



SOUTH WEST VICTORIA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT STUDY

Regional Overview Report: Executive Summary

June 2013



FOREWORD

The landscapes of South West Victoria tell the story of a rich and complex evolution - reflective of the region's geological morphology, economy, ecology and cultural history.

They include the rugged and spectacular Grampians Ranges (Gariwerd); the cones and lakes of the volcanic plains; and the majestic River Red Gums scattered throughout the pastoral lands.

The purpose of this landscape assessment is to examine the character and significance of the landscapes of South West Victoria; to understand how they may be affected by future change; and to protect and manage those values that are most important, for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Traditional Owners

The Study acknowledges that the State of Victoria has an ancient and proud Aboriginal history and complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, and offer our respect to the past and present Elders, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Project Participants

The Project Team would also like to thank all who have provide input, through the community photographic exercise, wanting to be kept informed and the sharing of information and local knowledge. This appreciation extends to the community groups, environmental/landcare groups, progress associations, from local and aboriginal people, academic groups, the Project Reference Group Members and others who have followed and supported the study.

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COVER IMAGE: Lake Linlithgow looking towards Dunkeld / Grampians, image courtesy of Tracey Kruger

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Regional Overview Report

This document, *South West Victoria Landscape Assessment Study: Regional Overview Report*, provides an executive summary of the landscape character types, and most significant landscapes of the region. It outlines the methodology for the study, and contains the key recommendations for protecting and managing these landscapes at a state and regional level.

Purpose of this Study

The Department of Planning and Community Development commissioned this landscape assessment study of South West Victoria to better understand and assess the visual character and significance of the wide range of landscape types, which include the volcanic plains and cones that dominate much of the area, to the Great Dividing Range in the north, and the Grampians in the central west. The study will be used to better to better inform planning scheme policy to assist planning decision making, and to ensure landscapes of importance are adequately protected and management into the future.

The South West Landscape Assessment Study, prepared in partnership with local government throughout the region and a range of stakeholders, provides a comprehensive understanding of landscape values, their location and their spatial extent. This will assist regional planning to support economic growth and development investment in the right locations into the future through the Great South Coast, Central Highlands, and Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plans, (currently being undertaken by the Victorian Government) and implementation through local government planning schemes.

Study Methodology

The methodology for landscape assessment studies has evolved considerably over ten years of professional practice, from an initial focus on visual significance, to a holistic approach that considers all cultural landscape values, including aesthetic values (both visual and non-visual), historic, environmental, scientific, social and other values.

A detailed visual assessment is still at the core of the work however, largely because the studies are commissioned with the intention of protecting landscapes from inappropriate visual intrusion, or from development that detracts from the valued character of the landscape.

Landscape assessment studies include extensive field work, desktop research, GIS mapping, and comparative analysis against various sets of criteria in order to assess and document the character and significance of various landscapes and views. Generally, the methodology is structured around the consideration of the following five key elements:

- Landscape character
- Landscape significance
- Community values
- Change in the landscape
- Landscape protection and management

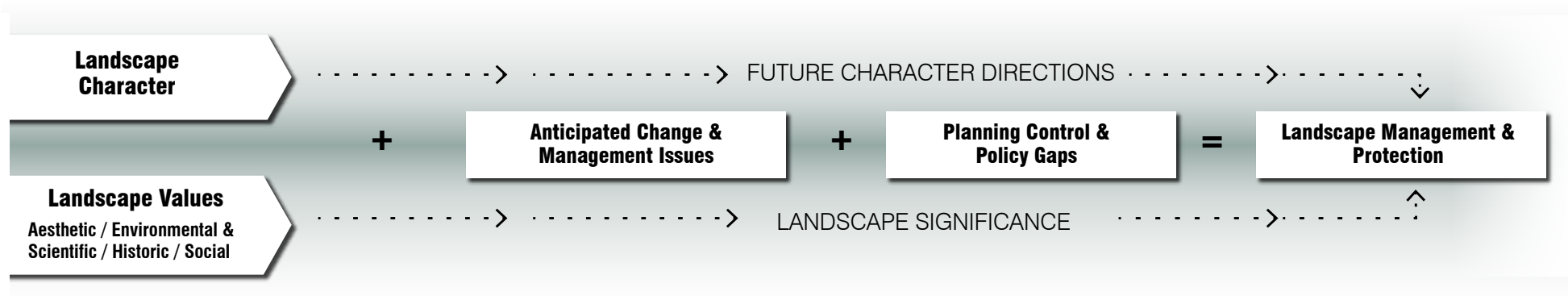
These key elements come together in the ‘formula’ below, around which the studies are structured:

