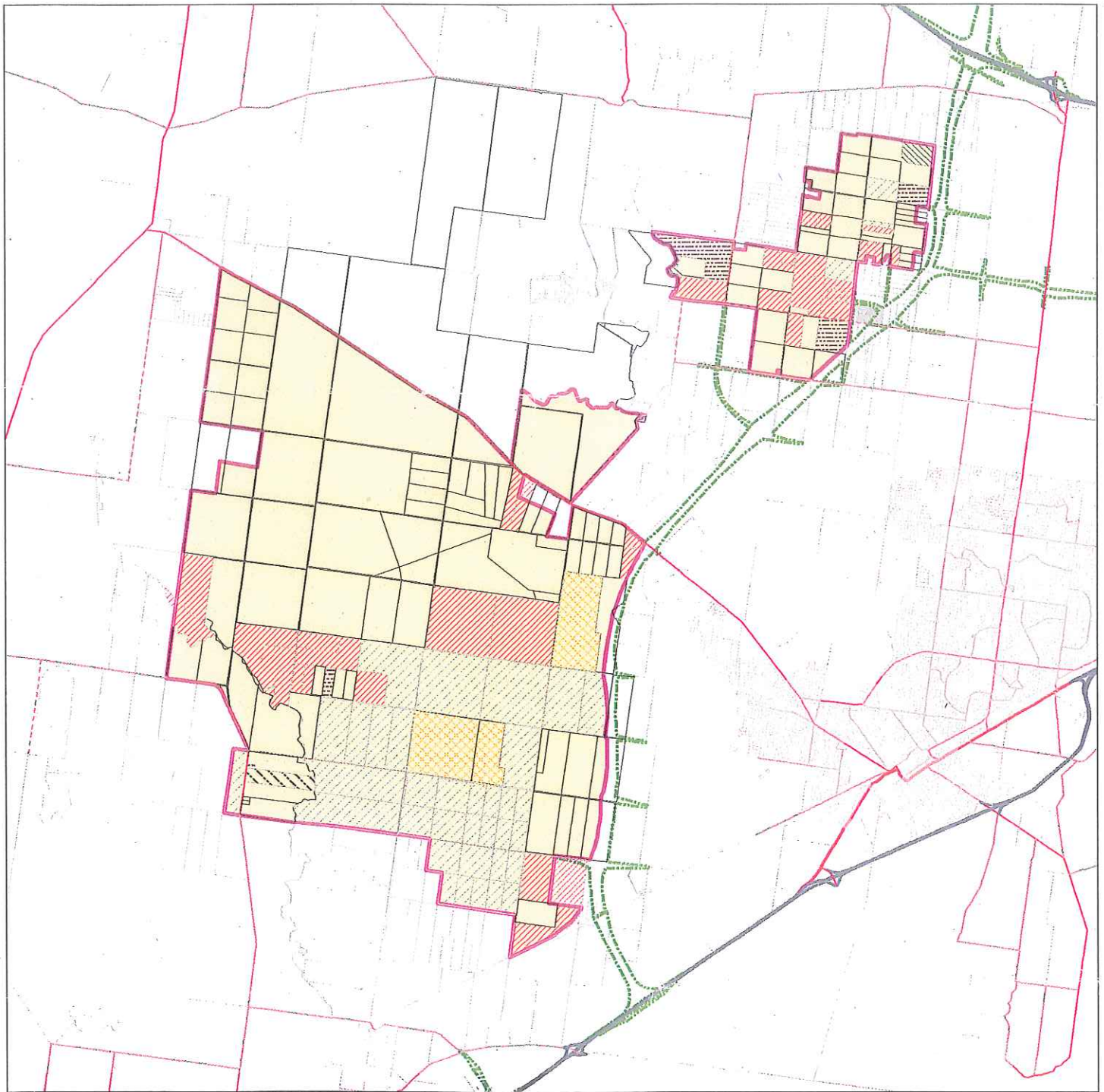


# Initial Acquisition Schedule December 2010

Department of  
Sustainability and  
Environment



## Legend

### Roads

- Freeway
- Highway
- Main Road
- Main Road (Unsealed)
- Collector
- Collector (Unsealed)
- Local

- Western Grassland Reserve  
(Public Acquisition Overlay)
- OMR

### Land Owner's preferred Acquisition

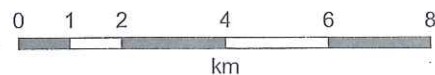
#### Approved for purchase and reservation

- ASAP
- 2010/11
- Short term: 1-3 years

#### Subject to future approval

- Long term: 2017-2020
- No preference

- DSE Land
- Quarries





Department of  
Sustainability and Environment

FOI 181013  
Document 2

PO Box 500  
East Melbourne Victoria 8002  
Telephone: (03) 9637 8000  
Facsimile: (03) 9637 8100  
ABN 90 719 052 204

Mr Dean Knudson  
First Assistant Secretary  
Environmental Assessment and Compliance  
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities  
PO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

*Dean*

Dear Mr Knudson

**WESTERN GRASSLAND RESERVES ACQUISITION PROGRESS**

I am writing following our recent discussions regarding the Melbourne Strategic Assessment. As you would be aware the acquisition of the Western Grassland Reserves (WGR) is one of the major Victorian commitments in the *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities* Program Report.

Firstly, I would like to inform you that the Victorian Government has recently acquired the first significant part the Western Grassland Reserves (WGR). The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) purchased a large property of 1000 hectares, west of Werribee, on the northern edge of the southern reserve. This is the largest land parcel in the WGR Public Acquisition Overlay area and means the Victorian Government has nearly 7 per cent of the WGR under its management.

The property has high biological values, and is almost entirely covered by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* listed "Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain". It also contains several high quality wetlands, all of which are referable to the newly listed *EPBC Act* community "Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains". The property supports many significant native plant and animal species.

When we discussed the WGR acquisition program in early June, I explained to you some of the challenges DSE faced in meeting the overall acquisition timeline of 2020.

The acquisition program is based on cost-recovery, and reliant on developers purchasing native vegetation offset "credits" from DSE. The funds from the sale of these credits are then used by DSE to purchase and manage properties in the WGR.

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However, as mentioned, recent forecasts indicate that development within the Melbourne growth corridors is slower anticipated and is likely to take decades to complete. DSE and the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance are exploring options to advance the process of acquiring land. These are unlikely to meet the current commitment detailed in the program report and the actual timing of development.

Given these circumstance, I seek confirmation that the acquisition timeline for the WGR as currently set out in the program report may be extended. I also seek your advice as to the best way to effect this variation, assuming it can be made.

A renegotiated timeline should maintain the connection between clearing and offsetting, and ensure that there is always a pool of offset credits secured ahead of development. This is a fundamental principle. However, given the uncertainties in the timing of development, I would suggest that a process and outcome based approach be considered consistent with the above principle, rather than a specified date. I understand that the Australian Government has taken a similar approach, based on this principle, with the Sydney growth areas.

I look forward to your considered advice on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Adam Fennessy

**Acting Secretary**

**Department of Sustainability and Environment**

12 / 07/2012



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Our reference: 2012/08397

Mr Adam Fennessy  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Sustainability and Environment  
PO Box 500  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 8002

Dear Mr Fennessy

I refer to your letter of 12 July 2012 regarding the acquisition process for the Western Grassland Reserves.

I note your advice that there may be difficulties in meeting the overall acquisition timeline of 2020 stated in the *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities Program Report* (Victorian Government, December 2010) endorsed on 2 February 2010 under Part 10 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. I understand this is due to the continued lag in housing developments and consequent reduced availability of funding for the acquisition process.

The department agrees in principle to extension of the acquisition timeline, if needed, in the circumstances you describe. We note the Property Acquisition Overlay and Environmental Significance Overlay will continue over properties within the proposed Western Grassland Reserves to ensure properties can be purchased as funds become available. I propose we continue to work together to develop clear and transparent options to extend the acquisition timeframe for the Reserve.

I further note your advice the first property has now been acquired within the Western Grassland Reserves. This is a significant milestone particularly since the property contains nearly 1000 hectares of listed critically endangered *Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain* as well as the more recently listed *Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains*.

Please do not hesitate to contact Carolyn Cameron s22 [redacted] if you need to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dean Knudson', written over a horizontal line.

Dean Knudson  
First Assistant Secretary  
Environment Assessment and Compliance Division

19 July 2012

s22

**From:** s22 @depi.vic.gov.au  
**Sent:** Thursday, 28 August 2014 4:35 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** s22 @depi.vic.gov.au  
**Subject:** Update on tasks in Melbourne Strategic Assessment

Hi s22

s22 just let me know you are after a bit of an update -

No changes on the two items below (although we are expecting a draft report from the monitor soon)  
The MRF is nearing completion as is currently going through an internal review process prior to being given to our Executive Director for his sign off. Once he has done that we will be able to provide a working copy to the Commonwealth - this is probably a month or so away unfortunately, as we've had some distraction around the planning provisions.

s22

---

s22  
Manager  
Native Vegetation Programs  
Department of Sustainability and Environment  
2/8 Nicholson St  
East Melbourne, 3002

Ph: s22  
Fax: s22  
Mob: s22

----- Forwarded by s22 on 28/08/2014 04:26 PM -----

**From:** s22 /DSE/VICGOV1  
**To:** s22 @environment.gov.au,  
**Cc:** s22 @VICGOV1  
**Date:** 06/08/2014 01:54 PM  
**Subject:** Update on tasks in Melbourne Strategic Assessment

Hi s22


s22 mentioned you wanted an update on where things are at with a couple of items;

- Independent monitor - the audit is currently underway. Most of the data collection and analysis is complete, with a couple more elements to go (particularly trying to get a sample of permits is causing some delays). No major inconsistencies or issues have been noted to date. I still expect to get a draft report from them mid to late August
- GEW reserve - a brief is currently in the system for approval by the Minister prior to submission to the Commonwealth

Let me know if you need any further information

s22

--	--	--

DEPI	s22   <b>Manager Native Vegetation Information   Environment and Landscape Performance</b> Land, Fire and Environment   Department of Environment and Primary Industries Level 2, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 s22 .au	
    <a href="http://www.depi.vic.gov.au">www.depi.vic.gov.au</a>		

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s22

**From:** s22 [redacted] @depi.vic.gov.au  
**Sent:** Friday, 5 September 2014 4:52 PM  
**To:** s22 [redacted]  
**Cc:** s22 [redacted] @depi.vic.gov.au; s22 [redacted] @depi.vic.gov.au  
**Subject:** Agenda for meeting between DEPI and DoE 8 Sep 2014  
**Attachments:** 8 Sep Additional Documentation.zip; Meeting 8 September 2014 Agenda.doc

Hi All,  
Please find attached the agenda and supporting documentation for the meeting between DEPI and the DoE for Monday 8 September 2014.

Kind Regards,

s22 [redacted] | Graduate Economist | Environment and Landscape Performance  
Land, Fire and Environment | Department of Environment and Primary Industries  
Level 2, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002  
s22 [redacted]

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## Update on Independent Monitor Audit

*Please note that this update has been prepared from a draft independent monitor report*

DEPI has engaged RSM Bird Cameron as Independent Monitor to undertake a review of whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report for the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA).

Appointment of an independent monitor to undertake such a review was a commitment of the Program Report, to be carried out in stage 2 of the program (process implementation).

The audit found that the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reservation of land in respect to the strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary has occurred in accordance with the endorsed MSA Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009), in all material respects. This has been preliminarily qualified, however, in four areas:

1. Cultural Heritage Management Plan not prepared in precinct;
2. approval of Growth Corridor Plan not completed;
3. Conservation Management Plan not developed for Bibron's Toadlet in precinct; and
4. Southern Brown Bandicoot Sub-Regional Species Strategy not prepared with Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

The MSA team are currently in discussion with RSM Bird about these areas. A more detailed overview of each qualification is included below.

### 1. Cultural Heritage Management Plan Not Prepared

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. In accordance with the Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

### 2. Approval of Growth Corridor Plan

Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plan and its incorporation into relevant planning schemes have not yet occurred. As the Growth Corridor Plan sets the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the Growth Corridor Plan.

### 3. Conservation Management Plan Not Developed

For the Taylors Hills West precinct a Conservation Management Plan was not developed for the Bibron's Toadlet, a matter of national environmental significance. However, permits for lot subdivisions, construction and removal of vegetation have been issued.



4. Southern Brown Bandicoot Sub-Regional Species Strategy not prepared with Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved post the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy on 5 August 2013. The MSA Program Report requires that each Sub-Regional Species Strategy be approved by the Commonwealth prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

AH  
D



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND,  
WATER AND PLANNING**

**Melbourne Strategic Assessment**

Independent Monitor Report

January 2015

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Victorian Government engaged RSM Bird Cameron as Independent Monitor to undertake a review of whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program (the “MSA Program”) have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009).

RSM Bird Cameron is pleased to present its Independent Reasonable Assurance Engagement Report setting out our conclusion and findings from the review conducted.

### **1.2 Background**

On 4 March 2009, the Commonwealth Government signed an agreement with the Victorian Government to undertake a strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne’s urban growth boundary. The Commonwealth Environment Minister endorsed the MSA Program, as set out in the Delivering Melbourne’s Newest Sustainable Communities: Program Report (December 2009) (the “MSA Program Report”) in February 2010. Since that time, the Commonwealth Government has approved a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Sub-Regional Strategies for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog, and Southern Brown Bandicoot and signed three approvals, one on 16 April 2010, a second on the 5 September 2013 and a third on 11 September 2014. These allow for urban development in the four growth corridors within Melbourne’s expanded 2010 Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and in 28 existing precincts within the 2005 UGB. It also provides for the development of the Regional Rail Link Corridor between west of Werribee and Deer Park and the Outer Metropolitan Transport Corridor.

Approximately 28 Precinct Structure Plans have been approved by the Victorian Government and contain conditions and obligations to ensure the requirements of the MSA Program are implemented. Planning permits have been issued for developments within these precincts, and works have commenced.

The Victorian Government aims to provide assurance to the Commonwealth Government that that they are meeting the commitments outlined in the Program report that mitigate the process of urban and infrastructure development.

The MSA Program Report sets out monitoring and reporting activities in relation to the various stages of the MSA Program. Some of these activities require an Independent Monitor to audit the MSA program.

### **1.3 Role of the Independent Monitor**

The role of the Independent Monitor for this engagement was to carry out an audit, and provide a report with reasonable assurance conclusion to the Victorian Government, on whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land have occurred in the manner described in the endorsed MSA Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program. The audit was to identify and report where processes are inconsistent with the MSA Program Report Stage 2 intent, and make recommendations for rectification.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

### 1.4 Basis for Qualified Conclusion

Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report on whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the MSA Program have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report, as at 1 September 2014, has been qualified in relation to the following:

#### Cultural Heritage Management Plan Not Prepared

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011.

In accordance with the Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

#### Approval of Growth Corridor Plans

Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and its incorporation into relevant planning schemes had not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) were completed and have been approved as early as January 2011. As the Growth Corridor Plans sets the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the Growth Corridor Plans.

This does not appear to be consistent with the MSA Program Report and the intent of the MSA Program.

#### Sub-Regional Species Strategy Not Approved prior to Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014, however the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Further details on these issues are provided in **Part B – Detailed Findings**.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

### 1.5 Qualified Reasonable Assurance Conclusion

The qualified reasonable assurance conclusion has been formed on the above basis. Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report containing our qualified conclusion (**Part A**) has been included on pages 7 to 10 of this report.

A summary of work performed and the findings against each element of the Program Report included in the scope of our audit has been provided **Appendix 1**.

### 1.6 Other Matters Noted during our Audit

We have made the following observations as result of the testing performed on the following elements of Stage 2 of the MSA Program:

- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy;
- Sub-Regional Species Strategy; and
- The Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure.

These have been summarised below:

- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report states that an overarching Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared for each expanded growth area, and each Biodiversity Conservation Strategy must be approved by the Commonwealth Government.

We noted one Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was prepared to cover all growth areas, as opposed to a separate Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for each. We reviewed the Strategy and tested that each growth area stipulated within the MSA Program Report was captured and addressed, without material omission. We also noted the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was approved by the Commonwealth Government on 5 August 2013, as required under stage 2 of MSA Program Report.

- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report states each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted that the SRSS that was prepared for the Growling Grass Frog and Golden Sun Moth was approved on the same day as the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. This decision was based on the need for the SRSS to be prepared in conjunction with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, ensuring consistency. This appeared to be in line with the intent of the Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report, in material respects.
- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report requires the following to be performed for the Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure:
  - development of an Environmental Impact Report;
  - conduct a public consultation on the Environmental Impact Report; and
  - development of Development Plans.

We noted that as at the date of this report, none of the above were completed as the infrastructure project has not commenced and therefore could not be reviewed as part of this assurance engagement.

## 2. SCOPE AND APPROACH

### 2.1 Scope of the Engagement

The scope of work under this engagement included:

- Assessment of whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land has occurred in the manner described in the endorsed MSA Program Report. The audit and our report related only to Stage 2 of the MSA Program as outlined in the MSA Program Report, and included the following elements:
  - Growth Corridor Plans;
  - Biodiversity Conservation Strategies;
  - Sub-Regional Species strategies;
  - Cultural Heritage Management Plan;
  - Planning Permits;
  - Conservation Management Plans;
  - Native Vegetation Precinct Plans;
  - Precinct Structure Plans (specific and limited to a sample of six precinct structure plans);
  - National Park or reserve management plans;
  - Framework for transport Infrastructure and planning mechanisms (Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure);
  - Planning of Grassland Reserves (Reserve Management Plans);
  - Interim management plans; and
  - Offsets.
- Assessment of the Victorian Government's implementation of the endorsed MSA's Stage 2 program design, including identifying any anomalies and the subsequent processes adopted between the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments;
- Identified where processes or changes are inconsistent with the MSA Program Report Stage 2's intent, and make recommendations for rectification.
- Prepared a report to be submitted to the Victorian Government for the MSA Program for provision to the Commonwealth Government.

#### Materiality Assessment

Materiality was used to determine the nature, timing and extent of procedure if executed and to assess the relative significance of the matters noted in **Part B**. Matters were deemed material they represent risk or non-compliance which could influence the decisions of users of the Program Report.

In assessing materiality we considered the matters raised in the context of information that is relevant to stakeholders of the MSA Program or that may be affected by the delivery of the MSA Program. Our assessment of materiality included an assessment of whether the each matter was significant to the particular audited body, if it was pervasive and the effect it has on the MSA Program information or the audited body's compliance as a whole. In combination, these considerations determined whether the matter may affect the decisions of the stakeholders involved in the MSA Program or that are affected by its delivery.

