

Draft rural land use strategy

Environmental hazards, landscapes and catchments

Introduction

In 2006, Macedon Ranges Shire Council introduced the shire's inaugural 2002 Rural Land Strategy. The Strategy identified critical issues facing the shire arising from growing competition for rural land. Since 2006 there have been changes in the shire's rural areas, a raft of state and local strategies have been adopted and Ministerial amendments to the suite of rural zones have been gazetted.

All of these have implications for rural land use and development. To address these changes, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council has prepared the draft Rural Land Use Strategy to update the rural framework plan and policy directions for rural land. It has regard for the changing nature of rural land use, the strategic and policy context and the unique circumstances associated with Macedon Ranges Shire's peri-urban location. The draft Rural Land Use Strategy addresses all land currently in the Farming Zone and the Rural Conservation Zone.

Overview

Macedon Ranges Shire remains predominantly rural, with a hierarchy of settlements set in an attractive and productive rural environment.

Agriculture remains an important part of the character and economy of the shire, especially the high quality soils in the east of the shire and in the north where there has been less land fragmentation. Effective land management is a key priority.

Protection of water quality, especially potable water supply, is fundamental. Land use and development, particularly un-serviced development in open water supply catchments, is to be minimised and managed to ensure water quality is not compromised.

Native vegetation is to be retained and enhanced, balanced with fire protection considerations. Native vegetation is vital for the environmental health of the shire and is a significant component of the shire's character.

Development complements the nature and character

of the rural landscapes of the shire. Landscapes, in particular the landscapes around Mount Macedon and Woodend, are highly valued by residents and visitors and facilitate tourism which plays a key economic role in the shire.

Development in the rural areas should deliver high quality environmental outcomes and contribute to improved habitat and ecological connectivity through good design and on-site environmental improvement.

The draft rural land use strategy is now open for consultation

Further details on this consultation can be found here: mrsc.vic.gov.au/yoursay

You can also find copies of the Rural Land Use Strategy, other strategy summary documents, and details of the engagement program on this web page as well.

Submissions should be addressed to:
**Rural Land Use Strategy Submission,
C/- Macedon Ranges Shire Council**



PO Box 151, Kyneton VIC 3444



mrsc@mrsc.vic.gov.au



Development controls need to be brought into the Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme that will make environmental outcomes a requirement of new development. The Environmental Significance Overlay is the most effective control to achieve this outcome.

If not managed, development pressures and sprawling growth can increase risks from bushfire and flood. They can also add to infrastructure costs and lead to a loss of important non-urban assets including productive farmland, water catchments, earth resources, biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Retaining the economic and community value of these assets is a key consideration in planning for this area.

The diversity of land uses in the Farming and Rural Conservation Zones reflect a diverse rural community. Landholders have a range of motivations for living in the rural areas and aspirations for using their land which is leading to increased land use conflict. There is a role for planning policy to clearly articulate preferred land use and development outcomes that respond to local circumstances. Non-policy measures are also required to support rural landholders to achieve best practice land management and resolve land use conflict.

A review of Macedon Ranges' environmental values was recently completed with the adoption of a Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy set out a suite of objectives, strategies and actions to further enhance and protect the shire's biodiversity. Of particular relevance to this review is a recommendation to undertake a detailed assessment of four high value conservation areas where it is considered that there is a mismatch between the land's environmental values and its inclusion in the Farming Zone. The assessment was undertaken by RMCG in conjunction with this rural land review. The assessment identified three areas with significant biodiversity values that warranted rezoning from Farming Zone to Rural Conservation Zone.

Landscape

The rural landscapes are important to the identity and attraction of Macedon Ranges. The rural landscapes include natural landscapes such as Macedon Regional Park, Hanging Rock, Cobaw Ranges, Lerderderg State Park, Mt William and Wombat State Forest. The rural farmed landscape is also an important feature providing long views across the shire, with scattered vegetation and rural housing. In 2019, Council recently completed a review of landscape areas and Significant Landscape Overlays and will be the subject of a separate planning scheme amendment.

