

## **Growing Our Regional Cities – More Support Needed for Whyalla, Port Pirie, Port Augusta**

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As the Upper Spencer Gulf enters a 'once in a generation' economic transformation, the Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie Mayors say it is important that all tiers of Government work together to invest in civic initiatives to support well-planned city growth and liveability.

This comes on top of calls for investment into strategic transport infrastructure, a tailored approach to skilled migration and decentralisation, a strong national energy policy and support for locally-based university study.

Port Pirie Mayor Leon Stephens, Whyalla Mayor Clare McLaughlin and Port Augusta Mayor Brett Benbow say investment into local infrastructure and services will be crucial if the Upper Spencer Gulf is to maximise the benefits of the economic growth the region is starting to experience.

Port Augusta Mayor Brett Benbow said the rapid pace of economic change across the region means all three cities will need to make further investments to provide the services and lifestyle to attract and, importantly, retain new skilled workers and their families.

"For example, the Upper Spencer Gulf is starting to see an increase in economic activity and will require a substantial increase in workforce in coming years", explained Mayor Benbow.

"Ultimately, we want to see people move here and make the Upper Spencer Gulf home – not just 'fly in and fly out'.

"That's only going to happen if we can offer the level of local facilities and services to attract them and improve the amenity of our cities."

Port Pirie Mayor Leon Stephens added that all three cities have invested heavily in initiatives including town entrance and foreshore redevelopments, rejuvenation of sporting and library facilities, park, garden and streetscape upgrades, bike and walking tracks, water reuse schemes and community events that foster civic pride and vibrancy.

"But there is still more that needs to be done and we just can't fund it alone, Mayor Stephens added.

"For example, the Port Augusta wharf and marine infrastructure like boat ramps and jetties right across the Upper Spencer Gulf are an important part of our lifestyle and economy, but they are incredibly expensive to maintain and upgrade."

"The Whyalla and Port Augusta airports are really important for commercial passenger transport and both are in need of upgrades, but again, this is infrastructure that is a significant cost for regional Councils to manage."

The three cities are also backing calls from the Australian Local Government Association for more Federal funding into local roads.

Whyalla Mayor and member of the Local Government Association board, Clare McLaughlin, explained that Councils in South Australia have 7% of the population, collectively own and manage 11% of the nation's roads, but receive only 5.5% of road funding. Successive Federal Governments have recognised this inequity and provided supplementary funding to South Australian Councils but this will end next year.

"We have a number of locally owned freight and tourism roads across Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla that we are all struggling to maintain. The added pressure from major industrial developments, defence activity and growing tourism traffic is making this task all the more difficult."

"It is a very exciting time for the Upper Spencer Gulf, but to make sure our communities come out of this transition stronger, more resilient and more economically diverse, we really need a strong partnership with Government and a strong representative in Canberra."

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