

21.01 MUNICIPAL PROFILE

01/05/2014
C55(Part 1)

The Wellington municipality has an area of 10,924 square kilometres and is located approximately 200 kilometres east of Melbourne.

The Shire's population increased between the 2006 and 2011 censuses from 40,080 to 41,440, a reversal of the decline seen between 1996 and 2001. The percentage of persons aged 55 years and over increased from 28.4% to 31.7% over the period. This indicates that the Shire has an ageing population.

21.01-1 Settlement and Housing

19/12/2013
C70

The Shire's population principally (over 60 percent) resides in and around the six main urban centres, and is mainly concentrated in the central part of the municipality. The towns of Sale, Heyfield, Maffra, Rosedale and Stratford are all located on or close to the Princes Highway whilst the town of Yarram is located on the South Gippsland Highway.

Sale is the largest urban centre in the Shire with a total population in 2011 of 13, 825 persons within the Sale Statistical Local Area, a growth rate of 5.6% since 2006.

The remaining large townships fulfil a service role to the rural areas across the Shire, as well as being centres of commerce, industry and employment in their own right.

The township of Yarram is the largest in the south-west area of the Shire. It fulfils the primary commercial and cultural function for the rural areas and smaller settlements in this part of the municipality.

The Ninety Mile Beach area includes a number of settlements, stretching from Loch Sport in the north-east to Port Albert in the south-west.

21.01-2 Environment and Landscape Values

01/05/2014
C55(Part 1)

Wellington Shire includes relatively unspoilt coastal, lake and mountain areas, together with some of the richest agricultural land and oldest urban settlements in the State. The Shire is situated in Central Gippsland, between the Latrobe Valley and Ninety Mile Beach.

The Shire includes an array of ecosystems, stretching south from the Great Dividing Range and Dargo High Plains to the Gippsland Lakes system, wetlands and the Ninety Mile Beach coastal areas. The Alpine National Park is a key natural feature of the Great Dividing Range. A significant proportion of the Shire's area is public land, particularly the foothills and alpine regions of the Dividing Range north of Maffra, Heyfield and Briagolong, the Tarra-Bulga National Park and the Holey Plains State Park south of Rosedale.

The wetlands in the Shire provide a haven for bird life and many are recognised by their listing on the National Estate Register and declarations under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as water fowl habitat). These wetlands provide a prelude to the Gippsland Lakes, Lake Wellington, Lake Victoria, Heyfield and the coastal regions including the Corner Inlet/Nooramunga Marine National Park in the Shire's south-west region. The Ninety Mile Beach is a significant part of this coastal system.

The largely undeveloped coastline of the Ninety Mile Beach and the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are also major features in the region.

Coastal landscape features vary throughout the Shire. Dunes, wide sandy beaches, mangrove and intertidal sand and mud flats dominate the south-western parts of the Shire, while the extensive and continuous ocean coast of the Ninety Mile Beach is the dominant landscape feature of the north eastern parts. Gentle undulations along narrow spits and peninsulas are also found between poorly drained mud and sand flats and shallow lakes and inlets.

A number of important water features are present within the Shire, including the large and permanent Lake Wellington, the long ephemeral lakes that occur behind the narrow coastal strip, such as Lake Reeve, and non tidal inlets and swamps and lagoons. Extensive areas of estuarine mangrove, salt marsh and swamp vegetation also occur around wetland and watercourse areas. Dunes along the coastline are often dominated by low indigenous coastal scrub.

Rural areas

Overview

The Wellington Shire Rural Zones Review identified nine Planning Units across the municipality. These Units are used to identify common natural and physical features within the Shire and are divided into geographical areas. The Planning Units are an important tool for the systematic identification and consideration of planning matters. These are presented geographically and in tabulations that describe each of the Units in the Shire which are:

- Planning Unit 1: Northern Ranges
- Planning Unit 2: Macalister
- Planning Unit 3: Glenmaggie-Briagolong
- Planning Unit 4a: Rosedale-Stradbroke
- Planning Unit 4b: Eastern Gippsland Plains
- Planning Unit 5: Strzelecki
- Planning Unit 6: Coastal West, Hinterland
- Planning Unit 7: Coastal East, Hinterland
- Planning Unit 8: Coastal

Planning Unit Descriptions

Planning Unit 1: Northern Ranges

The Northern Ranges Planning Unit covers the northern part of the Shire and is predominantly public land with freehold land interspersed within the Crown Land. The Unit is characterised by heavily vegetated steep terrain and sheer narrow valleys on the southern face of the Victorian Alps. The forested public land in the Unit retains high ecological and broader environmental values. The Unit has a strong history in timber production from public lands, however this has diminished in recent decades and the Alpine National Park will not be available as a timber resource in the future.

