

16. RECREATION AND TOURISM

16.01 Regional Overview

It is estimated that some three to five million visitors are attracted to the Region each year, with the Dandenong Ranges National Park alone attracting close to one million people. Approximately 70% of the Region's land is held in public ownership, and within this area significant land has been set aside for parks.

The reservoir parks associated with Melbourne's water supply, such as Maroondah and Silvan reservoirs, have been popular for decades as a 'developed' recreation setting. 'Natural' recreation areas are generally found in the forested areas of the ranges surrounding the Yarra Valley and in the Olinda State Forest and at Mt. Donna Buang. Both 'developed' and 'natural' parks within the Region attract thousands of visitors annually.

Two of Victoria's major tourist attractions, the Healesville Sanctuary and the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway, are located within the Region. In addition, there is significant tourist activity associated with the Yarra Valley wine industry. The Yarra Valley's reputation for cool-climate quality wines is spreading, with an increasing recognition of the potential for related eating and overnight accommodation facilities, in select parts of the Region.

In the Dandenong Ranges, the diverse range of cultural attractions, the picturesque gardens, and the contrasting urban-rural landscapes and bushland settings provide an ideal focus for local, interstate and international visitors.

A number of recent recreational trends need to be taken into account in the planning, development and management of the Region's open space. There is evidence of greater interest in unstructured outdoor activities such as walking and cycling within 'natural' settings. Outdoor social activities such as picnics and barbecues have maintained their traditional appeal, particularly for family groups and organisations. As Melbourne continues to grow in area and population, particularly in the South East Growth Area (Berwick and Pakenham), it is expected that the number of Melbourne residents using major parks just beyond the metropolitan area will also grow.

If properly managed, tourism and recreation can have significant economic benefits, particularly if visitors can be encouraged to extend their stays overnight/s. The challenge is to ensure that such gains can be achieved with minimum disruption to the environment, to the amenity of the local area, and to its community.

The Region's greatest range of opportunities for development of recreation and tourism facilities are within the Yarra Valley. However there is a need to carefully plan and coordinate the development of these facilities, to ensure that the Region's most valued assets - its environmental and landscape qualities - are maintained.

This Strategy adopts a positive approach. It integrates environmental objectives with economic and social goals, by encouraging the tourist industry to develop with themes compatible with environmental protection, and by creating jobs for local people.

The Strategy recognises that the industry will be seeking a high degree of amenity, and that the way the Region presents itself will determine the degree of success of the enterprise, and influence the extent of preservation of some of the Region's most important features.

16.02 Regional Goals

The regional goals for Recreation and Tourism Policy are to:

- Facilitate further development of the Region's recreation and tourist attractions and facilities, whilst protecting the environment, the landscape and the amenity of the Region and its residents.
- Encourage coordination of the planning, provision and promotion of recreation and tourism facilities in the Region.
- Encourage a diverse range of tourist activities and facilities in appropriate locations, consistent with identified themes.
- Optimise employment and economic benefits to the Region's residents from appropriate recreation and tourism developments.
- Improve the Region's competitive strengths in tourism, to encourage and provide for an increased number of local, interstate and international overnight visitors, and to increase their average length of stay in the Region.
- Encourage positive attitudes amongst the Region's residents, relevant bodies and local councils towards the development of recreation and tourism in the Region, including the provision of associated education and training opportunities and to provide for public consultation.
- Facilitate resolution of existing problems or deficiencies in tourism and recreation infrastructure, through coordination between Government Departments and other relevant public agencies, Councils and local tourism and recreation bodies.

16.03 General regional policies - coordination

The planning, provision and promotion of recreation and tourism facilities, including those on Public Land, must be coordinated at the regional level.

This is to ensure the recognition of regional and local priorities, to assist in the proper allocation of available resources, and to enable the assessment and addressing of possible impacts on the residents, landscapes and environment of the Region. The opportunity for residents to use such facilities and activities must also be considered

16.04 Protection of the environment, landscapes and resident's amenity

Wherever possible, and for all new developments, recreation and tourism activities must be conducted in appropriate locations in the Region, away from areas where the impacts of such activities could be detrimental to the area's residents or to its environmental and landscape values.

