

Outback Communities Authority

Annual Business Plan and Budget 2024 - 25

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Presiding Member's Message

As Presiding Member of the Outback Communities Authority (the Authority), we are pleased to provide our draft Business Plan and Budget for the next financial year. This Business Plan is an essential statutory requirement to facilitate our funding for the next financial year.

As indicated in the 23/24 Business Plan and Budget, the Authority is developing a new Strategic Plan in partnership with Outback communities through consultative processes that simultaneously involve the Authority's governance, operational leadership, and those people who live and work in Outback SA, and those organisations that deliver services to our communities.

This process commenced in November 2023 at the Progress Association Forum held in Port Augusta and is taking account of the material generously provided at Coober Pedy through the Outback Futures consultation. We expect this exciting new 'blueprint' to be finalised in coming months, acknowledging that we are also delivering the Outback SA Drought Resilience Plan, which also requires extensive engagement and this has put time pressures on our consultation processes for the blueprint. It is also identifying synergies with the blueprint content.

We are very grateful for our communities' input and will visit all of our communities by August to obtain their input into the Strategic Blueprint.

In addition to visiting communities the Director and I have commenced holding regular online meetings with members of Progress Associations for an informal exchange of information. These catch ups have been very useful in achieving timely information exchange with our communities. We will continue to engage in this way and welcome any suggestions you have about the content of these meetings.

I look forward to considerable progress over the next 12 months in how Outback SA communities are positioned to capitalise on their potential for their communities and the state of SA.

*Jan Ferguson OAM
Presiding Member*

Director's Message

The last 12 months have seen many changes in the Office of the Outback Communities Authority, as we position ourselves to be a more agile organisation that works in partnership with our communities, is easy to deal with and maintains good communication.

We have sown the seeds for several interrelated initiatives, including a customer relationship management system, a complete overhaul of our website, and a new regional and community identity. These will all come to fruition in the coming months.

The Office has introduced a monthly newsletter, as well as a 'grants' newsletter. We welcome your subscription to these regular publications.

We will continue to roll out high speed public wi-fi to our communities as funding becomes available, and actively seek partnerships that support improved liveability, amenity and managed economic development. The wi-fi initiative is possible because of our strong working relationship with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which shares our vision for connectivity to improve personal, social and economic well being.

We will also provide strong support to Leigh Creek in its journey as an independent township that is part of the Outback collective of communities.

While a great deal has been achieved in 2023/24 we still have lots to do. With a great staff team, shared vision and purpose and a strong, engaged Board, I am confident that we will continue to make steady progress towards Outback SA becoming a place where our residents enjoy services on parity with those available to people living in regional centres and our capital city.

Marg Howard

Director

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About the Outback Communities Authority

The Outback Communities Authority (the Authority) is State Government Statutory body established on 1 July 2010 to administer the *Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Act 2009*. It is responsible for the efficient, effective, and accountable administration and management of outback communities in the unincorporated areas of South Australia, along with promoting their participation in local, place-based decision making.

The Authority comprises seven board members, supported by administrative staff in the Office for the Outback Communities Authority (OCA) who are assigned by the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and are responsible for the efficient and effective governance and management of the Authority's affairs. There is currently one Board vacancy.

The Authority's role, in partnership with outback community organisations, is to facilitate and support the provision of local government type services that enhance liveability, such as community development, infrastructure management, waste management and recreational facilities. The Authority also provides public facilities including airstrips, public toilets, open spaces, and UHF repeater networks. Various State and Federal Government agencies have responsibility for other services and infrastructure such as health, housing, education, roads and community and social inclusion services.

The Authority seeks appropriate partnerships to improve outcomes for outback communities, and works collaboratively with communities, stakeholders, and communities of interest in planning for and delivering a thriving, resilient Outback SA.

Funding Local Services and Facilities

The Authority is primarily funded through two means:

- the Federal Government's Local Government Grants Commission (in the same way as a Council incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1999*), and
- a State Government appropriation.

The State Government substantially increased its appropriation commencing in the 23/24 financial year. This increase was the result of the Outback Futures report recommendations, which identified the costs of some of the services provided by the Authority primarily consumed by people from outside Outback SA.

The Authority partners with local communities to provide funding assistance for local priorities through Community Affairs Resourcing and Management (CARM) Agreements and in some communities, with the addition of a Community Contribution.

When considering investment in new or upgraded infrastructure and other assets in the future (as well as when replacing existing assets at the end of their useful lives), the Authority focuses on service levels desired by outback communities which are affordable in the longer term within responsible financial constraints. Apart from the initial capital cost of such assets, ongoing funding must be available to meet the annual maintenance and other operating expenses of these assets.

