

Regional Investment

The WA Government has outlined investment to address the unique needs and inequity experienced in our regional, remote and rural communities. These initiatives are in addition to those that apply for all Western Australians. We particularly welcome the investments in housing and health, two chronic issues that are exacerbated in the regions. However, more is urgently needed to support these communities.

(See Government fact sheets for a breakdown of each specific region)

Initiative	Early Years Partnership (BP2, V2, P503-505)
Investment	\$15.6 million over four years
Description	Support for families and community infrastructure to increase child wellbeing and school readiness by improving access to early learning opportunities, early identification and intervention services.
Implications	This investment expands on the 10-year partnership between the Minderoo Foundation, Telethon Kids Institute and four communities in metro, regional, remote and very remote areas. Despite this being a much-needed area of investment, \$15 million doesn't go far to improve community and child wellbeing in 4 very diverse areas.

Initiative	Social and Affordable Housing Investment Fund (BP2, V2, P505)
Investment	\$400 million one-off contribution in 2024-25
Description	A top up to the fund, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$60 million for a Regional Community Housing Grants Program, to support community housing providers to deliver new dwellings or refurbish existing dwellings; • \$43.8 million in additional investment for Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), to fund new builds and land acquisitions; • \$34.8 million to unlock more development-ready land for housing in regional centres including Broome, Karratha and Kalgoorlie; and • \$22 million to expand existing homelessness services, including programs which operate in Geraldton, Albany and Kalgoorlie.
Implications	This is a very welcome investment as the housing crisis is felt more acutely in the regions, including when it comes to workforce capacity. The Government needs to address these challenges in the regions specifically.

Initiative	Regional Pensioner Travel Card (BP2, V2, P588)
Investment	\$20.3 million over four years

2024 - 2025 Budget

Description	Increase the value of the Regional Pensioner Travel Card by \$100 (from \$575 to \$675) from 1 July 2024.
Implications	This will support eligible pensioners to travel regionally with less out of pocket expenses however, the \$100 is mostly levelling out inflationary pressures on cost of fuel and transport.

Initiative	Regional Airfare Zone Cap (BP2, V2, P588)
Investment	\$65.3 million over two years
Description	Cheaper airfares for regional residents for personal travel.
Implications	This initiative has had significant uptake since its conception. We welcome the extension of funding that supports those living in regional and remote areas to remain connected to metropolitan Perth. This access increases the liveability of communities, where travel is often extortionately expensive. If you are a resident relying on income support, a \$600 round trip remains unaffordable.

Initiative	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) (BP2, V1, P306)
Investment	\$27.7 million over four years
Description	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) provides financial subsidies for eligible WA country residents to access specialist medical services that are not available locally.
Implications	<p>Additional funding for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) will help ensure regional and remote Western Australians continue to have access to specialist health care located in regional hubs or the Perth metro region. While additional funding has not been earmarked for a specific purpose, overspend on the PATS in the 2023/24 actuals indicates that additional funding will be used to cover increased costs of travel, accommodation, and food.</p> <p>No funding has been specifically identified to support a review of the PATS. A lack of commitment to such a review neglects a key ask of regional communities in WA, as outlined in the WACOSS 2024/25 State Budget Submission, and leaves communities struggling to navigate a service that may no longer be fit for service.</p>

Initiative	Continuation of Operation Regional Shield (BP2, V2, P406)
Investment	\$23.4 million over two years
Description	Operation Regional Shield provides additional police officers as a response to youth crime and anti-social behaviour in regional WA. This funding will support between 25 and 35 additional police officers in regional areas, primarily in the Kimberley region.

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Implications	Successive state budgets have increased investment into frontline policing, with no drop in community crime to correspond. Increased policing may lead only to an increase in arrests and increase the number of young people involved in our justice system. Targeted investment in community-based prevention and intervention projects such as Justice Reinvestment is needed to improve community safety in a sustainable manner by addressing the underlying socio-economic causes of crime.
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Initiative	Supporting Regional Health Services (BP2, V1, P306)
Investment	\$405.5 million over three years
Description	<p>Support patient care and services in regional areas focused on sustainable staffing, virtual care models and growing costs of service delivery, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$12.7 million over 2 years on Regional Palliative Care - \$8.8 million over 2 years on Hospital Avoidance Program - \$3.59 million over 2 years on Lions Eye Institute Services - \$244,000 over 2 years on Newman Renal Accommodation Facility - \$12.75 million over 2 years on Regional Palliative Care - \$1.43 million over 2 years on Renal Care Support Services - \$6.5 million over 2 years on Rural and Remote Nursing Posts - \$10.8 million over 2 years on Specialist Cancer Services - \$16.8 million over 1 year on Temporary Regional Incentives for Nurses and Midwives - \$15 million for a new MRI Unit at Hedland Health Campus - \$7.7 million to continue WACHS Critical Staff Accommodation Program - \$173.2 million redevelopment of Bunbury Hospital - \$43.4 million extra investment in Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment - \$2.3 million extension plan for Ronald McDonald House facility, supporting regional families travelling to Perth for medical treatment.
Implications	We welcome this much needed investment in regional healthcare that recognises many significant calls from community members. However, some investments don't go far enough to meet the significant demand of patients in regional and remote areas.

Initiative	Continuation of Remote Communities Program Horizon Power (BP2, V2, P797)
Investment	\$68.3 million over four years
Description	Improve reliability of critical infrastructure in remote communities such as power and water.

Implications	This is a welcome investment that will provide important connection for remote communities to receive the same reliability of water and power as regional and metropolitan areas.
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Initiative	Social Housing Energy Performance Upgrade Initiative Co-Investment (BP2, V2, P504)
Investment	\$20.7 million over three years
Description	Energy improvements and efficiencies to social homes.
Implications	This is a very necessary investment to improve the conditions and efficiencies to social housing. This will hopefully see the reduction of cost of living pressures such as air conditioning or heating for households doing it tough by making homes more climate appropriate.