

Shire of Yarra Ranges

**Victoria Grants  
Commission Submission**



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## Foreword

Thank you for the opportunity for Yarra Ranges to make a submission in relation to the Victoria Grant Commission's (VGC) grants model.

The visit by the VGC to the Shire in November 2007 proved extremely valuable in further developing our understanding of the methodology used to allocate grants. We were also grateful for the opportunity to discuss with the VGC some of the issues faced by the Shire and Local Government more broadly.

We have prepared this year's submission to further expand on some of the issues discussed during the VGC's visit. In particular, this submission focuses on:

- Governance
- Environment
- Family and Community Services
- Business and Economic Services

The issues raised in this submission impact not only on Yarra Ranges but the Local Government sector as a whole. In the case of the discussion of Governance and the Environment, they reflect the changing nature of the role of Victorian Councils.

For each of the topics raised, an initial discussion is provided of the issues faced by Local Government broadly. This is followed by a section about the Shire's response to the issues presented. Finally, recommendations are made for the way forward.

Also included in this submission is an updated snapshot of the Shire to provide some background and context to the issues raised in this submission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this information. We trust that you will consider these significant issues sympathetically and positively. We are available to discuss this information and any other issues you may have at a time of your convenience.

# Governance

## THE ISSUE

The governance role of Local Government has expanded over the past ten years beyond managing Council operations and local law enforcement to include community planning, community strengthening, advocacy and community leadership development. This has emerged out of growing community expectations that Councils be the builder of sustainable communities, recognition of the importance of strong and well-connected communities and an acknowledgement that Local Government is well-placed to facilitate community planning and development.

The State Government, through 'Growing Victoria Together' and the 'Building Stronger Foundations for Resilient Communities' funding package in 2005, has made explicit its emphasis on the building of cohesive communities. The Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 also recognises this shifting focus. The extract of Section 3D of the Act describes the leadership and good governance role of Councils in planning, building and representing local communities:

- "Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making,
- Advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments,
- Fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life".

Local Governments across Victoria have increasingly taken on this expanded governance role in recent years, with Victorian Councils now incorporating community planning, community development and advocacy activities into their core business. In recognition of this emergent work area, and to gain an understanding of the full extent and nature of these activities undertaken by Councils, a number of projects are currently being undertaken by the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Department of Planning and Community Development and the LGPro Corporate Planners Network.

The final report of the Local Government Victoria Community Planning Project, 'Planning Together: Lessons from Local Government Community Planning in Victoria' (December 2007) found that while specific activities are varied and tailored to particular communities, community planning is now commonplace in Victorian local governments:

*"Approaches to local planning have been varied, but it has become common practice for local governments to develop 'community plans' alongside their council plans. Community plans are more aspirational, longer term, involve more extensive community consultation and deal with matters outside local governments' domain and direct control".*

The report also concludes that community planning work is expensive, time intensive and reliant on specific skills and expertise. The need for increased resourcing of this important work was highlighted as a core issue for Councils. Identified as a key issue to address is: "How to ensure the skills and resources are available to undertake community planning processes" (Local Government Victoria, December 2007).

The investment in the development of community plans was found to sit alongside the other key governance work of Victorian Local Governments in building

community leaders, strengthening local communities and advocating to other levels of government on behalf of communities. While structures and activities again vary, Victorian Councils typically have departments dedicated to community strengthening, advocacy and community planning work and undertake a considerable raft of activities to achieve these ends.

## **THE SHIRE'S RESPONSE**

The Shire of Yarra Ranges has implemented a well-developed program of community planning, community development and advocacy work. Council has worked with its community to develop Vision 2020, the Yarra Ranges Community Plan, which was reviewed by the community in 2006 and will again be reviewed with our community in 2009.

The development and review of the Shire's Community Plan is a considerable undertaking, requiring significant resource allocation in both its consultation and development phases, particularly due to the dispersed nature of the Shire's communities. Once developed, the directions and aspirations expressed by the Yarra Ranges' community in the Plan drive the activities undertaken by Council, and more broadly by residents, community groups, service providers, business and other levels of government, in working to achieve the vision. The Community Plan is used by Council to underpin the organisation's strategic direction and to inform the development of the Shire's Council Plan.

Like most Councils, the Community Plan is only one component of these new governance activities for the Shire. Council's Strategy and Organisational Development Department and Community Strengthening Unit are dedicated to undertaking a range of work to strengthen and build the capacity of the Shire's communities, develop and support local community leadership, and, to advocate to other organisations and levels of government.