To assist in the provision of services to outback communities the Authority has two revenue raising mechanisms; a Community Contribution Scheme (CCS) which is a community specific levy, and the Asset Sustainability Levy (ASL), which is a whole of region levy. Both are similar to council rates applied under the *Local Government Act 1999*. While the introduction of an ASL mechanism was a recommendation of the Outback Futures report, this has so far not been supported by Government.

Community Contribution Scheme (CCS) – Andamooka

In early 2012, in partnership with the Andamooka Progress and Opal Miners Association Incorporated (APOMA), community consultation was undertaken to enable community input into a Community Plan, Financial Plan and Budget. The consultation initiative included mail-outs, media statements and community meetings. Subsequently, a CCS was implemented at the request of APOMA with the wide support of the Andamooka community. The community contribution for 2012-13 was set at \$400 per property unit. The CCS has continued uninterrupted and at the same level since.

APOMA has been consulted to confirm if they agree in principle to enter a CARM Agreement which includes a community contribution for 2024-25. The Authority commenced consultation in May 2024 on the Andamooka Annual Budget and CARM Agreement including a CCS for 2024-25. Community consultation suggests the annual cost of \$400 per property unit will be continued for the 2024-25 financial year.

Community Contribution Scheme (CCS) – Iron Knob

Early in 2013, the Iron Knob Progress Association Incorporated approached the Authority requesting assistance for the delivery of municipal services for Iron Knob residents using a CCS. Community consultation commenced in October 2013 on the Iron Knob Business Plan, Budget, CCS and Community Affairs Resourcing and Management Agreement. The consultation suggested that a CCS would be widely supported by the community.

The Iron Knob CCS was applied from 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2014 with the levy set at \$120 (\$60 per quarter for two quarters) per property unit. The CCS has continued uninterrupted at the same level until 2021-22. At the Iron Knob Progress Association Incorporated's request, consultation was undertaken by the Authority in May 2022 to increase the CCS amount, with an outcome of community agreement to increase the CCS to \$360 per

property unit per annum. Preliminary consultation suggests the annual cost of \$360 per property unit will be continued for the 2024-25 financial year.

Community Contribution Scheme (CCS) – Leigh Creek

On 1 January 2016 the Authority commenced providing municipal services into Leigh Creek. To provide these services the Authority was provided a specific allocation from State Government with the clear understanding that it did not impact on the Authority's existing budget.

As part of its role in supporting Leigh Creek in its transition to an independent township, the Authority commenced consultation in May 2023 on the Leigh Creek Annual Budget and CARM Agreement including a CCS for 2023-24, with the per property unit being set at \$560 for the 2023-24 financial year.

Authority staff are working with the Leigh Creek Residents and Ratepayers Association to establish the per property unit amount for 2024-25 as the Association acquires more assets in its transition to an independent town and identifies costs associated with their maintenance.

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Focus for 2024-25

In finalising The Strategic Blueprint for Outback SA the Authority is positioning itself to support the region's sustainable growth, economic prosperity and enhanced quality of life for its residents while preserving its unique cultural and environmental heritage.

While the Authority is not responsible for critical infrastructure such as roads and utilities, it is actively pursuing changes to government policies and regulatory frameworks that will result in more fit for purpose solutions to issues such as water security and energy supply. An example of this stronger advocacy work is the newly formed Outback Roads Consultative Forum, developed in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and convened by the Authority.

The goal areas identified in the Outback Futures Project are still relevant to our business in the coming year.

1. Liveability

Services, amenity, and infrastructure that support improved liveability of the region.

2. Vibrancy

A vibrant region with a consolidated, strategic cultural and events management structure that builds social capital.

3. Connection

A well-connected Outback where collaboration between the Authority, communities, regions, industries, and stakeholders is part of the way things are done.

4. Future opportunities

A future oriented approach to services and infrastructure that positions Outback SA to capitalise on opportunities for appropriate economic development while maintaining its unique environment and character.

5. The Brand

The Outback SA identity and economy is strong and well understood.

6. Governance

The Authority's governance is strong, transparent, accessible, and represents the region well; and autonomous in its ability to advocate for issues that matter to Outback communities.

2024 - 25 Key Activities and Action Plan

In addition to finalising The Strategic Blueprint for Outback SA, the Authority is consolidating a range of initiatives that have been commenced in 2023- 24.

This includes the Outback SA Drought Resilience Plan, developed through extensive consultation, and taking future funding opportunities for implementation of some of its elements. We will continue to partner with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to deliver on the vision of high-speed public wi-fi in all of our communities.