## **2. SCOPE AND APPROACH (CONT.)**

### **2.1 Scope of the Engagement (Cont.)**

#### **Materiality Assessment (Cont.)**

Examples of qualitative factors are:

- matters which may have significant impact on the reputation of audited body;
- matters which indicate a serious weakness in the audited body's systems, processes and controls; and / or
- matters which indicate fraudulent reporting of compliance with the Program Report.

Materiality was considered during the risk assessment phase and revised during the course of the assurance engagement so that the extent and type of procedures conducted adequately reflects the risk of material non-compliance. When setting materiality, consideration was given to the risk that a misstatement or non-compliance will not be identified by the audited body's systems and processes. The auditor exercises their professional judgment in assessing these risks.





**RSM Bird Cameron**

**INDEPENDENT  
REASONABLE  
ASSURANCE  
REPORT**

**As at 1 September  
2014**

## **INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT**

### **Part A - Conclusion**

**To: The Management of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and Melbourne Planning Authority**

We have conducted a reasonable assurance engagement in relation to whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reservation of land in respect to the strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary has occurred in accordance with the endorsed Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009) (the "MSA Program Report") as at 1 September 2014.

The engagement related only to Stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program (the "MSA Program") as outlined in the MSA Program Report. The assurance procedures performed were specific to the following elements of Stage 2 of the MSA Program:

- Growth Corridor Plans;
- Biodiversity Conservation Strategies;
- Sub-Regional Species strategies;
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan;
- Planning Permits;
- Conservation Management Plans;
- Native Vegetation Precinct Plans;
- Precinct Structure Plans (specific and limited to a sample of six precinct structure plans);
- National Park or reserve management plans;
- Framework for transport Infrastructure and planning mechanisms (Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure);
- Planning of Grassland Reserves (Reserve Management Plans);
- Interim management plans; and
- Offsets.

#### **Responsibility of the Victorian Government**

The Victorian Government, is responsible for preparation of the relevant urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land required under each element of Stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report. This responsibility includes design, implementation and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation of each framework, strategy and plan subjected to the assurance procedures within the scope of this engagement.

#### **Our Independence and Quality Control**

We have complied with the relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, which include independence and other requirements founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence, due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

Furthermore, in accordance with Australian Standard on Quality Control 1 *Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, and Other Assurance Engagements*, RSM Bird Cameron maintains a comprehensive system of quality control including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

## **INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)**

### **Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)**

#### **Our Responsibility**

Our responsibility is to express a reasonable assurance opinion on whether the processes undertaken to prepare each element of Stage 2 of the MSA Program was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, based on the evidence we have obtained.

We conducted our audit in accordance with ASAE 3000 *Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information*. Our procedures were designed to provide reasonable assurance, as defined by ASAE 3000. The procedures selected depended on our judgment, including an assessment of the risks of material impact of the matter being audited.

We believe that the assurance evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our assurance conclusion.

#### **Summary of Procedures Undertaken**

The procedures we conducted in our reasonable assurance engagement included:

- Discussions with relevant key personnel involved in delivering each element of the MSA Program, that included responsible officers from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Department of Transport Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI) and Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) to gather relevant information and develop an understanding of roles and responsibilities for implementation of Stage 2 and the processes undertaken in preparing the elements described above;
- Prepared a detailed Project Plan setting out the detailed approach and methodology;
- Conducted fieldwork, including interviews with identified responsible officers and review of information obtained, to understand and confirm:
  - whether the requirements, and intent, within the MSA Program Report for the element were clear and understood;
  - the processes undertaken to prepare the element, and how the matters required within the MSA Program report have been considered and addressed;
  - the final elements are consistent with the intent of the MSA Program Report; and
  - where elements have changed, considered whether the changes are also consistent with the intent of the Stage 2 of MSA Program.
- Assessed, based on work conducted around the chosen sample, whether the process undertaken to prepare the element is consistent with the manner as described in the MSA Program Report; and
- Prepared a draft and then final audit report to include detail of the findings and conclusions reached.

#### **Use of our Reasonable Assurance Report**

This report has been prepared for the Victorian Government. Accordingly, we expressly disclaim and do not accept any responsibility or liability to any party other than the Victorian Government for any consequences of reliance on this report for any purpose.

## **INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)**

### **Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)**

#### **Inherent Limitations**

Because of the inherent limitations of any internal control structure, it is possible that fraud or errors may occur and not be detected. We have not audited the overall internal control structure and no opinion is expressed as to its effectiveness. An audit is not designed to detect all weaknesses in control procedures or all instances of non-compliance as it is not performed continuously throughout the period, and the tests performed are on a sample basis having regard to the nature and size of the entity.

Any projection of the evaluation of internal control procedures to future periods is subject to the risk that the procedures may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with them may deteriorate.

#### **Basis for Qualified Conclusion**

Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report on whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the MSA Program have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report, as at 1 September 2014, has been qualified in relation to the following:

##### Cultural Heritage Management Plan Not Prepared

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011.

In accordance with the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

##### Approval of Growth Corridor Plans

Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes has not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) were completed and have been approved as early as January 2011. As the Growth Corridor Plans set the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the Growth Corridor Plans.

This does not appear to be consistent with the MSA Program Report and the intent of the MSA Program.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)

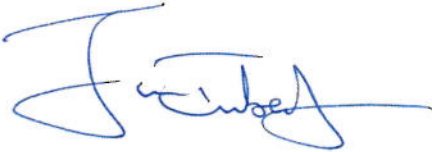
#### Sub-Regional Species Strategy Not Approved

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014, however, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Further details on these issues are provided in **Part B – Detailed Findings**.

#### **Qualified Conclusion**

In our opinion, except for the matters referred to in the Basis for Qualified Conclusion paragraph, the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reservation of land in respect to the strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary has occurred in accordance with the endorsed Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009) as at 1 September 2014, in all material respects.



**JM IMBERT**  
RSM Bird Cameron

Melbourne  
21 January 2015

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings

#### Findings and Recommendations

We have detailed our findings from our testing performed below. The results should not be construed as providing an opinion on the matter being audited as a whole, instead they should be read in the context of providing evidence to support the conclusion.

#### 1. Cultural Heritage Management Plans not prepared for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct

<b>Ratings:</b>			
Compliance	1	Risk	M

#### Observation

Cultural Heritage Management Plans are required for any high impact activities listed (including greenfield residential subdivision and construction of major transport infrastructure), and for any activity in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity which has not been subjected to major ground disturbance. The MSA Program Report states that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be prepared for each precinct in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

We noted that Cultural Heritage Management Plans were not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. Per the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

We made the following observations that support the requirement for a Cultural Heritage Management Plan to be prepared for the Greenvale North Precinct (R1):

- The documented Precinct Features for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct identifies a low to moderate Aboriginal cultural heritage value and potential post-contact heritage in the form of high potential for historic heritage value, due to the eastern portion of the precinct being utilised by the Royal Australian Navy for armament testing;
- The Greenvale North (R1) PSP stated Indigenous archaeological artifacts have been found across the site and it is expected that complex investigations incorporating sub-surface testing will be required throughout the precinct when Cultural Heritage Management Plans are prepared;
- Discussions held with the Hume City Council indicated their position was that Cultural Heritage Management Plans should be prepared to ensure all cultural sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites are identified and incorporated into the precinct planning, preventing delays in development and changes to precinct lot sizes; and
- For Greenvale North (R1) there was no evidence to support agreement by all relevant stakeholders that Cultural Heritage Management Plans were not required for the precinct.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 1. Cultural Heritage Management Plans not prepared for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct (Cont.)

##### Implication

The preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is a requirement of the MSA Program Report.

Without a Cultural Heritage Management Plan developed in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* as required by the MSA Program Report, there is a risk that culturally sensitive and post-contact heritage sites within the precinct of Greenvale North (R1) has not been given consideration in the planning stages of the PSP.

##### Recommendations

We recommend a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is prepared for Greenvale North (R1), in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, as required by the MSA Program Report. Identification of culturally sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites should be reflected in the PSP. Development on the respective sites should not proceed until all requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plans have been met.

#### Management Comments

A precinct structure plan sets the future structure for the suburb and guides the use and development of land in the precinct over the longer term. The Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines include a standard approach to integrating heritage requirements into the precinct structure planning (PSP) process. The legal requirement to have completed a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is triggered at the planning permit stage. Under Section 52 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2000*, a decision maker must not grant a planning permit if a cultural heritage management plan is required for an activity if— (a) all or part of the activity area for the activity is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity; and (b) all or part of the activity is a high impact activity.

It should be noted that not all subdivision or development is triggered by the above and that only land that is captured by the above requires a CHMP to be prepared.

Hume City Council submitted to the Planning Panel considering the merits of Planning Scheme Amendment C119 to the Hume Planning Scheme (implementing the Greenvale North R1 Precinct Structure Plan) that a CHMP should be prepared prior to the amendment being approved, the Panel accepted that sufficient investigations of pre- and post-contact heritage had occurred during the PSP process and implicitly that development proponents should be responsible for the completion of a CHMP (if required).

Subsequently, development proponents have responded to their obligations to prepare a CHMP if they have been required to do so by the Act.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### 2. Approval of the Growth Corridor Plans

<b>Ratings:</b>			
Compliance	1	Risk	L

##### Observation

The Growth Corridor Plans (also referred to as the Growth Area Framework Plans within the MSA Program Report) set the regional framework for planning precincts within the growth areas based on the strategic directions of Melbourne 2030. The Growth Corridor Plans are intended to:

- Set an overarching strategic planning framework to guide future development in the four Growth Corridors;
- Inform the Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) Process;
- Indicate areas of high environmental or landscape value, natural features or open space to be preserved;
- Identify, broadly, the location of future residential districts, industrial and employment areas and open space networks;
- Indicate the likely strategic transport infrastructure required to support urban development; and
- Identify the location for future Major and Principal Town Centres (MTC & PTC).

The MSA Program Report Stage 2 requires the Growth Corridor Plans to be submitted for approval by the Minister for Planning and incorporated into relevant planning schemes. The requirement for formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and incorporation into relevant planning schemes had not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, we noted there are PSPs that are complete and have been approved as early as January 2011. We also noted the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was approved on 5 August 2013 and the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment on 7 August 2014.

##### Implication

There is a risk that completed and approved PSPs were informed by Growth Corridor Plans that has been subjected to reiterations or amendments that have not been reflected or captured within the completed PSPs.

This is not considered to be in accordance with the intent of the MSA Program Report.



## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### 2. Approval of the Growth Corridor Plans (Cont.)

##### Recommendations

We recommend that the Victorian Government review the Growth Corridor Plans once approved and incorporated into planning schemes, to assess whether there have been significant changes that impact completed PSPs in respect to:

- Biodiversity;
- Transport and infrastructure;
- Urban growth boundary areas; and
- Other applicable areas of the PSP that are informed by the Growth Corridor Plans.

##### Management Comments

The Growth Corridor Plans (GCPs) were informed by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) and Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS) for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Southern Brown Bandicoot and incorporate the location of the boundaries of each conservation area. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning reviewed the GCPs prior to their release in 2012 to ensure consistency with the biodiversity strategies.

Finalisation of the GCPs and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes has been dependent on the finalisation of these strategies. With the BCS and SRSS completed, the GCPs have been finalised for statutory planning approval.

The BCS, SRSS and GCPs have not significantly changed since 2012. Approved precinct structure plans are generally consistent with the final GCPs, however they will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Planning Authority following statutory planning approval, and incidental minor modifications will be incorporated where required.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 3. Approval of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot



#### Observation

Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS) define how matters of environmental significance will be protected within each growth area. Examples of matters of environmental significance include:

- Growling Grass Frog;
- Southern Brown Bandicoot; and
- Golden Sun Moth.

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014. .

The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

A draft SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was initially prepared and released for public consultation in December 2011 (prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy). The draft SRSS was prepared based on technical work undertaken by consultants, including literature reviews, targeted surveys, use of Population Viability Analysis tools and habitat models, and technical workshops. However, following submissions received during the public consultation process, the draft SRSS was set to be replaced by a new strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot incorporating additional technical work performed.

We acknowledge that the finalised version of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy states there may be amendments required for the south-eastern growth corridor to ensure consistency with the potential additional requirements arising from the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot.

#### Implication

There is a risk that the approved Biodiversity Conservation Strategy may not be complete and does not consider all aspects of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Furthermore, a risk of non-compliance with the intent of the MSA Program Report.

#### Recommendations

We recommended that if there are changes made to the SRSS that have not been gazetted and impact the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, we recommend that Biodiversity Conservation Strategy is updated and approved accordingly.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 3. Approval of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot (Cont.)

##### Management Comments

DELWP has reviewed the BCS for consistency with the SBB strategy/associated supplement and has determined that the documents are consistent and that the BCS addresses all relevant aspects of the SBB strategy/associated supplement.

The SBB strategy focuses on a 'management area' outside the south-eastern growth corridor (i.e. outside the area covered by the BCS). The only mandatory obligation it imposes within the BCS area relates to habitat compensation fees and this requirement is consistent between the BCS and SBB strategy.

The associated supplement applies to some land within the area covered by the BCS (Botanic Ridge and Devon Meadows precincts). The supplement does not establish any conservation areas within these precincts and so DELWP is of the view that the BCS does not need to be updated. Rather, the supplement commits the Victorian Government to creating habitat for SBB within certain existing open space and drainage reserves. These commitments will be implemented through the precinct structure plans for these precincts and DELWP has agreed on a process to achieve this with the Metropolitan Planning Authority.

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Growth Area Framework Plans / Growth Corridor Plans</b> Growth Corridor Plans are put in place to guide the creation of new communities within the growth areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casey – Cardinia;</li> <li>• Hume;</li> <li>• Melton – Caroline Springs;</li> <li>• Whittlesea;</li> <li>• Wyndham; and</li> <li>• Sunbury</li> </ul> <p>Growth Corridor Plans set out the regional framework for the preparation of precinct structure plans within the growth corridors and show broad land-use patterns, proposed transport networks, regional open space, important waterways and areas of environmental sensitivity. The plans incorporate the location and boundaries of each conservation area consistent with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and exclude urban development from each area.</p> <p>In accordance with the MSA Program Report, the Growth Corridor Plans have been informed by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the sub-regional species strategies.</p> <p>The Growth Corridor Plans require approval from the State Minister for Planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the Growth Corridor Plan that has been developed;</li> <li>• Tested that submission of Growth Corridor Plans have occurred following the finalisation of Biodiversity Conservation Strategies for each Growth Area;</li> <li>• Reviewed evidence of approval by the Minister for Planning (where applicable);</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer for each Growth Area to gain an understanding of the process in developing the Growth Corridor Plan;</li> <li>• Tested that each growth area stipulated within the MSA Program Report is captured within the Growth Corridor Plan; and</li> <li>• Tested that boundaries of each conservation area per the Biodiversity Conservation Strategies are consistent with the Growth Corridor Plans.</li> </ul>	<p>RSM Bird Cameron identified issues in respect to Final Approval of the Growth Corridor Plan not having occurred at the date of this report. (Refer to <b>Finding 2 – Part B</b> of this report)</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Biodiversity Conservation Strategies</b></p> <p>A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared which is relevant to all expanded growth areas and will inform the preparation of the Growth Corridor Plans. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy must be approved by Commonwealth Government prior to finalisation. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy defines how protected areas designated within growth areas will be managed.</p> <p>The BCS is the overarching strategy for the protection of biodiversity in the growth corridors and is a significant step towards finalising the planning for biodiversity required for the Melbourne Strategic Assessment.</p> <p>The strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addresses all relevant matters of state significance, as well as matters of national environmental significance protected under the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>;</li> <li>• Ensures the long term protection of biodiversity in the growth corridors, by setting up a network of conservation areas; and</li> <li>• Sets out conservation measures to protect important biodiversity outside Melbourne to complement actions within the growth corridors.</li> </ul> <p>The BCS informs the Growth Corridor Plans. These plans set the strategic direction for future urban development of land in the growth areas over the next 20 to 30 years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained completed and finalised Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the expanded growth areas;</li> <li>• Reviewed evidence of approval by the Commonwealth Government for finalised Biodiversity Conservation Strategy;</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer for each Biodiversity Conservation Strategy to gain understanding of the process in developing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy; and</li> <li>• Reviewed that approval of Biodiversity Conservation Strategy has occurred prior to approval of the Growth Corridor Plan.</li> </ul>	<p>The MSA Program Report states that an overarching Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared for each expanded growth area. However, we noted that one Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was prepared to cover all growth areas. (Refer to <b>Section 1.6 of the Executive Summary, page 3 of this report</b>).</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS)</b></p> <p>SRSS define how matters of environmental significance will be protected within each Growth Area. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growling Grass Frog;</li> <li>• Southern Brown Bandicoot; and</li> <li>• Golden Sun Moth.</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of the SRSS is to inform the preparation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy by identifying important populations, areas of habitat to be protected as required by the prescriptions, and habitat corridors. These strategies influence the design of precincts during the preparation of precinct structure plans.</p> <p>SRSS have been prepared for the Growling Grass Frog, the Golden Sun Moth and the Southern Brown Bandicoot. These threatened species are matters of national environmental significance protected under the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.</p> <p>The sub-regional species strategies will help ensure the long-term protection of Growling Grass Frog, Golden Sun Moth and Southern Brown Bandicoot in the growth corridors. The SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot also focuses on conservation actions for the species outside the area covered by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained and reviewed completed Sub-Regional Species Strategies;</li> <li>• Interviewed a sample of responsible officers to gain an understanding of the process for identifying matters of “environmental significance” and the guidance obtained.</li> <li>• Discussed the prescriptions that were approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister in 2010 for most relevant matters of national environmental significance, listed below and why Sub-Regional Species Strategies were no prepared.</li> </ul> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striped Legless Lizard;</li> <li>• Matted Flax-lily;</li> <li>• Spiny Rice-flower; and</li> <li>• Migratory species.</li> </ul> <p>Tested that the Strategies have been approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and applicable PSP.</p>	<p>The MSA Program Report Stage 2, states that each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014 despite the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy being finalised on 5 August 2013 (refer to <b>Finding 4 – Part B of this Report</b>).</p> <p>The MSA Program Report states that each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted that the SRSS for the Growling Grass Frog and Golden Sun Moth was approved the same day as the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. (refer to <b>Section 1.6 of the Executive Summary, Page 3 of this report</b>).</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Precinct Structure Plans</b></p> <p>Precinct Structure Plans sets out the future structure of the Suburb including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of housing;</li> <li>• Activity Centres;</li> <li>• Community facilities;</li> <li>• Local transport networks; and</li> <li>• Open space.</li> </ul> <p>Around 28 PSPs have been approved and contain conditions and obligations to ensure the requirements of the MSA Program are implemented.</p> <p>The plans must be prepared and approved by the State Minister for Planning and incorporated into the relevant planning scheme before urban development can proceed (some exceptions apply). Once a plan has been incorporated into the relevant planning scheme, planning permits can be granted by the responsible authority (usually council) for urban development.</p> <p>PSPs must be prepared in accordance with the Growth Corridor Plans and the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines (GAA, 2009). These guidelines provide guidance on the assessment, protection and management of biodiversity values within the precinct and identify outputs that must be produced, including a Native Vegetation Precinct Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained a sample PSP and compare against permits obtained;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers for the PSPs obtained, to gain an understanding of the process of developing PSP and links/consistency with the Growth Area Framework Plans;</li> <li>• Reviewed for consideration given to applicable Cultural Heritage Management Plans, Native Vegetation Precinct Plans and Conservation Management Plans for each Precinct selected;</li> <li>• Tested the PSPs have been approved by the State Minister; and</li> <li>• For the sample of PSPs tested that it was developed in accordance with Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines (GAA, 2009). The following PSP were selected:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Botanic Ridge;</li> <li>2. Greenvale North (R1);</li> <li>3. Manor Lakes;</li> <li>4. Blackforest Road south;</li> <li>5. Taylors Hill West; and</li> <li>6. Melton North.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted as result of the testing performed. Consideration was given to Cultural Heritage Management Plans, Native Vegetation Precinct Plans and Conservation Management Plans with each PSP tested, within material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Cultural Heritage Management Plans</b></p> <p>Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) are to be prepared for each precinct in accordance with the Victorian <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>. CHMPs are required for any listed high impact activity (including greenfield residential subdivision and construction of major transport infrastructure) and for any area of cultural heritage sensitivity which has been subject to major ground disturbance.</p> <p>These plans provide for the management of known aboriginal cultural heritage values and those that may be discovered during works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained CHMP for the sample precincts selected above and tested the CHMP was developed in accordance with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006;</li> <li>• Reviewed the PSPs for any high impact activity planned and tested that the CHMP addressed each activity and followed up on the status of these; and</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each CHMP and gained an understanding of the process to identify the applicability of activities that required inclusion within the CHMP.</li> </ul>	<p>We noted that CHMPs were not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The PSP for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. Per the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met (refer to <b>finding 1 - Part B of this Report</b>).</p>



## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Native Vegetation Precinct Plans (NVPP) and offsets</b></p> <p>NVPP is prepared for each precinct in accordance with clause 52.16 of local planning schemes. The NVPP sets out the requirements for the protection and removal of native vegetation for a defined area or precinct. The NVPP must be approved by the Commonwealth Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Arts.</p> <p>In the case of the growth corridors, the plans are a tool used to protect Commonwealth listed ecological communities.</p> <p>The plans are prepared using native vegetation assessments and mapping to standards specified by DELWP.</p> <p>Native vegetation precinct plans must be prepared based on the time-stamping maps and dataset, which cover all native vegetation patches within the precinct, and will be supplemented by surveys of individual trees where relevant.</p> <p>The plans are incorporated into the relevant local planning scheme. Native vegetation precinct plans are prepared in accordance with Biodiversity Precinct Structure Planning Kit, and in accordance with the MSA program report, must be consistent with the prescriptions.</p> <p>Offsets relate to actions to make reparation for the loss of native vegetation arising from removal or destruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the NVPP for the sample of Precincts select and tested that the NVPP was developed in accordance with clause 52.16 of the local planning schemes and Biodiversity Precinct Structure Planning Kit;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each NVPP to gain an understanding of the process undertaken to identify native vegetation areas within each precinct that will require the plan to be developed;</li> <li>• Reviewed offsets relating to the specific precinct and gained an understanding of the process of identifying potential vegetation for destruction and the criteria for offset applied;</li> <li>• Tested compliance with the vegetation offset requirements established in accordance with the Native Vegetation Management Framework (2002); and</li> <li>• Traced offsets stipulated within each NVPP to the habitat compensation statement (where applicable).</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Conservation Management Plans</b></p> <p>A Conservation Management Plan is prepared where there is an important population of species that require particular management (e.g. Growling Grass Frog, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Golden Sun Moth, Matted Flax Lily etc.)</p> <p>They outline how matters of national environmental significance and state significance will be protected and managed within a precinct and must be prepared where there are important populations or habitats of threatened species within the growth corridors that require particular management.</p> <p>The plans are prepared as part of the precinct structure planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the Conservation Management Plans for the sample of Precincts selected and assessed consistency with the sub-regional species strategies for the particular Growth Area;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each Conservation Management Plan and gained an understanding of the process undertaken to identify the species within the area that would require a conservation management plan; and</li> <li>• Followed up on the further actions that were noted to take place per the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the sample of Precincts selected.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance with the MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Planning Permits</b></p> <p>Planning permits must be issued generally in accordance with the Precinct Structure Plan and include any implementation provision outlined. Development cannot proceed unless the requirements (as set out in the CHMP, NVPP and the Conservation Management Plan) are met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed planning permits issued and assessed for compliance with the PSP; and</li> <li>• For development that occurred, verified that the following was finalised:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural Heritage Management Plan</li> <li>- NVPP; and</li> <li>- Conservation Management Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>
<p><b>Prescriptions</b></p> <p>Prescriptions have been drafted for most matters of national environmental significance. All prescriptions require approval by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.</p> <p>Requirements from the Prescriptions have been incorporated into the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See testing for Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>See outcomes for Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>
<p><b>National Park or Reserve Management Plans</b></p> <p>National Park or Reserve Management Plans have been developed to reserve land for conservation or recreational purposes under the Victorian <i>Crown Land Reserves Act 1978</i> or Victorian <i>National Parks Act 1975</i> depending on the final decision regarding the tenure of the land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted interviews with responsible officers of each growth area and gained an understanding of the process of identifying land that will be reserved for conservation or recreational purposes; and</li> <li>• Reviewed each land discussed for inclusion within the Reserve Management Plans of the applicable growth area.</li> </ul>	<p>As land acquisition has only occurred recently, there is currently no Reserve Management Plan in place. The land is currently being managed under the Interim Management Plan. Management guidelines for the acquired land have been developed and will form the basis of a management plan prepared by Parks Victoria upon assignment of land. The Interim Management Plan covers the appropriate management, data and weed control of the site.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Interim Management Plans</b></p> <p>Prepared for private property that has been embarked to form part of the grassland reserve although is yet to be acquired. It must be prepared in accordance with the <i>Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained details of the Interim Management plan for the precincts sampled; and</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer to obtain an understanding of the current status of the Interim Management Plan.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>
<p><b>Quarries and Mines</b></p> <p>Native vegetation removal associated with the Earth Resources Industry (Quarries and Mines) is exempt from the requirements of the <i>Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> and the planning scheme.</p> <p>The detailed planning of future quarries within the Urban Growth Boundary will be undertaken in accordance with relevant prescriptions approved by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment. This will be affected by amending the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Primary Industries (now Department of State Development, Business and Innovation) to require that the prescriptions approved by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment will be applied to all future quarries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing could not be performed due to information not being made available to DELWP and RSM Bird Cameron.</li> </ul>	<p>None</p>




## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure</b></p> <p>The Regional Rail Link is a 50 kilometre railway connection from west of Werribee to Southern Cross Station via the Melbourne-Ballarat railway, connecting at Deer Park. The MSA Program is concerned with the west of Werribee to Deer Park section of the Regional Rail Link, which is approximately 30 kilometres long.</p> <p>The final Strategic Impact Assessment Report for the MSA Program assesses the potential impacts of implementing the MSA Program Report on matters of national environmental significance. The final alignment is outlined in the MSA Program Report.</p> <p>The Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor is 70 kilometres long and it links Werribee, Melton, Tullamarine and Craigieburn/Mickleham and connects to the E6 Transport Corridor, which links Donnybrook to the Metropolitan Ring Road at Thomastown.</p> <p>The final Strategic Impact Assessment Report for the MSA Program assesses the potential impacts of implementing the MSA Program Report on matters of national environmental significance. The proposed corridor is outlined in the MSA Program Report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews were conducted with the relevant responsible officer;</li> <li>• We reviewed the following documents:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ecological Plan for the Regional Rail Link;</li> <li>- Regional Rail Link Development Plan;</li> <li>- Regional Rail Link Environmental Management Plan; and</li> <li>- Approval and sign-off of each document above.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reviewed consideration given to the management of storm-water run-off from the Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>The MSA Program Report requires the following to be performed for the Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of an Environmental Impact Report;</li> <li>• conduct a public consultation on the Environmental Impact Report; and</li> <li>• development of Development Plans.</li> </ul> <p>We noted that as at the date of this report this project had not commenced and none of the above were completed and therefore could not be reviewed as part of this assurance engagement.</p>




## APPENDIX 2 – COMPLIANCE AND RISK RATINGS

The risk and compliance ratings applied to assess the issues identified are as follows:

### Compliance Rating

Rating		Description	Action
Level 1		Evidence of non-compliance with audit criteria.	These should be addressed as a matter of high priority, within one to three months
Level 2		Issues which could possibly result in non-compliance with audit criteria but where no evidence of actual non-compliance was found. However, there is considered to be insufficient formal evidence of controls in place or being actioned in relation to these issues.	These should generally be addressed within three to six months.
Level 3		Housekeeping matters and opportunities for improving internal controls and procedures relating to compliance.	These should be addressed within six to twelve months.

### Risk Ratings

Rating		Description	Action
High		Issues which may have a major impact on the Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues require senior management attention with regular monitoring and reporting at executive meetings.
Medium		Issues which may have a moderate impact on the Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues require management attention with regular ongoing monitoring.
Low		Issues which have a minor impact on Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues are the responsibility of management with regular monitoring and reporting at staff meetings.



**RSM Bird Cameron**

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**Melbourne Strategic Assessment- Independant Monitor Report- January 2015**

**Key Points:**

- Under the endorsed Program for the MSA, an Independent report on Stage 2 implementation of aspects of the Program is to be undertaken. This report is required every two years for the first four years. As the Program was endorsed in 2010, this will be the final required unless we request continuance and Victoria agrees.
- The Independent report identified three areas of non-compliance with the endorsed Program:

Non-compliance	Compliance/Risk rating	Independant report recommendations	DELWP response	DEWHA response
Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the Greenvale North Precinct was not prepared prior to activities being undertaken in the precinct.	1/Medium (Need to be addressed within 1-3 months and requires management attention and ongoing, regular monitoring)	That no work should proceed in any area identified as being of cultural significance in the Greenvale North precinct until a CHMP for the precinct has been prepared.	That CHMP are only required at the Planning permit stage IF all or part of the “activity” (proposal) area entails cultural heritage sensitivity or all or part of the activity is high impact. This is when a CHMP would be required to be completed. This avoids the need for a CHMP over all areas of a precinct. The responsibility of preparing the CHMP is now on proponents of any development in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.	Program requires a “Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be prepared for each precinct in accordance with the Aboriginal heritage Act 2006.”  Program then does stipulate “high impact activity” and “any activity in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity which has not been subject to major ground disturbance”.
Precinct Structure Plans (PSP) have been prepared prior to Growth Corridor Plans (GCP) being incorporated into	1/Low (Need to be addressed within 1-3 months and requires management and monitoring at a staff/management	Review all GCP and related PSP to ensure consistency.	“Generally” consistent but each PSP will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Planning Authority when processed for statutory planning approval. GCP are now finalised for	Not readily transparent that the 28 PSP already approved have been reassessed or are consistent with any GCP for their area.



<p>Victorian Planning schemes. GCP were to solidify regional commitments that would then feed into the precinct plans. The independent report suggests the PSP already approved by Victoria (28 in total) may not be consistent with the GCP, which were NOT finalised at time of review.</p>	<p>level)</p>		<p>statutory planning approval.</p>	
<p>Sub-Regional Species Strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was not approved by the Minister prior to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS).</p>	<p>1/Low (Need to be addressed within 1-3 months and requires management and monitoring at a staff/management level)</p>	<p>Assess SBB SRSS against BCS and amend the BCS to include any changes.</p>	<p>DELWP have reviewed both documents for consistency to each other and determined that they are. DELWP mentions the supplement report for SBB contains most outcomes for SBB, which are to be achieved through PSP.</p>	<p>BCs states (pg 14) "implementation of the BCS together with the sub-regional species strategies, including the strategy for the southern brown bandicoot, will satisfy the conservation requirements for these three matters of national environmental significance."</p>

- The Independent Monitoring Report also noted that the endorsed Program stated BCS would be prepared for EACH growth area, however only one overarching BCS has been approved by the Minister. The review concluded that the single BCS still "captured" all requirements of each growth area.

s22

**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 29 October 2015 11:32 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** FW: Progress Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** MSA Progress Report 2013-14-V4.pdf

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**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 27 August 2015 2:43 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** FW: Progress Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

-----Original Message-----

**From:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 27, 2015 02:21 PM AUS Eastern Standard Time  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** Progress Report

Hi s22,

Please find attached copy of the MSA Progress Report. Please do not distribute it beyond your teams. Shane has a hard copy.

If you have any comments or it raises any red flags, please let us know as soon as possible.

Happy to discuss.

Kind Regards,  
s22

s22 | A/Manager - Melbourne Strategic Assessment | Environment and Landscape Performance  
Land, Fire and Environment | Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning  
Level 2, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

s22

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# Melbourne Strategic Assessment

Progress Report: 2013-2014



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## Executive summary

This report outlines the progress in implementing commitments made by the Victorian Government as part of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA) Program, outlined in 'Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities: Program Report' (Victorian Government, 2009).

The purpose of the Progress Report is to:

- Report publicly on compliance with the endorsed MSA Program and the conditions of the Commonwealth approvals regulating urban development in Melbourne's growth corridors
- Ensure transparency and accountability in implementing the MSA Program
- Consolidate the separate reporting requirements of the Program Report.

The report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Program Report and Monitoring and Reporting Framework for the MSA (MRF). It reports on the program outputs and the Key Performance Indicators associated with each program output detailed in the MRF.

Program outcomes will be reported on in the 2018-19 Progress Report.

This is the first Progress Report for the MSA Program as the final Commonwealth approval required for the MSA Program under Part 10 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) was granted in 2014. As such, this Progress Report includes reporting on the implementation of program outputs for the 2013-14 reporting period as well as overall progress to date since the endorsement of the MSA Program in 2010.

### Program outputs

The report describes progress against the following program outputs:

- Urban and infrastructure development proceeds in accordance with the Commonwealth approvals
- Program cost recovery and expenditure is transparent and efficient
- A 15,000 hectare grassland reserve is established and managed
- A network of conservation areas within the Urban Growth Boundary is protected and managed for matters of national environmental significance species and vegetation communities
- A 1,200 hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland reserve is protected and managed
- 80 per cent of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland is protected within the Urban Growth Boundary
- 80 per cent of high priority habitat for Golden Sun Moth, Spiny Rice-flower and Matted Flax-lily is protected and managed
- Important landscape and habitat areas for Southern Brown Bandicoot are protected and managed.

## **Independent monitor**

In accordance with the Program Report, an independent auditor has reviewed stage 2 of the MSA Program to check compliance and provide assurance to the Commonwealth Government that the Victorian Government is effectively implementing the endorsed program.

The auditor has provided a qualified reasonable assurance, that except regarding three areas, the planning mechanisms of the MSA have been undertaken in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report.

## **Summary of financial performance**

Revenue received under the MSA Program has been slower than expected as a result of a slow down in the property market. To date, the program has received \$30.785 million in revenue and expended \$23.114 million on program implementation activities. These activities have focused on the acquisition of land for the Western Grassland Reserves and development of an online system that estimates habitat compensation obligations for land parcels in the growth corridors.



# 1 Introduction

The Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA) evaluates the impacts of the Victorian Government's urban development program for Melbourne on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) listed under the EPBC Act and establishes conservation measures to mitigate these impacts.

Melbourne's urban development program provides for:

- Urban development in four growth corridors within the expanded 2010 Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)
- Urban development in 28 existing precincts within the 2005 UGB
- Development of the Regional Rail Link Corridor between West of Werribee and Deer Park (section 2)
- Development of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor.

The MSA was conducted under the strategic assessment provisions (Part 10) of the EPBC Act.

As part of the MSA, the Victorian Government made commitments to the Commonwealth Government in relation to conservation measures (program outputs) and program outcomes required to protect MNES. These commitments are outlined in the Program Report. The Commonwealth Environment Minister endorsed the program, as set out in the Program Report, in February 2010.

Since this time, the Commonwealth Minister has granted four approvals for urban development under Part 10 of the EPBC Act for the area covered by the MSA. These approvals are for:

1. Development and operation of the Regional Rail Link (West of Werribee to Deer Park) (June 2010).
2. Urban development in the existing 28 urban precincts within the 2005 UGB (July 2010).
3. Urban development in the western, north-western and northern growth corridors (September 2013).
4. Urban development in the south-eastern growth corridor (September 2014).

The Commonwealth approval for the existing 28 urban precincts requires that urban development proceeds in accordance with prescriptions for nine MNES.

The prescriptions specify requirements for the protection of MNES that must be followed during the planning of urban precincts, including requirements to protect areas of high biodiversity value for MNES and offset the removal of habitat for MNES.

The Commonwealth approvals for the growth corridors requires that urban development proceeds in accordance with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors (BCS) and sub-regional species strategies for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Southern Brown Bandicoot.

The BCS is the overarching strategy for the protection of MNES in the four growth corridors. The Commonwealth Government has agreed that the BCS fulfils the prescriptions in 16 of the existing 28 urban precincts, as well as in part of the former Greenvale South (R3) precinct now known as Greenvale West. As such, there is no requirement to apply the prescriptions at the planning phase in these areas.

The conservation measures in the BCS include the protection and management of 36 conservation areas containing areas of high biodiversity value for MNES, requirements to offset the removal of habitat through habitat compensation obligations, and salvage and translocation requirements.

## 1.1 Reporting requirements under the program

The Program Report requires the Victorian Government to monitor and report on the implementation of the MSA Program. Section 11 of the Program Report sets out the monitoring and reporting requirements for each of the four stages of the implementation of the program: the approval stage; the process implementation stage; the construction and works stage; and the operation stage.

The Victorian Government is required to submit regular reports to the Commonwealth Government or release reports publicly on various implementation activities, including in relation to the gazettal of planning scheme amendments, the removal and offset of native vegetation, and compliance activities.

The Program Report requires the government to prepare a monitoring and reporting framework for the MSA Program. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has prepared a MRF (DELWP, 2015a) that meets the requirements for monitoring and reporting in the Program Report.