To illustrate the types of specific activities undertaken by Victorian Local Governments, a list of activities the Shire of Yarra Ranges has completed in recent years is included below:

- Ongoing funding of a Strategy and Organisational Development Department and Community Strengthening Unit;
- Facilitating the development and review of the Shire's Community Plan (Vision 2020);
- Facilitating the development of local community visions and action plans;
- Development of a Community Consultation Policy and Resource Kit;
- Development of a Community Indicators Report;
- Development of a Community Portal;
- Delivery of VISTA Community Leadership Program;
- Delivery of the Young Leaders program that support and develop emerging community leaders;
- Encouragement and support of effective Township and Community Groups;
- Support of community strengthening activities through the Community Grants Program;

- Conducting community education programs, such as the Shire's 'Learning for Sustainability Program' and discussion forums like our 'Town & Gown Lecture Series';
- Advocating to State and Federal Governments on a range of community issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This changing governance role described above has required a shift in activities undertaken by Victorian Local Governments. Completing these tasks effectively comes at a considerable cost to Councils.

In the past we have raised concerns with the definitions used in capturing the governance costs of Councils through the VGC returns. Currently the VGC 'Governance' Expenditure Function does not cater for Councils' broader governance role in community building, planning and advocacy, and undervalues the true governance costs of Councils. The model instead focuses on the more traditional governance costs, such as elections, hence the inclusion of the 'Scale' Cost Adjustor.

Community development activities are currently included under 'Business and Economic Services'. This category is defined by the VGC as including only town planning and urban/rural renewal. The breadth of community planning, community strengthening, advocacy and leadership development activities described above do not fit within this existing definition.

We urge the VGC to broaden the definition of 'Governance' given to Councils in preparing their returns and to review the funding allocation of this function. This would enable Councils to more accurately categorise their governance expenses and enhance the VGC's model to better reflect the actual workings of local government. While we applaud the VGC for reducing the 'Scale' Cost Adjustor percentage weighting, it would be more effective to reduce it further and to increase the 'Population Dispersion' Cost Adjustor to reflect the costs of undertaking these broader governance activities amongst dispersed communities.

We recommend that the VGC:

1. Broaden the definition and funding allocation of the 'Governance' Expenditure Function to include factors such as advocacy, building sustainable and well-connected communities, stimulating partnerships, educating community leaders and community planning.
2. Remove or further reduce the 'Scale' Cost Adjustor percentage weighting for the 'Governance' Expenditure Function.
3. Increase the 'Population Dispersion' Cost Adjustor percentage weighting for the 'Governance' Expenditure Function.

## Environment

### THE ISSUE

In the Shire's 2005, 2006 and 2007 submissions, we urged the VGC to expand the application of the 'Environmental Risk' Cost Adjustor to the 'Governance' Expenditure Function as a first step in recognising the costs to Councils in protecting and enhancing our natural environment. Given the growing threats to the environment

caused by climate change and drought, and the increasing role of Local Government in mitigating these risks and protecting the environment, the Shire now believes that the VGC model should acknowledge the management of the environment as a core expense in its own right.

The preservation and enhancement of our natural environment and actions that reduce our environmental footprint have become increasingly important in recent years due to the affects and future risks of climate change. The recently released (2007) Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change states that: "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures" ... "Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

There is also now a clear recognition of the direct relationship between human activity and climate change. Occurring with this are increasing expectations from local communities and State and Federal Government that Local Government play a key role in reducing the impact of their communities on the environment and in managing and protecting the environment. At the National General Assembly of Local Government (held by the Australian Local Government Association in November 2007) a key focus was the leadership role of local government in responding to climate change. The conference's keynote speaker, Tim Flannery, talked about the fundamental role of Local Government with respect to managing the environment and said that "Local Government does the 'heavy lifting' globally in terms of climate change".

Councils across Victoria are increasingly responding to environmental challenges and dedicating significant portions of their budgets to environmental management. The bulk of Local Governments have dedicated environment departments, or indeed directorates, that undertake a range of range of work to protect and enhance the natural environment within their jurisdictions, to reduce the impact of local communities on the environment, and, to respond to the increased environmental risks caused by climate change and drought.

