



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF SOUTH WEST VICTORIA

DETERMINING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

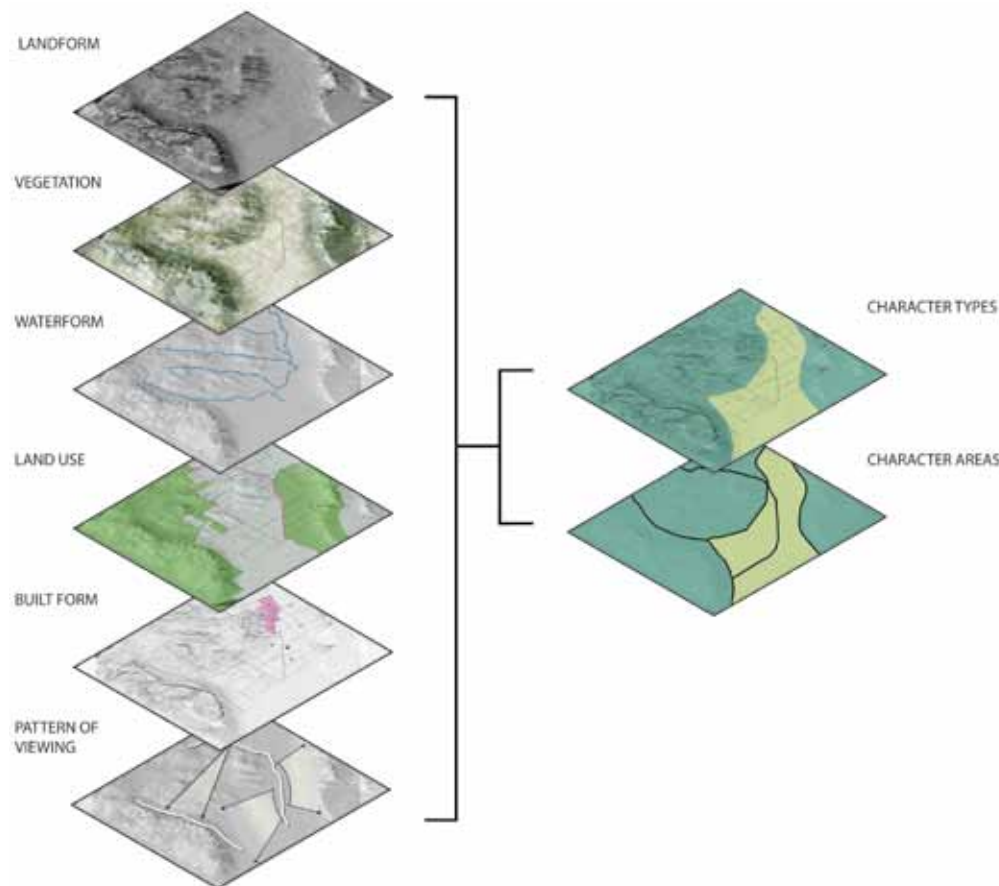
For the purpose of this study, landscape character is defined as the interplay of geology, topography, vegetation, water bodies and other natural features, combined with the effects of land use and built development, which makes one landscape different from another.

The study area has been divided into eight landscape Character Types based on broad areas of common physical, environmental and cultural characteristics. These are shown on the map opposite.

At a local level, each Character Type has been further divided into landscape Character Areas, which are separate geographical units within the same Character Type, or areas across which local conditions, such as the landscape features, or the pattern of viewing, vary.

A professional assessment has underpinned the determination of landscape character, focussing on objective distinctions between Character Types, and the relationship between landscape Character Types and their constituent Character Areas.

