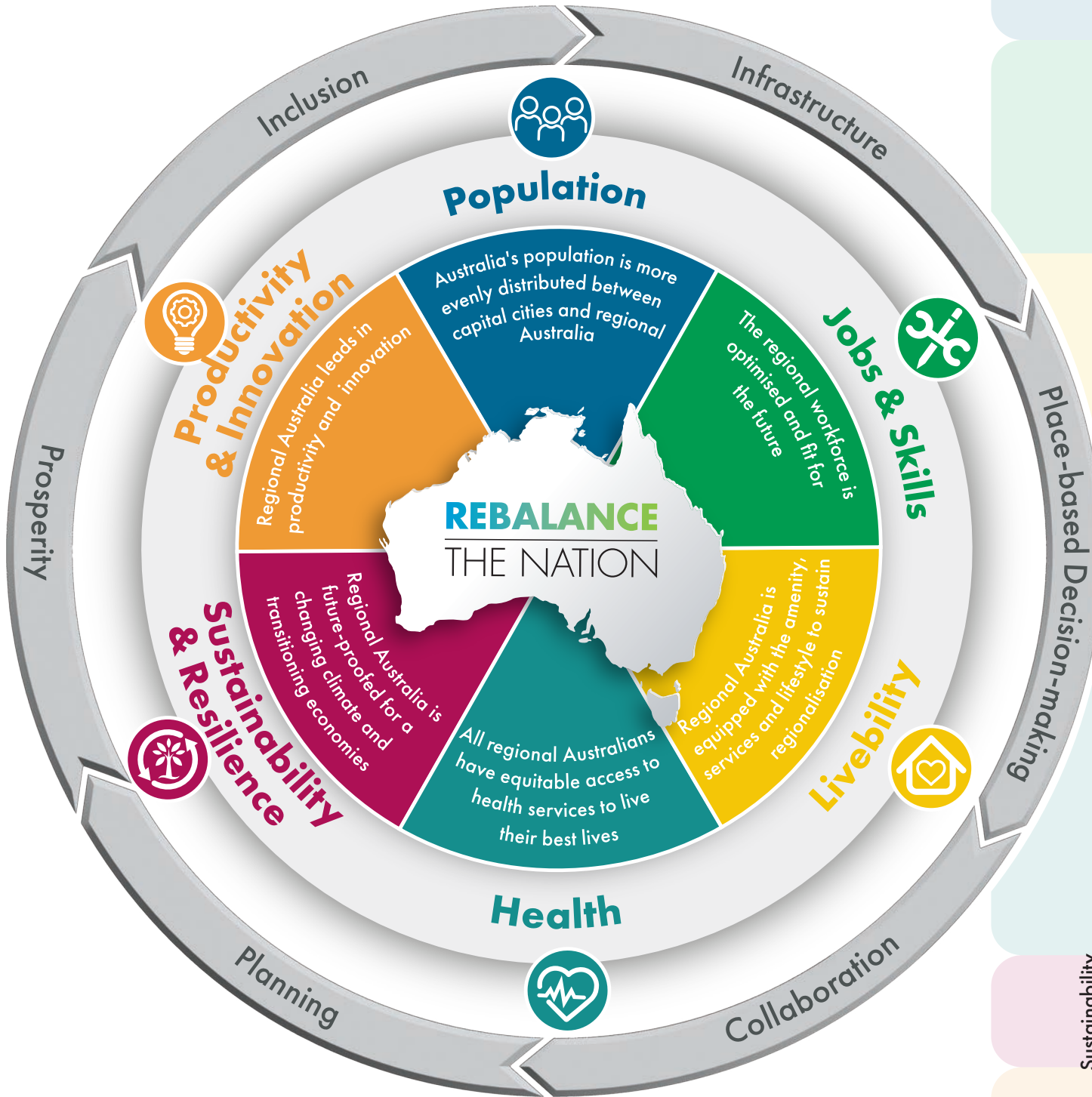
- The REAL (Regional Energy and Legacy) Deal - a national framework that aligns governments, industry and communities to deliver legacy investments in Australia's Regions through the energy transition.



Productivity & Innovation

- Regional Productivity Solutions – co-designed, placed-based investments in skills, infrastructure and regulatory reform to lift productivity in regions.

Ambition Targets and 2025 Progress



Rating*

- Progress
- Backwards
- New data to come

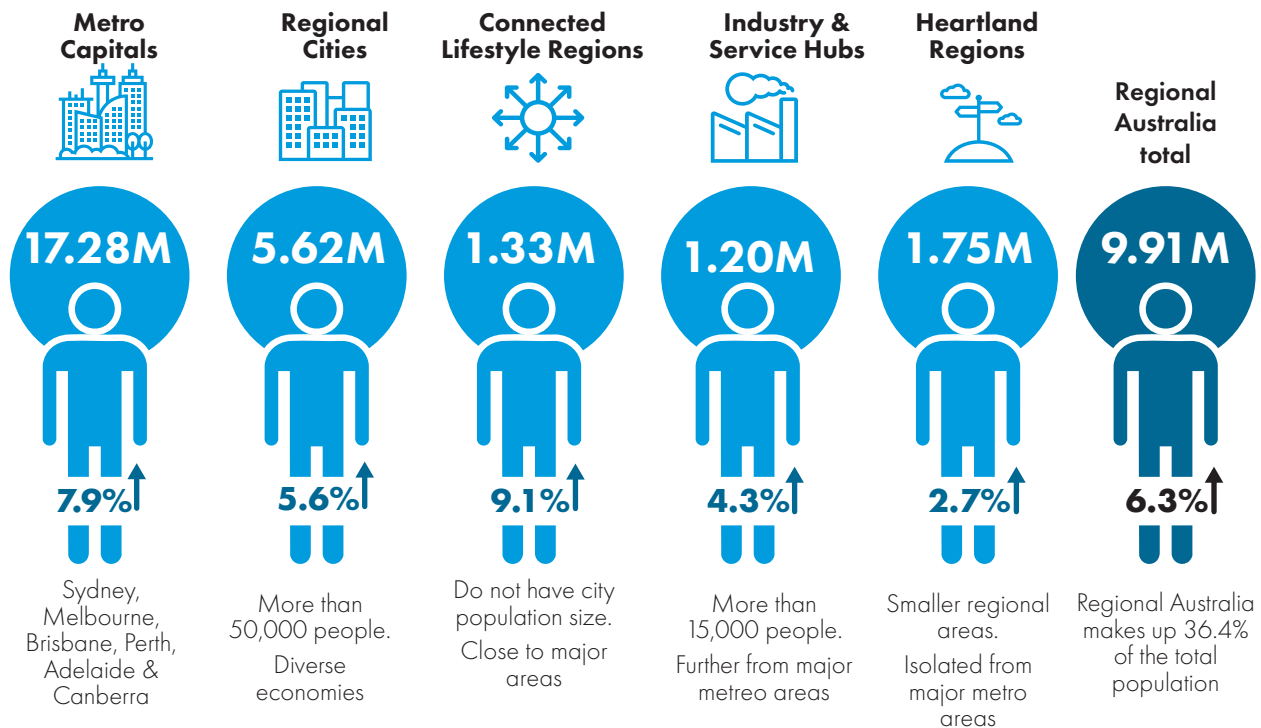
	Ambition 2032 target	Year 3 Progress	Rating *
Population	By 2032, more than 11 million Australians will be living prosperously in the regions	Regional Australia's population increased from 9.78 million to 9.91 million between 2023 and 2024 a rate of 1.3%	➔
	Increase regional Australia's younger population share (15-39 years) to 35% by 2032	The share of younger regional Australians (aged 15-39 years) increased from 30.0% (2023) to 30.2% (2024).	➔
	Double the proportion of new migrants settling in regional Australia by 2032 to 40%	The proportion of overseas arrivals settling in regions increased slightly from 16.5% in 2022-23 to 16.7% in 2023-24.	➔
Jobs & Skills	Reduce the recruitment difficulty in regional Australia to below 40%	Regional recruitment difficulty dropped from 58% in 2023 to 50% in 2024.	➔
	Increase the share of highly skilled workers employed in regional Australia to 62% of the regional workforce	The proportion of highly skilled workers in regional Australia dropped slightly from 55.3% in 2024 to 55.2% in 2025.	➔
	Increase the school attainment rate of young people in regional Australia to 75% or above	The attainment rate for young people (20-24 years) in regional Australia has decreased from 74.8% in 2023 to 73.9% in 2024.	➔
	Boost post-school qualification completion in regional Australia to 65% or above	The proportion of regional Australians aged 15-74 years with a post-school qualification has increased from 59.1% in 2023 to 59.5% in 2024.	➔
Liveability	Increase wellbeing score of Australians living in regional communities to a score of 75 in the Regional Wellbeing Survey	New data will be available in October 2025. The previous survey of regional Australians (2023) recorded a score of 71.1 for the Personal Wellbeing Index.	■
	Increase regional Australia's Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) score to 75 or above, equal to metropolitan Australia	New data will be released on November 2025. The most recent Digital Inclusion Index score for regional Australia was 69.8, based on 2023 data.	■
	Increase rental vacancy rates in regional areas to at least 3%	The regional rental vacancy rate remained tight, at 1.9% in June 2025, the same as June 2024.	➔
	Ensure annual building approvals match population growth	Building approvals in regional Australia rose by 3.7% in FY2024-25 compared with FY2023-24.	➔
	Increase number of childcare services available to regional Australians	The number of childcare services in regional Australia rose by 3.5% between 2023 and 2024	➔
	Increase the proportion of students achieving a Strong or Exceeding proficiency standard in reading and numeracy	In reading, the proportion of regional students at Strong or Exceeding proficiency level increased from 57.0% in 2024 to 58.0% 2025, while the proportion at the Needs Additional Support level decreased from 16.1% to 14.9%. In numeracy, the proportion of regional students at the Strong or Exceeding proficiency level increased from 55.0% in 2024 to 56.3% in 2025, while the proportion of students at the Needs Additional Support level fell slightly from 14.7% to 14.5%	➔
	Strengthen access to, and opportunities for, engagement in arts, cultural, community and recreational experiences in regional Australia	New data will be released in October 2025. In the previous survey Regional Australians sense of getting involved decreased from 3.3 in 2021 to 3.2 in 2023 (out of 7)	■
Health	Increase number of medical practitioners in regional Australia by more than 100 FTE per 100,000 population to 430	The number of medical practitioners in regional Australia increased from 354 FTE per 100,000 population in 2023 to 365 in 2024.	➔
	Increase the number of allied health professionals in regional Australia by more than 150 FTE per 100,000, to approximately 700 FTE	The number of allied health workers in regional Australia increased from 538 FTE in 2022 to 551 FTE per 100,000 in 2023.	➔
	Regional Australians have the same level of access to Medicare services as metropolitan areas	Regional Australians accessed an average of 11.4 Medicare services per capita in 2024 up from 11.2 services in 2023.	➔
	Reduce the years of potential life lost due to premature death (under 75)	Years of potential life lost in regional Australia decreased to 49.3 years in 2023 from 50.5 in 2022.	➔
	Regional Australians are accessing the NDIS at the same rates as people living in major cities	Regional Australians accessed 74.5% of allocated NDIS services in 2024 up from 73.2% in 2023.	➔
Sustainability & Resilience	Regional Australia is reducing its emissions intensity and contributing to Australia's 2050 climate targets	Regional Australia decreased emissions per \$M of output by 4.8% in 2023.	➔
	75% or more of regional Australians live in an area with a high or moderate capacity for disaster resilience	The proportion of the regional population living in an area with high or moderate resilience increased from 63.3% in 2020 to 71.0% in 2024.	➔
Productivity & Innovation	Increase regional Australia's contribution to national output	Regional share of Australia's GDP increased slightly from 38.4% (2023) to 38.5% (2024).	➔
	Regional Australia's productivity (GDP per hour worked) is growing by 1.2% per annum	Regional productivity grew 0.5% in 2023-24, compared to a decline of 3.7% in 2022-23.	➔
	Increase workforce participation in regional Australia to 68% or higher	The regional workforce participation rate increased from 63.2% in May 2024 to 63.7% in May 2025.	➔
	Increase new business and innovation in regional Australia	The regional share of total business entries decreased from 29.1% in 2023 to 27.7% in 2024. The regional share of newly registered trademarks increased slightly from 19.1% (2023) to 19.6% (2024) and the regional share of patent filings decreased from 4.8% (2023) to 4.1% (2024).	➔

Regional Australia in 2025

Regional population growth continues

The population of regional, rural and remote Australia is nudging 10 million in 2025, increasing from 9.78 to 9.91 million in 2024 and growing at a rate of 1.3% over the last year and at a growth rate of 6.3% since 2019.¹

2024 Estimated resident population (ERP) with % change since 2019 ERP



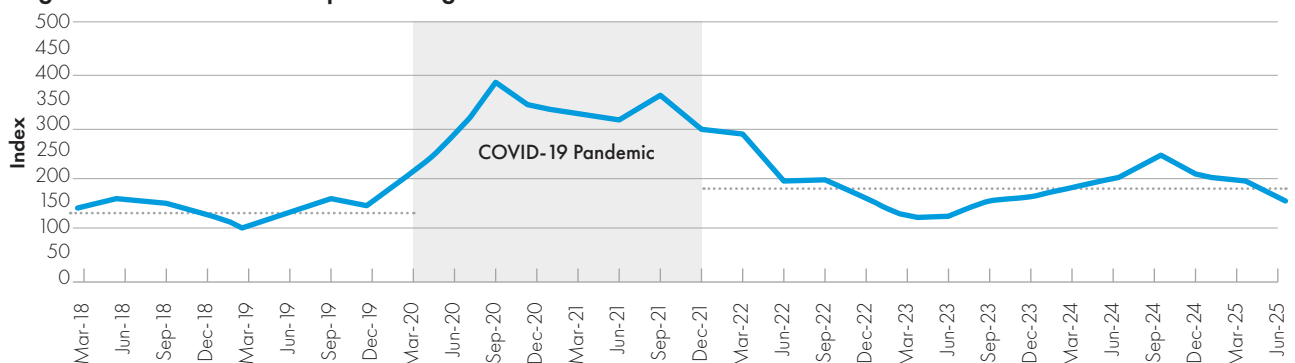
See Appendix C - Methodology for details of regional typologies.

Movement of people from capital cities continues to fuel population growth in the regions. Net internal migration from capitals to regions increased to 35,000 in 2023-24, the largest annual growth in more than 20 years (outside of pandemic years)².

RAI's *Regional Movers Index (RMI)*, which tracks migration from capitals to regions, consistently shows more people moving from cities to regions than in the opposite direction. During the full 2024-25 financial year this difference was to

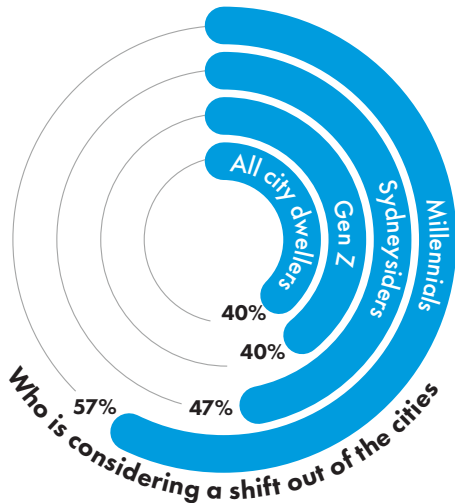
the tune of some 28%. Not only are more people moving from our capitals into our regions than in the other direction, but the number of those capital-city people making a regional move has remained elevated since the onset of the pandemic through to the post-COVID era. During each of the quarters of 2024-25, the average number of capital city people making a regional move was 13 per cent higher than the quarterly average prevailing prior to the COVID pandemic.³

Regional Movers Index - Capital to Regions Relocations

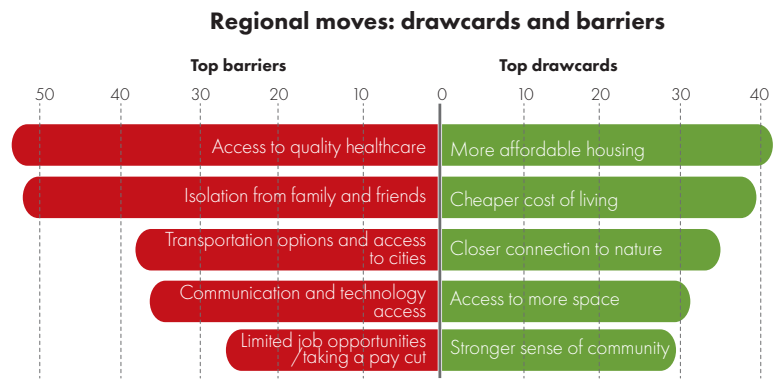


Demand for regional living is also at its highest. RAI data from late 2024 revealed that 40% of city-dwellers would consider a move to regional Australia – up from 20% in May 2023. Affordable housing and a lower cost of living were the top two influencing factors, while concerns about access to healthcare remained the main barrier.⁴

Moving to the regions



Market research commissioned by RAI in 2024



Significant natural disasters remind us of the necessity of strong and resilient regions

Once again, extreme weather conditions have shone a spotlight on the necessity to have strong and resilient regions. Cyclone Alfred hit southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales in February and March. NSW was hit again in May with severe flooding in the Mid North Coast and Hunter regions.

Record-breaking droughts have continued in South Australia and Victoria throughout the year with these states receiving less than 20% of their normal rainfall marking their driest 15-month period on record.

In March, a severe algal bloom was confirmed off the coast of South Australia triggered by marine heatwaves. The bloom has led to mass deaths of marine life, including fish and sharks and has impacted oyster farming and public health. Both the state and federal governments have contributed to a joint response.

Climate scientists note that while Australia is known as a land of “drought and flooding rains,” the current simultaneity and severity of these extremes are virtually unprecedented in modern records. Such back-to-back extremes, happening in parallel, are stretching Australia’s disaster response capabilities and testing the resilience of its economy.

Weather data provider, Early Warning Network

Housing continues to be a handbrake to growth

What should be a time of growth and renewal for regional Australia is being challenged by widespread housing pressures, driven by significant shortages and structural barriers. While it is still generally more affordable to buy a home in the regions than in the capitals, this advantage is waning.

The RAI's 2025 report *Answering the Call for Regional Housing* found that regional housing approvals are 20 % lower than the early 2000s and are failing to keep pace with population growth. House prices are growing faster in the regions than in the cities. Australia's rental crisis is, in fact, a regional rental crisis - when it comes to securing a rental property, availability in the regions is consistently tighter and rent increases consistently faster than in capital cities.⁵

Regional communities are struggling to house critical workers - childcare staff, teachers, doctors, and emergency personnel, seasonal and temporary workers, as well as retail and hospitality employees. These workers are essential to maintaining liveability in our regions, not only for today's population but also our city-dwellers who aspire to make the move.

Productivity agenda

In 2025, the Australian Government made national productivity growth a top priority, and Australia's regional economies are well positioned to lead the way. The regions are home to many of Australia's most productive industries, including mining, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and energy. Tackling productivity challenges in the regions where these sectors operate will unlock further growth and deliver significant dividends in jobs, output and income generation.

Despite their fundamental importance to the national economy, regional areas continue to face persistent productivity barriers. These include limited access to key infrastructure, constrained labour mobility, skills shortages, lower educational attainment and poor digital connectivity. These barriers must be addressed through coordinated, place-based policy interventions if regional areas are to realise their full economic potential.

RAI and a number of National Alliance for Regionalisation members have made submissions to the Productivity Commissions reviews of the Treasurer's five pillars of productivity and to the economic roundtables held in August. RAI also contributed to pre-economic roundtable discussions, including the Northern Australian Roundtable. Westpac's submission to the economic roundtables highlighted the Ambition and argued that productivity growth could be unlocked by focusing on growing the regional population by a further one million people, supporting our target of 11 million by 2032.

RAI Executive Education Program participants



Regions managing our energy transition

The Federal Government's Net Zero Economy Authority was legislated in late 2024, establishing a new independent statutory to support regions as they navigate the transition. In addition, most states and territories have introduced new legislation and policies to guide the energy transition (see Sustainability & Resilience for full annual policy summary).

While regional communities are embracing the opportunities of the energy transition, many communities still share concerns about potential negative impacts from large-scale renewable energy projects in their regions. These include social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts, with major infrastructure projects creating additional strain on limited housing, infrastructure, services and employment markets. In some communities, concern has escalated into opposition, threatening social licence for renewable energy projects.

