



MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

# MAV Board Regional Groupings of Councils Review

Options Paper \_\_\_\_\_

# Contents

Page number

---

2            **Foreword**

---

3            **1. Introduction**  
**2. Review Principles**

---

4            **3. Current Regional Groupings**

---

5            **4. Other (Non-MAV Board) Regional Groupings**

---

6            **5. Regional Grouping Options**

---

14           **How to Provide Feedback**

---

15           **Attachment 1**

---

# Foreword



## From the MAV President

On behalf of the MAV Board, I am pleased to release this Options Paper and invite feedback from councils on the options presented for the new configuration of the MAV regional groupings of councils.

The need for the review of groupings, follows the decision of State Council to alter the number of regions from 12 to 10 and the number of delegates elected to the MAV Board as Directors from 12 to 10.

The regional groupings were last reviewed in the early 2000s. This review provides an opportunity to consider present-day requirements including how to group councils in a way that best serves the sector and the good governance of the MAV. In future, the MAV Rules 2022 provide for regional grouping reviews to be conducted at least once every six years.

Whilst there are many ways to configure the regional groupings, the Board's identification of options was underpinned by the following principles. The principles, applied as a whole and not on a hierarchy, provide that each regional grouping should have an equal number of councils; each regional grouping should comprise of councils with common interests; and regional groupings should align with other representative structures that engage with councils.

The MAV Rules 2022 continue the requirement for State Council to determine the number of regions, and the Board to determine the configuration of regional groupings and the member councils

within each group. The feedback from councils about location and appropriateness of the regional groupings will be a critical consideration to assist the Board to make its decision.

Given the next MAV Board elections will be held on 3 March 2023, the Board is aiming to make its decision about the regional groupings in December this year. This will provide time for the MAV delegates to prepare for the elections and enable the MAV to make the necessary preparations for the elections as required by the MAV Rules 2022.

As demonstrated during our recent review of the MAV Rules, the MAV Board is committed to consultation with our members and we look forward to engaging with councils about this review. We invite and encourage all councils to provide **feedback** on the options proposed for the metropolitan and non-metropolitan regional groupings by Wednesday 7 December 2022.



**Cr David Clark**  
**MAV President**

19 October 2022

# 1. Introduction

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Rules 2022 (the Rules) were made, subject to Governor in Council approval and publication in the Victoria Government Gazette, at the Special meeting of State Council on Friday 16 September 2022.<sup>1</sup>

The Rules create an MAV Board comprised of the President and ten delegates elected to the Board in the office of Director – five from metropolitan councils and five from non-metropolitan councils. Under the former MAV Rules 2013, the MAV Board comprised the President and 12 Board Members – six from metropolitan and six from non-metropolitan councils.

In accordance with the Rules, the MAV Board must now consult participating member councils to determine the regional groupings of councils and classify each member council as belonging to:

- one of the five regional groupings of metropolitan councils; or
- one of the five regional groupings of non-metropolitan councils.

The MAV Board has appointed John Nevins, a former local government CEO and Victorian public sector senior executive, as the independent consultant

to make a recommendation to the Board about the regional groupings of councils following consultation with councils.

A Steering Committee has been appointed to support this project and report to the Board comprising of the MAV President Cr David Clark, and Cr Ruth Gstrein, Deputy President (Rural) and Cr Rohan Leppert, Deputy President (Metro).

This Options Paper invites councils to provide feedback about two options for the regional groupings of metropolitan councils and two options for the regional groupings of non-metropolitan councils.

The MAV Board intends to finalise the review of the regional groupings by making a determination about the classification of each council and the regional groupings in December. This will provide the required time to prepare for the MAV Board elections which will be held on 3 March 2023. Once the determination and classification has been made the Board must, under the Rules, notify each council within 14 days about the decision of the Board.

# 2. Review Principles

The MAV Board has resolved to apply the following principles in determining which regional grouping a council will belong to:

- each region should be of equal electoral size (number of councils)
- each region should comprise of councils with common interests, be these spatial or by nature of the councils' operating environment; and

- MAV regions should align with other representative structures that engage with councils.

These principles will be applied as a whole and not on a hierarchy.

The Board's intention is to create fairness and equity in the voting system across councils keeping in mind the primary purpose of the regional groupings is to elect the MAV Board Directors.

*1. The MAV Rules 2022 will commence on the day the Rules are published in the Victoria Government Gazette. Councils will be notified when this occurs.*

# 3. Current Regional Groupings

Since the early 2000s there have been 12 MAV Board regions, six covering non-metropolitan Victoria and six covering metropolitan Melbourne. The existing groups are shown in [Attachment 1](#).

As demonstrated in *Table 1: Council Numbers - Current MAV Board Regions* (refer below), there is no consistency in the number of councils in the existing 12 regions. Apart from Mornington Peninsula's membership of the Interface Region, all regional groups are based on geographic location, with each group comprised of a cluster of councils that share municipal boundaries.

## 3.1 Metropolitan Regional Groupings

The existing six metropolitan regional groupings are made up of 31 councils. The regional groupings vary in resident population size from 672,601 to 989,433. The total combined resident population of these councils is 4,890,986, which represents 74.7 per cent of Victoria's resident population.<sup>2</sup> Three metropolitan regional groupings have five council members, two have six council members and one regional grouping has four council members.

