



THINKING REGIONAL AND RURAL

Guidelines for Assessing
Regional and Rural Impacts
of Government Policy
and Legislation

April 2013



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Introduction

Regional and rural Victoria – comprising the state's 48 non-metropolitan municipal council areas – plays a key role in the state's future prosperity and growth.

Regional and rural Victoria accounts for about a quarter of the state's economic output and employment and its population is projected to grow by an extra 528,000 people – from 1.48 million to 2.01 million – by 2036. This growth presents both opportunities and challenges for regional communities.

The Victorian Government has a strong commitment to ensure that the growth of regional areas is managed in the right way. To support this, the Government has established:

- > The \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund – part of a plan to support regional cities and rural communities to create new prosperity, more opportunities and a better quality of life.
- > A dedicated Ministerial portfolio for Regional Cities.
- > A commitment to fostering local decision-making through partnerships with the five Victorian non-metropolitan Regional Development Australia Committees (RDA), local government, business and community sectors.
- > The Regional Policy Advisory Committee (RPAC) to bring the voice of regional and rural Victoria to the table.
- > A commitment to recognise Regional Strategic Plans as the endorsed vision and priorities for each region.

Implicit in this approach is recognition that there is diversity in the character, circumstances and needs of regional and rural Victoria compared to Melbourne, and even within different regional and rural areas.

The Regional Policy Advisory Committee was established under legislation to provide independent advice to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development and Minister for Regional Cities on priorities in regional Victoria; and to monitor and advise on the impacts of legislation and policy decisions on regional and rural Victoria.

In order for the characteristics of regional areas to be properly considered in major Government decision-making, RPAC has worked with Regional Development Victoria to develop this guide with the objectives of:

1. **increasing knowledge and understanding** of regional and rural issues across government
2. **encouraging systematic consideration** and integration of regional and rural impacts into legislation and policy development
3. **generating a positive outcome** from these considerations.

Purpose of this guide

This guide aims to assist policy makers to identify, monitor and assess potential impacts of major Victorian Government decisions on regional and rural Victoria.

The guide has been developed with the input of the Regional Policy Advisory Committee, which has a legislated role to monitor and advise the Government on the impacts of legislation and policy decisions on regional and rural Victoria. RPAC undertakes this role in two ways:

- > By providing direct advice to Government on the impacts of specific legislation or policy referred to RPAC by Ministers
- > By promoting an approach that seeks to build capability and knowledge across Government about the potential impacts of legislation and policy on regional and rural Victoria.

This guide has been developed to assist the second part of this role.

Specifically, the guide provides information to consider and integrate regional and rural impacts into the design, development and review stages of the policy cycle. Through increased awareness and understanding of regional and rural issues, policy makers will be able to make informed appraisals of a policy's benefits, costs, and where appropriate, find ways to ensure impacts are managed.

With this in mind, the guide is applicable both to the development of new policies and legislation, and review of existing policies, legislation and programs. It is intended to complement

and enhance existing legislation such as the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, decision-making frameworks around economic, social and environmental considerations or other established monitoring and evaluation systems, to incorporate thinking about regional and rural issues into impact assessments.

The considerations outlined in the guide represent high-level considerations that can be applied individually or collectively to assist policy makers satisfy existing obligations to consider the regional and rural implications of legislative or policy proposals. Their scope and application are intended to be as broad as possible to accommodate the range of decisions made by government. Integrated early in the policy cycle, particularly the design process, these considerations provide a valuable tool to ensure effective and equitable public policy.

The considerations are not exhaustive and can be supplemented with specific local knowledge and experience, where appropriate, and supported by relevant and credible evidence. This may include existing research, analysis, modelling or surveys incorporating a regional and rural dimension; specially-commissioned research or data analysis; or program evaluation.

Part One – Rationale for assessing regional and rural impacts

Why is regional and rural Victoria important?

For the purposes of this guide, regional and rural Victoria refers to the 48 non-metropolitan municipal councils.

Victoria's regions play a key role in driving economic growth and prosperity. They:

- > account for around a quarter of the state's people, jobs and economic activity
- > are the primary source of the state's agriculture, food production and processing, energy and mineral resources
- > contribute significantly to Victoria's goods production and service delivery.

Regional and rural Victoria is unique, with diverse natural, historic and lifestyle attractions. The regions feature a rich and varied social fabric ranging from large regional cities to small rural settlements, and contain the vast majority of the state's rich natural assets and biodiversity.

The drivers of economic prosperity can vary considerably across regional and rural areas. Some regional economies consist of a wide diversity of employers and industry sectors, whereas some rural areas may rely heavily on one or a few industries, such as agriculture, mining or forestry. In such cases, these areas may be more vulnerable to changes that have significant impacts on those industries.

The very nature of regional and rural Victoria means that it is dispersed over greater areas with lower population densities than cities such as Melbourne. A quarter of the State's total workforce is located in regional Victoria, but is dispersed over a much larger geographic area than in metropolitan Melbourne. This means people have to travel greater distances to access work, schools and services.

