

## Draft rural land use strategy

# Overall summary

### 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.

### Opportunities

The draft strategy identified a number of opportunities for improvement as listed below including:

- The strategy should be consistent with the 2002 Rural Land Strategy principles and the Macedon Ranges Statement of Planning Policy.
- The current Rural Framework Plan needs to be updated to respond to recent trends and regulation changes.
- Reviewing the boundaries to the Rural Conservation Zone and Farming Zone to ensure that zones align with preferred land use and development outcomes.
- Remove duplicated or redundant policy.
- Address legacy issues, particularly small lots in the Farming Zone.
- Provide additional guidance to assess planning permit applications in the Farming Zone and Rural Conservation.

### Rural land use trends

The trends in rural land use observed in the 2002 Rural Land Strategy are still evident today, and remain relevant. Commercial scale agriculture has contracted to the northern and north-eastern parts the shire. Elsewhere, land use is a mix of viticulture, hobby farming, rural lifestyle, environmental living and tourism. The equine industry has emerged as a significant and growing sector, particularly in the eastern parts of the shire and between Kyneton and Trentham.

## 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](http://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**



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Land between Woodend and Malmesbury is significantly fragmented and is experiencing the highest concentration of new dwelling development in the rural areas. Broadacre agriculture has largely left the area and been replaced by a mix of equine, small scale specialist agriculture, hobby farming, and rural lifestyle. There are many small vacant parcels of land in this area and most landholder enquiries regarding new dwellings in the Farming Zone come from this part of the shire. The area lies within potable water supply catchments. These findings indicate that a different policy response is required. The Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee reached a similar conclusion and noted:

There are clear tensions between existing rural zones and rural land use activities, in particular as they relate to viability of farming enterprises. There is a gap in policy and the absence of guidelines to assist with these tensions. In suitable locations, alternative planning controls that permit a greater range of on-farm business activities may assist with farm business viability. Investigating the possible application of the Rural Activity Zone as a means of addressing some of these tensions was supported.

### Draft rural land use strategy vision

The 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.

Protection of water quality, especially potable water supply, is fundamental.

Native vegetation is 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.

Development in the rural areas delivers high quality environmental and contributes to improved habitat and ecological connectivity through good design and on-site environmental improvement works.

Development occurs in an orderly and sustainable manner, maintaining clear distinctions and separations between settlements.

Economic growth and development are encouraged to deliver jobs and reduce escape expenditure. This occurs in appropriate locations within the settlement boundaries, apart from agriculture based business.

