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STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Settlement

Large settlements

Sale, Wurruk and Longford (combined population of about 15,800 people) have developed inter-dependent roles and together they form the regional centre of Wellington, providing for diverse commercial, cultural, health and industrial activities.

Sale is the principal town and main growth settlement in Wellington. It is Wellington's main employment, education, medical and commercial centre and caters to a large catchment of smaller townships.

Important attributes of Sale include its character which is derived from its heritage buildings; the Port of Sale Cultural and Civic Precinct; and its farming hinterland. Energy resources in Bass Strait and the RAAF Base East Sale support employment in Sale.

Wurruk is distinguished by contemporary infrastructure and its position on a ridgeline overlooking the Thomson River floodplains.

Longford is a small rural living settlement south of Sale and is characterised by single dwellings set amongst gardens on large allotments.

Maffra (4,300) is an administrative, commercial and social centre for surrounding farms and communities. A productive rural hinterland supports rural industry in the town. It is characterised by a town centre that features a tree-lined boulevard with a variety of specialty shops and cafes.

Heyfield (2,000) is built on timber industries and tourism being the major hardwood sawmilling centre of Victoria and the gateway to Lake Glenmaggie, the Avon Wilderness Park and Alpine National Parks. It is characterised by large vegetated recreation areas, spacious streetscapes with native vegetation and predominately low-scale built form.

Stratford (2,600) is located on the Princes Highway between Sale and Bairnsdale on the Avon River. It is developing a specialisation as an arts and culture stopover and provides essential services for the local community and visitors. It is characterised by its association with the Avon River, native street trees and single-storey scale, although taller buildings do exist, including the State Bank building.

Rosedale (1,600) is a highway town on the Latrobe River which is developing as a recognised tourist stopover. It is characterised by active frontages to Princes Street, heritage buildings, the intact Crown grid subdivision pattern and tree-lined, wide road reserves that provide a visual connection to the rural surrounds.

Yarram (2,100) is the primary commercial and cultural centre for the rural areas and small settlements in the south-western part of Wellington and capitalises on its heritage for regional tourism and local recreational opportunities. The South Gippsland Highway forms the central spine of the township and includes a defined town centre characterised by heritage buildings. Residential areas are generally located to the east and south of the town centre and maintain a consistent grid subdivision pattern.

Most larger settlements within Wellington are connected to reticulated services except for low density residential properties that use on-site effluent disposal systems. Some rural towns including Maffra and Yarram have drainage issues.

Council's strategic directions for 'Large Settlements' are to:

- Support higher population and growth and reinforce the regional centre role of Sale.
- Support Wurruk and Longford as secondary settlements to complement Sale by providing diversity and choice in urban and rural living and opportunities for new industry, local services and facilities.

- Support moderate population and growth within Maffra, Rosedale, Stratford Yarram and Heyfield to maintain their roles as local service centres.
- Encourage rural living areas in proximity to developed settlements to utilise existing social, cultural and infrastructure facilities.

Other settlements

There are a number of other inland and coastal townships in Wellington that are minor rural service centres with limited reticulated sewerage, drainage, community or recreational facilities. These include the following townships:

Alberton (260) is a small rural service centre with an established timber industry. It is characterised by its low lying farmland context and low-scale dwellings set close to the South Gippsland Highway. The Victoria Hotel is a prominent local landmark.

Briagolong (1,100) is a small town with a service role to the local community and nearby tourist uses. It is characterised by low-scale dwellings set into a well vegetated urban environment. The town centre is not formalised and commercial activities predominately located on Maffra-Briagolong Road.

Dargo (100) is a remote rural community supporting outdoor recreational tourism in the surrounding National Parks. It is characterised as a mountain village with a stylised, rustic built form using earthen materials and colours. It also includes groves of established walnut trees and informal open spaces which connect the urban area to the surrounding forested hills and valley pastures. Low rural fencing and large lot sizes contribute to the rural character.

Licola (30) is a remote rural locality providing limited retail and communication services to nearby camping grounds, isolated rural dwellings and tourists. It is characterised as a mountain village with a collection of isolated buildings set among native vegetation on the Macalister River. Local rural fencing and informal gardens contribute to a sense of open space.

