

Be Connected –improving access to Hepatitis B care in the Barwon Southwest region

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BACKGROUND

- In Australia, few people living with hepatitis B virus (HBV) are engaged with care, and only half the people who need treatment, receive treatment¹ -the remainder at risk of cancer and cirrhosis².
- Australia is not on track to achieve the World Health Organization target of eliminating hepatitis B,
- Treatment uptake is lower in regional areas compared to cities, with uptake in Barwon Southwest (BSW) region of Victoria well below the national average¹.
- Services in the region providing HBV care include one public viral hepatitis clinic at University Hospital Geelong (UHG), one outreach viral hepatitis nurse, private medical specialists that charge out of pocket costs in Geelong and Warrnambool, and four general practitioners (GPs) that are accredited to prescribe HBV treatment^{4,5}.
- The aim of this study is to gather evidence to support development of a community-based HBV model of care to improve access to care in the BSW region, by:
 - I. Conducting a literature review of community based models of hepatitis B care (presented elsewhere)
 - II. Map populations eligible for HBV testing, HBV testing, and notifications of HBV infections across the region, and
 - III. Interviewing healthcare workers to gain understanding of their experience and perceptions (presented elsewhere).

HEPATITIS B MAPPING: AIM & METHODS

- Aim
- To assess the distribution across BSW of
 - Populations eligible for hepatitis B testing including people born in endemic countries and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - HBV notifications
 - HBV surface antigen (sAg) testing.
- Method
- Data were collected from the 2021 Census¹⁸, the Victorian Department of Health Infectious Disease Notifications¹⁹, and Australian Clinical Labs (ACL).
- Data were mapped using ArcGIS Pro.

HEPATITIS B MAPPING: RESULTS

- The postal area with the highest population eligible for hepatitis B testing was 3214 (Figure 1)
 - (Corio, Norlane, Geelong & North Shore)
 - ~15% born in an endemic country or identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - Testing rate 2506 people tested/100,000 people/year.
- The postal area with the highest HBV sAg testing rates was 3221 (Figure 2.)
 - (Barrabool, Ceres and Gnarawarre)
 - 75 people getting tested each year
 - Testing rate 9441 people tested/100,000 people/year.
- Limitations include single pathology provider – some variability in utilization across the region
- The local government area with the highest notification rate was Greater Geelong (Figure 3.)
 - 11.2 notifications/100,000 people/year.