Regional and rural Victoria also has a greater proportion of residents aged over 65 years than Melbourne with areas such as Queenscliffe, Strathbogie and Central Goldfields all recording more than 10 percent higher than the State average for this age group.



Victoria's population is projected to rise from its current level of 5.4 million to more than 7 million people by the mid 2030s (*Victorian State Government Population & Household Projection 2008*). If this population growth continues to be located just in Melbourne, rising infrastructure and congestion costs could contribute to a fall in Melbourne's liveability and quality of life. It makes good sense to encourage and stimulate future population growth into our regions, particularly in the regional cities. Regional Victoria's population is projected to grow by an extra 528,000 people - from 1.48 million to 2.01 million - by 2036.¹

This growth presents both opportunities and challenges for communities moving into the future.

In this context, investment in regional and rural communities makes an important contribution towards ensuring strong growth and prosperity across Victoria.

Victorian Government policy approach

The policy approach to Victorian regional development is strongly based on recognition of diversity in the character, circumstances and needs of regional and rural Victoria compared to Melbourne, and within different regions and rural areas. In turn, recognition of this diversity means it is important to address opportunities and challenges in policy and service delivery by using a local or place-based approach.

Consistent with this, the Government is committed to a grass roots approach to regional development that values local knowledge and expertise in decision-making. It is characterised by:

- > dedicated investment in regional and rural Victoria
- > empowering local decision-makers through flexible funding models
- > the establishment of a dedicated Ministerial portfolio for Regional Cities
- > new measures to ensure regional and rural characteristics, opportunities and challenges are taken into account in policy and program design.

The \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund (RGF) is the centrepiece of the Government's plan to deliver better outcomes across regional and rural Victoria. The RGF provides flexibility so communities can drive important new local ideas and projects that bring with them:

- > better infrastructure and services
- > a stronger economic, social and natural environment
- > new jobs and improved career opportunities
- > support for planning and development of projects
- > increased capacity to leverage investment.

¹ Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), *Victoria in Future 2012*.

The importance of assessing regional impacts of major government decisions

Systematically considering the characteristics of regional areas in developing legislation or policy is designed to minimise unintended consequences and bring to light opportunities where regional and rural communities can capitalise on their unique character and strengths. It is a practice that has been adopted by many countries throughout the world.

In England, Northern Ireland and New Zealand, the concept of 'rural proofing' has been widely adopted as a framework for assessing the impact of policies and programs on regional and rural communities. In England and Northern Ireland rural proofing applies broadly across all areas of public policy; whereas in New Zealand rural proofing considers specific issues around population density and isolation.

Canada has adopted a 'rural lens' policy that is applied to monitor and assess impacts once a policy is implemented. This approach is supported by a Rural Development Network, which brings together a number of departments through a partnership arrangement, with the aim of maximising benefits from policies and programs for regional and rural communities through a coordinated approach.

The OECD notes that a number of its member countries, including Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey have also incorporated a 'rural' policy framework into regional development to varying degrees.²

Despite variations in scope or focus in the examples provided here, generally these policies are based on recognition that:

- > regional and rural areas make an important contribution to the wider economy and community
- > failure to consider opportunities and challenges in regional and rural areas during policy development increases the risk of unintended consequences that may impede these communities
- > the high dependence on primary production in regional and rural economies results in lower population density and larger distances from services and markets
- > achieving government policy priorities generally requires accounting for the needs and characteristics of both urban and regional areas
- > all people should have a reasonable expectation to live, work, contribute to, and be part of, a community, regardless of where they live.

The basis for introducing a similar approach to assessing the regional and rural impacts of major Government decisions in Victoria is that it represents good practice in legislation and policy development.

The desired outcome of this approach is to:

Ensure the needs and special considerations of regional and rural communities and areas are routinely and objectively considered as part of the policy development process.³

² Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *Regional Development Policies in OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2010 p.18.

³ Adapted from Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (2003) *A Guide to Rural Proofing*, United Kingdom, p.2.

How to consider regional and rural impacts

These guidelines are relevant wherever major Victorian Government decisions are being contemplated or developed. This includes:

- > new policies
- > new legislation
- > new funding proposals
- > service delivery models
- > new regulations and Regulation Impact Statements
- > program design and evaluation.

Rather than create new administrative requirements, the guidelines are intended to facilitate the development of systematic and comprehensive consideration of regional and rural impacts where this is required in existing state government processes (for example, the requirement to consider regional and rural impacts in Cabinet Submissions).

An assessment of regional and rural impacts should generally apply when any new funding, investment, regulation or service of significance is being considered; or when any review of these is being done. Equally, it can inform and assist each stage of the policy cycle (**Figure 1**). If applied early, it is less likely that significant policy adjustments will be required at the 'eleventh hour' to accommodate regional and rural needs and challenges.