Council's strategic directions for 'Other settlements' are to:

- Support limited population and growth within other inland townships as minor settlements or tourism nodes.
- Encourage rural living areas in proximity to developed settlements to utilise existing social, cultural and infrastructure facilities.

Coastal settlements

Wellington is also characterised by several coastal settlements along the Ninety Mile Beach coastal area and the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park. Most of these settlements experience a large population influx during holiday periods.

There is a legacy of about 11,000 subdivided lots along the Ninety Mile Beach without connection to reticulated water and sewerage systems. State government controls have been in place since 1979 to restrict development in these areas due to a lack of infrastructure and impacts on the coastal environs and Gippsland Lakes system. The *Wellington Coast Subdivision Strategy: The Honeysuckles to Paradise Beach* (GHD, February 2007) identifies the limits to growth along this sensitive coastal strip.

Coastal settlements in Wellington include:

Loch Sport (800) is a growing coastal town with local commercial and community facilities catering to outdoor recreation, particularly water-oriented activities. It is a linear town with single and double storey dwellings of varied sizes set among coastal forest and bushland.

Port Albert and Palmerston is a small port town of special heritage significance in Gippsland. It is a tourist destination with commercial and recreational marinas, retail and services. It is characterised by its cultural heritage and heritage building stock. The town retains much of its original form, layout and aspect.

Golden Beach and Paradise Beach are low density coastal lifestyle settlements with limited utility services. Golden Beach includes a limited range of commercial and community facilities which serve both settlements. Both settlements are characterised by low maintenance modest dwellings set amongst coastal heathland. There is no reticulated water or sewerage and only limited areas are connected to electricity.

Seaspray has an established role as a tourist destination with a caravan park, boat launching facilities and lifesaving club. It is characterised by an avenue of cypress pines, wide road reserves, relatively small allotments and examples of pre-war beach holiday development.

The Honeysuckles is a small residential dormitory settlement. It is characterised by formed gravel roads providing access to modest weatherboard or hardiplank dwellings set within the coast heathland.

McLoughlins Beach is a small residential settlement dependent on surrounding townships for commercial and community facilities. There is a major boat launching and mooring facility located to the east of the township. It is characterised by its distinctive setting of waterways and mangrove wetland. Urban form is varied with an indistinct housing stock, partially sealed road network and informal open swale drains.

Manns Beach is a small fishing and holiday settlement, dependent on surrounding towns for commercial and community facilities. Its urban form is characterised by modest single and two storey dwellings with large sheds set in simple gardens. Unsealed roads and low scale vegetation expose the settlement to views and coastal weather.

Woodside Beach is a small holiday village settlement dependent on surrounding towns for commercial and community facilities. It supports access to a patrolled section of Ninety Mile Beach. It has two distinct areas – established residential homes set in coastal vegetation on undulating terrain, and low density residential estate on an exposed and un-vegetated ridge line.

Robertsons Beach is a small low-lying residential settlement reliant on Port Albert and Yarram for commercial and community facilities. It is characterised by its native heathland setting, unsealed roads and open drains.

Council's strategic directions for 'Coastal settlement' are to:

- Support limited population and growth within coastal townships as minor settlements or tourism nodes.
- Limit unplanned development outside the defined settlement boundaries along the Ninety Mile Beach.

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Environmental and landscape values

Owing to native vegetation clearance, many of Wellington's native species and communities are listed as highly significant and threatened including the Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland vegetation community. Remnant native vegetation in agricultural landscapes form important bio-links between the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves, the Gippsland Lakes, Ninety Mile Beach, the Strzelecki Ranges and Nooramunga Inlet.

Many wetlands in Wellington are recognised by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. These natural environments filter water into the Gippsland Lakes, Heyfield Wetlands and the Corner Inlet/Nooramunga Marine National Park. The Thomson and Latrobe Rivers and other waterways support ecologically significant stands of remnant vegetation and form part of a network wildlife corridors and recreation routes for walking and cycling.

Wellington's rural areas contain some of the most ecologically important and diverse areas in Victoria, including the Gippsland Lakes, the Ninety Mile Beach and the Alpine National Park. Significant environmental landscape issues for Wellington's rural areas include water quality, inappropriate residential development and protection of vegetation habitat and neighbouring wetlands and coastal parks. Infrastructure development can have significant detrimental effects on these landscapes.