Victorian Local Governments are also acting as environmental leaders, advocating to other levels of government on environmental issues and undertaking work with business, agriculture, schools, private landholders and households to build skills, capacity and leaders in environmental sustainability and gain leverage in the community around environmental protection.

This environmental work is strongly supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and recognised by the association as a key role for local government. One of the MAV's organisational strategic objectives is: "to ensure Local Government has effective practices and processes that protect and enhance the environment". The MAV does this through policy advice and the development of alliances between the three tiers of government and other key stakeholders, as well as through the MAV Strategic Environment Advisory Group.

## **THE SHIRE'S RESPONSE**

While the environment is everybody's business, Interface and Rural Councils are particularly interested because they encompass the majority of our environmental assets and face the greatest challenges in protecting and managing the environment.

In the case of Yarra Ranges Shire, the state of our environmental assets is of even more interest. Yarra Ranges has over 700 square kilometres of bushland, including large forested areas which encompass much of Melbourne's water supply catchments and some of the most environmentally significant parts of Victoria. These areas play a vital role in reducing Victoria's carbon emissions and in feeding and protecting Melbourne's precious water supply.

The delicate balance between protecting the natural environment against the impact of people and the built environment is an ongoing challenge. A range of management and governance activities are undertaken by the Shire to protect our important environmental assets and reduce our impact on climate change. Alongside this work the Shire also manages a number of initiatives to reduce and respond to the increasing risk of fire, flood and erosion. Of key concern to the Shire is bushfire, particularly as increases in air temperature and drought heighten the risk of fire in the Yarra Ranges already fire prone bushland.

To illustrate the types of activities undertaken by Victorian Local Governments in managing the environment, a list of some of the activities the Shire of Yarra Ranges undertakes is provided below:

- Dedicated Environment Department and Emergency Management Unit;
- Climate Change Commitment;
- Environment and emergency management policies and strategies;
- State of the Environment research report to monitor and report on our environment;
- Weed eradication programs and education;
- Native vegetation planting;
- Programs focused on maintaining biodiversity;
- Management of trails for recreational purposes;
- Environmental education programs including Environmental Leadership Program;
- Support for 'friends' and 'landcare' programs;
- Advocacy to the State and Federal Government on a range of environmental issues including weed management and climate change.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The above examples show the growing importance of Council activities in managing the environment and the particular issues faced by the Shire of Yarra Ranges. They illustrate the extent of work currently undertaken by Councils to enhance and protect our precious environment and reduce the threat of climate change.

Currently, the costs of environmental management are addressed in the VGC model under the 'Other Infrastructure Services' Expenditure Function. Included is 'Fire Protection', 'Environment Protection' (in the form of beach protection, salinity control and flood mitigation) and control of vermin and noxious weeds which falls under 'Agricultural Services'. The full breadth of environmental protection, management and leadership work undertaken by Victorian Councils and described above do not fit within these categories.

We believe that a review should be undertaken of the VGC model's Expenditure Functions to create a new 'Environment' Expenditure Function that covers the true

range of activities undertaken by Councils. This change would make the model more reflective of the increasing expense to Local Governments in protecting and managing the environment and responding to environmental challenges.

We recommend that the VGC:

1. Create an 'Environment' Expenditure Function that acknowledges the increasing expectations and cost of managing and protecting the environment.
2. Use sites of biological significance or remnant native vegetation (sourced from DSE) as the major cost driver for the new 'Environment' Expenditure Function.

## Family and Community Services

### THE ISSUE

The VGC has recognised that population dispersion has a significant impact on Waste Management, Governance, Recreation and Culture, Aged and Disability Services and Other Infrastructure Services, with each of these Expenditure Functions carrying a 25% or higher Cost Adjustor weighting for population dispersion. The true impact of population dispersion on the provision of Family and Community Services has, however, yet to be fully reflected.

High population dispersion affects the delivery of Family and Community Services in much the same way as Aged and Disability Services. A 2004 submission by Interface Councils to the State Government (*Building a Sustainable Child and Family Service System across the Interface*, October 2004) emphasised key issues faced by Interface Councils in the delivery of Family and Community Services:

*"...while all the Interface municipalities share the circumstance of having the city on the one side and the country on the other, they need to respond to different combinations of three sets of needs: those of the new families is in the growing housing estates, those of residents of small and medium sized rural towns, and those of more scattered rural communities (Marston et al, 2003)". The challenge of developing and maintaining a range of servicing models appropriate to these patterns of population dispersion, including catering for some well established suburban areas is further compounded by a distinct lack of infrastructure and inflexible funding models that are better designed for urban metropolitan settings'.*

In terms of service provision, the submission highlighted the following issues:

- An absence of an effective service system across the Interface created by a lack of appropriate service facilities distributed throughout large Interface LGAs;
- Few locally-based, provider agencies with most clustered towards the CBD;
- Inflexible service requirements preventing the development of tailored solutions to local problems;
- Funding insufficient to meet the level of need and to respond to increased levels of complexity.