The Metropolitan Southern Region has the smallest number of council members, with four councils, and represents 13.19 per cent of the Victorian resident population. The Interface Region with its six member councils represents

15.11 per cent of the Victorian resident population. These regions represent at least two per cent more of the Victorian resident population than the three metropolitan Board regions with five council members (Metropolitan Central, Metropolitan South-East, Metropolitan East).

It is of interest to note that the current Interface Region does not include all interface councils. A third of the interface councils are members of other metropolitan regions.

## 3.2 Non-metropolitan Regional Groupings

The existing six non-metropolitan regional groupings include 48 councils. The regions vary in resident population size from 132,880 to 511,979. In total they have a combined resident population of 1,656,108, which represents 25.3 per cent of the Victorian resident population.<sup>3</sup> One non-metropolitan regional grouping has six council members, two regional groupings have seven council members, two regional groupings have eight council members and one regional grouping, Rural North-East, has 12 council members.

The non-metropolitan South Central Region with a resident population of 511,979, equal to 7.82 per cent of Victoria's resident population, is the largest non-metropolitan region based on resident population. This region comprises eight council members based around and incorporating Geelong.

**Table 1: Council Numbers – Current MAV Board Regions**

| Metropolitan MAV Board Region | Number of Councils | Non-metropolitan MAV Board Region | Number of Councils |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Metropolitan Central          | 5                  | Rural North-West                  | 8                  |
| Metropolitan South-East       | 5                  | Rural South-West                  | 7                  |
| Metropolitan East             | 5                  | Rural North-Central               | 7                  |
| Metropolitan Southern         | 4                  | Gippsland                         | 6                  |
| Metropolitan West             | 6                  | Rural North-East                  | 12                 |
| Interface                     | 6                  | Rural South-Central               | 8                  |
| <b>Metropolitan total</b>     | <b>31</b>          | <b>Non-metropolitan total</b>     | <b>48</b>          |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b>         |                    |                                   | <b>79</b>          |

2. Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Regional Population, 2021

3. Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Regional Population, 2021

# 4. Other (Non-MAV Board) Regional Groupings

Victorian councils are members of various regional groups. Several of these are determined by the Victorian government. Most of them are established and driven by councils' shared interests and objectives.

In addition to State Upper and Lower House electoral boundaries (which do not align with council boundaries) examples of State Government-instigated council groupings include:

- Regional Development Victoria's nine Regional Partnerships.
- Department of Health's 28 primary care partnerships (PCPs) - 19 in rural Victoria and nine in the metropolitan Melbourne area.
- The six metropolitan regions under Plan Melbourne.

Most regional groups are driven by councils themselves. For the purposes of this Options Paper more than 20 council groupings were reviewed including:

- LeadWest comprising five councils in Melbourne's West
- G21 Geelong Region Alliance comprising five councils
- Interface Councils comprising ten councils that form a ring around metropolitan Melbourne

- M9 - an alliance of nine inner Melbourne councils
- South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) comprising nine councils
- Northern Councils Alliance (NCA) comprising seven councils
- Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) comprising nine councils
- Regional Cities Victoria comprising ten councils
- Association of Bayside Municipalities comprising nine councils
- Timber Towns Victoria comprising 21 councils
- Rural Councils Victoria comprising 38 councils
- Murray River Group of Councils comprising six councils
- North East Local Government Network comprising 12 councils
- Eastern Region Group of Councils comprising six councils
- Inner Southern Metropolitan Mayors Forum comprising six councils.

The size and membership of each group is largely determined by the specific shared purpose(s) of the group.

# 5. Regional Grouping Options

The draft options for the regional groupings of councils are proposed in sections 5.1 and 5.2. These options have been informed by the following observations and considerations:

- a) the status quo must change. The Rules provide for ten regional groupings – five metropolitan and five non-metropolitan. This necessitates change to the existing 12 regions.
- b) there is no single right way to configure the regional groupings, multiple options exist. The MAV Board will apply the principles in section 2 above.
- c) region configurations do not preclude councils from participating in other regional groups in pursuit of delivering the best possible outcomes for their communities.
- d) spatial connectivity of a regions' member councils continues to be a dominant consideration. Except for Mornington Peninsula's membership of the current Interface Region, spatial connectivity and the associated community and economic interactions this connectivity provides, has been a key feature of existing regions.
- e) there is no consistent Victorian Government regional grouping of councils.
- f) individual councils are members of multiple different regional groups and associations.
- g) the membership of existing council groupings, including those established by the State Government, are primarily structured for the specific purpose or shared interest of each individual group.
- h) the existing regional groupings do not have an equal number of council members. The new groupings will also be unable to have an equal number of councils because 31 metropolitan councils and 48 non-metropolitan councils cannot be evenly divided into five groups each.
- i) there is not and cannot be consistency between metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions in terms of the number of councils in each region.
- j) within each option, some but not all regions can have equal numbers of councils and similar population sizes.
- k) with the Rules requiring each MAV Board Director to regularly meet with the other delegates and participating member councils within the region that they represent, the geographic and landscape features of eastern Victoria impacting the construct of the current Gippsland group of councils are still a significant consideration regardless of recent improvements in online connectivity.