Figure 1. Heat map of population eligible for hepatitis B testing

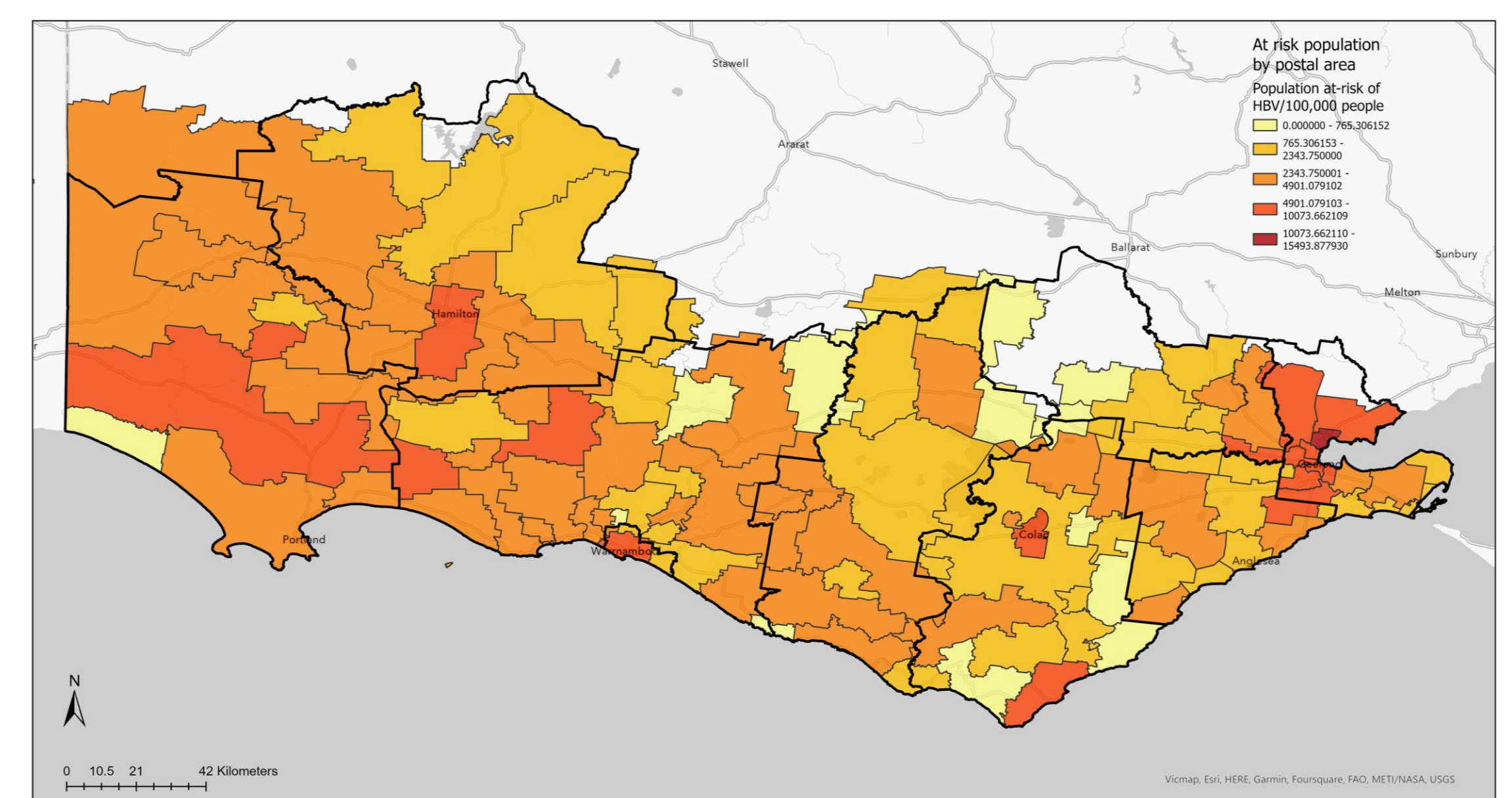


Figure 2. Heat map of HBV sAg testing

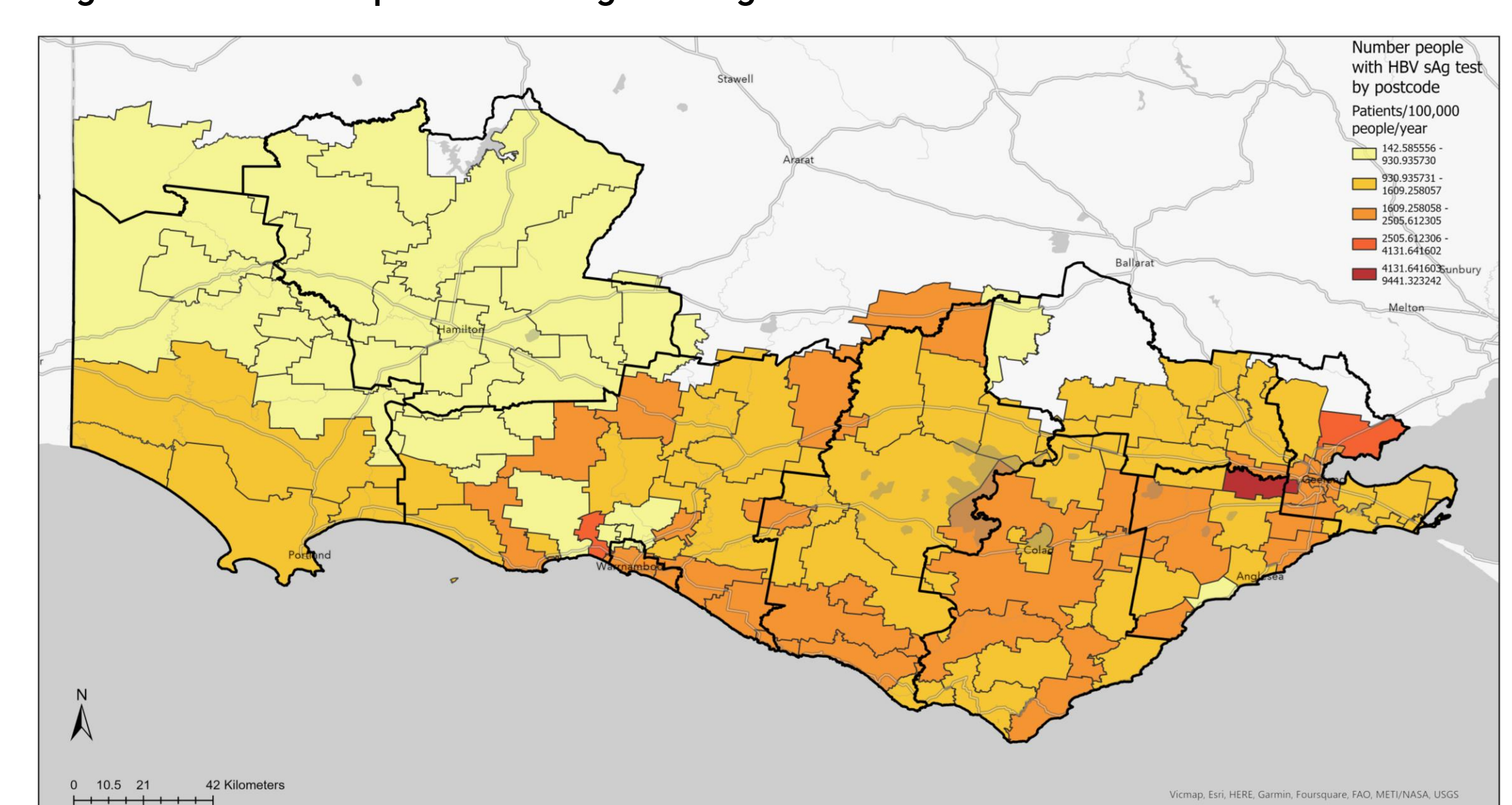
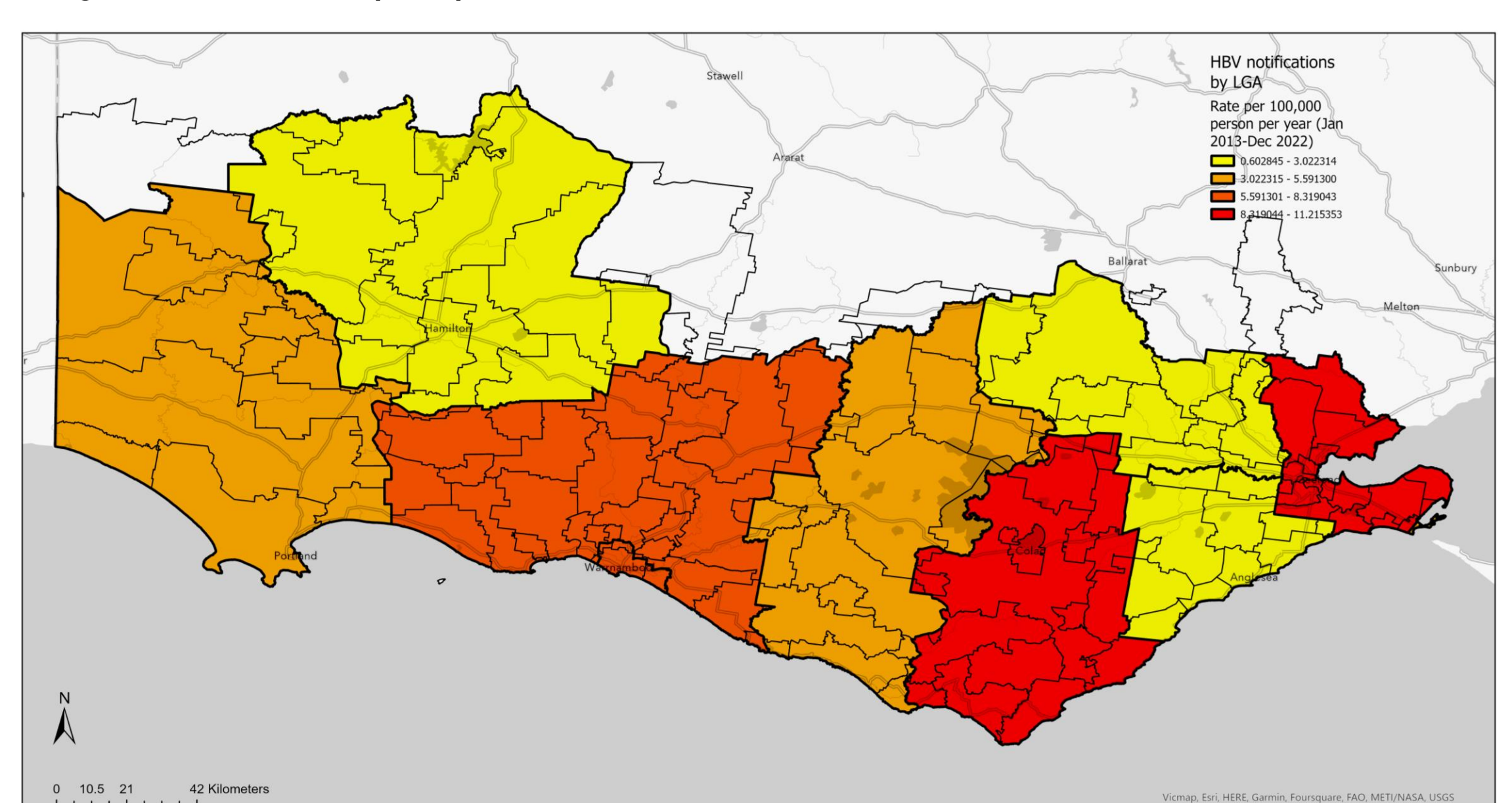


Figure 3. Heat map hepatitis B notifications



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Mapping data informs priority areas for interventions to increase testing of eligible populations, including those with high rates of notifications.
- Parts I and III of the Be Connected project will inform the nature of the interventions
- Data collection for Part III of the project is complete and thematic analysis is underway – including the perspectives of local health care workers is critical to successful engagement in a low prevalence region
- Further action is required to get BSW on track to achieving the hepatitis B WHO and National elimination targets

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