

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Settlement

The established townships and settlements offer a significant opportunity to expand in locations with infrastructure and leisure facilities, where natural environment is protected and where a high level of community safety is facilitated.

Proximity to Melbourne's outer metropolitan area creates growth and lifestyle opportunities for Murrindindi Shire. Increasing numbers of residents are commuting between the municipality and metropolitan Melbourne, with many living flexibly with a city base. Established townships and settlements are connected, serviced and offer lifestyle appeal.

Alexandra, Yea, Eildon and Marysville are fully serviced with a range of community and physical services, including reticulated water, drainage and sewerage. These towns play a significant role as service centres to surrounding areas, contributing to the economic and social vitality of the municipality. All of these towns have potential for further residential expansion with Yea and Alexandra having potential for significant growth. The service centre and tourism role played by Marysville is being re-established as the town rebuilds following the 2009 bushfires.

There are a number of other smaller townships and settlements in the municipality, all offering alternative lifestyle choices for residents. These smaller townships and settlements include Buxton, Flowerdale, Glenburn, Molesworth, Narbethong, Strath Creek, Taggerty, Taylor Bay, Thornton, Toolangi and Yarck. Other smaller settlements exist in rural areas, some being former townships.

The Kinglake Ranges area comprises the Kinglake, Kinglake West - Pheasant Creek, Kinglake Central and Castella settlements. The area is unserviced, with no reticulated water or sewerage. Most of this area was affected by the 2009 bushfires and has undergone an active rebuilding program.

Council seeks to develop its established townships and settlements by:

- Supporting each township as the focus of residential, commercial, community and service hub for its surrounding area.
- Concentrating development in locations free from environmental constraints, where environmental values are protected and the level of community safety is improved.
- Support the function and residential growth of smaller townships and settlements.

Environmental and landscape values

The natural environment, rich biodiversity, significant public land areas and high quality landscape, form an essential part of the municipality's character, liveability and economy. This natural environment forms the basis for the core economic activities in the municipality. Its long term sustainable use and protection of the natural environment is critical for the continued economic and social well-being of the municipality.

Remaining native vegetation on private land is highly fragmented and usually occurs in small or narrow linear remnants, increasing the importance of roadside and riparian vegetation. Land clearing, invasion of weeds and loss of habitat are particular threats to this vegetation.

Lake Eildon and the Goulburn, Yea and Acheron Rivers and tributaries are important natural features and water resources, providing a large proportion of the water supply in the Goulburn Broken catchment. Lake Eildon is a significant water, natural environment and tourism resource.

The Yea Wetlands, forming part of the Yea River on the eastern side of the Yea township, and the National Heritage Place listed Yea Baragwanathia Flora Fossil Site, Limestone Road, Yea are significant landscape features and attractions in the Yea area.

In protecting environmental and landscape values, Council supports:

- Protecting environmental values, including native vegetation, roadside vegetation, and scattered paddock trees.

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- Encouraging environmentally sustainable design and energy and water efficiency.
- Locating and designing development and wastewater systems to minimise any landscape and water quality impacts on waterways and Lake Eildon.
- Protecting and enhancing waterways, catchments, flood plains and wetlands.
- Minimising erosion, prevent sediment runoff, enhance water quality and improve riparian health.
- Limiting the impact of development on the flow and quality of surface water and groundwater.
- Protecting biodiversity and environmental values of local, state, national and international significance.
- Protecting and enhancing habitat and wildlife corridors across the landscape.
- Encouraging innovative environmental practices, including carbon farming and vegetation offsetting.
- Protecting significant landscapes, including rivers and floodplains, highways, elevated slopes, Lake Eildon, Cathedral Ranges and significant natural features.
- Protecting the environmental and landscape values of land surrounding Lake Eildon by careful design, siting and construction.
- Protecting the natural and heritage river values of the Goulburn River.

Environmental risks and amenity

Natural environmental hazards present risks and constraints for land use and settlement in the municipality. Land use planning must fully address and carefully manage natural hazards such as bushfire risk, flooding, drought, and climate change impacts, such as more frequent, intense or uncertain weather events. Climate change has the potential to have adverse impacts on the key industries of agriculture and tourism and on economic prosperity and viability in general.

