

Minimum Local Government Service Levels for Victorians

All Victorians should have access to levels of service that enable liveability and safety. Victorians pay income tax, GST and rates and are entitled to a level of reciprocity in the service levels they receive.

The services set out in this document detail a minimum set to be provided by local government for their communities. Most communities will have levels in excess of these but none should fall below them.

- A responsive and effective municipal council.
- All weather access roads to all inhabited residences.
- A road network that meets the needs of local industry.
- Kerbside waste and recycling services for all townships
- Urban drainage systems to cope with a minimum 20 year rainfall event
- Footpaths to safety standards in the central business, hospital and school areas
- Access to public facilities including
 - o Recreation Reserve
 - o Functional Meeting Space
 - o Park and playground
 - o Public toilet
 - o Swimming pool
- Immunisation for children on a monthly basis
- Local statutory and strategic planning services
- Environmental health enforcement
- Enforcement of Local Laws and building regulations
- School crossing supervision on major roads
- Community planning on a community (town) basis
- One hour of HACC services every 2 weeks for eligible clients, e.g. domestic assistance, personal care or respite care.
- Weekly access to library books and services.
- Access to Maternal and Child Health Services.
- Youth services including access to an annual youth event.
- Transport to essential appointments for frail aged people.
- Meals on Wheels
- Child care and kindergarten services in towns.
- Municipal emergency services
- Access to business development information and support.

Small rural shires have major barriers to their capacity to provide basic services to their residents. These include:

- 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.

To address these issues, local government has focussed positively on improving efficiencies, sharing services, innovative service provision and enhanced management. A great deal of progress has been made, and continues to be made, with many of these shires reaching high levels of efficiency but the lack of sustainability of small rural shires remains.

Despite these efforts it is apparent the residents of these shires have inferior services and poor community outcomes and liveability. The residents of these shires make a considerable contribution to the nation's GDP, as well as paying rates and taxes, the same as their metropolitan colleagues, but do not receive the minimum level of services. This is clearly inequitable.

The Local Government Act requires councils to "work in partnership with the Governments of Victoria and Australia" in order to ".. achieve the best outcomes for the local community" and to ".. improve the overall quality of life of the people in the municipal district." This responsibility is not being met by these partners under the current fiscal arrangements.

The provision of Financial Assistance Grants under the current structural arrangements is not sufficient to address the disadvantage faced by small rural shires so that the minimum level of services can be provided if the shires are to remain sustainable.

What this document seeks to do is not to suggest the changes and solutions that might remedy the problem but to seek agreement to the concept that all Victorians, including the residents of small rural shires, are worthy of a specific minimum set of service levels. It is not until agreement on this can be reached that the methods of achieving this outcome can be formulated.