



**Macedon  
Ranges**  
Shire Council

**Strategic Planning  
& Environment**

# Macedon Ranges Draft Localised Planning Statement

July 2014



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The Macedon Ranges Draft Localised Planning Statement has been developed by Macedon Ranges Shire Council with support from the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure.

The Victorian Government has provided the Council with funding to assist in community engagement and consultation and support in the development of the statement.

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## 1. Introduction

### The role of Localised Planning Statements

The Victorian Government, in partnership with local government, is establishing Localised Planning Statements for four key areas; the Bellarine Peninsula, Macedon Ranges, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley.

These highly valued areas have significant geographic and physical features which contribute to the quality of life for Victorians and are a distinctive part of our state. They play an important role in the state as tourist destinations and have strong economic bases driven by tourism, agribusiness and lifestyle, with all areas linking strongly with Melbourne.

Because of their attractiveness, accessibility and proximity to metropolitan Melbourne, these areas are increasingly coming under pressure for growth and change. This could potentially undermine the long-term natural or non-urban uses of land in these areas and needs to be carefully managed. Because of this there is a need to identify the key valued attributes and activities important to these areas and put in place objectives and strategies to ensure that they are preserved and enhanced for ongoing use by present and future generations..

## How will Localised Planning Statements guide decisions?

Localised Planning Statements will provide the basis for planning policy within the Victoria Planning Provisions at a state level for the relevant area. As such, all statements will need to be adopted by the respective council as well as the Minister for Planning before they can be given effect in state policy. Once implemented into the state planning policy framework, all planning decisions will need to have regard to the relevant policies as appropriate.

A new Ministerial Direction will be introduced that will require all planning authorities to have regard to the Localised Planning Statement when any amendments to the planning scheme are prepared and considered.

As these areas are important at a state level Localised Planning Statements can provide the basis for a more specific and tailored approach to land use, development and subdivision controls at the local level where appropriate.

## How has the Macedon Ranges Localised Planning Statement been developed?

The Macedon Ranges Localised Planning Statement has been developed by the Macedon Ranges Shire Council with support from the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure.

This Localised Planning Statement builds on community consultation that has shaped existing and previous strategies and policies, including the *Macedon Ranges Settlement Strategy (2011)* and *Statement of Planning Policy No.8 – Macedon Ranges and Surrounds (Town and Country Planning Board, 1975)*. This Statement has responded to the issues and strategic policy directions provided in these documents and has also been further informed by a broad range of input from the community.



## 2. Overview of the policy area

The Macedon Ranges policy area is approximately 60 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, midway between Melbourne and Bendigo. The policy area is located within the Shire of Macedon Ranges (the Shire) and is part of the broader peri-urban region which surrounds the built-up areas of metropolitan Melbourne. The Shire is approximately 1,750 square kilometres in area, predominantly rural in character and includes a number of established regional centres, towns and settlements. The policy area applies across approximately 800 square kilometres of land in the Shire and is under the indigenous custodianship of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri peoples.

In 2011 the Shire had a population of 42,800 people. The population profile of the Shire is also ageing and by 2036 approximately 25% of the population will be over 65 years. Gisborne and Kyneton are the major population and employment centres within the municipality. Urban growth over the past decade has been greatest in the southern part of the Shire in Gisborne, Romsey and Riddells Creek, with more modest growth occurring in Woodend, Kyneton, Malmsbury, Lancefield, Macedon and Mount Macedon.

The area's rural landscapes provide an important buffer between local towns and settlements and the urban areas of metropolitan Melbourne. The area also supports a range of farming and related rural activities, and features high quality soils that are a significant food production resource.

The Macedon Ranges are a prominent land form located central to the policy area. They form part of the Great Dividing Range and provide some of the most outstanding natural features north-west of Melbourne. The areas surrounding the Macedon Ranges are renowned for offering country lifestyle and landscapes which feature attractive forested slopes, interesting landforms and man-made features such as gardens and reserves. Along with the significant views and vistas to and from the undulating wooded hills these aspects form the valued environmental and cultural landscape of the policy area.