The MRF sets out how the Victorian Government will monitor and report on activities, processes, program outputs and program outcomes established to deliver and implement the MSA Program. It establishes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable the implementation of program outputs and program outcomes to be measured. Reporting on the implementation of program outputs is undertaken annually, while reporting on program outcomes is undertaken five-yearly.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Progress Report

The purpose of the Progress Report is to:

- Report publicly on compliance with the endorsed MSA Program and the conditions of the Commonwealth approvals regulating urban development in the MSA Program area
- Ensure transparency and accountability in implementing the MSA Program
- Consolidate the separate reporting requirements of the Program Report.

The Progress Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Program Report and MRF. It reports on the program outputs and the KPIs associated with each program output detailed in the MRF. Progress on the program outcomes will be reported in the 2018-19 Progress Report.

This is the first Progress Report for the MSA Program because 2013-14 is the first reporting period since the Commonwealth Environment Minister granted approvals for urban development in all of Melbourne's growth corridors. As such, the report includes reporting on the implementation of program outputs for the 2013-14 reporting period as well as overall progress to date since the endorsement of the MSA Program in 2010.

The report has been prepared by DELWP on behalf of the government agencies responsible for implementing the MSA Program, including the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).

## 1.3 Glossary

**BCS area** – The area covered by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors (BCS) described on page 4 of the BCS. This is a subset of the area covered by the MSA and comprises:

- The four growth corridors in the expanded 2010 UGB
- 16 of the existing 28 urban precincts in the 2005 UGB
- The Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor/E6 Road Reservation.

**Commonwealth approvals** – The four approvals granted by the Commonwealth Environment Minister for urban development under Part 10 of the EPBC Act for the area covered by the MSA Program. These approvals are for:

1. Development and operation of the Regional Rail Link (West of Werribee to Deer Park) (June 2010).
2. Urban development in the existing 28 urban precincts within the 2005 UGB (July 2010).
3. Urban development in the western, north-western and northern growth corridors (September 2013).
4. Urban development in the south-eastern growth corridor (September 2014).

The approvals have effect until 31 December 2060. The approvals exclude development in the northern growth corridor within the boundary of Hearn's Swamp and on properties 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 in the Diggers Rest Precinct Structure Plan (Growth Areas Authority, 2012).

**Habitat Compensation Layer** – A data layer administered by DELWP showing the location of native vegetation and threatened species habitat within the BCS area. The layer is used as the basis for calculating the habitat compensation fees to be paid to DELWP for the removal or deemed removal of native vegetation and habitat in the BCS area. The layer is based on the time-stamping dataset, threatened species habitat mapping undertaken for the sub-regional species strategies and assumptions about threatened species habitat described in the BCS.

**MSA area** – The area covered by the Melbourne Strategic Assessment program, as defined in chapter 2 of 'Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities: Program Report' (Victorian Government, 2009).

**Matters of national environmental significance** – Matters listed under Part 3 the Commonwealth EPBC Act.

**Matters of State significance** – Threatened species and ecological communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) and DELWP's Rare and Threatened Species Advisory Lists.

**Prescriptions** – Prescriptions specify requirements for protection of matters of national environmental significance that must be followed in preparing precinct structure plans and in undertaking individual developments. The Commonwealth Environment Minister has approved the following prescriptions:

- Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Golden Sun Moth
- Striped Legless Lizard
- Southern Brown Bandicoot
- Growling Grass Frog
- Matted Flax-lily
- Spiny Rice-flower
- Migratory species.

**Time-stamping dataset** – The time-stamping project captured and 'time stamped' native vegetation information to establish a dataset showing the type, extent and condition of all native vegetation in the BCS area. The data was used together with threatened species habitat mapping undertaken for the Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Growling Grass Frog and assumptions about threatened species habitat described in the BCS to create the Habitat Compensation Layer.

## 1.4 Acronyms

BCS – Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne’s Growth Corridors

CACP – Conservation Area Concept Plan

CIP – Conservation Interface Plan

CHMP – Cultural Heritage Management Plan

DELWP – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (formerly DEPI)

DEPI – Department of Environment and Primary Industries (formerly DSE)

DoE – Commonwealth Department of the Environment

DEDJTR – Department Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

DSE – Department of Sustainability and Environment

EMP – Environmental Management Plan

EVC – Ecological Vegetation Class

GCP – Growth Corridor Plans

GEW – Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain

GGF – Growling Grass Frog

GSM – Golden Sun Moth

IWMP – Integrated Water Management Plan

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

MFL – Matted Flax-lily

MPA – Metropolitan Planning Authority

MRF – Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Melbourne Strategic Assessment

MNES – Matters of national environmental significance

NTG – Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain

NVPP – Native Vegetation Precinct Plan

PSP – Precinct Structure Plan

SBB – Southern Brown Bandicoot

SRF – Spiny Rice-flower

UGB – Urban Growth Boundary

WGR – Western Grassland Reserves

## 2 Independent Monitor

In accordance with the Program Report, the Victorian Government will engage auditors in two phases during the first 10 years of the implementation of the program. The role of the auditors is to:

- Audit compliance of the implementation of stages 2 and 3 with the endorsed Program
- Provide reasonable assurance to the Commonwealth Government that the Program is being implemented in accordance with the Program Report.

In stage 2, an auditor will be engaged to review the establishment of the planning mechanisms and processes to implement the program, such as Growth Corridor Plans, Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs), and conservation strategies, against the requirements of the Program Report.

Stage 2 of the program will be audited in 2014 and in 2016.

In stage 3, an auditor will be engaged to review the construction of urban areas and transport infrastructure to implement the program against the requirements of the planning mechanisms and processes established in stage 2 and program approvals granted in stage 1.

Stage 3 of the program will be audited in 2017 and 2022.

### 2.1 Audit of stage 2 of the program – 2014

The 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program is complete. The auditor prepared an Independent Reasonable Assurance Report (see Appendix 1) and provided a qualified assurance.

The qualified assurance concluded that, except for the matters identified in Table 1, the planning mechanisms and processes to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reserve land in relation to the MSA occurred in accordance with the endorsed Program Report, in all material respects.

Table 1 sets out the reasonable assurance qualifications and the Victorian Government's response.

**Table 1: Reasonable assurance qualifications and Victorian Government's response**

Reasonable assurance qualification	Recommended rectification	Victorian Government response
A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. In accordance with the Program Report, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the CHMP are met.	A CHMP should be prepared for Greenvale North (R1), in accordance with the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> . Identification of culturally sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites should be reflected in the PSP. Development on the sites should not proceed until all requirements of the CHMP are met.	A PSP sets the future structure for the suburb and guides the use and development of land in the precinct over the longer term. The PSP Guidelines include a standard approach to integrating heritage requirements into the PSP process.  The legal requirement to have completed a CHMP is triggered at the planning permit stage. Under Section 52 of the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> , a decision maker must not grant a planning permit if a cultural heritage management plan is required for an activity if — (a) all or part of the activity area for the activity is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity; and (b) all or part of the activity is a high impact activity.

Reasonable assurance qualification	Recommended rectification	Victorian Government response
<p>A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. In accordance with the Program Report, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the CHMP are met.</p>	<p>A CHMP should be prepared for Greenvale North (R1), in accordance with the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>. Identification of culturally sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites should be reflected in the PSP. Development on the sites should not proceed until all requirements of the CHMP are met.</p>	<p>It should be noted that not all subdivision or development is triggered by the above and that only land that is captured by the above requires a CHMP to be prepared.</p> <p>Hume City Council submitted to the Planning Panel considering the merits of Planning Scheme Amendment C119 to the Hume Planning Scheme (implementing the Greenvale North R1 PSP) that a CHMP should be prepared prior to the amendment being approved, the Panel accepted that sufficient investigations of pre- and post-contact heritage had occurred during the PSP process and implicitly that development proponents should be responsible for the completion of a CHMP (if required).</p> <p>Subsequently, development proponents have responded to their obligations to prepare a CHMP if they have been required to do so by the Act.</p>
<p>Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans (GCPs) and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes had not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, PSPs were completed and have been approved as early as January 2011. As the GCPs sets the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the GCPs. This does not appear to be consistent with the Program Report and the intent of the MSA Program.</p>	<p>The Victorian Government should review the GCPs once approved and incorporated into planning schemes, to assess whether there have been significant changes that impact completed PSPs in respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity;</li> <li>• Transport and infrastructure;</li> <li>• UGB areas; and</li> <li>• Other applicable areas of the PSP that are informed by the GCPs.</li> </ul>	<p>The GCPs were informed by the BCS and Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSSs) for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Southern Brown Bandicoot and incorporate the location of the boundaries of each conservation area. DELWP reviewed the GCPs prior to their release in 2012 to ensure consistency with the biodiversity strategies.</p> <p>Finalisation of the GCPs and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes has been dependent on the finalisation of these strategies. With the BCS and SRSS completed, the GCPs have been finalised for statutory planning approval (an amendment has been prepared and is awaiting final approval).</p> <p>The BCS, SRSSs and GCPs have not significantly changed since 2012. Approved PSPs are generally consistent with the final GCPs, however they will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Planning Authority following statutory planning approval, and incidental minor modifications will be incorporated where required.</p>

Reasonable assurance qualification	Recommended rectification	Victorian Government response
<p>The SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014, however the BCS was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the BCS.</p>	<p>If there are changes made to the SRSS that have not been gazetted and impact the BCS, the BCS should be updated and approved accordingly.</p>	<p>DELWP has reviewed the BCS for consistency with the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot and associated supplement and has determined that the documents are consistent and that the BCS addresses all relevant aspects of the SRSS.</p> <p>The SRSS focuses on a 'management area' outside the south-eastern growth corridor (ie. outside the area covered by the BCS). The only mandatory obligation it imposes within the BCS area relates to habitat compensation fees and this requirement is consistent between the BCS and SRSS.</p> <p>The associated supplement applies to some land within the area covered by the BCS (Botanic Ridge and Devon Meadows precincts). The supplement does not establish any conservation areas within these precincts and so DELWP is of the view that the BCS does not need to be updated. Rather, the supplement commits the Victorian Government to creating habitat for SBB within certain existing open space and drainage reserves. These commitments will be implemented through the PSPs for these precincts and DELWP has agreed on a process to achieve this with the MPA.</p>

## 3 Urban and infrastructure development proceeds in accordance with the Commonwealth approvals

### 3.1 Introduction

The Victorian Government is implementing the MSA Program, including the Commonwealth approvals and the requirements of the Program Report and BCS, through a range of mechanisms and processes, including planning processes under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (P&E Act).

This section reports on the implementation of these planning mechanisms and processes.

The key mechanisms and processes are:

- **Planning scheme amendments** – Planning schemes are amended under the P&E Act after the preparation of PSPs to give effect to the Commonwealth approvals and requirements of the Program Report and BCS within each precinct.
- **Precinct Structure Plans** – PSPs are prepared for each precinct and set out the future structure of a suburb, including the location of housing, activity centres, community facilities, transport networks, open space and conservation areas. PSPs include conservation requirements to give effect to the Commonwealth approvals and requirements of the Program Report. Development in a precinct must be generally in accordance with the PSP.
- **Native Vegetation Plans (NVPs)** – NVPs are maps prepared for each precinct and shown in PSPs that identify the native vegetation that may be removed and the native vegetation that must be retained within a precinct. The term ‘NVP’ in this document includes Native Vegetation Precinct Plans prepared under clause 52.16 of the Victoria Planning Provisions.
- **Conservation Area Concept Plans (CACPs)** – CACPs are maps prepared for each conservation area and shown in PSPs that set out the land-uses suitable within each conservation area and specify broad conservation requirements and constraints. The term ‘CACP’ in this document includes Conservation Management Plans prepared as a requirement of the prescriptions.
- **Planning permits** – A planning permit is a legal document that gives permission for a use or development on a particular land parcel under a planning scheme. The permit includes conditions that reflect the requirements of the Commonwealth approvals and BCS where relevant.
- **Integrated Water Management (IWM)** – IWM planning aims to ensure precincts are developed in accordance with best practice urban water management principles and methods and impacts on MNES, including Ramsar wetlands, are avoided and minimised. IWM plans are prepared as separate plans as part of the PSP process or are incorporated into various section of each PSP and are implemented by Melbourne Water through drainage schemes and planning processes.
- **Environmental Management Plans** – An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) has been prepared by the Regional Rail Link Authority for the Regional Rail Link (section 2 west of Werribee to Deer Park) to ensure impacts on native vegetation and MNES are avoided, minimised and mitigated. The EMP was prepared in accordance with the conditions of the referral for the project under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. DELWP may also require proponents to prepare EMPs for proposed uses or development within conservation areas.



- **Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs)** – CHMPs are required for certain activities including subdivisions of three or more lots in culturally sensitive areas in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. CHMPs provide for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Development not in a culturally sensitive area does not require a CHMP.
- **Work plans** – Work plans are prepared for any quarries and mines within the MSA area, including to manage the impacts of the quarry on native vegetation and MNES. Work plans must be consistent with the requirements of the BCS or prescriptions.
- **Adjustments to conservation area boundaries** – The Commonwealth approvals require that agreement be obtained from the Commonwealth Environment Minister for proposed adjustments to conservation area boundaries in certain circumstances. DELWP has administrative responsibility for considering endorsement of proposed adjustments that require the agreement of the Commonwealth Minister. Where a proposed adjustment does not require the agreement of the Commonwealth, the proposal requires the agreement of DELWP.
- **Development or works in conservation area** – The Commonwealth approvals require that agreement be obtained from the Commonwealth Environment Minister for proposed development or works in conservation areas that results in a 'net loss of habitat' for ecological communities or species listed under the EPBC Act. DELWP has administrative responsibility for considering endorsement of proposals that require the agreement of the Commonwealth Minister. Where proposed development or works does not require the agreement of the Commonwealth Minister, the proposal will require the agreement of DELWP.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b).

## 3.2 Compliance

This Progress Report has not reported on the following KPIs in the MRF as these were determined through the development of the MRF and were not monitored prior to 2013-14:

- Per cent of permits with conditions consistent with the Commonwealth approvals.
- Number of non-compliances with permit conditions associated with the Commonwealth approvals.

Reporting on the KPIs for compliance with NVPs and illegal removal of native vegetation (see Tables 4 and 8) was undertaken by sampling data from six precincts covering four municipalities, which was done as part of the 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program. The six precincts sampled were:

- Botanic Ridge (City of Casey)
- Greenvale North (R1) (Hume City Council)
- Manor Lakes (Wyndham City Council)
- Blackforest Road south (Wyndham City Council)
- Taylors Hill West (City of Melton)
- Melton North (City of Melton).

For future Progress Reports, data to enable reporting on these KPIs will be collected in accordance with the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b) following completion of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy for the MSA.

### 3.3 Progress so far

The highlights for the MSA Program to 30 June 2014 are:

- 29 PSPs were gazetted.
- 22 NVPs were approved and incorporated in gazetted PSPs.
- 152.2 ha of native vegetation was identified to be retained in gazetted PSPs within the BCS area and 41.1 ha in the 12 precincts outside the BCS area under the prescriptions.
- The following habitat for MNES has been identified to be retained in gazetted PSPs:
  - 149.1 ha of Golden Sun Moth (native and non-native) habitat
  - 433.9 ha of Growling Grass Frog habitat
  - 47.4 ha of Matted Flax-lily habitat
  - 4.2 ha of Spiny Rice-flower habitat.

### 3.4 Progress against key performance indicators

#### 3.4.1 Planning scheme amendments

A total of four planning scheme amendments were gazetted in 2013-14 to implement the MSA Program and 29 planning scheme amendments have been gazetted since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014, covering 26 precincts.

In determining the per cent of planning scheme amendments gazetted in the reporting period that are consistent with the Commonwealth approvals (see Table 2), DELWP reviewed the PSPs and Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) schedules introduced by the amendments in relation to:

- Incorporation of a CACP (or an equivalent CMP) in the PSP, where conservation areas occur in the precinct.
- Incorporation of a Conservation Interface Plan (CIP) in the PSP. CIPs are plans showing the layout of the interface area, or buffer, that must be established around conservation areas in accordance with the requirements for buffers specified in the BCS, where conservation areas occur in the precinct.
- Requirements to secure conservation areas, as specified in the BCS, where conservation areas occur in the precinct.
- Requirements to undertake salvage and translocation, as specified in the BCS.

This Progress Report has not reported on the per cent of planning scheme amendments gazetted since commencement of the MSA Program that are consistent with the Commonwealth approvals as 14 of these amendments were gazetted prior to the finalisation and approval of the BCS. DELWP will conduct a review of these amendments to ensure they are consistent with the Commonwealth approvals. This review may result in future planning scheme amendments for these precincts.

DELWP has reported separately to the Commonwealth Government on the implementation of the prescriptions for MNES approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister in 2010. The biodiversity outcomes of their implementation are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 2: Planning scheme amendments**

	2013-14	Total
Number of planning scheme amendments to introduce a Precinct Structure Plan	4	29
Per cent of gazetted planning scheme amendments to introduce a Precinct Structure Plan consistent with the Commonwealth approvals	75%*	(no data)

\*A CMP has not been finalised for Black Forest Road South, as the PSP for this precinct was produced while DELWP was amending the approach to conservation management planning as described in section 3.4.4. A CACP will be prepared as part of the review of the 14 precincts as described in section 3.4.1.

### 3.4.2 Precinct Structure Plans

A total of four PSPs were gazetted in the reporting period to implement the MSA Program and 26 PSPs have been gazetted since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014. The 26 gazetted PSPs cover approximately 24 percent of the MSA Program area.

The PSPs gazetted in the reporting period were: Alfred Road (Wyndham Vale); Blackforest Road South (Wyndham Vale); Greenvale Central; and East Werribee Employment Precinct.

The list of 26 PSPs gazetted since commencement of the MSA Program is provided in Appendix 2.

The BCS identifies 36 conservation areas in the growth corridors within the 2010 UGB that will be protected and managed for conservation of MNES and matters of state significance.

Additional reserves to be protected and managed for MNES have been identified in 12 of the existing 28 precincts within the 2005 UGB as a result of the implementation of prescriptions. These reserves are identified in the relevant PSPs, and comprise:

- Reserve for Growling Grass Frog, shown in the Clyde North PSP.
- Reserve for Growling Grass Frog, shown in the Officer PSP.
- Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve, shown in the Truganina South PSP.
- Reserve for Growling Grass Frog, shown in the Cardinia Road Employment Area PSP.
- An additional reserve shown in the Toolern PSP (indicative area shown in Figure 1 at page 45 of the PSP). However, as a CMP has not yet been completed for this reserve, reporting on the outcomes of this PSP will commence once the CMP is completed.

