

PSP Guidelines 2020

Peri-urban and Regional stakeholder consultation

Workshop summary

March 2021



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1.0 OVERVIEW

The VPA hosted a 2-hour workshop on Tuesday 20 October with 23 participants from 11 different planning organisations to unpack the needs of its peri-urban and regional stakeholders in relation to the recently redrafted *Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields* (the Guidelines).

Participants represented a range of organisations, including the public and private regional planning industry. See Appendix 1 for a detailed attendance list.

The purpose of this summary report is to provide an overview of the feedback heard in the workshop and close the loop with those who attended.

1.1 Project background

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) has updated its *Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields* (the Guidelines), with the aim to improve liveability in new greenfield areas. The main goal of the Guidelines is to provide a clear purpose, pathway and practical toolbox for preparing a successful Precinct Structure Plan (PSP). The Guidelines include updated principles and performance targets to guide minimum standards for PSPs based on 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The updated Guidelines build on the original Guidelines that were released over ten years ago to incorporate current policy, best practice and lessons learned. Once final, the Guidelines can be used to plan for all greenfield areas, though currently primarily focus on the need of Melbourne's greenfield areas. Further consideration of requirements and adaptations for regional Victoria's settings will be given as part of the refresh.

The VPA released the Guidelines for stakeholder and industry feedback in September until November 2020. This workshop formed part of the broader consultation process.

1.2 Workshop purpose and objectives

The main purpose of the workshop was to meet with peri-urban and regional stakeholders to understand the updated Guidelines from a regional greenfields perspective.

The workshop aimed to:

- Provide background and context about the update to the Guidelines
- Raise questions and prompt discussion from participants
- Hear feedback about suitable targets in the Guidelines for peri-urban and regional settings
- Discuss local character and how the Guidelines can play a role in protecting it
- Understand the most useful way to provide a regional addendum to the updated Guidelines
- Collect ideas about the best way to raise awareness about the Guidelines to ensure they are understood by relevant planning professionals.

1.3 Outcomes

Feedback heard in this workshop will feed into the broader consultation feedback. It will be used to assist the VPA to prepare further information to aid planners from peri-urban and regional areas to apply the Guidelines appropriately.

1.4 Format of the event

The workshop was held on Zoom and was facilitated by VPA staff. It included a detailed presentation from the project manager about the updated Guidelines. Throughout the course of the workshop, two interactive platforms (Mentimeter and Jamboard) were used to collect feedback from participants, both as a plenary and in small break out groups. The small break out groups were facilitated by members of the VPA's regional planning team.

1.5 Sensitivities

The VPA acknowledges that Victoria's peri-urban and regional areas are diverse and have their own specific needs and interests. Best efforts were made to ensure that feedback heard during this consultation was a true representation of this diversity.

It is important to note that workshop participants represented a variety of different sized peri-urban, regional and rural local government areas which is reflected in feedback throughout. See Appendix 1 for a detailed attendance list.

2.0 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

2.1 Plenary activities

At the start of the workshop, participants gathered in the main room to introduce themselves and discuss the uniqueness of planning for peri-urban and regional greenfields. Answers were collected on the Mentimeter platform.

The first question asked where participants were joining the workshop from. Results showed that participants tuned into the workshop from across Victoria, including Albury-Wodonga (two), Ballarat, Bendigo (two), Bright, Brunswick East, Castlemaine (two), Darley, Lara, Mount Eliza, Camperdown, Geelong (six), Warragul, Werribee and Wyndham Vale.



