



western plains north green wedge management plan vision and community views report

october 2013



prepared by hansen partnership pty ltd



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1 introduction

This report has been prepared as part of the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan project, being undertaken by Hansen Partnership and its team of sub-consultants, for the City of Melton.

The first report provided background information in relation to the Western Plains North Green Wedge. Since the background report was prepared, consultation has occurred which involved meetings with key agencies, a survey that was sent to all land owners / residents of the Western Plains North Green Wedge, and a consultation day held at the Toolern Vale Hall in May 2013. The consultation day provided the opportunity for agencies, stakeholders, and residents and members of the community to input into the project. A number of meetings have subsequently been held with other parties. The draft Background Report was revised after consultation to ensure all issues identified within the consultation processes were documented.

This report sets out the values and draft vision identified for the study area by the consultant team, based on the consultation undertaken to date and the consultant's assessment of the management issues affecting the green wedge. See Figure 1 on the following page for the study area.

The aim of this report is to seek provide the community and key stakeholders with a summary of the matters that have informed the draft 'vision'. More importantly, it provides a suggested vision to inform consultation and allow for feedback on the strategic objectives of the management plan prior to the drafting of the plan. The report aims to highlight the divergent views that exist in relation to the management of the Western Plains North

Green Wedge and to highlight the issues that have been considered by the project team in determining a draft vision for the area. While there will always be some views which are not reflected by the proposed approach, it will seek to reflect the broad consensus of the community and other key stakeholders and land managers in relation to the on-going management of this area.

1.1 aim of this report

To provide context and clarity regarding the aims for the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan, these can be summarised as follows:

- Identify a vision, objectives and actions for the sustainable development of the green wedge area.
- Identify the values and features of the green wedge, the preferred land uses, environmental and natural resources that should be protected, as well as the needs of the local community.
- Recommend a range of measures and approaches to protect and enhance the green wedge.



Toolern Vale Hills

1.2 the purpose of the green wedge

In order to develop a management plan for the study area it is necessary to have a clear understanding of exactly what the purpose of the 'green wedge' is. Confusion and a lack of understanding of the purpose of the Western Plains North Green Wedge was a key issue raised at the community consultation sessions held as part of the project.

Uncertainty and scepticism existed as to whether the study area is intended to be a permanent non-urban area, or whether it is just a 'holding zone' used by the State government to prevent subdivision until the land is required for urban expansion. Recent expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary into green wedge areas on the fringe of Melbourne, has fuelled this uncertainty. However, recent direction from the State government has been towards more permanent 'fixing' of the Urban Growth Boundary. This is explicitly stated within the recently released draft metropolitan strategy 'Plan Melbourne'.

It is also important to note that a 'green wedge management plan' is not a document which is intended to revise or reconsider the area identified as being part of the 'green wedge' but to examine mechanisms and actions which may assist with improving the land management of green wedges in line with the purposes of the zones defined by the Victorian Planning Provisions.

green wedge zone

The Green Wedge Zone applies to the majority of the Western Plains North Green Wedge. The purposes of the (amended) Green Wedge Zone as set out in the planning scheme include the following:

- *To provide for the use of land for agriculture.*
- *To recognise, protect and conserve green wedge land for its agricultural, environmental, historic, landscape, recreational and tourism opportunities, and mineral and stone resources.*
- *To encourage use and development that is consistent with sustainable land management practices.*
- *To encourage sustainable farming activities and provide opportunity for a variety of productive agricultural uses.*
- *To protect, conserve and enhance the cultural heritage significance and the character of open rural and scenic non-urban landscapes.*
- *To protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area.*

The above purposes are elaborated on below, with the intention of clarifying them in the context of issues raised by the community:

- To protect and to enhance areas of environmental, biodiversity and landscape values on the western fringe of Melbourne.
- To protect and enhance land for its historic, recreational and tourism opportunities consistent with the open rural landscape character of land in the green wedge.

- To protect land for its mineral and stone resources.
- To provide for the ongoing productive use of land for agriculture, of a type and form that is suited to areas on the western fringe of metropolitan Melbourne.
- To provide rural lifestyle opportunities, for those seeking to live in a rural area and to maintain their land in a sustainable way, for either agricultural, environmental or rural related purposes.
- To provide some opportunities for educational, recreational, institutional and other like urban related uses, that benefit from a location within an attractive rural environment, on the basis they provide significant opportunities to revegetate and enhance the environment features of the land, and are of a size and a scale that is consistent with the open rural character and landscape of the area.
- To promote sustainable land management in all regards, whether it be for conservation, agriculture or some other rural related use.
- To provide a long term non-urban boundary to metropolitan Melbourne.
- To manage rural land at the metropolitan interface, where it is subject to considerable spill-over activities from urban activities.

Green Wedge land is not designated to preserve land in a low intensity rural land use until it is required for long term urban growth and should not be planned in this way.

green wedge a zone

The Green Wedge A Zone applies to south west corner of the study area between the urban area of Melton and the municipal boundary (the Harkness Road rural living area). The purpose of the Green Wedge A Zone as set out in the planning scheme include the following:

- *To provide for the use of land for agriculture.*
- *To protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity, natural resources, scenic landscapes and heritage values of the area.*
- *To ensure that use and development promotes sustainable land management practices and infrastructure provision.*
- *To protect, conserve and enhance the cultural heritage significance and the character of rural and scenic non-urban landscapes.*
- *To recognise and protect the amenity of existing rural living areas.*

Key to this definition is the acknowledgement that this part of the Green Wedge is to recognise areas which have a 'rural living' component.



example of major infrastructure within the green wedge

rural conservation zone

The Rural Conservation Zone applies to the north-west corner of the study area above the Digger Rest–Coimadai Road. There is also a band of RCZ land extending along the Djerriwarrh Creek. The purpose of the Rural Conservation Zone as set out in the planning scheme include the following:

- *To conserve the values specified in a schedule to this zone.*
- *To protect and enhance the natural environment and natural processes for their historic, archaeological and scientific interest, landscape, faunal habitat and cultural values.*
- *To protect and enhance natural resources and the biodiversity of the area.*
- *To encourage development and use of land which is consistent with sustainable land management and land capability practices, and which takes into account the conservation values and environmental sensitivity of the locality.*
- *To provide for agricultural use consistent with the conservation of environmental and landscape values of the area.*
- *To conserve and enhance the cultural significance and character of open rural and scenic non-urban landscapes.*

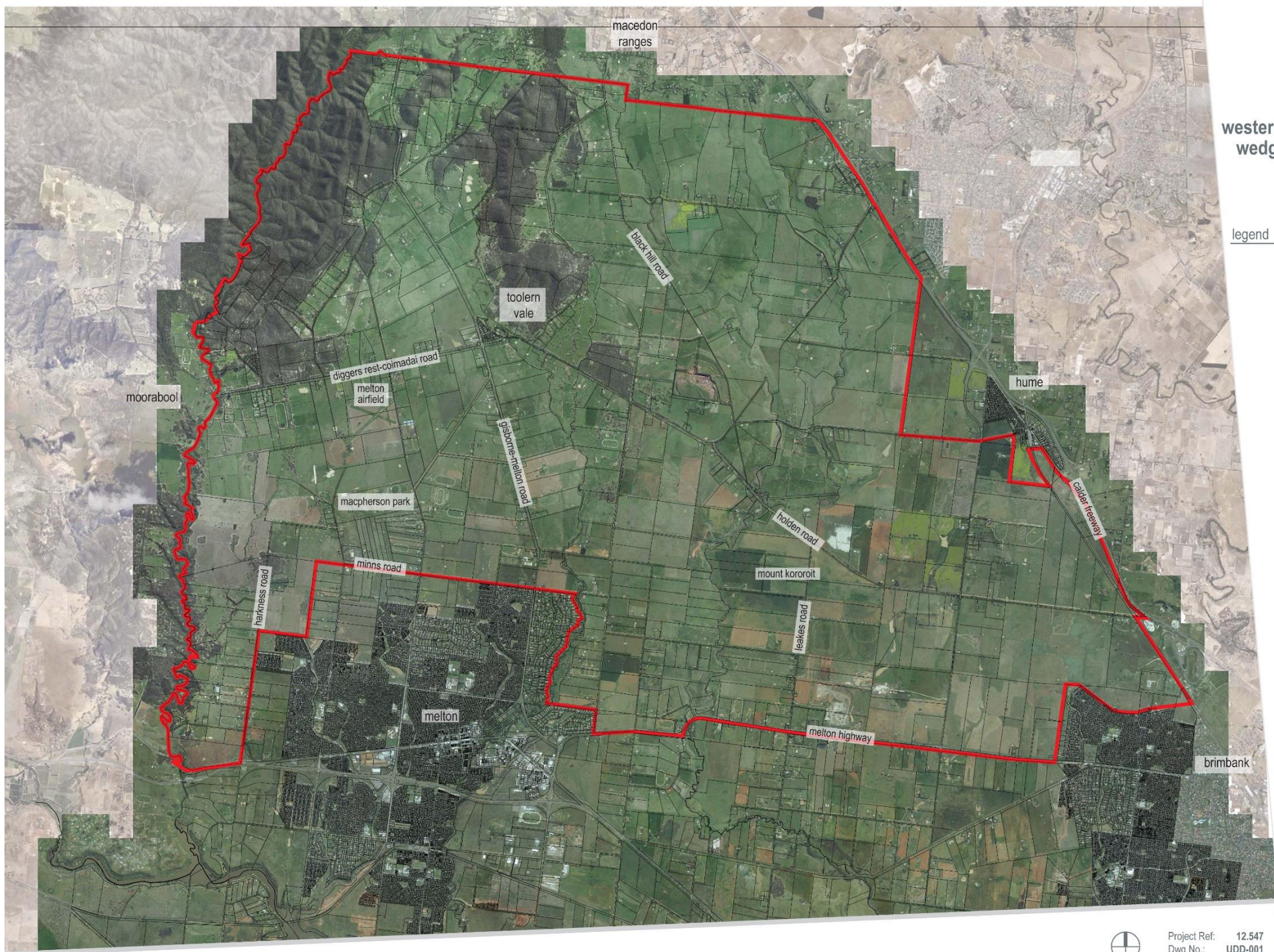
As with the Green Wedge and Green Wedge A Zones, the underlying purposes is the protection of environmental and landscape character and the protection of agricultural land uses.

western plains north green wedge management plan

figure 1:
aerial / study area

legend

study area 



Project Ref: 12.547
Dwg No.: UDD-001
Scale: NTS
Date: 04.10.13
Revision: A

2 views and opinions

The following consultation has been undertaken to provide the opportunity for agencies and the community to provide input into this project and to express their views about the future management of the green wedge:

A survey was sent to all land owners and residents of the green wedge.