Murrindindi Shire is subject to significant bushfire hazard, particularly in the southern section. This hazard is due to the nature and extent of vegetation, topography, potential for extreme fire behaviour arising from drought and climate change, the dispersed and ad-hoc nature of development and lack of infrastructure and access in some locations.

Natural flooding of floodplains and their associated wetlands promote the health of rivers and floodplains and provide essential breeding habitats for bird and aquatic species. However, the municipality includes areas of floodprone land where flooding has historically caused substantial damage to the natural and built environment. While significant costs are incurred by direct damage to public and private property, indirect costs to the community such as long-term economic impacts, loss of productivity, displacement of residents, closure of roads, trauma and ill health are also significant.

The growth of industry in the Lethbridge Street, Alexandra area requires protection from uses that may impact on the use and development of the land for industrial purposes. This needs to be balanced with protecting existing residential amenity as industrial expansion occurs.

Council seeks to address environmental risks and amenity by:

- Reducing the impacts of climate change, by supporting alternative energy sources, carbon farming, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and adopting environmentally sustainable development principles.
- Directing future growth to existing townships to protect environmental values and improve community safety particularly from high bushfire risk.
- Encouraging development only when the risk to life and property from bushfire can be reduced to an acceptable level and that bushfire protection measures can be implemented.

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- Strengthening community resilience to bushfire by ensuring that bushfire protection measures are considered and given effect to in decision making.
- Supporting the rebuilding of communities affected by the 2009 bushfires.
- Minimising risk to life and property from bushfire and flooding through the appropriate siting, design and management of uses and developments.
- Maintaining the flood carrying capacity, temporary storage function and environmental significance of floodplains and waterways.
- Balancing the protection of valued industrial land from encroachment by incompatible uses with protecting the amenity of existing residential uses.

Natural resource management

The agricultural sector in Murrindindi Shire is diverse, economically significant and has potential to expand. Agricultural activities include beef and sheep grazing, horticulture, cropping, vegetable growing, aquaculture, forestry and niche products.

The Goulburn River valley and tributaries is a fertile valley of high agricultural quality. The Kinglake Ranges has high quality soils and agricultural value, while the Toolangi area is of national horticultural significance.

Favourable climatic and environmental conditions and proximity to the Melbourne market have seen the recent development of intensive agricultural industries, including an expansion of the viticultural, stone fruit, berries, vegetables and turf production.

Agricultural land is under increasing pressure for conversion into non-agricultural uses.

Council aims to protect the viability of agricultural land and waterways by:

- Protecting high quality agricultural land for ongoing agricultural use.
- Protecting rural land for productive agricultural uses and compatible rural uses.
- Ensuring that the use and development of rural land protects and enhances agricultural potential and the productive capacity of the land and surrounding land.
- Supporting existing agricultural production activities, including beef and sheep grazing, horticulture, cropping, vegetable growing, aquaculture, timber production and niche products.
- Supporting emerging agricultural industries that are compatible with existing agricultural practices, including horticulture, intensive animal production, agroforestry, farm gate agricultural sales, boutique, niche agriculture, agricultural processing, value adding industries and carbon farming.
- Supporting the evolution of agriculture in response to improved practices and climate change.
- Ensuring that agricultural land is not developed for primarily residential purposes.
- Discouraging the fragmentation of rural land into lots incapable of productive agricultural and rural use.
- Protecting water catchments from inappropriate use and development, particularly the Goulburn River valley and its tributaries.

Built environment and heritage

The municipality has a diverse and colourful history and includes many sites and structures of heritage significance. Heritage forms an essential part of the municipality's town and rural character. Recognition and protection of significant heritage is important for the cultural integrity and character of the community.

Well-designed, sustainable development that is sensitive to its context plays an important role in maintaining a town's character and appearance. This is especially important where a town is being rebuilt as a result of the 2009 bushfires.

