

21.07 Major strategic planning themes

These influencing factors on the strategic planning of the Shire can be summarised as three major themes that provide the basis for the Strategic Statement:

- **ECONOMY;** a strong economic base derived from versatile, high quality agricultural land, the local processing of product and the expansion of services to support production;
- **ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE:** an environment which provides the resources for agricultural production, recreation, tourism and further investment and a high quality of life valued by the residents and admired by visitors.
- **URBAN DEVELOPMENT:** a co-ordinated approach to the residential, industrial and commercial development of urban areas.

These three themes are embraced in all strategies and policies and they provide for:

ECONOMY - The Shire is one of the richest agricultural areas in the nation and has major tourism development opportunities.

The south-west area of Gippsland within which the Shire is located, supports over 20% of Victoria's dairy production and a significant proportion of the State's vegetables. Gippsland and the Shire are within a strategic geographic location in terms of their association with other highly productive agricultural areas and accessibility to major markets. The Princes Highway and Melbourne-Gippsland railway provide a high quality transport network for the movement of people as well as freight.

There are many opportunities for expanding tourism. Baw Baw National Park contains the closest down hill skiing facility to Melbourne and also provides opportunities for other recreational pursuits. Walhalla, an isolated old gold mining town in the north of the Shire, presents visitors with a journey through history with great potential to accommodate visitors in the nearby picturesque towns of Rawson and Erica. The Gourmet Deli Trail also presents an excellent foundation for linking tourism with the area's produce and other natural and cultural attractions.

ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE - The Shire boasts magnificent landscapes and virtually untouched wilderness.

The Shire's natural environment contains pristine areas of high habitat value, supports high quality water catchments, is endowed with excellent scenery and extensive areas for sustainable timber production. Those environments which have been extensively modified for urban and agricultural development generally have very high quality landscapes. When these features and qualities are combined with the assets and facilities of the towns they provide a quality of life which is highly valued. However some activities, although bringing economic and social benefits to residents of and visitors to the region, can have significant adverse environmental impacts on downstream users both within the Shire and in other municipalities.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT - The Shire offers variety in housing choice, employment opportunities, excellent services and amenities

Quality of life is a significant factor that has attracted people to the area. The Shire offers many choices in housing and caters for the needs of the population in terms of community services, retail and business services; recreation and cultural activities. It also provides a

range of employment opportunities within the Shire in agriculture, administration, education, health and service industry. The education and health facilities are at a very high standard. The Shire's towns have a special rural character, they are set in high quality landscapes and offer a choice of lifestyle. Warragul and Drouin provide the option of an urban lifestyle in a rural setting in their developing role as twin towns.

Continuing to ensure the co-ordination of urban development with supporting infrastructure while maintaining the areas strong environmental and resource attributes will be critical.

The Strategic Planning Framework Map on the following page seeks to set out the key elements of the Shire's profile, the factors influencing the future planning, the vision for the Shire and the major strategic directions which are to be pursued.