Public Land (Including National and State Parks)

An assessment of landscape character and significance has been undertaken across the entire study area irrespective of land tenure (public or private). This was considered important for completeness and to inform a full comparative strategic assessment of significance across the region.

Land within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone is governed by legislation such as the *Crown Lands (Reserve) Act 1978*, and the *National Parks Act 1975*. This provides the appropriate framework and context for the management of public land, along with any approved incorporated plans that seek to manage these public assets relevant to the purpose of their reservation.

Notwithstanding, this study and its findings provides valuable advice and information for Public Land Managers in managing public assets, and in preparing future revisions to management plans or other guidelines.



Study Outputs

South West Victoria Regional Overview Report

2 Versions:
Executive Summary
Extended Version

Introduction

Study Methodology
Study Outputs
Study Area
Consultation & Community Values

Landscape Character of South West Victoria

Significant Landscapes of South West Victoria

Landscape Protection & Management

Regional Landscape Management
Municipal Toolkits
Proposed Significant Landscape Overlays

Consultation & Community Values Report

1 Document

Consultation & Community Values

Purpose
Stakeholders
Consultation Method

Community Perspectives on the Landscape

Landscape Character / Significance /
Intangible & Non-visual Significance /
Spoiled Landscapes & Threats

Landscape Character Analysis Feedback

Landscape Significance Assessment Feedback

Appendices

South West Victoria Landscape Character Types & Areas Analysis Papers

1 Volume of 51 Papers

Landscape Character Types Analysis Papers:

Overview
Pattern of Viewing
Landscape Values
Change in the Landscape
Future Landscape Character Directions
Landscape Protection & Management
Landscape Management Guidelines

1 per Landscape Character Type

Character Area Analysis Papers:

Overview
Pattern of Viewing
Landscape Values
Landscape Protection & Management

1 per Landscape Character Area

South West Victoria Significant Landscapes & Views Assessment Papers

2 Volumes of 53 Papers

Significant Landscape Assessment Papers

Overview
Significance Rating
Significance Map
Aesthetic Values
Other Cultural Landscape Values

1 per Significant Landscape

Significant Views Assessment Papers

Overview
Significance Rating
Viewshed Map
Aesthetic Values
Other Cultural Landscape Values

