

## Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee

### Request for information: DTP's Regional Planning Hub Program

06 June 2025

- **How many staff (or FTE equivalent) work in the regional planning hub and what are their roles?**

There are six staff dedicated to delivery of the Regional Planning Hub program as well as support from a Director and Senior Manager:

- Director, Regional Planning Services
- Senior Manager, Gippsland and Regional Planning Partnerships
- Senior Planner: three positions (2.7 FTE)
- Planner: two positions (2 FTE)
- Para Planner: one position (1 FTE vacant)

- **Where are staff located?**

The staff are located across a few regional offices and 1 Spring Street, Melbourne:

- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change (Agriculture Victoria), 12 Peart Street, Leongatha
- Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads), Warrnambool Customer Service Centre, 29 Jamieson Street, Warrnambool
- Galkangu - Bendigo GovHub, 195-229 Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo
- 1 Spring Street, Melbourne

- **How many requests for assistance (from how many local governments) does the regional planning hub receive every year?**

Table 1 outlines the number of requests for Regional Planning Hub assistance since program inception in July 2021. Requests are categorised into four categories:

- Professional development assistance
- Strategic planning assistance
- Statutory planning assistance
- Statutory planning assistance (flood affected councils), following the October 2022 flood event. Note that this stream of assistance is only relevant from 2022/2023 onwards.

Table 1: Requests for Regional Planning Hub program assistance from 2021-present

Type of Assistance	No. of Requests	No. of Councils
<b>30 June 2021/30 June 2022</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>41</b>
Professional development	56	
Strategic planning	50	
Statutory planning	29	
<b>30 June 2022/30 June 2023</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>41</b>
Professional development	153	
Strategic planning	35	
Statutory planning	9	
Statutory planning (flood affected)	14	
<b>30 June 2023/30 June 2024</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>44</b>
Professional development	173	
Strategic planning	35	
Statutory planning	6	
Statutory planning (flood affected)	6	
<b>30 June 2024/06 June 2025</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>43</b>
Professional development	186	
Strategic planning	19	
Statutory planning	3	
Statutory planning (flood affected)	17	
<b>Total number of requests received</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>48</b>

- **What is the nature of these requests for assistance?**

The Regional Planning Hub program provides support and resources to the 48 rural and regional councils that can:

- assist councils with peak workloads and priority developments
- build land use planning capacity and capability within councils

- improve planning schemes to simplify processes and approvals
- help with significant regional planning projects.

Councils can request assistance under four main streams:

- Professional development
- Strategic planning
- Statutory planning
- Statutory planning (flood affected councils)

Requests for professional development assistance include attendance at PIA Planet courses, accredited training, or other specialist training; collaboration and networking opportunities, and mentoring.

Requests for strategic planning assistance include support to undertake strategic planning projects (including scoping studies, background work and consultant briefs); planning scheme amendment document assistance; specialist strategic planning advice, and preparation of planning scheme reviews.

Requests for statutory planning assistance include support to address planning permit backlog or specialist advice/expertise to progress a significant planning permit application.

Requests for statutory planning assistance (flood-affected councils) include support to assist the 37 rural and regional flood affected councils recover from the effect of the October 2022 flood event. Requests for support include statutory planning permit backlog, which may have occurred as a result of council resources being otherwise directed to recovery efforts, and support to progress strategic planning projects (including settlement plans) to avoid areas of known flood risk. This stream of support also enables a council to apply for reimbursement of statutory planning fees for planning permit applications as a direct result of the October 2022 flood event.

- **How many requests are assisted with per a year?**

Table 2 outlines the number of Regional Planning Hub requests which have been completed per year, since program inception in 2021.

**Table 2: Number of Regional Planning Hub requests completed per year**

Year	No. of completed requests
30 June 2021/30 June 2022	107
30 June 2022/ 30 June 2023	191
30 June 2023/30 June 2024	194
30 June 2024/30 June 2025	197
<b>Total number of completed requests</b>	<b>689</b>

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- **What is the nature of the assistance provided?**

In addition to responding to council requests under the four main streams of assistance, the Regional Planning Hub program delivers a range of state-wide initiatives to build land use planning capability and capacity across rural and regional Victorian councils. These initiatives include:

- **Rural and Regional Planning Cadet program**

The Rural and Regional Planning Cadet Program (Cadet program) is a new initiative being delivered by the Regional Planning Hub and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. The aim of the Cadet program is to build land use planning capability and capacity across rural and regional councils by subsidising the tertiary education fees of any eligible planning course for council planning cadets or existing staff members wishing to transition into a planning role. Currently, the Cadet program is supporting the tertiary studies of 16 cadets across 11 councils. A further round of support will be offered by the Regional Planning Hub in the second half of 2025.

- **Regional Planning Hub mentor program**

The Regional Planning Hub commenced a mentor program in 2023. The mentor program matches a rural or regional council planner with a planning professional and provides one-on-one mentorship over a fixed period, to develop key planning skills and knowledge. Since the program started, a total of 28 planners across 16 councils have participated in the mentor program.

- **A Good Practice Guide to Planning Scheme Reviews**

In 2022, the Regional Planning Hub partnered with RedInk Planning (now Schemology) to develop a resource library and procedure manual to assist rural and regional councils undertake planning scheme reviews to meet the requirements of Section 12B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. 27 of the 48 rural and regional councils have since prepared planning scheme reviews using the resource.

- **Structure Planning Guidance for Rural and Regional Victoria**

In 2023, the Regional Planning Hub partnered with Plan2Place Consulting to prepare 'Structure Planning Guidance for Rural and Regional Victoria' and the 'Emeral Town Model Small Town Structure Plan'. These resources provide councils with detailed guidance on how to prepare a structure plan for smaller settlements in a timely and cost-effective manner. The guidance materials are currently being used to deliver nine structure plans across six councils.

- **Regional Planning Partnerships Local Heritage Resource Toolkit**

The Regional Planning Hub is currently preparing a heritage resource (including guidance material and document library) which is due to be released in the second half of 2025. The toolkit will support rural and regional councils to update and implement outdated or incomplete legacy heritage studies to meet contemporary heritage best-practice standards. The resource responds to an identified need to support councils to protect and manage local heritage assets and improve heritage planning practices.

- **Bushfire planning guidance material and training program**

The Regional Planning Hub has engaged with government agencies and council stakeholders to address the need for consistent application of bushfire planning provisions in Victoria, identifying a demand for clearer guidance and targeted training for rural and regional council planners. In the second half of 2025, the Regional Planning Hub will develop updated guidance materials and deliver in-person training to support councils in effectively applying bushfire planning policies in both statutory and strategic contexts.