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C41**PYRENEES SHIRE KEY INFLUENCES & ISSUES****21.01-1**15/12/2016
C41**Snapshot of Pyrenees Shire**

Pyrenees Shire is located in central Victoria between the regional centres of Ballarat and Ararat. It shares common boundaries with the City of Ballarat and Shire of Hepburn to the east, Golden Plains Shire to the south-east, Corangamite and Moyne Shires to the south, Rural City of Ararat to the west, Northern Grampians Shire to the north-west and Central Goldfields Shire to the north-east.

Pyrenees Shire was created in September 1994 by the amalgamation of the Shires of Avoca, Lexton and Ripon. It takes its name from the Pyrenees Range, a “fold range” which is almost entirely located within its municipal borders.

The Shire covers an area of 3457 square kilometres, extending approximately 90 kilometres in a north-south direction and 40 kilometres in an east-west direction. Despite its size, the Shire has only a small population of 6867 (Victoria in Future 2016), the majority of which reside in the towns of Beaufort and Avoca. There are a number of smaller townships and settlements located throughout the Shire however, which provide local services and facilities to surrounding rural areas and provide important foci for community activities and social interaction. The Shire is projected to have a population of 7,419 by 2031 (Victoria in Future 2016).

The Western, Sunraysia and Pyrenees Highways pass through the Shire and provide it with good connections to the surrounding region and to Melbourne. However the good external road connections combined with the small population has resulted in residents relying to some extent on the nearby regional centres and large towns for employment and to meet their needs for retail services, community services and entertainment.

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C41**Key influences**

- A settlement pattern based on historic rural service centres and former gold mining areas.
- The distribution of Shire’s population, in Beaufort and Avoca and small towns of Amphitheatre, Landsborough, Lexton, Moonambel, Snake Valley and Waubra.
- Rural-residential communities in the south-east part of the Shire.
- Small lot subdivision north of Beaufort and extending to Raglan and Trawalla.
- The dominance of primary industry in the local economy, particularly in wool, meat, hay production, grain, potatoes and nurseries, grape production and forestry in the southern portion of the Shire centred around Beaufort.
- The growth of viticulture and opportunities for new industry and tourism in the Pyrenees Ranges area.
- The dominance of the Pyrenees Range in the landscape of the northern parts of the Shire and the Great Dividing Range through the central parts of the Shire.
- The highland plateau and extensive alluvial floodplains of the Avoca River.
- The two drainage systems created by the Great Divide comprising the Goulburn-Murray River system via the Avoca and Wimmera Rivers and associated tributaries and the Hopkins River system, via Mt Emu Creek.
- The reliance on rivers and streams for the Shire’s urban and agricultural water supply.
- Basaltic plains with natural lakes and swamps formed from volcanic eruptions creating significant landscape and landmarks in the south of the Shire.
- Climate variations from north to south, impacting on agricultural activities.

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Key issues

The key planning issues and influences facing the Pyrenees Shire are based around three strategic themes:

Settlement, built environment and heritage

- The need to generate further employment opportunities.
- The maintenance of viable communities at times of static or low population growth.
- The retention of the established character and ethos of existing townships.
- The protection of the cultural and heritage assets of the Shire.

Environmental and landscape values & risks

- The protection and management of the Shire's natural resources and environment.

Rural development

- The protection and management of agricultural land and the need to encourage agricultural diversity.
- The responsible use and management of inappropriately subdivided rural land.
- The management of rural residential and other small lot rural development.
- The promotion and facilitation of tourism development.