The policy area's native woodlands such as Black Forest and the Cobaw Forest are renowned for their scenic aspects and biodiversity values. Other forests within the area, such as the softwood plantation in the south-east of the policy area, also perform an important economic function. The closure of sawmills in the policy area has seen forestry now confined to softwood plantations north and west of Macedon, and some harvesting in the Wombat Forest. The area also offers significant tourism and recreation assets, from Hanging Rock and Mount Macedon, to wineries and eateries, nature conservation, historic assets and walking and riding trails.

The high demand for growth in the region, combined with an increase in tourism and recreation activities, places pressure on the natural assets of the area. The changing nature of agriculture and the economy and the continuing demand for a rural residential lifestyle all combine to put pressure on the rural landscapes and environmental features in the policy area. As the area continues to grow, it is vital that these valued characteristics are retained and that the policy area remains a rural and regional part of Victoria characterised by small towns, agricultural enterprises and environmentally significant landscapes.

## Environmental features

The policy area contains many environmental assets that are of ecological, scientific and historical significance and also important for economic considerations such as tourism and agriculture. The Macedon Ranges form part of the Great Dividing Range and are the remainder of more extensive Upper Devonian volcanic granite formations, which overlook the surrounding region. Its maximum elevation is approximately 1000 metres at Mt. Macedon and Camels Hump with lower parts of the formation being at 600-770 metres in the Black Forest at the western foot of Mt. Macedon and 490-550 metres in areas north of Macedon Ranges. The Cobaw Range and Mount William in the north and north-east of the policy area reach elevations of over 750 metres, while the lowest point is at Jackson's Creek in the south east at an elevation of 250 metres.

These variations in geology, landform, soil, sand and climate are reflected in the marked changes of vegetation throughout the policy area. Over very short distances, dry forests and woodland merge into wet open forest and this range of habitats provides for a diversity of fauna. The policy area retains rich native biodiversity with extensive areas of remnant native vegetation, including significant forested areas, which are an integral part of the policy area's unique landscape. Key features include Mount Macedon and the Macedon Regional Park, the Wombat State Forest around Woodend and the Cobaw Ranges.



The policy area also features significant exotic vegetation, including boulevards of tree plantings in many towns, Avenues of Honour in Macedon and Woodend, and significant ornamental gardens on Mount Macedon that are fundamental to local landscape quality.

The policy area also contains significant water catchment areas, including many open potable water catchments, which constitute a significant water supply asset for both the policy area and the broader region. The main streams which drain the area to the south of the Macedon Ranges and form headwaters of the Maribyrnong River system are Deep Creek, Emu Creek, Riddells Creek and Jacksons Creek. North of the Macedon Ranges, Five Mile Creek flows into the Campaspe River system.

In total there are 24 proclaimed water supply catchments in the policy area, including the headwaters of the Campaspe, Coliban, Maribyrnong and Werribee Rivers. Special Water Supply Catchments wholly or partly within the area include Djerriwarrh, Eppalock, Lake Merrimu, Lake Merrimu (Goodmans Creek), Lake Merrimu (Lerderderg River), Lancefield (Deep Creek), Macedon (Bawden Creek), Mollison Creek (Pyalong), Monument Creek, Romsey (Upper Bolinda Creek), Rosslyne Reservoir (Jackson Creek), Sunbury (Cherlies Creek and Main Creek).

## Recreation

The policy area is highly valued and utilised for a variety of recreation uses. Bush walking, cycling, picnicking and bird watching are just some examples of activities that occur. There are a number of nature reserves both within and outside of settlements that are home to valuable flora and fauna, as well as providing for passive recreation opportunities.

