



WHAT is the minimum level of service you expect in your community?

Rubbish collection, potholes in roads repaired, a library or child health services, aged and disability care, community transport and support for volunteers, for instance. Communities expect our local council to provide these services, and don't give it a whole lot of thought. In rural and regional areas there is often a lack of competition from service providers and suppliers, and governments, especially councils, become the provider of 'last resort' for vital services to a local community. In many parts of rural Victoria people aren't receiving the services most of us take for granted.

WHAT are rural councils doing?

Instead of watching services run down, rural councils have joined forces to lobby state and federal governments to provide more sustainable funding structures that enable a minimum service level for all Victorians, no matter where they live.

The Rural Living messages are simple...

- **Rural councils struggle to deliver a minimum level of services to their communities**
- **Rural councils are not sustainable under the current funding structures**
- **It is time for State and Federal Governments to change the way they fund rural communities to deliver the minimum level of services**

"It is time for change. Now is the time for us to band together for rural communities. As a united voice, we can achieve change to ensure they survive. Both now, and well into the future."

Buloke Mayor Cr Reid Mather

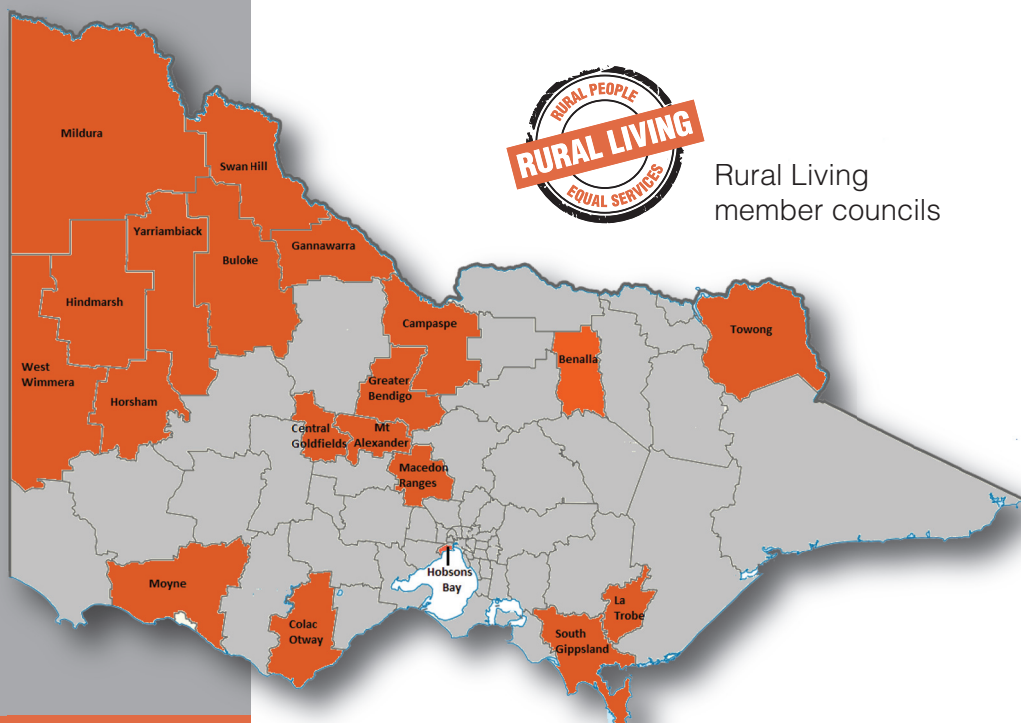
Major barriers to sustainability for rural shires include:

Sustainability of rural councils and communities is a shared solution between Local Government and the community, but at the same time the State and Federal Governments needed to understand it is not acceptable to have disadvantaged people just a few hours out of Melbourne.

- Lack of economies of scale
- Large distances and time required to deliver services
- More people with lower incomes and other socio-economic factors
- A higher proportion of aged people in the population
- Lack of competition from service providers and suppliers
- Difficulties in the recruitment of staff and skilled contractors
- Frequent market failure resulting in premium prices for goods and services
- Small population sizes and a consequent lack of capacity to pay for services

Rural Living is seeking a long-term solution

Buloke Shire Council launched Rural Living in May 2015, inviting councils across Victoria to join forces to fight for equal services for rural people.



Rural Living member councils

Highlights:

- 8 councils joined in the first month. The campaign now has 20 councils on board including rural councils, regional cities and metropolitan councils.
- A Rural Living working group meets regularly and has had meetings with Local Parliamentary Members, State and Federal Government Ministers and opposition leaders to outline campaign goals.
- A Municipal Association of Victoria State Council meeting of 79 councils voted 84 percent in favour of promoting the sustainability of small rural shires through Rural Living.
- The Victorian Farmers Federation has endorsed the campaign, urging State and Federal governments to fix the two-class system between rural and metropolitan areas as a matter of urgency.
- A Rural Living Facebook page is generating broad interest from across Victoria and interstate, spreading the Rural Living messages even further.
- We have attracted interest from Local Government and the community in NSW and SA, who are watching closely to see what they might be able to replicate in their rural areas.
- Regional and metropolitan media are watching the campaign closely, and it has attracted coverage in major dailies as well as radio, print and online media.

For the first time in Local Government history, the State Government has agreed to consider the level of services needed by all Victorians to achieve a reasonable standard of living.

Where to from here?

The Victorian Government has agreed to join a Rural Living working group to create a list of minimum services all Victorians are entitled to. This list will include roads, aged and disability services, waste management, recreational services and libraries. We are continuing to pursue the Federal Government to also join the group.

What can you do?

We are extending an open invitation to all rural, regional and metropolitan councils in Victoria to join our campaign. With every new council that comes on board, we become even more determined, stronger and closer to achieving change.

Further information

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RuralLivingVictoria

www.buloke.vic.gov.au/rural-living-victoria1