16.05 Visitor effect on environmental capacity

Visitors who do come to the Region need to be enticed to stay for longer periods and day trippers need to be diverted away from the Dandenong Ranges, to areas appropriate for tourism and recreation in the Upper Yarra Valley. This is necessary to reduce the pressures of over use on the important landscape, environmental and visitor attraction values of the Region, particularly in the Dandenong Ranges.

Opportunities for recreation and tourism activities and facilities in the Upper Yarra Valley must be promoted, to increase its attractiveness as an alternative to the Dandenong Ranges.

Strategies to assist in the implementation of this policy include:

- promotion of short-break accommodation opportunities, as a means of spreading visitor loads, particularly in the Dandenong Ranges and other overloaded areas;
- promotion of activities and facilities which entice overnight stays, such as nocturnal animal observation at the Healesville Sanctuary and Koori (Aboriginal) cultural activities at the proposed Aboriginal Cultural Centre;
- development of selected wineries and vineyards as tourist attractions in the Region, which highlight the Region's viticulture and wine making industry, and the provision of information and interpretation on these activities;
- development of Mt. Donna Buang as an all-season tourist destination, with an emphasis on the nearest snow-play area to Melbourne, its magnificent scenery, and the opportunity for healthy outdoor activities, provided that the adjacent Watts River and Maroondah catchment are properly protected;
- development of a variety of tourist/visitor accommodation, including low-key farm holiday opportunities and associated outdoor activities;
- development of attractions associated with timber getting and gold mining;
- re-establishment of the historic rail service from Lilydale to Healesville, with the operation of old steam trains, and the re-development of Healesville Railway Station as an attraction featuring transportation history and related matters;
- development of roadside signs in appropriate locations to guide day-trippers to other tourist locations away from the Dandenong Ranges;
- development of and crafts activities related to established themes; and
- establishment of restaurants, tearooms and coffee houses reflecting the hospitality trade of the area.

16.06 Recreation and tourism in Township Policy Areas

The provision of recreation and tourism facilities and services in Township Policy Areas must be carried out in a manner which:

- ensures that any new facilities and/or services are located and designed to be compatible with the current and future needs of local residents and visitors, and
- maximises economic and other benefits to the local community, while minimising adverse impacts on the amenity of local residents, and on the area's landscape character and environment.

16.07 Recreation and tourism in Landscape Living Policy Areas

A limited range of recreational and tourist opportunities may be allowed in appropriate locations within Landscape Living Policy Areas, provided they are in keeping with and enhance the overall character of the area, and they maintain the visual, environmental quality and residential amenity of the area.

16.08 Recreation and tourism in Rural Policy Areas

A diverse range of recreational and tourism opportunities are to be encouraged in appropriate locations in Rural Policy Areas provided that they are in keeping with, and enhance, the existing overall character of the area and the maintenance of rural and agricultural pursuits, visual and environmental quality and residential amenity.

16.09 Promotion of tourism and recreation

The Region should be promoted for tourism and recreation through major themes, which have been identified as major strengths and which reflect the values important to the Region and its visitors. These themes include:

- Lifestyle experiences, health, good living;
- Rural environment (space, vistas, agriculture);
- Wineries;
- Natural environment (mountains, forests, rivers and streams, flora and fauna);
- Major attractions (e.g. Healesville Sanctuary, Puffing Billy Railway, Upper Yarra Dam, Mt Donna Buang), and
- History and Heritage (e.g. timber, gold, water, guesthouses, pioneer skills).

16.10 Tourist Routes

Appropriately signed and located tourist routes should be developed as a means of informing the public and to:

- assist in planning for recreation and tourism facilities;
- assist in the protection of environmentally and landscape sensitive areas;
- aid in interpreting the historic and cultural values of the area; and
- avoid residential areas where traffic conflicts could arise.

The designation of tourist routes must include consultation with Vic Roads, local Councils and, where appropriate, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Melbourne Parks and Waterways and other relevant bodies.

16.11 Information and interpretation

Tourism and recreation information and interpretation facilities for the Upper Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges (including appropriate signage) need to be provided in appropriate locations, to inform visitors of the nature and location of tourism and recreation facilities and services available.