A consultation day was held in the Toolern Vale hall on 8th of May 2013 for landowners and key stakeholders including:

- Local Conservation Groups
- 'Friends of' and Landcare Groups
- Council officers from surrounding municipalities
- Melbourne Water
- Western Water
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment and Management Authority
- Department of Primary Industries
- CFA
- Local Businesses
- Farmers within the local area

This section of the report summarises the findings of that consultation. The findings expressed are the views of the various participants involved in the consultation.

2.1 summary of the survey

A survey was sent to all households within the study area. A total of 85 responses were received. Following is a brief summary of the survey results in relation to the questions asked in the survey form, along with the relevant responses.

How do people use their land?

- residential (33)
- agricultural (23)
- hobby farming (21)
- horse related purposes (20)

What are the key barriers to maintaining and using land?

- outside influences (i.e. people dumping rubbish) (32)
- lack of resources (30)
- government or authority decision making (29)
- size of land parcels (25)
- differing values of people in the area (25)

What do you think is the key purpose of the green wedge?

- to live in a semi-rural environment (53)
- agriculture and farm, and conservation (37)
- wide range of purposes (21)
- of least importance was generating income and economic development purposes (15) and supporting urban areas of Melton by accommodating uses such as churches and schools (7).

What is most important to you in the area?

Respondents were asked to rank the order which was as follows:

- Ability to build houses in the area (23)
- Preservation of green and open spaces for residents to enjoy (12)
- Protection of key landscape features such as Mount Cottrell and the Pyrete Range (11)
- Ability to keep farming in the area (10)
- Conservation of the existing threatened plants and animals (9)
- Protection of water catchments and waterways (9)
- Economic development for business and tourism uses such as quarries and restaurant (3)

What are the biggest threats facing the green wedge?

- excessive development and urban sprawl (22)
- population growth (6)
- poor land management (9)
- farming becoming unviable (4)

What would most like to see happen over the next 20-30 years?

- allow residential development (18)
- subdivision of lots suitable for rural living (11)
- no change (9)
- rezoning of land to allow for sustainable development (6)
- preservation of environmental and rural aspects (6).



Djerrivarrh Creek corridor

2.2 consultation day

The consultants and Council staff were present at the Toolern Vale Hall for a series of stakeholder and community information sessions. The sessions presented findings of the Background Report and provided the opportunity for agencies and the community to provide input into the project. The information sessions also provided opportunity for more detailed discussions after the group briefing. Detailed summary notes were taken during the information sessions to document discussion and stakeholder and community feedback.

Sessions were held with agencies and authorities early in the day, with a 'drop-in' session planned for the evening for members of the community:

- 10.00-12.00pm: conservation and waterways
- 1.00-3.00pm: planning
- 3.30-5.30pm: agriculture (no attendees, although it is noted that some attended the 'planning' session)
- 6.30 to 8.30: community 'drop-in' session

2.3 community drop in session

The evening session was well attended with an estimated 120 people being present. Due to the number of people attending at the one time, the format of the evening session was changed from a 'drop-in' session to a group session convened by the consultants.

Following is a summary of the key issues identified during the information session. The complete summary notes taken during the information sessions are included at Appendix A. Copies of the summary notes were forwarded to all attendees who provided their details to Council and were also made available on Council's website.

general comments

- Lack of appreciation / understanding of the roles of State and Local Government in context of green wedge policy.
- Confusion for landowners created by the continued expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Differing expectations for the future of green wedge area, including whether to allow or prevent further subdivision.
- Concern over any 'one size fits all' approach to future planning for green wedge areas.

agricultural productivity

- Agricultural viability, noting that broad acre / large scale farming is unviable within the study area.

- Smaller lot agricultural production could be viable, but must be located in appropriate locations.
- Some diversification in agricultural activity is occurring, however there is a lack of education focusing on agricultural and land management.
- Water access and availability is critical for intensive agricultural opportunities
- High cost of maintaining sustainable agricultural practice.
- Hobby farms provide small scale opportunity for sustainable living.

lot size / subdivision

- Impact of smaller lot subdivision on character of the area.
- Cost of maintaining large blocks of land, where agricultural viability does not exist.
- Significant differences in expectations / opportunities for land, including: farming / agricultural activity; rural lifestyle; house lot excisions; or urban development (as part of any future expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary).

other land uses

- Opportunity to provide for rural living opportunities, which are not provided for within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Opportunity for tourism, recreation and active rural pursuits which are compatible with the rural character.

- Desire for parks / open space, retail use and employment opportunities.

environment related

- Protection of the environment is a critical consideration.
- Need to encourage ways for the rural community to live sustainably.
- Revegetation programs need to consider drought tolerant species.
- Impact of increasing development
- Incremental loss of open rural character and associated rural lifestyle.
- Negative impact of intensive development within the green wedge e.g. place of worship.



Melton Airfield located within the green wedge

2.4 key stakeholder sessions

A summary of the key issues identified during the session with key stakeholders include the following.

conservation and waterways session

- Significant environmental damage has been caused across the study area due to the removal of original vegetation.
- Ongoing concern of urbanisation, with a range of associated impacts on sensitive areas.
- Potential reservations would largely be along creeks to improve connections and reduce
- Obstacles to creek line repair include landholder resistance and resourcing, meaning a holistic large scale approach is required, including active support at State and Federal level.
- Wildlife corridors are an excellent way to link landscapes, sustain endangered flora and fauna species etc, however there are issues of management and fragmentation of corridors, which results in isolation of threatened species.
- Education of landowners on sustainable practices is of importance as is the need for partnership between key stakeholders/ community.
- Major issues of gaps / lack of information on existing flora and fauna species which may require protection.
- Western side of study area has rare remnant plant communities which require a buffer from urban development.

- Shift in focus at Catchment Management Authority to regional level, with a new focus on protecting and conserving the hinterland, including working closely in the roll out of the Metropolitan Planning Strategy (Plan Melbourne).
- Need to have an open debate on thresholds for expanding Urban Growth Boundary in sensitive areas.
- Need clear policy direction for land use and activity within the green wedge to provide certainty and to reduce speculation for urban development.
- Major infrastructure being built within the study area including future OMR, radio communications towers, water tanks which impact on the landscape.
- Drought is a significant issue which affects management of land, however with cattle removed from land due to drought, woodlands and native vegetation is returning to the land.
- Need for a clear policy program to encourage people to protect and enhance native vegetation within green wedge areas.
- The focus for the green wedge area needs to be on farming, rural activity and landscape / environmental protection rather than focussing of economic activity, building activity and speculation on land values.
- A challenge for the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan will be to clearly articulate what the future will be, what uses will support that future (and what will be done to encourage them) and what uses will threaten that future (and how they will be discouraged).

- Need to attract the right landowners / achieve 'buy in' of landowners to achieve land management results that are required, which links back to the strategic message / vision for the area.

planning session

- Identified 'extractive investigation areas' do not mean that the land in question will be used for extractive industry but reflects areas where there may be potential for this to occur.
- Two current extractive industry proposals within the study area are in early planning stages, with future approvals and licence applications required from DPI and Council.
- Acknowledged that a high pressure gas pipe runs through the study area, where sensitive use and development should be restricted within proximity to pipeline. Buffers of 500 metres to sensitive uses and a low density buffer of 350 metres suggested (noting that sensitive uses could be within closer proximity but require study to demonstrate why location is appropriate).
- Lot size and land use capabilities need to be addressed to designate where are the most appropriate locations for farming (having regard to drought and access to recycled water and
- Long term certainty for the protection of the green wedge from urban development is required.
- An existing issue of poor management of land, including both small and large lots, caused by lack of understanding and education in good land management practice.

- Land speculation is impacting on the affordability of land, which in turn is impacting on the potential use of land for active farming and rural activities.
- Recycled water has potential for viable use on small farms, but is not economically sustainable for broad acre farmers.
- Land use and development within the green wedge should appropriately fit with agricultural and / or conservation purposes.
- Important to educate the community about the environmental values of the area to assist with its protection.
- There are limitations to land use and activity within the Green Wedge Zone which impact on the scale of operations, even though tourism supposed to be OK.
- Key themes for the management of waterways should consider: 'identify'; 'protect'; 'connect'.
- Need to consider how to best address co-ordination and contradiction between plans at different policy levels.
- Need to encourage sustainable land management practice through education and rebate schemes in order to achieve landowner 'buy in' and to match long term vision with short term benefits.
- It is appropriate to allow land to revegetate and there should be incentives to ensure it occurs in sustainable manner.