These issues are made more complex and costly when coupled with significant risk indicators for the different groups accessing the services including:

- Infants more likely to have low birth-weights, not be breastfed and not participate in Maternal and Child Health Programs;
- New mothers experiencing higher rates of post-natal depression, higher rates of Child Protection Notifications and Substantiations and fewer childcare places;
- Young adults with significantly lower rates of school completion, fewer attending university, higher proportions using alcohol and tobacco and higher incidences of self-harm.

## THE SHIRE'S RESPONSE

As an Interface Council, the Shire of Yarra Ranges is the largest metropolitan Melbourne municipality and, like all Interface Councils, includes a mix of rural and urban communities. Around 70% of the Shire's population live in the 'urban' areas of the municipality. This area represents approximately 3% of the Shire's landmass. The remaining population is dispersed throughout approximately 35 permanent rural communities and townships. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities and rural areas within the Shire, making it one of the most diverse of any municipality in the State.

Like other Interface Councils, high population dispersion impacts on the delivery of Family and Community Services in Yarra Ranges due to increased community need and increased pressure on service delivery. Some examples of higher community need due to population dispersion in the Shire are:

- Increased social isolation due to poor access to public transport, proximity to services in the local area and distance from social and support networks;
- Access to basic health, community and support services impacted by increasing fuel costs, poor access to public transport and the proximity of services;
- Limitations on young peoples' ability to participate actively in their community, access employment and training opportunities, interact with social networks and access services and programs due to poor access to public transport, increasing fuel costs (for those who have access to a vehicle), limited services for youth and social isolation.

Examples of the challenges faced by the Shire in the delivery of family and community services to their dispersed communities include:

- The distance travelled by Council staff when providing services and programs impacts on the number of people they can see in one day;
- Travel distances increase the cost of service provision, most particularly as fuel costs continue to rise;
- A lack of primary health care services in the municipality, such as hospitals, places additional pressure on Council services;
- A large outreach service is provided by Council, including outreach Maternal and Child Health Services, creating challenges for appropriate staff supervision and support, particularly as issues and crises arise;
- Council currently operates 22 Maternal and Child Health Centres compared with the state average of 9 centres per LGA;
- A lack of youth support programs delivered by other agencies and higher than average numbers of youth 'at risk' places additional pressure on Council to

address the needs of young people living in the Shire, particularly in the area of mental health.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The above challenges faced by the Shire and other Interface Councils illustrate the impact of population dispersion on the delivery of Family and Community Services. The issues faced by Council's with dispersed communities in providing these services are no less challenging, nor costly, than the delivery of Aged and Disability Services. We believe population dispersion, along with population aged under 6 years, to be the major cost factors in the delivery of Family and Community Services.

We recommend that the VGC:

1. Increase the percentage weighting of the 'Population Dispersion' Cost Adjustor for 'Family and Community Services'.
2. Reduce the percentage weighting of the 'Population Growth' Cost Adjustor for 'Family and Community Services'.

## **Business and Economic Services**

### **THE ISSUE**

Statutory planning services in Local Government deliver statutory land use and development services in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Statutory planning services administer the planning scheme, process planning and subdivision applications and represent Councils at VCAT and community forums.

In the VGC grants model, statutory planning services form a component of the 'Business and Economic Services' Expenditure Function, with a number of Cost Adjustors applied including 'Population Growth' at 10%. The Shire believes that the 'Population Growth' Cost Adjustor has been incorrectly applied to this Expenditure Function.

The Department of Planning and Community Development captures data each year on planning permit activity across Victoria. The most recent figures available (2005/06 financial year) show that, contrary to the VGC model, there is no relationship between population growth and the delivery of planning services.