In the information provided on the Dandenong Ranges, visitors must be made aware of alternative facilities and attractions to the Dandenong Ranges in other parts of the Region.

Roadside signs and other directional information, particularly those directing visitors to tourist and other attractions, should ensure that they are not a hazard to motorists, pedestrians or property, and that the important landscape, environmental and amenity values of the Region are not detrimentally affected.

16.12 Roadside facilities

The planning and provision on road sides for wayside stopping places, picnic and scenic lookout points, and recreation facilities, must be carried out in a manner which causes minimal adverse impact on landscape values, Sites of Natural and Cultural Significance, traffic movements and the residents of the Region:

16.13 Tourist and visitor accommodation and related facilities

Visitors to the Region, particularly overnight visitors, should be encouraged to stay longer, in order to stimulate local economies, to provide employment opportunities for local communities, and to spread the visitor loadings over longer periods of time.

Councils should encourage and facilitate the provision of a range of tourist and visitor accommodation, in appropriate localities, in order to encourage tourists and visitors to stay in the Region for longer periods of time.

Preference in implementing this policy should be given to, accommodation associated with other attractions; improvement or redevelopment of existing accommodation facilities, additional small scale developments, such as bed and breakfast establishments; low cost accommodation such as camping facilities; and accommodation in association with appropriately located restaurants.

16.14 Caravan parks

Land which is proposed to be used for a caravan park must either be located within:

- a Township Policy Area or a Rural Policy Area and be included within a zone that specifically provides for such uses; or
- the townships of Warburton, Healesville and Yarra Glen, where the use may be allowed subject to a planning permit.

16.15 Tourist accommodation

The use or development of land for tourist accommodation must be controlled to protect the amenity of residents and the visual and environmental capacity of the area, and to ensure consideration is given to the primary purposes of the relevant policy area for the land.

To achieve this, a planning permit must be required to develop new tourist accommodation establishments. However, planning schemes may allow bed and breakfast style tourist accommodation in any policy area, without planning approval, provided that:

- it is temporary tourist accommodation provided by the resident of a dwelling;
- no more than 5 tourists are accommodated at any one time;
- no new building is constructed; and
- specified car parking and advertising sign requirements are met.

16.16 Hotels

Hotels may only be allowed within commercial or activity centres in Township Policy Areas, and must be controlled to protect the amenity of residents, and the visual and environmental quality of the area.

16.17 Restaurants

Land may be used or developed for a restaurant, subject to planning permit, only where:

- it is in a Township Policy Area; or
- it is in a commercial or activity centre in any other policy area; or
- it is used in conjunction with agriculture, natural systems, outdoor recreation facility, rural industry or winery; and
- it will be designed and sited to protect the amenity of residents and the visual and environmental quality of the areas, and to achieve the primary purpose of the policy area within which the land is situated.

16.18 Roadside Stalls

Land within a Rural Policy Area may be used for a roadside stall, subject to planning permit and provided that:

- only primary produce normally grown on the land on which the stall is situated, including fruit, vegetables, flowers and other farm produce, is to be sold; and
- the location of the roadside stall is appropriate, having regard to traffic considerations; the adequate provision of off-road car parking; and that advertising signs are designed and located so that they do not detract from the landscape character of the area.

16.19 General use and development policies for tourism and recreation facilities

In order to conform with these policies, and to ensure the sustainability of environmental amenity and opportunities for recreation and tourism, any use or development for recreation or tourism purposes, which requires a planning permit, must comply with the following:

- Any undesirable effects of the use or development by reason of its appearance, discharge of wastes into the environment, excessive noise or traffic generation, or the like, must be minimised and/or controlled.
- The site must be both suitable for and capable of supporting the use or development.
- Adequate car parking for the use or development must be provided on the site;

- Any advertisements or signs must be located and designed so that they do not detract from the landscape character or unnecessarily distract passing traffic.
- The intrinsic value of existing native vegetation and its value as habitat for wildlife must be protected.
- The use or development must, if within a Township Policy Area, be connected to a reticulated sewerage system or, if in any other policy area, be capable of properly treating all wastewaters and disposing of effluent within its site.
- The proposed use or development must not contribute to an over-development of a particular area.