## 5.1 Options: Metropolitan Regional Groupings

### 5.1.1 Metropolitan Option 1

This option is based on a variation of Plan Melbourne's six metropolitan regions, which, except for Mitchell Shire Council, align with the Metropolitan Partnership boundaries. Under this option, Plan Melbourne's Inner Metro Region would be merged with the Inner South East Region into a proposed "Inner Metropolitan South East Region". All other regions in this option match the Plan Melbourne regions. This would result in four metropolitan regional groupings each with six member councils and one metropolitan regional grouping with seven member councils.

The assessment of Option 1 against the review principles outlined in section 2 is as follows:

**Principle: Each region should be of equal electoral size (number of councils)**

Complies as best able. This option provides for four regional groupings with six councils each and one regional grouping with seven councils.

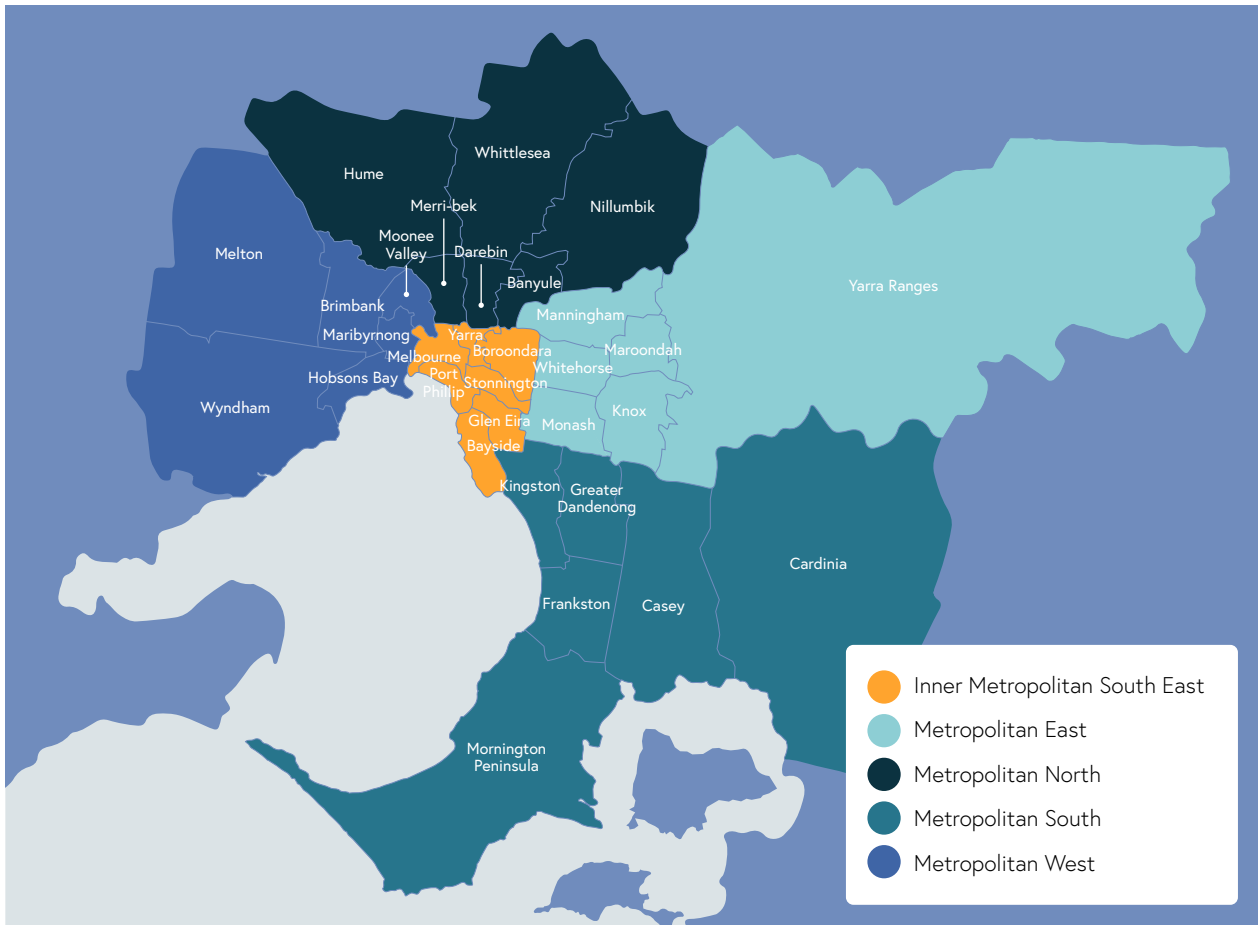
**Principle: Each region should comprise of councils with common interests, be these spatial or by nature of the councils' operating environment**

This option complies in that all councils in each regional grouping have spatial continuity with associated community and economic interactions across some or all of a region's members.

**Principle: MAV regions should align with other representative structures that engage with councils**

This option complies as it is based on Plan Melbourne's six metropolitan regions, with the only variation being the joining of two regions.

**Metropolitan Option 1**



| Metropolitan Option 1                | Member Councils   | Number of Councils |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Inner Metropolitan South East (IMSE) | Bayside, Boroondara, Glen Eira, Melbourne, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Yarra   | 7                  |
| Metropolitan East (ME)               | Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges                 | 6                  |
| Metropolitan North (MN)              | Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek, Nillumbik, Whittlesea                      | 6                  |
| Metropolitan South (MS)              | Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula | 6                  |
| Metropolitan West (MW)               | Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham            | 6                  |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b>                |   | <b>31</b>          |



### 5.1.2 Metropolitan Option 2

This option proposes:

- the Metropolitan East Region be the same as Option 1.
- expansion of the existing Metropolitan Central Region to include Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong Councils
- reconfiguration of the remaining three regions.

