

New push for uni hub at Mt Barker

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A peak body representing growth areas around Australia has put pressure on the Federal Government to deliver a university hub in the Hills, labelling it a "priority project" for the upcoming Federal budget.

In its pre-budget submission, the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) called on the Government to commit funding for a Regional University Centre (RUC) in Mt Barker, and ensure funds allocated for a freeway upgrade by the previous Government were honored.

An investment of \$75m shared between Federal and State governments was committed last year for the freeway project, along with \$1.5m for a RUC in Mayo.

However, an application by Regional Development Australia Hills, Fleurieu and KI for a Mt Barker RUC was rejected by the Federal Department of Education earlier this year.



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NGAA chief executive Bronwen Clark said key infrastructure projects needed to be better coordinated and sequenced by the Federal and State governments to keep up with Mt Barker's growth.

"These things take a lot of time to plan, develop and build - if we started now, by the time it's ready and operational there will be a much larger population needing these services," she said.

"Each year it's delayed or not funded ... it means there are growing populations that won't have access to tertiary education locally.

"All the data shows that young people living in growth areas have lower tertiary education rates than

others, and a lot of that is just because of (lack of) access."

Funding for the second stage of the South Eastern Freeway Managed Motorways project was announced by the former Federal Government last year, but Ms Clark wants the current Government to reaffirm the commitment in this year's budget.

"We really need this budget to re-commit (to the project) ... (Federal Infrastructure Minister Catherine King) has said all of these press release projects announced by the former Government are up for review," she said.

"We hope that this really-needed project in a growth area will go ahead with Local Government being consulted as to the best outcome."

It came as the Federal Opposition raised concerns that projects such as the Hahndorf Township Improvements and Access Project could be axed under the Federal Government's 90 day review of infrastructure projects which were announced by the previous Government.

Ms Clark said Mt Barker's current infrastructure was unlikely to meet the needs of a growing population expected to exceed 47,000 by 2036, and become the State's second biggest city.

"We need to plan better for the future ... we need to meet the housing shortage, there's no excuse given the technologies and design expertise we have that it can't be (solved)," she said.

Other priority projects listed by the NGAA include the Westlink Stage 2 in the Wyndham City Council area in Victoria, and the Outer Harbour road corridor in the City of Kwinana council area in WA.