16.20 Transport modes

The use of transport modes other than private motor vehicles, for recreation and tourism activities, must be encouraged in order to lessen any adverse effects on the Region's environment and residential amenity, and to reduce traffic demands on the Region's road system.

16.21 Primary purpose - Recreation and Tourism on Public Land

Planning, provision and management of recreation facilities on Public Land is to be undertaken by the appropriate Government Department or public authority.

The primary purpose of policies for recreation and tourism on Public Land is to manage, maintain, and where necessary, improve existing recreation and tourism facilities, and to provide additional facilities and opportunities for a variety of recreational and tourism activities, whilst ensuring that any adverse effects on natural resources, water quality, landscape, environmental character and environmental values, residential amenity and roads, are minimised.

16.22 Mt. Dandenong Ridge Area

Consistent with the general recreation and tourism policies, the further provision and/or expansion of recreation or tourism facilities on Public Land in the Mt. Dandenong Ridge Area must be limited.

Government Departments and public authorities and Councils responsible for the management of recreation and tourism facilities within the Mt. Dandenong Ridge Area, must ensure that there is generally no further provision of such facilities within this area, but at the same time, recognise the possibility for upgrading and relocating existing facilities.

16.23 Promotion of Public Land for recreation

Government Departments and Public Authorities responsible for the management of recreation facilities must, when preparing management plans, make provision for the establishment or continued use of appropriate recreation facilities in the Lysterfield Lake Park and other appropriate public land areas beyond the Mount Dandenong main ridge. These plans should also provide for the publishing of brochures and other material promoting the use of these areas for suitable recreational activities.

Camping grounds and camping opportunities for bushwalkers, cyclists, kayakers and rafters should only be allowed on Public Land or in appropriate locations near linear trails or near appropriate rivers.

16.24 The Yarra River System

The Yarra River and its main tributaries below the major water supply reservoirs/dams must be recognised as a special recreational feature, and encouragement must be given to the provision of opportunities, where appropriate, for a variety of recreational activities, including walking tracks, picnic areas, and access for water-based activities.

The Department of Conservation Natural Resources, Melbourne Parks & Waterways, Council and other relevant public agencies, in consultation with Council, must review and coordinate the use of water frontages in the Yarra River catchment within the Region.

16.25 Disused Lilydale-Warburton Railway Reserve

Staged development of the Lilydale-Warburton Railway Reserve and other disused railway reserves for walking, cycling, horse riding and other compatible activities will be encouraged, without prejudice to the possible future use of these reserves for transport purposes if required.

Government Departments and Public Authorities which own/control and manage the disused Lilydale - Warburton Railway Reserve must support the implementation of, and give effect to, the 'Lilydale-Warburton Railway Reserve Recreation Management Plan July 1988' when considering works or undertakings on the Reserve or when considering the disposal of any land which is part of, or associated with, this Railway Reserve.

16.26 Disused Lilydale-Healesville Railway Reserve

Government Departments and Public Authorities which own/control and manage the Lilydale-Healesville Railway must, should this railway not be re-established as a commuter rail service, assist in the development of a strategy for its use as a 'tourist' railway.

The use of the railway reserve for purposes other than a commuter rail service or a 'tourist' railway, may be allowed only when such use is compatible with the protection of the reserve's potential for use as a linear recreation reserve (similar to the Lilydale-Warburton Railway).

16.27 Linear Recreation Opportunities

The development of a regional system of walking, horse riding and bicycle tracks, in a variety of landscapes connecting townships and other private land with Public Land, must be encouraged and coordinated.

In planning and developing recreation facilities and systems within the Region, Government Departments, public authorities, Councils and other agencies responsible for the management of those recreation facilities and systems must consider the approved recommendations of the Land Conservation Council, and must have regard to:

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- the possibility of including disused linear features such as the Silvan aqueduct, disused railway reserves, road reserves, stream reserves and utility easements to create a network of walking, horse riding and bicycle tracks throughout the Region;
- where appropriate, the feasibility of leasing private land for purposes of linear linkages with Public Land;
- the need for such facilities, and their integration with existing facilities in particular locations, and
- the effects on local residents, on the environment, and on the landscape of the area in which any such facility is to be situated.