Planning permit activity data shows that of the Councils who dealt with the twelve highest number of planning applications in 2005/06, only one was also listed in the top six Councils with the largest or fastest population growth between 2001 and 2006 (DPCD Planning Permit Activity, 2005/06 and ABS, Regional Population Growth, 2007). Councils with the three highest permit activity in 2005/06: Mornington Peninsula (2,823), Yarra Ranges (1,929) and Greater Geelong (1,562) have all experienced population growth rates similar to or below the Victorian average over the last four years.

Instead of population growth, higher than average workloads and levels of expenditure in the delivery of planning services relates to the level of complexity. Councils with complex planning schemes, many zones and overlays and with strongly competing interests and demands amongst their communities are those that

deal with high numbers of planning applications and applications that are complex and timely to process.

## **THE SHIRE'S RESPONSE**

The Shire's Planning Services department has a focus on achieving an improved quality of life for residents and the protection and enhancement of the Shire's natural environment as identified in the planning scheme and our Community Plan - Vision 2020.

In 2005/06, Yarra Ranges dealt with the second highest number of planning applications of all Victorian Councils. To manage this considerable workload, the Shire funds a large statutory planning department of 27 team members.

The reasons for the Shire's particularly high demands in statutory planning relates primarily to the complexity of the Yarra Ranges planning scheme as the Shire is an area of high natural and cultural significance. This complexity was highlighted in the late 1970s with the inception of the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan, which is the only remaining Regional Plan (of those that were in place at that time) that has been enshrined in the Planning and Environment Act.

The complexity of the Shire's planning scheme and high demand on statutory planning relates to:

- Range of zones applying in the Shire - Residential, Industrial, Business and Green Wedge;
- Large numbers of overlays (landslip, wildfire, significant landscape, environmental etc) and often a number of overlays on individual parcels of land;
- Strict vegetation controls which leads to the use of the Native Vegetation Framework;
- High number of permit triggers based on the need to satisfy the Regional Strategy Plan requirements;
- Complex and often competing issues relating to tourism, environment, social and economic.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The application of the 'Population Growth' Cost Adjustor to the 'Business and Economic Services' Expenditure Function incorrectly assumes a relationship between population growth and statutory planning demand and expenditure. An examination of data relating to population growth and planning permit applications shows this to be incorrect.

We recommend that the VGC:

- Remove the 10% application of the 'Population Growth' Cost Adjustor from the 'Business and Economic Services' Expenditure Function;
- Apply the 'Population Dispersion' Cost Adjustor to the 'Business and Economic Services' Expenditure Function at 10%.

## About the Shire

The Shire of Yarra Ranges is located on metropolitan Melbourne's eastern fringe. The Shire's population is currently estimated at 144,993 people and it covers an area of almost 2,500 square kilometres.

The Yarra Ranges is the seventh largest local government area in Melbourne in terms of population size and the eighth largest in the state of Victoria.

### OUR COMMUNITY

The Shire of Yarra Ranges was formed in 1994 following the amalgamation of the former Shires of Healesville, Lilydale, Sherbrooke and Upper Yarra.

The Shire balances a mixture of urban and rural communities. Around 70 per cent of the population live in the 'urban' areas that represent approximately 3 per cent of its landmass. The rest of the Shire's population is distributed throughout the remaining area. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities and rural areas within Yarra Ranges, making it one of the most diverse of any municipality in the State.

The average population density of the Shire is significantly lower than most metropolitan fringe municipalities. In the more rural areas of the Shire, the population density is approximately 17 people per km<sup>2</sup> which is comparable to most rural shires.



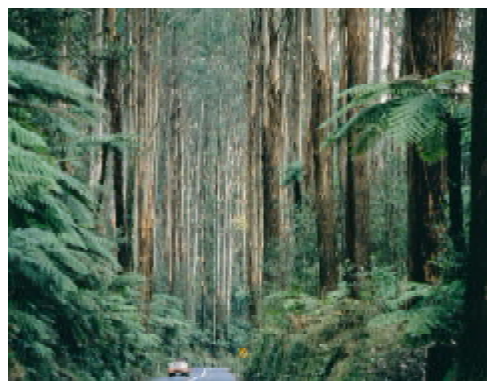
Yarra Ranges can be characterised as a 'young' Shire, with a higher than average proportion of the population aged between 0 and 17 years and more family households than typical across Victoria. In line with broader trends, the Shire's population is, however, ageing, with increasing proportions of residents aged 60 years and older. While cultural diversity is not as pronounced in Yarra Ranges as it is in other municipalities, almost 10,000 residents of the Shire are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The dispersion and diversity of the Shire's communities significantly impacts on the cost of infrastructure and service provision, particularly to the more rural areas and is significantly different to that experienced by other Metropolitan Councils.

