

**Macedon Ranges Shire Council – Council Submission  
Proposed Intersection Upgrade at Kilmore Road and Melbourne Road, Gisborne**

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) have undertaken consultation with Council and the community regarding the proposed intersection upgrade at Kilmore Road and Melbourne Road, Gisborne.

Council has a number of concerns related to township character, history and open space management. In addition, the inclusion of a left hand slip lane is not considered to be conducive to walkability or enhancing pedestrian priority in the town centre.

It is requested by Council that RRV:

- Acknowledge the social and cultural significance of the large old trees within Gisborne, and the considerable contribution they make to the highly-valued landscape and township character.
- The intersection upgrade be designed to protect and retain significant old trees with high retention value.
- The intersection upgrade be designed to enable retention of the bluestone bridge and creek channel.
- Trees be protected and retained during construction works.
- The intersection be designed to provide high priority to pedestrians and active transport modes and the use of slip lanes be avoided.
- The intersection be designed address identified road safety issues but retained to a scale appropriate for the Gisborne town centre, and not a freeway or arterial road interchange scale.
- Consider the detrimental impacts on township character caused by incremental loss of public open space and trees for roads and car parking.

Council is seeking that the scoping of this capital project be further refined to respond to concerns and looks forward to working with RRV to develop a satisfactory outcome.

**Trees and Township Character**

One of the most valued elements about Gisborne highlighted during recent consultation undertaken for the Gisborne Futures project is its village atmosphere, tree lined streets and country town character. Essential to maintaining this is identifying the key elements that contribute to township character, and identifying the threats to these so that development can be accordingly managed.

The intersection of Kilmore and Melbourne Roads is a key gateway site for Gisborne. Once part of the Calder Highway before the town was bypassed in the 1990s, Melbourne Road descends the Jacksons Creek escarpment with a dramatic series of turns that has created an iconic entrance into the town centre. It epitomises the Macedon Ranges in a display of varying topography, generous open spaces and road reserves and large, old deciduous trees.

A large number of trees were planted at the time of settlement and are an important part of the township history, character and identity. There is evidence that many of the significant oaks and elms were planted over 130 years ago. It is also evident that many of these have been incrementally lost.

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) has submitted a preliminary tree assessment for 60+ road side trees that occur in the vicinity of the Kilmore Road and Melbourne Road intersection. In discussions RRV has indicated that that the majority of the trees will be severely impacted and will require removal.

It is acknowledged that the proposed road project will result in the loss of some trees within the road reserve, particularly suckering growth that has occurred along Bunjil Creek.

The construction of a left hand slip lane will prioritise car movements at the cost of removal of significant trees (elms and oaks) with high retention value that likely date back to the mid – late 1800s (Figure One and Two). An additional Elm tree in the park is also at risk of removal from the road project. Details of these trees are have been provided through an arborist report and are marked with red circles in Figure Three.

Of further concern is the potential for the cumulative loss of trees through a number of proposed intersection upgrades. The upgrade of Station Road from the northern roundabout to Farrell Street has proposed to remove in excess of 30 trees, including three significant old oak trees at the intersection of Saunders Road.

The proposed intersection duplication/upgrade of Station Road and Aitken Street may also see a number of significant large old oak trees removed.

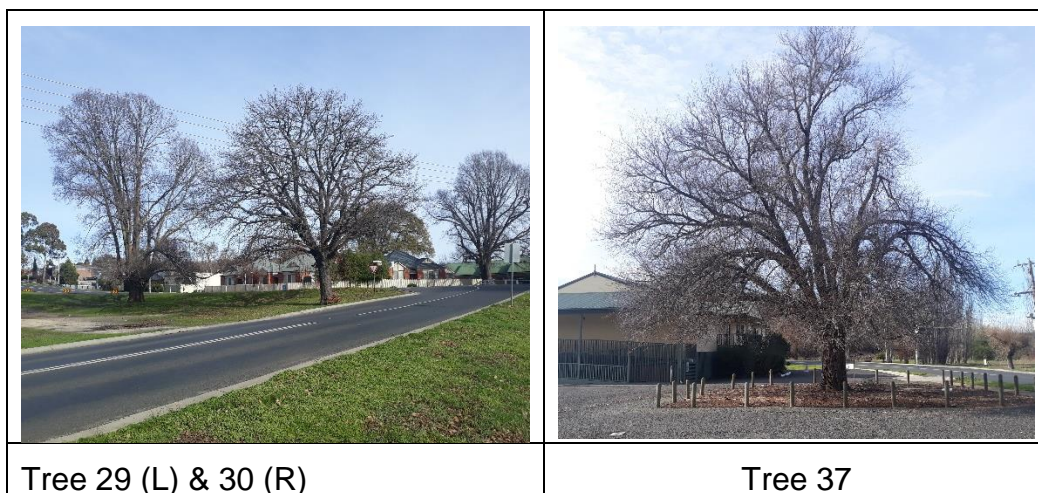


Figure One: Trees proposed to be removed



Daniel, Mark James 1867-1949 photographer.