The 2,379 hectare Macedon Regional Park protects forested land along the ridge of the Macedon Ranges and surrounds the highest peak at Mount Macedon. The park offers great opportunities for bushwalking, scenic drives, picnics, and magnificent views are provided from the Mount Macedon Memorial Cross and Camels Hump viewing platforms. Picnic facilities are provided at Sanatorium Lake and there are many walking and cycling tracks throughout the park.

## Tourism

The Macedon Ranges have been appreciated for their recreational and tourist value since the mid 1800's when development of the area as a holiday and health resort began. Current strengths of the area as a tourist location include food and wine, vibrant townships, arts and culture, festivals and events, nature based tourism, heritage and history and an emerging strength in day spas and wellbeing services.

The policy area is located within Victoria's broader Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges tourism region which is extremely popular with both domestic and international visitors due to its rich history, natural attractions, top quality wineries, historic gardens and proximity and accessibility to the Melbourne metropolitan area.

The Macedon Ranges themselves are a key recreation and tourism asset for the region and features the historic ornamental gardens of Mount Macedon, the unique geology of Camels Hump and the Mount Macedon Memorial Cross. Hanging Rock is also a significant tourism asset and with its unique geological formation it provides scenic views, bushwalking and picnicking as well as hosting periodic performances at the base of the rock.

The policy area also features a number of historic built heritage assets influenced by the Goldfields era, including its towns and settlements, many of which still retain a unique heritage character and village atmosphere. Day trippers and visitors are attracted to the region for pleasure driving, picnicking and sightseeing and recreational pursuits such as rock climbing, bush walking and riding. The equine and wine industries, as well as weekend markets, also attract tourism and economic activity.



## Agriculture

Farming activities make a valuable contribution to the area and include broad acre cropping and grazing as well as specialist activities such as viticulture, timber plantations, stock raising including and a strong equine industry. Agriculturally productive high quality soils are situated between Lancefield and Romsey, in the Kyneton district and north of Woodend/Newham and Heskett.

Farming land provides an important non-urban buffer between the towns and settlements in the Shire and the urban areas of metropolitan Melbourne. A significant portion of the policy area is designated for agricultural purposes with the majority of large farm holdings being located predominantly to the north of the policy area. However, traditional farming activities are declining in favour of more intensive forms of agriculture, such as vineyards and other horticultural pursuits, which also contribute to the tourism value of the area.

The equine industry is also a significant part of the local agricultural economy, with horse breeding supporting other related industries such as vets, farriers, dentists, trainers, instructors, suppliers of horse related products as well as fencing and other horse related property building and maintenance. The keeping of horses also provides a considerable contribution to the community through its recreational activities such as pony and adult riding clubs, trail riding clubs, dressage clubs and local competitions and training.

The area is experiencing substantial growth in investment for equine related infrastructure and facilities. This is, in part, due to the decline of competitive facilities in metropolitan Melbourne and the higher cost of property.

## Towns and settlements

Within the policy area housing is predominately detached, and is dispersed across settlements that range from large towns to smaller rural localities. In addition, the area has a considerable supply of rural residential land with dispersed housing in the rural balance. In the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan Gisborne is designated as a Regional Centre that will accommodate higher levels of growth with the towns of Romsey and Riddells Creek accommodating a more modest amount of growth. Other settlements such as Macedon and Mount Macedon are to be limited to little to no growth given infrastructure and environmental constraints. Council manages the growth of its towns and settlements through its Settlement Strategy.

There are many sites and features of national, state, regional and local historic, architectural and cultural significance in the area, including sites of Aboriginal cultural significance. Many towns and locations in the area were developed prior to the gold rush. Development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has also been significant. Examples of this heritage are seen today in streetscapes, buildings and other landmarks. In the rural areas early settlement and farming practices represent significant cultural associations and relationships for the community.