This option provides for four regions with six councils and one region with seven councils.

The assessment against the review principles outlined in section 2 is as follows:

**Principle: Each region should be of equal electoral size (number of councils)**

Complies as best able. This option provides for four regional groupings with six councils each and one regional grouping with seven councils.

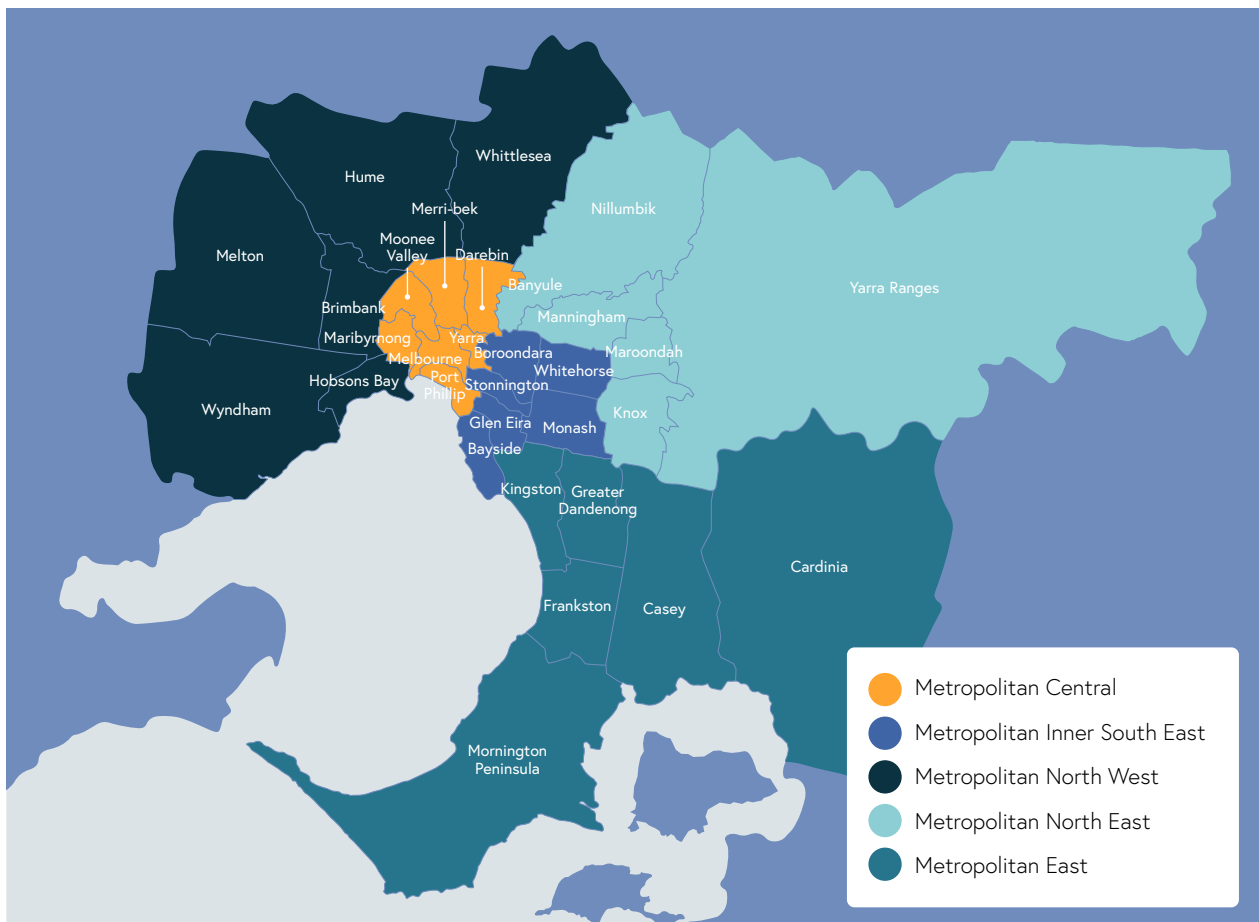
**Principle: Each region should comprise of councils with common interests, be these spatial or by nature of the councils' operating environment**

This option complies as all councils in each regional grouping have spatial continuity with associated community and economic interactions across some or all of a region's members.

**Principle: MAV regions should align with other representative structures that engage with councils**

This option is not based on a single existing state or local government grouping of councils. It draws on a range of groupings of metropolitan councils.