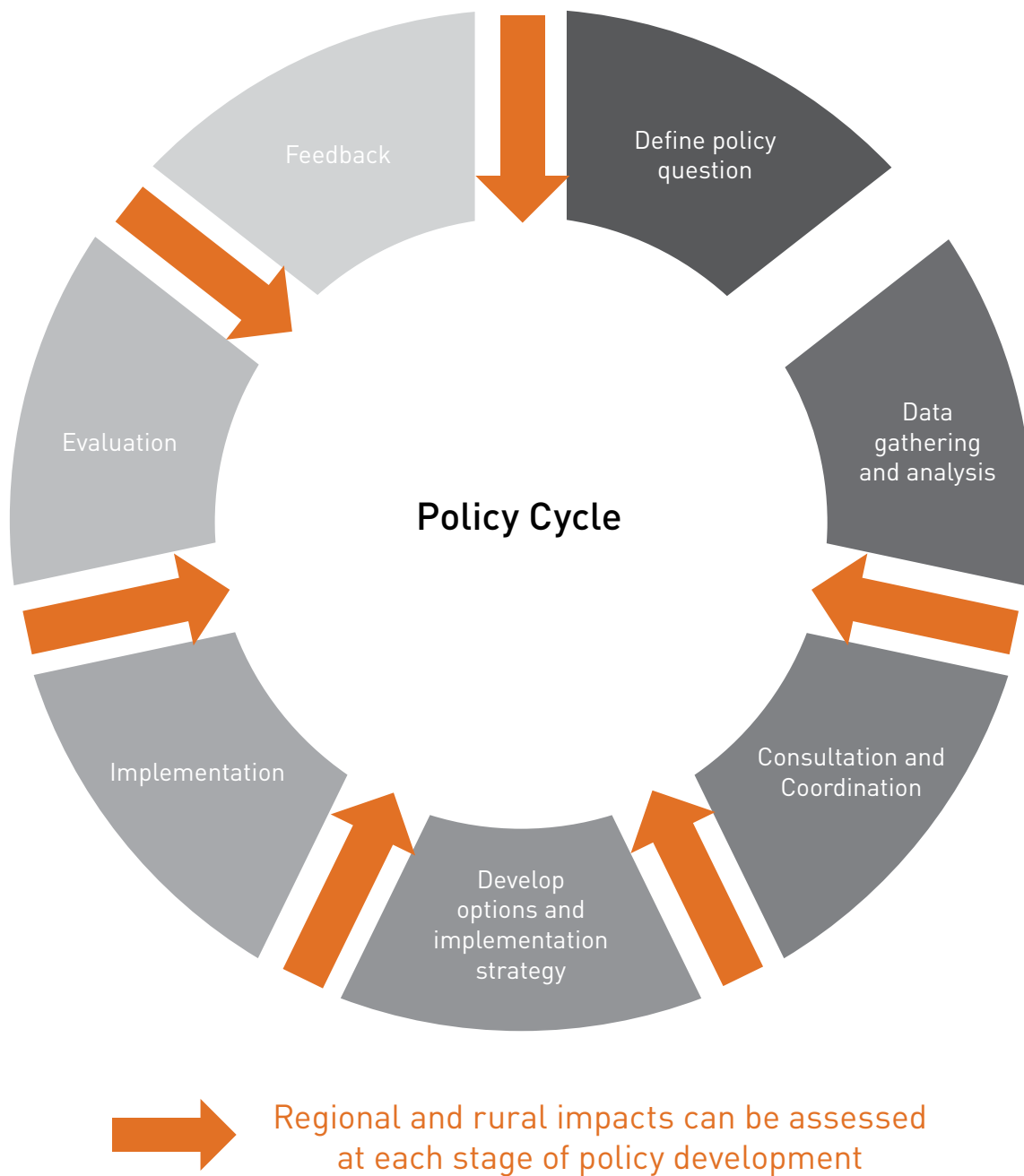


Figure 1: Stages of Policy Development⁴

⁴ Adapted from Hindle, R. *Rural Proofing Policy and Programme Development*, Rural Innovation, @RuralUK, available at www.defra.gov.uk/crc/files/rural_proofing_policy.pdf (last accessed 11 September 2012).

For instance, where new legislation, policies or programs are being developed, integrating this assessment early can assist with:

- > defining the policy question and objectives - is it a question that applies to all of Victoria?
- > data gathering and analysis - incorporating a metropolitan/regional and rural split as well as between and within regions where the impacts are likely to be localised, into the evidence base
- > consultation and coordination - identifying potential opportunities to take account of regional and rural impacts
- > developing options and an implementation strategy - appraising various options for benefits and costs
- > implementation - ensuring flexibility exists to enable the policy to be refined or adapted to meet changing needs or circumstances
- > evaluation - incorporating feedback mechanisms and identifying appropriate data and evidence to collect during implementation to inform evaluation.