1 per Significant View

Municipal Implementation Toolkits

1 Volume of 15 Toolkits

Landscape Character Types & Areas Significant Landscapes & Views

Existing Planning Scheme Provisions

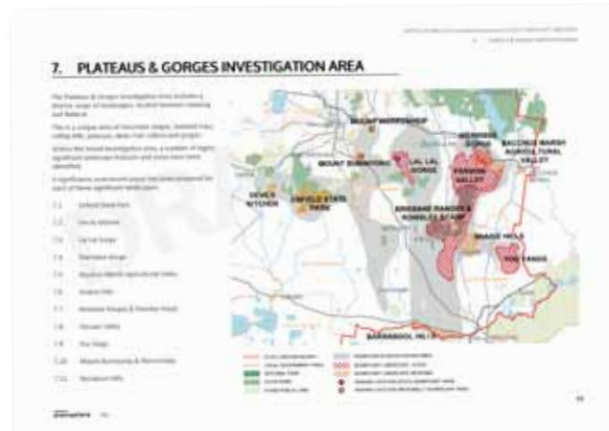
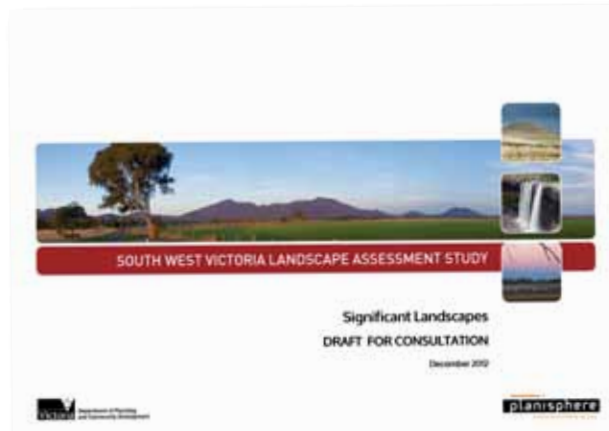
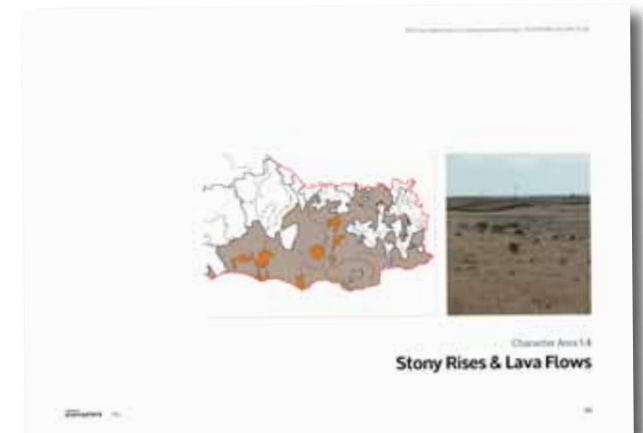
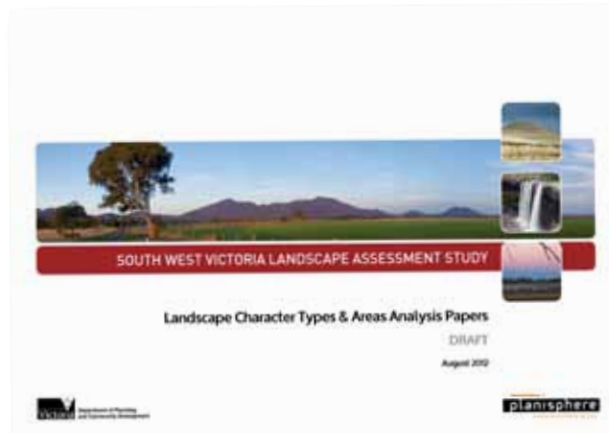
Planning Scheme Recommendations

Appendices

SLO Packages

1 per Municipality

Example Documents



STUDY AREA

The study area for the South West Victoria Landscape Assessment includes all non-urban areas that have not been the subject of previous studies in the region, including 15 municipalities, or parts thereof. (Refer to 'Relationship to Previous Studies' adjacent.)

The northern boundary of the study area follows major roads (with one exception) and municipal boundaries, for simplicity and clarity i.e. from the South Australian border the Wimmera Highway to Horsham; the Western Highway to its intersection with the Ararat municipal boundary; the Ararat municipal boundary; the Pyrenees Highway to Avoca; the Sunraysia Highway, then Greenhill Creek Road to the Hepburn municipal boundary.

The Project Reference Group participants were invited to recommend expansion of the study area boundary where evidence suggested that a potentially significant landscape was located immediately beyond it. While no recommendations were received, the study did examine areas immediately adjacent to ensure full assessment of landscape character and significance. Examples of the identification of significant landscapes beyond the 'formal' study area boundary include the Natimuk Douglas Saline Wetland Depression (Rural City of Horsham) and the Mount Rouse and Mount Napier Lava Flows (Shire of Moyne).

