

Regional Development Australia Peel Inc.

Submission — Draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines, National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program

Lodged with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts via MobileCoverageRoads@infrastructure.gov.au, 24 July 2026.

Contact name	Ashley Maynard, Director Regional Development
Organisation	Regional Development Australia Peel Inc.
Telephone	
Postal address	
Email	
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About this submission

Regional Development Australia Peel is the Australian Government-funded regional development committee for the Peel region of Western Australia, covering the local government areas of Mandurah, Murray, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Waroona and Boddington. The region sits immediately south of metropolitan Perth, extending from the Indian Ocean coast about 100 kilometres inland (Figure 1). This submission was prepared following consultation with the region’s five councils and draws on written input from the Shires of Murray, Waroona, Serpentine-Jarrahdale and Boddington, the Shire of Murray’s April 2024 submission to the Regional Telecommunications Inquiry, and priority-site information provided by the Peel Development Commission from its January 2026 nominations, made with the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), to Round 8 of the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP).

The Peel region, Western Australia — five local government areas



Peel region boundary shown in dark blue. LGA boundaries: Landgate LGATE-233 (generalised). Map prepared by RDA Peel, July 2026.

Figure 1: The Peel region and its five local government areas. Boundaries: Landgate (LGATE-233), generalised.

RDA Peel supports the National RRAMP’s objective and delivery model. Multi-carrier coverage on regional roads is a genuine safety and economic need in Peel. The Shire of Murray reports that 98 per cent of its area is bushfire-prone under the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) assessment, that bushfire incidents in the 2023–24 season ran more than 60 per cent above its five-year average, and that during that season emergency warnings were not received in network black spots, leaving police and emergency services to doorknock evacuations. The Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona fire, quoted in the Shire’s 2024 submission to the Regional Telecommunications Inquiry, found that timely alerts “rely on a functioning communications network”. Our feedback is directed at making sure the final Guidelines can deliver these outcomes in peri-metropolitan regional areas like Peel, not only in remote Australia.

Issue 1 — Eligibility mapping must not exclude functionally regional areas (Section 5.2 and Glossary)

The draft defines Eligible Roads by the OpenStreetMap ‘Trunk’ and ‘Primary’ classifications outside Major Urban Areas. Two practical problems arise for Peel.

First, classification boundaries. Parts of the Peel region have previously been treated as metropolitan for Commonwealth funding purposes despite rural land use, dispersed communities and a regional economic

role — the Shire of Murray (1,821 km², predominantly rural) has had exactly this experience under earlier programs. The Shire's explicit feedback for this consultation is that the final eligibility framework should ensure predominantly rural and regional local governments are not unintentionally excluded by technical mapping or classification boundaries. This is a recurring structural problem for Peel: under the ABS geography and the Modified Monash Model, much of the region is classified metropolitan, and programs that adopt those boundaries uncritically exclude functionally regional communities by default. Nor can commercial deployment be assumed to fill the gap: these sites remain uncovered precisely because the market has not delivered, and the Peri-Urban Mobile Program — the Commonwealth's program for the metropolitan fringe — is fully committed. We ask the department to test the Major Urban Area and road-classification settings against peri-metropolitan regions before finalising the Guidelines.

Second, locally critical roads sit below the default classification. The roads our councils nominate as their highest safety priorities — Preston Beach Road (the single primary route in and out of a coastal settlement impacted in the January 2016 Waroona–Yarloop bushfires) and the Nanga Brook Road/Nanga Road tourism route into Lake Navarino and Dwellingup — are unlikely to appear on a Trunk/Primary default list. Under the draft, local governments have no direct right to nominate additional roads; nominations sit with state and territory governments, registered applicants and parliamentarians.

Recommendations:

1. Provide a direct nomination pathway for local governments to propose additional roads, retaining state government endorsement, with a nomination form that accepts the evidence councils already hold — crash records, emergency event history and visitation — rather than requiring technical network planning.
2. Publish the Eligible Locations Database before the application period opens, with a window for councils to review coverage classifications and propose corrections.
3. Amend the Major Urban Area treatment so functionally rural areas within peri-metropolitan local governments remain eligible, and publish the boundary layer in the Eligible Locations Database so councils can verify eligibility.