The land in steep areas is subject to soil creep and to erosion when exposed. The Unit is also a high wildfire risk area, particularly highland areas which have large fuel loads and steep terrain. Careful soil management is required by all land uses in this Unit to minimise soil and broader environmental degradation.

Planning Unit 2: Macalister

The Macalister Planning Unit is located centrally in the Shire. It incorporates the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) and surrounding dryland agricultural areas. It is characterised by flat landscape and is predominantly used for agriculture purposes as the land is suitable for gravity-fed irrigation and has high quality soils.

Planning Unit 3: Glenmaggie-Briagolong

The Glenmaggie-Briagolong Planning Unit interfaces between the flat Macalister agricultural area and the northern ranges. There is increased popularity for rural residential/lifestyle living in this Unit due to its visual attractiveness, although this can create conflict between lifestyle living and agriculture practices. Land in the steeper areas tends to be less cleared. Land within this Unit is classed as good grazing land with limited

versatility for other uses. The land should be retained for agricultural purposes in the future. Land in the west of the Unit is used for plantation forestry.

Planning Unit 4a: Rosedale-Stradbroke

The Rosedale-Stradbroke Planning Unit occupies the Gippsland Plains north and south of the Princes Highway, and the lowland hills to the south of Rosedale. Land uses in the Unit are varied. Land in the north and south of the Princes Highway is characterised by flat to gently undulating plains that support sheep and beef grazing (and limited dairying). There is little irrigated agriculture apart from irrigated vegetable production in the south-east of the Unit on sandy soils. The hillier areas of the Unit are largely covered by native forest (Holey Plains Park) and forestry plantations. Dryland agriculture and the timber industry (on private and public lands) have very high strategic importance in the Unit. The Unit contains extensive sand and gravel resources that could be extracted in the future.

Planning Unit 4b: Eastern Gippsland Plains

The Eastern Gippsland Plains Planning Unit occupies the eastern side of the Shire. Much of the Unit has a flat to gently undulating landscape with lighter sandy surface soils and a regular but widely spaced drainage pattern, flowing generally south easterly toward Lake Wellington. The land across most of the Unit has a moderate capability for a range of productive and non-productive uses, assisted by gentle landscape profiles and reasonably stable soils under good ground cover. Land capability in the vicinity of Lake Wellington is diminished by high water tables and salinity and is not suited to cropping. None the less, agriculture in this Unit contributes to the strong strategic importance of agriculture in the Shire.

Planning Unit 5: Strzelecki

The Strzelecki Planning Unit is located in the south-west of the Shire. It is primarily characterised by the steep to hilly Strzelecki Ranges that include the Tarra-Bulga National Park. The landscape is dominated by the hills with native vegetation and softwood and hardwood plantation forestry. This is interspersed with grazing farmlands that have diminished over recent decades due to expanding plantation forestry. Conflicts between 'lifestyle living' and forest operations have emerged in areas of this Unit.

The strategic importance of farming in the hillier parts of the Unit has diminished but the Unit still provides a valuable contribution to the Shire's agricultural economy.

Planning Unit 6: Coastal West, Hinterland

The landscape is mainly a flat coastal plain with no distinguishable features, located inland of the low coastal sand dunes of the Ninety Mile Beach and abutting the base of the visually dominant Strzelecki Ranges.

Suitability for cultivation is limited by environmental conditions particularly salt load in winds off the ocean that would impact adversely on most vegetable and crop production types and higher water tables in lower lying areas. Cultivated sandy soils are also vulnerable to wind erosion. The most suitable agricultural use is extensive livestock grazing, particularly where irrigation water is not available.

Grazing agriculture in the Unit is strategically important for its contribution to the Shire's economic base and its rural character. Suitability for more intensive dairying use is enhanced where groundwater is available for spray irrigation.

Planning Unit 7: Coastal East, Hinterland

The land is typically flat and low lying with some raised dunes in the western end. There are areas of extensive sheep grazing and dairying in the south-west of the Unit and plantation forestry. However, farming areas in the Unit are generally of low productivity and are very sparsely settled.

