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C19**RURAL LAND AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

This policy applies to all land in the Farming Zone.

Policy Basis

Agriculture is the most significant industry in the municipality. This industry is reliant on a land resource that needs to be sustainably managed and protected from conversion to non-soil based use and development. The protection and enhancement of agriculture is linked to the environmental and economic well-being of the municipality.

While rural areas in Buloke Shire predominantly support broadacre agriculture, opportunities and requirements exist for the establishment of Rural Dependent Enterprises in these areas. These enterprises can include uses and developments such as fertiliser processing facilities, transport depots and storage facilities as well as intensive agriculture.

The MSS identifies the importance of Rural Dependent Enterprises to the economy of the municipality, particularly for value adding industries associated with cropping and grazing.

Rural Dependent Enterprises should not be located on prime agricultural land and any use that forms part of a Rural Dependent Enterprise should be sympathetic to the surrounding agricultural uses. In assessing the impact of these enterprises on the surrounding agricultural land it may be necessary to introduce buffer zones to ensure the development/use does not harm agricultural productivity or biodiversity values.

Rural Dependent Enterprises must meet the purpose of the Farming Zone and should complement the agricultural production base of the municipality. These enterprises provide an opportunity to explore new developments in the agricultural and associated industries. It is essential that Rural Dependent Enterprises are located near existing services and infrastructure.

When assessing the impact of a proposed Rural Dependent Enterprise it is important to ensure that it does not impact on any of the natural vistas and landscapes that are characteristic of Buloke and may be considered to be significant.

Land use and development in rural areas need to facilitate ongoing agricultural use and development, including intensive agriculture which does not inappropriately compromise the amenity of residents' lifestyles.

The construction of dams is often necessary to support the agricultural and/or residential use of land. The siting, design, and construction of dams should be undertaken to minimise the impact on land and water-ways, with a particular emphasis on maintaining environmental flows in rivers and streams of the catchment.

Objectives

To protect high quality agricultural land because of its versatility, productivity and ability to sustain a wide range of agricultural uses without significant degradation.

To prevent the unsustainable use of agricultural land which results in the loss of the quantity or quality of the natural resources and limits the realisation of the land's full productive potential.

To prevent land use conflicts between agricultural uses and sensitive uses to ensure that use and development are not prejudicial to agricultural industries or the productive capacity of the land.

To ensure that the subdivision of land for the establishment of Rural Dependent Enterprises does not compromise the viability of the remaining rural holding.

To support the diversification of agriculture, the development of agroforestry and the processing of agricultural products grown within the municipality.

Policy

It is policy that:

- The capability and suitability of agricultural land will be considered in the assessment of use and development proposals. Use and development of land should make optimum use of its productive potential and, where buildings or works are essential, they should be sited so as to avoid or minimise loss of good quality agricultural land.
- Agricultural land should be protected as an economic and environmentally valuable resource. Conversion of land to non-soil based use and development will be strongly discouraged unless there is no other suitable site for the proposed use and development and significant public benefit is demonstrated.
- Retention of agricultural land in productive units will be preferred and fragmentation of land will be strongly discouraged.
- Use and development proposals that are consistent with, and seek to implement, a whole farm plan will be encouraged. A whole farm plan demonstrates how the enterprise will be developed and operated. The whole farm plan must be of a high standard.

Use and development will be discouraged in the Farming Zone which:

- Alienates agricultural resources,
- Is sensitive to off-site effects from agriculture such as sprays and odour,
- Lessens the capacity of essential infrastructure
- May prejudice agricultural resources and agricultural production.
- When considering applications for proposals potentially sensitive to normal activities in agricultural areas, consideration will be given to the need for buffers on the subject land.
- Use and development, including subdivision, which is in support of and incorporates best management practice will be strongly supported.
- Approvals for land use or development in rural areas may include permit conditions requiring works to mitigate potential environmental impact or repair existing environmental impact, for example, fencing remnant vegetation or replanting indigenous native vegetation.
- When considering an application for construction of a building in the Farming zone the responsible authority may consider, as appropriate:
 - the use of the natural topographical features to screen the proposed development,
 - the effect on attractive views of the natural landscape, and
 - the importance of the undeveloped natural vistas along the major highways.

Subdivision, Use and Development

It is policy that the responsible authority may consider applications for subdivision of rural land to create lots less than 100ha where the following situations apply:

- Where an agricultural activity could viably take place on a small lot, because of its intensive nature; and
- Where a rural dependent enterprise is proposed and cannot be located outside the Farming Zone.

It is policy that, in considering applications to subdivide land to create lots less than 100ha:

- Subdivisions which are likely to lead to a concentration of lots altering the general use and character of the area and which are inconsistent with the purposes of the zone will be discouraged.
- Subdivision creating lots of a size greater than that required to undertake the operations of the Rural Dependent Enterprise and to provide any necessary buffer areas will be discouraged.
- An application for the subdivision and use and development of land in the Farming Zone must be accompanied by a report that should explain and address the following:

1. General Considerations

- The relationship of the use, development or subdivision of the land to agricultural land use, agricultural diversification and natural resource management.
- The need for the proposal to create additional lots on the land.
- The availability of infrastructure to the site, such as roads and electricity, and its capacity and ability to support the development.
- The impacts of activities associated with surrounding agricultural uses on the proposal.

2. Agricultural Considerations

- Agricultural characteristics and development trends of the existing or proposed industry.
- Location of land use and development and compatibility with adjoining agricultural land uses.
- The impacts of the proposed subdivision on the viability of agricultural activities on the remaining rural holding.

3. Site Constraints

- That the site is capable of sustaining the proposed use without adverse impact on the environment.
- Site quality attributes such as soil type, soil fertility, soil structure, soil permeability, aspect, contour and drainage patterns (where appropriate)
- Site characteristics such as existing land degradation problems (erosion, weeds, salinity), existing vegetation and wildlife habitat.
- Proximity to any proclaimed water catchment area
- Areas subject to flooding
- Areas of fire hazard
- Salinity discharge and recharge areas
- Proposed method of providing a water supply to each lot.
- Lot layout to enable compliance with the Code of Practice – Septic Tanks.

4. Economic Considerations

- A description of the facilities and improvements proposed, their location and staging over time.

5. Environmental Considerations

- The impacts of activities on natural vegetation.
- The presence of rare or threatened Flora and Fauna or priority vegetation communities.
- The impacts of activities on watercourses or wetlands.

- Include buffers and allow for protection and connectivity of remnant vegetation where possible.
- Ensure that high value individual habitat trees are protected.
- Refer to vegetation guidelines under any approved Native Vegetation Plan.

Small Lot Excision in the Farming Zone

- Lots created under the excisions provisions of the Farming Zone should have a maximum size of 2 hectares, except as otherwise required by a provision of this planning scheme.
- Dwellings excised under the provisions of Farming Zone should be in a habitable condition and able to comply with the Building Code of Australia to this extent.
- The excision of dwellings will take place in a manner that will ensure the dwelling does not have the potential to restrict agricultural production on adjacent land.
- An adequate distance should be maintained within the excised lot around the dwelling to reasonably limit any likely impacts of adjacent agricultural activity. The permit may require the planting of vegetation within the excised lot to reduce any potential impacts.
- Subdivision likely to lead to concentration of lots as to change the general use and character of the rural area will be discouraged unless it can be shown that the clustering of lots will not limit the productive use and development of the larger lots in the subdivision or that surrounding.
- Excision of more than one house lot from a rural property will generally not be supported.