It is recognised that such activities frequently use a substantial depth of evidence to inform their design, assess various options, and provide a base upon which to make a decision. It is not intended that the assessment of regional and rural impacts should require departments to significantly increase the scope of this information gathering. In many cases, analysing existing information can provide a metropolitan, regional and rural split.

In the case of existing legislation, policies or programs, an assessment of their impacts on regional and rural areas can assist with evaluation (effectiveness and equity) and feedback (capturing the voice of regional and rural communities).

Effective and equitable policy should recognise the differences not only between regional and metropolitan areas, but within different regional areas themselves. Regional Development Victoria, the Victorian Government's lead agency for regional and rural development, can provide information on key differences, which may include:

- > geography (distance or isolation from major centres or infrastructure)
- > demographics (ageing population)
- > economies and industries (concentrated employment in an industry sector)
- > planning, infrastructure and community development needs (land use needs and ability to access infrastructure and services)
- > environment (significance and contribution to liveability).



Smaller communities and businesses may benefit more than larger metropolitan communities from certain public policy decisions - for example, those that enhance local business competitiveness or improved services. In some cases, such decisions may create unique opportunities for regional communities and businesses - for example, construction of a new bridge or hospital can present opportunity for using local suppliers during construction and then ongoing employment for its maintenance or operation. It is therefore worth considering whether specific policy or legislative approaches or additional investment may be warranted in order to maximise these opportunities for regional and rural people.

Case Study

The development of the Victorian Government's Rural and Regional Health Plan was designed to address particular issues faced by regional and rural communities such as travel time to specialists and ageing populations. Initiatives such as telehealth show that the health system can be tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of local communities and is supported by a place-based approach to service delivery.

In some instances, public policy decisions may result in localised and unintended consequences despite the objective being to achieve an overall net benefit. When this is identified, it should be considered whether it is appropriate to develop a means for offsetting these impacts during different phases of the policy development cycle.

By examining the potential unintended consequences and possible offsets for regional and rural areas, a more effective design of the policy may be found that eliminates or minimises negative impacts, while still achieving the desired outcome. For this reason, assessment of regional and rural impacts should be carried out at the earliest opportunity.

It is acknowledged that identifying unintended consequences is difficult. For this reason, all policies should have a robust and responsive evaluation framework built in, including the capacity to take into account local knowledge and experiences to adjust the policy accordingly.

Part Two – Application of regional and rural assessments

There are three key steps central to assessing regional and rural impacts of major government decisions:

1. **Consider** whether the proposal is likely to have any impacts on regional and rural Victoria
2. If so, **assess** the significance of those impacts
3. Where necessary, **adjust** the proposal to ensure regional and rural needs are addressed, as far as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Major government decisions will often take the form of written policy, new regulations, new legislation or a policy review.

Figure 2 shows an example of this – the typical process that a legislative proposal travels through, from planning to decision and how regional and rural considerations should be taken into account from the earliest possible opportunity.

A number of considerations are outlined below that ensure the diverse character, opportunities and challenges of regional and rural Victoria are recognised and taken into account. The considerations are:

- > Economy
- > Accessibility
- > Social and community
- > Environment
- > Equity.

The considerations identified are not an exhaustive list. Equally, they may not all be relevant to all proposals and can be applied individually or collectively as required. Should further information or assistance be required to identify specific issues, Part Three provides a list of useful sources and contact points for the Regional Policy Advisory Committee.

More detailed discussion of these considerations follows. Hypothetical case studies are included under each consideration to provide a practical example, including potential solutions.