High watertables occur in low lying parts of the Unit, which may also experience impacts from rising sea levels through from Gippsland Lakes. This could cause extensive inundation, rising of water tables and expansion of existing land salinity.

Relative to other parts of the Shire, this Unit has limited strategic agricultural importance due to the low productivity of soils and less sizeable agricultural enterprises and forest plantations.

Planning Unit 8: Coastal

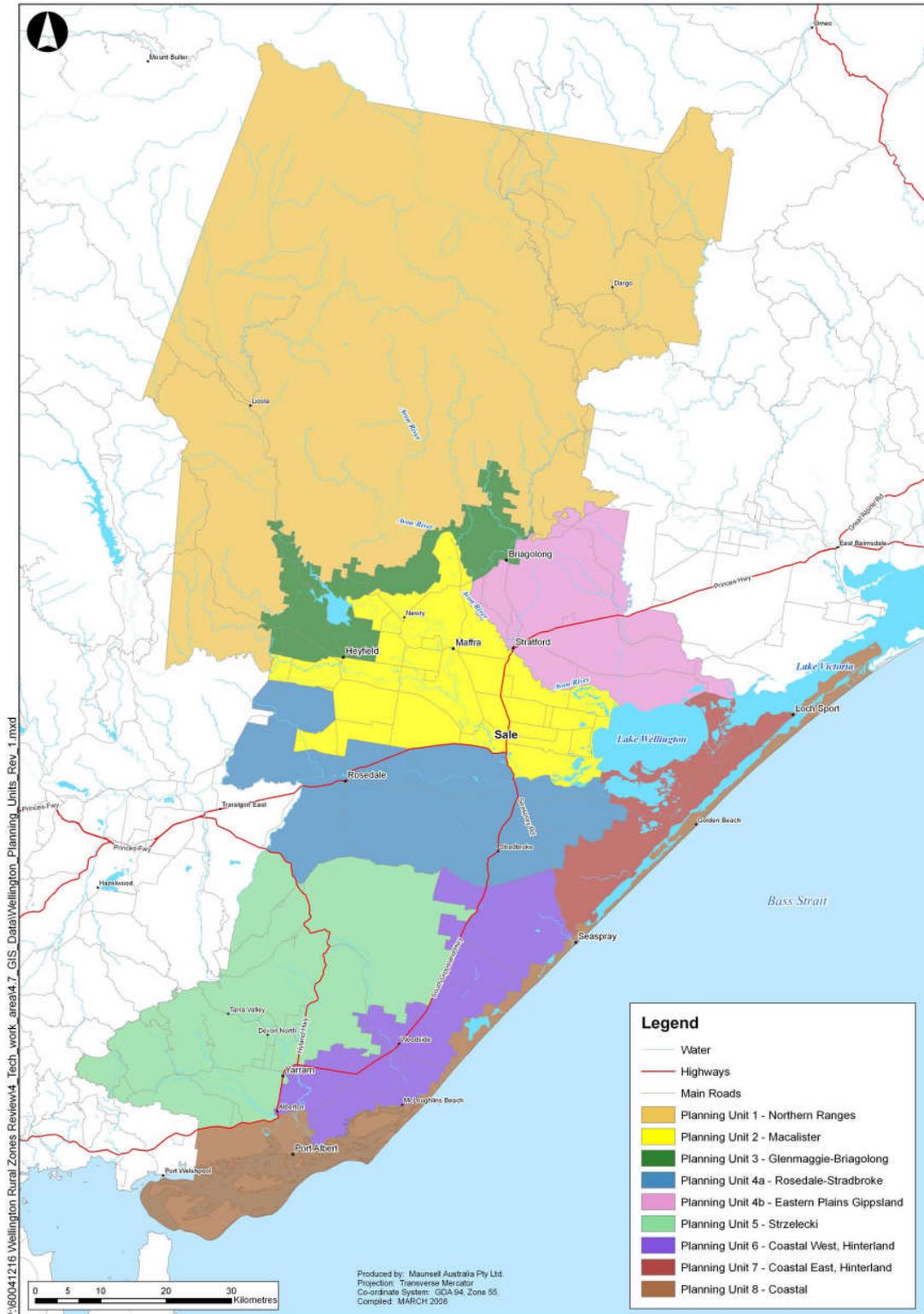
The Coastal Planning Unit covers the full length of the narrow primary dune system and associated lakes and lagoons at the western end of the Unit. The sensitive and fragile coastal sand dune environment is an integral component of Ninety Mile Beach. Sand dunes along the coastline are highly vulnerable to wind erosion and the Unit is also particularly susceptible to the impacts of sea level changes. The agricultural strategic importance of the Unit is very low as the land is not particularly suitable for agricultural uses.