RAI's 2025 report *Towards Net Zero: Building a Legacy*, found that many communities feel overwhelmed by the scale and speed of renewable energy development in their regions. Approval and regulatory processes remain complex; community engagement is fragmented; there remains a lack of clear information about the transition; and some communities are experiencing fatigue from the cumulative impacts of consultation. A lack of coordination and empowered community decision-making is undermining social licence.⁶

The RAI's Regional Energy and Legacy (REAL) Deal proposes a national approach that aligns governments, industry and communities to deliver long-term investment in Australia's regions through the energy transition. The REAL Deal is designed to facilitate legacy-building investment at a regional level to deliver more impactful, long-term benefits to the regions. Pooling developer contributions from all projects in a region into a Local Legacy Fund is at the heart of the model. The framework would also facilitate contributions from government and other partners and place-based decisions about funding priorities and allocation of funds.

Regional decision making in the states and territories

2025 saw new government efforts to embed regional leadership and decision making power.

Following his re-election in 2025, WA Premier Roger Cook has appointed senior ministers to represent each of WA's regions. The purpose is to ensure better understanding and representation of regional needs and to ensure regional communities have access to local job opportunities, as well as the services and infrastructure they need.

Other states have also introduced new policies and frameworks to strengthen place-based governance and decision-making.

In 2024, the Queensland Government introduced the *Regional Collaborative Governance Model (RCGM)* which establishes six Regional Leadership Networks to foster adaptive, place-based decision-making.

NSW launched the Regional Communities Consultation Guide, with the aim to deliver meaningful consultation that responds to local needs and shape effective policies, programs, and services.

Tasmania has commenced implementation planning on two Strategic Regional Partnerships which bring together state and local governments, industry, and community stakeholders to address regional priorities such as workforce, infrastructure, and service delivery.

Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) aims to achieve equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health, education, employment, housing, justice and other socio-cultural outcomes, through a commitment to four priority reform areas and 17 socio-economic outcomes, with measurable targets.

This year's 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan reported that while 10 of the 15 measurable targets showed improvement only 5 of the 19 targets are currently on track to be met by 2031.

Report on progress against these reforms and targets highlights ongoing challenges to accessing timely data for annual reporting, with new data available for only nine of the 17 socio-economic outcome areas since the 2023 report, with just four of these nine showing positive movement toward targets on track to be met by 2031. It also showed that four targets are worsening: early childhood development, adult incarceration, children in out-of-home care and suicide rates.




The report emphasises the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, embedding the Priority Reform Areas from the National Agreement and the need for rights-based policy approaches, long-term funding, and genuine partnerships with Indigenous communities⁷.







Progress across States and Territories

The RAI tracks progress across the Ambition's targets within states and territories and has highlighted some key achievements. Refer to Appendix B – State Data Tables or the new online Ambition tool at regionalaustralia.org.au for full progress data tables by target and state or territory.




New South Wales

-  | Recorded the largest monthly increase in building approvals at 50% comparing June 2025 to June 2024.
-  | Second highest rate of post school qualifications at 61.3%.
-  | Second highest share of national total business entries at 8.9%.

Victoria

-  | Recorded the largest year-on-year increase in students achieving at the Strong or Exceeding Proficiency Level in both reading and numeracy - up 3.7% and 6.4% respectively.
-  | Also recorded the greatest improvement in students Needing Additional Support with a 9.1% decrease in numeracy and a 13.5% decrease in reading.
-  | Saw the largest drop in recruitment difficulty - down 12 percentage points.
-  | Biggest increase in childcare services at 3.7% and the lowest percentage of regional population living in a childcare desert at 14.3%.

Queensland

-  | Compared to other regions, regional Queensland received the highest share of international migrants — 38% of the state's total and 6.7% of the national total.
-  | Has the highest share of national total trademark registrations and the highest regional share of national patent activity.
-  | Saw the second biggest increase in medical practioners per 100,000 at 3.9%.

Tasmania



| Recorded the lowest recruitment difficulty of all regional areas at 43%.



| Saw the biggest increase in NDIS payments compared to their allocation up 2.9% to 75.9%.



| Experienced the biggest increase in productivity of 4.5%.

South Australia



| Achieved the largest increase in post-school qualifications - up 4.6 percentage points.



| Recorded the second largest increase in annual building approvals at 28.1%.



| Recorded the biggest decrease in emissions per M\$ of output at 8.7%.

Western Australia



| Recorded the largest regional population growth in 2024, up 2.0%.



| Achieved the largest improvement in school attainment, rising 12.6 percentage points to 84.3%.



| Recorded the largest increase in annual building approvals at 34.9%.

Northern Territory



| Reported the highest proportion of highly skilled workers at 60.4%.

| Recorded the highest rate of post-school qualifications at 66%.

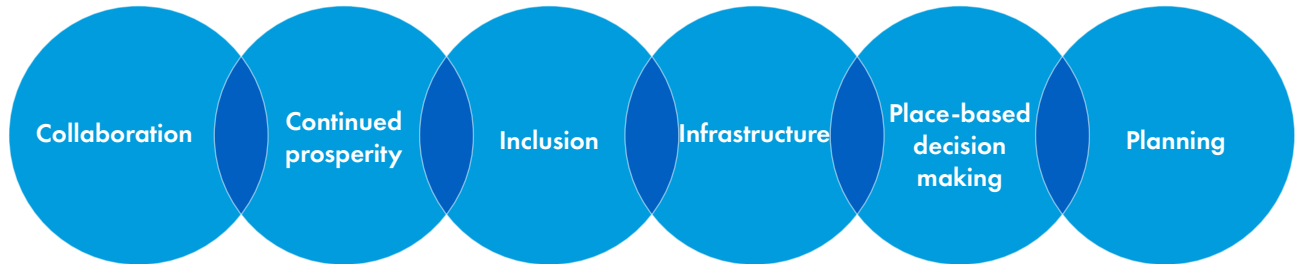


| Experienced the biggest increase in medical practitioners up 4.9%.

RAI and activating the Ambition in 2025

Core to the Regionalisation Ambition 2032 - and to achieving the RAI's vision of Rebalancing the Nation - is the consideration of a set of key cross-cutting themes that will enable balanced, well-rounded and equitable outcomes.

These themes are:



The regional stories shared throughout this progress report showcase these themes in action and their role in leading systems change.

New digital tool, targets and local data

The Ambition has undergone a number of changes this year designed to broaden both its data and insights, as well as reach. The Ambition was always designed to be a living and breathing document with the RAI committed to pursuing targets and metrics that best support regional Australia. As new data and priorities emerge, we remain committed to ensuring this tool is as contemporary, relevant and useful as possible for regional Australians.

New digital tool

The Ambition and its annual progress over the last three years is now digitally accessible via our website. For the first time, results are available at a national, state/territory and LGA/local levels. This tool is designed to help regions see how their progress tracks against national and state/territory targets. The creation of this tool was a result of feedback from RAI's Regional Activators Alliance, who helped design the original Ambition.

New productivity target

From 2025, the Ambition will set a new productivity target for Regional Australia (GDP per hour worked) to grow by 1.2% per annum. This aligns with national projections outlined in the 2023 Intergenerational Report.

New metric to measure progress towards Net Zero

The RAI's Sustainability target 'Regional Australia is trending towards net zero emissions by 2050 unlocking new jobs and industry opportunities' has been replaced with 'Regional Australia is reducing its emissions intensity and contributing to Australia's 2050 climate targets'.

Progress will be reported by analysing changes in emissions intensity, measured as greenhouse gas emissions per unit of economic output: kg CO₂e per \$ of GDP.



Introducing a sixth pillar - Health

This year, the Ambition welcomes a sixth pillar – Health. Previously, health metrics were captured under the Liveability pillar, with ratio and share targets for the number of medical practitioners and allied health professionals. The RAI has now expanded health targets to five and created a standalone Health pillar to reflect the critical role health plays as an enabler of both quality of life and population growth.

The RAI worked with health peak members of the National Alliance for Regionalisation - the Australian Medical Association, the National Rural Health Alliance, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Rural Doctors Association of Australia to develop these targets.

Working with regions to embrace 'Ambition-ous' thinking

In early 2025, Regional Activators Alliance Member Advance Cairns announced its Roadmap 2035, adapted from the Ambition and highlighting the interconnected elements of a regional economy.



The five pillars

The Roadmap has been developed around five key pillars, adapted from the Regional Australia Institute, which reflect the interconnected elements of our regional economy. None work without the other.

These pillars have been chosen to best reflect the composition and diversity of Far North Queensland.

These five pillars are:

- Our Place in the Region
- Diversification and Innovation
- Liveability
- Sustainability
- Jobs and Skills

National discussions on migration to support population targets

The RAI hosted three Regional Migration Network Forums in 2024 and 2025, commissioned by the Australian Government through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. The third and final forum, held in Canberra in February, explored effective migrant attraction and retention strategies in regional Australia. Previous forums explored regional employment systems and regional migration systems.

The forum was attended by regional migrants and representatives from regional councils, settlement services providers, business, state and federal government representatives, community organisations and Regional Development agencies from across Australia. Research and policy discussions provided multi-faceted perspectives on migration in regional Australia – exploring strategies to improve settlement and wellbeing outcomes for migrants.

Assistant Minister of Immigration the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP was a keynote speaker at the forum and publicly acknowledged the role of the Ambition in shining a spotlight on the importance of migration in advancing regional Australia.

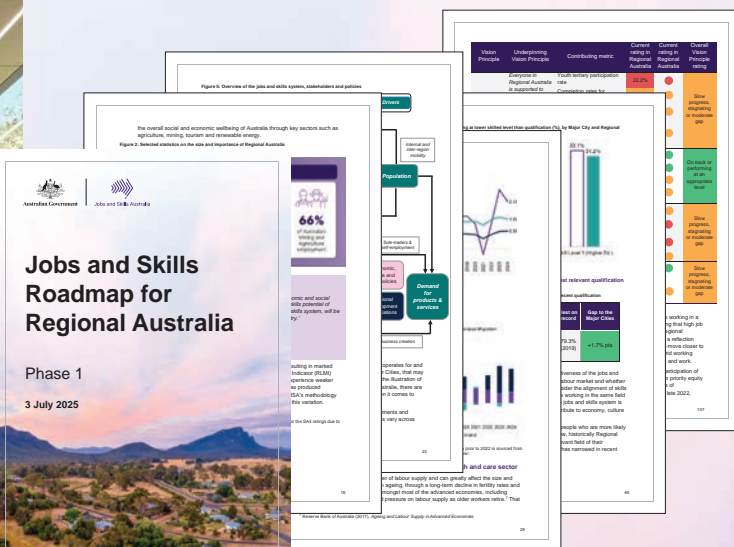
RAI CEO Liz Ritchie continued her role as a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Skilled Migration in 2025 and the RAI will release its Regional Migration Experiences Report in November.



RAI CEO Liz Ritchie with Assistant Minister of Immigration the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP

Supporting a plan for fit-for-the future labour market

The Jobs and Skills Regional Roadmap (Phase 1) launched by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) in July was inspired by the Regionalisation Ambition 2032 and long championed by the RAI as a vital next step by government to help regional communities plan and execute labour plans for a rapidly changing regional Australia. The RAI team was proud to play an advisory role in the development of the Roadmap.



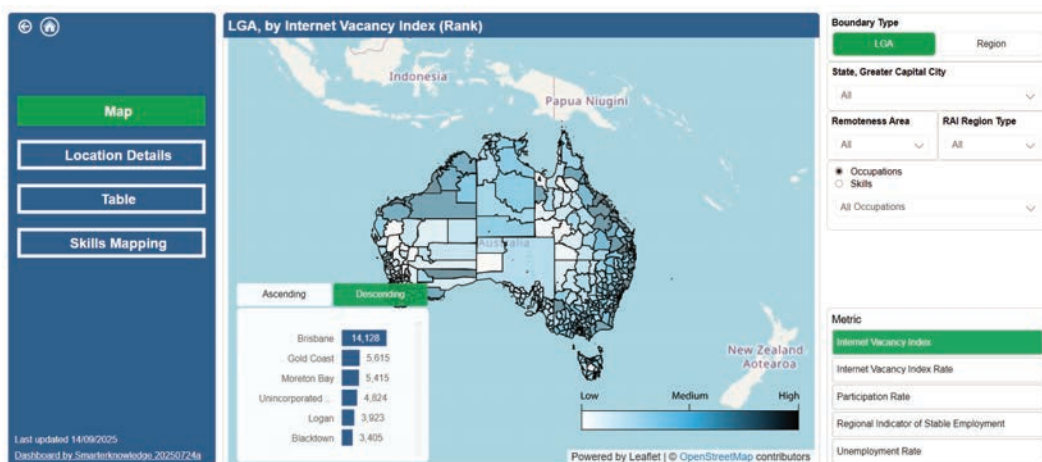
(L-R) Alec Webb RUN, Liz Richie RAI, Bjorn Jarvis Jobs & Skills Australia, Fiona Nash RAI Board Member, Peter Lake Jobs & Skills Australia, Megan Lily Deputy Commissioner Jobs & Skills Australia.

The jobs and skills system in Regional Australia helps realise the aspirations of its people.

JSA's vision for the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia



Launching new data to optimise regional workforces



RAI's Regional Jobs Guide

RAI continues to provide labour market data and research that equips communities with the practical tools they need. In March, the RAI launched the Regional Jobs Guide, an online tool designed to provide detailed information about regional labour markets, ensuring that job seekers, employers, and policymakers have access to the most relevant data for informed decision-making in workforce planning and economic development. It goes beyond traditional labour market reporting by offering an interactive, highly customisable tool that delivers real-time, location-specific insights.

To fully capture labour market conditions in regional Australia, the tool displays five key indicators: the Internet Vacancy Index, the Internet Vacancy Index Rate, the Regional Indicator of Stable Employment, the Labour Force Participation Rate, and the Unemployment rate.

The Regional Jobs Guide complements and expands on the JSA's Jobs and Skills Atlas, by providing information by local government area, adding a 'skills needs' feature and presenting information in tabular form.

Building essential practice for Australia's complex regional challenges

In 2025, RAI, with funding from the Commonwealth Government, continued to build a nationwide community of practice to elevate regional leadership capability.

The cornerstone of the community of practice has been five 3.5-

day Regions Leading Their Own Development intensives, where 126 senior regional executives co-created their own practical Cases for Change to apply back in their regions. These genuine case studies are currently reshaping Indigenous housing approaches, renewable energy benefit-sharing models, and worker attraction and retention strategies.

Using the program's methodology, RAI collaborated on the development of the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project's 10-Year Sustainability Roadmap - demonstrating how enhanced practice can translate to long-term regional resilience.

Underpinning the program was the RAI's Transforming Regions Handbook Series, making knowledge on regional systems innovation accessible and providing practitioners with tested tools for addressing complex challenges.




Expanding the RAI capacity program, we saw over 200 elected councillors and regional members participate in the Building the Future with Your Community workshops with Emeritus Professor Jim Cavaye and The Future of Policy for Australia's Regions workshops with Professor Andrew Beer.

The Regional Australia Hub continued in 2025 as the community and resource for regional leaders. Guided by a Strategic Advisory Committee comprising Emeritus Professor Sandra Harding and senior representatives from DITRDCA, RDA, academia, and regional development - the Hub's 2025 evolution will enable accredited pathways, collaboration and knowledge exchange at national scale.



RAI Executive Education program participants.

Population

TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Over 11 million Australians are living prosperously in the regions by 2032	Regional Australia's population increased from 9.78 million (2023) to 9.91 million (2024) – a rate of 1.3%. ⁸	Metropolitan population increased from 16.9 million to 17.3 million, a rise of 2.4%.	
Increase regional Australia's younger population share (15-39 years) to 35% by 2032	The share of younger regional Australians (aged 15-39 years) increased from 30.0% to 30.2% between 2023 and 2024. ⁹	Metropolitan younger population increased from 37.1% (2023) to 37.4% (2024).	
Double the proportion of new migrants settling in regional Australia by 2032 to 40%	The proportion of overseas arrivals settling in regions increased slightly from 16.5% in 2022-23 to 16.7% in 2023-24. ¹⁰	Nearly 70% of migrants in regional areas continue to settle in regional cities. Nearly 60% of total international migrations continue to settle in Sydney and in Melbourne.	

New Insights

- **Centre for Population** analysis of the regional population found that net internal migration outflow from capital cities to regional areas in **2023-24 was the largest outflow** since the beginning of the sub-state internal migration data in 2000-01, excluding COVID.

Net overseas migration remained the primary driver of regional growth, despite 86% of national net overseas migrants settling in capital cities. Sydney and Melbourne continue to receive the majority of overseas migrants (56%) with a further 22% going to Brisbane and Perth. The inner-city of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth accounted for around 15% of overseas migrants despite accounting for just 5.9 per cent of the national population.¹¹

- The RAI's **Regional Movers Index**, published quarterly in partnership with Commonwealth Bank, continues to show the **strong trend for city to region migration**, remaining around 17% above pre-COVID levels, and with movement from capital to regions 26 per cent higher than regions to capitals.¹²
- A nationwide survey by the RAI found that **40% of city dwellers** would consider moving to the regions - double the rate from 2023. Of these, 47% plan to work in their current jobs remotely or in hybrid roles. This shift is partly driven by the flexibility of working from home, enabling people to pursue regional lifestyles without sacrificing career goals. More affordable housing, lower living costs, and lifestyle benefits are key motivators.¹³

- **Australian HR Institute** released a report on *Hybrid and Flexible Working Practices in Australian Workplaces in 2025*, which referred to a number of case studies from regional employers. These employers noted the benefits of hybrid work, like **improved recruitment and retention** (especially for hard-to-fill roles), access to broader talent pools, including professionals unwilling to relocate, enhanced work-life balance, which is attractive to younger workers and families. Challenges included digital infrastructure, maintaining team cohesion and monitoring productivity remotely.¹⁴
- **The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute** launched *Inquiry into projecting Australia's urban and regional futures: population dynamics, regional mobility and planning responses*, a report highlighting the growing importance of regional Australia in national population planning, acknowledging that **internal migration, not international, is the key driver of regional population change**. It noted new migration clusters are emerging in states like NSW, Victoria, and Queensland, driven by housing affordability, lifestyle preferences, and remote work opportunities. Regional areas with strong connectivity, education, health services, and tourism appeal are attracting more residents. The report calls for place-based planning, improved small-area population projections, and targeted infrastructure investment - especially in transport, education, and aged care. Findings underscore the need for a national roadmap to guide strategic settlement planning and ensure regional areas can absorb and benefit from future population shifts.¹⁵

Federal Policy

Facilitating positive outcomes in regions and cities

- **Treasury** has been given a leading role in managing population and planning, formally taking over responsibility for **regional cities and housing**, land and planning policy as part of a broader Machinery of Government change. Treasury's Centre for Population continues to lead national forecasting and analysis.
- The **Federal Government** has launched the **National Urban Policy** which covers all Australian cities, including regional cities, which the policy acknowledges are vitally connected to our largest cities. The policy sets out a long-term vision for liveable, and equitable, productive, innovative, sustainable and resilient cities. (see breakout box)

Supporting migrant opportunities

- **New migration visa changes** came into effect, aimed at boosting international migration to regional areas and addressing national skill shortages. This includes the Skills in Demand Visa, replacing the Temporary Skills Shortage Visa, with an expanded occupations list and prioritised processing for applicants settling in regional Australia. Migrants settling in designated regional zones may receive priority processing and additional points under the skilled migration points test.
- The Government continued its work on the **National Regional Migration Strategy** which is scheduled to be released later this year. The RAI and members from the National Alliance for Regionalisation were heavily involved in providing input into the strategy.

State and Territory Policy

Planning for future growth

- **NSW** updated its Settlement Strategy: a strategy first launched in 2023 to improve settlement outcomes for refugee and refugee-like people living in NSW. The revised strategy added new housing actions and emphasised continued resourcing of the **NSW Growing Regions of Welcome**. It also identified and scoped opportunities to address social isolation for refugees in regional areas without established community networks. The strategy continues to recognise the unique challenges of regional areas—such as limited transport and housing—and addresses them through local partnerships and culturally responsive service delivery.
- The **Plan for Victoria** was released in early 2025 and outlines regional strategies to manage population growth and settlement across the state over the next 25 years. It supports decentralisation by promoting growth in regional cities and rural towns aiming to reduce pressure on Melbourne. Each region has a distinct plan aligned with local strengths, infrastructure needs, and environmental considerations. Housing supply targets are set for each regional LGA. The strategy emphasises **place-based planning**, housing diversity, job accessibility, and climate resilience. It also integrates Aboriginal self-determination and community engagement. These regional plans aim to ensure balanced development, economic opportunity, and liveability across Victoria.
- WA Premier Roger Cook announced an aspiration for **WA's regional areas to double in size** to take pressure off the urban areas.

My vision for the state is that we see significant decentralisation of the state's population into our regional centres.

