

September 2021 Meeting Note:

The Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils (PUGRC) agreed to review the Terms of Reference as of June 2021. Amendments to the Terms of Reference were identified at the 27 August 2021 PUGRC Forum.

The Secretariat has incorporated the requested amendments for review which have been highlighted in yellow.

Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils Terms of reference as of 10 September 2021

1.0 Background

The Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils (**PUGRC**) was established in 2007 in response to concerns at the lack of a comprehensive vision for the peri urban region of Melbourne and Geelong. The PUGRC meets bi-monthly to discuss shared challenges, opportunities and initiatives.

The Peri Urban Councils share common characteristics and impediments to managing population growth. These councils border the growth zones of both Melbourne, Geelong and the regional cities of Ballarat and Bendigo and are highly desirable for residential growth over the coming decades. However, this growth is tempered by managing much of Victoria's productive agricultural and environmental lands and accordingly, these Councils play a significant role in ensuring the ongoing health of this State and should be recognised as such.

Existing policy positions currently do not adequately recognise the regional commonalities nor the importance of this group of Councils to Victoria. New, more directed policy responses are required to support the sustainable populations and economic growth of this region.

2.0 Purpose

The Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils Forum (**PUGRC Forum**) is comprised of:

- Mayors and/or Councillors;
- CEOs; and
- Relevant Directors and delegates as required.

The PUGRC Forum is to strengthen the region through four key areas:

2.1 SUPPORT:

- Working in close partnership with the Victorian Government to ensure that the **unique landscapes of the Peri Urban region** are recognised and protected through **holistic and integrated planning**, the provision of **high-quality infrastructure** and the creation of **local employment opportunities**;
- To source funding for growth opportunities and infrastructure for our communities;
- To develop government policies and initiatives to support and strengthen the Peri Urban region; and
- Through engagement with all levels of Government and stakeholders.

2.2 PROTECTION:

- Of our local and regional character;
- Of our productive agricultural lands; and
- Of our State significant tourism and environmental assets.

2.3 RECOGNITION

- That PUGRC is a collaborative forum for Government and industry;
- Of the important role the Peri Urban region plays in achieving a 'better balance' for Victoria by providing connected, commutable and liveable alternative;
- Our region is the playground for Victoria and visitors, offering recreational and tourism assets, vibrant lifestyles and friendly communities; and
- Our region's population is changing rapidly, and we must be supported to manage the growth and challenges of population change, including digital connectivity, affordable housing, transport, community infrastructure and amenities.

2.4 ENHANCEMENT

- Of our communities through appropriate infrastructure, services, economic development and planning;
- Of our agricultural and business sectors through appropriate support and policy settings;
- Of our tourism and environmental assets; and
- Of our Municipal operations through regional partnerships and collaborative projects.

3.0 Aim

PUGRC is the leader in advocating for Victorian Peri Urban support and solutions at the local, state and national level.

3.1 Membership

Financial Members of the Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils:

- Bass Coast Shire Council;
- Baw Baw Shire Council;
- Golden Plains Shire Council;
- Moorabool Shire Council; and
- Surf Coast Shire Council.

Membership is open to other Councils who are part of Melbourne and Geelong Peri Urban regions and contribute financially to the group.

Each Council will be represented by the Mayor and/or a Councillor and the CEO (these representatives will make up the **PUGRC Board**). Councils may include additional relevant council representatives at Forums as required.

Members must attend a minimum of 75 per cent of meetings over the calendar year. Members may send delegates that will count towards the 75 per cent attendance threshold.

All members must be available and willing to actively participate and provide comment and review on issues between meetings.

Quorum for meetings of the PUGRC Forum will require representation by four member Councils.

In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair/s will be asked to chair the meeting.

Decision-making will be made by consensus wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be achieved, simple majority will resolve the issue with each Council having one vote. Where a deadlock occurs after this vote, the Chair will be able to cast a deciding vote to break the deadlock.

A record of meeting proceedings will be kept. Circulation of such records will be restricted to members.

4.0 Workplan

PUGRC will undertake advocacy engagement with relevant stakeholders as it relates to the agreed workplan of the alliance. This will include but is not limited to Government Ministers and their Shadows, local Members of Parliament, Departments, Statutory Authorities, Peak Bodies and other interested or impacted organisations.