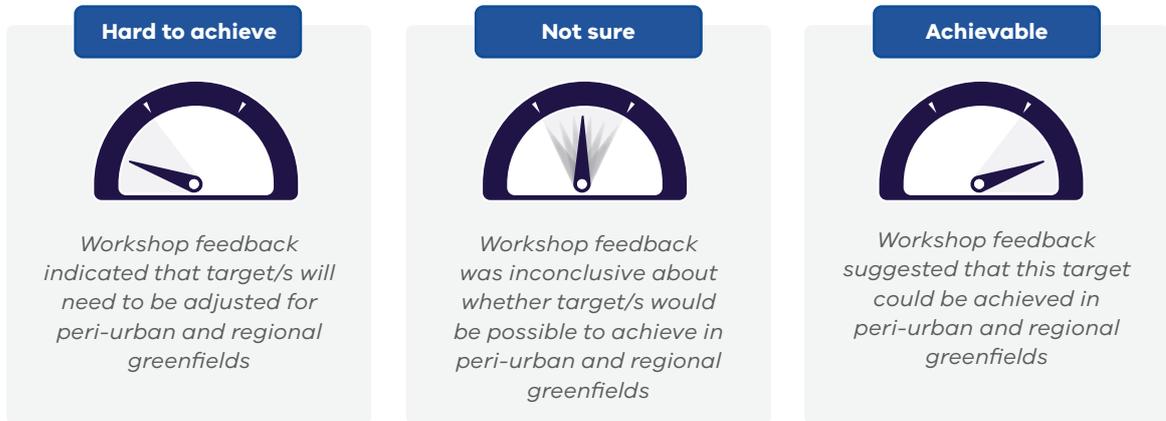
Participants were also asked “what makes planning for peri-urban and regional greenfields unique?”.

The results were shown live as participants submitted their answers and included:

- Limitation of resources
- Natural typography and environmental constraints
- The relationship and transition between new greenfields and existing townships and communities
- Service infrastructure constraints, especially transport connections
- Different community habits (e.g. car dependency)
- Different planning motivations (i.e. less density, lower land prices and different lot sizes)
- Bushfire risk.

2.2 Discussion 1: Adjustments

Participants were moved into break out groups to discuss the proposed planning targets in the Guidelines and assess the adjustments required to make them suitable for peri-urban and regional settings. The results are broken into themes below.



2.2.1 Viable densities

“Lift the benchmark for densities by setting a minimum 20 dwellings per net developable hectare across the entire PSP area.”



Overall, participants felt this target was too high for regional and rural towns and indicated that the community would be resistant to this level of density. Feedback highlighted the need for diversity to be delivered through any density being delivered.

There was consensus across the groups that regional towns are highly variable in density and character, so a more nuanced and flexible approach to density targets is required. Although it is possible for larger regional cities in proximity to Melbourne, such as Geelong, to reach these this target it would not be feasible for other Councils. Participants advised that more thought is required regarding density and topographic constraints, environmental constraints and bushfire risk in areas, as these complexities may make achieving density more difficult.

Some suggestions were made about ranging the density from 13 – 15 dwellings per net developable hectare and introducing some performance criteria to help regional councils decide whether they should be planning for “low”, “middle”, or “high” density.

“Facilitate increased densities within an 800m walkable catchment of an activity centre, train station or Principle Public Transport network”



Participants indicated that overall, this target would be very difficult to deliver in regional and rural settings as without a critical population mass, the provision of services and public transport is limited.

Some suggested this distance could be scaled in accordance with relevant densities and catchment areas. Feedback showed support for this target where there is good access to a strong public transport network and some of the larger regional cities indicated they are currently meeting this target or have aimed for an even low rate at 400m.

It was universally agreed that a strong focus should be placed on delivering higher quality shared paths in the regions, to link activity centres. Concerns were raised over the cost benefit of delivering more infrastructure in rural areas.

2.2.2 Safe, accessible and well connected

“Increase connectivity and walkability by seeking to deliver 95% of dwelling within either 800m of a train, 6700m of a tram or 400m of a bus stop.”



It was generally agreed that this target is unrealistic for regional and rural towns unless the State Government were committed to delivering the infrastructure required to meet it.

It was suggested that an alternative target should be introduced that emphasises safe, connected walking and cycling corridors. The importance of healthy lifestyles and incorporating liveability measures and connectivity as a social determinant of health were discussed in relation to this target. One participant said that “as these targets already apply in regional areas through clause 56.04-1, they should not be reduced”.

2.2.3 Connect people to jobs and higher order services

“Deliver a job density of one job per dwellings within the wider growth corridor.”



