

MUNICIPAL PROFILE

Situated in north west Victoria and sharing borders with New South Wales and South Australia, Mildura Rural City is the largest municipality in Victoria, covering an area of some 22,330 sq kms. Mildura is a significant regional city in a strategic tri-State location that services a catchment of some 250-300kms in a radius extending into South Australia and New South Wales.

The main urban centre of the municipality is Mildura, surrounded by the satellite towns of Irymple, Red Cliffs and Merbein. Ouyen is the major town in the south of the municipality and there are a number of other smaller settlements throughout the rural areas. The total resident population in 2011 was approximately 51,850. Council supports a high growth scenario which expects the population to be approximately 65,000 by 2032. Approximately 85% of new dwellings will be constructed in the 'Main Urban Area' comprising Mildura, Irymple and Nichols Point. An additional long term residential front is to be provided in the area between Irymple, Nichols Point and Mildura, known as the Mildura East Growth Area. Demographic change, in particular the aging of the population, is driving the need for medium density housing.

The environmental characteristics of the municipality vary considerably in climate, soil type, ground and surface water, riparian areas, and flora and fauna. Total rainfall is insufficient to fully sustain horticultural, stock and domestic demand, and is reducing as a result of climate change. There is high demand on river and stored water to sustain horticulture and domestic needs, particularly in the summer months. The Murray River is a key economic and social driver of the municipality. Environmental flows are important in sustaining the significant amounts of riparian land within the municipality which are of environmental, ecological and economic importance.

Most of the large areas of remaining native vegetation are on public land. The municipality hosts approximately 40% of the total area of the Victorian Parks system. The major parks include the Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld National Parks, Big Desert Wilderness Park and the Murray-Kulkyne Park. Roadsides, Bushland, Flora and Fauna and other reserves contain a significant proportion of remnant vegetation, particularly understorey and ground flora. Roadside vegetation often forms linear corridors that act as important biolinks between more substantial areas of vegetation between the river and inland environs.

The municipality and the region has in excess of 3,800 Aboriginal places of cultural significance including many sites dated to thousands of years prior to arrival of the first European pioneers, who arrived in the region at Wentworth in the 1840's. The arrival of the Chaffey brothers and the development of irrigation infrastructure provided the impetus for growth in Mildura and the broader region. Many of the original buildings and irrigation infrastructure of the main settlement period of the 1880's still exist today and continue to have practical application and historical interest.

The Mildura region has a \$2.45 billion economy (2007-08) that has shown positive growth over recent years. Significant agriculture and horticulture sectors generate economic activity in other sectors such as manufacturing, wholesale trade, transport and storage. The protection of agricultural and horticultural land is important, particularly in the Mildura Older Irrigated Areas (MOIA) and Newer Irrigated Areas (NIA). The economic base is diversifying with emerging industries such as mineral sands, salt extraction, boat building, packaging and solar power generation.

The municipality and surrounding region are served with a range of transport infrastructure including State highways, railways, airport and limited public transport.

Recent studies have indicated a need to address issues such as car parking provision and location; traffic flow for domestic and commercial traffic; bicycle links; extension, re-definition and upgrade of several major transport arteries; establishment of a bypass of Mildura; relocation of railway infrastructure such as the Freight Gate; development of freight intermodal terminals; business development opportunities associated with Mildura Airport; and the establishment of a transport corridor. The majority of these issues have significant implications for the future land use and development pattern of the municipality.