

21.01 MITCHELL SHIRE

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21.01-1 Municipal profile

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The Shire

The Shire's southern boundary is approximately 35 kilometres north of Melbourne, just outside the suburban fringe from which Mitchell extends north into the heart of Victoria. Mitchell shares boundaries with Hume and Whittlesea to the south; Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander and Greater Bendigo to the west; Strathbogie to the north; and Murrindindi to the east. The Shire includes the townships of Beveridge, Wallan, Kilmore, Wandong-Heathcote Junction, Broadford, Seymour, Pyalong, Tooborac, Puckapunyal and Tallarook, and has an area of approximately 2864 square kilometres. A mix of rural holdings blends with Mitchell's townships to create a diverse region that provides welcoming stopping places for travellers on the Hume Freeway and the Goulburn Valley and Northern Highways.

The community

At 30 June 2008, Mitchell had an estimated resident population of 32,760 with continuing population growth of more than 2% each year. Mitchell's age structure is youthful, with 29.4% aged under 18 and only 14.2% aged over 60.

Mitchell's population is expected to increase by 50% by the year 2020, and double by the year 2030. Most of this growth will be in the south of the Shire, with the populations of Wallan and Beveridge growing to 30,000 and 50,000 residents respectively.

While the southern growth areas will see a greater proportion of younger families, there is an expectation overall for a healthier, ageing population, living longer with a greater proportion of persons over 60 years old. Mitchell will also become culturally and linguistically more diverse.

Metropolitan and Shire growth

The projected population growth will not be uniform. The southern part of Mitchell, including Wallan and Beveridge which lie within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), and the southern towns of Kilmore and Wandong-Heathcote Junction, will experience a markedly greater rate of growth relative to the balance of the Shire. For relatively small towns, this rate of growth has significant implications for infrastructure and service needs and provision, but also for the perception and character of the settlements.

Metropolitan growth will be a primary driver in population growth but the amenity and lifestyle choices offered by the Shire are also likely to remain a significant magnet. Employment will be a further contributing factor to driving growth, although jobs are more likely to be established in the Hume corridor and mainly to the south of Mitchell.

The growth of metropolitan Melbourne, including Beveridge and Wallan, will also attract significant investment in regional transport and other infrastructure. The major highways through the Shire and the north-south rail link are strong strategic assets. Population growth will generate demand for further infrastructure, housing and services that will in turn generate jobs and economic growth.

The economy

Mitchell has a diverse employment base, without being reliant or dependent upon a single employer or industrial sector. The employment sector includes retail and community

services in the major towns, and agriculture and the service sector more broadly throughout the Shire. Manufacturing ranges from home based industries in some of the smaller centres to larger manufacturing and processing establishments in Broadford, Seymour and Kilmore. The economic contributions of the agricultural base, including the various ancillary and service industries are significant.

The main employment sectors in Mitchell are public administration and safety (16%), retail trade (14%), education and training (11%), health care and social assistance (10%) and manufacturing (9%). Estimated economic output includes manufacturing (21.5%), followed by government administration and defence (16.7%), retail trade (9.5%), construction (7.3%), and agriculture, forestry and fishing (6%). Small businesses contribute significantly to Mitchell's economy, with 90% being either single operator or having less than five employees. The tourism sector, which attracts 456,000 visitors per annum, is principally serviced by single operators and small businesses.

The environment

Mitchell 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 north-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.

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 the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park 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 as are other areas of the Shire.

Mitchell has a diverse range of landscapes including steep to gently undulating sedimentary hills, dissected granite plateaus with gentle to steep slopes, undulating volcanic plains, and alluvial floodplains associated with major rivers and creeks. Climatic variation is pronounced with a higher rainfall and longer growing season in the southern portion of the Shire. Mitchell is bounded to the east and west by forested highlands and presents an important link in the landscape for wildlife movement.

Many areas of the Shire have been cleared for farming creating a mosaic of farmland, with remnant bushland found on road reserves, waterways and small bushland reserves.

21.01-2 Key planning issues

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- Population growth and changing settlements, including the growth of metropolitan Melbourne.
- Climate change.
- Economic challenges and opportunities.
- Changing legal and policy frameworks.
- Peak oil.
- Changes in the demographic makeup of the Shire.
- Maintaining the country character of the Shire.
- Transport and infrastructure.

- Natural resource management and biodiversity.
- Urban design.
- Diverse housing needs.
- Protecting farming land.

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Strategic vision

Council Plan

The *Council Plan 2013-2017 (Revised 2014)* provides Council's 'Vision':

Together with our community, creating a sustainable future.

Mitchell 2020

The *Mitchell 2020 – Community Plan* describes the Council and community vision and priorities for the next 10 years and establishes a shared basis for joint planning, service delivery and advocacy.

According to *Mitchell 2020*, the most valued assets in the community are the Shire's country lifestyle, attractive rural landscapes, the sense of community well-being, relaxed style of living, access to trains and accessibility to Melbourne.

The *Mitchell 2020* 'vision' is:

- *Mitchell Shire in 2020 will be seen as a municipality that has embarked upon a journey of significant growth. In doing so it will have been recognised for achieving sustainable outcomes and prosperity for its distinctive communities. Mitchell will be a sought after location in which to actively live and work. Visitors will seek to explore the many and varied experiences within the Shire.*
- *Diverse housing opportunities, combined with high quality community, educational and recreational facilities, means that Mitchell will be seen as a destination offering unique opportunities to existing and future residents.*
- *Mitchell in 2020 will reflect and protect its natural environment, promoting a lifestyle that encourages community participation. Residents of all age groups will be engaged in active and passive recreation using the many tracks, trails, parks, cultural assets and sporting facilities that are a feature of the Shire.*
- *Mitchell will have utilised its natural advantages with regard to its strategic location and well planned infrastructure to attract employment and investment. The network of public transport options will create connectivity within and between communities in urbanised and rural environments.*

Strategic framework plan