Other reserves have also been established by councils within the MSA Program area that include native vegetation and MNES, such as open space reserves. These reserves have been included in previous reporting to the Commonwealth DoE on the outcomes of the precinct structure planning process. However, they are not included in the figures in Table 3 on the amount of native vegetation and potential habitat for MNES to be retained as they were not established as a result of the BCS or prescriptions and may be used for purposes other than conservation.

**Table 3: Precinct Structure Plans**

	2013-14	Total
Number of Precinct Structure Plans gazetted	4	26
Per cent of program area with gazetted Precinct Structure Plans	2.7 %	23.8 %

	2013-14		Total	
<b>Native vegetation and potential habitat for MNES identified in gazetted PSPs to be retained in conservation areas established under the BCS or the prescriptions:</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>
<b>Habitat for MNES species*</b>				
Golden Sun Moth <sup>^</sup>	-	-	111.8 ha	38.1 ha
Growling Grass Frog	34.2 ha	-	288.7 ha	145.2 ha
Matted Flax-lily	-	-	47.4 ha	-
Spiny Rice-flower	-	-	-	4.2 ha
Southern Brown Bandicoot	-	-	-	31.3 ha
<b>MNES communities</b>				
Natural Temperate Grassland	-	-	-	32.3 ha
Grassy Eucalypt Woodland	-	-	86.1 ha	-
Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands	-	-	17.9 ha	-
Other native vegetation	2.1 ha	-	48.2 ha	8.9 ha
<b>Total native vegetation</b>	<b>2.1 ha</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>152.2 ha</b>	<b>41.1 ha</b>

	2013-14		Total	
<b>Native vegetation and potential habitat for MNES identified in gazetted PSPs to be removed for urban development:</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>
<b>Habitat for MNES species*</b>				
Golden Sun Moth <sup>^</sup>	945.7 ha	-	3,272.4 ha	(no data)
Growling Grass Frog	427 ha	-	1,145.7 ha	(no data)
Matted Flax-lily	6.5 ha	-	205.5 ha	11.1 ha
Spiny Rice-flower	7.9 ha	-	173.4 ha	-
Southern Brown Bandicoot	-	-	(no data)	(no data)

	2013-14		Total	
<b>Native vegetation and potential habitat for MNES identified in gazetted PSPs to be removed for urban development:</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>	<b>Precincts within BCS area</b>	<b>12 precincts outside BCS area</b>
<b>MNES communities</b>				
Natural Temperate Grassland	5.9 ha	-	184.2 ha	63.7 ha
Grassy Eucalypt Woodland	3.9 ha	-	18.6 ha	8.4 ha
Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands	-	-	3.0 ha	9.8 ha
Other native vegetation	4.7 ha	-	186.3 ha	125.1 ha
<b>Total native vegetation</b>	<b>14.5 ha</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>392.1 ha</b>	<b>206.9 ha</b>

\*These figures are not additive as habitat for some MNES overlaps. For example, Matted Flax-lily and Golden Sun Moth habitat may occur on the same patch of native vegetation.

^Golden Sun Moth habitat includes native habitat (which occurs in native vegetation) and non-native habitat (which occurs in non-native vegetation).

### 3.4.3 Native Vegetation Plans

A total of three NVPs were approved as part of PSPs in the reporting period and 22 NVPs have been approved since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014.

NVPs were not prepared as part of four PSPs (Alfred Road (Wyndham Vale), Melton North, Pound Road and Truganina Employment Area) since commencement of the MSA Program. An NVP was not prepared for Alfred Road (Wyndham Vale), Melton North, and Pound Road as there is no native vegetation in these precincts. For Truganina Employment Area, the PSP specifies that a NVP will be prepared for this precinct. Until this occurs, any removal of native vegetation in the precinct is assessed under clause 52.17 of the Wyndham Planning Scheme.

There were no known cases of non-compliances with NVPs in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014 (see Table 4). Reporting against this KPI was based on a sample of data derived from six precincts as part of the 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program (see section 3.2).

**Table 4: Native Vegetation Plans**

	2013-14	Total
Number of Native Vegetation Plans approved as part of Precinct Structure Plans	3	22
Per cent of gazetted precincts with Native Vegetation Plans	75%	85%
Number of non-compliances with Native Vegetation Plans	0*	0^

\*Of the precincts sampled as part of the 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program, one NVP was gazetted within the 2013-14 reporting period (for Black Forest Road South).

^Of the precincts sampled as part of the 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program, five NVPs were gazetted since commencement of the MSA Program (Botanic Ridge, Greenvale North (R1), Manor Lakes, Blackforest Road South, and Taylors Hill West).

### 3.4.4 Conservation Area Concept Plans

A total of three CACPs were approved as part of PSPs in the reporting period and 14 CACPs (or equivalent plans known as Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)) have been approved since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014.

Initially under the MSA Program, CMPs were the primary mechanism for protecting and managing conservation areas. CMPs were prepared by DELWP for each conservation area at the precinct structure planning stage and set out land-uses suitable within each conservation area as well as specifying detailed management actions to be implemented in the conservation area.

DELWP has improved the approach to conservation management planning under the MSA Program. CMPs have been replaced by CACPs and detailed land management plans. This approach allows land management details to be determined once land is secured and land managers are identified.

CACPs set out land-uses suitable within each conservation area and broad conservation requirements and constraints. Detailed management actions (for example, ongoing fire and weed control) are set out in land management plans prepared by the land manager.

Since commencement of the MSA Program, CACPs (or equivalent CMPs) were not prepared as part of 12 PSPs as there are no conservation areas in these precincts. These 12 PSPs are: Alfred Road (Wyndham Vale); Cranbourne East; Cranbourne North Stage 2; Diggers Rest; Greenvale North (R1); Greenvale West (R3); Lockerbie North; Manor Lakes (Wyndham Vale); Melton North; Point Cook West; Pound Road; and Truganina Employment Area.

**Table 5: Conservation Area Concept Plans**

	2013-14	Total
Number of Conservation Area Concept Plans (or equivalent plans) approved as part of Precinct Structure Plans	3	14
Per cent of conservation areas in gazetted precincts with Conservation Area Concept Plans (or equivalent plans)	100%	100%

### 3.4.5 Adjustments to conservation area boundaries

A total of two adjustments to conservation area boundaries were agreed to in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014 in accordance with the Commonwealth approvals. The adjustments did not require the agreement of the Commonwealth Environment Minister under conditions 3 or 4 of the Commonwealth approvals.

In agreeing to the proposed adjustments, DELWP considered the criteria in the *Guidance Note: Implementing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors* (working document) (DELWP, 2015), which are consistent with the Commonwealth approvals and BCS.

The adjustments were made to the following conservation areas:

- Conservation area 14 - 'Western Growth Corridor: Growling Grass Frog corridors (south)'. The approved boundary is shown in the Ballan Road PSP (GAA, 2013b)
- Conservation area 36 - 'South-Eastern Growth Corridor: Growling Grass Frog corridors'. The approved boundary is shown in the Clyde Creek PSP (MPA, 2014).

**Table 6: Adjustments to conservation area boundaries**

	2013-14	Total
Number of approved adjustments to conservation area boundaries	2	2
Number of adjustments to conservation area boundaries requiring Commonwealth approval	0	0
<b>Net land added to or removed from conservation areas as a result of approved adjustments to conservation area boundaries, by conservation area type:</b>		
Nature Conservation	-	-
Growling Grass Frog conservation, floodplain and open space	0 ha*	0 ha*
Open Space	-	-
Regional Parks	-	-
Existing Public Land	-	-

\*The adjustments resulted in the removal of the following land from each conservation area:

- Conservation area 14 - Removal of 1.62 ha of land from the north-western part of the conservation area. Addition of 1.62 ha of land to the western part of the conservation area.
- Conservation area 36 - Removal of 8.6 ha of land from the northern part of the conservation area. Addition 8.6 ha of land to the eastern and western part of the conservation area.

### 3.4.6 Development or works in conservation areas

A total of one proposal for development or works in conservation areas was agreed to in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014 in accordance with the Commonwealth approvals. The proposal did not require the agreement of the Commonwealth Environment Minister under condition 2 of the Commonwealth approvals.

In agreeing to the proposal, DELWP considered the criteria in the *Guidance Note: Implementing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors* (working document) (DELWP, 2015), which are consistent with the Commonwealth approvals and the BCS.

The proposal comprised a duplication of the Wollert to Wandong gas transmission pipeline, which affected conservation areas 22, 28 and 34 identified in the BCS.

**Table 7: Development or works in conservation areas**

	2013-14	Total
Number of approved development or works in conservation areas	1	1
<b>Hectares of native vegetation and habitat for MNES affected by development or works, by conservation area type:</b>		
Nature Conservation	0	0
Growling Grass Frog conservation, floodplain and open space	0.39 ha of native vegetation*	0.39 ha of native vegetation*
Open Space	0.14 ha of native vegetation*	0.14 ha of native vegetation*
Regional Parks	0	0
Existing Public Land	0	0

\*DELWP referred this development application to the Commonwealth for advice on whether it required Commonwealth agreement under condition 2 of the approvals for urban development. The Commonwealth advised DELWP that State agreement was sufficient as the application involved no net loss of habitat for MNES.

### 3.4.7 Illegal removal of native vegetation

There were no known cases of illegal removal of native vegetation within conservation areas in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014 (see Table 8). Reporting against this KPI was based on a sample of data derived from six precincts as part of the 2014 audit of stage 2 of the program (see section 3.2).

**Table 8: Illegal removal of native vegetation**

	2013-14	Total
Number of cases of illegal removal of native vegetation within conservation areas	0	0
<b>Hectares of native vegetation and habitat for MNES affected by illegal removal of native vegetation within conservation areas, by conservation area type:</b>		
Nature Conservation	-	-
Growling Grass Frog conservation, floodplain and open space	-	-
Open Space	-	-
Regional Parks	-	-
Existing Public Land	-	-
Number of cases of illegal removal of native vegetation outside conservation areas	-	-



### 3.4.8 Water management

A total of four Integrated Water Management Plans (IWMPs) were approved in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to June 2014.

Initially under the MSA Program, IWMPs were the primary mechanism for ensuring best practice urban water management was implemented in the development of precincts. IWMPs were prepared for each precinct at the precinct structure planning stage.

IWM planning has now been progressed to be part of whole of water cycle planning in PSPs. While IWMPs are part of some PSPs, IWM planning is now incorporated into various parts of each PSP and is implemented by Melbourne Water through drainage schemes and river health planning.

**Table 9: Water management**

	2013-14	Total
Number of Integrated Water Management Plans approved for gazetted precincts	0	4

### 3.4.9 Transport projects

Two transport projects are part of the MSA Program – the Regional Rail Link (section 2 – West of Werribee to Deer Park) and Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor. To date, approval has only been sought and granted for the Regional Rail Link (section 2).

There are no known non-compliances with the approved EMP for the Regional Rail Link (Regional Rail Link Authority, 2012) affecting matters of national environmental significance in the reporting period and since commencement of the project to 30 June 2014.

**Table 10: Transport projects**

	2013-14	Total
Number of non-compliances with the approved Environmental Management Plan for the Regional Rail Link (section 2) affecting matters of national environmental significance	0*	0^

\*Based on data in Regional Rail Link: Deer Park-West Werribee Junction: Six Monthly EPBC Monitoring Report January to July 2014 and Six Monthly EPBC Monitoring Report July to December 2013.

^Based on data in Regional Rail Link: Deer Park-West Werribee Junction: Environmental Annual Report, July 2012-July 2013 and Regional Rail Link: Deer Park-West Werribee Junction: Six Monthly EPBC Monitoring Report January to July 2014 and Six Monthly EPBC Monitoring Report July to December 2013.

### 3.4.10 Cultural heritage

A total of five Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) were approved in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to June 2014.

Initially under the MSA Program, CHMPs were prepared for each precinct at the precinct structure planning stage to protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage values across the whole precinct.

CHMPs are required for subdivisions of three or more lots in culturally sensitive areas in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and are now prepared only for culturally sensitive areas. Development not in a culturally sensitive area does not require a CHMP.

**Table 11: Cultural heritage**

	2013-14	Total
Number of Cultural Heritage Management Plans approved for gazetted precincts	5	101

### 3.4.11 Quarries and mines

Since endorsement of the MSA Program in 2010, no new work plans were approved for quarries or mines within the MSA area to 30 June 2014. Approval was granted for the variation of one existing work plan in April 2010. This variation did not affect any native vegetation or habitat for MNES.

**Table 12: Quarries and mines**

	2013-14	Total
Per cent of approved work plans consistent with the prescriptions or BCS	-	-
Number of non-compliances with approved work plans affecting matters of national environmental significance	-	-

## 4 Program cost recovery is transparent and efficient

### 4.1 Introduction

The MSA is being delivered on the basis of full cost recovery through payment of habitat compensation fees by proponents undertaking buildings and works in the MSA program area.

Habitat compensation fees are used to implement the conservation measures outlined in the Program Report, including acquisition of the WGR. Fees are paid to DELWP, and these are held in a trust account administered by DELWP.

### 4.2 Progress so far

A summary of progress for habitat compensation obligations in the BCS area and offsets in the 12 precincts is provided in Table 15.

Program delivery focused on the development of an online tool in the Department's Native Vegetation Information Management system (<http://nvim.depi.vic.gov.au/BCS>) to enable landowners in the BCS area to estimate their habitat compensation obligations.

Purchasing land for the protection and management of MNES is reliant on the payment of habitat compensation fees from landowners as development progresses in the growth corridors, in accordance with the cost recovery approach under the MSA Program. For conservation areas identified in the BCS, land is secured following gazettal of the relevant PSP and only prior to the commencement of development on adjacent land.

Revenue received under the MSA Program to date has been slower than expected as a result of a slow down in the property market and minimal revenue has been received for some habitat compensation fees. This delay has slowed progress in securing the Western Grasslands Reserve (section 5), Grassy Eucalypt Woodland reserve (section 7), and 80 percent of highest priority habitat for MNES protected under the MSA Program (sections 9, 10 and 11).

Details of revenue and expenditure by financial year are shown in Table 13 and for each habitat compensation fee type in Table 14.

Table 13: Program revenue and expenditure by financial year

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Total
<b>Revenue</b>					
Trust	\$6,922,750.00	\$3,387,104.53	\$2,768,450.03	\$4,779,808.41	<b>\$17,858,112.97</b>
State Appropriation Funding	\$10,000,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,200,000.00	\$0.00	<b>\$12,200,000.00</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$16,922,750.00</b>	<b>\$3,387,104.53</b>	<b>\$4,968,450.03</b>	<b>\$4,779,808.41</b>	<b>\$30,058,112.97</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Land acquisition	\$11,340,000.00	\$4,660,000.00	\$898,602.85	\$3,453,709.97	<b>\$20,352,312.82</b>
Land management	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$151,272.18	<b>\$151,272.18</b>
Habitat construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
Ecological monitoring	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$182,163.31	<b>\$182,163.31</b>
Program delivery	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,200,000.00	\$229,234.51	<b>\$2,429,234.51</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$11,340,000.00</b>	<b>\$4,660,000.00</b>	<b>\$3,098,602.85</b>	<b>\$4,016,379.97</b>	<b>\$23,114,982.82</b>

Table 14: Program revenue and expenditure for each habitat compensation fee type

	Native Vegetation and Scattered Trees	Golden Sun Moth	Spiny Rice-flower	Matted Flax-lily	Growling Grass Frog	Southern Brown Bandicoot	Total
<b>Income</b>							
Trust	\$13,529,221.97	\$3,860,823.59	\$136,730.70	\$104,772.17	\$226,564.54	\$0.00	<b>\$17,858,112.97</b>
State Appropriation Funding	\$11,570,800.00	\$246,400.00	\$79,200.00	\$35,200.00	\$253,000.00	\$15,400.00	<b>\$12,200,000.00</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$25,100,021.97</b>	<b>\$4,107,223.59</b>	<b>\$215,930.70</b>	<b>\$139,972.17</b>	<b>\$479,564.54</b>	<b>\$15,400.00</b>	<b>\$30,058,112.97</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>							
Land acquisition	\$16,908,302.85	\$3,444,009.97	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<b>\$20,352,312.82</b>
Land management	\$151,272.18	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<b>\$151,272.18</b>
Habitat construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
Ecological monitoring	\$68,618.26	\$3,053.64	\$4,156.98	\$3,977.36	\$99,483.06	\$2,874.01	<b>\$182,163.31</b>
Program delivery	\$1,734,473.45	\$255,754.26	\$87,452.44	\$55,187.75	\$279,361.96	\$17,004.65	<b>\$2,429,234.51</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$18,862,666.74</b>	<b>\$3,702,817.87</b>	<b>\$91,609.42</b>	<b>\$59,165.11</b>	<b>\$378,845.02</b>	<b>\$19,878.66</b>	<b>\$23,114,982.82</b>

**Table 15: Habitat compensation – progress to date**

	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Regional Rail Link corridor (section 2) and 12 precincts approved prior to 1 March 2012</b>		
Number of habitat hectares provided as offset	5.93	79.81
Number of hectares of GSM habitat with offset met	18.685	85.915
Number of hectares of GGF habitat with offset met	19.297	21.758
Number of staged obligations agreements	1	3
<b>Area covered by Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</b>		
Hectares of land with habitat compensation obligations met	121.17	121.17
Number of staged obligations agreements	4	4
<b>Other Areas</b>		
Hectares provided as offset to development within the Melbourne Urban Development Policy Area	1.91	4.97
Hectares provided as offset from changes to Conservation Area boundaries	-	-

## 5 A 15,000 hectare grassland reserve is established and managed

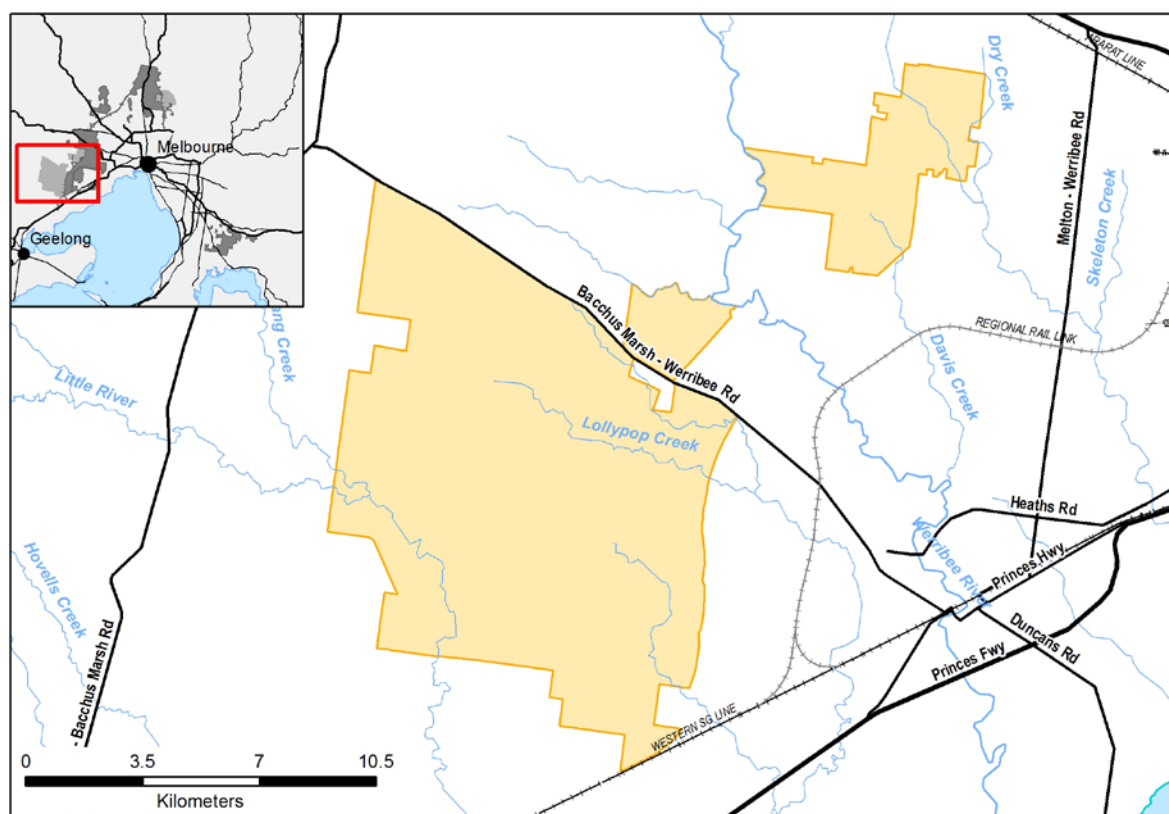
### 5.1 Introduction

The Victorian Government has committed to reserving 15,000 hectares of land west of Melbourne as part of the MSA Program to protect the critically endangered ecological community *Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain* (Natural Temperate Grassland) and threatened species, and to mitigate the impacts of urban development in the growth corridors on MNES.