WA Premier Roger Cook



Supporting migrant experiences in regions

- The **NSW Government** has created the NSW Settlement Advisory Council to further support the settlement experience for people from **refugee and refugee-like backgrounds** living across the state. It will put refugees and other community members at the heart of policy and process, working to ensure a smoother settlement experience and a better connection to services.

Activate Australia Skills

Activating underutilised skills in regional Australia

Antonio Michell, a qualified physiotherapist and trauma specialist from Chile, is one of thousands of skilled migrants who came to regional Australia hoping to contribute, only to be held back by Australia's costly and confusing skills recognition system.

"I was cleaning toilets at construction sites, and would hear regional Australians suffering from severe pain tell me how they couldn't get a private physio appointment for months," he said.

Despite having a decade of experience, he faced a lengthy, expensive process to have his qualifications recognised and to register to practice physiotherapy in Australia.

Antonio's story is not unique. Deloitte Access Economics estimates that 620,000 permanent migrants across Australia are working below their level of skill and qualification. Better harnessing their skills would deliver a \$9 billion annual boost to Australia's economy.

Workforce shortages are particularly severe in regional areas, especially in health, education and housing. Streamlining overseas qualification recognition would allow skilled people already living in the regions to fill these crucial roles and strengthen essential services.



That's why the Regional Australia Institute proudly supports the Activate Australia's Skills campaign – an alliance led by non-profit Settlement Services International. The campaign is calling for urgent reform of the skills and qualifications recognition system, so more migrants can work in the jobs they're trained for and help address regional and national skill shortages.

As Regional Australia Institute CEO, Liz Ritchie, said: "If we reform the costly, bureaucratic and complex skills recognition system, we can get skilled migrants to fill the more than 70,000 jobs regional Australia needs to be an economic powerhouse, and the best place to live."

The campaign is supported by over 100 Australian organisations and a long list of personal endorsements from industry leaders, economists, thought leaders and prominent Australians.

National Urban Policy

Activating underutilised skills in regional Australia

The National Urban Policy outlines six implementation principles to align decisions on policies, planning, and investment, and to provide a framework for how all parties can work together to achieve the policy's goals.

These principles emphasise place-based planning, ensuring decisions reflect the unique needs of local communities, including regional cities. The policy promotes long-term planning that integrates infrastructure, housing, and services, supported by data and evidence. It also calls for inclusive engagement, ensuring diverse voices, especially those historically underrepresented, are heard in urban development. Finally, the principles stress climate resilience

and sustainability, embedding environmental goals into urban growth strategies. Together, these principles aim to deliver better outcomes for people and places, ensuring cities and regional centres are liveable, productive and equitable.

Under the policy, the Australian Government will collaborate with state and territory governments through Planning Ministers' Meetings and other forums to deliver a shared vision for sustainable urban growth. This includes joint work plans, co-developed tools, and coordinated actions to address nationally significant urban challenges and improve policy alignment.

Case Study

The welcome experience expands across regional NSW

The Welcome Experience (TWE) is the cornerstone of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Essential Worker Attraction Program. TWE is a free, place-based concierge service that supports essential workers, and their families, who are considering applying for, or have accepted, a job in regional NSW.

Shortages of essential workers in regional NSW have increased over recent years, leading to inequitable access to services and poorer outcomes for regional residents compared to their metropolitan counterparts.

The program encourages people working within health, education, justice, the police force, and emergency services to see the benefit of relocating to regional NSW by helping them make connections and feel at home in their new communities.

Moving to a new community can be a daunting experience, but TWE aims to attract essential workers to regional NSW,

and encourage them to stay, by setting them up for success from the start.





The program offers a concierge service, providing assistance with relocation, housing, cultural and social connection, local knowledge, education and childcare, and partner employment.

TWE ran as a pilot in eight communities across regional NSW from July 2023 to June 2024.

The pilot program was so successful, it has now been expanded to 52 local government areas and will run until 30 June 2026. Originally piloted in Broken Hill, Muswellbrook, Bega, Walgett, Coffs Harbour, Corowa, Griffith and Goulburn, new areas include Orange, Dubbo, Kiama, Tumut, Kempsey, Uralla, Bourke, Yass Valley, Queanbeyan, Shoalhaven and Wagga Wagga.



Jobs & Skills

TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Reduce the recruitment difficulty in regional Australia to below 40%	Regional recruitment difficulty fell from 58% in 2023 to 50% in 2024. ¹⁶	Recruitment difficulty remains higher than in capital cities, where recruitment difficulty fell to 45% in 2024, down from 53%.	
Increase the share of highly skilled workers employed in regional Australia to 62% of the regional workforce	The proportion of the regional workforce employed in skilled occupations remained steady at 55%. ¹⁷	The share of highly skilled workers in regional Australia remains lower than in the major capitals, at 62.6% (May 2024).	
Increase the school attainment rate of young people (aged 20-24) in regional Australia to 75% or above	The attainment rate for young people (aged 20-24) in regional Australia fell from 74.8% in 2023 to 73.9% in 2024. ¹⁸	The gap between regional and metro students' attainment rates in Australia has not improved. Attainment in major cities rose to 89.4% in 2024, up from 87.5% in 2023.	
Boost post-school qualification completion in regional Australia to 65% or above	The proportion of regional Australians aged 15-74 with a post-school qualification rose from 59.1% in 2023 to 59.5% in 2024. ¹⁹	Metro rates fell slightly from 64.7% in 2023 to 64.6% 2024, meaning little change to the five-percentage-point gap between regional post-school qualification outcomes and those in major cities. While outer regional areas rose in 2024 to 57.4% and inner regional areas remained at around 61%, remote and very remote areas declined to 52.5%, widening the gap between these locations.	

About Jobs & Skills data in 2025

- This report measures the share of 'highly skilled workers,' defined as skilled levels 1-3 by ANZSCO. The target of 62% aligns with metropolitan levels.
- The school attainment rate in this report uses the 20-24 age bracket. Previous progress reports have used 15-19 age bracket.

Achieving a truly dynamic, productive, and competitive economy – with sustained and inclusive employment – will require all participants in the system to move forward together with a strong focus on collaboration and providing more equitable access to opportunities.

Professor Barney Glover AO
Commissioner, Jobs and Skills Australia.

New Insights

- **Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)** has released the first phase of the *Jobs and Skills Roadmap for Regional Australia*, with its report finding that **workforce participation among 25–54-year-olds has hit a record high** of 85.4%, driven by job availability, population growth and greater workplace flexibility. However, at the same time, about one in six young people in the regions are not in work, school or training, pointing to complex and overlapping barriers to participation. Employers also continue to face challenges, with nearly 10% of essential service roles still vacant and more than a third of occupations under persistent hiring pressure. The roadmap recognises that regional communities face different challenges than those in cities – ranging from distance and infrastructure to service availability.

The Roadmap also outlined several **barriers to school attainment** including a lack of sufficient secondary schools in remote areas, under-resourcing in existing schools of teachers and infrastructure, cultural discrimination and a lack of culturally responsive teaching for First Nations students, as well as additional transportation and accommodation costs for distant schools.²⁰

- **JSA’s 2024 annual report**, titled *Better Together*, reaffirmed the persistence of historically high vacancies, despite a year-on-year decline. The report highlights growth and **ongoing demand pressure for skill 3 level occupations** - trade and technical roles that are critical to many productive industries in regional Australia.²¹
- **JSA’s Occupation Shortage Report** introduced a new **Labour Supply Index** – a tool designed to assess the balance between labour demand and supply across different occupations. This Index revealed that many health professionals and technical trades continued to be undersupplied in regional areas.²²
- **JSA’s Regional Labour Market Indicator** in June showed regional and remote areas continue to be more likely to experience relatively **weaker labour markets** compared to major city counterparts with around half of the SA4’s located in regional areas rated either ‘below average’ or ‘poor’ in June 2025 while all six remote areas were rated ‘below average’ or ‘poor’. However, the report

also highlights some current areas of considerable labour market strength in parts of regional Australia including in regional Queensland (Central Queensland and Darling Downs) and southern regional New South Wales.²³

- The **National Centre for Vocational Education Research** released a 2025 report, *Student Support: Enabling the Learner Journey*, highlighting that Registered Training Organisations with high qualification rates were those that implemented **comprehensive student support strategies**. Research findings showed that these strategies were critical to improving outcomes, particularly in regional and remote areas, and significantly boosted completion rates for First Nations students. Strategies included early engagement, caring and skilled educators, continuity of support and strong relationships.²⁴

This report busts the long-held myth that you have to live in a major city to earn a high income.

Liz Ritchie, commenting on the Beyond City Limits report by RAI

- **RAI** released a report, *Beyond City Limits*, revealing that many regional and remote areas in Australia offer significant **income premiums compared to major cities**, after accounting for housing costs. The study found that median incomes in Remote and Very Remote areas are 12.8% and 13.6% higher, respectively, than in major cities. In Remote and Very Remote areas the report found an income premium for six out of eight major occupation groups: Professionals, Technicians and Trades Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, Clerical and Administrative Workers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Labourers. Overall, there are more than 80 individual jobs where net incomes are higher across all four remoteness categories, compared to major cities.²⁵

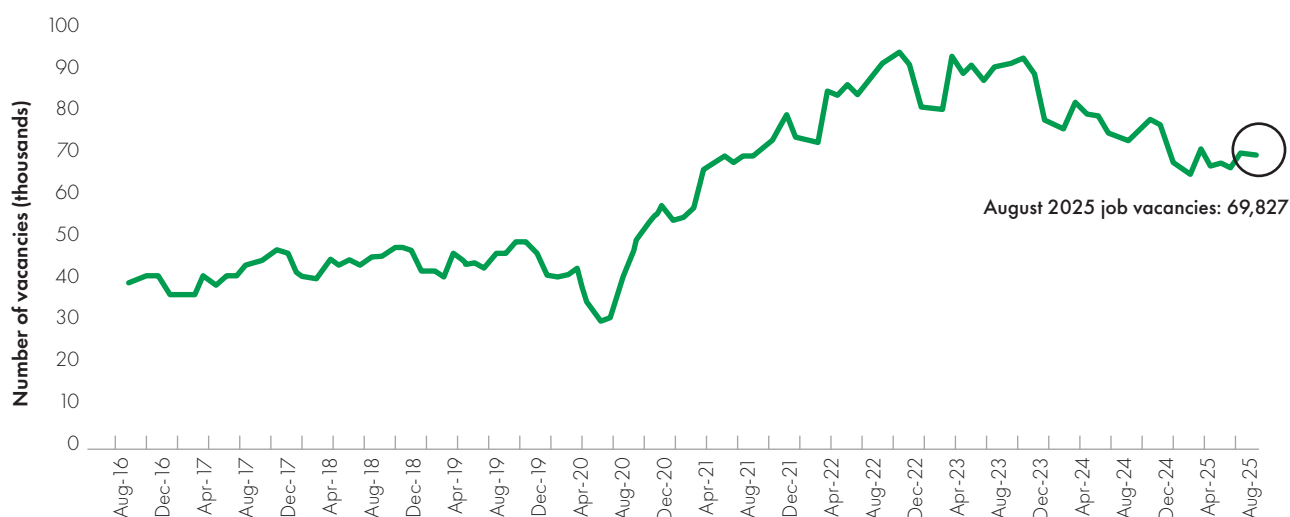


Policy Progress

In 2025, efforts at both the national and state/territory level focused on addressing long-term labour market needs in regional Australia through planning under the National Skills Agreement and National Skills Plan.

Data and planning tools from Jobs and Skills Australia are helping all levels of government to better target and plan for region-specific labour challenges, which continue to be reflected in job vacancy numbers.

Regional Australia job vacancies



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, monthly internet vacancies, RAI

Federal

Overcoming barriers to access to training in regional, rural and remote areas

- The **First Nations Economic Partnership** (2025-2030), a landmark agreement between the Federal Government, the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance, includes an investment of \$31 million to fund 12 Mobile TAFE units, delivering **on-Country training** in trades, healthcare, hospitality, and renewable energy. The program also creates 800 new roles under the Remote Jobs and Economic Development initiative and supports First Nations Clean Energy projects.
- More than 650 new jobs have been approved through the first grant round of the **Remote Jobs and Economic Development** program, helping around 100 employers create local jobs in remote communities. The program is targeting 3,000 jobs between 2025 and 2027.

Improving access to higher education

- The **Federal Government** has continued to open more *Regional University Study Hubs* as part of its \$66.9 million national expansion, which will more than double the number of hubs across Australia. This year, new hubs were launched on King Island (Tasmania), in South Australia, and in Warwick, Queensland. In Warwick, only around 13% of young people hold a degree.

The evidence shows that where Regional University Study Hubs are, university participation goes up.

Building a fit-for-the-future workforce

- The **Jobs and Skills Regional Roadmap** (Phase 1) outlines a number of recommendations for all levels of government. For the Federal Government, it recommends leading the coordination of regional workforce development strategies, funding and supporting regional education and training infrastructure, supporting regional employers and expanding access to Commonwealth Supported Places and investment in digital connectivity and transport infrastructure.

For State and Territory Governments, it recommends **co-designing regional workforce strategies**, aligning school, VET and higher education pathways to regional labour market needs, supporting wraparound services such as housing and childcare, and strengthening regional TAFE and training delivery in priority sectors like health and construction.

For local governments, it encourages **local partnerships** between employers, trainers and community organisations; the identification of local skills gaps and opportunities; support of place-based employment initiatives; and the promotion of regional liveability to attract and retain skilled workers.

- The **Federal Government** has launched *Australian Government Jurisdictional Action Plan 2024-2028*, which sets out the Government's strategy to deliver on the shared objectives, outcomes and national priorities of the **National Skills Agreement and the National Skills Plan**. It is the first jurisdictional action plan supporting a stronger Vocational Education and Training (VET) system and emphasises the need to deliver equitable access for regional, rural and remote communities. Funding is directed to regional delivery of Fee-Free TAFE, Remote Training Hubs,

and TAFE Centres of Excellence. Each state and territory government has published its own jurisdictional action plan using the same principles.²⁶

- The **Federal Government's** 2025-26 Budget included a commitment of \$91 million to grow the **clean energy workforce** including capital upgrades to regional training facilities and support for New Energy Apprenticeships.

Jurisdictional Action Plans

Jurisdictional Action Plans are a new initiative under the National Skills Agreement, agreed by all states and territories with the Commonwealth Government. Their purpose is to identify those actions that will contribute to jointly identified national priorities, targets and outcomes, and to provide greater visibility for industry and community stakeholders on how the vocational education and training system, under joint national stewardship, is meeting the needs of all Australians and promoting social and economic prosperity.

As part of the National Skills Agreement, each state and territory will develop policies supporting eight national priorities. The following are some regionally focused initiatives called out in State and Territory Jurisdictional Plans.

- The South Australian plan, *Skilled. Thriving. Connected*, emphasises place-based planning and delivery, working with local employers, councils and community groups to identify workforce gaps and training opportunities. The plan commits to building the capability and capacity of regional training providers, including TAFE SA and community-based RTOs.
- The *Western Australian Skills and Workforce Development Acton Plan 2024* highlights support for Regional Coordinating Committees that identify local training and workforce needs and align investments with regional priorities. The plan also includes delivery of regional job ready programs across regional communities, incentives for regional employers and support for First Nations communities with school and workforce enablement programs.
- Queensland's *Training Priorities Plan* includes policies to expand the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy to 50 additional schools, with new regional academy hubs providing local, on-the-ground trainers, as well as expanded agricultural training opportunities.
- The Northern Territory's *Skills NT Plan 2024-25* commits to expanding access to VET in regional and remote communities and increasing the First Nations VET Workforce by 25% through targeted and responsive projects.



- In New South Wales, the *NSW Skills Plan 2024–28: Building Skills and Shaping Success* introduces a new regional skills planning model to embed community-based decision-making and address local skills needs. It also includes initiatives such as expanding trade readiness programs in regional areas, training and workforce retention strategies for the care and support economy and developing place-based training to support the Net Zero transition. The plan also includes targeted support for regional, rural and remote students to improve VET completion rates.
- The Victorian Jurisdictional Action Plan for Skills and TAFE 2024-25 has a strong focus on regional skills development to support Net Zero and the energy transition. It flags investment in TAFE Gippsland to establish a Clean Energy Centre at its Morwell Campus, new trade buildings for the Clean Energy and Technologies Hub at South West TAFE (Warrnambool), Clean Economy Skills Labs led by Melbourne Polytechnic and TAFE Gippsland, and Stage 2 of the Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre at Federation University (Ballarat).

States and Territories

Supporting a trained, connected, local workforce

- The **Tasmanian Government** has scaled its *Youth Career Facilitator* in the Northwest to help prepare young people for apprenticeships and careers in **high demand industries**, such as construction, tourism and hospitality, the care sector, agriculture, and manufacturing. The program works with peak industry bodies like the Vocational Education and Training Sector and the Regional Jobs Hub.
- In **South Australia**, the newly opened Port Augusta Technical College has attracted an initial 200 enrolments for hands-on training in high-demand sectors such as infrastructure, health, hospitality, and trades. The College has been developed in partnership with major employers including **BHP and SA Power Networks**.
- **NSW** has launched a \$1 million internship program to support the state's transition to net zero. The *NSW Skills for Net Zero* initiative pairs 100 tertiary students with businesses for 200 hours of paid work on **emission-reduction projects**. Delivered by the CSIRO, the program aims to build a skilled workforce and help businesses meet decarbonisation goals while giving students real-world experience.

Overcoming barriers to educational access in regional, rural and remote communities

- In **Victoria**, construction has begun on the new Warrnambool Tech School which will open in 2026 and will provide innovative, **hands-on STEM learning** for all secondary students in the Warrnambool, Corangamite, Glenelg, Moyne and Southern Grampians local government areas.
- The **Queensland Government** has launched the **Queensland Virtual Academy (QVA)**, a \$12 million initiative aimed at expanding educational opportunities for over 4,000 students across 365 state schools, particularly in regional and rural communities. The academy livestreams specialist subjects such as Senior Physics, Specialist Mathematics, Japanese, and Psychology, helping students access courses not available at their local schools. It also offers STEM enrichment programs for Years 5–9, supporting students with high aptitude in science and technology.

Incentives for regional educators

- The **Queensland Government** continues to provide free accommodation for up to 12 months for **teachers relocating to priority regional schools**, with expanded eligibility.



Case Study

Munarra Centre of Regional Excellence – Pathway to Equity and Economic Inclusion

Established on Yorta Yorta Country in Shepparton, Victoria in August 2024, the Munarra Centre of Regional Excellence is Australia's first Indigenous-led tertiary education hub. Its culturally grounded approach fosters not only academic and vocational success but also pride, confidence, and a sense of identity - critical enablers of long-term regional participation in education and employment.

"We are reconciling our history and designing our future as we go. Munarra is a way of walking towards our future. Having a vision is critical to be able to pull us out of crisis elements of our community," stated Paul Briggs OAM, Munarra's Acting Chair and champion for nearly two decades.

Munarra's visionary, pathways-driven model has been developed to drive educational equity – helping to increase school attainment rates and boost post-school qualification completion rates for young Indigenous people in the Goulburn Murray region, home to Victoria's largest Aboriginal population outside Melbourne.

Munarra is a collaboration between the Rumbalara Football Netball Club, the Kaiela Institute, and the University of Melbourne, with funding and support from the Victorian Government and the Greater Shepparton City Council. It is governed by an Indigenous-led board, bringing to life a place-based, self-determined vision of prosperity through education.



Its guiding mission - to reclaim Indigenous knowledge, empower young people and revitalise a thriving First Nations economy - is embedded in every aspect of its design, curriculum and partnerships. The Centre plays a central role in the Goulburn Murray Prosperity and Productivity Plan, a 15-year strategy focused on regional self-determination and economic inclusion.

Munarra builds on the success of the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE), a proven educational model that has already supported more than 1,200 students to gain VCE and TAFE qualifications and transition into further study or employment.

Now relocated within the Munarra Centre and reimagined as the Munarra Academy, the program is expanding through partnerships with the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and GOTAFE, enabling seamless pathways into vocational certificates, diplomas and undergraduate degrees.



Case Study

La Trobe University: Bold long-term strategy for lifting tertiary participation in regional Australia



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

Through its *Regional Growth and Innovation Strategy 2030*, launched in May 2025, La Trobe University is investing in regional people, partnerships and places to drive inclusive economic development, strengthen educational outcomes, and ensure vibrant, sustainable futures for the communities it serves.

The Strategy is built around three strategic pillars: reformed education for regional learners, research that drives regional development, and vibrant multipurpose regional campuses.

La Trobe's Chancellor, the Hon. John Brumby AO said, "Fewer than 20 per cent of regional, rural and remote Australians attend university, yet the Australian Universities Accord has set a national higher education participation target of 55 per cent by 2050."