The intent of this target received complete support by participants in the workshop as it will allow planners to work towards limiting the need for regional communities to travel to the city for work by delivering more local jobs.

While all participants supported its intent, the metrics of the target received mixed feedback. To make the target more feasible, some suggested measuring the wider growth corridor differently for regional and rural areas when compared to Metropolitan growth corridors. Another solution raised was to consider employment in a more regional context than individually in PSPs, to capitalise on health and/or education hubs in neighbouring towns.

Participants requested the Guidelines better consider recent changes to working behaviours as a result of COVID19. Some concerns were raised about delivering enough employment land in new PSPs to allow for this target, as there is significant pressure for competing uses in these areas. Lack of available workers housing and limited access to fast speed internet was also raised as a barrier to achieving this target.

2.2.4 High quality public realm

“Deliver bigger networks of open spaces by requiring a sports reserve or open space larger than one hectare within 800m of all dwellings in a PSP.”



It was universally agreed at the workshop that this target was feasible in regional towns, though some participants reiterated the importance of keeping sporting facilities grouped together in smaller townships instead of spreading facilities across the area. It was raised that “better distribution of access to open space is potentially more important than the individual size of these spaces”. As this target is already included in Clause 56, it was agreed that it should not be reduced.

Some participants suggested including a range (800 – 1500m) for smaller rural towns or setting a density trigger that applies this target would help planners to deliver it.

“Deliver a local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of 95% of dwellings in a PSP.”



This target was generally supported, though requests were made to extend the target beyond parks to include community farms, food hubs, and other opportunities for diverse open space including passive space and linear parks. Again, participants argued that as this target is already included in state policy, it should not be reduced.

Some participants questioned how this target would change if it was determined that lower densities were more suitable in some rural places.

2.2.5 Services and destinations

“Require 70% of dwellings to be planned for within 800m of a government primary school and 100% of dwellings to be within 3200m of a government secondary school.”



Mixed feedback was heard on this proposed target. Generally, participants were concerned that the size of some rural and regional PSPs may not generate enough demand for a school and that the scale of development was not comparable in this instance to metro areas.

The need for cooperation from the Department of Education was also raised, and some participants felt they could not influence an outcome like this.

It was suggested that this target could be repurposed to concentrate on safe walking and cycling connections to schools nearby.

2.2.6 Thriving local economies

“Require 90% of dwellings within 800m of an activity centre.”



While participants agreed that this target is important when planning for healthy and active communities, it was agreed that it is less achievable in regional areas and may need to be adjusted for this setting. Some participants expressed concern that creating a second activity centre in a precinct with low demand may take away from the town centre of a rural town. It was stressed that the scale of the regional town must be considered before applying this target.

2.2.7 Comments on other targets



- Catchments should be defined by a period of development, not only generic distance.
- Important to focus on active transport as regional towns are generally very car-dependent.
- Targets should address bushfire management needs at all times.
- The Guidelines should be related to regional growth area plans instead of Plan Melbourne.
- A stronger link to the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019 – 2023* should be established in the Guidelines to promote health through the 20 minutes neighbourhoods principle.

2.3 Discussion 2: Protecting local character

Participants discussed the protection of local character in small break out groups.