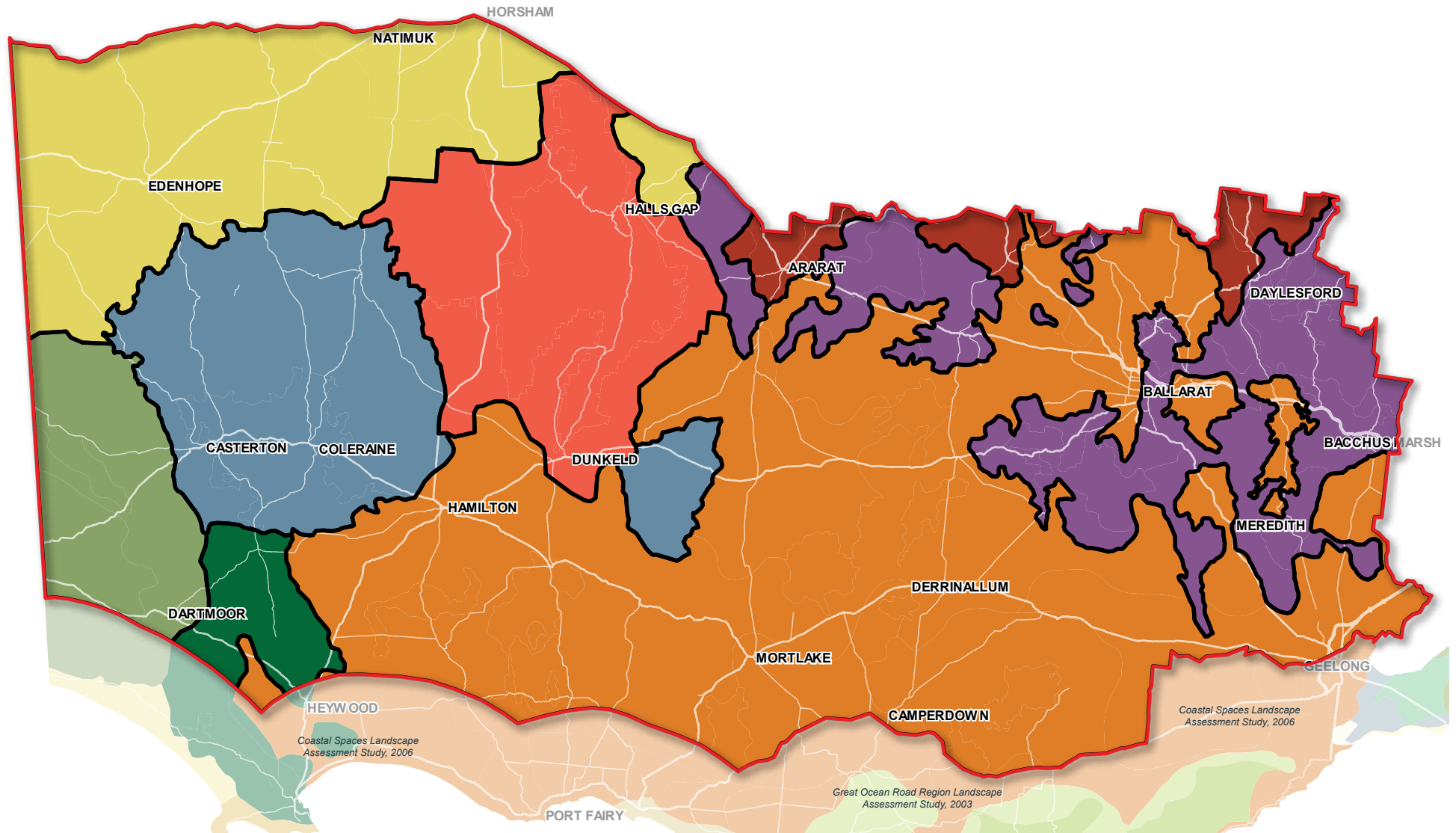
In brief, the Character Types and Areas were identified through a study of key landscape character elements including landform, waterform, vegetation and land use and built form, together with a detailed field survey.