Date: 1899 Source: State Library Victoria

Figure Two: The maturity of Tree 29 in the photograph above from 1899 indicates that it is likely to be 130-150 years old.



Figure Three: Tree Protection Zone Map – Red circles showing potential tree removal.

### Removal of bluestone bridge

The bluestone structural elements of the Bundjil Creek bridge and channel at Melbourne Road date back to 1874 and are considered to have local heritage significance for historical, aesthetic and social reasons.

Council requests that Regional Roads Victoria consider a design that enables the retention of the bluestone bridge and creek channel.

## **Incremental loss of public open space for road infrastructure and car parking**

Parkland adjacent to the Jacksons Creek open space corridor has been set aside as a public open space reserve since the founding of the township and is an integral, highly valued aspect of township character. In recent years there has been numerous instances of this public open space being lost to car parking, at the northern end of Brantome Street and the old Police Station site (adjacent to the Courthouse). The replacement of car park located within the road reserve to public open space continues to erode public open space.

## **Pedestrian safety**

Indicative designs show a left hand slip-lane is to be provided to allow for a free-flow of left turning traffic. Slip lanes are typically not conducive to the enhancement of pedestrian priority and providing a safe, walkable town centre because:

- they increase the number of road crossings a pedestrian has to make;
- they enable vehicles to turn left at a higher speed; and
- it is not clear that pedestrians have right of way, regardless of whether there is a zebra crossing.

Design of Intersection

**Early design options presented for the intersection indicate a scale that is considered to be inappropriate to the Gisborne town centre. There is no clear justification for why the intersection needs to be designed to enable B-double movements along Kilmore Road given it is not a designated B-double route. Previous Community Consultation**

## ***Council Plan Survey***

Residents responding to a survey to inform Council's Plan highlighted the need to preserve the streetscapes of the towns, and to consider the long term effect on aesthetics, cultural and social attributes of proposed road projects, planning and building applications.

## ***Gisborne Futures Consultation Summary***

Residents of Gisborne are concerned about housing growth and implications for traffic congestion, services, infrastructure provision and the look and feel of the township. Consultation has identified the importance of the retention of the spacious, semi-rural character of the town, and trees in particular.

When asked what three things do you love about Gisborne, the village atmosphere, community, parks and gardens, and trees all ranked the highest. The potential loss of open space, trees and/or views of the landscape were identified as threats to the rural lifestyle and character of the town.

When asked about movement and access, traffic congestion in and around the town centre and how this will be further impacted as the population increases were raised as concerns. Respondents also identified the need to improve pedestrian safety and upgrade path networks for increased walkability, and requested action to remove large freight vehicles from local streets.

When asked about values relating to the environment and open space the need for protection of existing street trees and the continued planting of more canopy trees in the town centre and surrounding open spaces were identified as key issues among survey respondents.

## **Policy Context**

### ***Statement of Planning Policy***

In 2018 Macedon Ranges region was declared a distinctive area and landscape under the *Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Act 2018* – Distinctive areas and landscapes. The declaration in relation to Macedon Ranges Shire was published in the Government Gazette on 16 August 2018.

In 2017 the Minister for Planning directed that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) work with Macedon Ranges Shire to develop a Localised Planning Statement (LPS) and a work program to implement all of the recommendations of the Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee as part of the Statement. The work program broadly included:

- preparation of new legislation to enshrine Macedon Ranges Shire as a distinctive area and landscape
- the preparation of an LPS, now a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP), to strengthen the importance of the Macedon Ranges in state planning policy by having a clear vision and settlement structure including long term boundaries for townships based on approved structure plans
- planning controls to give statutory effect to the SPP and further strategic work to address gaps in vegetation protection and significant landscape overlays

The purpose of the SPP as set out in the *Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Act 2018* is to create a framework for the future use and development of land in the declared area to ensure the protection and conservation of the distinctive attributes of the declared area. At the Ordinary 24 July 2019 Council Meeting the Statement of Planning Policy was endorsed.

The SPP sets out broad objectives for land use and development in Macedon Ranges Shire and involves:

- a vision for the area
- objectives and strategies for eleven policy domains
- settlement boundary maps for towns planned to accommodate managed growth.

The eleven (11) policy domains are:

1. Landscape
2. Biodiversity and environmental values
3. Water catchments and supply
4. Aboriginal culture, heritage and caring for Country
5. Post –contact cultural heritage
6. Agriculture and natural resources
7. Tourism and Recreation
8. Settlements

9. Transport and Infrastructure
10. Risk and resilience
11. Settlement boundary maps

If the Statement is endorsed by the Governor in Council, it will be considered as an Incorporated Document in the Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme and embedded in the Planning Policy Framework together with the existing state and local planning policies, zones, overlays and particular provisions which will continue to apply to land in the Shire.

