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Cash need spurred by growth

Amy Walker

SIX new families move into Melton Shire each day and pressure is mounting on the council to provide infrastructure and promote community cohesion.

The shire is expected to have 100,000 residents by 2030.

The National Growth Areas Alliance, of which the council is a member, reveals Melton would need a share of \$3.1 billion to cover funding shortfalls.

Melton acting chief executive Kelvin Tori said the population growth intensified many acute issues, such as the need for the duplication and electrification of the railway line and a Caroline Springs rail station.

"These aren't council responsibilities, which make them distinct from other needs but we can't really leave them out of the discussion," he said.

The other pressing needs include \$17 million to seal heavily used rural roads; \$60 million to duplicate Melton Highway; \$4 million for Abbey Rd and \$5 million for Westwood Drive bridges.

Mr Tori said building social cohesion through community infra-

structure also needed desperate attention.

"The real burning need we have is for recreation areas to meet the community demand and for community centres that build community cohesion," he said.

He said Melton needed a \$3 million athletics facility; \$1.5 million for the Northlake centre; \$2 million for the Taylor's Hill pre-school; \$3.5 million for a Burnside community centre; \$2 million for the Morton Homestead aged facility; \$8 million for the MacPherson Park upgrade and \$1 million for the botanic gardens.

Other needs included \$3.5 million for a youth centre; \$6 million for a new library; \$10 million for a cultural centre; \$2 million for the bike path network and \$1 million for tree planting.

"The arts is a very important aspect of communities... we've got an arts strategy which we're working on to increase the availability of infrastructure to support the arts," he said.

"It's about what a critical mass this population growth is in the national context. This is where most of the growth in the Australian population will go."