Landscape Character Types

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Western Volcanic Plains |
| 2 | The Uplands |
| 3 | Goldfields |
| 4 | Rolling Tablelands |
| 5 | The Wimmera Plains |
| 6 | The Grampians (Gariwerd) & Surrounds |
| 7 | Vegetated Rises |
| 8 | Glenelg Plain |

Landscape Character Types of South West Victoria



LANDSCAPE TYPES & AREAS OF SOUTH WEST VICTORIA

1 THE WESTERN VOLCANIC PLAIN

- 1.1 Paddocks & Cones
- 1.2 Large Shallow & Deep Crater Lakes
- 1.3 Volcanic Agricultural
- 1.4 Stony Rises & Lava Flows
- 1.5 Lakeside Stony Rises
- 1.6 Volcanic Lakes & Swamps
- 1.7 Cones & Mines
- 1.8 Volcanic Ranges
- 1.9 Vegetated Volcanic Plains
- 1.10 Partially Wooded Agricultural
- 1.11 Winchelsea Western Plains

2 THE UPLANDS

- 2.1 Forested Hills
- 2.2 Residential Forest Edges
- 2.3 Cleared Pastures
- 2.4 Fertile Valleys
- 2.5 Plateaus & Gorges

- 2.6 Brisbane Ranges

- 2.7 You Yangs

- 2.8 Creswick Forested Uplands

- 2.9 Rural Living

- 2.10 Valley Views

- 2.11 Central Forested Uplands

- 2.12 Island Uplands

- 2.13 Eastern Pyrenees

- 2.14 Southern Pyrenees Rises

- 2.15 Upland Interface

- 2.16 Mount Cole Creek

3 GOLDFIELDS

- 3.1 Agricultural Plateaus

- 3.2 Goldfields Forests

- 3.3 Central Goldfields

- 3.4 Ararat Hills

4 THE ROLLING TABLELANDS

- 4.1 Eastern Tablelands

- 4.2 Open Hills & Valleys

- 4.3 Vegetated Tablelands

5 THE WIMMERA PLAINS

- 5.1 Lakes & Wetlands

- 5.2 Cleared Wimmera Catchment

- 5.3 Lake Lonsdale & Surrounds

- 5.4 Mount Arapiles

6 GRAMPPIANS (GARIWERD) & SURROUNDS

- 6.1 The Grampians Ranges

- 6.2 Grampians Surrounds

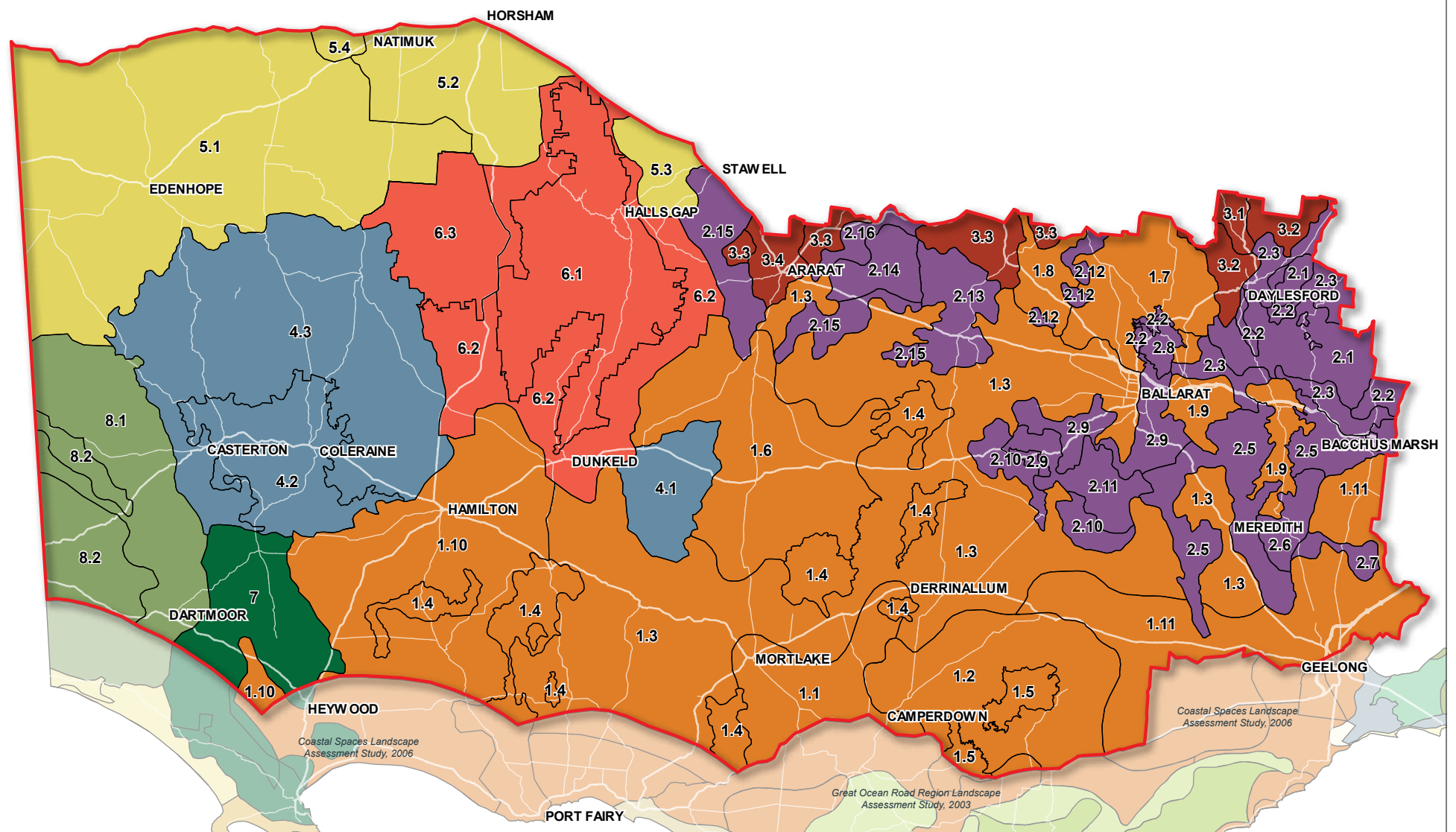
- 6.3 Black Range & Surrounds

7 VEGETATED RISES

8 GLENELG PLAINS

- 8.1 Plantations & Reserves

- 8.2 Pastoral Plain



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES SUMMARY

1. The Western Volcanic Plain

Volcanic activity has shaped much of South West Victoria's landscape. This extensive Character Type is formed by a flat to undulating basaltic plain scattered with volcanic features including stony rises, old lava flows, numerous volcanic cones and old eruption points which together create a unique visual landscape.