2.5 aboriginal party consultation

The following notes summaries the key issues raised during a meeting with elders of the Wurundjeri group:

- There are many unregistered Aboriginal places within in the study area.
- There are around 80 registered Aboriginal places which are mostly surface scatters.
- There are many Aboriginal places around Djerrivarrh Creek, noting that the Western Freeway / Anthony's cutting uncovered lots of previously unrecorded silcrete quarry outcrops.
- Toolern Creek has the potential to contain caves and silcrete outcrops which may have been used by Aboriginal people.
- Significant sites within the study area include: Mount Tophet; Lerderderg Park; and the upper reaches of Taylors Creek.
- Concern raised at the amount of development work that is going on in the study area (although most comments relate to the growth areas) and frustration that the Aboriginal community does not have input into decisions about this development.
- A possible ceremonial ring may be located near Mt Tophet.

2.6 summary of community and stakeholder views

It is difficult to express a consistent view of the community's opinions and values about the study area, as there is considerable divergence of views between different groups. However, generally it is considered that the views can be divided into the following categories.

long term commercial farmers

This group includes the few people or families that continue to run what may be called traditional cropping or grazing activities within the area. This group laments the difficulties that exist in trying to run 'commercial' farming operations in the area due to changing agricultural practices over the years, changing agricultural markets, fragmentation of land, the inability to expand farms to maintain economies of scale, the increased presence of rural residents and non-farm activities, increased traffic, proximity to Melbourne, and the loss of agricultural support services and facilities. Many of these people and families continue to operate their farms either individually or as share farmers utilising other properties in the area. However they are continually under pressure and do not see a future for commercially viable traditionally farming practices to remain in the area, or for new investment in that form of farming, once they retire or leave their land.

more recent rural residents

A number of recent rural residents have positive attitudes about the area and the joys of living in a rural environment. Such residents have generally purchased land in pursuit of a rural lifestyle. This rural lifestyle may have associated with it a part-time farming operation, more as a lifestyle or interest, or as a land management technique, rather than as a commercially viable activity. Equally, it may be associated with a passion for horses or for conservation. This group generally does not want to see any change in the planning controls. They enjoy the low intensity of development, the continued use of the land for rural purposes, and the attractive rural landscapes available throughout the area.

longer term rural residents and part time farmers

Many people purchased land in the area some time ago, for part-time or possibly full-time farming purposes, as well as for rural lifestyle purposes. Many of these people have holdings of less than 40 hectares, which is the minimum size of an allotment that allows for possible further subdivision. Many of these people have found it increasingly difficult to continue to conduct part time farming operations, noting that economic viability is a critical factor in whether or not such agricultural activities continue or cease.

At present the market for the sale of their land is not seen as being strong and the value that they would get is not good. Some are staying on their land either because they continue to like a rural lifestyle, even though they experience difficulties in managing their land. Others remain because they cannot sell their

land for a value that would enable them to leave and relocate elsewhere, or because of a hope that their land may be rezoned and its value enhanced in the future.

speculators

Some people have purchased land, either recently or some time ago, for largely speculative reasons, on the expectation or the hope that the land may be rezoned to an urban zone or a zone that allows a smaller lot size and greater subdivision potential. Some people in this group live on the land and continue to manage it in an appropriate manner. Others are absentee land owners who may either continue to manage the land to varying degrees, or in some case take no care of the land whatsoever.

aboriginal community

The Aboriginal community has a strong connection to the land. Many registered and unregistered sites are located throughout the study area. The aboriginal community would like to establish a closer relationship with Council and have more involvement in decision making in the area, especially in relation to Council and publicly owned land.

3 key values

It is difficult to gain consistency about the community's views and values about the area, as there is considerable divergence of views expressed by different groups within the community. The divergence seems to exist in relation to matters such as:

- the zoning and planning controls that apply in parts of the study area.
- the development and subdivision potential of the land.
- the opportunities that exist to continue to farm land.
- the role of the area in terms of accommodating Melbourne's long term urban growth.

Regardless of this, the following key values of the green wedge have been identified by the consultant team from the background work and consultation with stakeholders and the community:

- The open rural landscapes.
- The natural environmental and biodiversity values of the area.
- The rural lifestyle opportunities provided in the area, close to the Melbourne metropolitan area and Melbourne airport.
- The sense of community that exists amongst people who live in the area.
- The peacefulness and tranquillity of the area.
- The history and heritage of the area, both Aboriginal and European history.

- The importance of the creeks and waterways.
- The importance of the hills and more undulating land in the northern parts of the area.
- The importance of specific features such as the hilltops.
- The equine industry.

Those aspects of the green wedge that do not seem to be highly valued by land owners and residents of the area include the following:

- The economic development role of the wedge.
- The role of the green wedge for commercially viable broad acre farming.
- The role of the area as a location for urban related uses such as quarries that adversely impact on the landscape qualities and amenity of the area.



long range view of green wedge interface with residential land use

4 key issues & influences

A number of key issues were identified in the background report that will need to be addressed in the management plan. A summary of the key issues from the background report is outlined below.

- Management of agricultural land which responds to the overall preferred future for the green wedge while acknowledging the significant challenges facing agriculture, including: reduced rainfall, land capability and fragmentation.
- Exploring other ways that environmental assets and the rural landscape can contribute to sustainable economic development in light of the challenges facing agriculture, including: tourism opportunities and other complimentary uses which do not compromise green wedge values.
- Pressures on the green wedge for urban related uses to service new and existing residential populations, which creates barriers to establishing agricultural uses as a result of land prices prohibiting the consolidation of lots, or managing the interface between the semi-industrial nature of modern farming and large residential populations.
- Exacerbation of pressure for urban related uses by the existing uncertainty in the long term alignment of the metropolitan Urban Growth Boundary, where there is a reluctance of some landowners to use their land for the intended purpose under the current zoning in the expectation that this zoning will change in the future.
- Protection of important remnant ecosystems within the study area, noting grasslands are among the most depleted and most vulnerable of Victoria's ecosystems.
- Protection of important woodland areas which are also home to a range of flora and fauna.
- Improved protection and enhancement of waterways and associated heritage and environmental assets to increase resilience of these important systems from landscape, open space and environmental perspectives.
- Ensuring an appropriate balance between rural residential development and the threat of bushfire which exists in the northern parts of the study area is achieved.
- Impact of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road proposed alignment which will essentially 'cut off' the south eastern corner of the study area from the remainder of the green wedge when constructed.
- Management of broader impacts on the green wedge from people and their actions, including: introduction of pest species and domestic animals, poor land management, control of domestic animals, dumping of rubbish or land fill from nearby urban development.
- Maximisation of opportunities afforded by the recycled water pipeline by understanding why the take-up of this resource been fairly limited and what may assist in using this resource to support new and existing agricultural uses.
- Consideration of the constraints and opportunities associated both the Tullamarine Airport and the Melton Airfield, but acknowledging that under State Policy the plans will need to ensure that any plan does not compromise the operations of these areas.
- Protection of significant landscapes and key vistas to the north of the study area.
- Protection and enhancement of unique topographical features, which include volcanic cones as the high points in a generally flat landscape.



Mount Kororoit – significant volcanic landscape feature

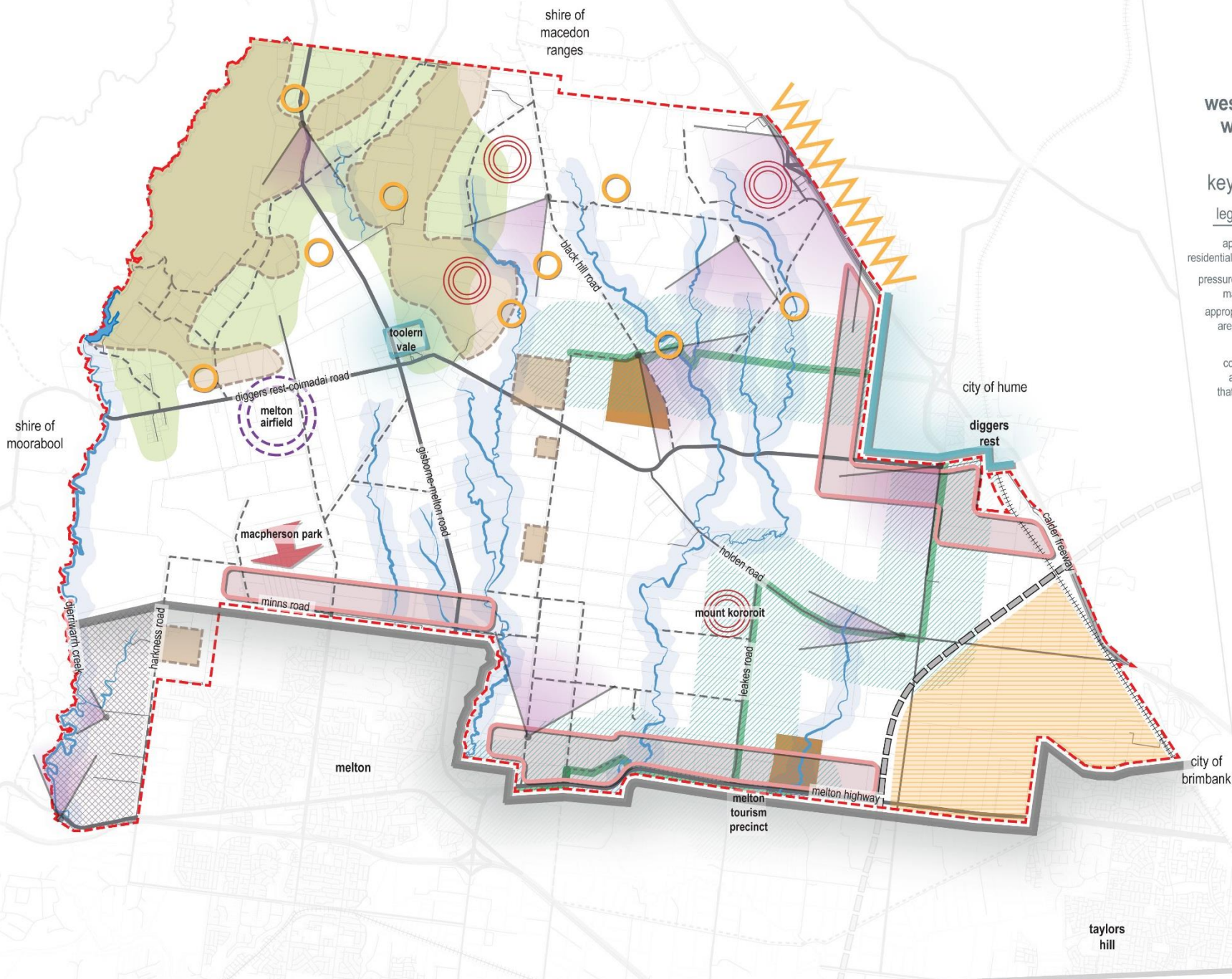
- Disconnection of MacPherson Park from the urban area of Melton and the relationship and connections between activity in that area.
 - Pressure for fragmentation and re-subdivision along major roads and close to urban areas, which particularly affects the major connector roads.
 - Recognising existing scattered heritage places (pre and post contact) as important reminders of both Melton's early settlement and more broadly Melbourne's establishment.
 - Appropriate management of rural living areas where they are in proximity to urban and creek environs to ensure development reflects both the role as a transition area from the urban to natural environments.
 - Management of extractive industry activities to ensure the ongoing use of existing quarry sites is not compromised and that new quarry activities are located appropriately having regard to landscape and existing uses
 - Management of differing landowner expectations for land use and activity within the green wedge and ensuring decision making is strategically based which provides a net community benefit.
 - These key issues and influences will form the basis of the matters for consideration as part of the development of the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan and are illustrated in Figure 2, where possible.
-