In protecting heritage assets and promoting built form improvements, Council will:

- Protect sites, places and features of natural, archaeological and cultural heritage significance.
- Protect buildings of identified heritage significance.
- Protect the cultural heritage of the municipality.
- Encourage high quality contemporary design that becomes a valued addition to heritage places.
- Encourage design and development of township entrances and streetscapes that respect the built environment, contribute to the overall appearance and character of the town.
- Promote energy and water efficiency in design and development, including the use of water sensitive urban design principles.
- Facilitate the rebuilding and revitalisation in towns and communities affected by natural disasters.

Housing

The established townships and settlements offer a significant opportunity to expand and provide living opportunities in locations with infrastructure and leisure facilities, where natural environment is protected and where a high level of community safety is facilitated.

Council seeks to manage the development of its towns by:

- Promoting and facilitate further residential development and housing diversity in established townships to meet the needs of the community, including affordable housing, public housing and aged care accommodation.
- Allowing the subdivision and development of Rural Living land where environmental benefits such as the protection of native vegetation and treatment of waste water are demonstrated.
- Supporting residential growth that is sustainable.
- Facilitating the rebuilding of housing and residential diversity in towns and communities affected by natural disasters, including the 2009 bushfires.

Economic development

Murrindindi Shire has a diverse economy, with key economic sectors being:

- Agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture and viticulture.
- Tourism, hospitality and conferencing.
- Manufacturing and engineering.
- Retail and trade services.
- Education, including outdoor education.
- Health care and social services.
- Forestry and timber processing.

The key commercial areas are Alexandra, Yea, Kinglake, Eildon and Marysville, with strong business activity also in the small townships.

The houseboat industry services sector provides long term employment and future growth opportunities for Eildon. Alexandra and Yea are the prime industrial areas in the municipality, both having land for lighter industrial uses or for industries that require larger areas and buffers from other land uses. Kinglake Ranges and Narbethong have existing industrial areas to cater for some local industrial and service needs.

There is a diverse and skilled workforce within the Murrindindi Shire that is available for existing industry sectors and for new and expanded businesses. The ageing population and loss of young people from the Municipality needs to be addressed to maintain the available skilled workforce.

The natural and built attractions in the municipality contribute significantly towards its character and appeal and form the basis for an active tourism industry and the municipal economy.

This includes high amenity rural and natural landscapes, diverse public land and forests, rivers, heritage and attractive townships. The region's environmental assets, particularly the National and State Parks, Lake Mountain Alpine Resort, Lake Eildon, the Goulburn River, and the Great Victorian Rail Trail offer opportunities for a broad range of outdoor pursuits.

In promoting economic development, Council supports:

- Encouraging business expansion, investment and employment.
- Facilitating the growth of home-based business, small businesses, niche industries and rural based industries.
- Supporting new and emerging industries.
- Supporting the revitalisation of economies in towns and communities affected by natural disasters, including the 2009 bushfires.
- Facilitating active commercial areas in townships.
- Strengthening the role and identity of townships, including supporting businesses within the commercial centres of Kinglake, Kinglake West – Pheasant Creek.
- Facilitating commercial and industrial uses in the commercial areas of Alexandra, Yea, Kinglake, Eildon and Marysville.
- Facilitating commercial activities in smaller townships.
- Providing a supply of industrial land to cater for a range of industrial uses.
- Encouraging the development of serviced industrial land in the municipality.
- Encouraging sustainable growth in tourism, leveraging Murrindindi Shire's natural assets, proximity to Melbourne and links with neighbouring regions.
- Supporting recreation, tourism and lifestyle facilities linked to Lake Eildon, the Goulburn River and the Great Victorian Rail Trail.
- Facilitating the development of Eildon and Marysville townships as all year round residential, commercial and tourism destinations.
- Facilitating development of new tourism accommodation options and conference centres.
- Facilitating the rebuilding of tourism accommodation, attractions and facilities in areas affected by natural disasters, including the 2009 bushfires.
- Encouraging tourism activities in any identified heritage place to which the Heritage Overlay applies.
- Encouraging small enterprises in tourism, creative arts, home-based businesses, overnight visitor accommodation and farm enterprises and markets that showcase local produce.
- Supporting the development of education opportunities, including outdoor education.