"The bold targets outlined in La Trobe's new Regional Growth Strategy 2030 will make a significant contribution to boosting post-school qualifications, reducing the gap between metropolitan and regional higher education participation and increasing the skilled workforce in areas of greatest regional need such as health and education."

As part of its focus on expanding what the University offers regional students, the Strategy aims to grow enrolments in La Trobe's on-campus, hybrid and online courses by more than 60% compared with 2024 Equivalent Full time Student Load, or four times the growth rate of the domestic student population in regional Victoria, by 2030.

Backed by industry and philanthropic partners, La Trobe has awarded the first 150 of 1,000 dedicated scholarships for regional learners. At the same time, regional school partnerships and community outreach are helping to lift aspirations and increase Year 12 attainment.

La Trobe is also strengthening its role as a catalyst for regional innovation. It is doing this by driving innovation and jobs growth through research and industry partnerships, particularly in the areas of health and agriculture where the University is already a recognised leader - doubling the number of co-located regional industry partners by 2030, embedding entrepreneurship programs, and expanding micro-credentials aligned with regional employer needs. La Trobe's Pro Vice-Chancellor Regional, Associate Professor Melanie Bish, said: "This strategy was in part inspired by the Regionalisation Ambition 2032 and the vision to rebalance the nation. It is a bold and necessary step to contribute to stronger regional communities. It's about unlocking opportunity, driving local innovation, and investing in people and places so our regions lead meaningful economic, social, and educational change".

With La Trobe's widespread presence across regional, with regional campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton, and this bold ambition, La Trobe University is demonstrating how a university can be a powerful agent of regional transformation.





Case Study

ViewJobs: Powering Regional Workforce Solutions Across Australia.

To combat skill shortages in rural and regional communities, ViewJobs has launched as the nation's first digital employment marketplace dedicated exclusively to non-metropolitan areas. The platform, a joint venture between Australian Community Media (ACM) and founders Lewis Romano, Jarrah Kammoora, and Jake Williams, is rapidly becoming a lifeline for businesses struggling to recruit.

Since its initial rollout in March 2024, ViewJobs has helped unlock thousands of opportunities for regional employers and job seekers:

- Over 100,000 live positions across regional and rural Australia
- More than 250,000 applications submitted
- Jobs filled in two weeks after remaining vacant for months (eg. tradespeople at Obieco Industries in Tamworth).



viewjobs

Leveraging ACM's vast regional network—including mastheads like the Canberra Times, Newcastle

Herald, Illawarra Mercury, and The Courier (Ballarat), ViewJobs reaches over 8 million Australians monthly.

ViewJobs technology utilises AI-driven matching tools to bring metropolitan-level smart recruitment to regional employers making it easier to recruit vital skills and roles. It is also the RAI's official jobs partner of the Move to More campaign promoting the 'good life' in Australia's regions. By focusing on regional job visibility and lifestyle promotion, the platform addresses both supply and demand: linking regions and recruiters with motivated talent. This means ViewJobs is making a big contribution to RAI's goal of reducing regional difficulty to under 40%.

Since launching, regional employers in healthcare, agriculture, logistics, and education now have a central digital hub with national reach. Job seekers gain improved visibility, matching, and awareness of regional opportunities.





ViewJobs isn't just helping people find work; it's rebuilding the bridge between regional ambition and employment reality. By supporting the Regionalisation Ambition 2032 and now aligning with Move to More, ViewJobs is playing a big role the aspirations of our regions.

viewjobs.com.au

To get bums in seats within two weeks for some positions is unreal... you are getting a better employee because ... candidates are targeted for the specific needs of your regionally-based business. It's been a game-changer.

Fiona Sweeney, HR Manager, Obieco Industries

Liveability

TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Increase the wellbeing score of Australians living in regional communities to 75 out of 100 in the Regional Wellbeing Survey	<p>New data will be available in October 2025.</p> <p>The previous survey of regional Australians (2023) recorded a score of 71.1 for the Personal Wellbeing Survey.²⁷</p>	<p>In 2023 the Personal Wellbeing Index for metro areas was 70.8.</p>	<p>New data available October 2025</p>
Increase regional Australia's Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) score to 75, matching metropolitan Australia	<p>New data will be released in November 2025.</p> <p>The most recent regional Digital Inclusion Index score for regional Australia is 69.8, based on 2023 data.²⁸</p>	<p>As reported in 2023, while the indices for Inner Regional (71.3) and Remote Australia (70.0) are closer to the metropolitan level (74.8), Outer Regional (66.3) and Very Remote Australia (62.6) lag.</p>	<p>New data available November 2025</p>
Increase rental vacancy rates in regional areas to at least 3%	<p>The regional rental vacancy rate remained tight, at 1.9% in June 2025, the same as June 2024.²⁹</p>	<p>Metro and regional rental vacancy rates are similarly low with metropolitan areas at 1.8% in 2025.</p>	
Ensure annual building approvals match population growth	<p>Building approvals in regional Australia rose by 3.7% in FY2024-25 compared with FY2023-24.³⁰</p>	<p>In metro areas, building approvals rose significantly by 15.5%.</p>	
Expand access to childcare services in regional Australia	<p>The number of childcare services in regional Australia rose by 3.5% between 2023 and 2024.³¹</p>	<p>While the number of total childcare services grew in major cities and inner regional areas, by 3.2% and 4.6% respectively, services in remote and very remote areas rose only marginally by 0.4%.</p>	
Increase the proportion of students at strong or above the national proficiency standard for reading and numeracy	<p>In reading, the proportion of regional students at Strong or Exceeding proficiency level increased from 57.0% in 2024 to 58.0% 2025, while the proportion at the Needs Additional Support level decreased from 16.1% to 14.9%.</p> <p>In terms of numeracy, the proportion of regional students in the strong or above proficiency level increased from 55.0% in 2024 to 56.3% in 2025, while the proportion at the Needs Additional Support level fell slightly from 14.7% to 14.5%.³²</p>	<p>By comparison, 71.9% of metropolitan students are at the strong or above level for reading, while those at Needs Additional Support level is just 7.2% - around half that of regional Australia.</p> <p>For numeracy, 70.6% of metropolitan students are at the strong or above level, with 7.3% at the Needs Additional Support level - again, about half the proportion in regional Australia.</p>	
Strengthen access and opportunities for engagement in arts, cultural, community, and recreational experiences in regional Australia	<p>New data will be released in October 2025.</p> <p>In the previous survey Regional Australians' sense of 'getting involved in the community' decreased from 3.3 in 2021 to 3.2 in 2023(out of 7).³³</p>	<p>The previous survey saw regional and metro both with a score of 3.4 in 2023.</p>	<p>New data available October 2025</p>

About Liveability data in 2025

- The target measuring medical practitioners and allied health professionals has been moved into the new 'Health' pillar.
- The target measuring satisfaction for public transport will be reintroduced in 2026, supported by more advanced metrics and data collection.
- RAI has changed the NAPLAN target to measure students at Strong and Exceeding levels for both numeracy and reading at Year 9.
- Data provided by Cotality is being used this year to measure rental vacancies. Note that Cotality recorded a different rental vacancy to what was reported in 2024 via Proptrack.

New Insights

Amenity and economic gains were the top drawcards for potential movers³⁴



Market Research Commissioned by RAI in 2024.

- **RAI** released further data and findings from its nationwide survey into **city dwellers and their consideration of a move to regional Australia**. Of those considering a move, 47% said they'd continue in their current work role on a remote or hybrid basis, 29% would look for a role in their new community, and 61% indicated they'd look to relocate in the next five years.³⁵
- *The State of the Housing System 2025* report by the **National Housing Supply and Affordability Council** identifies regional disparities in housing affordability, supply and access. It highlights that **rental stress is rising faster in regional areas** than in capital cities and calls for planning system reform and targeted investment in infrastructure and housing supply to support regional growth and resilience.³⁶
- **RAI** released *Answering the Call for Regional Housing*, a major report into housing shortages in regional Australia and the need for actions to lift housing supply. This report identified **regional housing challenges as structural**, varied and different to capital city challenges requiring a suite of dedicated and place-based policy and program responses. Multiple factors need to be addressed: higher costs, significant barriers to finance, limited access to skilled labour and materials, and regulatory and planning hurdles (see breakout box).³⁷
- **Creative Australia** released its report *Widening the Lens: Social Inequality and Arts Participation*, which identified how geography, alongside income, education and occupation shapes participation and **access to the arts**. It identified geographic disadvantage as a barrier to engagement due to reduced access. According to the report, financial barriers are now the main reason people in regions are not attending arts and cultural events. The report calls for systemic change to improve equity of access.³⁸
- **Social Ventures Australia** released *Targeting Investment Where It Counts*, which identified priority communities in regional, rural, and remote Australia for early childhood investment. It found that **131 areas experience both high early childhood disadvantage** and limited childcare access, with 68% of these located in regional or remote locations. These areas often have high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, highlighting the need for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Early Childhood Hubs. The report recommends tailored, integrated models - such as holistic and intensive ECEC services - to address developmental vulnerability and socio-economic disadvantage, especially where universal childcare access is insufficient.³⁹

- The **Federal Government** released its 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review, which found persistent connectivity gaps in regional, rural, and remote Australia, especially for First Nations communities. Key actions include modernising the **Universal Service Obligation**, improving mobile network capacity, expanding community Wi-Fi, enhancing consumer protections, and supporting affordability through low-cost plans. It also recommends a national telecommunications data platform, improved planning approvals, more resilient infrastructure, and the creation of a permanent oversight body. The review acknowledged that connectivity literacy and inclusive digital strategies are vital to bridge the digital divide and ensuring equitable access.



Policy Progress

Federal

Addressing childcare deserts

- The **Federal Government** has announced the **Building Early Education Fund (BEEF)**, a \$1 billion investment aimed at building and expanding childcare centres in areas of greatest need. The Fund specifically prioritises outer suburbs and regional communities classified as childcare deserts. Many of the new childcare centres to be constructed are expected to be built in rural and regional locations.

Improving connectivity

- The **Federal Government** has announced a partnership between NBN Co and Amazon's Project Kuiper to provide up to 300,000 homes and businesses with access to fast, reliable internet services via **Low Earth Orbit satellites**. This upgrade replaces older Sky Muster services and aims to boost connectivity, public safety, and economic opportunity in hard-to-reach areas.
- The **Federal Government** will introduce legislation to mandate mobile carriers provide universal mobile coverage across Australia - a world-first reform. Covering up to 37,000 km of regional roads, the **Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation** will expand Triple Zero access, improve disaster resilience, and address mobile black spots. Enabled by Low Earth Orbit Satellites and Direct to Device technology, rollout is expected by 2027.
- *Mapping the Digital Gap*, a supplementary project of the **Australian Digital Inclusion Index**, has been renewed for an additional four years (2025-2029). This project works in partnership with **12 local First Nations organisations** in remote communities and tracks progress against Closing the Gap Target 17, helping inform government and industry on targeted policy and program investment.
- The **Regional Tech hub** has launched grants of \$3,000 to community groups in rural, regional, and remote areas to support grassroots projects that help locals improve their understanding of, and **access to phone and internet** connectivity.
- The **Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034** explicitly includes **digital literacy for regional, rural, and remote students** as part of its national reform agenda. The agreement identifies these students as a priority equity cohort.

RAC ACTION

RAC member Telstra has launched Australia's first satellite-to-mobile text messaging service, known as Telstra Satellite Messaging (TSM). Developed in partnership with SpaceX's Starlink Direct to Cell, the service enables eligible Telstra customers to send and receive SMS messages in remote areas beyond traditional mobile coverage. Initially available to users of the Samsung Galaxy S25 series and iPhone 13 to 16 models, TSM provides connectivity via low Earth orbit satellites when users are outdoors with a clear line of sight to the sky. While currently limited to text messaging, the service represents a major step forward in bridging digital divides across Australia's vast and underserved regions. It also lays the groundwork for future capabilities, including voice and data services.



Facilitating the building of 1.2 million new homes over the next five years

- Work on the **National Housing Accord** continued, with the Federal Government announcing that nearly 45,000 new homes were completed in the first quarter of the accord. However, there has been no reporting on how many of these homes were built in regional Australia, and RAI continues to recommend a **committed regional sub-target of 40%** to ensure long-term equity.
- To further support the **National Housing Accord**, the Federal Government has made a new commitment of an additional \$54 million to **accelerate the uptake of modern methods of construction** and a further \$120 million from the National Productivity Fund to incentivise states and territories to remove red tape. These measures are designed to help deliver more homes faster. Modern methods of construction and prefabricated housing are emerging solutions to regional housing challenges.
- The income and price caps for the **Help to Buy** scheme have also been expanded in 2025, enabling more first home buyers to purchase with a lower deposit and a smaller mortgage. This change particularly benefits **first homeowner in the regions**, where property prices are typically lower.

Improving liveability

- The **Federal Government** has announced \$67 million in funding for **15 regional projects** under the *Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program* including the Nowra Riverfront Precinct Activation (Shoalhaven City Council), six multi-purpose precincts in remote NT communities, and the Geraldton Green Connect Program - a multi-use parkland and transport hub.

Improving transport

- The 2025-26 **Federal Budget** committed **major investments in regional infrastructure** including \$7.2 billion towards upgrades to the Bruce Highway in Queensland, along with investment for duplication and upgrades of key regional roads in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania.

Support for regional airlines, the lifeblood of thriving regional communities

The Federal Government has continued to support Rex Airlines, with the Federal Court approving an extension of its administration period through 2025. The government is offering a ticket sales guarantee to reassure regional passengers, maintain bookings and allow vital accessibility to regional communities.

Air services are vital to life in regional communities, yet despite population growth, there are fewer regional airlines operating today than 20 years ago. As the Regional Airports Association of Australia regularly notes, 41% of domestic passengers each year travel through regional airports, and 55% of all aviation workers are based in regional and remote areas



Federal government support programs like the Regional Airports Program are critical to continue funding essential maintenance and upgrades of regional airports. While regional airports are the lifeblood of regional communities, around 60% operate at a loss due to ageing infrastructure and rising security costs.

States and Territories

Facilitating the building of 1.2 million new homes over the next five years

- **NSW** launched Round Three of the Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund, allocating \$4.4 million to 24 councils to support strategic **planning and infrastructure projects aimed at unlocking housing supply**. These projects are expected to help deliver 55,000 new homes across regional NSW over five years.
- Multiple states are incorporating **Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)** into housing procurement and construction to accelerate social housing delivery.

The Building Homes for NSW program completed the first, factory-built modular social homes in Wollongong, Shellharbour and Lake Macquarie. Build time was cut by 20% and around 100 local jobs were supported. Each modular home is being placed in the backyard of existing social housing properties to maximise land use.

In Queensland, Government builder QBuild, is planning to deliver 600 new houses using MMC by December 2025. MMC is also one of the main methods the Victorian government is using to deliver more than 1,300 social and affordable homes as part of its Regional Housing Fund.

- **Queensland** has announced a \$2 billion *Residential Activation Fund*, with \$1 billion allocated to regions, to **accelerate housing development** by funding critical infrastructure.
- The **Tasmanian Government** has accelerated reviews of all three regional land use strategies to **streamline planning and boost housing supply**. These reforms aim to deliver more homes faster, particularly in regional Tasmania, by enabling clearer planning pathways and unlocking land for development.
- The **West Australian** Government has confirmed \$25 million for the *Regional Housing Support Fund*, providing grants of up to \$5 million to support **new housing and land supply** across regional WA, including local government projects and regional subdivisions.

Addressing essential worker housing shortages in regional Australia

- The **West Australian Government** has announced it will double funding of its Government Regional Officer Housing construction program to \$104 million, delivering **100 new homes for essential workers**.
- **South Australia's Office for Regional Housing** will launch a \$2.15-million pilot project in 2025 to test **modular transportable homes** as accommodation for essential workers in remote areas.
- The **NSW Parliament** has released a report recommending a whole-of-government strategy for essential worker housing, including repurposing government-owned land, inclusionary **zoning, build-to-rent models, and shared equity schemes**.
- The **Victorian Government** has committed a further \$120 million for 23 new regional worker housing projects across the state to **support industries such as health, agriculture, and tourism**. Through the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund, more than 40 projects have already unlocked \$370 million in housing investment.

Improving educational outcomes for regional kids

- The **Northern Territory** Government has launched the *Boosting Literacy and Numeracy Plan*, a \$14.2 million initiative aimed at improving student outcomes through a consistent, evidence-based teaching method known as Explicit Teaching. The program was trialled successfully at **Katherine South Primary** and will now be implemented across all NT Government schools.

Investing in community connection and the arts

- The **Victorian Government** has announced \$5.1 million in funding for 159 projects under Round 2 of the Tiny Towns Fund, **supporting towns with fewer than 5,000 residents**, and has provided additional funding for the Regional Tourism Network Industry Strengthening Program.

Improving physical connectivity

- **South Australia** has launched its first, 30-year *Transport Strategy*, which included a Regional Public Transport Review. This review identified service gaps across 19 contracted regions to **improve access to health, education and employment**. Recommendations included expanding on-demand services, improving frequency and coverage and enhancing fare equity.

Case Study

Woree Social and Affordable Housing Project

The Woree Social and Affordable Housing Project in Cairns is a landmark initiative delivering 490 social, affordable, and specialist disability apartments - the largest of its kind in Queensland and the biggest volumetric timber modular development in the Southern Hemisphere. Backed by \$364 million in funding, the project is led by Community Housing Limited in partnership with Tetris Capital and supported by the Queensland Government's Housing Investment Fund.

The development targets downsizing seniors, helping free up larger social housing stock for families. It also addresses Cairns' acute housing need - where 1,764 households are on the social housing register, nearly 20% aged over 55. The project offers a 60/40 mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments, tailored to singles and couples.

The 5.4-hectare site will feature four interconnected villages with energy-efficient homes, landscaped gardens, BBQ areas and playgrounds - all designed to foster community and safety.

Modular construction was chosen to overcome labour shortages and Cairns' wet season constraints, after traditional builders were unable to commit to fixed contracts. This approach enabled timely delivery despite limited subcontractor availability.



Financing was made possible through a hybrid model combining:

- Queensland Government grants and subsidies
- ANZ and NAIF fixed-rate construction debt
- Housing Australia concessional operations phase financing

This marks the first joint commitment by NAIF and Housing Australia in housing, unlocking new debt sources and establishing a scalable model for future regional housing developments.

Insight

Regional and remote education in the independent schooling sector

In 2025, Independent Schools Australia (ISA) began developing its inaugural Regional Education Strategy (*the Strategy*) and conducted a targeted survey with regional independent schools and other stakeholders focusing on choice and affordability, resource, equity and access, and skills and workforce.

ISA represents schools, students and teachers right



across Australia, including **145,937** students enrolled in regional and remote schools, **416** schools located in regional and remote areas and **5,588** boarding students. Nationally the ISA supports 745,000 students, 1,230 schools and a workforce of more than 128,000.

Key learnings

The two largest issues affecting the effective delivery of education in regional independent schools are:

1. Securing and retaining qualified staff in teaching and school leadership roles; and
2. A shortfall in the funding needed to provide essential education services, or to maintain critical infrastructure

Workforce

- More than 50% of respondents reported a high level of difficulty in recruiting qualified teachers and school leaders.
- Over 80% of respondents indicated access to professional development for teachers and school leaders is lacking in their area.
- Housing availability for those migrating from major cities is a major issue.
- Even when schools identify a suitable employee, employment can fall through if their spouse or partner is unable to secure local employment.

Funding and affordability

Every aspect of operating a school in a regional or remote area is more expensive than in a metropolitan area, including recruitment, relief teaching, professional development, construction, telecommunications, power and transportation.

School leaders are concerned that rising school costs combined with regional economic growth and real wage growth is making independent schooling less accessible for equity groups and lower-income earners.

We also heard

Survey respondents scored the importance of 'a range of schooling options to enhance the appeal of regional areas for families' on average as 82 out of 100.

More than 70% of respondents indicated students with disability in their region have limited or no access to Special Schools

More needs to be done to make VET pathways accessible to students in regional and remote schools.

Boarding school is not considered viable by most respondents, with accessibility rated 37 out of 100. Primary barriers are financial (87% of respondents) and the location of schools (56%).

Regional and remote schools cannot flourish without adequate housing supply to support regional migration by families and education professionals. This is unlikely to occur without reliable, easy access to health care and other essential services and employment opportunities for income earners.

The Strategy will identify innovative new approaches and community-driven solutions which will foster growth in regional and rural areas and position local independent schools as critical social infrastructure for their communities.

isa.edu.au



Case Study

RAI report *Answering the Call for Regional Housing*

RAI's *Answering the Call for Regional Housing* report confirms that regional Australia is experiencing a housing crisis, marked by record-low rental vacancies, rising affordability pressures, and chronic undersupply. With regional populations growing and housing construction failing to keep pace, urgent and coordinated action is essential to unlock the full economic and social potential of Australia's regions.