### OUR UNIQUE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Shire of Yarra Ranges has long been recognised as a special place for its natural beauty and diverse habitats. The combination of national parks, state forests, private gardens and its location on the doorstep of Melbourne all combine to make the area unique in its natural, cultural and amenity values.

The Shire contains some of the most environmentally important areas in Victoria, which are a significant factor in attracting



residents and tourists. The mountainous landscapes and the Yarra River valley contain significant areas of remnant native vegetation, much of which is botanically and zoologically significant, providing important habitat for wildlife.

During the development of the Vision 2020 – Community Plan, the community identified the Shire as needing special recognition for its unique values. The combination of having a large human population living amongst the various forests and habitats, and the inclusion of agricultural production into the valley's ecology, is a situation that requires specialised management systems to maintain a sustainable balance.

The Shire is rich in natural resources such as good quality water, highly productive agricultural land and extensive native forest areas. Much of the Shire's flora and fauna is of regional, state or national significance and an extensive range of recreational, tourism and economic opportunities arise from this impressive resource base. Due to the significant nature of the environment, a key theme throughout land management and planning approaches is that of sustainability.

Integrating protection of the natural environment with development opportunities is both complex and resource-intensive. The Shire strongly promotes ecologically sustainable development and is actively working in conjunction with land management agencies and community groups to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to the protection, enhancement and management of our natural assets.

## OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Yarra Ranges has a diverse economy of around 10,000 businesses, employing some 35,289 people with a total Regional Output of \$8.3 billion. Around 3,000 of these businesses are Home Based.

Manufacturing continues to represent the single most valuable sector to the economy, yielding \$2.8 billion in regional output. The other key sectors are Construction (\$882 million), Property & Business Services (\$836 million) and Retail Trade (\$696 million).

Agriculture and Forestry also remains an important sector of the economy providing \$550 million (including wine making) of regional output. The Shire supports rural producers in seeking niche and export markets and encourages further value adding to agricultural products.

Conservative estimates indicate that the Shire produces:

- **75%** of Victoria's strawberries **\$80m**
- **70%** of Victoria's nursery horticulture **\$150m**
- **30%** of Victoria's floriculture **\$60m**
- **12%** of Victoria's orchard fruit **\$60m**
- **5%** of Victoria's wine and grapes **\$235m**
- Livestock **\$70m**



The Shire and in particular the 'Yarra Valley' is gaining local and international recognition as a fine food and wine producing area. This will continue to strengthen as the Yarra Valley is branded and promoted by Tourism Victoria as Victoria's hero food and wine tourism destination, to national and international markets.

Each year, over 2.2 million tourists visit the area, including wineries of the Yarra Valley and the townships and gardens of the Dandenong Ranges. Visitors are attracted to the Shire's unique landscape and major attractions, such as the Healesville Sanctuary, Puffing Billy Railway, and the National Parks. Short break visits are increasing, and there is a focus on encouraging longer stays and expanded tours to the Shire. Tourism generates approximately \$170 million per annum.

Council advocates for access to rural funding initiatives and a wide range of public transport options in the rural areas, as insufficient transport impacts upon access to local jobs, particularly for young people in the region.

Key factors in the future economic growth of the Shire include:

- The provision of appropriately zoned and well-located land for commercial, industrial and service-based enterprises
- Well-designed and adequate infrastructure
- Convenient and safe transport links to and within the Shire
- Access to Melbourne's port and airport and the market place generally
- A skilled workforce
- Establishing and meeting market needs
- Attracting appropriate new investment and development.

<b>TOURISM IN THE SHIRE</b>	
Total tourists to the Shire	<b>2,189,000</b>
Domestic day trip visitors	<b>1,220,000</b>
International visitors (visitor nights)	<b>177,000</b>
Domestic overnight visitors (visitor nights)	<b>792,000</b>
Domestic overnight expenditure	<b>\$78 million</b>
Domestic day trip expenditure	<b>\$82 million</b>
International expenditure	<b>\$10 million</b>
<i>Source: Bureau of Tourism Research &amp; Tourism Victoria.</i>	