Issue 2 — Strategic Location types are narrower than the program's safety objective (Section 5.2.3)

Projects must sit at one of six location types (rest areas and truck stops, campgrounds, service centres, EV charging stations, tourist sites, public toilets) within 500 metres of an Eligible Road. The Guidelines name road safety and emergency connectivity as core objectives, yet the location types omit the settings where that need is most acute in our region: single-egress settlements and their evacuation routes, emergency assembly areas, crash black spot lengths between stopping places, and dispersed tourism assets such as trail networks. Lane Poole Reserve alone receives around 270,000 visits a year across roughly 80 kilometres of trails with known black spots; connectivity failures there are an emergency response risk as much as a visitor-experience issue.

We note adjacent programs do not fill this gap: MBSP Round 8 and the Peri-Urban Mobile Program fund coverage for communities and localities rather than road corridors, and both are fully committed. The double-funding exclusions in the draft Guidelines already prevent overlap.

Recommendations:

4. Add emergency-management location types — evacuation routes for single-egress settlements, emergency assembly areas, and locations with recorded crash history.

5. Allow a local government to endorse a strategic location case by case where it serves an Eligible Road, with supporting evidence.
6. Apply the 500-metre limit flexibly where the location functionally serves the road, such as trailheads and reserve entry points.

Issue 3 — Keep regional (non-remote) projects investable and make the local government role workable (Sections 3.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 5.1)

Under Section 3.1, a regional site attracts 100 per cent funding only in the hardest configuration — a new site bringing three new carriers. Most regional configurations attract 60–85 per cent, while remote sites reach 85–100 per cent with two new carriers on either a new build or an upgrade. Carriers can therefore be expected to direct their allocations to remote projects first. Peel’s corridors carry high and growing traffic volumes — population projections cited in our councils’ planning documents put the region among the most populous areas outside Perth and the South-West by 2051 — yet under the draft settings they are the least attractive projects to an applicant. On any value-with-relevant-money test, a funded site on a high-volume Peel corridor serves more road users per grant dollar than a remote site; the settings should not push investment away from where usage is highest. We ask that the quarterly funding-allocation reviews explicitly monitor the regional/remote distribution of applications and adjust settings if regional sites are not coming forward.

This risk is not hypothetical. In January 2026, ten Peel priority sites were nominated for MBSP Round 8 by the Peel Development Commission with the Western Australian Government. None was funded: the department’s published Round 8 outcomes (March 2026) show all seventeen funded sites in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, and none in Western Australia. One of those nominations — Crossman, in the Shire of Boddington — sits on Albany Highway, the State highway linking Perth and Albany. The Shire advises a coverage gap of approximately 48 kilometres between the Bannister and Williams towers, confirmed in its earlier discussions with a national carrier. Without deliberate settings, the National RRAMP will repeat this pattern.

Every project also requires written local government endorsement, and co-contributions are encouraged. Endorsement is the right control, but the draft does not say what it involves. Small rural councils have limited capacity: in our own consultation for this submission, two of five Peel councils could not respond within the original two-week window, with their input arriving only in the final days before lodgement, and the Shire of Murray advised that identifying guideline-compliant sites requires technical staff, Main Roads WA, landowners and carriers — work that cannot be done quickly or for free. Co-contribution expectations that fall on resource-constrained local governments would repeat a burden our councils have raised under previous programs.

Recommendations:

7. Define the endorsement requirement — criteria, a standard template and a reasonable timeframe — so it does not become an unresourced bottleneck for small councils.
8. Make clear that local government co-contributions are welcome but not expected, and recognise in-kind contributions (land, access, planning facilitation) in the value-with-relevant-money assessment.
9. Report the distribution of funded projects across regional and remote areas at each quarterly review, and rebalance funding tiers or allocations where regional take-up is lagging.

