

21.03

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

21.03-1

Coastal environs overview

The French Island Marine National Park encompasses approximately 2,800 hectares along the northern shoreline of French Island and includes extensive areas of saltmarsh and mangrove communities and seagrass beds which act as a nursery for fish, especially King George Whiting, Bream and Mullet. The area is also a significant feeding habitat for migratory waders found in Western Port Bay.

Key issues

- Protecting and managing the Island’s coastal areas that are recognised by the Ramsar Convention.
- Recognising the importance of the French Island Marine National Park to the environmentally sensitive waters of Western Port Bay.
- Protecting the botanical and zoological significance of the coastal environs.
- Managing the interface between the National Park and Marine National Park, and private land holdings.

21.03-2

Objective

To minimise negative impacts on the coastal environment.

21.03-3

Strategies

1. Support use and development in coastal locations where they are compatible with the sensitive nature of their surrounding environment and the capacity of the land.
2. Ensure that there is no net loss of coastal vegetation through the use or development of land.
3. Require proposals to demonstrate that they will not adversely affect the habitat and breeding values for migratory birds, waterfowl and other fauna species.
4. Protect coastal and wetland areas from inappropriate land use and development.
5. Ensure that use and development does not have an adverse impact on the waters, and the environmental values of, Western Port Bay and the French Island Marine National Park.
6. Ensure that development is set back an appropriate distance to minimise impacts on the stability of the coastline.

21.03-4

Landscape overview

French Island, due to its extensive natural environment and minimal development, has unique landscape values. The National Trust has given the landscape on French Island a ‘high’ rating, assigned to parts of the physical environment considered to be essential to the heritage of Australia. The National Trust refers to the Island as a prominent feature in Western Port Bay.

Three distinct landscape character areas have been identified for French Island, based on broad areas of common physical, environmental and cultural characteristics:

- Inland National Park, defined by the preservation of the natural environment in one of the largest intact areas of wilderness within close proximity to metropolitan Melbourne.

- Pastoral Fields, defined by the low scale and low level of development across rolling pastoral land, and the contrast that this provides against the broader vistas to the Inland National Park and further afield to Western Port Bay and the mainland.
- Coastal Fringe, comprising the varied coastal landscapes of French, Sandstone and Elizabeth Islands and defined by a variety of small bays, headlands, long sweeping sandy beaches, pebble beaches, mangroves and saltmarshes reflecting the underlying geology, topography and orientation.

Key issues

- Conserving and protecting the Island's landscape qualities that have been recognised by the National Trust of Australia.
- Maintaining the distinct character in each of the landscape character areas through land use, the management of vegetation and appropriate design and siting of new development.

21.03-5 Objective

To protect and enhance the landscape values of the Island.

21.03-6 Strategies

1. Respect the National Trust landscape classification by minimising visual impacts of development through appropriate siting and design, particularly along the coastline and from elevated viewing points.
2. Ensure that development is designed and setback an appropriate distance from the coastline to minimise visual impacts and retain coastal landscape values.
3. Require buildings to be set back an appropriate distance from a road or road reserve and be designed to reduce their impact on the Island's landscape values.

21.03-7 Objective

To ensure new use, development and works, including proposals for vegetation removal, respects the distinct and values character identified for each of the landscape character areas.

21.03-8 Strategies

1. Preserve and enhance existing native vegetation in the Inland National Park, particularly along the boundaries of the National Park which defines an edge to the agricultural landscapes of the Pastoral Fields character area.
2. Encourage development to be sited at least 200 metres from land in a Public Conservation and Resource Zone and 40 metres from a road.
3. Maintain agriculture as the prominent land use in the Pastoral Fields character area.
4. Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern in the Pastoral Fields character area by encouraging low scale development and discouraging development that would result in a cluster of buildings.
5. Ensure development in the Coastal Fringe character area is low scale with non-reflective materials to maintain and enhance long range views to the mainland and Phillip Island, long range views back to the Islands, and mid range views along the Island's coastlines.
6. Encourage the use of non-reflective materials and muted colour tones for development in all landscape character areas.

21.03-9 Biodiversity overview

The quality of French Island's natural environment can be attributed to its isolation, where its ecosystems are relatively undisturbed. As a result, many parts of French Island are home to a number of rare or threatened plant and animal species. Major areas of environmental significance on French Island are:

- French Island National Park (11,050 hectares).
- French Island Marine Park (2,800 hectares).
- Sites of national and state botanical and zoological significance.
- Coastal environs.
- Wetlands nominated to the Ramsar Convention.

The natural biodiversity of the Island is highly regarded by both the Island community and the State Government.

Key issues

- Protecting and managing the Island's significant vegetation as recognised by the Ramsar Convention.
- Recognising the importance of the French Island National Park in conserving and protecting the Island's natural environment.
- Protecting the whole of the Island's ecological values, including particular sites of State botanical and national zoological significance.
- Recognising that rural areas contain unique environmental qualities that need to be protected.

21.03-10 Objective

To protect, conserve and enhance natural habitats for the Island's indigenous flora and fauna.

21.03-11 Strategies

1. Retain areas of existing remnant vegetation, wetlands and streamlines which provide movement corridors and habitat for wildlife.
2. Ensure that land use and development on sites identified as having zoological or botanical significance are compatible with conservation values and objectives.
3. Encourage best practice techniques for land use and development in environmentally sensitive locations, particularly in coastal areas and on land abutting the National Park.
4. Encourage revegetation of land with plants indigenous to the Island.
5. Minimise the fragmentation of areas with continuous remnant vegetation that provides corridors or refuge for wildlife.
6. Ensure that use and development does not adversely affect soil stability.
7. Ensure that use and development adjacent to waterways does not adversely affect the Island's water resources.

21.03-12 Objective

To minimise the impact of land use and development on biodiversity.

21.03-13 Strategies

1. Ensure that land use and development is in accordance with the environmental capability of the site.
2. Encourage the continued maintenance of an environment that is relatively free of pest plants and animals.
3. Ensure that design, siting and location of all development does not affect water quality or habitat.
4. Ensure that the conservation values of the site are enhanced and that environmental management plans are implemented.

21.03-14 Implementation

The objectives, strategies and policy guidelines arising from this Clause are implemented through the application of appropriate zones and overlays in Clause 74.01.