western plains north green wedge management plan

figure 2:
key issues & influences plan

legend

- appropriate balance between rural residential areas and the threat of bushfire 
- pressure for fragmentation of land along main roads & close to urban areas 
- appropriate management of rural living areas where they are in proximity to urban and creek environs 
- consider new agricultural practices and other economic development that responds to the rural landscape 
- recognise, protect and enhance unique topographical features 
- pressure for urban related uses 
- fragmentation and isolation of land due to proposed OMR 
- increase protection and enhancement of waterways 
- scattered heritage places 
- maximisation of recycled water pipeline opportunities 
- protection of highway vistas 
- protection of important remnant ecosystems 
- protection of important remnant woodlands 
- public conservation reserve areas 
- impacts from people and their actions 
- disconnection of macpherson park 
- manage airfield impact 
- manage quarry interfaces 
- recognise important viewpoints 



western plains south green wedge



Project Ref: 12.547
 Dwg No.: UDD-012
 Scale: NTS
 Date: 04.10.13
 Revision: B

5 the draft vision

This section of the report presents a draft vision and ideas for the future management of the study area. The draft vision and ideas are presented to obtain feedback from stakeholders and the community about the directions to be contained within the Green Wedge Management Plan that will be completed as the third and final part of this study.

In addition to a draft vision, this section also reviews the 'purposes' of the green wedge. It also provides some ideas for objectives and strategies that might be implemented on the basis of three key themes:

- people
- land use
- environment

5.1 draft vision

A vision is a single statement that encapsulates the ambitions for the green wedge as set out in the management plan. It provides the basis for all future recommendations and suggestions presented in the Plan.

The draft vision for the Western Plains North Green Wedge is:

Beautiful well managed expansive rural landscapes...

...that increasingly contribute to the biodiversity values of Melbourne and its surrounds...

...which provide valued and sought after rural lifestyles based on conservation, part-time farming, full-time farming, equestrian and other rural interests, for those who want such a lifestyle whilst living close to Melbourne ...

...which provide opportunities for a diversity of farming and agricultural operations and discrete tourism, recreation and entertainment related activities associated with a rural environment ...

...and opportunities for discretely located uses related to metropolitan Melbourne that may seek or require a location within a rural area close to the city

5.2 key themes

people

People, the values and attitudes of people living in the green wedge, and the reasons why they own land and live in the area, are central to the ongoing maintenance, management and enhancement of land.

There is often a miss-match between the values, the skills, the knowledge and the means of people who own land in the green wedge, and the intrinsic capabilities and value of the land they own.

The objectives and strategies presented in relation to the theme 'people' largely involve providing information to help people make informed decisions when they are looking to buy or sell land in a green wedge, supporting agricultural and conservation operations, and giving people a voice in the planning of the green wedge, as a green wedge.

It is considered that a key outcome of the management plan should be to change of emphasis of 'green wedge management', from planning policies and controls, to the values, the skills, the knowledge and the capabilities of people that own land in the green wedge to manage it in a sustainable way. Some of the key areas associated with peoples use of the area are shown on Figure 3 on the following page.

objectives

Objectives nominated for the theme of 'people' include:

- Enhance engagement between landowners, stakeholders and Council regarding ongoing management of the green wedge.
- Provide education and support to landowners / occupiers and better align reasons why people own / live in the green wedge.
- Ensure intrinsic land capability, qualities and values of the land underpin the long term management of the green wedge.
- Improve the ongoing management and appropriately active use of land.
- Improve community connectivity.

strategies

These objectives may be achieved through strategies such as:

- Consider the creation of committees / groups to oversee and provide direction on the management of the green wedge.
- Consider providing support to local industry within the green wedge.
- Consider the creation of promotional / marketing material for the green wedge.
- Consider investment in improving linkages within the green wedge (for pedestrian and non-pedestrian purposes).
- Potential negative green wedge impacts from peoples actions.



protected area on Harkness Road

western plains north green wedge management plan

figure 3:
people

legend

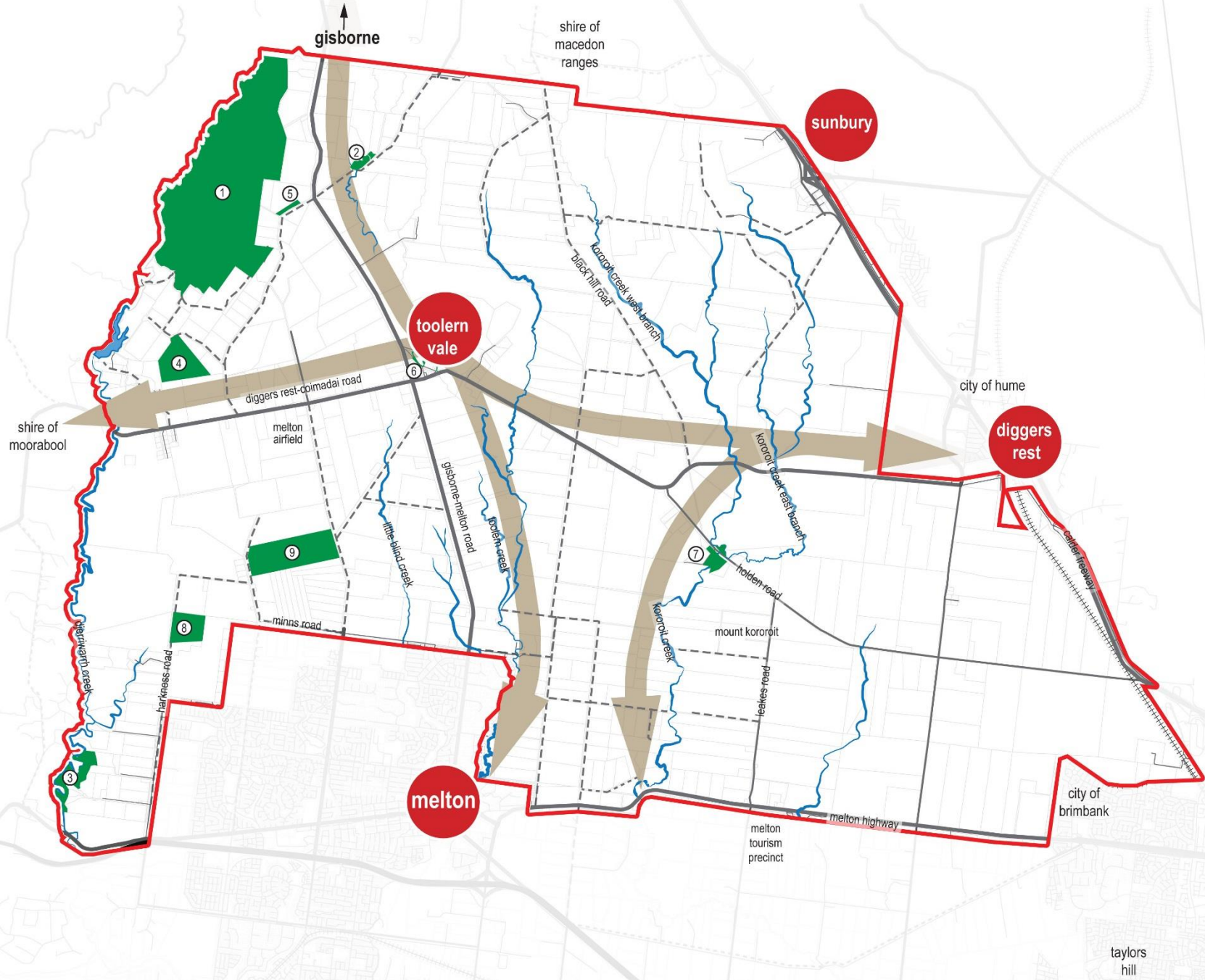
study area 

potential shared path alignment

crown reserves/parks 

reserves

- lerderderg state park ①
- toolern creek natural features reserve (benson road) ②
- long forest flora and fauna reserve ③
- yangardook bushland reserve ④
- chaplains road reserve ⑤
- toolern creek natural features reserve (toolern vale) ⑥
- kororoit creek (holden road) streamside reserve ⑦
- melton gilgai woodlands nature conservation reserve ⑧
- macpherson park ⑨



Project Ref: 12.547
 Dwg No.: UDD-003
 Scale: NTS
 Date: 04.10.13
 Revision: -

5.3 use of the land

discussion

Whilst broadacre agriculture will remain an important land use and land management technique throughout large parts of the Western Plains North Green Wedge in the future, it is unlikely to remain a commercially viable activity, particularly for full time farming, i.e. farming without supplementary 'off-farm' income.

