

Draft rural land use strategy

Rural Tourism 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.

Overview

In 2016, the Macedon Ranges attracted 1.6 million visitors, up from 1 million visitors in 2009. Total visitor expenditure in the Macedon Ranges in 2016 was estimated at \$273 million. Most visits are day trips to the Woodend – Macedon and Kyneton - Malmsbury sub-regions.

Key tourism attractions in the shire's rural areas include wineries, cycling, horse riding, accommodation and fishing that link to other key attractions such as Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock, artisan villages, township retail and restaurants and the spa and wellness experiences offered in nearby Daylesford. The majority of visitors to Macedon Ranges are self-driven. Road cycling and mountain bike riding are popular leisure activities. Most planning permit approvals for tourism developments have been for properties between Woodend and Malmsbury.

Opportunities

There is opportunity for further rural based tourism development including:

- Increased accommodation in the rural areas to take advantage of the natural settings
- Cafes, restaurants and quality cellar door destinations
- Farm gate and boutique produce opportunities including paddock to plate experiences, cooking and food growing schools
- Outdoor recreation such as cycling, bushwalking and horse riding.

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**



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Macedon Ranges wine producers are well positioned for direct retail sales being favourably located only one hour north of Melbourne. The amenity of the region makes it a highly valued weekend destination for wine tourism. Accommodation, weddings, restaurants will become more important for vignerons operating in this environment.

Operators of wineries and other rural enterprises reported that their value add opportunities are constrained by Rural Conservation Zone, as Place of Assembly is prohibited in the zone. Tourism development that is captured by Place of Assembly includes cooking classes, horse riding schools, conference centres, wedding venues, galleries, concerts and music festivals.

Place of assembly will be provided for through the rezoning of some land to Rural Activity Zone. This is a mixed use zone that provides for agriculture and a wider suite of uses, including tourism and commercial uses, compatible with agriculture, environmental and landscape characteristics of an area.

The Rural Activity Zone is designed to be applied to rural areas where:

- Farming is an important activity in the area, but other land uses are also supportable.

- A mixed-use function would support farming activities in the area, assist in preventing the unplanned loss of productive agricultural land elsewhere
- The use of land for non-farming purposes would not compromise the long term productivity of surrounding farmland
- Appropriate buffers can be provided to ensure land use conflicts are avoided.

Strategic implications

Tourism is an important economic sector in Macedon Ranges based primarily on the area’s natural attractions including Mount Macedon, Hanging Rock, attractive rural landscapes, outdoor recreation and paddock to plate experiences.

There is an opportunity to grow the rural tourism sector and diversify the tourism offer and value add to agriculture and established attractions such as Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock.

The strategy proposes that a Rural Tourism local planning policy be prepared in order to assist in balancing agricultural, environmental and amenity values in the assessment of tourism-related planning permit applications.

