

21.02 KEY INFLUENCES

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Planning for the future of the Shire is influenced by many factors. It is expected that major factors will include:

21.02-1 Settlement

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The major long term impact on the Shire's planning development is expected to be the continued expansion of the south east Melbourne metropolitan area and the focus of growth along the Princes Freeway east of Melbourne.

Population growth has centred on the two largest towns, Warragul and Drouin which are within five kilometres of each other. They are developing complementary roles as twin towns. As well as their residential and service roles these towns have developed a strong industrial base.

Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South and Longwarry also have strong local service roles.

The Shire is characterised by a large number of small local service centres reflecting the intensive nature of much of the agricultural activities and industries such as timber production and processing.

The development of Warragul as the major urban centre serving West Gippsland has seen it take on regional service roles in activities such as education, health and medical services and agricultural research.

The Shire has attractive lifestyle choices in urban or rural settings close to Melbourne and the Latrobe Valley.

Residents value and enjoy the lifestyle provided in the rural and urban areas with access to community services, proximity to recreational areas (ski resorts and the coast) and a rural aspect.

21.02-2 Environmental Management and Values

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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.

The high quality of the natural resource base and the reliance on the natural environment for economic sustainability are major factors in policy development.

The high quality agricultural land located within the Shire and the region is an influential factor.

With continuing growth, particularly in Warragul and Drouin, there has been strong pressure to use high quality agricultural land for residential purposes.

21.02-3 Economic Activity

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The Shire has highly productive agricultural land and extensive agricultural infrastructure and investment.

It has a great capacity to support tourism given the Shire's proximity to Melbourne and its natural advantages (ski fields, parks, lakes, mountains, historic towns and local produce).

The northern areas of the Shire are dominated by the mountains of the Great Dividing Range. Development of alpine recreational pursuits, particularly skiing has seen a major growing tourist role for the Shire. This has strengthened tourism which has had a strong focus on the landscape, the produce of the area and the historic gold mining settlement at Walhalla.

Another influence is the role of the area and the expansion of its economy within the context of Victoria and Australia.

There is a significant range of employment opportunities and quality of resources within the Shire and the region in agriculture, horticulture, service industries, administration, and the region's education and health facilities

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Transport and Infrastructure

The Shire is well positioned to regional transport links with population and employment centres in the form of a high quality highway system, efficient railway links and direct access to Melbourne's ports.

Reference Documents

'Statistical Profile Baw Baw Shire December 2007', Gippsland Research and Information Service, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Churchill.