It is considered that the land use emphasis should shift from commercially viable broadacre farming towards the 'productive' use of green wedge land for a wider and a more diverse range of rural and related land uses, and for environmental and conservation purposes. Opportunities include utilising the recycled water pipeline and a wide range of smaller scale and more diverse rural and agriculture and related operations that benefit from proximity to Melbourne also exist and should be maximised to support niche agricultural uses that benefit from proximity to urban areas.

Rural living, associated with part-time or at times full-time farming, or environmental or conservation purposes, should be a major land use. This group of residents will require greater support than traditional farmers in the area, to ensure effective and sustainable land management.

Increased pressure is expected for non-rural land uses, and improved policies and guidelines will be required to manage their impacts of the green wedge. Additional flexibility in relation to potential land uses under the amended rural zones adds weight to the need for clear guidance.

objectives

Objectives nominated for the theme of 'land use' include:

- Encourage a diversity of new and innovative agricultural uses.
- Maximise opportunities for agriculture associated with the recycled water pipeline.
- Encourage the widest possible range of rural and related uses to provide a long term, sustainable, land management outcome.
- Recognise rural living and rural lifestyle, in conjunction with a part time agricultural and / or conservations uses, as an effective use of land.
- Provide some opportunities for educational, recreational, institutional and other tourism and urban related uses – provided well designed and located.

strategies

These objectives may be achieved through strategies such as:

- Consider establishing an agricultural research collaborative to investigate, research and identify new and innovative productive agricultural uses.
- Encourage innovation which improves and maximises investment in agricultural land within the green wedge.
- Investigate the establishment of share farming schemes as a land management tool.
- Consider preparing a recycle water business plan to building upon the opportunity to provide water for agricultural use.
- Review or introduce planning scheme controls which provide improved certainty, protection and management of key values within the green wedge.
- Provide guidance on the siting and design of urban uses permitted in the green wedge.
- Consider both investment and support for appropriate tourism initiatives within the green wedge.

land use precincts

To ensure a 'one size fits all' approach is not created for the green wedge, it is important the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan has a precinct based appreciation of the study area, including consideration of attributes and limitations and the impacts and influences this will have for potential future land use and activity.

Figure 4 - Land Use, categorises the study area into five precincts. Each of these precincts are briefly discussed in greater detail below.

precinct 1 – gisborne melton road, toolern vale

This precinct relates to land along the Gisborne Melton Road to the north of Toolern Vale. The land is presently included in a Rural Conservation Zone, which has a minimum lot size of 40ha. Most of the area is also covered by a Wildfire / Bushfire Management Overlay and an Environmental Significance Overlay. The land is generally more undulating than other parts of the green wedge, has greater tree cover in places, and provides attractive views and outlooks.

It is considered that the current policies contained in the planning scheme are generally appropriate for this area. However it is considered that a greater emphasis should be given to conservation and also to small scale tourist uses that complemented the natural attractions of the area.

precinct 2 - eastern plains

This precinct covers an extensive area of land in the eastern and northern parts of the green wedge, extending to the Calder Freeway near Sunbury in the east.

Land to the north of Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road is more gently undulating, has some elevation (particularly to the north), contains a number of incised creek valleys, and is less affected by spill over activities associated with metropolitan Melbourne than is land to the south.

The recycled water pipeline from the Sunbury Wastewater Treatment facility crosses this precinct in two locations. As previously discussed the pipeline provides current access to a Class B water supply to support agricultural activities in the area. It is understood Western Water are seeking to upgrade this supply to Class A. Increasing awareness of this resource and encouraging its use is a key initiative Council could pursue in conjunction with Western Water.

This precinct has two major highway abutments: the Calder Freeway to the north-east; and the Melton Highway to the south. Broad expansive rural landscapes and vistas exist across the study area when viewed from the Calder Highway, both when travelling to and from Melbourne. The openness of this landscape should be taken into consideration in considering future planning permit applications in this area. Land adjacent to the Melton Highway is generally flatter and does not offer views across the study area to the same degree. There is a greater mix of land uses along this corridor that impact on the 'rural experience' along the road, and there is a greater presence of

encroaching urban development. The impact of uses in this area will therefore have less of an influence on the existing landscape character than development to north but remain sensitive due to the high visibility of this corridor, which will increase as the growth areas develop.

The northern parts of this precinct have a particularly attractive undulating rural aspect, with an outlook encompassing long range views across to the City of Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay. This part of study area has more potential for tourism and related activities, as well as for rural living and ongoing farming uses.

precinct 3 - macphersons park precinct

This precinct includes land to the north of the Melton Township, extending north towards Toolern Vale and east to Toolern Creek. It includes Macphersons Park, which is a major sporting and recreation facility used by residents of urban Melton, as well as residents of the green wedge. An air landing strip is also included in this area. Considerable lot fragmentation exists in parts of this precinct, especially between Macphersons Park and the north edge of Melton. Larger lots exist moving out from Macphersons Park to the west.

It is considered that land in this precinct may have some potential to allow for some smaller lot rural lifestyle and related development, interspersed with larger lots, where in accordance with relevant zone provisions. However any such development potential should be guided by a range of requirements and controls addressing: land capability, environmental features and considerations, minimum lot sizes, subdivision design, environment and pedestrian/ cycle links, integrated planning of the whole area etc.

precinct 4 - harkness road

This precinct relates to land to the west of Melton, extending to Djerriwarrh Creek. The land is presently included in a Green Wedge A Zone, which has a minimum subdivision size of 2 hectares, or 5 hectares within 300 metres of a creek or a number of other specified environmentally significant features. The land is also covered by a Development Plan Overlay.

Whilst the continuance of rural lifestyle living is considered to be the logical continued land use for this precinct, there are certain limitations set by environmental features. Consideration should be given to expanding the provisions of the applicable Development Plan Overlay (including whether it should be prepared by Council), to require improved environmental outcomes as part of any proposal to subdivide land.

















precinct 5 - holden road east

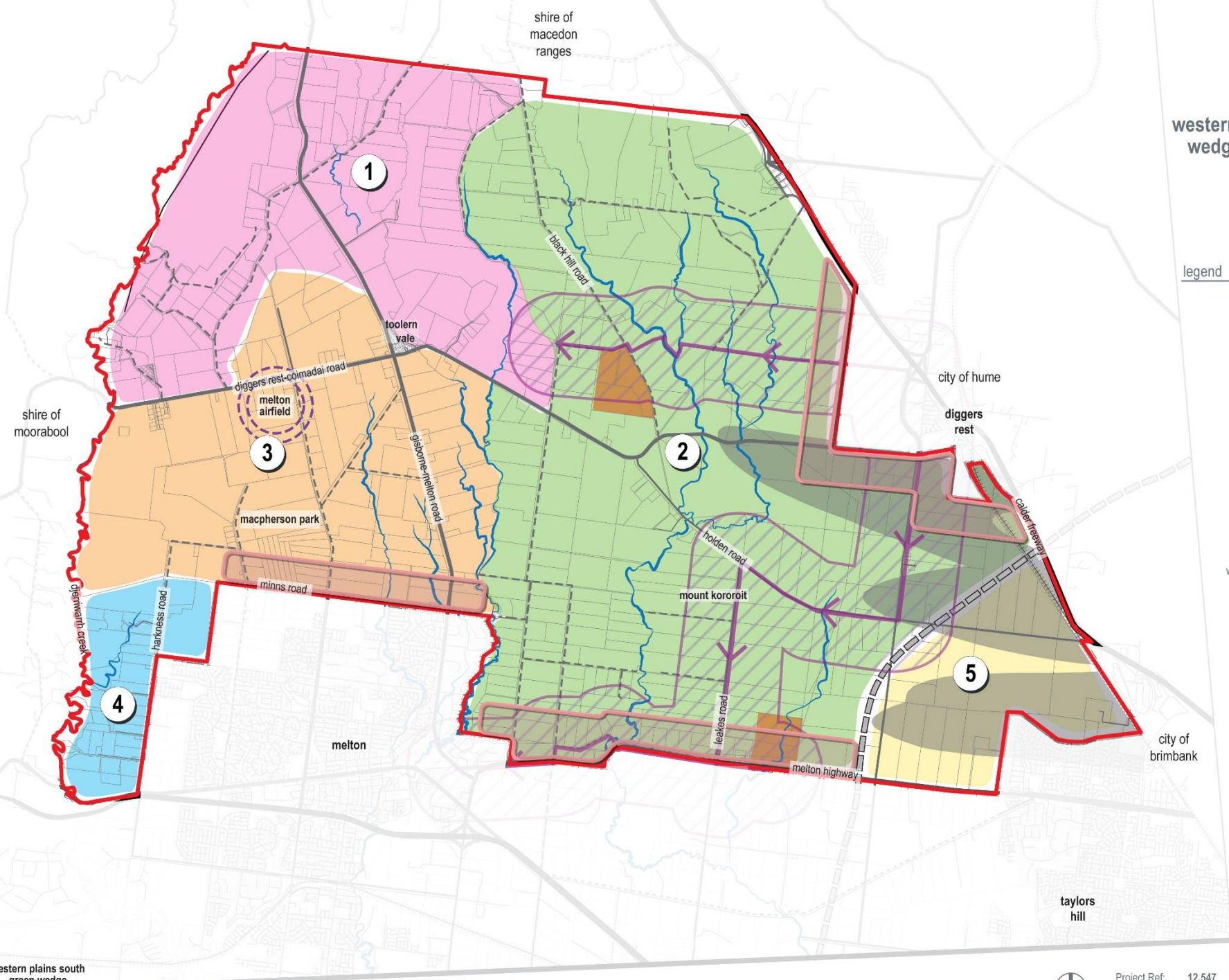
This precinct applies to land in the far eastern part of the green wedge that will be located to the east of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road. This area will effectively be cut off from the balance of the green wedge by the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road when it is constructed. Much of the land is also affected by an Airport Environs Overlay which has an impact on the potential for uses within this area. Given the likely long term isolation of this area, it will need a different response in including further consideration of the appropriateness of particular land uses in the area, and how it may transition over time in response to the proposed road alignment.