The evidence demonstrates that existing housing policies - at both federal and state levels - remain too focused on big cities. The lack of dedicated national and state-level attention to regional housing has led to persistent barriers in planning, financing, construction and infrastructure delivery. As a result, many regional communities lack the housing diversity and supply needed to support essential workers, accommodate population growth, enable senior residents to remain in their communities and provide for the most vulnerable.

There are promising innovations across jurisdictions that demonstrate how targeted, place-based solutions can be highly effective. Case studies in the report show how regions are rising to the challenge, adopting approaches such as modern construction methods, strategic infrastructure investment and partnerships with community housing providers. These efforts now need to be scaled up and further supported through the architecture and substance of housing policies and programs.



Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program






August 2025

The RAI makes recommends a fundamental reset of housing governance and investment to deliver a sustained, region-specific focus. Key proposals include establishing dedicated regional housing agencies, setting regional targets within national agreements, expanding investment in enabling infrastructure and implementing reforms to improve housing market efficiency. The report also highlights the need to build local industry capacity to deliver a wider range of housing types and strengthen data collection to guide future decisions.

If adopted, these reforms will help ensure that regional Australians - now and in the future - will have somewhere that is a safe, secure, appropriate and affordable homes.



Health

TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Increase number of medical practitioners in regional Australia by more than 100 FTE* per 100,000 population	The number of medical practitioners in regional Australia increased from 354 FTE per 100,000 population in 2023 to 365 in 2024. ⁴⁰	Medical practitioners in regional Australia grew by 3.1% outpacing metropolitan growth of 0.4% however still trail metro areas who have 482 per 100,000.	
Increase the number of allied health professionals in regional Australia by more than 150 FTE per 100,000, to approximately 700 FTE	The number of allied health workers in regional Australia increased from 538 FTE in 2022 to 551 FTE per 100,000 in 2023. ⁴¹	Regions grew the number of allied health professionals greater than metros areas at 2% versus 0.7% However total allied health professionals in metropolitan areas per 100,000 were 700 FTE, 20% higher than in regions.	
Regional Australians have the same level of access to Medicare services as metropolitan areas	Regional Australians accessed an average of 11.4 Medicare services per capita in 2024 up from 11.2 services in 2023. ⁴²	Australians in metro areas access Medicare services around 73% more than regional Australians with annual average of 19.7 services in 2024. Inner regional areas accessed an average of 9.5 services while remote areas just 5.9 services and very remote at 6.6.	
Reduce the years of potential life lost due to premature death (under 75) per 1,000 people	Years of life lost in regional Australia decreased to 49.3 years in 2023 from 50.5 in 2022. ⁴³	Potential years of life lost in remote (60.8) and very remote (89.5) areas are two to three times higher than in metropolitan areas (32.1).	
Regional Australians are accessing the NDIS at the same rates as people living in major cities	Regional Australians accessed 74.5% of allocated NDIS services in 2024 up from 73.2% in 2023. ⁴⁴	Metropolitan areas accessed 79.1% of services allocated to them in 2024. Very remote NDIS participants areas accessed 63% in 2024 (up from 58.1%) and remote areas accessed 71.4% (up from 70.8%).	

About Health data in 2025

- The Health pillar is new in 2025. Targets were designed to better understand labour force, service accessibility and health outcomes in regional Australia.

With labour force critical to service delivery the Ambition has set targets for both medical practitioners and allied health professionals to align with metropolitan ratios. Analysing Medicare services accessed per capita over different regional definitions is used to better understand access. Similarly, NDIS usage data is used to understand how regional Australians are accessing NDIS services allocated to them. Measuring potential years of life lost due to premature death (before the age of 75) has been used to understand health outcomes.

- Targets were developed with input from National Alliance for Regionalisation peak bodies – the Australian Medical Association, the National Rural Health Alliance, the Royal Flying Doctors Service and Rural Doctors Association of Australia.

To rebalance the nation, we envisage that all regional Australians have equitable access to health services to live their best lives.

Health has become a critical enabler to a high quality of life in the regions, not only for the millions who already call it home, but for the millions more who aspire to. Currently, access to health services varies significantly across different parts of regional Australia. Shortages of health professionals and services are impacting communities' ability to attract and retain new populations. Housing shortages and access to other services like quality education, childcare and transportation are also hindering workforce recruitment and retention. We need to improve access to quality healthcare for regional Australians to achieve greater equality in outcomes.

How?

- Further investment in targeted educational pathways to develop a larger pool of young medical and health professionals who will pursue lives and careers in regional Australia.
- Explore new and innovative models of health care for rural communities.
- Expand the use and understanding of new technologies to deliver remote health support where appropriate, particularly in allied health.

Insights

- The **Australian Medical Association's 2025 Rural Health Issues Survey Report** found that 90% of surveyed doctors ranked **funding and resources to provide adequate staff levels**, up-to-date facilities and equipment, and access to ancillary services as their most critical priority - consistent with the past four surveys. Ensuring rural health professionals and communities are involved in policymaking decisions was ranked the second-highest priority, followed by the need to enhance rural access to specialist outreach services. Despite these challenges, many rural doctors expressed deep satisfaction with their roles, citing strong community ties and the opportunity to care for multiple generations.⁴⁵
- The **National Rural Health Alliance's 2025 report The Forgotten Health Spend: A Report on the Expenditure Deficit in Rural Australia**, found that there is more than **\$1000 difference in health expenditure** per person per year between an Australian living in an urban area versus someone living rurally (using 2023-2024 data). The gap is most pronounced in rural and remote areas (MMM 5-7, populations of almost 10,000 to a few hundred) where per capita expenditure is now \$4701 lower than in metropolitan areas.⁴⁶
- The **National Rural Health Alliance's Rural Health in Australia Snapshot 2025** highlighted that 18,405 people in Remote and Very Remote Australia have **no access to primary health care services within an hour's drive** (one way) from their home. The consequence of poorer access to primary health care in rural Australia is higher rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations in all areas outside of Major Cities. The rate is two to three times as high in Remote and Very Remote areas.⁴⁷
- The **Medical Schools Outcomes Database 2025 Report** by the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand found that 29.3% of final-year medical students expressed a preference for non-metropolitan practice, with rural-background students significantly more likely to choose rural careers (62% vs. 19% of non-rural peers). Students who undertook rural placements longer than one year **were ten times more likely to prefer rural practice** than those without. The report highlighted the importance of expanding rural placements, supporting rural-background students, and investing in rural medical education infrastructure.⁴⁸



One very encouraging aspect of our survey is the testimonies from rural doctors expressing the immense satisfaction they gain from their work. Being able to treat generations of families and have strong ties to communities is an amazing feeling.

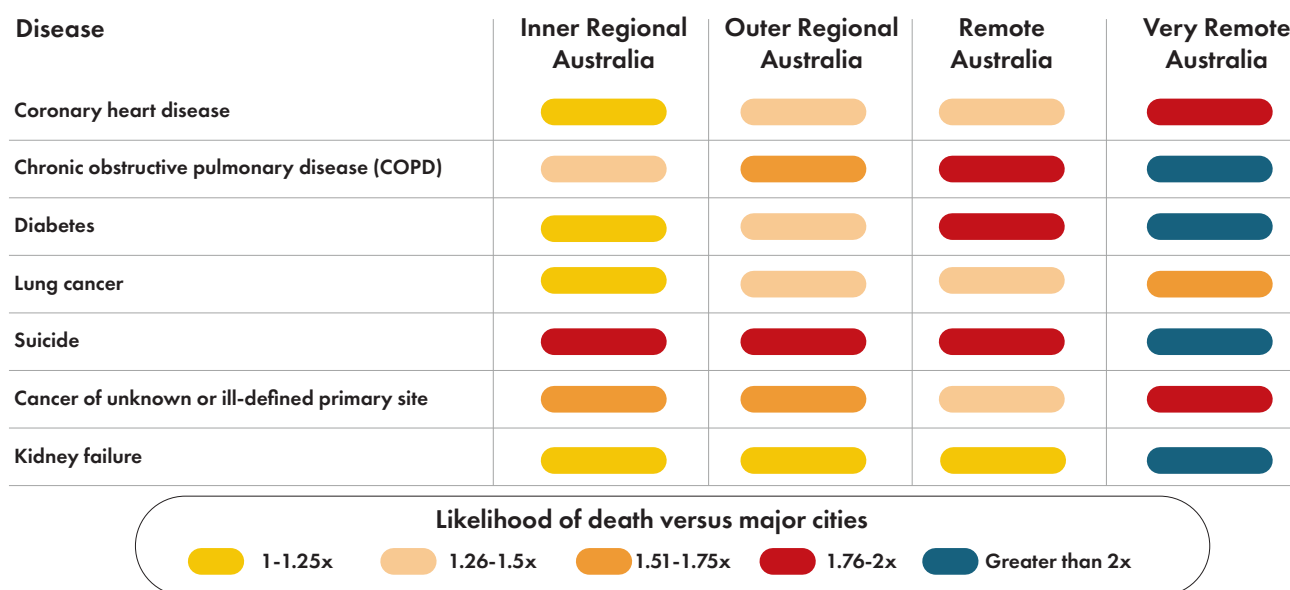
Dr Danielle McMullen, President of the AMA commenting on the AMA's 2025 Rural Health Issues Survey

• The **Australian Council of Deans of Health Sciences** Limited released a report, *Development of and support for the rural and remote allied health workforce in Australia* on the rural and remote allied health workforce, highlighting shortages and **uneven distribution of allied health professionals across Australia**. Despite a 67% increase in the national workforce between 2013 and 2022, rural areas continue to lag behind metropolitan regions, exacerbating health disparities. Small rural towns (MM5) have the lowest workforce density, and aged care services face a projected shortfall of 25,000 allied health professionals by 2033. Indigenous communities also lack culturally safe allied health services, prompting calls for targeted workforce development.

Key barriers include limited clinical placements, inadequate digital healthcare infrastructure, and restrictive pathways for overseas-qualified professionals. Proposed solutions include expanding rural placements, establishing a Bonded Allied Health Program, enhancing telehealth capacity, and developing rural generalist pathways.⁴⁹

• **Anglicare Australia's** latest report *In Every Community* warned that regional and remote Australians were being left behind with essential services stretched. It found that services in regional and remote access are harder to access, **providers are struggling to recruit and retain staff** and community services are being asked to fill critical workforce shortages with little or government support.⁵⁰

Rates of age-standardised death from specific diseases compared to Major Cities 2019-2023



Source: National Rural Health Alliance 2025 report *The Forgotten Health Spend: A Report on the Expenditure Deficit in Rural Australia*

Policy Progress

Federal

More services

- The **Federal Government** has confirmed that more than half of the committed **50 additional Medicare Urgent Care Clinics** will be in regional, rural, and remote areas including Bathurst, Bega, Maitland, Nowra, Shellharbour, Tweed Valley, Windsor, Ballarat, Mildura, Shepparton, Warragul–Drouin, Wodonga, Bundaberg, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Burnie, Devonport, Launceston and Alice Springs.
- **National Disability Services (NDS)** developed a *Disability Reform Action Plan* in 2025 to guide implementation of the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission recommendations. The plan includes foundational supports tailored for regional communities, **workforce development to ensure qualified providers in remote areas**, market management strategies to improve service availability outside metropolitan zones.

Innovative delivery

- **Heart of Australia**, in partnership with the Federal Government, launched the **National Lung Cancer Screening Program** to improve early detection in rural and remote communities. Lung cancer rates and mortality are significantly higher in these areas, especially among First Nations people. The initiative will deploy five mobile clinics equipped with CT scanners and diagnostic tools to reach around 50 communities annually across all states and territories.
- The **Lions Cancer Institute** in WA launched a new state-of-the-art **mobile unit** traveling across the state, offering free full-body skin cancer checks to remote and underserved communities. The initiative aims to increase early detection and reduce mortality from skin cancer, particularly in areas with limited access to dermatological services. To date, the Lions Cancer Institute has conducted more than 95,000 screenings, with 23% referred for further testing, and over 130+ cases of life-threatening skin cancers identified.

The Second Edition of the National Consensus Framework for Rural Maternity Services was announced to address the critical decline in rural and remote maternity units - a 41% reduction since 1992. Developed collaboratively by peak health organisations and supported by the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner, the Framework aims to ensure safe, culturally appropriate, and accessible maternity care for women outside urban centres.

It emphasises continuity of care, co-design with consumers, and culturally safe practices, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The Framework is endorsed by key stakeholders including the Rural Doctors Association of Australia, Australian College of Midwives, and National Rural Health Alliance. It provides practical guidance for service redesign, workforce support, and policy reform.

Supporting regional workforce growth

- The **Federal Government** is adding 100 new **Commonwealth Supported Positions** per year in medicine, targeted at universities that demonstrate evidence-based strategies to encourage students to pursue general practice careers and focus on regional, rural, and remote Australia.

State and Territories

Supporting regional workforce growth

- **Queensland** has announced it will establish a new **Health Sciences Academy in Rockhampton** to train the next generation of regional health workers. The Academy will fast-track years 10-12 students into careers as doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals in regional Queensland.
- The **Victorian Government** is funding the construction of 15 self-contained apartments at **Shepparton Hospital** to **support healthcare workers** through the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund. These energy-efficient units will help address housing shortages for frontline staff and improve retention in regional Victoria. More than 20 projects, including 12 healthcare housing initiatives, are underway statewide to attract and retain essential workers and strengthen regional communities.

Innovation

- **NSW's Health Research and Innovation Strategy 2025–2030** includes several initiatives specifically targeting regional, rural, and remote communities to improve health outcomes and equity. It emphasises place-based research and innovation, supporting **regional health precincts** – collaborations between local health districts, universities and community organisations. These precincts enable clinical trials and translational research in rural and remote areas, along with strategic investment in areas of strength such as agriculture, environmental health, and Indigenous health. Additional investment in digital health tools and data systems will allow regional services to participate fully in statewide research and innovation efforts.
- In **Victoria**, La Trobe Clinical Trials Platform launched in May, to **expand clinical research opportunities in regional Australia**. It supports trials in allied health, nursing, psychology, and public health, with a focus on non-pharmaceutical interventions. Tailored for startups and SMEs, the platform offers modular services including trial design, ethics approval, and data analysis. By leveraging La Trobe's Rural Health School and regional partnerships, it aims to improve healthcare access and innovation in underserved communities. This initiative helps bridge the gap between research and delivery, enabling regional areas to participate in and benefit from cutting-edge clinical studies.

The GP challenge in remote and very remote communities

Six remote and rural local governments in Western Australia - Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Kojonup, Lake Grace, Narembeen, and Ravensthorpe - are facing a critical challenge in sustaining access to primary healthcare. These communities, classified as RM 6 and RM 7 under the Modified Monash Model, suffer from chronic shortages of General Practitioners (GPs), leading to poorer health outcomes, increased emergency department use, and significant travel burdens for residents. To address this, the councils collectively contribute over \$1.475 million annually in cash, plus housing, vehicles, and medical facilities, to attract and retain GPs. These contributions represent up to 16% of their ratepayer income - an unsustainable financial burden that diverts funds from core local government responsibilities like infrastructure and community services.



Despite various Commonwealth and State programs, current incentives do not reflect the true cost of delivering health care in remote areas. The councils argue that telehealth, while helpful, cannot replace the need for resident GPs due to limitations in continuity of care, emergency response, and community integration.

The councils have formed an alliance to call for help with a sustainability payment from the Commonwealth and State Governments to reduce the financial burden on local governments. The alliance is seeking Federal block funding of \$300,000 per MM5–7 local government to support integrated rural generalist services.

Case Study

The Glen Innes Health Hub

The Glen Innes community has marked a significant milestone in regional health care with the opening of the Glen Innes Health Hub in May 2025, heralding a new era of locally delivered, multidisciplinary health services.

Funded through the Australian Government's Innovative Models of Care (IMOC) Program – Round 4, the four-year pilot project aims to improve equity of access to primary health care for rural and regional communities by providing a community-aligned, team-based approach to care.

The Glen Innes Health Hub forms part of the *Better Health for the Bush* strategic initiative, led by the Hunter New England and Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECC PHN). The overarching framework was developed in collaboration with the Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) and the University of New England (UNE).

HNECC PHN Chief Executive Officer Richard Nankervis highlighted the vital role the local community played in shaping the model of care. "Community perspectives have been instrumental in designing the Health Hub to reflect the unique needs of Glen Innes," Mr Nankervis said.

"This initiative is delivering much-needed primary care, giving residents timely access to essential services close to home.



"The Health Hub is the result of extensive collaboration between HNECC PHN, HNE LHD, UNE, Glen Innes Severn Council, local health professionals, and community members - all working together to address local health priorities."

The Health Hub is operated and led by Rural Fit, an organisation with a strong focus on improving health outcomes in rural communities. The service includes access to a general practitioner, nurse, and allied health professionals, supported by a Service Navigator who assists patients in connecting with the health, wellbeing, and social services they need.

To learn more about the Glen Innes Health Hub, visit: [About the Glen Innes Health Hub - Primary Health Network](#)

Case Study

Royal Flying Doctor Service

Kintore/Walangurru, an Aboriginal community nestled in one of Australia's most remote regions is the Northern Territory. With a cultural heritage dating back thousands of years, the residents of Kintore/Walangurru maintain a profound connection to their traditions and value self-determination as a core tenet for improving their health and wellbeing.

The community faces significant chronic health challenges, including rheumatic heart disease, diabetes, and kidney disease, all of which had oral health implications. Despite this, the community had not received oral health services for over a decade. Recognising the critical need for improved oral health within the community, community leaders, in collaboration with the Pintupi Aboriginal Health Service, reached out to Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to provide these services. Consequently, enhancing oral health became a vital component of a holistic health care approach.

This led to the creation of a co-designed oral health service, reflecting the community's values, wellbeing priorities, and the urgent need to prioritise care for young children, with an emphasis on preventive measures. The RFDS responded by designing a portable dental operation with two chairs, facilitating a one week-long clinic three times a year, with 40 - 60 appointments managed by dentists and dental hygienists. Additionally, the RFDS advocated for the community within the oral health profession, securing a specialist paediatric dentist to provide care on a regular basis.

Introduction of this much-needed service in a partnership approach has been incredibly successful. Services are over-subscribed due to strong community buy-in and



active involvement in service design - demonstrating that when services are co-designed and meet the needs of the community, acceptance and use are high, and health improves. Notably, community members increasingly attend routine examinations and preventive appointments, shifting from solely seeking pain relief. Visitation patterns have evolved, with patients using both drop-in and scheduled appointments.

This partnership model extends beyond oral health, enhancing primary care by integrating oral health management with overall health services provided through the Remote Health Clinic.

This exemplary service model embodies:

- Cross-cultural health service design
- Integration of oral health and primary health care
- Effective advocacy for community health care access
- Direct matching of clinicians to community health needs

Case Study

Mareeba and Communities Family Healthcare

Established in 2020, *Mareeba and Communities Family Healthcare* (MCFHC) is a registered charity rooted in grassroots community action. It was created to safeguard and strengthen healthcare delivery in the Mareeba, north QLD region and includes Mareeba Medical Clinic, Black Cockatoo Foundation, and the Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance.

Industry, local government, community, health sector and tourism has come together with an independent Chair to solve problems which had started to leave the region without a viable health and medical workforce.

The Mareeba Medical Clinic is central to MCFHC, offering comprehensive General Practice (GP) services through an integrated multidisciplinary team. The clinic balances acute care with chronic disease management, crucial in rural areas where care is often fragmented. Since 2020, community support has been vital in maintaining GP services. The clinic has grown from 2.5 to 6 full-time equivalent GPs, reducing wait times and improving continuity of care. In 2025, it launched an outreach clinic in Mutchilba (37km from Mareeba), extending essential services to remote populations and minimizing costly travel.

Beyond clinical care, MCFHC's Black Cockatoo Foundation addresses social and emotional wellbeing. This arm runs community health initiatives to boost connection, health literacy, and awareness. Its flagship program, the Mareeba Mental Health Champions Network, launched in 2022 with Queensland Mental Health Commission funding, trains community volunteers in Mental Health First





mareeba & communities family healthcare

Aid. To date, 68 residents have been trained, with 36 active Champions providing peer support and linking individuals to professional help. The Foundation also supports health-promoting events like the *Mareeba Rail Trail ParkRun*, *Great Wheelbarrow Race*, and *Rotary FNQ Field Days*, fostering social connection and mental health awareness.

