

## 21.04 ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

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This clause provides local content to support Clause 13 (Environmental Risks) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Specific references to individual towns are also included in Clause 21.11 (Local Areas).

### 21.04-1 Climate change

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Climate change is an issue that affects every aspect of everyday lives and must be addressed by every level of government. In Australia, local governments are able to directly affect up to 50% of all greenhouse gas emissions by undertaking energy efficiency and greenhouse abatement projects and supporting the community to do the same.

Climate change will impact on many aspects of the environment including flora and fauna, biodiversity, agriculture and land use, and will require strategic re-thinking about settlement, particularly in highly vulnerable areas.

Council has adopted a Sustainable Resource Management Strategy that seeks to address climate change issues, including energy and water use reductions.

#### Key issues

- Addressing climate change.
- Minimising greenhouse gas emissions.

#### Objective 1

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### Strategies

- Ensure that Council is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Facilitate sustainable communities through careful strategic planning.
- Evaluate use and development proposals with clear regard for climate change implications where relevant.

### 21.04-2 Floodplains

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The catchments of the various rivers and streams within Mitchell include areas of flood prone land, where flooding has historically caused substantial damage to the natural and built environment. Floods are naturally occurring events and the inherent functions of the floodplains to convey and store floodwater should be recognised and preserved.

Flooding imposes substantial costs on individuals and the community. While significant costs are incurred by direct damage to public and private property, indirect costs to the community such as loss of productivity, displacement of residents, closure of roads, trauma and ill health are also significant. Notwithstanding these significant impacts, natural flooding of floodplains and their associated wetlands provides essential breeding habitats for bird and aquatic species, and promotes the health of rivers and floodplains.

It is evident that the impact of floods is increasing due to land use and vegetation changes, in particular:

- Raised earthworks (including roadworks, levees and farm channels) which have reduced natural flood storage, obstructed and/or redistributed flood flows, and increased flow velocities and levels.
- Urban expansion in floodplains which has reduced flood storage, obstructed flood flows and increased the risk to life, health and safety to occupants of the floodplain.

Sound floodplain management is the critical means by which the economic, social and environmental risks associated with floodplain use and development can be minimised. This level of management is to be provided by the *Mitchell Local Floodplain Development Plan, Goulburn River Precinct, September 2003* which provides a performance-based approach for decision making that reflects local issues and best practice in floodplain management. In the south of the Shire in the Port Phillip and Western Port region, Melbourne Water is the floodplain and drainage manager.

### **Key issues**

- Maintaining natural environmental processes within floodplains.
- Protecting the community from the economic, social and environmental risks associated with flooding.
- Overland flooding.

### **Objective 1**

To sustainably manage floodplains.

### **Strategies**

- Discourage raised earthworks that reduce natural flood storage, obstruct and/or redistribute flood flows, and increase flow velocities and levels.
- Discourage urban expansion within floodplains that reduces flood storage, obstructs flood flows and increases the risk to life, health and safety.

## **21.04-3**

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### **Soil degradation**

Much of Mitchell is highly susceptible to land degradation problems, particularly the steep granite and sedimentary areas. Degradation currently being experienced includes erosion, a rising saline watertable, and reduced water quality. The impacts of climate change, including higher temperatures, extended periods of drought and more severe storm conditions will further degrade sensitive areas.

Clearing, overgrazing and loss of native perennial pasture has led to increased soil erosion. Some areas, such as the north west of the Shire, the Tallarook Ranges, Kilmore East hills and the outskirts of the Seymour and Broadford townships have potential erosion issues and need to be managed in a way that addresses these problems in the long term.

The clearing of trees and other native vegetation species, particularly on the steeper sedimentary hills, has increased groundwater recharge, resulting in a rising saline watertable and saline discharge areas. Land capability mapping has identified that all land north of the Divide could be subject to the risk of salinity if indiscriminate removal of native vegetation is undertaken.

### **Key issues**

- Avoiding land degradation associated with erosion, a rising saline watertable and reduced water quality.

### **Objective 1**

To ensure that the use and development of land does not cause significant land disturbance.

#### **Strategies**

- Minimise the need for earthworks on land with a slope greater than 20%.
- Minimise the removal of native vegetation on land with a slope greater than 20% .

### **Objective 2**

To minimise land degradation.

#### **Strategies**

- Minimise soil erosion, vegetation loss, run-off, saline discharge and effluent release into watercourses.
- Discourage the development of land in rural areas with a greater than 20% slope.
- Ensure that the use and development of land with a greater than 20% slope takes into account environmental constraints such as erosion.

### **Policy guidelines**

#### **Application requirements**

- An application to subdivide or develop land under the Erosion Management Overlay must be accompanied by information evaluating the erosion risk on the site, including:
  - A site assessment plan which incorporates a detailed land capability evaluation to be conducted by an appropriately qualified land capability specialist.
  - A detailed environmental management plan which includes proposals for the ongoing maintenance of soil stability, where necessary.
  - A plan containing a building envelope, indicating that the building envelope is not subject to high or severe erosion hazard.
  - A plan showing that appropriate access and servicing of the site or building envelope will not result in erosion or landslip.
  - Evidence that development and works will not increase the level of erosion risk on the site.

#### **Exercise of discretion**

- The comments of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries will be sought where sites have demonstrated land degradation problems.

#### **Decision guidelines**

- When deciding on an application to use, subdivide or develop land or carry out works the following matters will be considered, as appropriate:
  - The relevant Land Capability Mapping.
  - The advice of any relevant land management agency.

**21.04-4 Noise and air**

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Noise and air pollution affect the natural environment and standard of living. While many of the controls relating to noise and air pollution are administered by the Environment Protection Agency, Council assists in enforcing some of these controls through the planning scheme and local laws.

**Key issues**

- Protecting the community and the environment from the impacts of noise and air pollution.

**Objective 1**

To reduce noise and air pollution.

**Strategies**

- Ensure appropriate planning permit conditions, such as hours of operation and building setbacks are applied and enforced to address noise and air pollution.

**21.04-5 Bushfire**

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Extensive areas of the Shire are identified as being prone to bushfires, including in and around Mt Disappointment State Forest, Tallarook Ranges and the Puckapunyal Army Base. The impacts of a bushfire on life and property are influenced by factors including the subdivision pattern, availability of reticulated water, proximity to vegetation and community capacity. Bushfire can also impact on water quality.

**Key issues**

- Identifying areas prone to bushfire.
- Applying design, siting and subdivision standards in bushfire prone areas.
- Impacts of bushfire on water quality.

**Objective 1**

To minimise the risk to life, property and the environment from bushfire.

**Strategies**

- Ensure that the design, siting and layout of subdivision increase protection from fire.
- Ensure that use and development include adequate fire protection measures.