#### Metropolitan Option 2



| Metropolitan Option 2                | Member Councils  | Number of Councils |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Metropolitan Central (MC)            | Darebin, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Merri-bek, Moonee Valley, Port Phillip, Yarra | 7                  |
| Metropolitan North East (MNE)        | Banyule, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges                  | 6                  |
| Metropolitan East (ME)               | Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula  | 6                  |
| Metropolitan Inner South East (MISE) | Bayside, Boroondara, Glen Eira, Monash, Stonnington, Whitehorse                | 6                  |
| Metropolitan North West (MNW)        | Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Melton, Whittlesea, Wyndham                       | 6                  |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b>                |  | <b>31</b>          |

### Metropolitan Options Comparison vs Current

#### Option 1

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| IMSE                  | 7                         |
| ME                    | 6                         |
| MN                    | 6                         |
| MS                    | 6                         |
| MW                    | 6                         |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>31</b>                 |

#### Option 2

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| MC                    | 7                         |
| MNE                   | 6                         |
| ME                    | 6                         |
| MISE                  | 6                         |
| MNW                   | 6                         |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>31</b>                 |

#### Current Metropolitan Regions\*

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| MC                    | 5                         |
| MSE                   | 5                         |
| ME                    | 5                         |
| MS                    | 4                         |
| MW                    | 6                         |
| I                     | 6                         |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>31</b>                 |

\*Refer to Attachment 1

## 5.2 Options: Non-metropolitan Regional Groupings

### 5.2.1 Non-metropolitan Option 1

This option is based on the nine Regional Development Victoria's (RDV) Regional Partnerships and proposes retaining RDV's Gippsland Region and combines the other eight regions to form four regions as follows:

- Goulburn and Ovens Murray Regional Partnership Regions combined.
- Loddon Campaspe and Mallee Regional Partnership Regions combined.
- Wimmera Southern Mallee and Central Highlands Regional Partnerships combined, excluding Golden Plains.
- Great South Coast and Barwon Regional Partnership Regions combined, with Golden Plains included.

The assessment against the review principles outlined in section 2 is as follows:

**Principle: Each region should be of equal electoral size (number of councils)**

Arguably complies as most reasonably practical. This option delivers one regional grouping (Gippsland) with six councils, three regional groupings with ten councils each and one regional grouping with 12 councils.

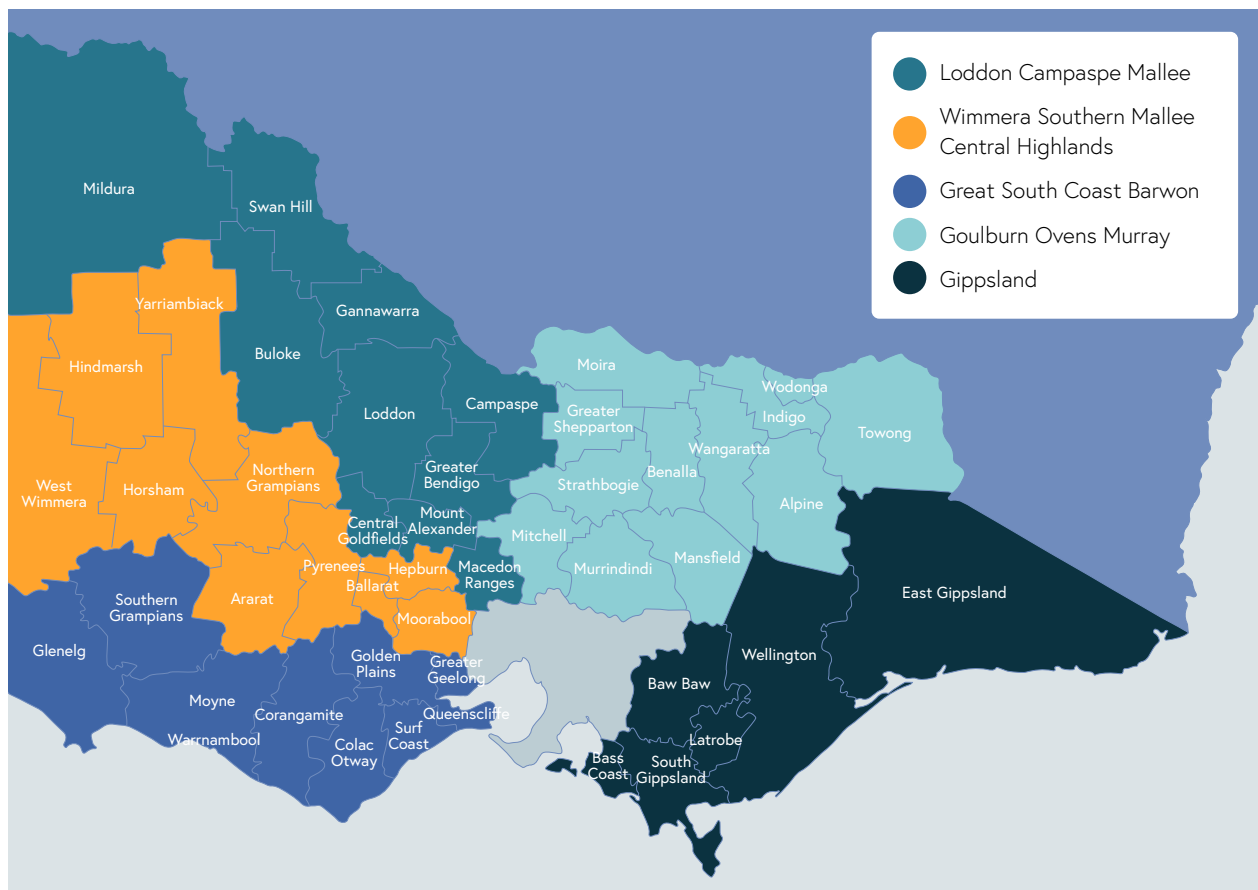
**Principle: Each region should comprise of councils with common interests, be these spatial or by nature of the councils' operating environment**

This option complies as all councils in each regional grouping have spatial continuity with associated community and economic interactions across some or all of a region's members.

