



Growth areas call for \$3.1 billion in federal funding

AN extra \$39 a year in Federal Government money for each resident of Whittlesea is needed to end a crippling funding crisis.

That's the finding of the National Growth Areas Alliance's research into demands for services in Australia's growth areas.

It found that residents in the growth areas such as Whittlesea needed \$3.1 billion to cover the funding shortfall.

Six Victorian councils – Hume, Casey, Cardinia, Wyndham, Melton and Whittlesea – have joined 24 other Australian councils in the NGAA's campaign to address the shortfall that jeopardises vital infrastructure in their communities.

The condition of local pools, libraries, parks, roads and social welfare services are in jeopardy unless federal money is given, according to the NGAA.

The association said \$11.7 billion needed to be spent during the next 15 years on the 30 booming council areas to keep up with the demand for services and amenities. The NGAA's campaign is deliberately geared to this year's federal election.

It plans to lobby election candidates and hold community meetings to push the issues on to the political agenda.

The NGAA spokesman, Whittlesea councillor Sam Alessi, said residents' demand for services and amenities was outstripping what councils could afford.

"With people now living and working closer to home, councils are under more pressure to deliver basic services while keeping rates and charges low," he said.

The NGAA plea for \$3.1 billion from the Federal Government's

surplus works out at \$206 million a year for the 30 councils, or \$39 a resident.

Victorian councils in the growth corridors around the edge of Melbourne united last year in a campaign with Leader Community Newspapers, called Fairer Communities, which led to \$25 million in State Government funding being given to councils for social welfare initiatives.

About one in four Australians live in growth areas.

A further 1.4 million people are expected in to the growth areas by 2022.

The campaign, known as Securing Our Future, will run in Leader Community Newspapers during the build-up to the election campaign.