

## **21.03 STRATEGIC VISION AND KEY ISSUES**

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### **21.03-1 Strategic vision**

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#### **French Island**

*A strong community that protects, conserves and enhances the environmental values and natural systems of the island whilst successfully balancing rural land use diversification.*

The key themes for French Island are addressed in Clauses 21.04-21.10.

#### **Sandstone Island**

*To protect and conserve the land in accordance with the Island's restructure plan, environmental and coastal constraints and isolation.*

The key themes for Sandstone Island are addressed in Clause 21.11.

#### **Elizabeth Island**

*To conserve Elizabeth Island as a self sustaining tourism facility in accordance with the environmental significance of the surrounding Western Port Bay.*

The key themes for Elizabeth Island are addressed in Clause 21.12.

### **21.03-2 Key issues**

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#### **French Island**

Key issues which influence use and development are based on the historic nature of uses and activities, the present day situation and the potential for change in the future. The key issues for French Island are focussed around the following themes:

#### **Settlement, population and housing**

- The Island has maintained a stable permanent and part-time population since the McLeod Prison Farm closed in 1975.
- The settlement pattern is scattered across the Island, with clusters of houses in the restructure areas of Tankerton Estate and Bullock and Decoy Swamp, and dispersed housing in the remaining rural areas.
- The Island's infrastructure and environmental constraints limit future settlement and housing opportunities.
- The Island's isolation contributes to the unique and valued Island lifestyle and has created a 'stand alone' but not self sufficient community, as most goods and services need to be sought from the mainland.
- It is important to protect the rural landscape which contributes to the Island's visual, cultural and heritage values, from inappropriate pressures of use and development.

#### **The environment**

- The following lead organisations and registered environmental databases have identified different environmental aspects of French Island as having high significance, which are described in more detail at Clause 21.05:
  - National Trust of Australia

- Ramsar Convention
- State botanical significance (Victorian)
- National zoological significance (Australian).
- The French Island National Park and French Island Marine National Park play an important role in conserving and protecting the Island's natural environment.
- The Island has areas of environmental, landscape, agricultural, cultural and recreational significance that should be protected for the benefit of the local and wider community.
- The whole of the Island has important and unique environmental qualities, including a high number of rare or threatened flora and fauna. The Island's isolation contributes to its environmental significance.
- The Island is susceptible to wildfire due to its type and extent of vegetation coverage.
- The impacts of climate change on the Island and the waters of Western Port Bay may affect future land use and development, particularly in coastal areas.

### **Economic development**

- The Island has limited ability to sustain commercial activities due to the low permanent and non-permanent population and relatively low tourist numbers.
- There is some potential for new tourism ventures, however these need to be sensitive to the importance of maintaining agricultural practices on the Island.
- New tourism ventures may result in an increased number of visitors to the Island, which may subsequently impact on environmental values and infrastructure constraints.

### **Resource management**

- Grazing of livestock is the predominant farming activity carried out on the Island and provides the main source of income for the majority of the Island's permanent population.
- The Island's access, isolation and infrastructure constraints are economically inhibiting factors that impact on the viability of a range of rural activities and the ability to diversify rural interests.
- Tourism and other non-agricultural activities in the rural areas should be balanced with the need to protect viable farming activities.

### **Heritage and built form**

- The Island contains a number of important early settlement sites and buildings as well as sites of Aboriginal significance. The historical farming practices and settlement pattern also contribute to the Island's heritage. These need to be protected for the benefit of the local and wider community.
- The Island's environmental qualities support the application of sustainable development practices in the built form.

### **Transport**

- The Island is accessed via ferry, which carries both passengers and vehicles. Maintaining this access is crucial both for visitors to the Island, and for the community seeking services and facilities on the mainland.
- The Island's unsealed road network limits accessibility and movement around the Island, but also contributes to the unique and valued Island lifestyle.

- Movement around the Island is predominantly by car.
- Visitors to the Island must obtain a permit from Parks Victoria of the French Island Community Association to bring a vehicle on to the Island.

### **Infrastructure**

- Community services and facilities on French Island are limited due to low population levels, however the primary school, sports ground and community hall play important roles in providing the Island with a sense of community.
- The Parks Victoria Office and radio link to the main land provide services to the protection of, and communication to and from the Island.
- Other community services and facilities need to be sought from communities on the mainland.
- The Island has no reticulated services. The extent of local infrastructure includes an unsealed road network, jetty, telephone service and small community tip.

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### **Sandstone Island**

- Sandstone Island contains limited infrastructure and is occupied by a single dwelling and shed only. There are no commercial or tourism facilities and, given the Island's access, isolation and infrastructure constraints, there are limited opportunities to provide such facilities.
- The Island's natural environment is important due to its location within Western Port Bay.

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### **Elizabeth Island**

- Elizabeth Island's limited infrastructure provides for tourism accommodation and residence. Any opportunities to expand the current activities on the island must be considered within the Island's environmental and isolation constraints.
- The Island's natural environment is important due to its location within Western Port Bay.

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### **Strategic Framework Plan**

The strategic framework for French Island is guided by its existing pattern of land use and development. French Island's unique conditions, including its stable population levels, limited access, isolation, infrastructure constraints and environmental qualities, denotes the limited capacity for change. However, various new uses and developments can potentially be accommodated on the Island in many locations and particularly in the southwest, in accordance with its environmental context. The broad strategic directions for land use planning in French Island, Sandstone Island and Elizabeth Island are illustrated in the Strategic Framework Plan.

**French Island, Sandstone Island and Elizabeth Island Strategic Framework Plan**