The Western Grassland Reserves (WGR) will cover two areas of land outside the UGB located south-east of Melton and west of Werribee (see Figure 1).

This section reports on the implementation of the establishment and management of the WGR.

Figure 1: Location of Western Grassland Reserves



The WGR will protect the largest remaining concentration of volcanic plains grasslands in Australia and a range of other habitat types, including ephemeral wetlands, waterways, Red Gum swamps, rocky knolls and open grassy woodlands. The reserves will increase the extent of protection of Natural Temperate Grassland from two per cent to 20 per cent. The WGR also provide habitat for a large number of State and Commonwealth listed threatened and rare species.

Land in the WGR is subject to a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) and the reserves will be established by acquisition of properties subject to the PAO in accordance with the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986*. The Minister responsible for administering Part 2 of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* is the acquiring authority and will seek to negotiate voluntary sale agreements with landowners affected by the PAO. The acquisition process for the WGR is expected to take a number of years.

DELWP has prepared the document *Land Protection under the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* (DEPI, 2014a), which sets out the prioritisation approach for land acquisition in the WGR. Multiple criteria are used to determine high priority land for acquisition in the WGR, including ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act, EVCs and management risks.

DELWP has established an interim management program for the WGR to support landholders in maintaining the values of the WGR during its establishment. The aim of the program is to:

- Control grassland weeds above standards required by legislation
- Prevent the establishment of new weeds
- Modify grazing regimes to assist in the achievement of biodiversity objectives.

DELWP delivered two projects to support interim management in the WGR, which were made available to all landowners in the WGR:

- **A weed control program.** Under this program, DELWP engaged contractors to conduct targeted weed control works. The program targeted grassland weeds in the 'lag phase', which can be eradicated completely, and the spread of other established weeds. Site Management Plans were prepared for each area by the contractor in consultation with DELWP prior to weed control works commencing.
- **BushTender auction.** BushTender is an auction process for improving native vegetation on private land. Under the approach, landholders competitively tendered to improve the quality or extent of their native vegetation. The benefit offered by each tender was assessed according to a range of biodiversity outcomes. Successful tenders were those that offered the best environmental value for money, with successful landholders receiving periodic payments for management activities conducted under agreements entered into with DELWP.

The parts of the WGR that have been purchased are managed under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*. Management is to be guided by land management guidelines prepared by DELWP for each acquired land parcel. The guidelines will be informed by surveys and inventory reports of each land parcel that document the location of biodiversity values and land management risks and opportunities.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP 2015b).



## 5.2 Progress so far

The highlights for this commitment to 30 June 2014 are:

- 1,059.1 ha of land has been secured, representing 7% of the WGR.
- The following land management activities have been undertaken:
  - The construction of 2,060 metres of fencing for pest animal and stock management.
  - The installation of 1,350 metres of road to act as a firebreak to manage wildfire risk and aid in the delivery of prescribed fire.

## 5.3 Progress against key performance indicators

Table 16: Land purchased in Western Grassland Reserves

	2013-14	Total	Percentage of total WGR area
Land secured	1,014.6 ha	1,059.1 ha	7%

### 5.3.1 Native vegetation secured in Western Grassland Reserves

The land purchased in the WGR in the reporting period includes eight Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), over 908.0 hectares of native vegetation and two ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act: Natural Temperate Grassland (841.2 hectares) and the critically endangered community *Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains* (SHW) (19.7 hectares).

Table 17: Vegetation communities secured in Western Grassland Reserves

EPBC-listed community		2013-14	Total
Natural Temperate Grassland		841.2 ha	885.2 ha
Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands		19.7 ha	19.7 ha
EVC Number	Ecological Vegetation Class	2013-14	Total
125	Plains Grassy Wetland	21.9 ha	22.0 ha
132	Plains Grassland	791.0 ha	835.0 ha
641	Riparian Woodland	< 1 ha	< 1 ha
649	Stony Knoll Shrubland	36.2 ha	36.2 ha
654	Creekline Tussock Grassland	13.9 ha	13.9 ha
803	Plains Woodland	< 1 ha	< 1 ha
821	Tall Marsh	< 1 ha	< 1 ha
895	Escarpment Shrubland	< 1 ha	< 1 ha

### 5.3.2 Interim management of land in Western Grassland Reserves

A total of nine landowners participated in the interim management program for the WGR in the reporting period, which covered 10 parcels of private land in the WGR.

In 2012, ten BushTender agreements were established with three landowners (the agreements continue until 2015). The total area under the BushTender agreements is 88 hectares. The management commitments under the agreements include grazing exclusion, weed control, ecological burning, pest control and fencing maintenance.

**Table 18: Interim management of land in Western Grassland Reserves**

		2013-14	Total (where additive)
Number of parcels under interim management		10 parcels	
Number of landowners participating in interim management program		9 landowners	
<b>Units of interim land management (DELWP Standard Outputs) undertaken</b>			
Fence	Metres of fence maintained	500 m	-
	Hectares of stock exclusion created by fencing	60 ha	-
Weed control	Hectares of weed species contained	450 ha	-
Pest animal control	Hectares of pest animal species controlled	60 ha	-
Grazing regime	Hectares of grazing management regime established	88 ha	-
Fire regime	Hectares of fire regime established	12 ha	-

### 5.3.3 Management of land purchased in Western Grassland Reserves

The following management activities were undertaken on land purchased in the WGR in the reporting period: fencing, firebreaks, weed control and grazing and fire management regimes.

**Table 19: Management of land purchased in Western Grassland Reserves**

Units of land management (DELWP Standard Outputs) undertaken		Units delivered 2013-14	Total units delivered (where additive)
Fence	Metres of fence installed	2,060 m	2,060 m
Road	Metres of firebreak installed	1,350 m	1,350 m
Weed control	Hectares of weed species controlled	1,059.1 ha	
Grazing regime	Hectares of grazing management regime established	682.5 ha	-
Fire regime	Hectares of fire regime established	332.1 ha	376.6ha

## 6 A network of conservation areas within the Urban Growth Boundary is protected and managed for matters of national environmental significance species and vegetation communities

### 6.1 Introduction

The BCS identifies 36 conservation areas in the growth corridors within the 2010 UGB that will be protected and managed for conservation. These conservation areas protect the most important habitat for ecological communities and populations of MNES and state significance in the growth corridors, including Natural Temperate Grassland, Grassy Eucalypt Woodland, Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands, Growling Grass Frog, Golden Sun Moth, Spiny Rice-flower and Matted Flax-lily.

Additional reserves to be protected and managed for conservation of MNES and state significance have been identified in 12 of the existing 28 precincts within the 2005 UGB as a result of the implementation of the prescriptions for MNES (see section 3.4.2).

The 36 conservation areas in the BCS are classified into five main categories:

- *Nature conservation.* These areas will be protected and managed primarily for conservation of a range of biodiversity values, including native vegetation and MNES.
- *Growling Grass Frog conservation, floodplain and open space.* These areas will be protected and managed primarily for the Growling Grass Frog, but will also include areas managed for passive recreation, water management and other suitable land-uses.
- *Regional parks.* These areas will be protected and managed as regional parks, with specific management regimes in place for areas containing MNES.
- *Existing public land.* These areas will be protected and managed for conservation of a range of biodiversity values, including native vegetation and MNES, under existing arrangements.
- *Open space.* These areas will be protected and managed for conservation, but will also include areas managed for passive recreation, water management and other suitable land-uses, with specific management regimes in place for areas containing MNES.

This section reports on the establishment and management of the 36 conservation areas identified in the BCS, as well as the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve established under the prescriptions as this reserve is to be secured through transfer to the Crown.

Conservation areas will be re-zoned appropriately to restrict urban development and will be secured for conservation over time as PSPs are prepared and urban development proceeds in the growth corridors, through the following mechanisms:

- Voluntary acquisition by the Crown and reservation under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, or
- On-title management agreements under section 69 of the *Conservation Forests and Land Act 1987*, or
- Vesting of the land in a public authority.

The management of conservation areas will generally be undertaken by public land managers. Private landowners will manage these areas where the land is not vested in a public authority or voluntarily acquired by the Crown. The land management requirements for conservation areas will be set out in management plans and/or on-title management agreements prepared by the land manager in consultation with DELWP. This will occur once relevant land managers have been identified and the conservation areas have been secured for conservation.

The form of management arrangement for conservation areas will depend on the land security arrangements and the type of land manager. For nature conservation areas, management plans will be guided by land management guidelines that will be prepared by DELWP for each acquired land parcel. The guidelines will be informed by surveys and inventory reports of each land parcel that document the location of biodiversity values and land management risks and opportunities.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b).

## 6.2 Progress so far

The highlights for this commitment to 30 June 2014 are:

- 10.54 ha of land in conservation areas was secured for conservation
- 1.91 ha of Natural Temperate Grassland was secured in conservation areas.

## 6.3 Progress against key performance indicators

### 6.3.1 Land secured in conservation areas

A total of 10.51 hectares of land was secured for conservation in the reporting period and since commencement of the MSA Program to 30 June 2014. This land is part of the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve established as a result of the prescriptions.

The boundary of the reserve is shown in the Truganina South PSP.

**Table 20: Land secured in conservation areas**

Conservation area	Total size of conservation area	Land secured 2013-14	Total land secured	Per cent secured
Truganina South	38.1 ha	10.54 ha	10.54 ha	27.7%

### 6.3.2 Native vegetation and key populations secured in conservation areas

The land secured in the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve in the reporting period includes 10.14 hectares of Natural Temperate Grassland, which is equivalent to the EVC 'Plains Grassland'. The remaining part of the land secured in the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve in the reporting period (0.37 hectares) does not qualify as Natural Temperate Grassland.

**Table 21: Vegetation communities and key populations secured in conservation areas**

EPBC-listed community		2013-14	Total
Natural Temperate Grassland		1.91 ha	1.91 ha

EVC Number	Ecological Vegetation Class	2013-14	Total
132	Plains Grassland	1.91 ha	1.91 ha

Key populations	2013-14	Total
-	-	-

### 6.3.3 Land security and management arrangements for conservation areas

The land secured in the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve was secured through transfer to the Crown for reservation under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

**Table 22: Land security and management arrangements for conservation areas**

	2013-14	Total
<b>Land secured through voluntary transfer to the Crown</b>		
Truganina South	10.54 ha	10.54 ha
<b>Land secured through vesting in a public authority and on-title agreement with management plan</b>		
-	-	-
<b>Land secured through on-title agreement with management plan</b>		
-	-	-
<b>Land secured through on-title agreement</b>		
-	-	-

#### 6.3.4 Management undertaken in secured conservation areas with a management plan

A slashing regime was established on land secured in the Truganina South Golden Sun Moth reserve in the reporting period to manage biomass levels.

Table 23: Management undertaken in secured conservation areas with a management plan

Units of land management (DELWP Standard Outputs) undertaken		2013-14	Total (where additive)
Grazing Regime	Hectares of alternative slashing regime established	10.54 ha	10.54 ha

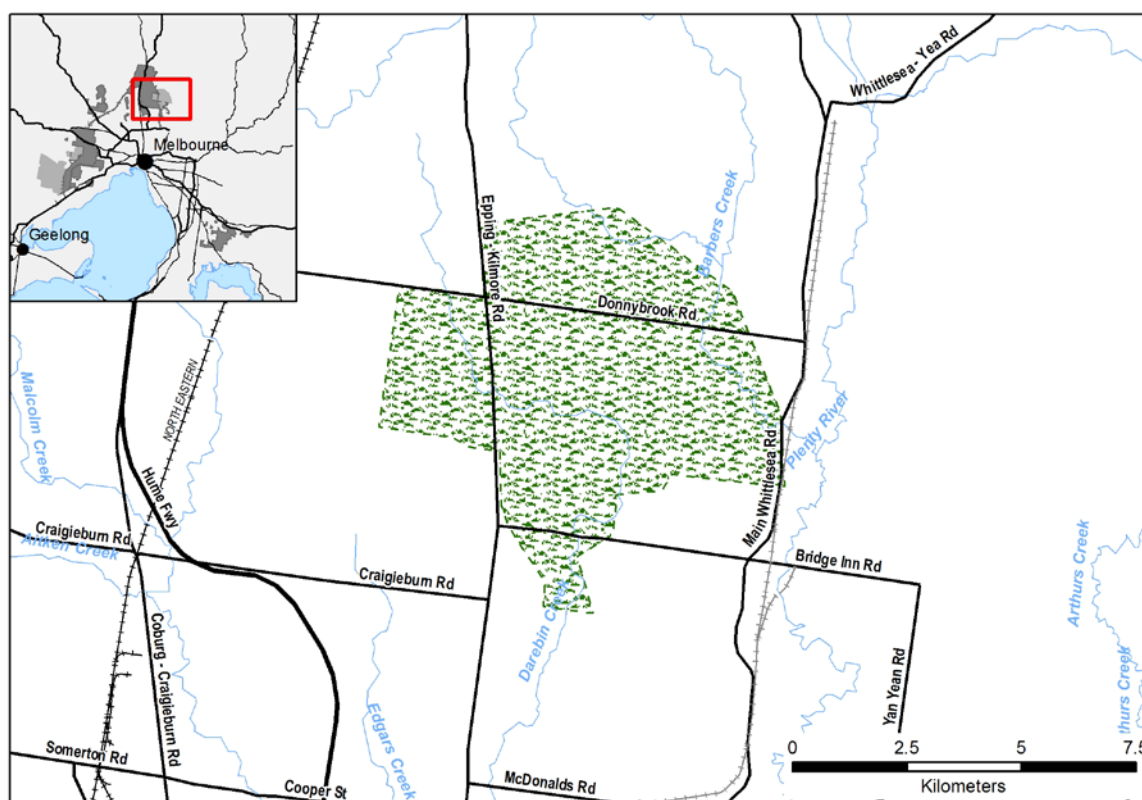
## 7 A 1,200 hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve is protected and managed

### 7.1 Introduction

The Victorian Government has committed to reserving at least 1,200 ha of land north-east of Melbourne as part of the MSA Program to protect Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) and mitigate the impacts of urban development in the growth corridors on this ecological community.

The boundaries of an investigation area within which the GEW Reserve will be located are identified in the BCS (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Investigation area for Grassy Eucalypt Woodland reserve



Land in the GEW Reserve will be secured for conservation through voluntary negotiation with landowners, including through voluntary purchase by the Crown and reservation under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* or on-title management agreements under section 69 of the *Conservation Forests and Land Act 1987*. The final boundary of the GEW Reserve will depend on the voluntary negotiation process, with each new land parcel secured influencing the future priorities for securing land parcels for the reserve and the final shape of the reserve.



A reserve management plan will be prepared for the parts of the GEW Reserve secured through voluntary purchase by the Crown. The management of the GEW Reserve will be guided by land management guidelines that will be prepared by DELWP for each acquired land parcel. The guidelines will be informed by surveys and inventory reports of each land parcel that document the location of biodiversity values and land management risks and opportunities.

## 7.2 Progress so far

Reporting against this program output will commence after the first land parcel in the GEW Reserve is secured for conservation through voluntary acquisition or on-title management agreements.

In accordance with the cost recovery approach under the MSA Program, securing the GEW Reserve is reliant on the payment of habitat compensation fees from landowners as development progresses in the growth corridors. A slow-down in the property market has resulted in fewer fees received than expected to date, which has delayed the establishment of the GEW Reserve.

The timing for purchasing the GEW Reserve will be determined in accordance with the *Land Protection under the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* (DEPI, 2014a), which outlines the process for prioritising land security in the reserves established under the MSA Program.

DELWP developed a draft proposal for the establishment of the GEW Reserve in the reporting period. The draft proposal will be submitted to the Commonwealth Government for consideration.

## 8 Eighty per cent of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland is protected within the Urban Growth Boundary

### 8.1 Introduction

As part of the MSA Program, the Victorian Government is required to protect 80 per cent of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) occurring within the growth corridors that meets the definition of the ecological community as listed under the EPBC Act.

GEW is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.

