



Call: pay up, MPs

Brad Ryan

WHITTLESEA residents are being urged to send postcards to politicians demanding federal funds to help the city cope with its growth.

Mayor Kris Pavlidis said Whittlesea would probably be Melbourne's fastest-growing municipality within a year, threatening already strained community infrastructure. "Our concern is that if this continues our community will be deprived of basic and vital services," she said.

Cr Pavlidis was speaking at the local launch of the Fund the Gap campaign, which is being pushed by the National Growth Areas Alliance, made up of 30 growth-area councils from six Australian cities.

Cr Pavlidis urged residents to sign and send Fund the Gap postcards to federal Minister for Local Government Jim Lloyd and Federal Opposition local government spokeswoman Kate Lundy.

The postcards ask for a commitment of federal funds of \$3.1 billion over 15 years for the 30 fast-growing council areas.

"It's about time the Federal Government recognised that we are here," Cr Pavlidis said.

Speaking at the launch, community welfare workers said their organisations were struggling to deal with the area's increasing demands.

"There is good community service infrastructure (in Whittlesea), but it is severely underfunded and strained," Whittlesea Community Connections' Jemal Ahmet said.

"Our nearest family violence services are two

municipalities away.

"Mental health services...are few and far between and, at times, completely inaccessible."

Stella Avram from Epping-based Kildonan Uniting Care, which offers legal, financial and housing services, said pressure on the organisation was intensifying. "We're increasingly being stretched to cover more services and programs because we know there is nothing else for the clients who are presenting to us," she said.

"Most of our funding...is coming from the corporate, not government sector."

Fund the Gap postcards are available from Whittlesea council's offices and council-run facilities.

For more information go to www.fundthegap.org



Mayor Kris Pavlidis calls for funding.