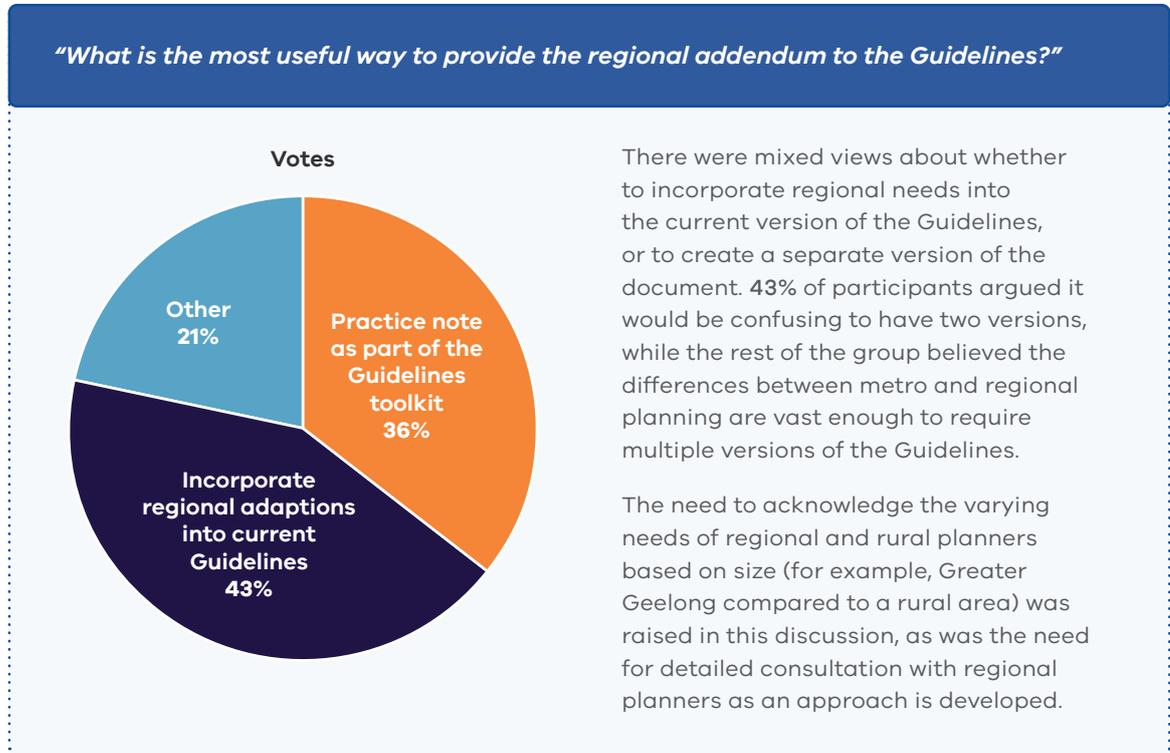
The top 8 ways that ***“the Guidelines can play a role in protecting local regional character”*** are outlined below:

- Local character should be incorporated into the vision setting for peri-urban, regional and rural PSPs and agreed with local community members.
- The Guidelines should include a requirement that any identification of local character through urban character assessments and/or technical reports must be referenced in future planning documents. If no technical work is undertaken, the protection of local character should be determined through to MAV Rural and Regional character document.
- The Guidelines should consider sensitive interfaces and transition interfaces in regional areas, to ensure valuable land is protected and residential to farming land transitions appropriately.
- The Guidelines should mandate principles that protect view lines and other local characteristics of smaller towns (wide roads etc).
- Planning should allow for non-urban breaks between towns so the settlement can retain its local identity.
- The document should provide guidance on how to balance the competing objectives of bushfire management and greening and protection of native vegetation objectives. Protecting local character can often be overruled by risk management of natural hazards.
- In general, the PSP process in regional and rural towns should leverage development contributions to renew infrastructure and other aspects of the township.
- Gateway locations must be planned appropriately to create a sense of arrival.