Further Information

For more detail on each of the Planning Units refer to the Wellington Shire Rural Zones Review Planning Units, Volume 2 (2009). The extended Planning Unit Descriptions in this report include descriptions of:

- Physical land units (agricultural quality, land capability, suitability and natural resource management).
- Strategic rural influences (SPPF and LPPF).
- Planning data information (demographic data, settlement patterns, land tenure, agricultural strategic importance, water, existing land uses, agribusiness/rural industry, rural tourism, coastal activities, coal stone extractive resources and timber resources).
- Strategic directions and zone implementation (strengths/opportunities, weakness/constraints, other planning matters and recommended changes to the LPPF, Zones and Overlays).

Planning Units Map



21.01-3 Environmental Risks19/12/2013
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A number of small rural and coastal settlements are not provided with reticulated services and are causing environmental concerns. The Shire is also impacted by bushfire, flooding, potential changes in climatic conditions and land degradation issues (including salinity and erosion).

21.01-4 Natural Resource Management19/12/2013
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Land across the central region of the Shire is characterised by alluvial plains with high quality soils, areas of high annual rainfall and an extensive irrigation system. Agricultural land to the south is renowned grazing country, also with high rainfall and good quality soils.

The Shire is wholly within the area of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority other than for a very small area of predominantly public land in the north east of the Shire which falls within the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority boundary.

The region has the State's primary reserves of brown coal and gas located within it. The delineation and protection of the coal resources and urban buffer areas will aid in retaining this valuable asset, and provide appropriate land use control in the areas adjoining the coal resource.

21.01-5 Built Environment and Heritage19/12/2013
C70

There are a number of important post-European heritage precincts and individual buildings within the Shire, together with significant Aboriginal heritage sites. These heritage assets contribute to the diversity and interest of the Shire and should be protected.

21.01-6 Economic Development19/12/2013
C70

All six main urban centres derive their wealth and prosperity from agricultural and farming activities, as well as the timber industry, off shore oil and gas extraction and activities associated with aviation.

In 2013, a significant proportion of the Shire's 14,192 strong labour force was employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing (13.5%), health and community services (12.8%), retail trade (11.8%) and public administration and safety (9.8%). While employment in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and manufacturing sectors has declined slightly, there has been continuing growth in the health and community services. This reflects an ageing population and increases in health and aged care services.

The Shire hosts significant airfield infrastructure with the RAAF base at East Sale being an important local employer. The oil and gas industry has also been well established in the Shire for many years. Bass Strait oil production has dropped from 500,000 barrels a day in the 1980's to 50,000 barrels per day at present. With the opening of the Turrum, Kipper and Tuna gas fields and expansion of the Longford gas plant in 2013-15, Bass Strait will play an increasingly important role in production of natural gas. This mining produces almost \$1.6 billion annually and directly employs over 489 people.

The Shire's agricultural sector is one of the largest contributors to the Victorian agricultural economy. The Macalister Irrigation District is an important component of the rural area. Dairying and cattle grazing are the dominant agricultural pursuits. Farm sizes are smaller on average than farms across the State largely reflecting the high quality of soils, climate and irrigation across the Shire.

21.01-7 Transport

19/12/2013
C70

Wellington Shire's key transport routes include the Princes Highway and the Bairnsdale-Melbourne rail corridor.

Local transport networks vary in scale and frequency throughout the Shire. These transport networks along with the key transport routes are used for both freight and private travel. Most travel in the Shire occurs in private motor vehicles

21.01-8 Infrastructure

19/12/2013
C70

The main urban settlements including Sale, Maffra, Yarram, Heyfield, Stratford and Rosedale are provided with reticulated services and other community infrastructure. A number of the small rural settlements including Alberton, Briagolong, Dargo and Licola and coastal areas have limited services. Infrastructure includes drainage, water, waste and energy services, open space and recreation facilities, roads, pedestrian and cycle paths, railways and airfields.