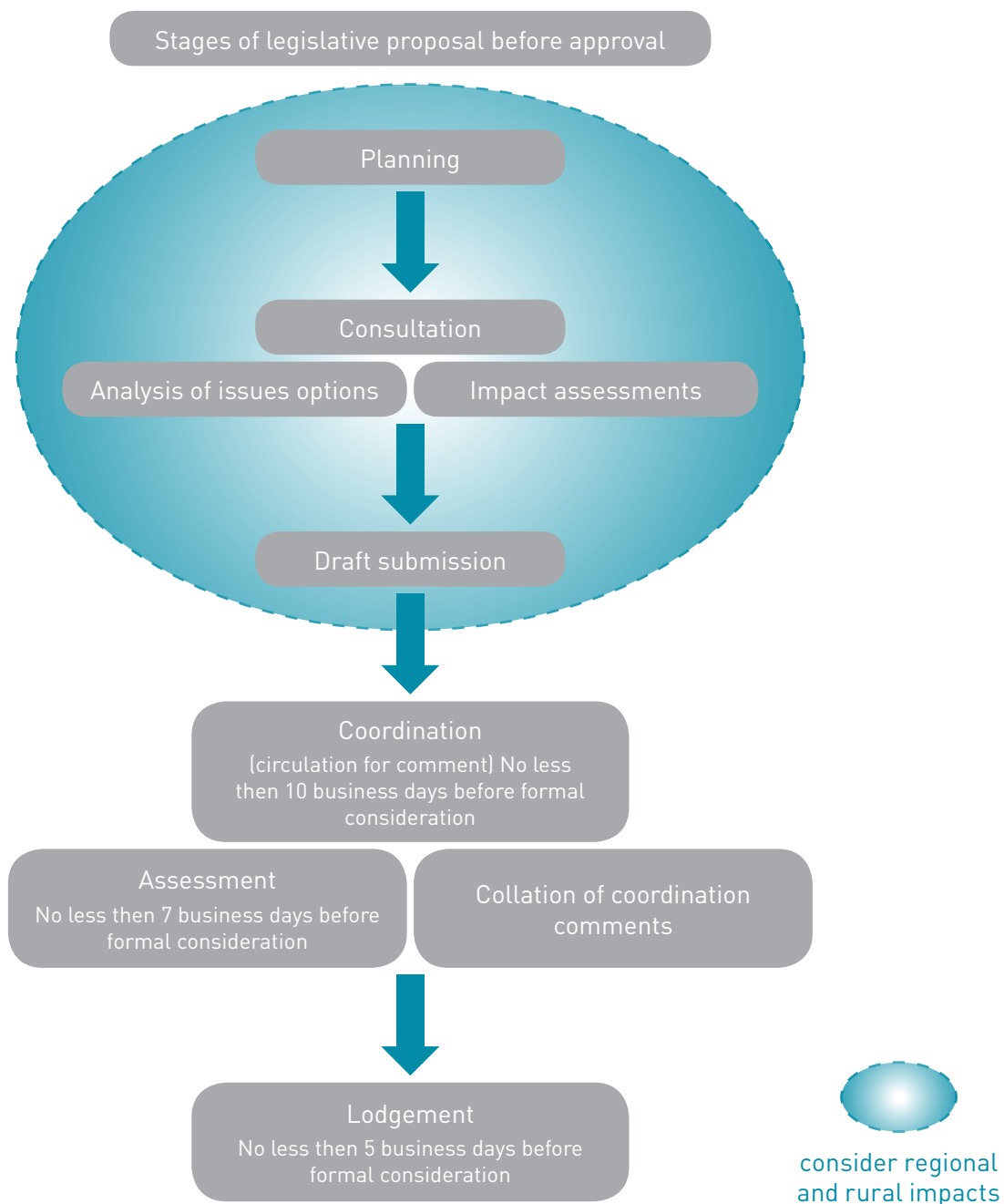


Figure 2: Process for Development of Legislation⁵

⁵ Adapted from the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, *Victorian Government Legislative Process Handbook*, Melbourne, 2009, p.78.

Economy

What does this mean?

For the purposes of this consideration, regional economies comprise the inter-related activities around the production and distribution of goods and services in specific geographical areas.

Why is this important?

The economies of Victoria's regional and rural communities vary widely.

Some small regional and rural communities are heavily dependent on one industry sector or one large employer. Throughout much of rural Victoria, agriculture and related industries are the most important source of employment and prosperity. Other communities may rely heavily on mining or forestry, while particular areas have developed strongly in the fields of manufacturing, tourism, banking and information technology.

There may be complex economic interdependencies in regional and rural communities that could be affected by a new policy or policy changes. Such interdependencies may not be obvious at first, but can be recognised with local consultation.

The impacts of policies or legislation affecting business - for example, changes to business taxation, regulation or licensing requirements that may make it easier or harder to employ people - are likely to be felt more sharply in regional Victoria, where employment, business opportunities and the ability for employees to move between industries may be more limited than in Melbourne.

Conversely, activities and investments that result in job creation or new business development - such as the expansion of a regional hospital - can have profoundly positive economic and employment impacts on small communities. Such opportunities should also be taken into account.

In developing a proposal, policy makers should be mindful of a requirement to work collaboratively with local government, as outlined in the Victorian State-Local Government Agreement (VSLGA). Public policy decisions which may increase the responsibilities or costs of local governments should bear in mind the fact that councils in regional Victoria are in many cases required to govern a much larger area than their metropolitan counterparts but with a lower rate base, due to lower population density. Often, local governments are also one of the largest employers within a region and the principal delivery mechanism for economic development activities.

Questions to consider

- > Will the policy or legislative proposal have impacts on regional business and/or regional economies?
- > How does the policy or legislative proposal take account of economic differences and dependencies within regional areas?
- > Are there individual local businesses or industry sectors that may be disadvantaged?
- > Are there opportunities for regional businesses or industries to benefit from the implementation of the new policy or legislation?
- > Will the policy or legislative proposal impact on local government responsibilities, service delivery or resourcing? If so, are the characteristics of regional and rural councils being considered?

Case Study: Economy

The construction of new police stations in country towns provides significant business and employment opportunities. By encouraging local contractors to express interest and register on a supplier capability database, a significantly higher level of participation by regional businesses was achieved than through a centralised procurement model.