**Principle: MAV regions should align with other representative structures that engage with councils**

This option substantially complies as it is based on Regional Development Victoria's (RDV) nine Regional Partnership Regions. The Gippsland Region is unchanged and the other eight RDV Regions have been combined to form four MAV Board regional groupings with Golden Plains shifting to a different region.

### Non-Metropolitan Option 1



| Non-Metropolitan Option 1                         | Member Councils   | Number of Councils |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Gippsland (G)                                     | Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland, Wellington   | 6                  |
| Goulburn Ovens Murray (GOM)                       | Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wodonga      | 12                 |
| Great South Coast Barwon (GSCB)                   | Colac Otway, Corangamite, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Greater Geelong, Moyne, Queenscliffe, Southern Grampians, Surf Coast, Warrnambool | 10                 |
| Loddon Campaspe Mallee (LCM)                      | Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Loddon, Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Mount Alexander, Swan Hill      | 10                 |
| Wimmera Southern Mallee Central Highlands (WSMCH) | Ararat, Ballarat, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, West Wimmera, Yarriabiack                   | 10                 |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b>                             |   | <b>48</b>          |

### 5.2.2 Non-metropolitan Option 2

This option proposes:

- the Gippsland and Rural North East regions are the same as Option 1.
- a different configuration for the three other MAV Board regions.

The assessment against the review principles outlined in section 2 is as follows:

**Principle: Each region should be of equal electoral size (number of councils)**

All regional groupings under this option have a different number of member councils, with the numbers ranging from six to 12.

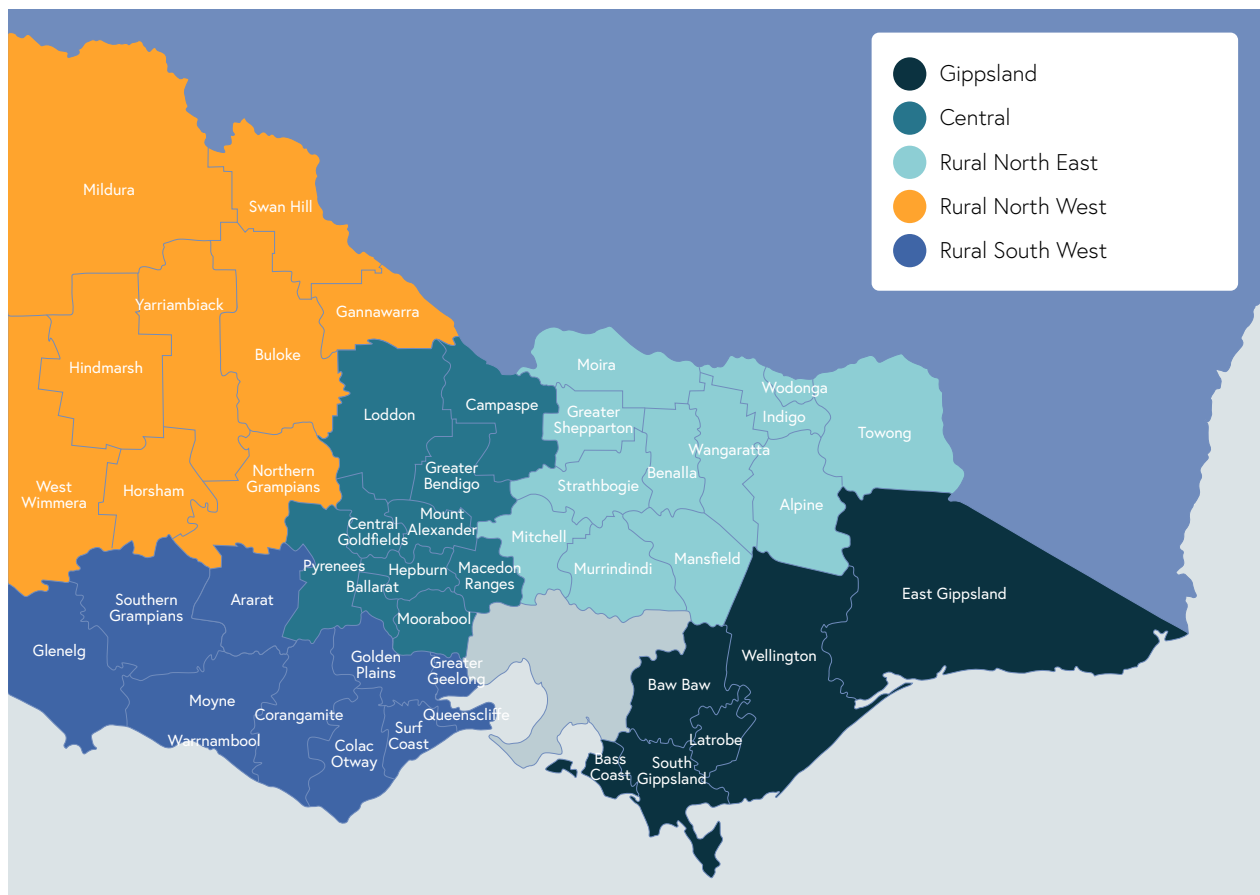
**Principle: Each region should comprise of councils with common interests, be these spatial or by nature of the councils' operating environment**

This option complies in that all councils in each regional grouping have spatial continuity with associated community and economic interactions across some or all of a region's members.