Transport

Murrindindi Shire is well served by a variety of highways and major roads including the Hume Freeway the Melba, Maroondah and Goulburn Valley Highways and the Whittlesea-Yea Road.

This road network provides significant social and economic benefits for settlement, business and tourism. Major highway corridors and linkages provide connectivity to metropolitan Melbourne, enhancing potential economic benefits for the municipality. There are further opportunities to enhance existing road networks and public transport, both within the municipality and externally with metropolitan Melbourne and other areas.

Transport Planning and delivery for Murrindindi Shire will:

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- Encourage high quality road and public transport connections.
- Improve transportation and connectivity within the Kinglake Ranges and beyond.
- Support the provision of an east /west link between the Maroondah and Melba Highways in the southern or central section of the municipality.
- Provide adequate car parking for uses and developments in rural towns.

Infrastructure

Community infrastructure

Community infrastructure planning must strive to enhance the liveability, wellbeing, amenity and quality of life within the municipality.

Community infrastructure and services are required for all age demographics. As the population of Murrindindi Shire is spread thinly over a large, diverse area, the development and delivery of community facilities and services has challenges for access and connectivity.

A small cluster of education providers in the municipality offer outdoor and environmental education, leadership programs, corporate training and adventure based activities. This established outdoor education industry in the area is recognised nationally and has further potential for growth.

In planning and delivering community infrastructure, Council will:

- Support each township as the focus of a residential, commercial, community and service hub for its surrounding area.
- Encourage the development of and access to community infrastructure and services to cater for the current and potential future needs of all age demographics.
- Facilitate improved accessibility for the general population and those with special needs.
- Encourage the development of the education industry, particularly the post-secondary, outdoor and environmental education sectors.
- Encourage local ‘place-based’ initiatives that will provide community benefit to individual towns and communities.

Open space

Open space and recreation opportunities are important for the health and well-being of the community. Open spaces exist in most townships, creating quality recreation options for residents and visitors. Outstanding scenic beauty and abundant natural attractions presently support a diverse range of recreational pursuits.

Some significant recreation trails exist in the municipality, including the Great Victorian Rail Trail and trails at Flowerdale, Pheasant Creek to Kinglake and Toolangi, all providing options for walking, cycling and equestrian usage.

Council seeks to improve its open space network and recreational opportunities by:

- Seeking the provision of open space through residential subdivision of land.
- Facilitating the provision of passive and active recreation land, facilities and activities.
- Providing improved walking and cycling connections, and public spaces.
- Providing a range of diverse leisure and recreational opportunities for all ages and interest groups.
- Expanding multi-use recreation trails and networks.
- Creating active and passive recreation spaces, facilities and activities.
- Providing linked recreation reserves and open spaces, including corridors along waterways and river networks.

- Allowing linked recreation corridors to be provided through open space contributions when practical and feasible.
- Encouraging areas of remnant vegetation to be incorporated into public open space.

Development infrastructure

New development in Murrindindi's towns and rural areas requires an appropriate provision of infrastructure to service and support future development.

Infrastructure provision should be coordinated and integrated to meet the requirements of proposed development and may be staged in accordance with development needs.

Council aims to support the efficient delivery of infrastructure by:

- Encouraging a consistent approach to the design and construction of infrastructure across the municipality.
- Encouraging improved infrastructure and services to support existing business and continued business growth.
- Ensuring that any new subdivision or development is provided with an adequate level and standard of infrastructure, to the standards of the relevant service authority.
- Supporting new telecommunications infrastructure.

Gaming

Gaming is part of Murrindindi Shire's recreation and entertainment offer, but for a significant few it causes serious personal, financial and social effects. Murrindindi Shire's current density of electronic machines and choice of gaming venues is low in the regional context. The strategic context and demographic characteristics of the Shire reveal that it is sensitive to unacceptable social costs arising from increases in gaming.

Council aims to reduce harm to the community from problem gambling by:

- Ensuring that any new gaming venues or proposals to increase in electronic gaming machines take into account the possible health, social and economic consequences for the community.