To address rural workforce shortages, MCFHC founded the Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance in 2020. This collaboration of healthcare providers and community leaders co-designs workforce solutions tailored to Mareeba's needs. In 2024, MCFHC partnered with the *National Rural Health Alliance* to secure Commonwealth funding for the *Primary Care Rural Integrated Multidisciplinary Health Service (PRIM-HS) pilot*. The PRIM-HS model addresses key challenges in attracting and retaining a rural health workforce by bringing together all relevant stakeholders including local government, community members, health service clinicians, hospital and health services, and local industry. The grant funding has already supported comprehensive community health needs assessments and will continue to fund governance training, health system literacy programs, and community engagement initiatives. This creates a strong foundation for testing and refining flexible, place-based employment models tailored to the unique needs of the region.

Sustainability & Resilience

TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Regional Australia is reducing its emissions intensity and contributing to Australia's 2050 climate targets	Regional Australia decreased emissions per \$m of output by 4.8%. ⁵¹	Metropolitan areas decreased emission per \$M by 3.5%.	
75% or more of regional Australia has a moderate to high capacity for disaster resilience	The proportion of the regional population living in an area with high or moderate resilience increased from 63.3% (2020) to 71.0% (2024). ⁵²	Regional resilience is now much closer to metropolitan levels, where 78.9% of the population live in an area with high to moderate resilience (down from 92.4% in the last survey).	

About Sustainability and Resilience data in 2025

- The emissions intensity of output in regional Australia has been added to the Ambition targets this year. Emissions intensity, measured as greenhouse gas emissions per unit of economic output, or kg CO₂e per \$ of GDP, will track progress in regional Australia's contribution towards Australia's net zero targets by 2050. Emissions intensity is expected to decline as regional firms adopt new technologies or alternative means of production that reduce emissions over time for a given level of economic output.
- The target for disaster resilience has been changed from more than 90% at a moderate to high capacity to 75% to better reflect the capacity of the index to measure equality of outcomes between regional and metropolitan areas. According to the Australian Disaster Resilience Index, areas falling within the lowest 25% are classified as having low resilience, those in the middle 50% are considered moderately resilient, and the top 25% are deemed highly resilient, all based on percentiles. (Areas are defined using ABS Statistical Areas Level 2). These classifications and proportions are fixed, so any change in the classification of an individual area over time is relative rather than absolute. An area's resilience classification is based on its ranking compared to other areas, not on its actual resilience. Therefore, although the proportion of the metropolitan population living in a high or moderate resilience decreased significantly from 92.4% to 78.9%, this does not necessarily mean resilience declined in many cities; rather, it may be that regional areas resilience index rankings have improved by a greater amount.

Insights

- The first major update of the **Australian Disaster Resilience Index**, a tool first developed in 2020 in partnership between Natural Hazards Research Australia, the University of New England, and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), was released in June. It found that while more than half of Australia's population lives in areas with moderate to high disaster resilience capacity, **resilience varies by remoteness**, with metropolitan and inner regional areas generally showing higher resilience (see breakout).⁵³

The **RAI** has released its latest report in its Net Zero series, *Towards Net Zero: Building a Legacy*, which examines the factors that contribute to **social licence for large-scale renewable energy projects** in regional Australia. The report considers the key principles for building long-term benefits from renewable energy development and proposes a national framework for regional planning and investment, the Regional Energy and Legacy Deal (REAL Deal – see breakout).⁵⁴

- The **Insurance Council of Australia** costed extreme weather events in Australia during the first half of 2025 at over **\$1.8 billion in insured losses**. The most costly, Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred was valued at \$1.36 billion (125,656 claims). Other major events include the North Queensland floods (\$274 million) and the Mid-North Coast and Hunter floods (\$194 million). Insurers have supported recovery efforts through local hubs and consultations.⁵⁵

- **Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's** inquiry into housing policy and disasters found that better housing **policies can significantly reduce disaster impacts** in regional Australia. It calls for better coordination between housing, planning, and emergency agencies, especially in flood and cyclone-prone areas. Local governments need more support, resources, and access to trusted data to plan resilient communities. Key recommendations include integrating disaster risk into housing strategies, simplifying post-disaster planning processes, and improving data governance to enable proactive, locally owned disaster mitigation and recovery efforts.⁵⁶
- The **Business Council of Australia** has released *Australia 2032 – Maximising our Potential*, a report that has highlighted the **critical role social licence and local benefit sharing** plays in helping Australia achieve higher emissions targets. The report assesses investment potential of current technology across seven economic sectors: electricity and energy, resources, transport, industry, buildings, agriculture and land. The BCA and McKinsey present three scenarios—50%, 60%, and 70+% emissions cuts—based on varying levels of ambition and policy support. Social licence is identified as a critical enabler. Delays and opposition – often due to insufficient engagement or benefit-sharing—raises cost and risk project viability. Achieving deeper emissions reductions requires significant capital investment, streamlined approvals, stronger social licence and coordinated national action.⁵⁷



Policy progress

Federal

Facilitating positive outcomes for regions in the transition to net zero

- The Federal Government has accepted the Climate Change Authority's independent advice and will set **Australia 2032 climate change target** at a range of 62% to 70% reduction on 2005 emissions.
- The **Net Zero Economy Authority** was officially established on 11 December 2024 under the Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024. It evolved from the earlier Net Zero Economy Agency and became a statutory authority to coordinate Australia's transition to net zero emissions, playing a central role in supporting workers, communities, and industries affected by decarbonisation, and in **aligning national efforts across government, industry, and regional stakeholders**.
- The **Federal Government** has launched the **Renewable Energy Developer Rating Scheme** which is designed to give farmers and regional communities clearer, independent information about companies seeking to develop renewable energy projects on their land.

Strengthening community resilience

- The Future Drought Fund Investment Strategy 2024–2028 was launched in early 2025. It outlines the roadmap for **building drought-resilient farms and communities** and supports the implementation of the Drought Resilience Funding Plan, which came into effect on 9 February 2024.
- The Disaster Ready Fund (\$1 billion over five years 2023-2038), will allocate \$200 million in 2025-26 (Round 3) to **projects that reduce the physical, economic, and social impacts of natural hazards** like floods, bushfires, and cyclones. Funding is delivered in partnership with states and territories, with co-contribution requirements adjusted for remote and First Nations communities.
- The **Federal Government** is investing \$76 million in 54 projects to help farmers **adopt climate-smart, sustainable agriculture practices**. Delivered through the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program, the initiatives focus on regions vulnerable to droughts and floods, aiming to improve soil health, water efficiency, and farm resilience.
- The **Federal Government** is committing an extra \$1 billion in new loan funding through the **Regional Investment Corporation** to provide more new loan funding to help farm businesses become more resilient and respond to drought conditions. The RIC administers support for farmers facing hardship with concessional loans for farm businesses and drought-affected farm-related small businesses.

State and Territories

Facilitating positive outcomes for regions in the transition to net zero

- The **NSW Government** has established the **Net Zero Commission and the Future Jobs and Investment Authority** that will implement regional transition authorities for the Hunter, Central West, Illawarra and Northwest coal regions.
- NSW also saw the formal commencement of construction for Australia's **first Renewable Energy Zone** in Central-West Orana. EnergyCo's Community and Employment Benefit Program funds legacy projects for communities within the zone.
- **Victoria** set a world-leading emissions target in 2023 and has committed to announce new sector pledges and implementation plans in late 2025 for how each sector (energy, transport, agriculture etc) will contribute to meeting its 2035 goals.
- **VicGrid** released the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan, the first strategic long-term plan for renewable energy zones and transmission infrastructure in Victoria. The plan outlines a coordinated approach to developing energy generation and transmission infrastructure across six proposed renewable energy zones. The plan is accompanied by a draft **Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan**.
- The **Queensland Government** has introduced **new legislation to govern renewable energy development** (Planning, (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025). The legislation mandates public consultation, consistent development rules, and community benefit agreements for large-scale solar and wind projects. The government has also announced plans to release a five-year Energy Roadmap by the end of 2025, identifying priorities for the energy sector to deliver an affordable, reliable and sustainable energy system for the state.
- The **Western Australian Government** has committed over \$1 billion for storage, wind and transmission upgrades, making it one of the **largest state-level clean energy investments** in Australia.

Making our regions more resilient

- The **Queensland** and Federal Governments have jointly committed over \$5 million to fund 15 coastal resilience projects through Round 4 of the QCoast2100 program, a program supporting **long-term climate adaptation and disaster mitigation**.
- The **Queensland** and Federal Government have launched the \$88 million **Crucial Access Links Program** to strengthen disaster resilience in Queensland's regional and remote communities. It funds upgrades to vital infrastructure such as airstrips, boat ramps, and seaports - ensuring access to emergency services and supplies during extreme weather events.
- **Victoria** is implementing a **Household Financial Relief Program**, offering up to \$1,000 for urgent expenses to drought-impacted farmers, delivered via the Country Women's Association. It is part of a broader, \$144 million Drought Support Package, including mental health programs and additional funding for community events.
- The **NSW Government** has released new guidelines to streamline **Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs)**, aiming to reduce disaster risk and build community resilience. DAPs are regionally tailored plans developed with councils, communities, and agencies addressing local hazards and long-term mitigation actions. Early projects are underway in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley and Northern Rivers.

ACTION



RE-Alliance has launched a new toolkit to help farmers and regional communities plan for the end-of-life phase of renewable energy projects. It outlines three key options: refurbishment, repowering, or decommissioning. With Australia's earliest renewable projects nearing retirement, the toolkit provides clear, factual guidance to support informed decisions. It empowers landholders and councils to manage infrastructure transitions responsibly, ensuring long-term benefits and resilience for regional areas.

ADVOCACY



ALGA
Australian Local
Government Association

New research from ALGA's Adapting Together report reveals Australian councils will invest over \$2 billion in climate adaptation by 2030, potentially delivering \$4.7 billion in community benefits. The study analysed 200+ council initiatives and five detailed case studies, showing local projects yield up to \$3.10 in benefits per \$1 spent. Examples include flood buybacks, bushfire education, coastal hazard planning, and urban cooling. The report calls for a \$400 million annual federal climate adaptation fund to support sustainable, place-based solutions across Australia.

ACTION

Nutrien

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and Ag Solutions® Nutrien Ag Solutions have launched the Victorian Drought Support Program to assist farmers facing severe drought. The initiative funds a Drought Support Advisor to help farmers access grants, connect with financial and mental health services, and provide feedback to guide future support. Acting as a central contact point, the program aims to streamline aid and build long-term resilience. Farmer input will inform decisions through the VFF's Disaster Relief Fund, ensuring targeted and effective assistance.

Towards Net Zero: Building a Legacy

RAI's report *Towards Net Zero: Building a Legacy*, examines the factors that contribute to social licence for large-scale renewable energy projects in regional Australia. It considers the key principles for building long-term benefits from renewable energy development and proposes a national framework for regional planning and investment, the Regional Energy and Legacy Deal (REAL Deal).

The report finds that many communities feel overwhelmed by the scale and speed of renewable energy development in their regions. Approval and regulation processes are complex, community engagement is fragmented, there remains a lack of clear information about the transition, and some communities are experiencing fatigue from the cumulative impacts of consultation. A lack of coordination and empowered community decision-making is impacting social licence.

The report highlights examples of regional communities that are taking a leadership role in planning for renewable energy development in their regions. From partnership principles in New South Wales, to collaboration frameworks in Victoria, to community benefits agreements within the planning framework in Queensland, regional communities are proactively building the foundations for long-term benefits in their regions.

The report recommends key actions for governments and industry to build and maintain social licence in regional communities: adopt just transition principles; continue to develop supportive policy and regulation; engage early with regional communities; and implement local planning and decision-making to deliver long-term benefits to the regions.

RAI has proposed a national framework, the Regional Energy and Legacy (REAL)Deal, that would bring together government, industry, and communities to deliver coordinated regional investment through the transition.

The REAL Deal would deliver a regional approach to benefit sharing, supported by government and industry co-investment, and led by communities through place-based planning and decision-making. This national framework builds on work already underway in many regions and offers a model for government to mandate which would provide agency and put decisions in the hands of regional communities as they navigate the transition and continue to build a sustainable future in their region.



Australian Disaster Resilience Index

The Australian Disaster Resilience Index is a tool originally developed and launched in partnership between Natural Hazards Research Australia, the University of New England, and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

It provides organisations with current, evidence-based insights into how communities across Australia can prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, by assessing disaster resilience as a system of social, economic, and institutional factors.

It assesses 2,330 Statistical Areas (SA2s) across Australia, measuring overall disaster resilience, coping capacity, adaptive capacity, and eight thematic dimensions.

Since its initial release, ADRI has become an important dataset for national, state and local governments; NGOs; industry groups and researchers.





First released in 2020, ADRI has become an essential resource for emergency services, government agencies, community organisations, and businesses working to build disaster resilience.

The index helps reveal where targeted investment can further strengthen community disaster preparedness.

Again in 2024, metropolitan and inner regional areas have generally shown higher resilience, supported by better access to services, economic capital, and governance. Outer-regional, remote, and very remote communities tend to have lower resilience, facing barriers such as limited information access, economic disadvantage, and weaker infrastructure. While some exceptions exist, the overall trend highlights a geographic divide, with resilience decreasing as remoteness increases, affecting preparedness and recovery capacity.



Productivity & Innovation

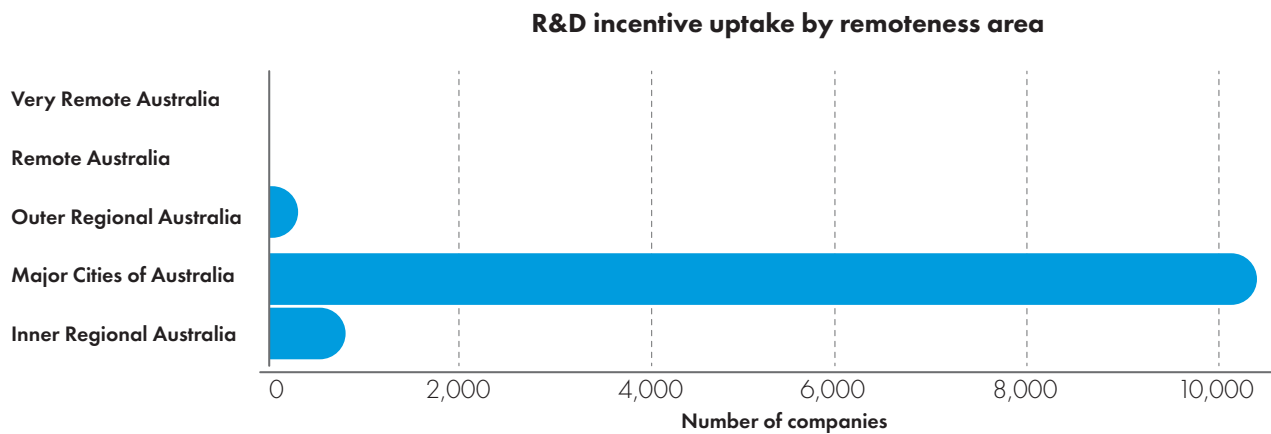
TARGET	Year 3 Progress	Regional Comparison	Status
Increase regional Australia's contribution to national output	Regional share of Australia's GDP increased slightly from 38.4% (2023) to 38.5% (2024). ⁵⁸	Metropolitan share of GDP decreased slightly to 61.5%.	
Regional Australia's productivity (GDP per hour worked) is growing by 1.2% per annum	Regional productivity grew 0.5% in 2024. ⁵⁹	Metropolitan productivity grew by 1% in 2024.	
Increase workforce participation in regional Australia to 68% or higher	The regional workforce participation rate increased from 63.2% in May 2024 to 63.7% in May 2025. ⁶⁰	Participation rate in metropolitan areas increased from 69.2% to 69.3%.	
Increase new business and innovation in regional Australia	<p>The regional share of total business entries decreased from 29.1% in 2023 to 27.7% in 2024.</p> <p>The regional share of newly registered trademarks increased slightly from 19.1% (2023) to 19.6% (2024) and the regional share of patent filings decreased from 4.8% (2023) to 4.1% (2024).⁶¹</p>	<p>Metropolitan areas increase trademark filings (+2%), business entries (+9%) and patent filings (+4%).</p> <p>Regional areas increased trademark filings (+5%), business entries (+2%) but declined in patent filings (-10%).</p>	

About Productivity data in 2025

- A new productivity growth target of 1.2% per annum in Regional Australia has been introduced in 2025. The target aligns with the long-term projections for Australia's national productivity growth in the 2023 Intergenerational Report.
- To measure business and innovation in regional Australia, business entries, trademarks and patent filings are now being used as indicators. Two out of three will be used to determine an overall positive or negative outcome.

Insights

- The **Treasurer** announced the government's **five productivity pillars** in late 2024, tasking the Productivity Commission to undertake inquiries into each. The five pillars are 1. Creating a more dynamic and resilient economy, 2. Building a skilled and adaptable workforce, 3. Harnessing data and digital technology, 4. Delivering quality care more efficiently, 5. Investing in cheaper, cleaner energy and the net zero transformation. Interim reports were released ahead of the Economic Roundtables in August, hosted by the Treasurer to inform Australia's productivity agenda. (See breakout).⁶²
- **CSIRO** released a report, *Options for supporting agricultural innovation policy in Australia*, which presents the outcomes of a collaborative project between 2021-24 that looked into **agricultural innovation policy in Australia**. It calls for a shift from the current productivity focus to a broader, integrated approach addressing sustainability and social inclusion. It highlights limitations of Australia's Rural Research and Development Corporations, originally designed to support commodity-specific productivity and competitiveness, to tackle complex, multi-sector challenges alone.⁶³
- The **Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance** launched its 2025 Workforce Plan – Pathways to Transformation which drew on extensive research, sector analysis and national surveys. The report identified challenges facing regional manufacturers, including **limited access to training, capital constraints, grant uncertainty and defence sector barriers** (i.e. complex procurement and compliance requirements). Recommendations included increased support for regional training, expansion of apprenticeship support and strengthening of local supply chains.⁶⁴
- An analysis of the **Federal Government's Research and Development Tax Incentive Program data** shows the majority of companies utilising the incentive are metropolitan based. While this may reflect city-based head offices of Australian companies, further analysis is needed to understand the significant lack of R&D being recorded in regional Australia.⁶⁵



Federal Policy

Supporting innovation and new industries in regions

- The **Federal Government** launched the Future Made in Australia Innovation Fund in 2025 to support the **deployment of innovative technologies** and facilities in priority sectors – such as green metals, clean energy technology and low-carbon liquid fuels. The fund will provide up to \$1.5 billion in grant funding to support pre-commercial innovation, demonstration and deployment of renewable energy and low emission technologies, to support Australia’s transition to a net zero economy. Targeted consultation took place through March and April 2025, with the program anticipated to open in the second half of the year.

Supporting regional businesses

- The **Federal Government** has released a *National Small Business Strategy: Working together for Small Businesses*. In Queensland and Tasmania, more than half of all small business owners reside outside capital cities. The key objectives of the strategy are to acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, provide a framework to facilitate coordinated and cohesive support, and create efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort by embedding a collaborative approach.

Supporting workforce participation

- The **Federal Government** has also legislated a three-day childcare guarantee, which means that from January 2026, all eligible families will be guaranteed access to **three days of subsidised childcare per week**.



Productivity in Regional Australia

To fast-track Australia into becoming a more productive and prosperous nation, the RAI has been advocating for a shift in focus to regional Australia.

Regional Australia feeds and powers the nation and is the source of many of our major export and income-earning sectors. Thirty-seven per cent of the population lives in regional Australia, and for the first time in seven decades, our regional, rural and remote communities are welcoming more city dwellers moving regionally each year than in the opposite direction.

Record jobs, a lower cost of living, great communities and wide-open green spaces are some of the key reasons two in five city dwellers are considering a move to the regions – and why businesses are investing in the regions.

Many regional and remote communities have traditionally faced productivity challenges due to distance and scale factors, and limited access to labour, capital and knowledge inputs to production. These challenges vary considerably across regional and remote Australia, depending on local conditions.

Productivity on the national agenda is an important opportunity to address these challenges and identify solutions to unlock productivity in regional Australia – which will benefit all Australians.

The RAI has made a number of contributions to the productivity agenda.

Australia's Productivity Pitch

1. A population plan to grow regional Australia and rebalance the nation
2. A Productivity Commission inquiry into measures to increase productivity in regional Australia
3. Improve digital connectivity in regional Australia
4. Improve labour mobility to lift regional productivity
5. A net-zero regional economic development strategy



Submission to Australia's Productivity Inquiry

The RAI's next submission provided a regional perspective on the 15 policy areas under the five core pillars that the Productivity Commission had nominated for consultation in the next stage of the inquiry.

A range of ideas were put forward by the Productivity Commission that could support growth in regional Australia, including taxation and regulatory reform to provide important incentives for increased business investment and productivity, and policies to realise the significant opportunities from improvements in digital technology and access to renewable energy in the regions.

RAI also recommended support for collaborative commissioning models across care sectors (health, disability and aged care), which could deliver greater benefits in regions where resources are scarce and populations are ageing, with greater need for care services.