**Principle: MAV regions should align with other representative structures that engage with councils**

This option is not based on a single existing State or local government grouping of councils. It draws on a range of groupings of non-metropolitan councils. The Gippsland and Rural North East Regions reflect the existing regional groupings.

#### Non-Metropolitan Option 2



| Non-Metropolitan Option 2 | Member Councils   | Number of Councils |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Central (C)               | Ballarat, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Hepburn, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Moorabool, Mount Alexander, Pyrenees              | 10                 |
| Gippsland (G)             | Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland, Wellington   | 6                  |
| Rural North East (RNE)    | Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wodonga              | 12                 |
| Rural North West (RNW)    | Buloke, Gannawarra, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Mildura, Northern Grampians, Swan Hill, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack                                  | 9                  |
| Rural South West (RSW)    | Ararat, Colac Otway, Corangamite, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Greater Geelong, Moyne, Queenscliffe, Southern Grampians, Surf Coast, Warrnambool | 11                 |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b>     |   | <b>48</b>          |

### Non-Metropolitan Options Comparison vs Current

#### Option 1

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| G                     | 6                         |
| GOM                   | 12                        |
| GSCB                  | 10                        |
| LCM                   | 10                        |
| WSMCH                 | 10                        |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>48</b>                 |

#### Option 2

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| C                     | 10                        |
| G                     | 6                         |
| RNE                   | 12                        |
| RNW                   | 9                         |
| RSW                   | 11                        |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>48</b>                 |

#### Current Non-Metropolitan Regions\*

| MAV Board Region      | Number of Member Councils |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| G                     | 6                         |
| RNC                   | 7                         |
| RNE                   | 12                        |
| RNW                   | 8                         |
| RSC                   | 8                         |
| RSW                   | 7                         |
| <b>TOTAL COUNCILS</b> | <b>48</b>                 |

\*Refer to Attachment 1

# How to Provide Feedback

Our Members are invited to provide feedback about this Options Paper following a council resolution or if there is no resolution by responding via correspondence from the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

Written feedback is requested by 5pm on Wednesday 7 December 2022 and can be emailed to John Nevins via the email address [mavboardregions@mav.asn.au](mailto:mavboardregions@mav.asn.au).

The written feedback will be published on the MAV's Members extranet site unless requested otherwise.

The MAV Board will consider all feedback. The regional groupings will be determined at a Board meeting in December. All MAV Members and MAV delegates will be advised of the outcome within 14 days of the decision being made.

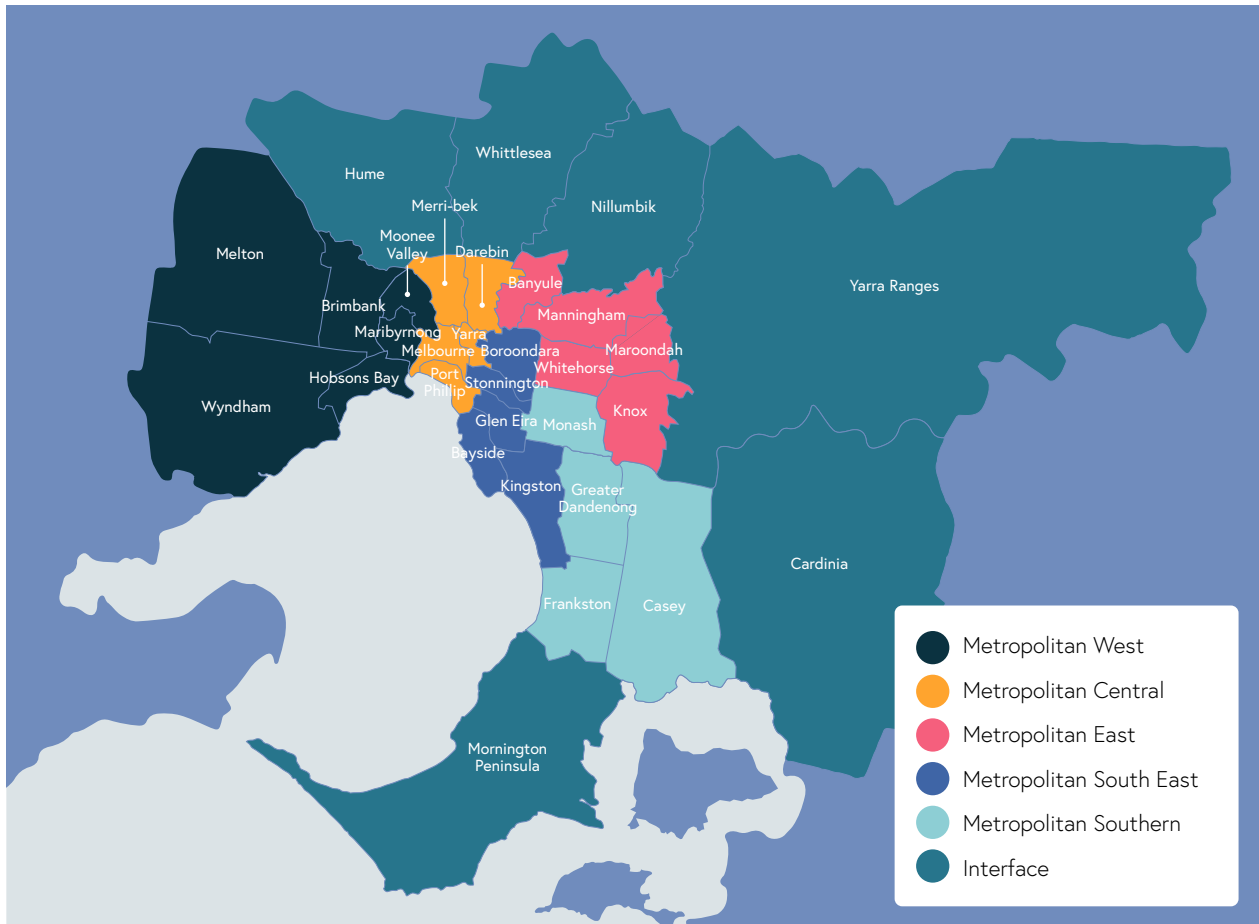
Queries can be directed to John Nevins by [email](#) or on **0411 191 918**.