This is a place of big skies, long views with volcanic rises that punctuate the horizon. When the first European settlers arrived they found the land primed for agriculture as it contained very few trees. Shelterbelts of cypress and pine were planted to protect crops and livestock from the winds that sweep the plain and are now a defining characteristic of the Type.

The area is dotted with many beautiful lakes and wetlands that are generally broad and shallow and may contain either saline, brackish or fresh water. Some of the wetlands are RAMSAR listed and of international importance.

Many paddocks and roadsides are edged with beautifully formed dry stone walls that were created when early pastoralists cleared the land of rocks for agricultural purposes, to contain stock and to control vermin.



Dry stone walls in the foreground of Mount Noorat

2. The Uplands

Defined by topography, this diverse Character Type rises dramatically to the north of the flat volcanic plain, stretching from near the Grampians Ranges in the west to the edge of the study area at Bacchus Marsh in the east. Fingers of the Victorian Uplands weave with the adjacent Goldfields region along this northern edge to form a rugged landscape of undulating hills and fertile agricultural valleys. Granitic intrusions have formed steeply sloping peaks and ridges, some of which are carpeted in vegetation at higher elevations. Plateaus that are cut by deep river gorges create dramatic landscape features to the south.

While the Uplands are largely cleared for agriculture they also support numerous large areas of public land, including Parks, Reserves and State Forests which contain a wealth of vegetation including wet and dry forests, Box-Ironbark woodlands and endangered grasslands. This is an area of contrasting topography, picturesque vineyards, lush forests, rolling agriculture and residential enclaves.



Granitic outcrops on the slopes of Mount Cole,

3. The Goldfields

Gold transformed Victoria and the Goldfields were at the heart of this transformation. This is a landscape of undulating agricultural land, slashed by steep sided ridges and peaks (predominantly with a northern aspect) and incised by deep narrow gorges. Fingers of the Goldfields Character Type weave into the adjacent Central Victorian Uplands.