2024-25 will see the Office of the Outback Communities Authority capitalise on the work done to implement its customer relationship management system. This will mean a seamless interface between internal administration, information management and workflows and the new Outback SA website, which is expected to go live early in the new financial year.

The Outback SA regional and community identity concepts have received overwhelming positive support from our communities and stakeholders, and we will implement that opportunistically as funding becomes available and synergistic projects emerge.

Action	Goal Areas	Targets and Measures
Develop a comprehensive waste management strategy for Outback SA	Liveability The Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is available to write a business case for funding to better manage waste management by December 2024
Consult then publish a Strategic Blueprint for Outback SA that brings together the Authority's aspirations and vision and those of Outback Communities	Liveability Connection Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blueprint is endorsed by key stakeholders by October 2024
Partner with Outback communities and service providers to identify infrastructure and utility gaps, priorities, and opportunities for innovation.	Liveability Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure and utility gaps, priorities and opportunities for innovation are recognized in the Strategic Blueprint for Outback SA by October 2024
Support communities to develop strategic and community development plans that improve amenity and aesthetics, inclusive of 'shovel ready' projects that improve liveability.	Liveability Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This action will be fast-tracked should the funding application to Stream 1 of the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program be successful.
In partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, deliver high speed public wi-fi in all Outback communities and at strategic remote locations.	Liveability Connection Future Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 100% increase in the number of communities with high-speed public wi-fi by June 2025
Implement the new Outback SA regional and community identity	Vibrancy The Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial identity concepts installed by August 2024 Community entrance signage installed as funding becomes available
The Authority's compliance function is supported in its activities by fit for purpose regulations	Liveability Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulations in place by June 2025
Revise and modernise the Authority's policies	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy review schedule implemented by December 2024
Continue to support Leigh Creek in its transition to an independent township	Liveability Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous improvement in the community's understanding of budget forecasting

Budget Snapshot of 2024 - 25

The 2024-25 Budget has been developed in accordance with the *Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Act 2009*. Management of the Budget during 2024-25 will include regular monitoring reports to the Authority.

The Australian Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program Phase Four will commence in 2024 with a completion deadline of June 2025.

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2024-25 OCA Budget

The 2024-25 Budget sets out income, operating expenses, and capital investment expenditure proposals consistent with the 2024-25 Business Plan and 2020-2025 Strategic Management Plan.

	2024 - 25 Draft Budget \$000	Notes
Income		
Financial Assistance Grants	1,848	(1)
State Appropriations	3,070	(2)
Community Contribution Scheme	489	(3)
Externally funded projects	2,371	(4)
Other	309	(5)
Total Income	8,087	
Operating Expenses		
Employee Costs	1,239	(6)
Supplies and Services	3,948	(7)
Grants and Contributions	2,688	(8)
Depreciation	801	(11)
Total Operating Expenses	8,676	
Surplus / (Deficit)		
Operating Surplus / Deficit	-235	
Less Capital Expenditure on Assets	-212	(9)
Plus Depreciation	801	
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	0	(10)

2024-25 Budget Notes:

- 1 Indexation of Federal Government Financial Assistance Grants.
- 2 Annual State Appropriation including Leigh Creek operations and Outback Futures appropriation.
- 3 Accrual of income from Community Contribution Scheme (CCS) levies planned for communities of Andamooka, Iron Knob and Leigh Creek for 2024-25.
- 4 Covers expected income from the Oodnadatta Municipal Services program and the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program Phase 4.
- 5 Income from interest on OCA funds, outback airstrips, dog registrations, public toilet donations, Andamooka Water Supply, and outback community insurance.
- 6 Includes Board Members' fees and employees supporting the transition of Leigh Creek to SA Government.
- 7 Includes expenses associated with the SA Government management of Leigh Creek, management of OCA owned assets and externally funded projects.
- 8 Includes community assistance through annual community CARM Agreements. Also includes joint projects with non-government stakeholders and expected expenditure for Local Roads and Community Infrastructure projects. The budget for CCS payments does not include expenses of about \$70,000 associated with the collection of the CCS which are included under 'Employee Costs' and 'Supplies and Services'.
- 9 Caters for capital expenditure on renewal and replacement of existing OCA assets (\$212,000).
- 10 Net Surplus / (Deficit) equals Operating Surplus / (Deficit), less Net Outlays on Assets.
- 11 The Budget for depreciation expenses takes account of new OCA assets acquired because of Leigh Creek transitioning to SA Government.

Office for the Outback Communities Authority
26 Mildred Street Port Augusta SA 5700
PO Box 3326 Port Augusta West SA 5700
Tel: (08) 8648 5970
Tel: 1800 640 542 (freecall)
Facsimile: (08) 8648 5971
Email: oca@sa.gov.au
www.oca.sa.gov.au