

Peri-Regional status

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Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula are like no other parts of Victoria, with their urban and rural mix, high-value agricultural and conservation land, and iconic tourism destinations.

This mix creates distinct economic advantages and disadvantages, and there are State-significant economic opportunities in both LGAs that are currently unsupported by any consistent funding streams.

Acknowledging this, and opening up regional funding streams to these municipalities, will benefit the regions, their residents and the State of Victoria.

We need a new status – Peri-Regional – that retains our metropolitan classification, recognises our unique challenges and opportunities, and unlocks the significant economic potential of our regions.

The potential of Peri-Regional status

Peri-Regional status will allow us to better service and support both our urban and rural areas, by:

- Acknowledging the unique mix of metropolitan and regional characteristics of Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula
- Granting access to relevant Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding to realise local, state and national economic potential
- Creating greater opportunities for our high-value tourism, agricultural and cultural sectors.

The missing piece in Victoria's spatial composition

Peri-Regional areas are the missing piece in the spatial composition of Victoria.

As a unique geographical form, Peri-Regional completes the picture, which now includes metropolitan, interface, peri-urban, regional cities and rural councils.

There is a precedent for creating a new status. In 2020, following advocacy from six regional councils (Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Macedon Ranges, Moorabool, Golden Plains and Surf Coast Shire), the Victorian Government recognised the group as **Peri-Urban**, allowing them access to the Growing Suburbs Fund, previously only available to Melbourne's ten Interface Councils.

What defines a Peri-Regional area?

Peri-Regional areas can be identified by mapping the concentration of high-value agribusiness land, tourism destinations and conservation land.

Doing this reveals that Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula are predominantly Peri-Regional in nature.

Retaining the "regional in the urban"

Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula have significant Green Wedge Zone land controls and physical constraints, meaning we are retaining, rather than transforming, our regional characteristics - the opposite scenario to most Interface Councils.

This creates significant economic potential for Victoria.

The assets and amenities in Peri-Regional areas (which

service agribusiness, tourism and land conservation) are critical to the economic wellbeing of Victoria and are important 'green lungs' for Greater Melbourne, contributing significantly to the State's globally recognised liveability.

However, retaining the regional in the urban also generates vulnerabilities that require tailored responses.

Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula have:

- metropolitan challenges such as skills gaps and high housing prices
- regional challenges such as poor digital connectivity and public transport access, and
- outer metropolitan challenges caused by socio-economic disadvantage across various measures (and reflected in high SEIFA index values).

Why 'Interface' status is no longer sufficient

Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula are embedded amongst the rapidly urbanising Interface Councils of outer metropolitan Melbourne.

However, half the Interface Councils (Casey, Hume, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham) are also classified as Metropolitan Melbourne Growth Areas, designated for urban use and due to be extended, to house and serve new communities of the future.

By contrast, Yarra Ranges' and Mornington Peninsula's population growth rates over the past 20 years have been closer to the average rates of regional cities and rural LGAs than interface or peri-urban groupings¹.

A consistent approach that will unlock economic potential

Plan Melbourne and the Double Triple Vision 2020 set the spatial agenda for Victoria, and our Peri-Regional LGAs can and should play a major role in helping Victoria meet these objectives.

Unfortunately, the current policy setting means that

Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges fall through the policy gap. Neither urban nor regional, they are often required to apply to urban programs to fund what are essentially regional objectives. While they do occasionally secure funding for these activities, it is often ad hoc.

Moreover, the evidence shows the level of support provided is not commensurate with the economic contribution the two LGAs make to the State.

There are State-significant economic opportunities in the two LGAs that currently do not match any consistently regulated funding support stream. By adjusting regional funding programs (particularly those for agribusiness and tourism) so that Peri-Regional areas are recognised, these places will make a greater, long-term contribution to the State's economic wellbeing.

For example, an evaluation of four unfunded agribusiness and tourism projects in the two LGAs (all of which are similar to funded regional projects) suggests **around \$121 million in GRP could have been generated for the State** if they had been funded.

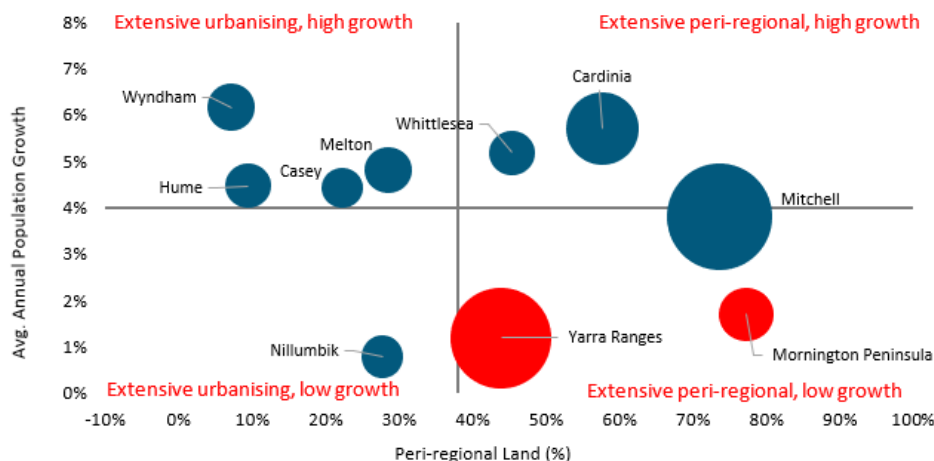
The ask

Help us to better support our rural businesses and populations, and increase our contribution to Victoria's economy, by recognising Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula with a new status: Peri-Regional.

Peri-Regional would enable the Victorian Government to:

- fine-tune the current policy and funding setting, to better recognise our regional needs and potential
- grant Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula consistent access to relevant Regional Victoria funding programs to better support our evidenced regional needs.

Read the full report, 'A Peri-Regional Approach: the economic and social benefits for the Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges'.



Source: ABS, 2021, Geografia, 2021, Geoscience Nexus, ABS Agricultural Census 2016-17, Tourism Research Australia, 2019, ABS Experimental Land Account, 2016.

1. Source: ABS, 2021. Average annual growth rate: Interface (3.9%), peri-urban (2.4%), Mornington Peninsula (1.4%), Regional City (1.0%), Yarra Ranges (0.6%), Rural (0.01%)