

APPENDIX B: RRMA / ARIA Concordance

There has been widespread acceptance of ARIA as a superior approach to measuring remoteness when compared with the RRMA classification. Within the Department of Health and Aged Care administration of regional assistance is moving from the use of the RRMA classification to use of ARIA. Many regional programs are targeted at areas of geographic disadvantage and these areas are often referred to by the convenient label of being ‘rural’ areas. However, there is not a generally accepted or generally applicable definition for the Australian context that can be used to identify rural areas. As a result, the RRMA classification has been widely used to determine eligibility of an area for program funding. The RRMA classification can be used to assign each SLA (based on 1991 boundaries) to one of 7 categories that can be further aggregated into three basic zones (Metropolitan, Rural, and Remote). The seven RRMA categories are:

1. Capital Cities (Metropolitan Zone)
2. Other Metropolitan Centres (Metropolitan Zone)
3. Large Rural Centres (Rural Zone)
4. Small Rural Centres (Rural Zone)
5. Other Rural Areas (Rural Zone)
6. Remote Centres (Remote Zone)
7. Other Remote Areas (Remote Zone)

The use of the word ‘rural’ in several of the category names of the RRMA classification was not originally intended to be a definition of rurality. However, over time, RRMA category names have evolved into a simple and convenient way of interpreting rurality. Many programs that have to make decisions on eligibility for assistance are constrained by legislation and policy to using RRMA categories that ‘define’ rural areas.

The development of the ARIA index deliberately avoided defining ‘rural’ areas. In many cases the term ‘rural’ is used when people are really referring to regional or non-metropolitan Australia. In these situations regional or non-metropolitan areas can be interpreted based on the degree of remoteness of an area (as measured in ARIA by accessibility to service centres). However in other situations a pure remoteness measure may not be the preferred approach. It may be more appropriate to take into account the population size of nearby urban centres and the use of RRMA categories is an accepted way of doing this. Thus it is acknowledged that some program areas rely on RRMA categories to determine eligibility for funding and there is a need to overlay the RRMA categories to current geographic boundaries and use this approach in conjunction with ARIA.

To meet the need for programs being able to identify the RRMA-like categories, each of the 1996 SLAs have been allocated a RRMA category code, with categories 6 and 7 being collapsed into a single group for the remote zone. The RRMA category for each of the 1996 SLAs is shown in (Appendix E);

The approach used to generate RRMA categories for the 1996 SLAs is described below. It is conceptually the same approach as used to create the original RRMA categories with the exception that the ARIA index score is used to define the remote zone.

- Step 1. All SLAs within a capital city Statistical Division are classified as RRMA category 1. The Hobart Statistical Division has increased significantly in size between 1991 and 1996 while each other capital city Statistical Division remains largely unchanged from 1991.
- Step 2. Population figures from the 1996 Census are used to define major population regions of size 100,000 and over. SLAs within Statistical Subdivisions covered by these metropolitan areas are classified as category 2 (Other Metropolitan Areas). This is the same conceptual treatment used for the original RRMA although there are two extra metropolitan areas that now qualify with a population greater than 100,000.
- Step 3. SLAs in the Remote or Very Remote ARIA categories (ARIA score greater than 5.80) are classified as being in the RRMA Remote Zone (RRMA category 6 and 7 combined).
- Step 4. Remaining SLAs are classified as being in the Rural Zone. The population size of the largest urban centre within each SLA is used to determine whether each SLA is a Large Rural Centre (with a population of 25,000 and over) or a Small Rural Centre (10,000 to 24,999 population size). SLAs containing urban centres of less than 10,000 are classified as Other Rural Areas.
The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of urban centres is, in general, not available and census 'actual location' counts must be used instead. Actual location counts tend to understate the real population and this was taken into account for some urban centres that had a population figure close to the 25,000 or 10,000 cut-off points. The ERP of an SLA can also be used in some cases where the urban centre closely corresponds to the SLA boundary.

The changes between 1991 and 1996, for each RRMA category, are summarised below:

1. Capital Cities (RRMA category 1).

The Greater Hobart Statistical Division has increased about 50% in size since 1991. An area around the town of Richmond to the north and north-east of Hobart is now included in the Statistical Division boundary. This extra area was classified as 'Other Rural Areas' in 1991.

The Melbourne and Brisbane Statistical Divisions have relatively insignificant changes to their boundaries between 1991 and 1996 while the remaining capital cities have no changes to their Statistical Division boundaries. All SLAs within the Statistical Division of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Darwin and Canberra continue to be defined as RRMA category 1.

2. Other Metropolitan Centres (RRMA Category 2).

Cairns and the Sunshine Coast have both been added to the list of major population centres that have an urban centre population of 100,000 or more in size.

The Cairns Statistical District had an ERP of 86,300 at the 1991 Census and grew to 106,700 in the 1996 Census. This area also has an urban centre population of around 100,000, as measured by Census Collection District population figures. This means that Cairns qualifies as a RRMA category 2 area as at the 1996 Census.

The Sunshine Coast Statistical District grew from 119,600 in 1991 to 156,400 in 1996. At the time of the 1991 Census the Sunshine Coast was considered to comprise a number of separate small urban centres and did not qualify as having an urban centre of 100,000 in size. However the Statistical District experienced population growth of 30% between 1991 and 1996 and although it still comprises a number of separate urban centres, many of these urban centres span an almost continuous area from Caloundra in the south to Noosa in the north. The combined urban centre population of this coastal strip, as measured by Census Collection District data, is over 100,000, thus the Sunshine Coast qualifies as a RRMA category 2 area as at 1996.

