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# Economic, mental health crisis affecting Melbourne's fast-growing areas

These Victorian regions are growing rapidly, but residents are facing a new struggle on Melbourne's outer fringe.



Peter Rolfe [Follow](#)

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Point Cook is one of Melbourne's fastest-growing regions.

Residents of Melbourne's outer growth areas face mounting economic and mental health crises.

More than 80,000 interviews of growth-area residents found more than half struggling to pay at least one bill, particularly energy, groceries, rent and personal loans.

Research by the National Growth Areas Alliance found people in growth areas were more likely to feel stressed (66 per cent), frustrated (65 per cent) and anxious (61 per cent) than the national average.

But despite being hit hard by the pandemic, fewer than half (46 per cent) of growth-area residents had accessed mental health support over the previous year, in comparison with the national average of 52 per cent.



Mitchell Shire is another rapidly developing region close to Melbourne's outskirts. Picture: David Geraghty

NGAA chairman Matthew Deeth said mounting economic, mental health and infrastructure issues would make growth areas an issue at this year's federal election.

"Locals in Victoria's growth areas are living without adequate access to doctors, hospitals, schools and other - social infrastructure, as well as access to local job opportunities," he said.

"These residents will be looking to the party that can best support them when they go to the polls.

"That starts with the appointment of a federal minister for growth areas to deliver stronger planning that distributes infrastructure, jobs and housing more evenly across metropolitan areas."

Melbourne has some of the biggest outer growth areas in Australia, with municipalities such as Wyndham, Whittlesea, Hume and Mitchell increasingly popular.

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Wyndham Mayor Peter Maynard said the council area taking in boom growth suburbs such as Hoppers Crossing, Point Cook, Werribee and Tarneit was typical of areas deperate for services.

“Growth-area communities such as Wyndham are constantly overlooked,” he said.

“For years we have dealt with poor access to local infrastructure and critical services, and our local residents are suffering as a result.

“Change is needed now and action will be critical for our voters.”

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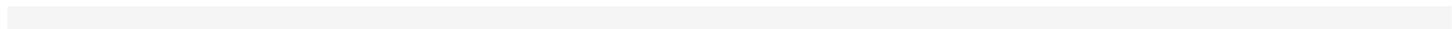
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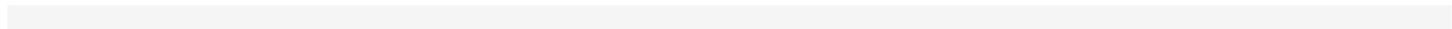
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