DELWP has estimated that 368 hectares of land in the growth corridors is 'highly likely' to contain GEW (DEPI, 2013a). Of this habitat, 294 hectares must be protected to meet the 80 per cent target. Land that may contribute to the 80 per cent target includes:

- Conservation areas identified in the BCS
- New and existing reserves within Melbourne's growth corridors not identified in the BCS or required under the prescriptions
- Land secured as part of the GEW Reserve that is additional to the 1,200 hectares of land the Victorian Government committed to protecting for the reserve, in accordance with the BCS.

### 8.2 Progress so far

Reporting on this program output will commence after the first land parcel containing GEW is secured in the growth corridors through voluntary acquisition by the Crown, vesting of land in a public authority, or on-title management agreements under section 69 of the *Conservation Forests and Land Act 1987*.

The timing for securing land for GEW will be determined in accordance with the *Land Protection under the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* (DEPI, 2014a), which outlines the process for prioritising land security in the reserves and conservation areas established under the MSA Program.

## 9 Eighty per cent of highest priority habitats for Golden Sun Moth protected and managed

### 9.1 Introduction

As part of the MSA Program, the Victorian Government is required to protect 80 per cent of high priority habitat for Golden Sun Moth (GSM) within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion.

GSM is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act and threatened under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act).

'High priority habitat' for GSM is defined as 'high persistence habitat' (as determined in DSE, 2009) that is confirmed to contain the species.

The total area of high priority habitat for GSM within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion is 12,328 hectares (DEPI, 2013d). Of this habitat, 9,862 hectares must be protected to meet the 80 per cent target. Land that may contribute to the 80 per cent target includes:

- WGR (expected to protect 8,100 hectares of high priority habitat)
- GEW Reserve
- Conservation areas identified in the BCS (expected to protect 410 hectares of high priority habitat)
- Additional habitat to be protected outside the UGB, as specified in the BCS
- New and existing areas protected within or outside the MSA Program area, not identified in the BCS or required under the prescriptions.

Existing reserves that are not part of the MSA, such as national parks, council reserves and offset sites, currently protect 677 hectares of high priority habitat for GSM (DEPI, 2013d).

As identified in the BCS, it is expected that an additional 680 hectares of high priority habitat will require protection outside the UGB to meet the 80 per cent target.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b).

### 9.2 Progress so far

The highlights for this commitment to 30 June 2014 are:

- 1,691 ha of high priority habitat for GSM have been secured.
- 14% of high priority habitat in the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion has been secured.

## 9.3 Progress against key performance indicators

### 9.3.1 High priority habitat for Golden Sun Moth protected

A total of 1,014.6 hectares of high priority habitat for GSM was secured within the Victorian Volcanic Plain that contributes towards the 80 per cent target for GSM. This land was secured in the WGR. Recent surveys have confirmed the presence of GSM on this land.

A total of 1,691 hectares of high priority habitat has been secured for GSM within the Victorian Volcanic Plain. This includes existing reserves that are not part of the MSA Program in accordance with the approach agreed to by the Commonwealth Government (DEPI, 2013d).

**Table 24: High priority habitat for Golden Sun Moth protected**

Key Performance Indicator	Units
Hectares protected 2013-14	1,014.6 ha
Total hectares protected	1, 691 ha
Total per cent protected	14%

## 10 Eighty per cent of highest priority habitats for Spiny Rice-flower protected and managed

### 10.1 Introduction

As part of the MSA Program, the Victorian Government is required to protect 80 per cent of high priority habitat for Spiny Rice-flower (SRF) within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion.

SRF is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act and threatened under the Victorian FFG Act.

'High priority habitat' for SRF is defined as 'high persistence habitat' (as determined in DSE, 2009) that is confirmed to contain the species.

The total area of high priority habitat for SRF within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion is 1,422 hectares (DEPI, 2013e). Of this habitat, 1,138 hectares must be protected to meet the 80 per cent target. Land that may contribute to the 80 per cent target includes:

- WGR (expected to protect 314 hectares of high priority habitat)
- GEW Reserve
- Conservation areas identified in the BCS (expected to protect 216 hectares of high priority habitat)
- Additional habitat to be protected outside the UGB, as specified in the BCS
- New and existing areas protected within or outside the MSA Program area, not identified in the BCS or required under the prescriptions.

Existing reserves that are not part of the MSA, such as national parks, council reserves and offset sites, currently protect 69 hectares of high priority habitat for SRF (DEPI, 2013e).

As identified in the BCS, it is expected that an additional 394 hectares of high priority habitat will require protection outside the UGB to meet the 80 per cent target.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b).

### 10.2 Progress so far

The highlights for this commitment to 30 June 2014 are:

- 69 ha of high priority habitat for SRF have been secured.
- 4.9% of high priority habitat in the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion has been secured.

## 10.3 Progress against key performance indicators

### 10.3.1 High priority habitat for Spiny Rice-flower protected

No high priority habitat for SRF was secured in the reporting period.

A total of 69 hectares of high priority habitat has been secured for SRF within the Victorian Volcanic Plain. This comprises land in existing reserves that are not part of the MSA Program in accordance with the approach agreed to by the Commonwealth Government (DEPI, 2013e).

**Table 25: High priority habitat for Spiny Rice-flower protected**

<b>Key Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Units</b>
Hectares protected 2013-14	0 ha
Total hectares protected	69 ha
Total per cent protected	4.9%

# 11 Eighty per cent of highest priority habitats for Matted Flax-lily protected and managed

## 11.1 Introduction

As part of the MSA Program, the Victorian Government is required to protect 80 per cent of high priority habitat for Matted Flax-lily (MFL) within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion.

MFL is listed as endangered under the EPBC Act and threatened under the Victorian FFG Act.

'High priority habitat' for MFL is defined as 'high persistence habitat' (as determined in DSE, 2009) that is confirmed to contain the species. The total area of high priority habitat for MFL within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion is 901 hectares (DEPI, 2013e). Of this habitat, 721 hectares must be protected to meet the 80 per cent target. Land that may contribute to the 80 per cent target includes:

- WGR
- GEW Reserve
- Conservation areas identified in the BCS (expected to protect 187 hectares of high priority habitat)
- Additional habitat to be protected outside the UGB, as specified in the BCS
- New and existing areas protected within or outside the MSA Program area, not identified in the BCS or required under the prescriptions.

Existing reserves that are not part of the MSA, such as national parks, council reserves and offset sites, currently protect three hectares of high priority habitat for MFL (DEPI, 2013e).

As identified in the BCS, it is expected that an additional 529 hectares of high priority habitat will require protection outside the UGB to meet the 80 per cent target.

The methodology for collecting and analysing the data in the tables below is set out in the *Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Technical Protocols for Program Outputs* (DELWP, 2015b).

## 11.2 Progress so far

The highlights for this commitment to 30 June 2014 are:

- 3 ha of high priority habitat for MFL have been secured.
- 1% of high priority habitat in the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion has been secured.

## 11.3 Progress against key performance indicators

### 11.3.1 High priority habitat for Matted Flax-lily protected

No high priority habitat for MFL was secured in the reporting period.

A total of three hectares of high priority habitat has been secured for MFL within the Victorian Volcanic Plain. This comprises land in existing reserves that are not part of the MSA Program in accordance with the approach agreed by the Commonwealth Government (DEPI, 2013e).

**Table 25: High priority habitat for Matted Flax-lily protected**

Key Performance Indicator	Units
Hectares protected 2013-14	0 ha
Total hectares protected	3 ha
Total per cent protected	1%



## 12 Important landscape and habitat areas for Southern Brown Bandicoot are managed

### 12.1 Introduction

The Victorian Government will implement a range of conservation measures to protect Southern Brown Bandicoot in south-eastern Melbourne in accordance with the Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot and associated supplement (DEPI, 2014b, 2014c).

Conservation measures will be implemented within a management area of 60,000 hectares primarily outside the UGB. The measures include:

- Maintaining the bandicoot population at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne through predator-proof fencing, fox baiting and monitoring.
- Voluntary incentive programs to deliver on-ground works on private and public lands such as fox baiting, habitat restoration and enhanced security for the species.
- A research program to answer key questions about genetics and habitat usage by the species.
- The enhancement of habitat in open space and drainage reserves in the Botanic Ridge and Devon Meadows precincts to enhance connectivity within the UGB.
- Voluntary incentive programs for landowners to enhance habitat connectivity outside the UGB to populations of the species on Quail Island to the south.
- A trust fund of approximately \$30 million will be established to fund the conservation measures from habitat compensation fees collected from development within the south-eastern growth corridor.

### 12.2 Progress so far

The Commonwealth Environment Minister approved the Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot in August 2014. As such, DELWP will commence reporting on the implementation of the strategy in the next reporting period (2014-15).

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RRLA (2013b) Deer Park-West Werribee Junction: Environmental Annual Report, July 2012-July 2013

RRLA (2012) Section 2 Environmental Management Plan, Revision 0

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# Appendix 1: Independent Auditor Report

[INSERT DOCUMENT]



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND,  
WATER AND PLANNING**

**Melbourne Strategic Assessment**

Independent Monitor Report

January 2015

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Victorian Government engaged RSM Bird Cameron as Independent Monitor to undertake a review of whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program (the “MSA Program”) have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009).

RSM Bird Cameron is pleased to present its Independent Reasonable Assurance Engagement Report setting out our conclusion and findings from the review conducted.

### **1.2 Background**

On 4 March 2009, the Commonwealth Government signed an agreement with the Victorian Government to undertake a strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne’s urban growth boundary. The Commonwealth Environment Minister endorsed the MSA Program, as set out in the Delivering Melbourne’s Newest Sustainable Communities: Program Report (December 2009) (the “MSA Program Report”) in February 2010. Since that time, the Commonwealth Government has approved a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Sub-Regional Strategies for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog, and Southern Brown Bandicoot and signed three approvals, one on 16 April 2010, a second on the 5 September 2013 and a third on 11 September 2014. These allow for urban development in the four growth corridors within Melbourne’s expanded 2010 Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and in 28 existing precincts within the 2005 UGB. It also provides for the development of the Regional Rail Link Corridor between west of Werribee and Deer Park and the Outer Metropolitan Transport Corridor.

Approximately 28 Precinct Structure Plans have been approved by the Victorian Government and contain conditions and obligations to ensure the requirements of the MSA Program are implemented. Planning permits have been issued for developments within these precincts, and works have commenced.

The Victorian Government aims to provide assurance to the Commonwealth Government that that they are meeting the commitments outlined in the Program report that mitigate the process of urban and infrastructure development.

The MSA Program Report sets out monitoring and reporting activities in relation to the various stages of the MSA Program. Some of these activities require an Independent Monitor to audit the MSA program.

### **1.3 Role of the Independent Monitor**

The role of the Independent Monitor for this engagement was to carry out an audit, and provide a report with reasonable assurance conclusion to the Victorian Government, on whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land have occurred in the manner described in the endorsed MSA Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program. The audit was to identify and report where processes are inconsistent with the MSA Program Report Stage 2 intent, and make recommendations for rectification.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

### 1.4 Basis for Qualified Conclusion

Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report on whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the MSA Program have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report, as at 1 September 2014, has been qualified in relation to the following:

#### Cultural Heritage Management Plan Not Prepared

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011.

In accordance with the Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

#### Approval of Growth Corridor Plans

Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and its incorporation into relevant planning schemes had not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) were completed and have been approved as early as January 2011. As the Growth Corridor Plans sets the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the Growth Corridor Plans.

This does not appear to be consistent with the MSA Program Report and the intent of the MSA Program.

#### Sub-Regional Species Strategy Not Approved prior to Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014, however the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Further details on these issues are provided in **Part B – Detailed Findings**.



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

### 1.5 Qualified Reasonable Assurance Conclusion

The qualified reasonable assurance conclusion has been formed on the above basis. Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report containing our qualified conclusion (**Part A**) has been included on pages 7 to 10 of this report.

A summary of work performed and the findings against each element of the Program Report included in the scope of our audit has been provided **Appendix 1**.

### 1.6 Other Matters Noted during our Audit

We have made the following observations as result of the testing performed on the following elements of Stage 2 of the MSA Program:

- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy;
- Sub-Regional Species Strategy; and
- The Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure.

These have been summarised below:

- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report states that an overarching Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared for each expanded growth area, and each Biodiversity Conservation Strategy must be approved by the Commonwealth Government.

We noted one Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was prepared to cover all growth areas, as opposed to a separate Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for each. We reviewed the Strategy and tested that each growth area stipulated within the MSA Program Report was captured and addressed, without material omission. We also noted the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was approved by the Commonwealth Government on 5 August 2013, as required under stage 2 of MSA Program Report.

- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report states each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted that the SRSS that was prepared for the Growling Grass Frog and Golden Sun Moth was approved on the same day as the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. This decision was based on the need for the SRSS to be prepared in conjunction with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, ensuring consistency. This appeared to be in line with the intent of the Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report, in material respects.
- Stage 2 of the MSA Program Report requires the following to be performed for the Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure:
  - development of an Environmental Impact Report;
  - conduct a public consultation on the Environmental Impact Report; and
  - development of Development Plans.

We noted that as at the date of this report, none of the above were completed as the infrastructure project has not commenced and therefore could not be reviewed as part of this assurance engagement.

## 2. SCOPE AND APPROACH

### 2.1 Scope of the Engagement

The scope of work under this engagement included:

- Assessment of whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land has occurred in the manner described in the endorsed MSA Program Report. The audit and our report related only to Stage 2 of the MSA Program as outlined in the MSA Program Report, and included the following elements:
  - Growth Corridor Plans;
  - Biodiversity Conservation Strategies;
  - Sub-Regional Species strategies;
  - Cultural Heritage Management Plan;
  - Planning Permits;
  - Conservation Management Plans;
  - Native Vegetation Precinct Plans;
  - Precinct Structure Plans (specific and limited to a sample of six precinct structure plans);
  - National Park or reserve management plans;
  - Framework for transport Infrastructure and planning mechanisms (Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure);
  - Planning of Grassland Reserves (Reserve Management Plans);
  - Interim management plans; and
  - Offsets.
- Assessment of the Victorian Government's implementation of the endorsed MSA's Stage 2 program design, including identifying any anomalies and the subsequent processes adopted between the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments;
- Identified where processes or changes are inconsistent with the MSA Program Report Stage 2's intent, and make recommendations for rectification.
- Prepared a report to be submitted to the Victorian Government for the MSA Program for provision to the Commonwealth Government.

#### Materiality Assessment

Materiality was used to determine the nature, timing and extent of procedure if executed and to assess the relative significance of the matters noted in **Part B**. Matters were deemed material they represent risk or non-compliance which could influence the decisions of users of the Program Report.

In assessing materiality we considered the matters raised in the context of information that is relevant to stakeholders of the MSA Program or that may be affected by the delivery of the MSA Program. Our assessment of materiality included an assessment of whether the each matter was significant to the particular audited body, if it was pervasive and the effect it has on the MSA Program information or the audited body's compliance as a whole. In combination, these considerations determined whether the matter may affect the decisions of the stakeholders involved in the MSA Program or that are affected by its delivery.

## **2. SCOPE AND APPROACH (CONT.)**

### **2.1 Scope of the Engagement (Cont.)**

#### **Materiality Assessment (Cont.)**

Examples of qualitative factors are:

- matters which may have significant impact on the reputation of audited body;
- matters which indicate a serious weakness in the audited body's systems, processes and controls; and / or
- matters which indicate fraudulent reporting of compliance with the Program Report.

Materiality was considered during the risk assessment phase and revised during the course of the assurance engagement so that the extent and type of procedures conducted adequately reflects the risk of material non-compliance. When setting materiality, consideration was given to the risk that a misstatement or non-compliance will not be identified by the audited body's systems and processes. The auditor exercises their professional judgment in assessing these risks.



**RSM Bird Cameron**

**INDEPENDENT  
REASONABLE  
ASSURANCE  
REPORT**

**As at 1 September  
2014**

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT

### Part A - Conclusion

**To: The Management of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and Melbourne Planning Authority**

We have conducted a reasonable assurance engagement in relation to whether the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reservation of land in respect to the strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary has occurred in accordance with the endorsed Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009) (the "MSA Program Report") as at 1 September 2014.

The engagement related only to Stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program (the "MSA Program") as outlined in the MSA Program Report. The assurance procedures performed were specific to the following elements of Stage 2 of the MSA Program:

- Growth Corridor Plans;
- Biodiversity Conservation Strategies;
- Sub-Regional Species strategies;
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan;
- Planning Permits;
- Conservation Management Plans;
- Native Vegetation Precinct Plans;
- Precinct Structure Plans (specific and limited to a sample of six precinct structure plans);
- National Park or reserve management plans;
- Framework for transport Infrastructure and planning mechanisms (Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure);
- Planning of Grassland Reserves (Reserve Management Plans);
- Interim management plans; and
- Offsets.

#### Responsibility of the Victorian Government

The Victorian Government, is responsible for preparation of the relevant urban frameworks, transport frameworks and the reservation of land required under each element of Stage 2 of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report. This responsibility includes design, implementation and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation of each framework, strategy and plan subjected to the assurance procedures within the scope of this engagement.

#### Our Independence and Quality Control

We have complied with the relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, which include independence and other requirements founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence, due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

Furthermore, in accordance with Australian Standard on Quality Control 1 *Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, and Other Assurance Engagements*, RSM Bird Cameron maintains a comprehensive system of quality control including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)

#### Our Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express a reasonable assurance opinion on whether the processes undertaken to prepare each element of Stage 2 of the MSA Program was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, based on the evidence we have obtained.

We conducted our audit in accordance with ASAE 3000 *Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information*. Our procedures were designed to provide reasonable assurance, as defined by ASAE 3000. The procedures selected depended on our judgment, including an assessment of the risks of material impact of the matter being audited.

We believe that the assurance evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our assurance conclusion.

#### Summary of Procedures Undertaken

The procedures we conducted in our reasonable assurance engagement included:

- Discussions with relevant key personnel involved in delivering each element of the MSA Program, that included responsible officers from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Department of Transport Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI) and Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) to gather relevant information and develop an understanding of roles and responsibilities for implementation of Stage 2 and the processes undertaken in preparing the elements described above;
- Prepared a detailed Project Plan setting out the detailed approach and methodology;
- Conducted fieldwork, including interviews with identified responsible officers and review of information obtained, to understand and confirm:
  - whether the requirements, and intent, within the MSA Program Report for the element were clear and understood;
  - the processes undertaken to prepare the element, and how the matters required within the MSA Program report have been considered and addressed;
  - the final elements are consistent with the intent of the MSA Program Report; and
  - where elements have changed, considered whether the changes are also consistent with the intent of the Stage 2 of MSA Program.
- Assessed, based on work conducted around the chosen sample, whether the process undertaken to prepare the element is consistent with the manner as described in the MSA Program Report; and
- Prepared a draft and then final audit report to include detail of the findings and conclusions reached.