As part of PUGRC's advocacy engagement, stakeholders will be invited to attend relevant meetings, with the view to:

- Provide information and updates on current work and initiatives;
- Participate in discussions on issues and opportunities facing the Peri Urban region;
- Assist the PUGRC to navigate government and provide introductions to relevant contacts as necessary; and
- Respect the confidentiality of information shared.

PUGRC's role when engaging with stakeholders is to:

- Advocate on behalf of the Peri Urban region;
- To work cooperatively with Partner organisations; and
- Respect the confidentiality of information shared.

5.0 Chair

The Chairperson shall be elected by the PUGRC for 12 months. Their responsibilities include:

- Being the key spokesperson for the PUGRC and advocating to Government and stakeholders on behalf of the PUGRC; and
- Orderly management of the PUGRC meetings and work priorities including:
 - Approving invitations for specialists to attend meetings when required by the Committee;
 - Chairing the meeting according to the agenda and time available;
 - Ensuring all discussion items end with a decision, action or definite outcome;
 - Reviewing and approving the draft agenda and minutes before distribution;
 - Approving any letters and media responses from the Secretariat;
 - Members may propose agenda items for the meetings for the Chair's consideration; and
 - Members are requested to have proposed agenda items to the Chair two weeks prior to the next meeting.

6.0 Deputy Chair/s

The Deputy Chairperson shall be elected by the PUGRC for 12 months. Their responsibilities include:

- Advocating to Government and stakeholders on behalf of the PUGRC and being the spokesperson for the PUGRC as required by the Chair;
- Chairing the PUGRC meeting when required and as outlined above; and
- Attending meetings with key stakeholders.

7.0 Meetings – PUGRC Forum

- Meetings are scheduled every 6 weeks from February to November (inclusive);
- Meetings will alternate between a 2-hour meeting (10am-12pm) online and a longer in person meeting (10am-2pm) held centrally in Melbourne;
- An annual schedule of meetings shall be distributed to members in December of each calendar year;
- The Chair may convene extraordinary meetings where necessary. Where possible members will be notified of the change or extraordinary meeting at least two weeks before these meetings are to be held;
- PUGRC meetings aim to provide a forum for strategic discussion and consideration of key issues, future direction and solutions; and
- Detailed work and discussion on individual matters or policy responses will be directed towards Technical Working Groups for presentation and endorsement by the PUGRC.

8.0 Technical Working Groups

- Technical working groups will be formed to provide the detailed work for PUGRC policies and positions and to respond to government reports and policies as required;
- The working groups will be comprised primarily of Council Officers with appropriate expertise in the subject area;
- Representatives of relevant Partner organisations or key stakeholders may be included as necessary to provide input and to assist to identify solutions and outcomes;
- The working group will meet outside of the normal PUGRC meeting schedule and may conduct meetings in person or via web or phone hook-up in recognition of the travel times required for meeting in person; and
- The output of the Technical Working Groups will be provided to the full PUGRC meeting for consideration and endorsement prior to any external discussion of the work.

8.1 Role and Responsibility of the Technical Working Groups

- Provide advice on issues and key themes emerging from implementation of Government policy statements;
- Provide input into PUGRC strategic documents, submissions and research and provide advice on peri urban issues; and
- Seek to resolve complex policy issues and identify appropriate solutions.

9.0 Secretariat

- The Secretariat will provide secretariat support to the PUGRC;
- The Secretariat will be responsible for assisting the Chair with meeting arrangements, advocacy, policy and communications;
- The Secretariat is currently hosted by Collective Position. This arrangement can be altered by negotiation between the Secretariat and the Chair's host Council;
- All member councils will be regularly informed of the activities of the Secretariat; and
- Details regarding the PUGRC's financial status will be provided by the Secretariat at every PUGRC meeting.

10.0 Communication

- Communication from the PUGRC will be undertaken through the Chair. The Chair will also be responsible for responding to any correspondence addressed to the PUGRC; and
- Any queries received about the PUGRC should be directed to the Secretariat.

11.0 Conflict of Interest

- Members are expected to manage any conflicts of interest under the terms of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

12.0 Amendments

- The terms of reference shall be reviewed bi-annually from the date of approval. They may be altered to meet the current needs of the PUGRC forum;
- The Terms of Reference will be reviewed again in March 2022; and
- The above Terms of Reference for the PUGRC Forum have been agreed to by PUGRC Members at their meeting on 10 September 2021.