This area is dominated by agriculture with large blocks of public land. Remnant forested areas dominate the lower slopes or poorer soils. Exposed quartz, granite and basalt bedrock hint towards the geological make up of the land below. Throughout this Character Area are visible reminders of the gold rush period, with old miners huts and mining shafts found in the forests, and coppiced regrowth of trees once cleared to supply timber for mining operations.



Goldfields landscape north of Ararat

4. The Rolling Tablelands

The Rolling Tablelands Character Type encompasses the Dundas and Merino Tablelands, and an area of rolling topography to the east of the southern arm of the Grampian's Serra Range.

It is defined by a broad plateau of rolling hills dissected by deep river valleys. Significant stands of vegetation line the valleys, creek corridors and roadsides in most part of this Character Type, with the exception of heavily cleared areas in the south-west that displays a much more open characteristic. The land is sparsely settled, with farm buildings and structures blending into the landscape rather than dominating it. Majestic individual Red Gums are a feature of this area.



Long range views to the Grampians north of Coleraine

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES SUMMARY

5. The Wimmera Plains

Ancient sand dunes separated by long, wide swales have formed the basis of the undulating landscape of the Wimmera Plains, which lie between Horsham and the South Australian border.

The landscape is characterised by open, agricultural fields scattered with remnant trees and an extensive network of wetlands and shallow lakes that have formed in the low lying land.



View across shallow lake to Mount Arapiles from the Mitre-Tooan Road

6. The Grampians (Gariwerd) & Surrounds

The Grampians are a visually spectacular range of mountains that rise dramatically from the pastoral plains of Victoria, forming the southernmost part of the Great Dividing Range. Their jagged silhouette is a prominent feature on the distant horizon, visible from many parts of the study area. Up close the mountains have a commanding presence that dwarfs surrounding features. They are often shrouded in cloud and influence the weather patterns around them.

Surrounding the ranges is the flat topography of pastoral land, characterised by the visual presence of the rugged mountain ranges that rise sharply in the distance. This phenomenon is no more visually dramatic than deep

within the Victoria Valley, where productive agricultural land is surrounded by the dominant mountain ranges. Remnant River Red Gums scattered throughout the paddocks and occasionally in large stands are a significant feature of this area, diminishing markedly further south.

When travelling from the west, the scale of the ranges is exacerbated by flat topography, 'big skies' and straight roads, where view lines allow for their presence to incrementally grow in scale upon approach. The area affords spectacular and ever changing views of the jagged terracotta-coloured escarpments and surrounding pastoral land, with the outlook altering dramatically in different light and weather conditions.



View across the ranges from Mount William

7. Vegetated Rises

This Character Type is an interface area that exhibits qualities of the Western Volcanic and Glenelg Plains and the Rolling Tablelands to the north. It is unified by an undulating topography of low hills and river valleys that are for the most part densely vegetated with a combination of plantation forestry and large areas of state and national parks. These are interspersed with cleared pastoral areas that provide views over and across the terrain to hills cloaked by vegetation beyond.

The characteristics of this landscape are driven by alternating patterns of land use with a variety of outlooks and views, and it is this patchwork that unifies it to one Type. There are no distinctive Character Areas, however it merges to the south, extending to Portland and Mount Clay. This southern area is detailed in the Vegetated Rises Character Type within the *Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study* (DSE, Planisphere, 2006). The area identified in CSLAS is edged by what is now the Cobboonee National Park.

8. Glenelg Plains

This Character Type encompasses the far western portion of the Study Area and is bounded by the Victorian and South Australian border, and the edges of the tablelands defined by the valley of the Glenelg River. The landscape sits within the “Green Triangle” plantation region that spans across the border, and contains a large number of plantations interspersed with forests. Aerial imagery reveals a highly dense patchwork of both.

On the ground, sandy dirt roads criss-cross a flat to undulating topography, with outward views mostly blocked by tall plantations and scrubby forests. In the south, forested areas give way to more open pastoral land. It is primarily this alternation that has delineated the two Character Areas found in this Type.



Plantation of Radiata Pine