Questions to consider

- > Have distances and population density been taken into account in devising the implementation or service delivery model?
- > Is there a risk that remote communities will be disadvantaged by a uniform 'one size fits all' approach?
- > Are there opportunities for the policy, legislation or service to benefit geographically-isolated communities if a local or regional approach is adopted?

Accessibility

What does this mean?

Under this consideration, accessibility is the ease of approach to one location from other locations, and is measured in terms of the distance travelled, the cost of travel, and the time taken.

Why is this important?

The impacts of legislation, regulation or policy can vary significantly depending on the geography of regional and rural areas, or the ability of people in such areas to access infrastructure or services. It is important to consider practicality for people in all communities, especially if distance or isolation from major regional centres or necessary infrastructure is a factor.

Case Study: Access

The delivery of specialised services, such as children's health, by multiple departments can involve numerous individual departmental officers travelling long distances to deliver these services for brief periods in small, remote locations.

In such circumstances, is there an alternative method of delivery? For example, could a more comprehensive service be provided through basing staff in these communities who are trained in the delivery of multiple services, or could agencies collaborate to ensure visits by service delivery staff occur in a more coordinated manner?

Social and Community

What does this mean?

For the purposes of this consideration, social and community is defined as a group of people in a specific geographic location who share varying degrees of cohesiveness, identity, resources, preferences and values in common.

Why is this important?

Regional and rural communities vary widely in their social and community structures. The demographic profile of many rural communities is skewed towards an older population with a 'demographic pinch' between the ages of 15 and 30, as younger people have often moved elsewhere for education and work. Some parts of regional Victoria have a significant migrant population, while major regional centres tend to have a demographic profile closer to that of Melbourne.

Regional and rural communities can exhibit certain social characteristics, such as strong rates of volunteering or distinct community identity. Some policy decisions have the potential to affect this positively, such as increasing government support for sporting groups or community associations. Alternatively, increasing regulation and reporting requirements on volunteer groups could impact these groups negatively.

There is a particularly strong link between employment, population and social fabric in smaller communities. In metropolitan and larger regional centres it is possible for skilled workers to move with the expectation that a job will be available at some point. However it is less likely for people to move into a small, rural community unless they have a specific job to go to. Similarly if employment is reduced in these areas, it is likely that the population will decline as well.

Questions to consider

- > Has the unique social composition of rural and regional communities been taken into consideration?
- > Could implementation of the new policy or legislation have any unintended impacts on social capital, such as a reduction in volunteering?
- > What are the opportunities to capitalise on or strengthen the positive characteristics of regional communities through the implementation model?
- > Will the new policy or legislation have any employment impacts in regional areas, which may in turn impact on the demographic trends within these areas?
- > Where negative employment impacts are identified, what measures are proposed to manage these?

Case Study: Social and Community

New regulations for food handling require that all people who handle food for sale need to attend an accredited food handling course. In many smaller, rural communities where retired residents may be involved in food handling as part of voluntary activities, this may pose particular difficulties. The necessary training to meet the new food handling requirements may be costly or difficult to access. The likely consequences of this are that food handlers in such areas will either comply with the requirements at considerable personal cost and inconvenience, or they may operate in breach of the new requirements.

In this situation, implementation of the new regulations could be supplemented with specific activities or mechanisms to ensure access for rural communities and to mitigate unintended consequences. For example, training could be delivered in a coordinated way to provide an opportunity for residents from a number of rural communities and/or organisations to complete the training together in a specified location.

Environment

What does this mean?

Under this consideration, environment refers to the natural surroundings, ecosystems, heritage value and social, economic and cultural aspects of a specific geographical area.

Why is this important?

Regional and rural Victoria is home to some of Victoria's greatest natural and cultural assets, including national parks, wildlife habitats and sites of Aboriginal and post-settlement heritage significance. Natural and cultural assets may be located on all land types, including public and private land. In some cases, such as the Twelve Apostles, they are also widely recognised tourist attractions and are a key part of the local economy. In other cases, these assets may be of local environmental significance or contribute to local liveability, such as a lake or wetlands.

Natural and cultural assets can be impacted by a wide range of policy decisions related to land use planning, heritage, waste management, urban water, clean air and healthy soil, business regulations and trade. As regional and rural Victoria makes up the majority of the state's land mass and, consequently, the majority of naturally and culturally significant land, consideration of this is important.

In many cases, the assessment of natural and cultural heritage impacts resulting from a policy decision will be taken into account through an Environmental Effects Statement and/or Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan - but this may not always be the case.

The appropriate consideration of environmental impacts against other regional-level considerations becomes particularly complex in decisions relating to environmental areas that are also regarded as economic or tourism assets.

