



# OPINION/LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Now more than ever, Victoria's regions must be heard

August 2024

The lifestyles afforded by our regional cities, and a couple of years in lockdown, prompted the largest city and suburban exodus Victoria has ever seen.

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) is the peak body representing our major regional centres of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, the Latrobe Valley, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, and Wodonga. Collectively, we are home to more than 800,000 people and are strategically important to the Victorian and national economy.

RCV is committed to assisting our regions grow – we need more homes and more jobs, and to protect the aspects locals love about their regional city. Consistent, fair and well-targeted funding from governments is critical to ensuring our regional cities not only function but thrive.

Within the next three years Australians will witness the beginning of three new terms of government with council elections in October, a federal election expected in 2025, and a Victorian state election to take place in 2026.

What happens in these election cycles will most likely shape our state for the next decade.

Now more than ever, Victoria's regional cities must be heard.

Federal and State Governments must work with our Regional Cities in a genuine partnership to ease the strains of population growth on our capital cities and reset government investment priorities to capitalise on the economic opportunities the regions offer.

Many regional Victorians look at the tens of billions being spent to ease growth pains in metro-Melbourne and wonder about the potential of that level of investment in growing and better connecting our regional cities.

Governments need to look beyond metro areas. Collectively we must raise aspirations for our regional cities. There is so much opportunity outside Melbourne to give rise to new and emerging industries, create more jobs, more affordable housing, and stronger communities.

We know the potential of our regions, we know challenges and we believe there is opportunity for all levels of government to work in partnership with RCV to unlock solutions.

And with growth comes expectations – fair expectations – of greater investment in public transport, roads, community spaces, and resilience to natural disasters.

*RCV is a regional leadership group dedicated to building a sustainable Victoria by providing strategic advice, coordination and advocacy to State and Federal Governments to support policies which enable Victoria's regional centres to grow and develop. Comprising Mayors and CEOs of the 10 largest cities in regional Victoria – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga – RCV is focused on achieving real change in regional Victoria through policy development and active implementation of those policies.*



As the trusted voice of regional Victoria, RCV continues to work to highlight the aspirations of Victoria's regional cities to deliver the economic growth, improved connectivity, liveability, and sustainability required in regional Victoria now and for the decades ahead.

***Cr Sali, Chair of Regional Cities Victoria and Mayor of Shepparton***  
***RCV comprises the mayors and CEOs of the 10 largest regional cities in Victoria.***

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