

21.01 ALPINE SHIRE PROFILE

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21.01-1 Municipal profile

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Regional context

Located approximately 300km north east of Melbourne and 70km south of Albury / Wodonga the Alpine Shire comprises an area of approximately 4,787km². The Shire is situated within the Hume region in North East Victoria falling within the Central Hume sub-region. This sub-region is the largest of the Hume region's four sub regions in terms of geographical extent and the second largest in terms of population.

The western two thirds of the Shire, situated largely within the Ovens River basin and including Bright and Myrtleford tends to have a close focus on the City of Wangaratta to the west for employment opportunities, economic activity and higher order services. The Shire also falls within the sphere of influence of the Upper Hume Sub-region particularly the eastern third of the Shire situated within the Kiewa River basin including Mt Beauty. This part of the Shire has a closer relationship with Albury / Wodonga to the north which provides an important focus for economic activity, higher education, health services, cultural activities and recreational opportunity.

The Shire adjoins Indigo Shire to the north, Towong Shire to the north east, East Gippsland Shire to the south east, Wellington Shire to the south, Mansfield Shire to the south west and the Rural City of Wangaratta to the west. Although not part of the municipal district the designated Alpine Resorts of Falls Creek and Mount Hotham are located wholly within the Shire boundary.

Local context

The Alpine Shire is one of Australia's most outstanding areas, being rich in both environmental assets and spectacular scenery. Around 92% of the Shire is public land, including the Mount Buffalo National Park and important elements of the Alpine National Park. Significant natural features include the Bogong and Dargo high plains as well as the State's highest peak Mount Bogong (1986 m). The majority of freehold land is located along the valley areas of the major rivers and streams with the common boundary between the private and adjoining public land being well in excess of 600km.

Alpine Shire's population distribution is consistent with other rural and regional centres with an above average aged population with 33% over 55 and a below average level of young people and adults. The majority of the resident population is located within the existing townships of Bright, Mount Beauty/Tawonga South and Myrtleford. The remainder is located within village settlements situated at Dederang, Dinner Plain, Harrietville, Porepunkah, Tawonga and Wandiligong, as well as people residing in smaller rural hamlets and rural precinct areas of the Shire.

Consistent with the broader sub regional context the Shire is renowned for its vibrant tourism industry based on snow sports, cycling, wine and fine food and nature based recreation such as rock climbing, fishing, mountain biking, bush walking, 4 wheel driving, rafting, sight-seeing, and paragliding. Accommodation and food also feature as key industries of the Shire, reflecting the importance of tourism particularly in settlements such as Bright and Mount Beauty. The other cornerstones of the Shire's economy is based on agriculture (beef, dairy and horticulture) and forestry (hardwood and softwood plantations).

Major regional transport connections include the Great Alpine Road – from Wangaratta to Omeo via Mount Hotham and the Kiewa Valley Highway / Bogong High Plains Road – from Wodonga to Gippsland via Mt Beauty and Falls Creek. The Shire is also served by three local airfields situated at Porepunkah, Mt Beauty and Horse Hair Plain (commonly called Mt Hotham). Rail links to Melbourne and Sydney are available from Albury-Wodonga and Wangaratta. Albury-Wodonga Airport offers regional commuter services to Sydney and Melbourne. Bus links offer connections to Wangaratta and Bright.

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C39**Key influences**

- Urban pressures on township edges and rural hinterland areas.
- The protection and sustainable use of agricultural land.
- The ability of the local economy to offer (on going) employment opportunities.
- Township character and identity issues.
- High levels of tourism.
- Infrastructure limitations due to environmental constraints such as bushfires, flooding and topography along with sparsely populated communities spread geographically.
- Built environment & heritage.
- Protection and maintenance of environmentally significant areas and the natural resource base.
- Tobacco industry legacy (land use changes as well as contaminated land issues).
- Ageing population base and low population growth.
- Environmental risk (flood prone land and bush fire).
- Balancing the public / private land interface.
- Mining legacy (small lots) and mining potential.
- Managing the relationship between the Alpine Resorts and alpine areas.
- Extensive areas of plantations.
- Reliance on climate dependent industries (e.g. forestry, agriculture and snow-based tourism).
- Water availability for both agriculture and urban areas.

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C39**Key issues**

The key issues facing Alpine Shire are focused around four strategic themes:

Settlement and housing

- Accommodating future residential growth.
- The need to manage town boundaries.
- Encouraging diversity and choice in housing options.
- High levels of absentee landownership.
- Accessibility and service delivery.
- Encouraging infill housing developments sympathetic to neighbourhood character.
- Pressure for rural living and supply of agricultural land.

Environment and natural resources

- Conservation of environmentally significant areas and biodiversity.
- Protection of endangered species.
- Significant opportunities for nature based tourism activities.
- The need to achieve a balance between development and conservation outcomes.

- Responding to climate change.
- Private land management.
- Natural disasters.
- Management of old dredge sites.
- Protecting significant landscapes.
- Contaminated land issues.
- Waste management.
- Special Water Supply Catchment issues.

Economic activity

- Agriculture / horticulture operating from a relatively small resource base.
- Emerging agricultural business and infrastructure.
- Legacy issues of former tobacco industry including irrigation infrastructure.
- Encroachment of tourism in rural landscape.
- Support for value adding industries within the Shire
- Maintaining active and attractive retail hubs.
- Diversity – emerging shifts in economic activity (eg water extraction).
- Climate change impacts on Alpine areas, industries and businesses.
- Limited employment opportunities for people moving to the municipality for lifestyle reasons.
- Protection of agricultural land resources.
- Mining and extractive industries.
- Plantations.

Infrastructure

- Management and provision of public infrastructure.
- Water quality and quantity issues
- Waste water management and asset protection
- Rail Trail expansion and maintenance.
- Stormwater and drainage.