

21.04 ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

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This clause provides local content to support **Clause 12 Environmental and Landscape values** of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Specific references to individual suburbs and towns are also included at Clause 21.13 (Local Areas).

21.04-1 Environment

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The City of Wodonga is picturesque, characterised by an extensive amphitheatre of hills and short east west valleys in the western part of the municipality. This landscape flows into the fertile river flats of the Murray and Kiewa Rivers. The eastern half of the municipality features the Kiewa Valley and Lake Hume which both provide a vital rich agricultural and recreational resource.

Dominant vegetation types within the area include box-gum grassy woodland, wet sclerophyll forest and river red-gum woodland and forest. The original extent of native vegetation in the area has been significantly reduced or altered by historic land clearing and management practices.

Several of the remaining areas of grassy woodland type vegetation are likely remnants of the White Box-Yellow Box Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland ecological vegetation community which is listed as Critically Endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Often the experience is that native vegetation is extremely difficult to retain on land that is already zoned for urban development. A challenge with the standard provisions set out in clause 52.17 is the fact that it does not distinguish between land that is zoned and not zoned for urban development. Measures to retain native vegetation on land zoned for urban development have often been piecemeal and have yielded little in the way of sustainable gains for habitat improvement.

The Albury Wodonga Corporation's Forward Tree Planting Program sought to improve environmental values in response to increasing urbanisation, establishing over 3 million trees on over 2000 hectares of land across Albury and Wodonga between 1976 and 1996. The forward tree plantings have been found to provide habitat and landscape linkages for many species including threatened species such as the Regent Honeyeater and Squirrel Glider.

In 2006, with the objective of undertaking a more strategic approach, the Wodonga Council, in conjunction with the Albury Wodonga Corporation, completed a study of the natural environment in southern parts of the City, including south Wodonga through to Leneva and Baranduda.

The Wodonga Retained Environmental Network (WREN) Strategy was created to balance the legitimate needs of protecting the environment and facilitating urban development. The strategy identified significant corridors and patches of native vegetation, with an emphasis on threatened species habitat, and areas for unconstrained development, providing a level of clarity for landowners, developers and agencies. The Leneva Valley and Baranduda Native Vegetation Precinct Plan (LVBVPP) facilitates the implementation of the WREN Strategy.

In order to form a sustainable natural framework for the long term health of biodiversity the connection between the WREN and larger adjoining habitats, such as Baranduda Range, Bears and Federation Hills and the Kiewa River floodplain, must be recognised and protected.

Key issues

- There is important native vegetation in areas identified for urban growth.
- The need to protect and restore biodiversity and natural habitats.
- The acquisition of land identified for reservation in the Leneva Valley and Baranduda Native Vegetation Precinct Plan.
- There are offset sites on private land which are identified in Section 173 Agreements, but are not identified by planning controls.
- Balancing environmental objectives with the need to service new development with infrastructure.
- The location of residential development abutting conservation reserves has led to illegal rubbish dumping and pressure to manage reserves for amenity and fire fuel reduction rather than conservation.

Objective

To protect and improve Wodonga's indigenous flora, fauna and habitat.

Strategies

- Identify significant native vegetation prior to re-zoning for future urban development to ensure remnant native vegetation is protected.
- Encourage integration of larger remnant patches within reserves and corridors as part of future urban development.
- Protect remnant native vegetation in roadside reserves and along wildlife corridors.
- Manage the system of reserves and open spaces to protect significant patches of native vegetation and habitat corridors to ensure no major loss of biodiversity or ecosystem function.
- At subdivision stage, require reserves to be edged with an appropriate interface treatment such as a road to minimise impacts on the environment.
- Work with agencies to plan for the servicing of new development whilst minimising impacts on the environment.

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Significant landscapes – Hillsides

The hillsides are part of the identity and character of Wodonga. The community has expressed clear support for the protection of the hillsides from intrusive development, insisting that the hills which overlook the urban and future urban areas remain free of development. The hills are one of Wodonga's most widely identified and supported environmental, lifestyle and community assets and have been long recognised as being visually important. Many of the hills surrounding Wodonga have been listed by the National Trust as being landscapes of significance.

Key issues

- The protection of prominent hillsides that surround Wodonga from encroachment by urban development.
- Balancing the objectives of providing safe and adequate public access to the hills with protecting environmental and landscape values.

Objective

To safeguard the visual and natural values of hillside landscapes.

Strategies

- Protect and maintain the system of ridgelines and hillsides that encircle Wodonga, Baranduda, Lake Hume and the Middle Creek Valley (Leneva) as major landscape elements, free from development.
- Discourage residential development above nominated contour levels which are based on the keyline – major break in slope – between the hillface and valley as identified by the Environmental Significance Overlay and Significant Landscape Overlay.
- Where possible add land parcels on the hillsides to the reserve and open space network.
- Link the hillsides to the urban area and floodplains through a system of linear open spaces and vegetated areas throughout the municipality.
- Telecommunications facilities may be supported on the hilltops in recognition of the essential service they provide to the community subject to the provision of an approved masterplan for telecommunications facilities across the municipality.
- Telecommunications facilities should not impact on an identified native vegetation offset site.

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Significant landscapes – Lake Hume

Lake Hume is a significant environmental and tourism resource. The use and development of land abutting the lake needs to be carefully assessed having regard to its landscape attributes and ensuring that the visual amenity of the landscape is not prejudiced. Any application within the Lake Hume Northern Section Catchment should address policy at Clause 21.06-3 Water quality – Lake Hume.

Key issues

- The protection and maintenance of the landscape values of Lake Hume.

Objective

To protect the natural environment and pristine setting surrounding Lake Hume from obtrusive development that may spoil the undeveloped landscape features of the environs.

Strategies

- Maintain the pristine setting of the lake with its surrounding land kept free of urban development.
- Ensure housing and development associated with rural land is sympathetic to the landscape and complements the lakeside setting.

Policy Guidelines

Exercise of discretion

It is policy to:

- Require that the building design, colour, scale and mass do not become dominant elements in the landscape.

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Implementation

The strategies will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Apply a Significant Landscape Overlay around Lake Hume to protect its significant landscape values.
- Apply a Significant Landscape Overlay to protect the hillsides from development and for their landscape significance.
- Apply Vegetation Protection Overlays to protect biodiversity assets.
- Ensure that private land identified for inclusion in the Public Park and Recreation Zone or Public Conservation and Resource Zone is acquired in accordance with the Leneva Valley and Baranduda Native Vegetation Precinct Plan (2013).

Further strategic work

- Rationalise Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedule 2) and Significant Landscape Overlay (Schedule 1) to provide a consistent approach to the protection of the hillsides.
- Review and update Vegetation Protection Overlays as appropriate.
- Investigate the provision of a Significant Landscape Overlay around the perimeter of Lake Hume to protect and maintain its landscape significance.
- Review and implement roadside management plan.