western plains north green wedge management plan

figure 4:
land use

legend

- study area 
- precinct 1 
- precinct 2 
- precinct 3 
- precinct 4 
- precinct 5 
- maximise recycled water pipeline opportunities 
- recycled water pipeline 
- proposed outer metropolitan ring road 
- melbourne airport environs overlay 
- major roads 
- minor roads 
- unsealed roads 
- manage urban interfaces 
- manage airfield impact 
- manage quarry interfaces 



western plains south green wedge



Project Ref: 12.547
 Dwg No.: UDD-002
 Scale: NTS
 Date: 04.10.13
 Revision: -

5.4 the environment

discussion

Increased emphasis is required on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. The environment theme focuses on the need to consider programs for investment or possibly to provide land to increase the environmental and biodiversity values of the area as well as its landscape qualities. Figure 5 identifies the some of the key actions and objectives in relation to the environment.

objectives

Objectives nominated for the theme of 'the environment' include:

- Protect and enhance existing environmental and biodiversity assets of the area.
- Increase native vegetation cover and biodiversity values throughout the area and especially along creeks and watercourses.
- Establish biodiversity corridors combined with walking and cycling links along creeks, supplemented by links and corridors on the road network.
- Protect and improve water quality throughout the area.
- Protect significant views and rural landscapes throughout the area.

strategies

These objectives may be achieved through strategies such as:

- Consider the creation of environmental and biodiversity strategies and schemes which both celebrate and actively improve environmental values and assets within the green wedge.
- Seek to establish Council as the focal point for conservation initiatives in the green wedge.
- Continue existing Council schemes which focus on land management within the green wedge.
- Seek to protect key environmental attributes within the green wedge.









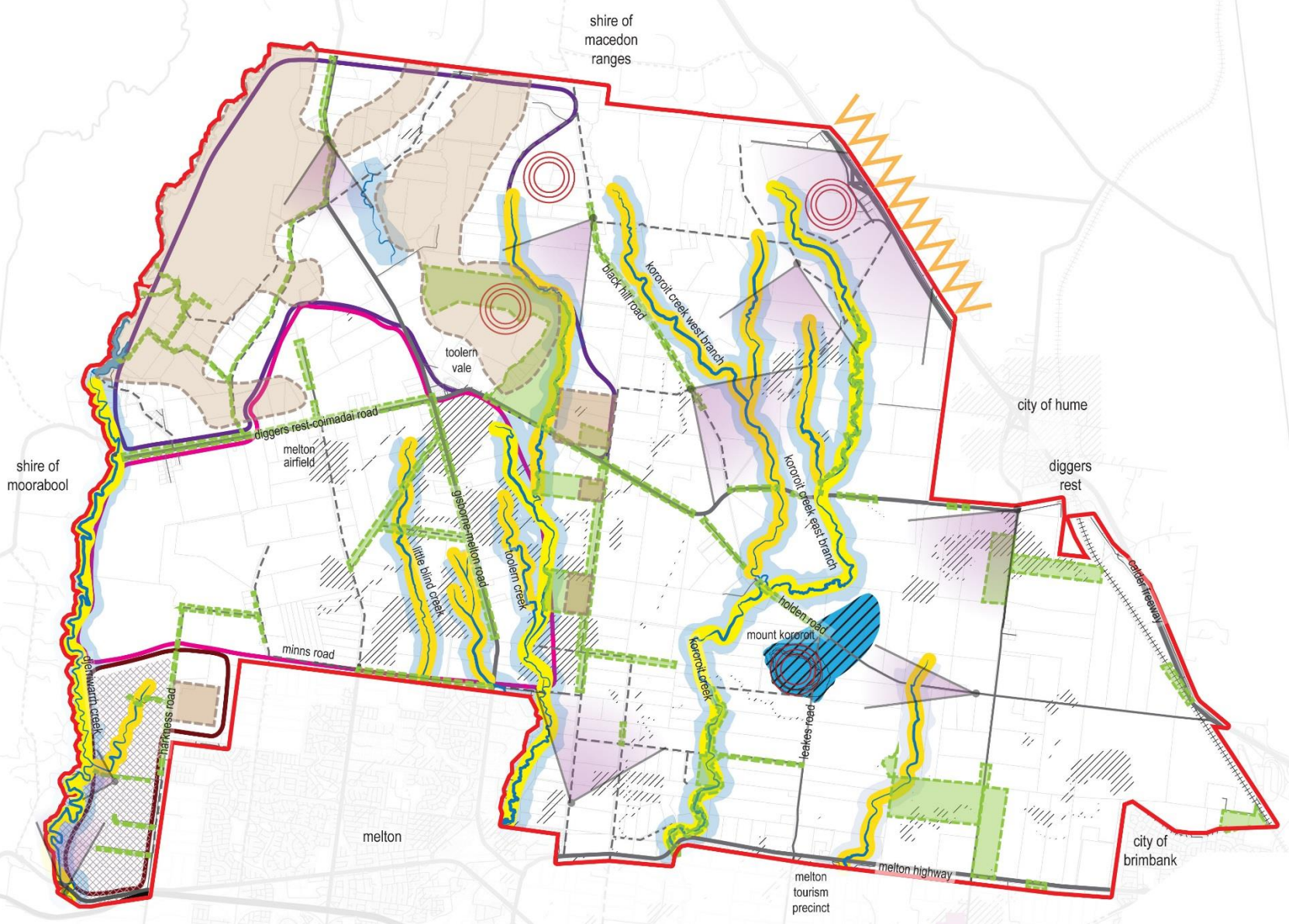
grasslands within the western plains northern green wedge

western plains north green wedge management plan

figure 5:
environment

legend

- study area 
- appropriate management of rural living areas where they are in proximity to urban and creek environs 
- increase protection and enhancement of waterways 
- recognise, protect and enhance unique topographical features 
- scattered settlement heritage 
- environmental improvement 
- protection of highway vistas 
- environment/conservation protection emphasis 
- environment enhancement emphasis 
- improved management along creek 
- mt kororoit and wetlands environmental enhancement 
- protection of important remnant ecosystems 
- protection of important remnant woodlands 
- public conservation reserve areas 
- recognise important viewpoints 



Project Ref: 12.547
 Dwg No.: UDD-001
 Scale: NTS
 Date: 04.10.13
 Revision: -



appendix 1
summary of community / stakeholder comments

summary of community / stakeholder comments

community drop in session

Following is a summary of comments and issues raised during the community drop in session, which constitutes the same content which is included within Council's summary notes of comments and issues identified during the stakeholder / landowner / occupier meeting for the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan.

Council's summary notes can be located at the following web address:

www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Building_planning_transport/Strategic_planning/Studiesstrategiesguidelines/Green_Wedges_within_the_City_of_Melton

general comments:

- There was much discussion and confusion around the role of State Government policy on green wedges, the difference between urban versus non-urban land, and the scope of this project.
- Confusion existed about the role of Council in changes to the Urban Growth Boundary by the State Government and difficulties encountered by land holders in this constantly changing environment.

- Polarised views existed overall on what should happen in the area. Some land holders want more flexibility around subdivision, whereas others expressed concern about additional subdivision in the area and the effect on the character of the area.
- There was a strong desire to see documentation of comments made at the meeting. People wanted to be able to see issues raised in the consultation reflected in the recommendations of the report.
- Concern over 'one-size-fits-all' approach when each landowner will have different expectations and different circumstances. Council should be proactive in asking each landowner what they want to do and providing advice on how best to do it. Look at different opportunities in different parts of the study area. Need to provide an outcome with the right mix of uses.
- Concern that filling in the survey won't change anything – still won't be able to subdivide land – the results of the project are predetermined (linked to understanding of State Government role in management of green wedge area).
- Concern about how the project can provide meaningful outcomes given very opposing views of landowners in the area, particularly relating to further development potential.
- One of the key things is for certainty and honesty in the outcomes of the project.

green wedge comments:

agricultural productivity

- General acceptance that agricultural viability is a key issue. Many comments indicated that broad acre and other large scale farming practices were unviable within the study area.
- Only three key broad acre farmers left, rest are hobby farmers. Of those three only one will continue long term, therefore what is the point of larger lots?
- Hobby farms provide an opportunity to live sustainably, providing for families.
- Smaller more manageable areas of agricultural lot production may be viable but these must be in appropriate locations.
- Diversification of agriculture is starting to occur: olives, vineyards, free range ducks, intensive horticulture.
- Lack of education, particularly around agriculture, management of land, keeping up with new technologies is an issue. Could use universities better? Advertise to local community, workshops with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) – agriculture branch, community based decisions and information sharing opportunities.