A regional economic development strategy would help leverage opportunities from the net-zero transition. Also included in the submission was support for ideas to speed up approvals for all major infrastructure and housing projects in regional Australia, including energy infrastructure.



States and Territories

Supporting innovation and new industries in regions

- The **Queensland Government** and **CSIRO** have launched a free program to support agricultural innovation among small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Queensland. Delivered through the Regional University Industry Collaboration (RUIC) initiative, the Innovate to Grow program **helps businesses in agriculture, food, and related technologies** develop and implement research strategies. Participants gain access to expert mentors, regional university researchers, and matched R&D support. It aims to accelerate commercialisation and strengthen industry-university collaboration, helping SMEs bring innovative products and services to market more efficiently.

Supporting regional businesses

- The **Queensland Government** has announced a \$16 million Regional Business Gateways grant program to support local Chambers of Commerce, other trade organisations, and local councils to build business **hubs in Queensland's regional centres**, as well as a \$10 million small business concierge service to support small and family business owners.
- The **Northern Territory Government** and Indigenous Business Australia held the second round of the **Aboriginal Tourism Business Accelerator Program**. The program is for Northern Territory based majority-owned Aboriginal businesses, organisations, and Aboriginal people to gain an understanding of the skills to develop or grow an Aboriginal tourism business.

Case Study

First Nations company using AI to track and quantify marine debris

Dennis Fay, founder of Salty Monkeys, exemplifies place-based innovation rooted in culture and community. A Torres Strait Islander from Badu Island, Dennis transformed his passion for spearfishing into a social enterprise that blends marine conservation, technology and Indigenous storytelling.

Salty Monkeys is a First Nations-owned and operated brand that makes adventure apparel and dive gear. With a focus on sustainability, some of the products are made from 100% recycled materials.

At RAI's 2025 Regions Rising Queensland event, Dennis showcased how innovation can grow locally to solve a global problem.

Each year, thousands of tonnes of foreign rubbish ends up on the Torres Strait Islands.

Through partnerships with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and tech firm KJR, Dennis is deploying AI and

drones to monitor and quantify marine debris. Data and surveying results in future will be able to identify hotspots and better targeting for rubbish collection.

Dennis is working with universities and recycling manufacturers to research and trial solutions for processing the plastic debris into potential fuels, materials and products.

His leadership has created local jobs, advanced reef health monitoring, and inspired youth through cultural and environmental programs. His work is a model for how Indigenous-led enterprises can drive sovereign capability and environmental stewardship.



Case Study

Victorian sawmiller building the houses of the future

Drouin West Timber & Truss is a fourth-generation regional family business which has evolved from sawmilling to modular and panelised housing.

DWTT has created the FutureFit™ Panelised Building System now supplying efficient, high-quality solutions for both Victoria's regional and metropolitan communities.

The FutureFit™ Panelised Building System utilises refabricated wall panels, floor cassettes, and roof trusses. FutureFit average build times to near lock up are 2.5 days for double story builds and 3.5 days for triple-storey builds. With four generations of leadership, the company is able to combine traditional timber skills with modern modular technology to create these homes of the future which are indistinguishable from those built using conventional methods.

Current projects include multiple 30-unit projects in Tarneit, Wollert, Clyde, Aintree and Mambourin, 210

units in South Morang and 44 Triple storey and 15 double storey units using panelised construction. A recent 72-unit project in Keysborough reduced build time by 5 months and saved \$350,000.

The company employs 50 local staff including apprentices and tradespeople and supports regional suppliers and contractors through local sourcing.

Drouinwesttimber and truss
FutureFit™
Panelised building system.

From our roots in sawmilling to next Generation FutureFit Panelised housing, our focus has always been on innovation and supporting our community. Modern construction methods allow us to deliver homes faster while contributing to the growth and sustainability of regional Victoria.

Peter Ward, Owner, FutureFit™



Appendix A - National Data Tables



Population

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Regional population (Annual change) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population March 2025 release	Regions	9,525,720	9,643,641 (+1.2%)	9,779,502 (+1.4%)	9,910,984 (+1.3%)
	Metro areas	16,159,692	16,370,758 (+1.3%)	16,873,275 (+3.1%)	17,283,385 (+2.4%)
	Australia	25,685,412	26,014,399 (+1.3%)	26,652,777 (+2.5%)	27,194,369 (+2.0%)
Proportion of younger population (15-39 years) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population (by Age and Sex) August 2025 release	Regions	29.8%	29.8%	30.0%	30.2%
	Metro areas	36.2%	36.3%	37.1%	37.4%
	Australia	33.8%	33.9%	34.5%	34.8%
Share of total overseas arrivals Year 0: 2020-21; Update: 2023-24; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population, March 2025 release	Regions	17.4%	18.6%	16.5%	16.7%
	Metro areas	82.6%	81.4%	83.5%	83.3%
	Australia	100%	100%	100%	100%



Jobs & Skills

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Recruitment difficulty Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by GCCSA Source: Data requested from Jobs and Skills Australia	Regions	52.0%	65.0%	58.0%	50.0%
	Metro areas	45.0%	63.0%	53.0%	45.0%
	Australia	48.0%	64.0%	55.0%	47.0%
Proportion of skilled workers Year 0: 2022; Update: 2025; by RAI regional definition Source: ABS Labour Force (Detailed) June 2025	Regions	55.3%	55.3%	55.3%	55.2%
	Metro areas	62.6%	62.6%	62.6%	62.6%
	Australia	59.7%	59.7%	59.7%	59.8%
Year 12 School attainment rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: ABS Education and Work 2024	Regions	73.7%	76.1%	74.8%	73.9%
	Metro areas	86.9%	89.4%	87.5%	89.4%
	Australia	84.1%	86.3%	84.8%	86.2%
Post-school qualification rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: ABS Education and Work 2024	Regions	57.5%	58.4%	59.1%	59.5%
	Metro areas	64.0%	64.9%	64.7%	64.6%
	Australia	62.3%	63.2%	63.2%	63.3%

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Wellbeing (Personal Wellbeing Index) Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; as per Regional Wellbeing Survey NO NEW DATA AVAILABLE Source: University of Canberra	Regions	72.4	73.6	71.1	
	Metro areas	69.2	69.8	70.8	
	Australia	70.4	71.0	70.9	
Digital Inclusion Index - Proportion (%) of LGAs above the national metro average NO NEW DATA AVAILABLE Year 0: 2020; Update:2023 by RAI's regional typologies Source: Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2021 and 2023	Regions	62.3	67.4	69.8	
	Metro areas	70.1	72.9	74.8	
	Australia	67.5	71.1	73.2	
Rental vacancy rate Year 0: June 2022; Update: June 2025; by GCCSA Source:Cotality Quarterly Review Report June 2025"	Regions	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%
	Metro areas	2.3%	1.6%	1.5%	1.8%
	Australia	2.1%	1.6%	1.6%	1.8%
Building approvals (total and annual change) Year 0: 2021-22; Update: 2024-25; by GCCSA Source: ABS Building Approvals June 2025	Regions	59,605	53,151 (-10.8%)	48,949 (-7.9%)	50,742 (3.7%)
	Metro areas	148,834	128,340 (-13.8%)	119,289 (-7.1%)	137,832 (15.5%)
	Australia	208,439	181,491 (-12.9%)	168,238 (-7.3%)	188,574 (12.1%)
Childcare places per child (0-5 years) Source: Year 0: 2021 Update: 2024; by RAI's Regional typologies Source: ACECQA National Register and ABS Regional Population	Regions	0.50	0.52	0.55	0.57
	Metro areas	0.60	0.62	0.65	0.68
	Australia	0.57	0.59	0.62	0.64
NAPLAN Numeracy– Proportion of Students at Strong or Above Level Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	Regions	55.2%		55.0%	56.3%
	Metro areas	69.9%		69.3%	70.6%
	Australia	65.9%		65.5%	66.8%
NAPLAN Numeracy– Proportion of Students Needing Additional Help Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	Regions	15.2%		14.7%	14.5%
	Metro areas	7.7%		7.6%	7.3%
	Australia	9.7%		9.5%	9.2%



Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
NAPLAN Reading – Proportion of Students at Strong or Above Level Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	Regions	58.0%		57.0%	58.0%
	Metro areas	71.9%		70.7%	71.9%
	Australia	68.1%		67.0%	68.2%
NAPLAN Reading – Proportion of Students Needing Additional Help Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	Regions	14.3%		16.1%	14.9%
	Metro areas	6.9%		8.2%	7.2%
	Australia	8.9%		10.3%	9.2%
Sense of Community (out of 7) Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023 as per Regional Wellbeing Survey Source: University of Canberra	Regions	2.3	3.3	3.3	
	Metro areas	2.8	2.9	2.9	
	Australia	2.7	3.0	3.0	

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Potential Years of Life Lost Per 1,000 population Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by Remoteness Source: AIHW Mortality Over Regions and Time (MORT) Books 2025 update	Regions	48.3	49.2	50.5	49.3
	Metro areas	32.1	32.7	34.6	32.1
	Australia	36.9	37.5	39.3	37.2
Medicare Service Rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness MBS services per person Source: Derived from MBS data provided by Services Australia	Regions	12.2	11.3	11.2	11.4
	Metro areas	22.4	20.3	19.4	19.7
	Australia	19.5	17.7	17.1	17.3
NDIS Utilisation Rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: NDIS	Regions	72.1%	72.0%	73.2%	74.5%
	Metro areas	74.5%	75.3%	77.7%	79.1%
	Australia	73.7%	74.3%	76.3%	77.6%
Medical Practitioners FTE per 100,000 population Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by MMM Source: Department of Health Workforce Database	Regions	336	335	354	365
	Metro areas	470	481	480	482
	Australia	433	440	446	451
Allied Health Workers FTE per 100,000 population Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by MMM Source: Department of Health Workforce Database	Regions	504	521	538	551
	Metro areas	629	662	695	700
	Australia	594	623	651	659



Sustainability & Resilience

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Emission Intensity (Tonnes of CO2e per \$M GRP) Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by RAI's regional typologies Source: Snapshot Climate Emissions Profile and .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Headline GRP series	Regions	323.6	306.7	287.0	273.1
	Metro areas	126.4	115.7	109.9	106.0
	Australia	203.2	189.9	178.3	170.2
Proportion of population living in areas with moderate or high resilience Year 0: 2020; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: Australian Disaster Resilience Index 2024	Regions	63.3%			71.0%
	Metro areas	92.4%			78.9%
	Australia	84.2%			76.9%



Productivity & Innovation

Target	State	Regional Progress			
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Gross Regional Product (Unit: \$ million and share of national total) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by GCCSA Source: .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Headline GRP series	Regions	923,192 (38.8%)	956,282 (38.5%)	984,886 (38.4%)	1,001,500 (38.5%)
	Metro areas	1,457,486 (61.2%)	1,525,286 (61.5%)	1,582,110 (61.6%)	1,602,205 (61.5%)
	Australia	2,380,678	2,481,568	2,566,996	2,603,706
Productivity (GRP \$ per hour worked) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by GCCSA Source: .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Productivity series	Regions	74.2	76.9	74.1	74.4
	Metro areas	84.6	85.2	81.0	81.8
	Australia	81.1	82.5	78.7	79.3
Workforce participation rate Year 0: May 2022; Update: May 2025; by GCCSA Source: ABS Labour Force (Detailed) June 2025	Regions	62.5%	62.9%	63.2%	63.7%
	Metro areas	68.1%	69.2%	69.2%	69.3%
	Australia	65.7%	66.6%	66.7%	67.0%
Innovation - share of total trademarks newly registered Year 0: 2021 Update: 2024; by RAI regional definition Source: Intellectual Property RAPID 2025	Regions	18.8%	18.7%	19.1%	19.6%
	Metro areas	81.2%	81.3%	80.9%	80.4%
	Australia	100%	100%	100%	100%
Innovation - share of total patents Year 0: 2021 Update: 2024; by RAI regional definition Source: Intellectual Property RAPID 2025	Regions	5.2%	4.5%	4.8%	4.1%
	Metro areas	94.8%	95.5%	95.2%	95.9%
	Australia	100%	100%	100%	100%
Innovation - share of total business entries Year 0: 2021 Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Data by Region 2011-2024 (by LGA) series	Regions	28.8%	28.1%	29.1%	27.7%
	Metro areas	71.2%	71.9%	70.9%	72.3%
	Australia	100%	100%	100%	100%

Appendix B - State and Territory Data Tables



Population

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Regional population (Annual change) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population March 2025 release	NSW	3,183,854	3,212,130 (+0.9%)	3,243,459 (+1.0%)	3,277,204 (+1.0%)	5,202,110 (+2.0%)
	VIC	1,657,723	1,679,009 (+1.3%)	1,698,941 (+1.2%)	1,722,268 (+1.4%)	5,256,451 (+2.7%)
	QLD	2,722,797	2,771,309 (+1.8%)	2,831,305 (+2.2%)	2,883,249 (+1.8%)	2,700,584 (+2.7%)
	SA	438,866	442,385 (+0.8%)	446,693 (+1.0%)	450,594 (+0.9%)	1,427,417 (+1.5%)
	WA	704,560	715,011 (+1.5%)	729,793 (+2.1%)	744,600 (+2.0%)	2,222,968 (+3.1%)
	Tas	567,239	571,051 (+0.7%)	573,738 (+0.5%)	575,496 (+0.3%)	
	NT	248,151	250,228 (+0.8%)	253,062 (+1.1%)	255,069 (+0.8%)	
Proportion of younger population (15-39 years) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population (by Age and Sex) August 2025 release	NSW	29.0%	28.9%	29.2%	29.3%	38.0%
	VIC	28.9%	28.8%	29.0%	29.2%	38.1%
	QLD	30.7%	30.5%	30.9%	31.1%	37.3%
	SA	26.6%	26.5%	26.8%	26.9%	34.4%
	WA	29.8%	29.8%	30.0%	30.2%	36.2%
	Tas	31.3%	31.2%	31.3%	31.2%	
	NT	40.0%	40.2%	40.6%	40.6%	
Share of total overseas arrivals Year 0: 2020-21; Update: 2023-24; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Regional Population, March 2025 release	NSW	6.6%	5.5%	4.4%	4.3%	28.5%
	VIC	1.3%	2.6%	2.0%	2.1%	26.7%
	QLD	6.0%	6.2%	6.5%	6.7%	10.8%
	SA	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	4.6%
	WA	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	10.9%
	Tas	1.1%	1.3%	1.0%	0.9%	
	NT	1.0%	1.2%	0.9%	0.8%	



Jobs & Skills

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Recruitment difficulty Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by GCCSA Source: Data requested from Jobs and Skills Australia	NSW	51%	64%	58%	50%	46%
	VIC	53%	69%	62%	50%	44%
	QLD	52%	64%	57%	50%	50%
	SA	50%	60%	54%	45%	48%
	WA	56%	69%	63%	54%	44%
	Tas	43%	56%	49%	43%	
	NT	56%	66%	61%	55%	
Proportion of skilled workers Year 0: 2022; Update: 2025; by RAI regional definition Source: ABS Labour Force (Detailed) June 2025	NSW	56.6%	56.0%	55.8%	56.4%	63.4%
	VIC	56.9%	57.1%	57.1%	56.6%	63.1%
	QLD	53.7%	53.8%	54.0%	53.8%	64.4%
	SA	51.8%	52.1%	52.3%	52.3%	58.8%
	WA	53.3%	53.3%	53.0%	53.1%	59.6%
	Tas	56.1%	57.2%	57.5%	56.9%	
	NT	60.4%	61.3%	60.9%	60.4%	
Attainment Rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: ABS Education and Work 2024	NSW	71.8%	77.2%	66.1%	70.6%	87.7%
	VIC	66.5%	76.1%	70.6%	77.3%	92.0%
	QLD	82.0%	80.7%	88.4%	71.9%	90.1%
	SA	72.3%	77.6%	75.6%	65.3%	85.4%
	WA	78.7%	44.8%	71.7%	84.3%	89.3%
	Tas	70.9%	77.3%	72.6%	76.6%	
	NT	73.3%	90.4%	86.0%	82.6%	
Post-school qualification rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: ABS Education and Work 2024	NSW	60.2%	59.4%	59.9%	61.3%	63.7%
	VIC	57.5%	59.5%	61.5%	60.2%	66.5%
	QLD	54.7%	56.2%	58.0%	58.5%	63.5%
	SA	51.7%	52.9%	52.8%	57.5%	61.1%
	WA	59.1%	59.4%	52.5%	56.0%	64.9%
	Tas	60.1%	60.5%	63.4%	61.0%	
	NT	62.8%	66.5%	64.3%	66.0%	

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Wellbeing (Personal Wellbeing Index) Year 0: 2020; Update: 2024; as per Regional Wellbeing Survey Source: University of Canberra	NSW	72.9	74.8	72.5		
	VIC	73.2	74.1	73.4		
	QLD	71.5	70.4	72.3		
	SA	73.3	72.3	71.7		
	WA	70.7	75.2	73.7		
	Tas	71.9	74.7	72.2		
	NT	68.7	67.0	67.2		
Digital Inclusion Index - Proportion (number) of LGAs above the national metro average NO NEW DATA AVAILABLE Year 0: 2021; Update: 2023; by RAI's regional typologies Source: Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2021 and 2023	NSW	0.0% (0)	3.1% (3)			
	VIC	0.0% (0)	6.1% (3)			
	QLD	1.4% (1)	0.0% (0)			
	SA	3.9% (2)	0.0% (0)			
	WA	5.6% (6)	0.9% (1)			
	Tas	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)			
	NT	N/A	5.3% (1)			
Rental vacancy rate Year 0: June 2022; Update: June 2025; by GCCSA Source: Cotality Quarterly Review Report June 2025	NSW	1.6%	2.2%	2.3%	2.1%	2.2%
	VIC	1.2%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%
	QLD	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	2.0%	2.0%
	SA	1.5%	1.2%	1.1%	1.4%	1.1%
	WA	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	1.8%	1.4%
	Tas	1.7%	2.4%	2.7%	2.3%	
	NT	2.1%	2.3%	2.4%	2.2%	
Building approvals (total and annual change) Year 0: 2021-22; Update: 2024-25; by GCCSA Source: ABS Building Approvals June 2025	NSW	18,381	16,538 (-10.0%)	15,490 (-6.3%)	15,352 (-0.9%)	33,236 (+22.0%)
	VIC	14,830	11,655 (-21.4%)	10,977 (-5.8%)	10,012 (-8.8%)	46,393 (+13.7%)
	QLD	17,235	16,388 (-4.9%)	14,834 (-9.5%)	16,347 (+10.2%)	21,543 (+18.9%)
	SA	10,476	10,086 (-3.7%)	9,234 (-8.4%)	11,832 (+28.1%)	2,680 (+29.8%)
	WA	2,966	2,432 (-18.0%)	2,576 (+5.9%)	3,474 (+34.9%)	27,247 (+84.2%)
	Tas	3,339	3,104 (-7.0%)	2,572 (-17.1%)	2,343 (-8.9%)	46,393 (+13.7%)
	NT	529	595 (+12.5%)	436 (-26.7%)	534 (+22.5%)	21,543 (+18.9%)

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Childcare places per child Source: Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI Regional definition Source: ACECQA National Register and ABS Regional Population	NSW	0.50	0.52	0.54	0.56	0.68
	VIC	0.58	0.63	0.66	0.68	0.71
	QLD	0.55	0.55	0.58	0.60	0.74
	SA	0.49	0.50	0.53	0.57	0.72
	WA	0.25	0.26	0.27	0.29	0.47
	Tas	0.35	0.38	0.39	0.40	0.68
	NT	0.65	0.68	0.72	0.74	0.71
NAPLAN Numeracy – Proportion of Students at Strong or Exceeding Level Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	NSW	57.6%		57.5%	58.4%	72.5%
	VIC	61.0%		60.8%	64.0%	73.3%
	QLD	52.2%		51.6%	52.1%	66.3%
	SA	50.3%		50.6%	51.9%	65.0%
	WA	52.6%		53.0%	53.4%	69.8%
	Tas	57.0%		56.8%	58.6%	
	NT	37.5%		37.8%	37.7%	
NAPLAN Numeracy – Proportion of Students Needing Additional Help Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	NSW	13.4%		12.9%	12.7%	6.9%
	VIC	10.1%		9.9%	9.0%	5.9%
	QLD	17.2%		16.9%	17.0%	9.2%
	SA	15.4%		15.0%	14.7%	8.9%
	WA	18.6%		17.4%	17.9%	7.7%
	Tas	13.5%		12.9%	12.4%	
	NT	35.7%		34.8%	36.3%	
NAPLAN Numeracy – Proportion of Students at Strong or Above Level Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	NSW	59.5%		58.9%	60.1%	73.2%
	VIC	65.0%		64.3%	66.0%	75.0%
	QLD	54.4%		52.8%	53.4%	68.0%
	SA	55.5%		52.5%	53.6%	66.7%
	WA	54.5%		53.7%	53.9%	70.5%
	Tas	61.6%		61.1%	61.7%	
	NT	41.0%		40.8%	40.4%	
NAPLAN Numeracy – Proportion of Students Needing Additional Help Year 0: 2023; Update: 2025; by Remoteness Source: ACARA, NAPLAN National Reports 2025	NSW	13.1%		14.6%	13.1%	6.9%
	VIC	8.8%		10.3%	8.8%	5.5%
	QLD	16.6%		18.9%	17.6%	9.1%
	SA	13.4%		16.4%	15.5%	8.7%
	WA	17.6%		19.5%	18.6%	7.9%
	Tas	12.6%		13.6%	13.0%	
	NT	33.3%		35.0%	35.7%	



Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Getting involved in the community Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; as per Regional Wellbeing Survey Source: University of Canberra	NSW	2.2	3.2	3.3		
	VIC	2.0	3.2	3.5		
	QLD	2.3	3.4	3.5		
	SA	2.5	3.2	3.4		
	WA	2.9	3.8	3.6		
	Tas	2.6	2.9	3.2		
	NT	3.1	3.1	3.4		

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Potential Years of Life Lost Per 1,000 population Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by Remoteness Source: AIHW Mortality Over Regions and Time (MORT) Books 2025 update	NSW	46.7	47.8	47.7	46.5	28.8
	VIC	44.5	45.2	48.4	45.9	31.1
	QLD	42.5	44.4	45.5	44.3	35.6
	SA	49.1	53.5	51.4	50.1	36.6
	WA	53.5	51.7	50.7	54.9	31.7
	Tas	44.6	44.1	46.6	42.9	
	NT	74.2	72.8	80.7	72.8	
Medicare Service Rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: Derived from MBS data provided by Services Australia	NSW	12.5	11.6	11.4	11.7	21.4
	VIC	10.4	9.7	9.6	9.8	19.6
	QLD	13.6	12.6	12.4	12.7	19.3
	SA	9.9	9.1	9.0	9.1	16.9
	WA	8.5	7.7	7.5	7.6	19.9
	Tas	16.6	15.6	15.4	15.3	
	NT	9.7	7.5	7.5	7.5	
NDIS Utilisation Rate Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: NDIS	NSW	73.1%	73.4%	74.4%	75.2%	81.1%
	VIC	67.4%	70.1%	72.2%	74.1%	78.3%
	QLD	73.4%	72.3%	73.8%	74.8%	78.5%
	SA	70.0%	69.7%	71.1%	72.3%	79.1%
	WA	69.5%	66.4%	68.4%	69.2%	
	Tas	76.3%	74.7%	73.0%	75.9%	
	NT	76.1%	74.4%	76.1%	76.4%	
Medical Practitioners FTE per 100,000 population Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by MMM Source: Department of Health Workforce Database	NSW	318	309	326	334	472
	VIC	291	303	324	333	478
	QLD	368	366	386	401	495
	SA	203	214	223	233	535
	WA	296	314	331	333	463
	Tas	446	458	487	504	
	NT	576	506	510	535	
Allied Health Workers FTE per 100,000 population Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by MMM Source: Department of Health Workforce Database	NSW	508	513	533	550	653
	VIC	532	555	581	594	720
	QLD	518	538	549	558	741
	SA	386	394	409	417	744
	WA	422	455	460	495	687
	Tas	539	554	573	582	
	NT	539	568	571	562	



Sustainability & Resilience

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Emission Intensity (Tonnes of CO2e per \$M GRP) Year 0: 2020; Update: 2023; by RAI's regional typologies Source: Snapshot Climate Emissions Profile and .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Headline GRP series	NSW	329.3	306.9	272.8	262.4	88
	VIC	374.3	349.9	304.4	285.2	96.9
	QLD	386.7	376	359.3	351.2	148.1
	SA	328.5	306.8	288.5	261.6	86.8
	WA	237.5	219.3	214.2	195.5	158.8
	Tas	196.3	195.2	178.6	176.3	
	NT	368.7	363.7	361	344.7	
Proportion of population living in areas with moderate or high resilience Year 0: 2020; Update: 2024; by Remoteness Source: Australian Disaster Resilience Index 2024	NSW	84.8%			90.4%	77.8%
	VIC	89.6%			98.1%	87.9%
	QLD	41.4%			54.2%	80.6%
	SA	61.1%			74.2%	87.5%
	WA	25.4%			35.3%	51.7%
	Tas	60.9%			59.5%	
	NT	0.0%			5.0%	



Productivity & Innovation

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Gross Regional Product (Unit: \$ million and share of state) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Headline GRP series	NSW	231,378 (31.7%)	238,087 (31.8%)	248,422 (31.9%)	252,096 (32.0%)	535,139 (68.0%)
	VIC	104,216 (20.1%)	113,767 (20.6%)	116,973 (20.4%)	118,610 (20.4%)	462,354 (79.6%)
	QLD	257,933 (55.4%)	271,431 (55.2%)	276,464 (54.7%)	286,872 (55.2%)	233,261 (44.8%)
	SA	29,553 (23.0%)	30,551 (22.5%)	32,399 (23.1%)	32,882 (23.2%)	108,639 (76.8%)
	WA	229,397 (54.7%)	228,282 (53.1%)	237,501 (53.3%)	235,141 (53.0%)	208,768 (47.0%)
	Tas	37,632	39,306	40,066	40,460	
	NT	33,083	34,858	33,061	35,440	
Productivity (\$ per hours worked) Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: .id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Productivity series	NSW	76.7	81.1	76.6	77.1	88.5
	VIC	73.4	75.3	71.8	71.1	75.4
	QLD	70.2	72.9	71.5	72.2	77.2
	SA	70.1	71.7	69.3	69.3	72.1
	WA	78.0	79.4	78.2	76.6	83.2
	Tas	72.6	73.0	70.0	73.1	
	NT	85.8	88.5	86.3	87.5	



Productivity & Innovation

Target	State	Regional Progress				Metro Year 3
		Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Workforce participation rate Year 0: May 2022; Update: May 2025; by GCCSA Source: ABS Labour Force (Detailed) June 2025	NSW	60.0%	61.0%	61.5%	62.2%	68.7%
	VIC	61.5%	61.7%	62.2%	62.9%	69.8%
	QLD	64.6%	64.8%	65.0%	65.6%	71.7%
	SA	57.5%	57.8%	57.7%	57.6%	64.9%
	WA	64.5%	64.5%	64.5%	64.7%	70.5%
	Tas	61.6%	62.2%	61.6%	60.5%	
	NT	72.6%	73.1%	73.0%	72.9%	
Innovation - share of total trademarks newly registered Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: Intellectual Property RAPID 2025	NSW	6.2%	6.2%	6.5%	6.4%	30.9%
	VIC	2.9%	2.6%	2.7%	2.8%	27.1%
	QLD	7.0%	7.1%	7.4%	7.6%	9.6%
	SA	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%	0.6%	5.6%
	WA	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	1.1%	6.0%
	Tas	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	
	NT	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	
Innovation - share of total patent activities Year 0: 2021; Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: Intellectual Property RAPID 2025	NSW	1.7%	1.4%	1.8%	1.5%	38.8%
	VIC	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	35.9%
	QLD	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	1.5%	5.5%
	SA	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	4.1%
	WA	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	6.0%
	Tas	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	
	NT	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	
Innovation - share of total business entries Year 0: 2021 Update: 2024; by RAI's regional typologies Source: ABS Data by Region 2011-2024 (by LGA) series	NSW	9.4%	9.1%	9.4%	8.9%	25.3%
	VIC	4.9%	5.1%	5.0%	4.7%	23.9%
	QLD	9.7%	9.2%	9.8%	9.4%	9.2%
	SA	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	4.7%
	WA	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%	7.7%
	Tas	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%	
	NT	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	

Appendix C - Target Methodology

Important information about this report

This report is intended to assist people to think about their perspectives, assumptions and understanding of regional issues. No responsibility is accepted by RAI Limited, its Board, or its funders for the accuracy of the information provided or for the quality of advice or decisions made by others based on the information presented. Unless otherwise specified, the contents of this tool remain the property of the Regional Australia Institute. Reproduction for non-commercial purposes with attribution of authorship is permitted.

RAI regional typology

The RAI uses a framework of five typologies to categorise settlements across Australia, one for major capital cities and four regional types to describe different places in regional Australia. The typology recognises that socio-economic experiences vary according to location in relation to characteristics like population size, economic fundamentals and proximity to regional centres or capital cities.



RAI regional types correspond approximately with the ABS Australian Statistical Geography (ASGS) Edition 3 Remoteness Structure. However, RAI typologies apply to local government areas (LGA) while the ABS Remoteness Structure (RS) is based on the Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1).

The RAI defines an LGA as metropolitan if it is within the geographic boundary of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide or Canberra. All other LGAs in Australia are allocated to one of the RAI's four regional typologies.

Number of LGAs in the RAI Typologies and ABS Remoteness Structure

ABS Remoteness Structure	Number of LGAs
Major cities of Australia	136
Inner regional Australia	132
Outer regional Australia	142
Remote Australia	61
Very remote Australia	76

RAI Typologies	Number of LGAs
Metropolitan	118
Regional city	48
Connected lifestyle area	58
Industry & service hub	37
Heartland region	286

Source: RAI analysis

Target	Measurement	Definition	Calculation	Source
1 By 2032, more than 11 million Australians will be living prosperously in the regions	Population.	According to the ABS, the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) is the official measure of Australia's population based on the concept of usual residence. It refers to all people, regardless of nationality or citizenship, who usually live in Australia, with the exception of foreign diplomatic personnel and their families.	No RAI calculation.*	ABS Regional Population.
<i>*Note: Estimated resident population includes usual residents who are overseas for less than 12 months. It excludes overseas visitors who are in Australia for less than 12 months.</i>				
2 Increase regional Australia's younger population share (15-39 years) to 35% by 2032	Share of younger population.	Younger population is defined as population aged 15-39 years.	Number of younger population, divided by total population.	ABS Regional Population.
3 Double the proportion of new migrants settling in regional Australia by 2032 to 40%	Proportion of overseas arrivals	Overseas arrivals refer to the recorded arrival of persons through Australian air or seaports (excluding operational air and sea crew).	Overseas arrivals settling in regions, divided by total national overseas arrivals.	ABS Regional Population
4 Reduce the recruitment difficulty in regional Australia to below 40%	Recruitment difficulty rate.	The 'recruitment difficulty rate' is the proportion of recruiting employers who experienced difficulty hiring. As businesses may have conducted several or concurrent recruitment rounds, this indicator focusses on the most recent recruitment round in the previous month.	The indicator is calculated as: employers who recruited and reported difficulty, divided by all employers who recruited (excluding 'unsure' responses).	JSA Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey.
5 Increase the share of highly skilled workers employed in regional Australia to 62% of the regional workforce	Proportion of the workforce in highly skilled occupations.	Highly skilled occupations include all ANZSCO 4-digit occupations at skill levels 1-3.	Workforce employed in highly skilled occupations, divided by all employees.*	ABS Employed Persons by Labour Market Region.
<i>*Note: For occupations with mixed skill levels, the lowest skill level is used.</i>				
6 Increase the school attainment rate of young people in regional Australia to 75% or above	Attainment rate.	Year 12 attainment rate for population aged 20 - 24 years.	Attainment rates are calculated as the percentages of young people aged 20-24 years who has acquired a year 12 certificate or equivalent.	ABS Education and Work.
7 Boost post-school qualification completion in regional Australia to 65% or above	Post-school or non-school qualification rate	A post-school qualification, also known as non-school qualification, refers to any formal education or training obtained after completing secondary school (high school).	Proportion of persons aged 15-74 years with a non-school qualification.*	ABS Education and Work
<i>*Note: The reason why the age group 15-74 is chosen is because of the limitation of ABS data which only reports the post-school qualification rates for persons aged 15-74.</i>				
8 Increase the wellbeing score of Australians living in regional communities to a score of 75 in the Regional Wellbeing Survey	Personal Wellbeing Index.	'The Personal Wellbeing Index measures a person's wellbeing on a score from 0-100. This score is calculated based on answers of respondents to the question 'How satisfied are you with...?': (i) Your standard of living, (ii) Your health, (iii) What you are currently achieving in life, (iv) Your personal relationships, (v) How safe you feel, (vi) Feeling part of your community, and (vii) Your future security.	Scores were measured for each item on a scale from 'completely dissatisfied' (0) to 'completely satisfied' (10), each of which was transformed to a scale of 0-100 prior to calculating the average score.	Regional Wellbeing Survey.
9 Increase regional Australia's Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) score to 75 or above, equal to metropolitan Australia	Australian Digital Inclusion Index.	The Australian Digital Inclusion Index uses data from the Australian Internet Usage Survey to measure digital inclusion across three dimensions of Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. Each of the three ADII dimensions are made up of multiple components, which are sourced directly from Australian Internet Usage Survey (AIUS) questions.	A score closer to 100 indicates higher inclusion while scores closer to 0 indicate greater exclusion.	Australian Digital Inclusion Index.
10 Increase rental vacancy rates in regional areas to at least 3%	Rental vacancy rate.	Proportion of time rental properties are on the market for properties with a rental publication in the last month.	No RAI calculation.	Cotality

	Target	Measurement	Definition	Calculation	Source
11	Ensure housing supply keeps pace with population growth through adequate home-building approvals.	Number of building approvals.	Building approvals for total dwelling units, including houses, units, apartments, etc.	No RAI calculation.	ABS Data by Region.
12	Increase number of childcare services available to regional Australians	Childcare places per child.	This is measured by calculating how many childcare places are available to each child, based on the boundaries of local government areas.	Total number of childcare places, divided by number of children aged 0-5 years.*	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) National Registers and ABS Regional Population.
*Note: Because ABS does not have the data for children aged 0-5 years, the estimated number of this age group is calculated by adding the number of children aged 0-4 years to one-fifth of the number of children aged 5-9 years.					
13	Increase the proportion of students achieving Strong or Exceeding proficiency level in reading and numeracy	Percentage of students in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' proficiency level from NAPLAN testing; Percentage of students in the 'Needs Additional Support' proficiency level.	From 2023, student achievement in NAPLAN is reported against 4 levels of proficiency: Exceeding, Strong, Developing, and Needs additional Support. This replaces the previous numerical NAPLAN bands and national minimum standards.	Number of students who are in the Strong or Exceeding proficiency level, divided by total number of students; Number of students who are in the Needs Additional Support proficiency level, divided by total number of students.*	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.
*Note: ACARA reports NAPLAN results for each year level tested (Years 3, 5, 7 and 9) and domain (reading, spelling, writing, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy). To reduce complexity, only results for numeracy and reading are reported. The percentages of students in Strong or Exceeding and Needs Additional Support levels are calculated across all year levels combined.					
14	Strengthen access and opportunities for engagement in arts, cultural, community and recreational experiences in regional Australia	Sense of 'getting involved in the community'.	'The extent of a person's involvement in local community activities was examined by asking survey participants how frequently they took part in the following types of activities, on a scale from 'never or almost never' (1) to 'all the time' (7): (i) I attend community events such as farmers markets, community festivals; (ii) I attend meetings/events held by local clubs/groups e.g. Lions, CWA; and (iii) I take part in sports groups or teams.	The 'getting involved' measure was calculated as the average of these items, from 1 (low levels of involvement) to 7 (high levels of involvement).	Regional Wellbeing Survey.
15	Increase the number of medical practitioners in regional Australia by over 100 FTE per 100,000 population, reaching 430 FTE	Medical practitioners FTE per 100,000 population.	Full-time equivalence for medical practitioners employed in Australia in registered profession, per 100,000 population.	FTE divided by total population and multiplied by 100,000.*	Department of Health Health Workforce Data.
*Note: The Australian Medical Board defines a medical practitioner as a person who is registered to practice medicine in Australia under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. They diagnose and treat physical and mental illnesses, injuries, and disorders. They also provide preventative action and make referrals to specialists. The target of 430 was chosen to reflect the approximate metropolitan ratio for 100,000 population in 2022-23 when the Ambition targets were set.					
16	Increase Allied Health professionals by more than 150 FTE per 100,000 population, reaching approximately 700 FTE	MBS services rate	Full-time equivalence for allied health workers in Australia in registered profession, per 100,000 population.	MBS services, divided by active Medicare population.*	Services Australia.
*Note: Allied health workers include all the health professions other than dental practitioners, medical practitioners, nurses and midwives. The target of 700 was chosen to reflect the approximate metropolitan ratio of 100,000 population in 2025 when the target was set.					
17	Regional Australians have the same level of access to Medicare services as metropolitan areas	Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) services rate.	MBS services per person.	MBS services, divided by active Medicare population.*	Services Australia.
*Note: All Australian citizens and permanent residents are eligible to enroll in Medicare, as well as international visitors from 11 countries that have reciprocal agreements for medically necessary treatment. Due to the limitation of data, the MBS services rate has not been age-adjusted to account for different age profiles across regions. To take into consideration the different demand for health services of different age groups, analyses have been conducted for people under 65 years, those over 65 years, and the total population. In all groups, similar results were found: there is a significant gap in MBS services between major cities and regional or remote areas.					

	Target	Measurement	Definition	Calculation	Source
18	Reduce the years of potential life lost due to premature death (under 75) per 1,000 people	Potential years of life lost per 1,000 population.	Potential years of life lost (PYLL) is a measure of the sum of the potential years of life lost from deaths occurred before 75 years of age.	PYLL divided by total population and multiplied by 1,000.	AIHW Mortality Over Regions and Time (MORT) books.
19	Regional Australians are accessing the NDIS at the same rates as people living in major cities	NDIS utilisation rate.	NDIS utilisation rate is defined as the proportion of committed support utilised.	Actual payments divided by total committed support.	NDIS
20	Regional Australia is reducing its emissions intensity and contributing to Australia's 2050 climate targets	Emissions per M\$GRP	Emissions intensity of production refers to the Co2 and CO2 equivalent emissions released in the production of a given quantity of output.	Tonnes of CO2e per M\$ of GRP.	Snapshot Emissions Profile ID Economy Headline GRP
21	75% or more of regional Australians live in an area with a high or moderate capacity for disaster resilience	Proportion of population living in an area with moderate or high resilience.	Disaster resilience is the capacity to prepare for, absorb and recover from natural hazards, and to learn, adapt and transform in ways that enhance these capacities in the face of future events. Disaster resilience arises from many social, economic and institutional capacities and the mix of these capacities in a community conveys how well it is positioned to absorb and adapt to natural hazards.	Population living in an area with moderate or high resilience, divided by total population.*	Australian Disaster Resilience Index.
*Note: According to the Australian Disaster Resilience Index, areas falling within the lowest 25% are classified as having low resilience, those in the middle 50% are considered moderately resilient, and the top 25% are deemed highly resilient, all based on percentiles. Thus these categories are relative rather than absolute.					
22	Increase regional Australia's contribution to national output	Share of national GDP.	Gross domestic (regional) product is defined as total market value of the goods and services produced by a country's (or a region's) economy during a specified period of time.	Gross regional product, divided by national total	.id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Headline GRP series
23	Grow regional Australia's productivity (GDP per hour worked) by 1.2% per annum	Local industry GRP per hour worked.	Local industry Gross Regional Product contains only industry components of GRP, and excludes accounting measures such as taxes, subsidies, and ownership of dwellings. Hours worked is the number of hours employed people work.	Local industry GRP, divided by total hours worked. Note: Local industry GRP (rather than total GRP) is used because it contains only industry components which are directly related to production.	.id (informed decisions) and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Productivity series.
24	Increase workforce participation in regional Australia to 68% or higher	Participation rate.	Proportion of working age population (aged 15 years and over) who participate in the labour market.	Labour force, divided by working age population.*	ABS Labour Force.
*Note: ABS defines persons aged over 15 years (rather than 15-64 years) as working age population.					
25	Increase new business and innovation in regional Australia	Share of total business entries.	Business entries refer to new businesses.	Regional business entries, divided by national total.	ABS Data by Region.
		Share of patent activities	All party activities related to patent application.	Regional patent activities, divided by national total.*	IP Australia Refreshed Automated Product for Information and Data.
		*Note: Patent application activities tend to be a better indicator to measure innovation than merely registered patents.			Share of newly registered trademarks.

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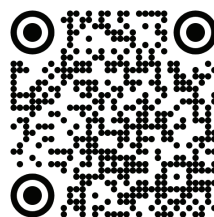
Citation

This paper can be referenced as:

Regional Australia Institute. (2025) Regionalisation Ambition 2032: Year 3 Progress Report. Regional Australia Institute: Canberra.

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