Within the Ninety Mile Beach area, geologically recent coastal and alluvial landforms have formed a series of narrow spits and peninsulas that separate the Bass Strait Coast at Ninety Mile Beach from the extensive inland lakes system of Gippsland Lakes and these coastal landscapes are of state importance.

Council's strategic directions for 'Environment and landscape values' are to:

- Respect the ecological importance of the Gippsland Lakes and coastal environment of the region.
- Require development to be subordinate to the natural landscape character and significance of the Ninety Mile Beach and the Gippsland Lakes.
- Avoid development in towns and settlements where it threatens the water quality and ecosystem values of the Gippsland Lakes and coastline.

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Environmental risks and amenity

There are several environmental risks that may impact on land use and development decisions, including bushfire, flooding, salinity, drought and land degradation.

Climate change has the potential to significantly increase the frequency and severity of these events, with coastal areas being particularly vulnerable as these areas may be subject to inundation from future sea level rises.

Salinity, acid sulphate soils, sedimentation and high nutrient loads may pose threats to farmland, infrastructure, the built environment of coastal towns and wetlands around Sale and Lake Wellington in particular. Salinity and land degradation can create issues for the viability of agriculture as well as reduce the quality of the environment.

Riverine flooding affects a number of townships, resulting in large areas of rural land being inundated.

In the Gippsland Lakes, flooding can result from high inflows from the incoming river systems as well as high tides and storm conditions off the coast and can take weeks to recede, with properties being isolated.

The coastline is subject to coastal inundation as a result of storm surge. Flooding in coastal areas will occur more frequently and at higher levels as sea-level rise into the future due to climate change.

The following locations are subject to significant flood risk.

- Areas of urban land at Loch Sport, Seaspray, Rosedale, Sale, McLoughlins Beach, Tinamba, Boisdale, Newry and Port Albert.
- Areas of rural land along the:
 - Dargo River at Dargo
 - Avon River from Valencia Creek to Lake Wellington.
 - Tarra River downstream to Tarraville.
 - Thomson River and Rainbow Creek from the Cowwarr Weir to the confluence with the Macalister River.
 - Macalister River from the Glenmaggie Weir to the Thomson River confluence.
 - Thomson River from the Macalister River confluence to the confluence with the Latrobe River south of Sale.
 - Lower Latrobe River from Flynn to Lake Wellington.

- Boggy Creek around Tinamba and Riverslea.
- Albert and Jack Rivers.
- Rural areas adjacent to the Ninety Mile Beach from Sesapray to Loch Sport.

Council's strategic directions for 'Environmental risks and amenity' are to:

- Limit development in towns and settlements where it will be subject to flooding, tidal flooding or subsidence, particularly around the Gippsland Lakes.
- Discourage development in areas of significant coastal vulnerability.
- Discourage residential development and associated uses in areas that are subject to high fire risk.
- Encourage use and development to minimise environmental damage on groundwater and aquifer recharge areas.

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Natural resource management

Rural areas include high quality agricultural land, timber industries, rural activities and environmental values. Wellington's agricultural sector is one of the largest contributors to Victoria's agricultural economy. Key agricultural sectors include dairying, vegetable growing and timber production.

The Macalister Irrigation District (MID) is an important component of the rural area within which dairying and cattle grazing are the dominant agricultural pursuits. Farm sizes in the MID are smaller on average than farms across Victoria. The *Rural Zones Review* (Maunsell Australia, January 2009) categorised Wellington into nine Landscape Units which are shown at Clause 02.04.

The timber industry plays an important role in Wellington's economy and comprises plantations, timber mills, processing plants and transport services. The potential for expansion of timber plantations in rural areas makes this industry an important one, with positive employment, economic, social, and environmental flow on effects.

Substantial areas of rural land are located in declared water catchment areas that provide for urban, domestic and irrigation water supplies.

Townships and farming communities are heavily dependent upon the health of the rivers and streams within catchment areas for town water supplies and rural irrigation. The supply of quality water depends on sound management of these water supply catchments.