Questions to consider

- > Will the new policy or legislative proposal have environmental impacts? If so, have the potential impacts in specific regional locations been adequately assessed?
- > Will the policy or legislative proposal have Aboriginal cultural heritage impacts? Have these been adequately assessed?
- > Have the environmental impacts of the proposal been considered through regional-level consultation and an understanding of the region's own priorities?
- > Does the proposal provide opportunities for regional communities to strengthen their natural asset base and, thereby, benefit their local amenity?

Case Study: Environment

A commitment to encourage greater tourism access to an environmentally sensitive coastline involves new investment in walking trails and car parks. If these are developed with the objective of causing minimal environmental damage and disruption, then a double benefit can be gained - preserving the natural asset and generating a sustainable economic return from it. In this sense, adopting a place-based approach to planning ensures a better balance between development opportunities and local priorities.



Equity

What does this mean?

Under this consideration, equity refers to the fairness towards all people, irrespective of where they live.

Why is this important?

Concerns about equity arise when policy or legislation is developed that may inadvertently restrict actions or make compliance more difficult for certain groups.

Issues of regional inequity can be seen in the hypothetical examples above relating to food handling or the delivery of social and community services. These policies can inadvertently create inequity by:

- > Imposing new requirements that are difficult for regional communities to comply with
- > Delivering reduced or fragmented services to smaller, remote communities, taking into consideration the principle of reasonable adjustment
- > Imposing higher costs
- > Restricting the ability of people in regional communities to participate in, or benefit from, business and community organisations.

Conversely policies and regulations can reduce inequity in regional communities.

This is particularly the case if they are specially designed to enable or support regional and rural communities. However, it is also possible that a policy not specifically intended to do so could be modified or adapted to reduce inequities identified during policy development - for example where state-wide service delivery models are tailored or modified to the particular characteristics and needs of regional and rural communities.

Some aspects of equity are also covered by the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, particularly the sections on participation in public life and cultural expression.

Questions to consider

- > Will the policy or proposal be consistent with the objective of ensuring that all people, no matter where they live, should have a reasonable ability to have prosperity, employment opportunities and quality of life?

Part Three – Further information and assistance

Regional Policy Advisory Committee

The Regional Policy Advisory Committee was established to provide independent advice to the Government on policy issues affecting regional and rural Victoria, including the impacts of legislation and regulation.

The committee can assist those responsible for the development of new legislation and policy to consider the regional and rural impacts of these. It can provide guidance on the considerations to be considered in assessing regional and rural impacts, act as a sounding board for testing new proposals and ideas, as well as use its own extensive regional networks to obtain regional stakeholder feedback.

Further information on RPAC can be found at:
www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-growth-fund/advisory-committee

For inquiries on obtaining RPAC's assistance in assessing regional and rural impacts, please contact:

The Secretary
Regional Policy Advisory Committee
C/- Regional Development Victoria
Level 12, 1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE, VIC 3000
Phone: (03) 9452 5284

Other sources of regional information

Regional Development Victoria

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is the Government's lead agency in developing regional and rural Victoria. The RDV website contains a variety of sources of information on regional and rural Victoria as well as links to other useful regional and rural organisations, including: Regional Strategic Plans and Regional Development Australia Committees for Victoria's five non-metropolitan regions.

RDV's website can be found at:
www.rdv.vic.gov.au

In assessing the regional and rural impacts of new government decisions, policy makers may need to source more specific data to support their analysis. RDV manages a number of sources of useful data and information that may inform policy development, program delivery and project assessments.

Regional Australia Institute

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) is an independent research institute dedicated to examining regional issues and policy priorities. Through its stocktake of regional research, RAI has developed a knowledge base of sources of regional analysis. This knowledge base provides easy access to sources of regional research and analysis completed since 2000, as well as current regional data sets and new research underway.

RAI's knowledge base can be accessed at:
www.regionalaustralia.org.au/regional-knowledge-base



The following is a list of sources of data and information from across Government that may assist impact assessment.

Population

Victoria in Future (VIF) 2012

Provides population and household projections for the state, regional Victoria, Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Statistical Local Areas (SLAs), including:

- > Population and household profiles (5-year intervals from 2006 to 2036) for Barwon, Central Highlands, East Gippsland, Gippsland, Goulburn, Loddon, Mallee, Ovens Murray, Western District, Wimmera
- > Population and household profiles (5-year intervals from 2006 to 2026) for all regional LGAs
- > Annual population projection data for SLAs and LGAs.

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/urban-and-regional-research/demographic-research/victoria-in-future-2008>

Indicators of Community Strength

Provides data on key wellbeing indicators including: ability to get help when needed; community participation; community attitudes; and perceptions of local amenity.

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/indicators-of-community-strength>

Community Wellbeing

A summary of the top 20 sources of data for describing community wellbeing across Victoria, including population characteristics, workforce, multicultural features, disadvantage, services and facilities, health, participation, amenity, economy, industry and transport.