The list of urban centres in RRMA category 2 as at 1996 comprises Cairns, Geelong, Gold Coast-Tweed, Newcastle, Queanbeyan (part of the Canberra-Queanbeyan urban centre), Sunshine Coast, Townsville, and Woolongong.

3. Large Rural Centres (RRMA Category 3).

Population shifts between 1991 and 1996 have resulted in several changes to the list of urban centres with a population size greater than 25,000.

- In 1996 there are six extra urban centres that have grown in size to have a population greater than 25,000. These are Bathurst, Warrnambool, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Geraldton, Bunbury, and Mandurah.
- The urban centre of Whyalla has decreased in size from 25,526 in 1991 to 23,382 in 1996 and has changed from RRMA category 3 to category 4.

The complete list of urban centres in RRMA Category 3 as at 1996 is:

NSW:	Albury, Bathurst, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Lismore, Orange, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga.
Vic:	Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton, Warrnambool, Wodonga.
Qld:	Bundaberg, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba.
SA:	None.
WA:	Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie/Boulder, Mandurah.
Tas:	Launceston.

NT:	None.
ACT:	None.

4. Small Rural Centres (RRMA Category 4)

Population shifts between 1991 and 1996 have resulted in changes to the list of urban centres in the Rural Zone with a population size between 10,000 and 25,000.

- There are three extra urban centres that have grown in size to have a population greater than 10,000. These are Parkes (NSW), Bacchus Marsh (Vic), and Busselton (WA).
- The urban centres of Bathurst, Warrnambool, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Geraldton, and Mandurah have each grown in size to be larger than 25,000 and have moved out of the Small Rural Centre category and into the Large Rural Centre category.
- The urban centre of Whyalla decreased in size from 25,526 in 1991 to 23,382 in 1996 and has changed from being a Large Rural Centre to now being a Small Rural Centre.
- The urban centre of Portland in Victoria has declined in size and no longer qualifies as a Small Rural Centre. The population of Portland fell from 10,115 in 1991 to 9,664 in 1996.

The treatment of the SLA containing the urban centre Port Lincoln has changed due to the use of ARIA index scores to define remoteness. This SLA was classified as a Small Rural Centre under the RRMA classification. However the ARIA score for the SLA containing Port Lincoln is 6.04 which puts it in the Remote category of ARIA and as such the SLA of "Port Lincoln (C)" is now classified as being Remote under the 1996 version of RRMA. Even though the population of Port Lincoln is still greater than 10,000 the ARIA score takes precedence in classifying the SLA as being in the Remote Zone

The complete list of urban centres in RRMA category 4 as at 1996 is listed below:

NSW:	Armidale, Ballina, Broken Hill, Casino, Coffs Harbour, Moama (part of Echuca-Moama), Forster-Tuncurry, Goulburn, Grafton, Griffith, Lithgow, Moree, Muswellbrook, Nowra-Bomaderry, Parkes, Singleton, Taree.
Vic:	Bacchus Marsh, Bairnsdale, Colac, Echuca (part of Echuca-Moama), Horsham, Mildura, Moe-Yallourn, Morwell, Ocean Grove-Barwon Heads, Sale, Traralgon, Wangaratta.
Qld:	Gympie, Maryborough, Warwick.
SA:	Gawler, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla.
WA:	Albany, Busselton.

Tas:	Burnie-Somerset, Devonport.
NT:	None.
ACT:	None.

5. Other Rural Areas (Category 5)

There are 443 SLAs classified as category 5 in 1996, compared with 461 SLAs in this category in 1991. However, the physical area covered by this category in 1996 is larger than for the original RRMA classification and in almost all cases the new areas in this category were in the Remote Zone in 1991. Every State/Territory except for the ACT contains an area that was in the Remote Zone in 1991.

There are only two areas that have moved from being in the Rural Zone in 1991 to being in the Remote Zone in 1996. These are the Coonamble-Warren area of western New South Wales and part of the Eyre Peninsula/Yorke Peninsula in South Australia.

The original RRMA approach of measuring remoteness using straight-line distances tends to underestimate remoteness across bodies of water. A good example of this problem is the measurement of remoteness from Adelaide to the Eyre Peninsula and the Yorke Peninsula. Using the ARIA index, four SLAs in the Eyre Peninsula and another SLA in the Yorke Peninsula all have a relatively higher remoteness index (compared with the RRMA approach). In each case the ARIA index score is greater than 5.8 and, as a result, these SLAs have been reclassified into the RRMA Remote Zone in 1996.

6. Remote Areas (Category 6 and 7)

There are 141 SLAs classified as remote 1996, compared with 175 SLAs in the remote category in 1991. The physical area covered by the remote category in 1996 is smaller than in 1991 (corresponding to the changes noted above for category 5). Each State/Territory except the ACT contains an area that changed from the Remote Zone in 1991 to the Rural Zone in 1996.

The largest physical areas that have moved from the zone to the rural zone are:

- The south-western part of New South Wales and adjoining areas of South Australia and Victoria.
- A number of SLAs in Western Australia spanning an area about 150km to 350km inland from Perth.

The Coonamble-Warren area of western New South Wales and part of the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia are the two main areas that have changed from being in the Rural Zone in 1991 to the Remote Zone in 1996.