Poor management of stormwater and effluent is contributing to pollution of ground and surface water resources in some settlements.

The Gippsland region contains significant coal resources that are an important energy resource suitable as a fuel source for the generation of electricity and having potential for alternative fuels and other products.

Council's strategic directions for 'Natural resource management' are to:

- Discourage subdivisions that do not support efficient agricultural practices.
- Discourage residential development that impacts the use of rural land for agricultural, industrial or rural activities.
- Support the contribution that agriculture and rural industries make to the economy.
- Maintain settlement growth boundaries to protect natural assets, coastal areas, the Macalister Irrigation District and high quality agricultural land.
- Discourage uses and development that are incompatible with the protection of productive land and natural assets.
- Promote sustainable development within the timber industries.

- Facilitate integrated catchment management that addresses salinity, erosion, sedimentation, water quality, biodiversity, and native vegetation retention.
- Discourage land and water management practices that impact the quality of water or increase occurrences of blue green algal blooms.
- Protect Wellington's coal reserves by delineating coal resources and urban buffer areas.

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Built environment and heritage

Wellington Shire has an extensive and diverse cultural heritage. The area was home to the Gunaikurnai people for thousands of years prior to European settlement. Gunaikurnai people are the recognised traditional owners of land, with territory extending from coastal and inland areas through to the southern slopes of the Victorian Alps.

There are significant areas of Wellington which have important cultural heritage values, including the Gippsland Lakes, which need to be conserved and protected for the benefit of future generations.

The Wellington Shire also has many important post European heritage precincts and places. In particular, Port Albert is a place of special heritage significance in Gippsland.

Council's strategic directions for 'Built environment and heritage' are to:

- Promote the identification, protection and conservation of places of heritage significance and cultural value.
- Protect and enhance the individual character of each township.

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Economic development

Wellington's economy is linked to the natural resource base and productive agricultural land and it is important to ensure natural assets are protected and used sustainably.

Important industries include defence, aviation, health, education, manufacturing, horticulture, dairying, intensive agriculture, timber production, racing, forestry and forestry support, fishing, tourism, oil and gas, brown coal production, mining support and environmentally sustainable green energy.

The RAAF Base East Sale and the West Sale Airport are important assets and provide opportunities for a range of aviation related businesses and value-added industries in the region.

Renewable energy production presents opportunities for Wellington to capitalise on Gippsland's potential to be a future leader in new, low emission energy technologies such as biomass.

Tourism has significant potential for growth, particularly cultural, agri-tourism, outdoor eco-tourism and racing, including horse and greyhound racing. A significant opportunity to improve tourism is associated with the Port of Sale Cultural and Civic Precinct including arts, entertainment and cultural activities.

Council's strategic directions for 'Economic development' are to:

- Encourage expansion and diversification of the regional economy to increase employment.
- Maximise the potential of productive and natural assets for rural purposes.
- Promote diversity in industrial, retail and commercial sectors.
- Support the role of horse and greyhound racing economy.
- Promote Sale as the regional headquarters for horse and greyhound racing in eastern Victoria.
- Encourage the development of tourism around natural environment, cultural and heritage assets.
- Facilitate Sale's role as a tourist destination.

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C109wellPt1**Infrastructure**

The efficient delivery of infrastructure is a fundamental element in providing affordable and diverse housing, generating economic growth and managing the municipality in a sustainable manner.

Basslink is an electricity interconnector located at McGaurans Beach that connects Tasmania to the national electricity market through the Loy Yang switchyard. The Interconnector enhances security of electricity supply on both sides of Bass Strait.

The Eastern Gas Pipeline (EGP) is a natural gas pipeline that is a key supply artery between the Gippsland Basin and New South Wales. Longford Gas Plant is a key link between the EGP and the wholesale gas market and allows suppliers to source gas from a variety of receipt points, including Longford. Natural gas from the Bass Strait gas fields is distributed to Melbourne via the Longford to Long Island Point pipeline.

Council's strategic directions for 'Infrastructure' are to:

- Encourage a consistent approach to the design and construction of infrastructure.
- Protect the Basslink Electricity Interconnector, the EGP and other natural gas infrastructure from development that impacts their continued operation.