It should also be noted that Section 46AZK of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires responsible public entities not to act inconsistently with Statement of Planning Policy: -

*“A responsible public entity must not act inconsistently with any provision of the Statement of Planning Policy that is expressed to be binding on the public entity when performing a function or duty or exercising a power in relation to the declared area”.*

Responsible Public Entities should endeavour to integrate the objectives relevant to the issues to be determined and balance conflicting considerations in favour of an outcome that best promotes the intent of the statement for the benefit of present and future generations. Government agencies must consider the Statement of Planning Policy when making relevant decisions and carrying out activities in the declared area. This includes for the purposes of the planning scheme, responsible public entities and planning authorities.

### ***Local Planning Policy***

#### ***Clause 21.01 (Municipal Profile)***

This Clause acknowledges the built environment and heritage of the Macedon Ranges:

*The character and heritage of the local townships is renowned. The high quality country lifestyle and towns with their own distinctive character are key attributes of the Shire. The Shire has sites of pre- and post- contact heritage significance. Heritage buildings and streetscapes - particularly in Kyneton, Gisborne, Woodend, Romsey, Lancefield, Mount Macedon and Malmsbury - contribute to the amenity and character of these towns*

#### ***Clause 21.13-1 (Local Areas & Settlements/Gisborne & New Gisborne)***

Identifies that heritage buildings and streetscapes, and the exotic street trees in Gisborne's town centre are key elements of the character of the town. This Clause contains the following objectives:

- To manage urban growth and development in Gisborne in a co-ordinated and environmentally sustainable manner that ensures Gisborne remains a semi-rural township that respects the established village character, natural setting, topography and view lines of the area.
- To ensure future urban growth in New Gisborne respects the township's semi-rural character, heritage streetscapes, view lines to the Macedon Ranges and significant natural environmental assets, including Gisborne Racecourse Marshlands Reserve.

Clause 21.13-1 also contains the following objectives related to heritage, landscape and township character:

- To maintain and improve key urban and landscape elements, and cultural heritage assets that contribute to the established semi-rural township and village character of Gisborne and New Gisborne.
- To protect and improve the appearance of the semi-rural landscape along the Calder Freeway, railway corridors and key township entrances.
- To ensure that changes in built form within established township areas are sympathetic with any heritage significance or the valued character of the area.
- To protect and improve areas of remnant vegetation, fauna habitat, natural drainage corridors, Gisborne Racecourse Marshlands Reserve and the landscape and open space corridor along Jacksons Creek as essential elements of Gisborne and New Gisborne's natural setting.

### ***Macedon Ranges Cultural Heritage Study (1994)***

This study, which is an incorporated document in the Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme, acknowledges the importance of mature exotic trees to the character of Gisborne through the following statements:

#### **Aesthetic Attributes**

The containment of the older township within the creek gorge and on lower areas together with mature plantings forms a picturesque view of an established rural townscape.

Mature avenue plantings of exotic trees along the gridlike streets enhance the wide verges and generous setbacks of houses in residential areas.

#### **Cultural Features**

The relationship of the old areas of Gisborne with the creek and Mt. Gisborne along with the mature exotic tree plantings are features which form the backbone of the historic townscape character to which the commercial buildings remain subordinate.

The study identifies the first issue that threatens the character of Gisborne:

*The central townscape and traffic management planning has juxtaposed a modern character within the area of historic fabric. New entry roads from Calder Freeway do not retain the significance of the avenue approach to Gisborne.*

The study notes that the road networks both major and minor are historic routes, and that the abrupt plunging landform of the Macedon River (Jacksons Creek) creek gorge promotes sensations of surprise and fascination when met for the first time. As well the gorge feature appears to be valued by the community as residences are orientated to face it. The study also notes the impact of past road works on the landscape setting of Gisborne:

*The Calder Highway By Pass is a harsh construction which sweeps across a landscape of gently gridded farmland. It is busy, noisy, dominant and also divisive, separating the town of Gisborne from New Gisborne and Magnet Hill. The exit ramps are massive works unsympathetic with the landscape setting and the scale of buildings and structures in the locality. The Mount Gisborne and the town of Gisborne landscape units share this concern.*



### ***Macedon Ranges Shire Council Tree Management Policy***

This policy aims to maximise the benefits of trees, which include carbon sequestration, oxygen, cooling, shade and habitat provision, increased biodiversity, increased property values, noise and pollution absorption, improved mental health and reduced rainfall runoff; and to generate community interest in maintaining a healthy tree population across the Shire.

The policy recognises that many trees have heritage and conservation values. If trees are removed due to infrastructure works by any other authority, the tree will be valued in accordance with the Tree Valuation formula outlined at Appendix A of the Policy.

It also requires that when removal of multiple street plantings for any reason occurs, residents are to be consulted and notified, and given opportunity to seek clarification or make an objection.