A copy of this Options Paper and the MAV Rules 2022 are available at [mav.asn.au](http://mav.asn.au).

# Attachment 1

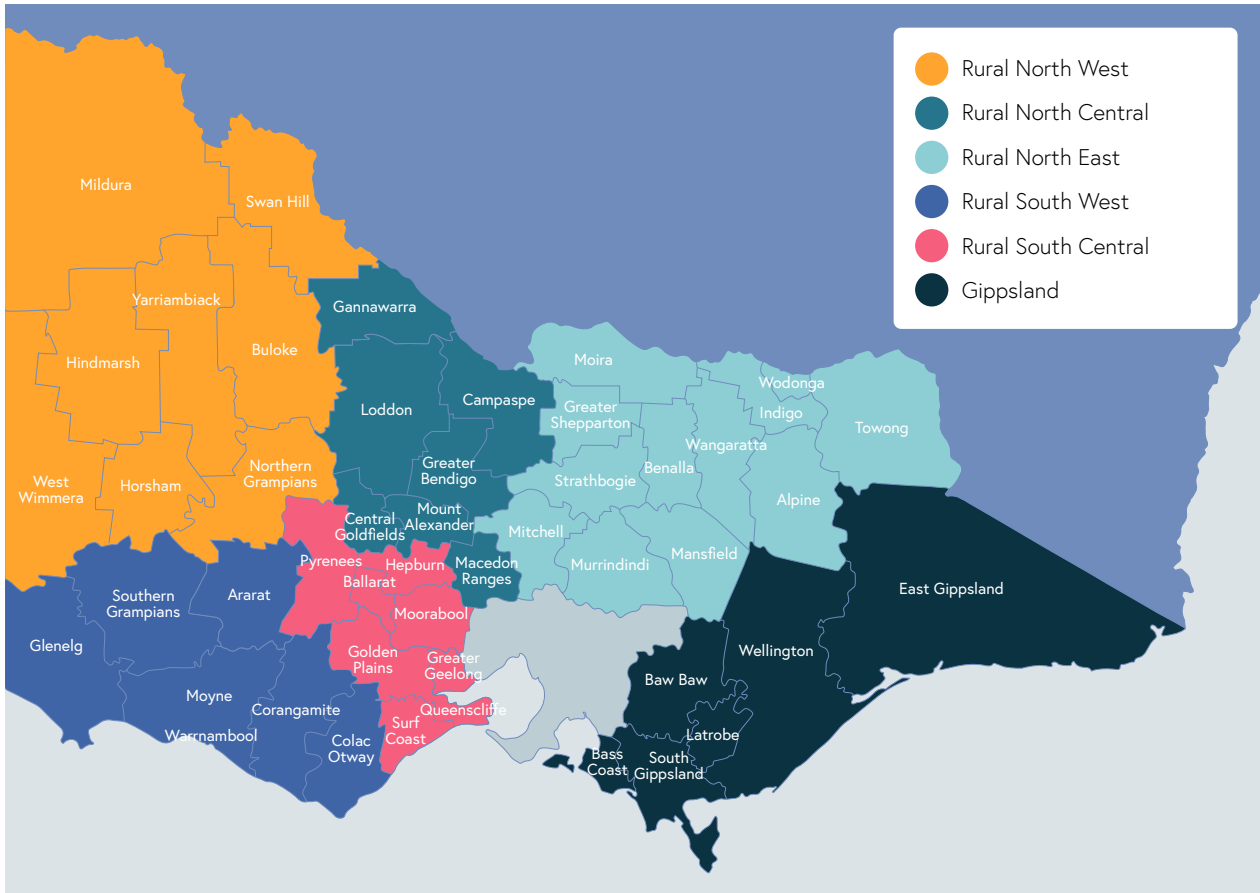
## Current MAV Board Regions

### Metropolitan Regions





**Non-metropolitan Regions**





Municipal Association of Victoria  
GPO Box 4326, Melbourne 3001  
03 9667 5555  
[inquiries@mav.asn.au](mailto:inquiries@mav.asn.au)

[www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)