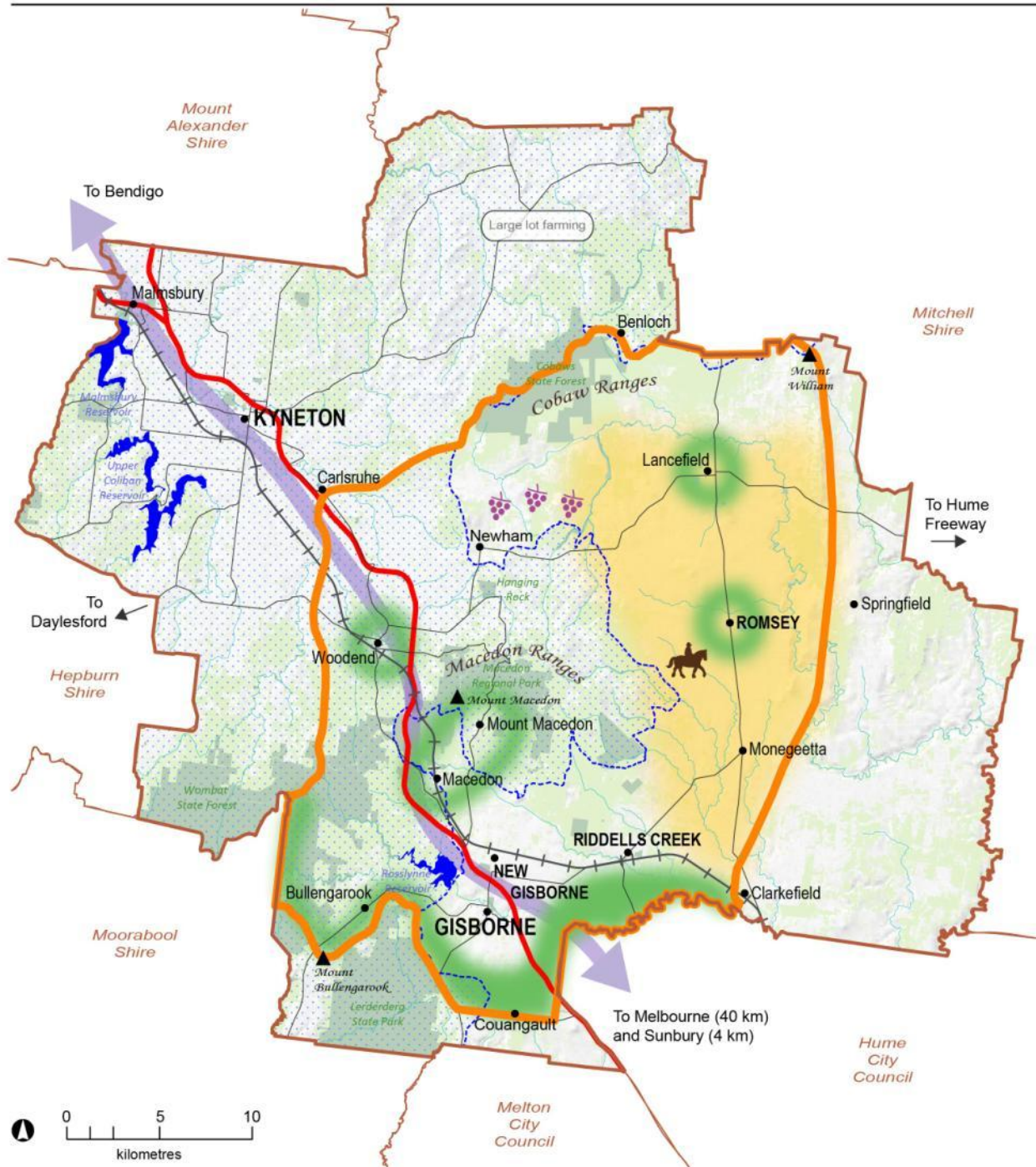
Townships in the area have their own distinctive character with tree lined avenues and “turn of the century” streetscapes, houses, commercial and public buildings. Wide main streets are a feature of Romsey, Gisborne and Woodend. There is continuing strong demand in the policy area for small acreage lots driven by the desire of many urban workers to live in semi-rural environments. The policy area is within the peri-urban region of metropolitan Melbourne and combined with its natural qualities it is an attractive location for new residents as well as visitors. The high quality transport links provided by the Calder Freeway and fast rail link, as well as proximity to Melbourne Airport, further contribute to the demand for land and building in the area.

