

21.02
19/01/2006
VC37

CONTEXT

Overview of the Mitchell Shire

The Mitchell Shire covers an area of 2,864 sq. kms with a resident population of 24,933 on June 30, 1996 and an estimated population in 2001 of over 28,000. The Shire is strategically located as the first municipality north of the Melbourne metropolitan area on the nationally significant transport corridors between Melbourne to Sydney and Brisbane.

The Shire has grown significantly in terms of population - the growth rate has exceeded 48% over the period 1981 - 2001. The population is focussed on the towns of Seymour, Broadford, Kilmore, Wallan, Wandong-Heathcote Junction and at the Puckapunyal Army Base west of Seymour. The corridor generally serviced by the Hume Freeway contains about 75% of the Shire's population.

The Shire offers a rural setting and lifestyle with access to urban services and facilities. It is a major underpinning of the Shire's strategic planning that future development maintain the urban-rural mix and the integrity and character of the Shire's towns.

Mitchell Shire in the State and Region

The regional setting of the Mitchell Shire is dominated by its proximity to Melbourne. This is especially the case for the southern areas where commuting to Melbourne for work is at high levels. The northern areas of the Mitchell Shire maintain in part the traditional links to regional centres such as Bendigo, Shepparton and Benalla. Rural areas on the western, northern and eastern boundaries of the Shire have more in common with the adjoining rural areas in the municipalities of Macedon Ranges, Bendigo, Strathbogie and Murrindindi. The construction of the Hume Freeway connection to the metropolitan ring road announced by the Government in February 2001, will provide a freeway system linking Melbourne's outer northern suburbs with the Western Ring Road and south east Melbourne. This connection which will bypass Craigieburn will further reinforce the development opportunities and pressures on the southern areas of Mitchell Shire. In particular, travel times between Mitchell Shire and the Central Business District will decrease by an estimated 10 – 15 minutes.

Mitchell Shire sits at the top of the Goulburn-Broken and Port Phillip Bay catchments with the Great Dividing Range passing through the southern area of the Shire. A small area on the western edge of the Shire is in the North Central catchment area. Regional catchment strategies have been prepared by the respective Catchment Management Authorities for the three catchments. There is a strong emphasis in the strategies on the importance of improving water quality in streams. In the Goulburn-Broken strategy there is a major focus on reducing the salinity levels in the Goulburn River. Flooding is an issue particularly along areas of the Goulburn River and Whiteheads Creek at Seymour.

The heritage of the Shire is rich. There are important historic buildings in most towns and the rural areas. Historic precincts are found in a number of towns, particularly in Kilmore along the Northern Highway - the Old Sydney Road. An area known as 'Site 17' on the eastern edge of Seymour is a former military training area with strong associations with the Australian Army. This area is potentially a site of national significance. The Mount William axe-quarry site, a major aboriginal archaeological site, is also of national significance. The overall strategic framework for the land use planning and projected development directions for the whole Shire is set out in Map 1 - Strategic Framework for Mitchell Shire.

