



Cash call for growth



IT would take only an extra \$39 a year in federal funds for each resident of Hume to help end the funding crisis affecting the nation's growth councils.

The National Growth Areas Alliance research reveals that residents in Australia's growth areas, such as Hume, need \$3.1 billion to cover the funding shortfall.

Six Victorian councils – Hume, Casey, Cardinia, Wyndham, Melton and Whittlesea – have joined 24 other councils in the alliance'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 forthcoming, according to the alliance.

A total of \$11.7 billion needs to be spent during the next 15 years on the 30 booming council areas in Australia to keep up with the demand for services and amenities.

The alliance's campaign is deliberately geared to this year's federal election and involves sustained lobbying of election candidates and community meetings to push the issues on to the political agenda.

Alliance spokesman, Whittlesea councillor Sam Alessi, said residents' demand for services and amenities was outstripping

what councils could actually 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 association 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 of State Government funding being dis-

bursed to councils for social welfare initiatives.

This national campaign represents about one in four Australians who live in the growth areas. Forecasts indicate that a further 1.4 million Australians will move 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.

The NGAA research also pinpoints problems with the current grants system, which fails to recognise the special demands of the growth areas.