- Potential for other more intensive agricultural opportunities (i.e. around recycled water pipeline) but broad acre (large lot) farming has no future in the area for a range of reasons. Major issue will be the availability of water.
- There is a high cost of maintaining sustainable agricultural practices and a lack of Council and other support in doing so is an issue. Get told to farm but not how to do so in such a difficult environment. Issues with trying to do the right thing but lacking support. Frustration at being told to pursue agriculture when on-farm experiences are so challenging.
- Connections to water, whether town, rural or recycled, impact on viability of farming. Water quality questionable, particularly in comparison to creek.
- Want economic viability of agricultural land, safeguarding of land for the future.

lot size / subdivision

- Concern over existing subdivisions already changing the landscape and character of the area. Concern over more of this occurring and the threat of significant change.
- When you have smaller lots, people look after their land more and plant trees and improve the area.

- Many people who had moved to the area a long time ago sought to farm the land, which has become increasingly difficult and unviable. Many more recent residents are seeking a rural lifestyle.
- Worry that keeping land in large lots is just keeping it in reserve so the Urban Growth Boundary can be shifted and developers have an easy go in turning land into suburbs.
- Cost of maintaining large blocks is beyond the resources of families, even if they are supplemented by off-farm income.
- Should all be urban land due to proximity to city.
- Many people moved to the area due to the rural lifestyle and the open vistas, and really do not want to see any urbanisation of the land or even subdivision which results in a loss of the open views.
- Expectations that being able to sell off part of farms will support retirement or support children. Issue of belief in peoples 'right' to subdivide their land as they choose.
- Want to be able to subdivide larger lots, leaving smaller lots as is.

other land uses

- Market desire for rural living opportunities, this should be possible in the area (not always being provided within Urban Growth Boundary).

- People don't want the small blocks being provided in Melton's urban area, they want the larger lifestyle blocks like Gisborne South and these should be provided in the green wedge area.
- Should use these areas to provide recreation opportunities, particularly in proximity to urban areas for young people.
- Area to contain shops, jobs and parks, reduce the need to travel 20 minutes to services.
- Supposedly encourage tourism, but lack of Council support for specific proposals.
- If development doesn't disturb the neighbourhood what is the problem with it?
- Should support more equine related uses and clubs etc in the area.
- There should be scope for more uses to be allowed in the area as long as they are compatible with the rural character.
- Provide for shops, jobs and parks.

environment related

- Management of kangaroos is becoming an issue.
- Cost of revegetation and time and money spent on replanting - particularly when crops get lost due to floods or other weather events.
- Council needs to protect the rural environment – you can't get it back.

- Some species of trees can be affected by the drought more than others. Consider drought tolerant species and fruit trees.
- The creek lines and hills are the most important part of the area, the rest of it has no value.
- Protection of the environment is important.

Need to find ways for community to live sustainably

impacts of increased development

- Concern over what increases in population in the area would mean for things like level of traffic etc that will impact on the 'rural' activities currently enjoyed by residents such as riding horses along roads.
- Fear of the city marching into the area, bit by bit, with smaller lots, larger houses, losing the green rural character. Enough opportunities for that elsewhere.
- There's no public transport access to the areas eg buses.
- Concerns with inappropriate / intensive development within the green wedge eg. places of worship.
- Rates need to remain stable or a small percentage increases over time only.

identified values

Some of the things that are valued in the areas include:

- rural character
- open space vistas
- proximity to Melbourne and airports
- lack of congestion
- diversity of opportunities
- wide streets and creek lines
- equine history
- conservation
- balance between conservation and allowing some development (Toolem Vale)
- close to urban areas but far enough away

area specific matters

- **Ryans Creek environs** - Some landholders stated that they had bought land on the expectation that it would be rezoned for urban purposes (i.e. near Melton Highway and Finchs Road). In some instances near Melton township, Council supported changes to the Urban Growth Boundary through the logical inclusions process. Some residents want to know whether Council will continue to support changes to the Urban Growth Boundary in their area, others want it to remain as it currently stands.

- **Harkness Road environs** - Some landholders around Harkness Road want to be able to subdivide down to 400 sqm blocks due to proximity to urban area, whereas some want it to remain as it is and prevent urbanisation of this area.
- **Northern environs** - Group of landowners, who together own large portions of land in the northern section of study area, want to see rural living subdivisions. They are happy to incorporate green spaces, give over creek lines to public land if allowed. Happy for it to occur in a co-ordinated manner but have tried a whole variety of farming, none of which has been successful. Different rural living opportunities in the north due to topography than in the south. Southern area is much more open so subdivision would compromise the vistas across open areas. Need to consider proximity of Diggers Rest railway station.

stakeholder information sessions

conservation and waterways session

The following notes are provided following sessions with participants of the conservation and waterways session:

- Opportunity to connect to northern catchments, fragmentation repair.
- Eastern 2/3 of the study area has damaged environment, original vegetation has gone.
- Possibility for reservations would be largely along the creeks.
- Obstacles to creek line repair – Land holders: resistant to free money and preserving the land and weed prevention also resourcing.
- Approach needs to be bigger than all of the agencies, needs active support at State and Federal level.
- Some small land holders resistant to creek line reservations, especially along Toolern Creek. Great opportunity to get habitat corridor, cross agency approach. Resistant landowners create issues in terms of achieving this continuity
- Head water impacts downstream. Starting point of waterways need further care. Biological contribution to waterways downstream.
- Major concern around urbanisation and effect on sensitive areas.
- Concern about Infrastructure being built in the area, i.e. OMR, radio communications towers, water tanks etc.
- Key issue is how and where infrastructure can be accommodated.
- Stormwater harvesting in Toolern Vale. Western Water are exploring options.
- Wildlife corridors great way to link landscapes.
- There is fragmentation of wildlife corridors and differing land managers, therefore information and data on environmental values has gaps.
- Need to educate landowners on sustainable practices.
- Major lack of information, therefore environmental values are unprotected. The system of protection is very much desktop based so if information is not available then limited protection is possible.
- A lack of information on existing species doesn't mean they are not there. Just that a study has not been done.
- Fragmentation results in isolation of threatened species.
- Need for partnership between key stakeholders, including the community.
- Western side of study area has a remnant plant community that are quite rare. Needs to be protected, threatened by urbanisation, needs to be some kind of buffer.
- Small study reserve on Harkness Road has issue of dumping rubbish etc., which will multiply if not protected as urbanisation continues.
- Importance of wildlife corridors, to sustain species and protect endangered species.
- Gaps in research on flora, birds and gaps with fauna research, which need to be addressed.
- Fragmentation especially to the south, close to the urban edge.
- Certainty of land use and proving strategic direction with the report will be important.
- Shift in focus at Catchment Management Authority to regional level, with a new focus on protecting and conserving the hinterland.
- There needs to be an open debate regarding potential thresholds and limitations of expanding Urban Growth Boundary in sensitive areas.
- Don't want to lose anymore hinterland. Land currently zoned in those areas. Stop changing zones to other uses.
- Encourage debate as to whether there is an identifiable threshold, push to build up, not out. Advocate voice rather than statutory weight.
- Need for certainty of land uses.

- Square Pegs in Green Wedges Study: 50% land holders are speculating on land to be rezoned for residential purposes. Only 2% in Casey / Cardinia – links back to certainty.
- DSE has vegetation mapping from 2012 so relatively up to date, but is not yet accessible.
- Overall discussion about the wording and position within the hierarchy of issues re 'economic development' in the green wedge – discussion regarding changes to wording or need to remove this from the report. Emphasis should be on conservation and protection with economic development only where it supports these outcomes.
- Worries about trade-off between economic development that promises improved environmental outcomes but then does not deliver.
- Certainty of policies so people know where they stand is vital.
- Data has so many gaps in it. Looking at DSE map / data from 2005. Cannot set targets for the future unless we know where we are now. This report therefore very important.
- Development is the problem, people merely waiting for the Urban Growth Boundary to expand. Need to maximise the economic potential of land in a sustainable manner.
- Identify what the environmental assets are, investment in detail where those areas are.
- What to do with abutments to OMR – off and on ramps are a concern. How to conserve areas with environmental significance.
- OMR road reserve. Opportunity to create another wildlife corridor, perhaps with slightly larger reserves. Significant opportunity to undertake revegetation work (corridor will be 100m wide).
- Imaginative thinking of how to connect wildlife corridors, not having regard to lines drawn on a map or key infrastructure, OMR for example.
- Have green wedges been successful in managing these areas?
- Depends on land use management as a key issue.
- There is a perception that the Government has always been able to redraw the Urban Growth Boundary when wanting to expand, despite early suggestions that the Urban Growth Boundary is fixed.
- Drought is an issue, affects management of land, and land in general.
- Farmers replaced with speculative owners, or lifestyle changes, resulting in a decline in the quality of property. Flip side is that cattle removed from land due to drought, has resulted in woodlands and native vegetation returning to the land.
- No program in green wedges areas that encourage people to protect / enhance native vegetation. Need programs to motivate and inspire people.
- Absentee land owners. No sense of community united to manage land in a sustainable manner.
- Need programs that are holistic, not simply weed management. Land owners state that weed control is the primary focus, not interested in management beyond that.
- Need to replace weeds with something local to enhance land.
- Need to have a show piece site, good farm that has done this, needs to be a real goal.
- Role for Melton to educate landowners, given range of cultural backgrounds.
- Not a push in community to take up offset potential, not the demand, fear if they do, they will restrict its development potential later. Also State government position makes this difficult.
- Land owners appear to be driven by their back pocket. Tap into this to incentivise sustainable land management.
- Rate rebate program had a total of 1,160 participants in 2012. Only 40 failures. Take up is 96% on average.