Peel priority locations

The following locations were nominated by Peel councils, directly during our consultation or through the Peel Development Commission's earlier program nominations. They are offered as evidence for the issues above, to inform development of the Eligible Locations Database, and as early candidates for discussion with registered applicants. RDA Peel is willing to coordinate engagement between the department, applicants and our member councils.

Location	Local government	Basis of need (as advised by councils and the Peel Development Commission)
Preston Beach Road and Preston Beach townsite	Shire of Waroona	Coastal settlement with a single primary route in and out; impacted during the January 2016 Waroona–Yarloop bushfires; crash history.
Nanga Brook Road	Shire of Waroona	Tourism route to Lake Navarino and Dwellingup; peak visitor traffic coincides with the bushfire season and school holidays; crash history.
Nanga Road	Shire of Waroona	As above — part of the same tourism route; crash history.
Dwellingup and surrounds, including Lane Poole Reserve (-32.712162, 116.063406)	Shire of Murray	Highest Shire priority. National award-winning trails destination; visitor numbers up 390% since 2020; ~80 km trail network; Lane Poole Reserve receives ~270,000 visits a year; black spots across the town, trails and reserve; emergency management risk.
Peel Business Park, Nambeelup (-32.504778, 115.814619)	Shire of Murray	Significant economic development need; intermittent coverage and in-building black spots including the Bushfire Centre of Excellence; work with a carrier already underway.
Coolup (-32.740239, 115.874419)	Shire of Murray	Limited coverage with significant black spots; ongoing emergency management and community connectivity need.
Crossman, Albany Highway (-32.7780, 116.5985)	Shire of Boddington	Confirmed by the Shire on 23 July 2026 as a long-standing priority; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Approximately 48 km between the Bannister and Williams towers, affecting residents, travellers, freight operators and emergency services. Community surveys consistently identify the black spot, and the Shire advises earlier carrier discussions confirmed a service gap that vehicle-mounted repeaters cannot fully address.
Quindanning–Marradong (-32.9658, 116.4492)	Shire of Boddington	Confirmed by the Shire on 23 July 2026; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Peel–Wheatbelt boundary area; outages during severe weather; high bushfire risk; better battery backup needed.
Lake Navarino (-32.8441, 115.9819)	Shire of Waroona	Unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Tourism destination served by the Nanga Brook Road/Nanga Road route above.
Etmilyn (-32.7423, 116.1124), Inglehope (-32.7597, 116.1868) and Whittaker (-32.5481, 116.0084)	Shire of Murray	Unfunded MBSP Round 8 nominations in the Dwellingup trails hinterland and south-east of North Dandalup.
Between Byford and Mundijong (-32.248462, 115.985516)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	Confirmed by the Shire on 22 July 2026 as a current priority; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Continued poor coverage in the fastest-growing outer area of Perth and Peel; the Shire advises reliable mobile data should be addressed before development encroaches on the most suitable infrastructure sites.

Mundijong Road (-32.294589, 115.943815)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	Confirmed by the Shire on 22 July 2026 as a current priority; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Key enterprise and business activity arc linking the AUKUS naval project area to defence housing at Mundijong and the West Mundijong Industrial Area.
Central Serpentine and Keysbrook, near Hopeland Road (-32.399456, 115.910200)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	Confirmed by the Shire on 22 July 2026 as a current priority; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Significant part of the Shire's primary-production economy; improved mobile data capacity needed to support business growth and adoption of autonomous technologies.
Karnup Road enterprise corridor (-32.363857, 115.933345)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	Confirmed by the Shire on 22 July 2026 as a current priority; previously an unfunded MBSP Round 8 nomination. Key link of business and residential activity between the freeway and South Western Highway, with a significant focus on business logistics and transport.

Closing

RDA Peel would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission. Please contact [REDACTED],
Director Regional Development, on [REDACTED]

Ashley Maynard

Director Regional Development

Regional Development Australia Peel Inc.

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