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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Key issues and influences

Non urban landscapes

- Moorabool Shire’s natural environment, towns, rural landscapes, and forested areas are important elements of the Shire’s character.

Water and catchment management

- Large areas of Moorabool Shire are in Special Water Supply Catchments providing potable water for local and regional populations.
- For public health reasons, prospects for population growth and investment are minimal for small towns and settlements that reside within a Special Water Supply Catchment and lack reticulated sewerage.
- Much of the Special Water Supply Catchment areas contain towns, communities, and productive farms that have a legitimate expectation to grow and prosper.
- There is a combined responsibility for water quality by the Shire, Water Authorities and Catchment Management Authorities.

Biodiversity

- Lerderderg State Park, the Brisbane Ranges National Park, Wombat State Forest, Werribee Gorge State Park, Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve and other bushland areas in the Shire are highly significant natural resources with nationally important flora, fauna habitat values. These values are also valuable attractors of recreation and tourism.
- Human activity particularly the impacts of population growth, urban growth, and agricultural activity have contributed to the decline in biodiversity, quality and quantity of native vegetation and waterway condition.
- Roadside vegetation is of great value to the Moorabool Shire as it provides for flora and fauna movement corridors between State and National Parks or Forests and supports the rural character of the area.
- Pest and environmental weed control are important issues within the Shire as is the revegetation of native flora along waterways.

Bushfire

- Large areas of the Shire are at risk of bushfire particularly forested areas on steep inclines.

Environmentally sustainable development

- Planning for development in Moorabool Shire must give deliberate consideration to environmentally sustainable development principals that will maintain and enhance the quality of the environment and natural resource base.

Flood management

- Large areas of the Moorabool Shire are prone to flooding as the Moorabool, Werribee, and Lerderderg Rivers flow through the Shire.

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Objective—Non urban landscapes

- To maintain and enhance the natural environment and the Shire’s rural identity and character.

Strategies

- Maintain the open rural landscape between the Shire's eastern boundary and Bacchus Marsh as a visual buffer.
- Recognise and protect the national, state and regional values of Werribee George State Park, Bungal State Forest, Long Forest Nature Reserve, Lal Lal State Forest, Lal Lal Falls, Brisbane Ranges Lerderderg State Park, and Wombat State Forest.
- Protect the landscape and scenic qualities of forested hill slopes, rural landscapes, and bushland setting of the Shire's rural and urban areas.
- Minimise visual impacts on high quality landscapes by only supporting well designed appropriate development on hilltops and ridgelines.

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Objective—Water and catchment management

- To protect the quality and quantity of water within the Moorabool Shire.

Strategies

- Promote the installation of reticulated sewerage within Bungaree, Dunnstown, Wallace and Myrning subject to a viable business case to support provision.
- Promote land use and development compatible with the Shire's natural environment, native vegetation, and places of environmental significance.
- Ensure that the removal of all stormwater and effluent associated with new development is undertaken in a way which is not to the detriment of the quality or quantity of water in local watercourses and limits downstream effects.
- Ensure the retention, protection, and revegetation of the riparian area along watercourses.

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Objective—Biodiversity

- To positively enhance biodiversity in the Moorabool Shire.

Strategies

- Support the implementation of the appropriate Regional Catchment Management Strategy
- Require land use change and development to retain native vegetation and to minimise topsoil disturbance.
- Require an increase in sustainable rural land management practices (in particular weed and pest management) when supporting land use change or development within rural areas.
- Maintain protect, and enhance the biodiversity values of important roadsides, particularly those within the surrounds of the state and national parks or forests.
- Maintain, protect and enhance the River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus Camaldulensis*) Population within the Bacchus Marsh Valley.

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Objective—Bushfire

- To minimise risk of bushfire damage.

Strategies

- Apply the Moorabool Fire Management Plan.

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Objective—Environmentally sustainable development

- To manage land use in an environmentally sustainable manner, to assist in reducing the ecological footprint of land within Moorabool Shire.

Strategies

- Ensure that the natural drainage functions are retained in the development of land for residential purposes.
- Ensure that new dams in the rural zones consider stream flow, catchment, landscape, environmental and land degradation issues.
- Encourage the principals of energy efficient building design and site layout to be considered for new developments, to reduce reliance on artificial heating and cooling and therefore subsequently reducing green house gas emissions.
- Ensure Best Practice Water Sensitive Urban Design principals are applied to all new development within the Moorabool Shire.

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Implementation

Zones and overlays

Specific application of zones and overlays to achieve the strategic objectives includes:

- Apply relevant overlays (VPO or ESO) to reflect biodiversity mapping of the Shire when completed;
- Apply Erosion Management Overlay (EMO) and Salinity Management Overlays (SMO) to reflect land capability across the Shire;
- Apply Floodway Overlay (FO) and Land Subject to Inundation Overlays (LSIO) to reflect relevant Council flood studies;
- Apply Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) to ridgelines, escarpments, and hilltops; and
- Apply bushfire Management Overlay to areas of fire risk.

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Further strategic work

- Complete the biodiversity mapping project.
- Undertake studies to further identify areas subject to flooding and areas subject to poor drainage.
- Undertake erosion studies to inform the incorporation of the Erosion Management Overlay.
- Undertake salinity mapping to inform the incorporation of the Salinity Management Overlay.
- Investigate an appropriate buffer zone around the Ballan and Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plants in conjunction with the relevant Water Authorities, and develop ESO's within these buffers in conjunction with the Water Authorities and the EPA.
- Revise Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 2 (ESO2 Waterway Protection) to incorporate floodway management.
- Extend and update the Bushfire Management Overlay (WMO) based on CFA mapping for bushfire prone areas.
- Review, update, and implement the Moorabool Shire Council Roadside Management Plan, 2001, including the application of a Vegetation Protection Overlay along roadsides with vegetation of significance.

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Other actions

- Work with and encourage other land managers and authorities to ensure a consistent and proactive approach to land and biodiversity conservation and enhancement.
- Encourage greater land owner awareness, involvement, and responsibility towards protecting their land and property from the threat of bushfire and flooding.

MOORABOOL PLANNING SCHEME

- Support the introduction of Stream Flow Management Plans.
- Work with the State Government to monitor the impact of domestic and stock dams on river flows and ground water quality and quantity.
- Work with Water Authorities to review planning controls relating to development in Special Water Supply Catchments.