

21.05

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NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This Clause provides local content to support Clause 14 (Natural Resource Management) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

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Agriculture

Protection of agricultural land

Agriculture is an important element of the regional economy with 16 percent of the work force employed within the agriculture, fishing and forestry sector.

The dairy industry continues to be important in the western district with a number of important milk processing plants being located in and around Warrnambool.

Warrnambool is the centre of southwest Victoria’s growing dairy industry. Over 23 percent of Australia’s milk is produced within the region from approximately 1,370 dairy farms. Local dairy farmers have the immediate advantage of proximity to dairy processing plants, fertile soil and reliable rainfall.

The region has opportunities for growth in the areas of viticulture, horticulture and alternative agricultural production. The preservation of the maximum amount of the limited supply of agricultural land is necessary for the conservation and sustainable development of the area and the state’s economic resources. The preservation of agricultural land in large areas is also necessary to sustain the agricultural economy of the area and to support those industries that rely on agricultural products for processing.

It is important that rural areas are protected to ensure agricultural uses remain viable and to ensure the City’s unique rural character is protected from urban development. Unplanned urban growth into the rich farming land around Warrnambool should be discouraged as it may compromise the viability of the dairy industry and processing facilities and lead to land use conflict.

Appropriate management of the urban-agricultural interface will be required to protect farming operations and maintain a greenbelt around Warrnambool’s settlement boundary.

Key issues

- Maintaining the significance of agriculture in the local economy.
- Providing opportunities for agricultural diversity.
- Land use conflicts between rural and urban land uses.

Objective 1

To maintain a diverse and economically viable agricultural sector.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Protect agricultural land in sustainable and productive units.
- Strategy 1.2 Support diversification of rural land uses that are consistent with sustainable land and water resource management.
- Strategy 1.3 Support intensive agricultural industries having regard to soil and water quality, the adequacy of infrastructure and the location of sensitive uses.

Objective 2

To prevent land use conflicts between agricultural uses and sensitive uses and ensure that use and development does not prejudice agricultural industries or the productive capacity of land and supports the processing of agricultural products.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Protect productive agricultural land from encroachment by uses which will limit the productive capacity of land.

Strategy 2.2 Discourage the unplanned expansion of urban uses and development into agricultural areas.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to agriculture will be implemented by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Farming Zone to provide for the use of land for agriculture and to encourage the retention of productive agricultural land.

Policy guidelines

When deciding on an application for use and development, the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Applying Clause 22.01 – *Rural dwelling excisions* to this Scheme.

Future strategic work

- Undertake further work to provide guidance on rural land uses, including a review of the rural areas within the municipality, to determine the most appropriate application of the rural zones.
- Investigate green wedge style planning controls for the purposes of protecting agricultural uses in urban / rural interface areas.

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Water

Catchment planning and management

Warrnambool's waterways are a significant environmental resource that must be protected from inappropriate development. The Hopkins and Merri River environs must be retained as natural drainage corridors with vegetated buffer areas wherever possible in order to perform their long term function as drainage areas, stream habitat and landscape areas.

The Hopkins River has its headwaters in the Great Dividing Range, reaching the coast at Warrnambool. At this location, it is a wide river in a steep valley. Indigenous groups still use the river for food and water, and it has spiritual and cultural significance.

The Merri River loops around the north and western parts of the city. The Lower Merri River Wetlands (Kelly's Swamp, Saltwater Swamp and the South Warrnambool Wetlands) have regional geologic, flora and fauna significance, as well as local recreational value. The river itself has some poor water quality characteristics, but has environmental value for supporting native species. It has been adversely impacted by urban activity and requires suitable enhancement and restoration for it to become a more valuable component of the surrounding urban areas.

Russells Creek is an intermittent creek that is located entirely within the City of Warrnambool. The creek has recently been the subject of flood mitigation works. The upper reaches are in rural land and the creek has been degraded as a result of stock grazing and access to the creek. Housing estates border the creek corridor in most of the lower reaches. The environmental values of Russells Creek could be enhanced both in terms of the riparian vegetation, in stream rehabilitation and improved stormwater quality.

Key issues

- The impact of use and development on water resources and waterways.

Objective 1

To maintain and enhance the ecological health of Warrnambool's water resources and waterways.

Strategies

Strategy 1.1 Require adequate buffers and reserves between waterways and new development.

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Strategy 1.2 Support the restoration of degraded land, particularly stream frontages, floodplains and riparian areas.

Objective 2

To reduce sediment and nutrients entering waterways.

Strategies

Strategy 2.1 Control urban run-off to protect and enhance waterways.

Strategy 2.2 Improve stormwater quality and minimise stormwater run-off in urban and rural areas.

Strategy 2.3 Ensure that waste disposal systems for residential, industrial and commercial purposes are not detrimental to the environment.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to water will be implemented by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Public Conservation and Resource Zone to publicly owned river corridors, wetlands, floodplains, and coastal reserves.
- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay over the coastal reserve, land adjacent to river corridors and wetlands, and other significant habitats.

Reference documents

Warrnambool Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2008 - 2013

Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy 2013 - 2019