Relationship to Previous Studies

The coastal areas of South West Victoria have been previously assessed as part of the *Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study* (2004) and the *Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study* (2006), as well as the entirety of the Surf Coast Shire in 2007. A landscape assessment study commissioned by the Southern Grampians Shire for the Grampians and its surrounds was also nearing completion at the outset of this study.

Given that the Coastal Spaces work was focussed on the coastline, with efforts concentrated on all landscapes that are visible from the coast, and from which the coast is visible, significant landscapes that were identified within the South West study area that extended into the coastal hinterland were assessed in their entirety. This has resulted in the proposal of protection and management recommendations for landscapes that also formed part of the Coastal Spaces



Study Area Map



CONSULTATION & COMMUNITY VALUES

Community values are sourced through communication and consultation with the people who live or work in, or visit, the study area.

Landscapes hold different values for different people. Some people may enjoy the scenic values and settings of landscapes. Others may appreciate the habitats they provide for wildlife, or their potential for productivity and economic return.

Purpose

A consultation program was developed at the beginning of the study so that the perceptions and values of the community about landscapes could be integrated into the findings and outcomes.

The key objectives of the consultation program were to:

- inform the community, key stakeholders, Councils and other Government departments or agencies about the project and its progress;
- invite their ideas and input at each stage;
- understand the perceptions and values of the wider community in relation to landscape character; and,
- refine and confirm the identification of significant landscapes in the study area.

The consultation program sought the involvement of a broad cross-section of individuals or groups within the community who have extensive knowledge and experience of, and connection to, the South West Victorian landscape.

Stakeholders

Project Reference Groups

Focused engagement was undertaken with two Project Reference Groups who were closely involved in the project. The groups had already been established as part of the Regional Growth Plans project and included representatives from each of the Councils and various State government departments and agencies. They had specialist knowledge, skills, information and resources to add to the project.

Interested Groups & Individuals

Interested community groups and individuals were invited to participate in the project via DPCD's project website, Council websites, local media, direct phone or email contact, or simply word-of-mouth. Project Reference Group members assisted in identifying many of these stakeholders and in disseminating information to this wider audience. Interested parties were invited to participate in the community photographic exercise to provide feedback throughout the project.



Photo of Lake Gnotuk from the northern rim, courtesy of Fiona Morris



Edenhope looking over paddock trees, courtesy of Rachel Farren



Cropping in the foreground of Mt Rouse, image courtesy of Tracey Kruger

Consultation Method

A variety of methods were used in the consultation program for each project stage:

STAGE 1	Analysis & Research	Community Bulletin 1 Project Website set up Project Reference Group meetings round 1
STAGE 2	Landscape Character Analysis	Community Bulletin 2 Community Photo Exercise Project Reference Group meetings round 2 Website updated / feedback invited
STAGE 3	Landscape Significance Assessment	Community Bulletin 3 Project Reference Group meetings round 3 Website updated / feedback invited
STAGE 4	Final Recommendations	Project Reference Group meetings round 4 Website updated

Community Photographic Exercise

A community photographic exercise was undertaken in the first stage of the project to help the study team understand community views and values in relation to landscapes. Participants were invited to submit photos to illustrate their ideas about landscape character, landscape significance, the intangible and non-visual aspects of landscapes and threats to landscapes. The information and photos provided by the community helped confirm and refine the landscape character analysis, landscape significance assessment and implementation recommendations.

Character Analysis & Significance Assessment Feedback

The community and the Project Reference Group provided invaluable feedback throughout the process through their detailed knowledge of specific landscapes. The responses helped refine the papers and confirm the study findings.