## Non urban breaks

Because of the high demand for growth, development needs to be carefully balanced with the protection of natural and agricultural landscapes that characterise the area. Protection of the unique natural environment and management of land use conflicts need to be carefully considered to ensure the policy area remains a predominantly rural location characterised by towns and settlements within a natural landscape.

Non-urban breaks of farmland, agricultural landscapes, forests, nature reserves and environmental assets are highly valued and contribute to the overall character of the area. These will be retained through maintaining growth boundaries around towns, managing urban growth through strategic planning and encouraging urban consolidation where it is appropriate to the character of the area and the capacity of available infrastructure. Maintaining rural buffers between the major recreational and scenic attractions, water catchments and forest resources of the policy area and the broader metropolitan urban areas, including Sunbury and Melton, is critical to achieve harmony with the natural environment and to maintain both the generally rural character of the policy area and its valuable landscapes.

# Macedon Ranges Localised Planning Statement



- |  |                                 |                                |                                    |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Proposed Localised Planning Statement policy area boundary | Major transport corridor        | Wineries                       | Non-urban breaks                   |
| Macedon Ranges municipal boundary                          | Freeways and highways           | Commercial equine cluster      | Proclaimed water supply catchments |
| Surrounding municipal boundaries                           | Arterial and sub arterial roads | High quality agricultural land | Lakes                              |
| Settlement   | Railway line                    | Public land                    | Waterway                           |
|  |                                 | Native vegetation extent*      |                                    |
- Background image: VMLite Hillshade (2008)  
\*Data Source: DSE-NV2005\_Extent



### 3. Significance of the policy area

The Macedon Ranges Localised Planning Statement policy area's significance derives principally from its abundance of natural attributes combined with its proximity to Melbourne.

The Macedon Ranges provide interesting geological landforms and scenic views across the surrounding natural and rural landscape with many features of ecological, scientific, historic and educational significance. They comprise a wide diversity and contrast of landscape types including State, regionally and locally significant areas of remnant vegetation within the Macedon Regional Park, Black Forest, Cobaw Forest and Wombat Forest and surrounds. These bushland areas are home to exceptional flora, fauna and natural habitats.

The outstanding quality and range of the natural environment and distinctive rural character of area, with 'country towns', are highly valued by the local and broader community and differentiate the area from metropolitan Melbourne and its urbanised and suburban development. Maintaining non-urban breaks around towns and between the policy area and the broader metropolitan Melbourne area are critical to protecting valued natural attributes and preserving the areas rural feel.

The area provides an important water resource to urban and local water supply systems. Careful management of the sensitive relationship between land use in water catchments

is required to ensure their ongoing water quality. The policy area offers a rare concentration of a wide variety of plant species and vegetation types on both public and private land within a relatively small area providing habitats for the wide variety of native fauna.

There is a broad range of assets valued by both residents and visitors to the area. The high quality natural and man-made landscapes and the heritage character of existing towns and settlements are key assets for the area and contribute to its physical attractiveness. These assets, combined with the area's proximity to metropolitan Melbourne, increasingly generate demand for development and need to be carefully managed. The area offers a range of increasingly diverse and important rural activities associated with agricultural production, equine and other emerging agribusinesses.