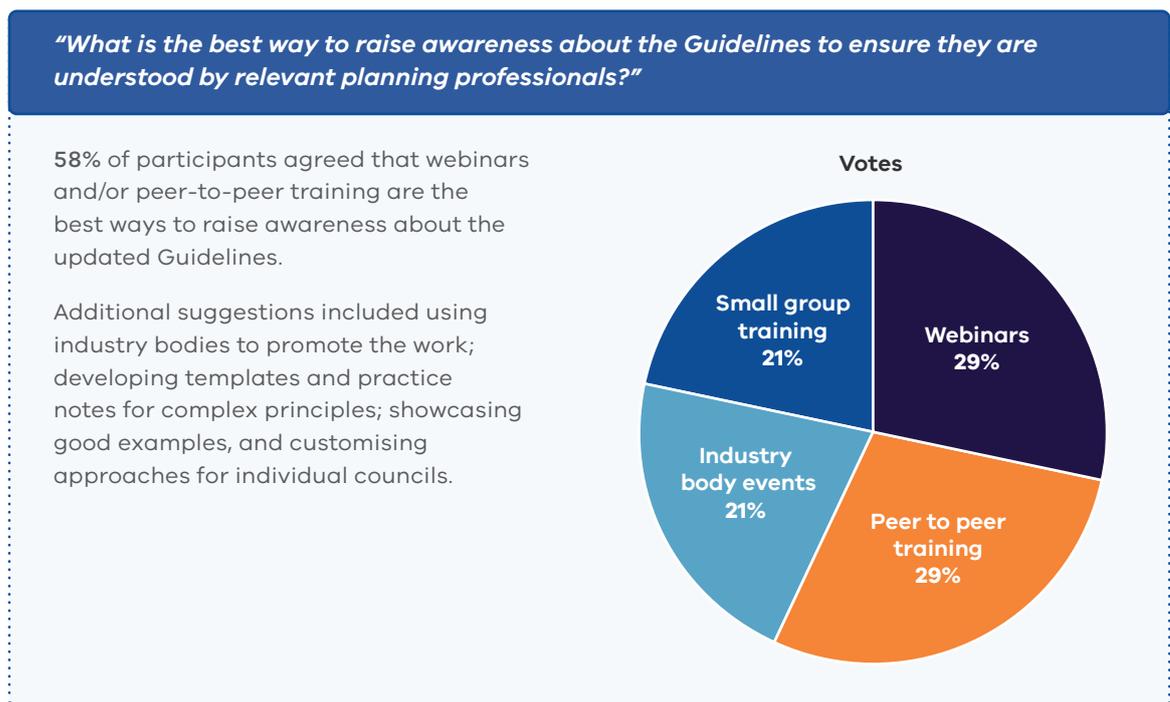
2.4 Discussion 3: Implementation tools

Participants were asked to provide feedback on their preference for implementing the Guidelines in regional and rural Victoria.

2.4.1 Approaches to reflecting peri-urban and regional needs in the Guidelines



2.4.2 Raising awareness



3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 Review of workshop

Workshop participants were asked to provide feedback on the workshop to the VPA. Overall, 94% of participants found the workshop somewhat or very valuable. 100% of participants agreed the workshop was well structured, though 13% of participants believed the length of the workshop was too short. 94% were satisfied or very satisfied that their feedback was accurately reflected, with 6% of participants unsure.

The project team delivered its objectives to hear from a broad range of regional and peri-urban stakeholders about the needs of planners in Victoria's regions. The information collected at the workshop will inform the next phase of this project.

3.2 Next steps

The feedback collected in this workshop will be used to inform changes to the Guidelines to respond to planning in peri-urban and regional settings. The VPA is currently reviewing all feedback it received during the consultation period. In addition to this workshop summary, a summary of the entire consultation process will also be provided to all who participated.

During the first quarter of 2021, the current performance targets will undergo further testing and refinement. The project team will work with regional partners again at this time.

As the next iteration of the Guidelines is developed, the VPA will prepare a Key Changes document which outlines the main updates in the document as a result of stakeholder consultation. The Key Changes report and finalised PSP Guidelines document are expected to be delivered in 2021. The VPA will continue to work with its peri-urban and regional stakeholders as it prepares a considered approach to providing information in the Guidelines that meets their needs.

For more information or feedback, please contact Brent McLean, Director Outer Melbourne brent.mclean@vpa.vic.gov.au, (03) 9651 9600.

4.0 APPENDICES

4.1 Appendix 1 – Detailed attendance list

Participants at the workshop work for the following regional and peri-urban organisations, noting that any feedback heard at the workshop reflected individual views and was not the endorsed view of their organisation.

- Bendigo City Council
- Beveridge Williams
- Central Goldfields Shire
- Geelong City Council
- Golden Plains Shire
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Mount Alexander Council
- Red Ink Planning
- South Gippsland Council
- Wodonga City Council