- Need to shift focus back to farming, rather than building. At the moment properties not being used for economic value as they are often not active due to speculation.
- People have been able to profit from land for last 150 years.
- Movement away from urban type development within the green wedge. Need to shift the mindset and create clear picture of land uses.
- Clear direction for Council to determine what is appropriate and what is not.
- Key issues with more intense uses of the green wedge over time, not the intended purpose of conservation of the green wedge.
- Farms preferred. Broad landscape with potential to be restored. Once more intense uses occur green wedge is divided up.
- Challenge - GWMP needs to be specific, not just motherhood statement. Needs to clearly articulate what the future will be, what uses will support this (and what will be done to encourage them) and what uses will threaten this (and how they will be discouraged).
- Should have discussion with Moorabool re western edge management.
- Identify, protect and connect wildlife corridors and waterways.
- Small landowner corridors can create issues with creek line management i.e. 5 – 6 km gap in protection of head waters.
- How to address issues where titles run to the creek, sometime half into the creek.
- Many issues related to urbanisation such as dumping and clearing of vegetation.
- Protection of flora and fauna and modification of waterways – key thing is to being to document information to build case for protection.
- Creek corridors play a role in migration for birds: again lack of information is causing vulnerability under current system.
- Opportunities to preserve the wider landscape within the green wedge, opportunity to connect remnant grass land sites.
- Community ownership of green wedge and new programs. Whole of community ownership, potential resource and finances to some degree.
- Grow West cited as example project.
- Education about how to manage properties. Need more outreach work, showcase property could do this.
- Paranoid about fire risks, certain species worth keeping as fire resistance. Again education needed.
- Lack of understating of how waterways operate.
- Needs to be a collective message, framework for all stakeholders, especially land owners. Coordination of the message which is relayed to land owners. Continuity.
- Have to have buy in of land owners or programs will not work. Land owner buy in is essential. Need time to build relationships and trust with land owners from a regional perspective. Time is needed.
- Farming enterprises are not getting smaller, smaller farms are unlikely to work. Needs to be incentives for people to stay on land and have them buy into programs.
- How to attract the right landowners to get the land management results that are required. Links to strategic message / vision for the area.

planning session

How to attract the right landowners to get the land management results that are required. Links to strategic message / vision for the area.

The following notes are provided following sessions with participants of the planning session:

- DPI's interest is in relation to quarries, extractive industry, being aware of the various layers or planning control.

- Protection of existing uses in terms of planning policies. For example, the introduction of a planning permit. For existing uses to expand, expansion has to comply. This is a concern.
- Extractive investigation area. Does not really mean anything. Defines resource under the ground, which is based on very sketchy data. Is purely indicative. There is no statutory weight. It is an attempt to predict where extractive industry resources will come from in years to come.
- Desire to achieve minimal areas of change.
- There is a gas pipe, high pressure, which runs through the study area. Avoid sensitive uses and development within proximity to pipeline.
- Often policy from planning side and DPI doesn't match up.
- Pipelines don't stop development. Risk needs to be managed around it. Access to it needs to be provided.
- Land use capabilities need to be addressed. Where are the most appropriate uses for farming, having regard to drought and access to recycled water and associated costs.
- What are sustainable lot sizes for farming? This is a key question.
- Need something to protect long term certainty of the green wedge from urban development.
- 3 broad acre farmers left - difficult to keep farming, resulting in subdivided lots.
- Conservation different from farming. If you're a farmer and you know what you're doing i.e. not farming near the creek.
- Need fall back plan. What's going to happen with large tracts of land?
- 50 to 100 acres for farming lots. Current lots sizes are larger. 5 new houses gone up in area recently on 10 acres, some on 50 acres.
- Poor management of land on small lots. People do not know what they are doing or how to manage the land.
- Some people on 10 acre lots are good managers, some people on 250 acres are not good.
- Broad acre farmers want to stay but can't keep farming for nothing. Babysitting the land for whatever comes in the future.
- No one's reinvesting in farming.
- Recycled water is too expensive. Land is too expensive and recycled water is also expensive.
- Recycled water. If you're going to take 10 mega litres it has to be stored. Can't spray it on ground on root crops. Have to grow fruit trees. Can use on grapes.
- 269 acres for sale at \$750,000. Nobody buying land. Been on the market for 2.5 years.
- Land waiting to be purchased is not being managed. Blockies can't manage as it's too big.
- Not a lot of speculation, evidenced by lack of properties being sold.
- Lot fragmentation already happened to the detriment of current landowners.
- Focus on horses. People can't afford area due to lot sizes.
- Tailoring lot sizes to the type of farm requirements that are needed in the future.
- Needs to be a more uniformed approach. i.e. big enough to accommodate large farming practices, grapes, cherries.
- Recycled water being used for people farming grapes and olives. Small farms. Not sustainable for broad acre farmers.
- Toolern Vale now. Perhaps not a lot of development, doesn't attract urbanisation due to no public transport.
- Change in residents can mean no care for the land whatsoever. 60 acres, significant weeds.
- Neighbouring property was subdivided (weren't aware of it). Now building 55 square factory shed.
- Dingo sanctuary - Want to develop tourism, want to set up a group to care for area behind property. Private country club for 3 municipalities to walk dogs in forest and connect with nature.

- Friends with property. 60 acres. Have just sold to developers.
- Uses within the green wedge should fit with conservation purposes, wineries etc.
- Should embrace vista values and north east corner for its wildlife values. Suggestion for information centre, conservation areas, function area for 150 people, class room for school children, part private and part public land.
- Improving access and facilities within the area.
- Need to educate people about the environmental values of the area.
- Existing zoning limits operations, even though tourism supposed to be OK. Need to think about what tourism means these days.
- Strict controls to prevent large tracks of land being developed for urban purposes, for example Gisborne.
- Green wedge keep it that way – Don't allow urban uses / development within it.
- What zones will be located, minimum lots sizes, restriction of residential lots, primary dwellings.
- Land fragmentation within the green wedge.
- What role does extractive industry have – issues based on individual assessment so not hugely relevant to broader decision making.
- Difficult to predict need for extractive industry, that's why extractive areas are so large.
- 2 extractive industries in proposal stage which are within the study area. Licence required from DPI, then a planning permit, statutory endorsement, consultation with DPI, in principle approval, then planning permit. Council send to DPI, then approved by DPI. Currently a matter between developer and landowner. Ensure plant operates within the legal and policy frameworks and to ensure that DPI is informed.
- Absentee land owners, often speculative purchases.
- Key themes should look at 'identify; protect; connect' in terms of waterways.
- Landowner buy-in / resources is major issue. Need to match long term vision with short term benefits.
- Education is so important. Fire risk/ balance and material benefit.
- Long term protection from urbanisation and zoning and how this impacts subdivision size.
- Co-ordination and contradiction between plans at different levels.
- What can we do to encourage sustainable land management.
- Free workshops. People don't know where to find information. DPI people and educated farmers. Community ownership and connection needs to be urban as well as rural.
- Internet not always possible. Need to have physical touchstone.
- Rebate scheme excellent. Taught us about the local area and how to manage. Wonderful incentive. Free access to information. Needs more policing.
- Rebate could be improved by showing people how to manage / improve sustainable land management practices.
- Farm Plan 21. Good program for small landowners.
- Program needs to be personable. Can't be relied upon on the internet. Letter box drop. If you need help contact us. People scared they are going to get fined.
- Mentor basis. Experienced farmers will to take calls from new land owners in the area.
- Appropriate to allow land to revegetate. Incentives to do so (need to manage in sustainable manner) as long as they do their weeds and relative fire measures.

aboriginal party consultation

The following notes are provided following a meeting with elders of the Wurundjeri group:

- There are many unregistered Aboriginal places within in the study area. Many Aboriginal places and stone artefacts were uncovered in this area.
 - Around 80 registered Aboriginal places occur in the study area. They are mostly surface scatters, though an ochre quarry has been located on a branch of Kororoit Creek.
 - There are many Aboriginal places around Djerriwarrh Creek. The Western Freeway / Anthony's cutting went over the creek and uncovered lots of previously unrecorded silcrete quarry outcrops.
 - Toolern Creek has the potential to contain caves and silcrete outcrops which may have been used by Aboriginal people. The creek corridor has potential to contain grinding grooves. Toolern Creek has an escarpment on one side and alluvial terraces on the other. Both landforms have archaeological potential.
 - Mountains on the volcanic plains were used by Aboriginal people as beacons as they travelled across the area.
- There is concern at the amount of development work that is going on (primarily within then growth area), and frustration that the Aboriginal community does not have input into decisions about this development. They are worried about potential breaches of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 in the study area.
 - Developments that they have observed might be harming Aboriginal heritage, in the area are:
 - Quarrying around location where the Diggers Rest Coimadai Road crosses the branches of Kororoit Creek.
 - Subdivision around Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road.
 - Fill being introduced at a private property along Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road, between Gisborne Melton Road and Melton airfield.
 - Interested in historical Aboriginal references to ceremonial activities and burials at Mount Tophet. Wondered whether Mt Tophet had a different common name as they were not familiar with it.
 - Part of the study area contains part of Lerderberg Park, which is an important cultural landscape.
 - As traditional owners Wurundjeri must have complete control of cultural values and heritage information and how it is used.
- A site visit to the study area is important, specifically a visit to Mount Kororoit, which is an important landmark and Mount Tophet (this was undertaken by Council on the 26 July, 2013).
 - The upper reaches of Taylors Creek are in the study area and are significant.
 - A possible ceremonial ring might be located near Mt Tophet.