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/dpcd-research>

Change and Disadvantage in Regional Victoria

This report provides a comprehensive picture of socio-economic change across regional and rural Victoria, including employment by industry, migration by age group, projected aging profiles, non-resident households, productive and amenity landscapes and skills shortages.

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/urban-and-regional-research/Regional-Victoria>

Victorian Population Health Survey

Provides LGA data on: health care use; self-reported health; weight and height; nutrition; alcohol; smoking; physical activity; psychological distress; social capital and networks.

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/survey/vphs.htm>

Local Government Profiles

Produced annually, each profile includes population, socio-economic, service and health data.

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/modelling/planning.htm>

Instant Atlas

Instant Atlas site provides interactive spatial data that includes maps, tables and charts allowing data to be filtered by theme and geography.

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/modelling/instantatlas.htm>

Economy and Industry

Regional Economic Profiles

As part of a broader information base on regional Victoria, RDV has developed a series of profiles tracking economic change and growth in each region. The profiles provide data on growth trends such as productivity, workforce participation and population, analysis of structural drivers of economic growth, and economic and employment forecasts for each region.

Further information is available from RDV at rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Industry Atlas of Victoria

Provides a graphic snapshot of the state's economy including number and distribution of businesses, industries and workforce.

www.dbi.vic.gov.au/research-reports/industry-atlas-of-victoria

Environment

State of the Environment of Victoria

Released by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, this report provides an integrated analysis of Victoria's natural environment, including trends over time and social and economic aspects of environmental sustainability.

www.ces.vic.gov.au/victorias-environment

Sustainability and Environment

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for the conservation and sustainable use of Victoria's natural environment, biological diversity and cultural heritage.

Information on a range of environmental considerations including: natural resource management, land management, climate change, sustainability, forests, bushfires, coasts and marine, plants and animals is available through DSE.

www.dse.vic.gov.au

Water

Provides information on water resource management, including links to Water Corporations, Catchment Management Authorities and regional Sustainable Water Strategies.

www.water.vic.gov.au

Land Use and Transport Planning

Victorian Transport Statistics Portal

Provides spatial data on transport in Victoria including: method of travel to work; industry and occupation of employment; key characteristics of the working population; property sales; accident statistics; and travel behaviours.

<http://www1.transport.vic.gov.au/VTSP/homepage.html>

Transport Demand Information Atlas for Victoria: Volume 2 Regional Victoria

This report provides data on journey to work, changes in public transport usage, freight movement and mapping of industry activity (such as mining, forestry, meat production, grains, wool, horticulture, dairy).

http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/31350/RegionalTransportAtlas_Vol2.pdf

Thinking regional and rural: an assessment checklist

There are three key steps central to assessing regional and rural impacts of major government decisions:

1. **Consider** whether the proposal is likely to have any impacts on regional and rural Victoria
2. If so, **assess** the significance of those impacts
3. Where necessary, **adjust** the proposal as far as is reasonable in the circumstances, to ensure regional and rural needs are addressed.

Have you considered the following:

Economy

- > Adverse impacts upon regional business, industry sectors and/or economies
- > Economic differences and dependencies within regional areas
- > Opportunities for regional business or industries to benefit from the policy
- > Impact upon local government

Regional Economic Profiles
rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

Industry Atlas of Victoria
www.dbi.vic.gov.au/research-reports/industry-atlas-of-victoria

Accessibility

- > Effect of distance and population density upon implementation or service delivery model
- > Remote communities disadvantaged by a uniform 'one size fits all' approach
- > Potential benefit to geographically-isolated communities

Victorian Transport Statistics Portal
<http://www1.transport.vic.gov.au/VTSP/homepage.html>

Transport Demand Information Atlas for Victoria: Volume 2 Regional Victoria
http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/31350/RegionalTransportAtlas_Vol2.pdf

Social and Community

- > Unique social composition of rural and regional communities
- > Unintended impacts on social capital
- > Capitalising on positive characteristics of regional and rural communities through the implementation model
- > Employment impacts which in turn impact upon demographic trends within regional and rural communities
- > Measures to manage negative employment impacts

Victoria in Future (VIF) 2012

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/urban-and-regional-research/demographic-research/victoria-in-future-2008>

Indicators of Community Strength

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/indicators-of-community-strength>

Community Wellbeing

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/dpcd-research>

Environment

- > Environmental impacts of the new policy or legislation
- > Regional-level consultation to better understand the region's own priorities
- > Opportunity for regional communities to strengthen their natural asset base
- > Impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage

State of the Environment of Victoria Report
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability
<http://www.ces.vic.gov.au/victorias-environment/state-of-environment-victoria-2009-2013>

Equity

- > Consistency with the objective of ensuring that all people, no matter where they live, have a reasonable ability to have prosperity, employment opportunities and quality of life

Indicators of Community Strength

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/indicators-of-community-strength>

Change and Disadvantage in Regional Victoria

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/home/publications-and-research/urban-and-regional-research/Regional-Victoria>