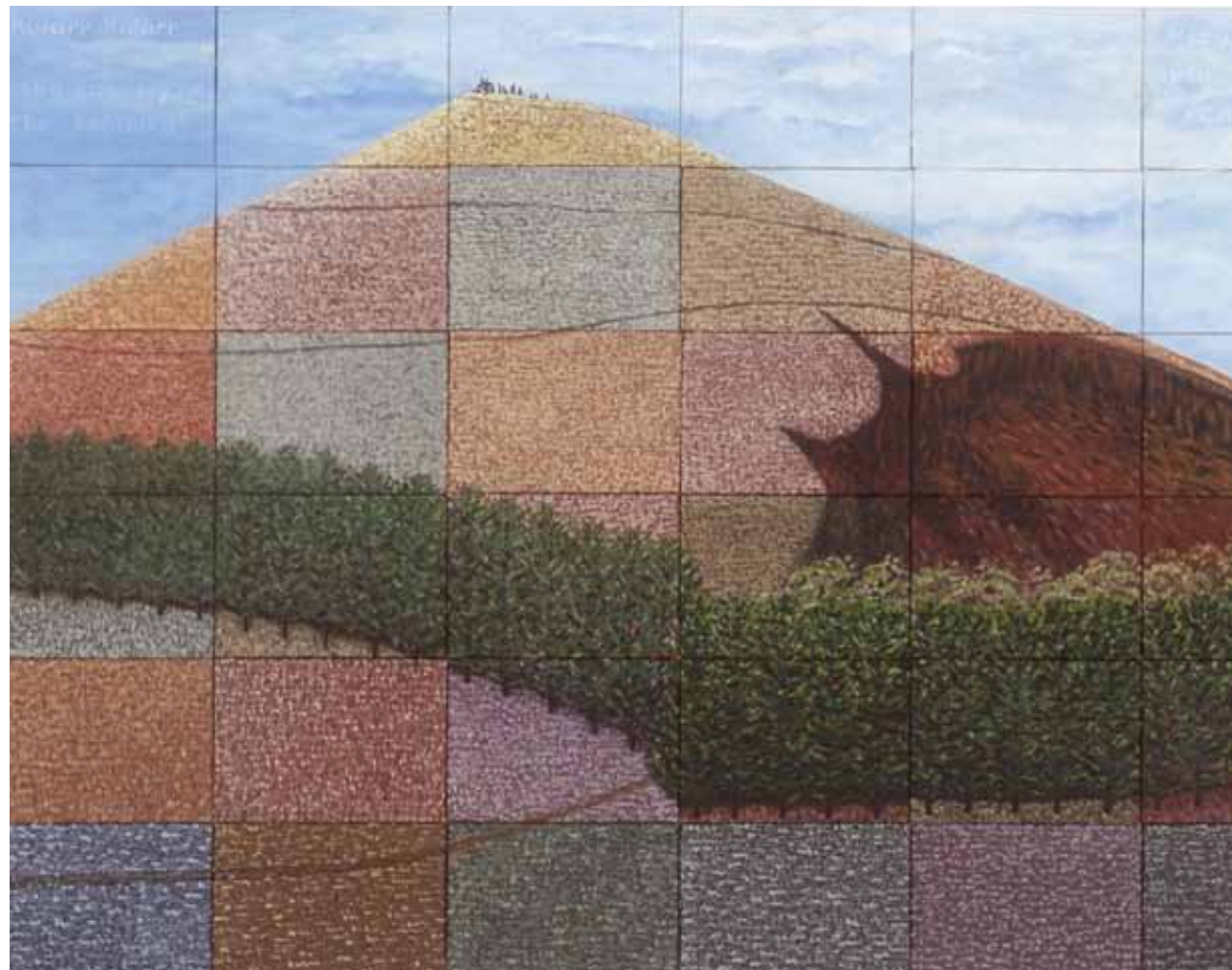
Photo of the Rabbit Wall, courtesy of Andrew Miller



Photo of Mount Elephant, courtesy of Andrew Miller



Photo of Lake Condah courtesy of Joy Elley, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria



Reproduction of 'The once perfect cone', 2005, artwork by Brigid Cole-Adams, acquired by State Library of Victoria, image courtesy of Brigid Cole-Adams



Photo of sheep, farmed for wool and meat, grazing under leaden skies (a winter typical scene), courtesy of Jo Stephens & Kay Paton, Yendon History Group