## **The key challenges facing the policy area**

- The pressure of demand for further residential subdivision and development and its impact on the valuable landscape, recreation, water and nature conservation resources.
- The extent of demand for and speculation in land giving rise to escalating land prices which undermines viable agricultural uses and results in increasing pressures for further subdivision.
- Use of elevated and steeply sloping land for residential purposes that impact on landscape protection, soil conservation, drainage, access and provision of services.
- The increased risk of bushfire associated with more settlement at the forest interface which can result in an increased number of deliberate and accidental bushfire ignitions.
- The risk of bushfire associated with the topography and ecology of the area, characterised by tall forests on steep terrain. This type of forest has the potential for high fuel hazards which can result in high-intensity bushfires.
- The potential conflict between the provision of access for effective fire protection and the restriction of public access in the interests of the conservation of flora, fauna and water.
- The urban development of nearby areas, such as Sunbury, Melton and Wallan, which will increase demand for water from catchments in the area.
- The potential for conflict between the interests of metropolitan and local communities and the importance of adequate recognition of both.
- The existing and potential conflict between recreation activities for on both water catchment management and nature conservation.
- Changing economic factors influencing the continued viability of agricultural land use and fragmentation of land through inappropriate subdivisions and development that is inconsistent with policy.
- The potential for conflict between current and future agricultural land uses and new residents seeking a 'rural living' lifestyle.



## **4. Policy objectives and strategies**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the policy is to protect and preserve the Macedon Ranges and its surrounds as an area of natural beauty, interest, importance and special significance and to preserve the continuing value and utility of the area's natural and man-made resources for the local community as well as the broader Victorian community and visitors to the area.



## Environment

### Objective:

**To protect and enhance environmental resources and landscape assets, with particular regard to water supply and nature conservation.**

### Strategies:

- Protect landforms and geological features of special scientific or educational value, including forests and other valued landscapes, from development.
- Protect water quality by minimising development in proclaimed water catchment areas and elevated areas.
- Maintain high value vegetation for biodiversity protection and conservation purposes.
- Maintain views across the landscape from public land by minimising development along ridgelines and within prominent view line areas and vantage points.
- Facilitate the integrated management of water catchments and recreation areas to minimise environmental impacts.



## Tourism and recreation

### Objective:

**To preserve important recreation areas for both residents and visitors and to support tourism related development that complements the sustainable use of recreation and environmental attractions.**

### Strategies:

- Protect the area's key tourism assets, including the heritage character of towns and settlements valued by tourists.
- Facilitate recreation and leisure uses that are primarily directed toward activities which require natural or semi-natural surroundings.
- Support recreational uses that are consistent with desired conservation outcomes and long term water catchment management objectives.
- Support the development of a range of appropriate recreation and tourist related facilities that support the economic base of the region and the growth of local employment.
- Require tourism related land uses to demonstrate it will not compromise the use of rural land for agricultural purposes.
- Facilitate appropriate tourism development which is in keeping with the landscape and environmental values of the region.



## Agriculture

### Objective:

**To support current and future agricultural land use as a key part of a productive rural landscape.**

### Strategies:

- Protect agricultural land from inappropriate subdivision and the impacts of other uses so that a viable agricultural based economic function is maintained.
- Support the development of appropriately sited specialist agricultural uses, such as equine industry and viticulture uses.
- Support agricultural practices that respond to and encourage adaption to climate change impacts.
- Support compatible value adding activities to existing agricultural uses such as farm door sales and agritourism.



## Communities and settlements

### Objective:

**To manage population growth by directing urban development to a hierarchy of settlements and protect the township and rural character their landscape features and surrounds.**

### Strategies:

- Facilitate and reinforce the growth of settlements in accordance with their role identified in adopted structure plans and the settlement strategy.
- Protect and maintain the significant heritage characteristics of towns and settlements including street tree plantings.
- Avoid bushfire and flood risk by limiting expansion of settlements in high risk locations.
- Maintain non-urban breaks between all settlements, including metropolitan Melbourne and the Sunbury and Hume growth corridors.
- Support the provision of drainage, sewerage, utilities and social services consistent with the special demands and constraints of the policy area.