#### Use of our Reasonable Assurance Report

This report has been prepared for the Victorian Government. Accordingly, we expressly disclaim and do not accept any responsibility or liability to any party other than the Victorian Government for any consequences of reliance on this report for any purpose.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)

#### Inherent Limitations

Because of the inherent limitations of any internal control structure, it is possible that fraud or errors may occur and not be detected. We have not audited the overall internal control structure and no opinion is expressed as to its effectiveness. An audit is not designed to detect all weaknesses in control procedures or all instances of non-compliance as it is not performed continuously throughout the period, and the tests performed are on a sample basis having regard to the nature and size of the entity.

Any projection of the evaluation of internal control procedures to future periods is subject to the risk that the procedures may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with them may deteriorate.

#### Basis for Qualified Conclusion

Our Independent Reasonable Assurance Report on whether the planning mechanisms (i.e. the urban planning frameworks and reservation of land) at stage 2 of the MSA Program have been established in the manner described in the endorsed Program Report, as at 1 September 2014, has been qualified in relation to the following:

##### Cultural Heritage Management Plan Not Prepared

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan was not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011.

In accordance with the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

##### Approval of Growth Corridor Plans

Formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes has not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) were completed and have been approved as early as January 2011. As the Growth Corridor Plans set the regional framework for planning precincts, there is a risk that completed PSPs have not considered applicable changes made to the Growth Corridor Plans.

This does not appear to be consistent with the MSA Program Report and the intent of the MSA Program.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part A – Conclusion (Cont.)

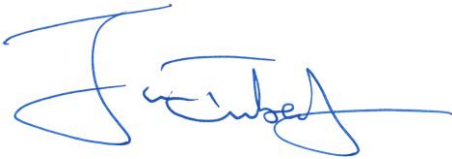
#### Sub-Regional Species Strategy Not Approved

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014, however, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Further details on these issues are provided in **Part B – Detailed Findings**.

#### **Qualified Conclusion**

In our opinion, except for the matters referred to in the Basis for Qualified Conclusion paragraph, the processes undertaken to prepare urban frameworks, transport frameworks and reservation of land in respect to the strategic assessment of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary has occurred in accordance with the endorsed Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program Report (Victorian Government, 2009) as at 1 September 2014, in all material respects.



**JM IMBERT**  
RSM Bird Cameron

Melbourne  
21 January 2015



## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings

#### Findings and Recommendations

We have detailed our findings from our testing performed below. The results should not be construed as providing an opinion on the matter being audited as a whole, instead they should be read in the context of providing evidence to support the conclusion.

#### 1. Cultural Heritage Management Plans not prepared for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct

<b>Ratings:</b>			
Compliance	<b>1</b>	Risk	<b>M</b>

#### Observation

Cultural Heritage Management Plans are required for any high impact activities listed (including greenfield residential subdivision and construction of major transport infrastructure), and for any activity in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity which has not been subjected to major ground disturbance. The MSA Program Report states that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be prepared for each precinct in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

We noted that Cultural Heritage Management Plans were not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. Per the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met.

We made the following observations that support the requirement for a Cultural Heritage Management Plan to be prepared for the Greenvale North Precinct (R1):

- The documented Precinct Features for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct identifies a low to moderate Aboriginal cultural heritage value and potential post-contact heritage in the form of high potential for historic heritage value, due to the eastern portion of the precinct being utilised by the Royal Australian Navy for armament testing;
- The Greenvale North (R1) PSP stated Indigenous archaeological artifacts have been found across the site and it is expected that complex investigations incorporating sub-surface testing will be required throughout the precinct when Cultural Heritage Management Plans are prepared;
- Discussions held with the Hume City Council indicated their position was that Cultural Heritage Management Plans should be prepared to ensure all cultural sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites are identified and incorporated into the precinct planning, preventing delays in development and changes to precinct lot sizes; and
- For Greenvale North (R1) there was no evidence to support agreement by all relevant stakeholders that Cultural Heritage Management Plans were not required for the precinct.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 1. Cultural Heritage Management Plans not prepared for the Greenvale North (R1) Precinct (Cont.)

##### Implication

The preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is a requirement of the MSA Program Report.

Without a Cultural Heritage Management Plan developed in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* as required by the MSA Program Report, there is a risk that culturally sensitive and post-contact heritage sites within the precinct of Greenvale North (R1) has not been given consideration in the planning stages of the PSP.

##### Recommendations

We recommend a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is prepared for Greenvale North (R1), in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, as required by the MSA Program Report. Identification of culturally sensitive sites and post-contact heritage sites should be reflected in the PSP. Development on the respective sites should not proceed until all requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plans have been met.

#### Management Comments

A precinct structure plan sets the future structure for the suburb and guides the use and development of land in the precinct over the longer term. The Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines include a standard approach to integrating heritage requirements into the precinct structure planning (PSP) process. The legal requirement to have completed a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is triggered at the planning permit stage. Under Section 52 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2000*, a decision maker must not grant a planning permit if a cultural heritage management plan is required for an activity if— (a) all or part of the activity area for the activity is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity; and (b) all or part of the activity is a high impact activity.

It should be noted that not all subdivision or development is triggered by the above and that only land that is captured by the above requires a CHMP to be prepared.

Hume City Council submitted to the Planning Panel considering the merits of Planning Scheme Amendment C119 to the Hume Planning Scheme (implementing the Greenvale North R1 Precinct Structure Plan) that a CHMP should be prepared prior to the amendment being approved, the Panel accepted that sufficient investigations of pre- and post-contact heritage had occurred during the PSP process and implicitly that development proponents should be responsible for the completion of a CHMP (if required).

Subsequently, development proponents have responded to their obligations to prepare a CHMP if they have been required to do so by the Act.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### 2. Approval of the Growth Corridor Plans

<b>Ratings:</b>			
Compliance	<b>1</b>	Risk	<b>L</b>

#### Observation

The Growth Corridor Plans (also referred to as the Growth Area Framework Plans within the MSA Program Report) set the regional framework for planning precincts within the growth areas based on the strategic directions of Melbourne 2030. The Growth Corridor Plans are intended to:

- Set an overarching strategic planning framework to guide future development in the four Growth Corridors;
- Inform the Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) Process;
- Indicate areas of high environmental or landscape value, natural features or open space to be preserved;
- Identify, broadly, the location of future residential districts, industrial and employment areas and open space networks;
- Indicate the likely strategic transport infrastructure required to support urban development; and
- Identify the location for future Major and Principal Town Centres (MTC & PTC).

The MSA Program Report Stage 2 requires the Growth Corridor Plans to be submitted for approval by the Minister for Planning and incorporated into relevant planning schemes. The requirement for formal approval of the Growth Corridor Plans and incorporation into relevant planning schemes had not occurred as at the date of this report. Despite this, we noted there are PSPs that are complete and have been approved as early as January 2011. We also noted the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was approved on 5 August 2013 and the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment on 7 August 2014.

#### Implication

There is a risk that completed and approved PSPs were informed by Growth Corridor Plans that has been subjected to reiterations or amendments that have not been reflected or captured within the completed PSPs.

This is not considered to be in accordance with the intent of the MSA Program Report.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### 2. Approval of the Growth Corridor Plans (Cont.)

##### Recommendations

We recommend that the Victorian Government review the Growth Corridor Plans once approved and incorporated into planning schemes, to assess whether there have been significant changes that impact completed PSPs in respect to:

- Biodiversity;
- Transport and infrastructure;
- Urban growth boundary areas; and
- Other applicable areas of the PSP that are informed by the Growth Corridor Plans.

##### Management Comments

The Growth Corridor Plans (GCPs) were informed by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) and Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS) for the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Southern Brown Bandicoot and incorporate the location of the boundaries of each conservation area. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning reviewed the GCPs prior to their release in 2012 to ensure consistency with the biodiversity strategies.

Finalisation of the GCPs and their incorporation into relevant planning schemes has been dependent on the finalisation of these strategies. With the BCS and SRSS completed, the GCPs have been finalised for statutory planning approval.

The BCS, SRSS and GCPs have not significantly changed since 2012. Approved precinct structure plans are generally consistent with the final GCPs, however they will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Planning Authority following statutory planning approval, and incidental minor modifications will be incorporated where required.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 3. Approval of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot

<b>Ratings:</b>			
Compliance	<b>1</b>	Risk	<b>L</b>

#### Observation

Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS) define how matters of environmental significance will be protected within each growth area. Examples of matters of environmental significance include:

- Growling Grass Frog;
- Southern Brown Bandicoot; and
- Golden Sun Moth.

The Sub-Regional Species Strategy (SRSS) for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014. .

The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was finalised on 5 August 2013. This is not consistent with the MSA Program Report requirement where each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

A draft SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was initially prepared and released for public consultation in December 2011 (prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy). The draft SRSS was prepared based on technical work undertaken by consultants, including literature reviews, targeted surveys, use of Population Viability Analysis tools and habitat models, and technical workshops. However, following submissions received during the public consultation process, the draft SRSS was set to be replaced by a new strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot incorporating additional technical work performed.

We acknowledge that the finalised version of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy states there may be amendments required for the south-eastern growth corridor to ensure consistency with the potential additional requirements arising from the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot.

#### Implication

There is a risk that the approved Biodiversity Conservation Strategy may not be complete and does not consider all aspects of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Furthermore, a risk of non-compliance with the intent of the MSA Program Report.

#### Recommendations

We recommended that if there are changes made to the SRSS that have not been gazetted and impact the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, we recommend that Biodiversity Conservation Strategy is updated and approved accordingly.

## INDEPENDENT REASONABLE ASSURANCE REPORT (CONT.)

### Part B – Detailed Findings (Cont.)

#### Findings and Recommendations (Cont.)

#### 3. Approval of the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot (Cont.)

##### Management Comments

DELWP has reviewed the BCS for consistency with the SBB strategy/associated supplement and has determined that the documents are consistent and that the BCS addresses all relevant aspects of the SBB strategy/associated supplement.

The SBB strategy focuses on a 'management area' outside the south-eastern growth corridor (i.e. outside the area covered by the BCS). The only mandatory obligation it imposes within the BCS area relates to habitat compensation fees and this requirement is consistent between the BCS and SBB strategy.

The associated supplement applies to some land within the area covered by the BCS (Botanic Ridge and Devon Meadows precincts). The supplement does not establish any conservation areas within these precincts and so DELWP is of the view that the BCS does not need to be updated. Rather, the supplement commits the Victorian Government to creating habitat for SBB within certain existing open space and drainage reserves. These commitments will be implemented through the precinct structure plans for these precincts and DELWP has agreed on a process to achieve this with the Metropolitan Planning Authority.

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Growth Area Framework Plans / Growth Corridor Plans</b>            Growth Corridor Plans are put in place to guide the creation of new communities within the growth areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casey – Cardinia;</li> <li>• Hume;</li> <li>• Melton – Caroline Springs;</li> <li>• Whittlesea;</li> <li>• Wyndham; and</li> <li>• Sunbury</li> </ul> <p>Growth Corridor Plans set out the regional framework for the preparation of precinct structure plans within the growth corridors and show broad land-use patterns, proposed transport networks, regional open space, important waterways and areas of environmental sensitivity. The plans incorporate the location and boundaries of each conservation area consistent with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and exclude urban development from each area.</p> <p>In accordance with the MSA Program Report, the Growth Corridor Plans have been informed by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the sub-regional species strategies.</p> <p>The Growth Corridor Plans require approval from the State Minister for Planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the Growth Corridor Plan that has been developed;</li> <li>• Tested that submission of Growth Corridor Plans have occurred following the finalisation of Biodiversity Conservation Strategies for each Growth Area;</li> <li>• Reviewed evidence of approval by the Minister for Planning (where applicable);</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer for each Growth Area to gain an understanding of the process in developing the Growth Corridor Plan;</li> <li>• Tested that each growth area stipulated within the MSA Program Report is captured within the Growth Corridor Plan; and</li> <li>• Tested that boundaries of each conservation area per the Biodiversity Conservation Strategies are consistent with the Growth Corridor Plans.</li> </ul>	<p>RSM Bird Cameron identified issues in respect to Final Approval of the Growth Corridor Plan not having occurred at the date of this report. (Refer to <b>Finding 2 – Part B</b> of this report)</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Biodiversity Conservation Strategies</b></p> <p>A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared which is relevant to all expanded growth areas and will inform the preparation of the Growth Corridor Plans. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy must be approved by Commonwealth Government prior to finalisation. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy defines how protected areas designated within growth areas will be managed.</p> <p>The BCS is the overarching strategy for the protection of biodiversity in the growth corridors and is a significant step towards finalising the planning for biodiversity required for the Melbourne Strategic Assessment.</p> <p>The strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addresses all relevant matters of state significance, as well as matters of national environmental significance protected under the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>;</li> <li>• Ensures the long term protection of biodiversity in the growth corridors, by setting up a network of conservation areas; and</li> <li>• Sets out conservation measures to protect important biodiversity outside Melbourne to complement actions within the growth corridors.</li> </ul> <p>The BCS informs the Growth Corridor Plans. These plans set the strategic direction for future urban development of land in the growth areas over the next 20 to 30 years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained completed and finalised Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the expanded growth areas;</li> <li>• Reviewed evidence of approval by the Commonwealth Government for finalised Biodiversity Conservation Strategy;</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer for each Biodiversity Conservation Strategy to gain understanding of the process in developing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy; and</li> <li>• Reviewed that approval of Biodiversity Conservation Strategy has occurred prior to approval of the Growth Corridor Plan.</li> </ul>	<p>The MSA Program Report states that an overarching Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will be prepared for each expanded growth area. However, we noted that one Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was prepared to cover all growth areas. (Refer to <b>Section 1.6 of the Executive Summary, page 3 of this report</b>).</p>



## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Sub-Regional Species Strategies (SRSS)</b></p> <p>SRSS define how matters of environmental significance will be protected within each Growth Area. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growling Grass Frog;</li> <li>• Southern Brown Bandicoot; and</li> <li>• Golden Sun Moth.</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of the SRSS is to inform the preparation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy by identifying important populations, areas of habitat to be protected as required by the prescriptions, and habitat corridors. These strategies influence the design of precincts during the preparation of precinct structure plans.</p> <p>SRSS have been prepared for the Growling Grass Frog, the Golden Sun Moth and the Southern Brown Bandicoot. These threatened species are matters of national environmental significance protected under the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.</p> <p>The sub-regional species strategies will help ensure the long-term protection of Growling Grass Frog, Golden Sun Moth and Southern Brown Bandicoot in the growth corridors. The SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot also focuses on conservation actions for the species outside the area covered by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained and reviewed completed Sub-Regional Species Strategies;</li> <li>• Interviewed a sample of responsible officers to gain an understanding of the process for identifying matters of “environmental significance” and the guidance obtained.</li> <li>• Discussed the prescriptions that were approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister in 2010 for most relevant matters of national environmental significance, listed below and why Sub-Regional Species Strategies were not prepared.</li> </ul> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striped Legless Lizard;</li> <li>• Matted Flax-lily;</li> <li>• Spiny Rice-flower; and</li> <li>• Migratory species.</li> </ul> <p>Tested that the Strategies have been approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and applicable PSP.</p>	<p>The MSA Program Report Stage 2, states that each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted the SRSS for the Southern Brown Bandicoot was approved on 7 August 2014 despite the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy being finalised on 5 August 2013 (refer to <b>Finding 4 – Part B of this Report</b>).</p> <p>The MSA Program Report states that each SRSS must be approved by the Commonwealth Government prior to the finalisation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. We noted that the SRSS for the Growling Grass Frog and Golden Sun Moth was approved the same day as the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. (refer to <b>Section 1.6 of the Executive Summary, Page 3 of this report</b>).</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Precinct Structure Plans</b></p> <p>Precinct Structure Plans sets out the future structure of the Suburb including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of housing;</li> <li>• Activity Centres;</li> <li>• Community facilities;</li> <li>• Local transport networks; and</li> <li>• Open space.</li> </ul> <p>Around 28 PSPs have been approved and contain conditions and obligations to ensure the requirements of the MSA Program are implemented.</p> <p>The plans must be prepared and approved by the State Minister for Planning and incorporated into the relevant planning scheme before urban development can proceed (some exceptions apply). Once a plan has been incorporated into the relevant planning scheme, planning permits can be granted by the responsible authority (usually council) for urban development.</p> <p>PSPs must be prepared in accordance with the Growth Corridor Plans and the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines (GAA, 2009). These guidelines provide guidance on the assessment, protection and management of biodiversity values within the precinct and identify outputs that must be produced, including a Native Vegetation Precinct Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained a sample PSP and compare against permits obtained;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers for the PSPs obtained, to gain an understanding of the process of developing PSP and links/consistency with the Growth Area Framework Plans;</li> <li>• Reviewed for consideration given to applicable Cultural Heritage Management Plans, Native Vegetation Precinct Plans and Conservation Management Plans for each Precinct selected;</li> <li>• Tested the PSPs have been approved by the State Minister; and</li> <li>• For the sample of PSPs tested that it was developed in accordance with Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines (GAA, 2009). The following PSP were selected:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Botanic Ridge;</li> <li>2. Greenvale North (R1);</li> <li>3. Manor Lakes;</li> <li>4. Blackforest Road south;</li> <li>5. Taylors Hill West; and</li> <li>6. Melton North.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted as result of the testing performed. Consideration was given to Cultural Heritage Management Plans, Native Vegetation Precinct Plans and Conservation Management Plans with each PSP tested, within material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Cultural Heritage Management Plans</b></p> <p>Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) are to be prepared for each precinct in accordance with the Victorian <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>. CHMPs are required for any listed high impact activity (including greenfield residential subdivision and construction of major transport infrastructure) and for any area of cultural heritage sensitivity which has been subject to major ground disturbance.</p> <p>These plans provide for the management of known aboriginal cultural heritage values and those that may be discovered during works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained CHMP for the sample precincts selected above and tested the CHMP was developed in accordance with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006;</li> <li>• Reviewed the PSPs for any high impact activity planned and tested that the CHMP addressed each activity and followed up on the status of these; and</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each CHMP and gained an understanding of the process to identify the applicability of activities that required inclusion within the CHMP.</li> </ul>	<p>We noted that CHMPs were not prepared for high impact activities occurring in the Greenvale North precinct. The PSP for Greenvale North was approved on 20 January 2011. Per the MSA Program Report Stage 2, precinct development cannot occur until the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan are met (refer to <b>finding 1 - Part B of this Report</b>).</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Native Vegetation Precinct Plans (NVPP) and offsets</b></p> <p>NVPP is prepared for each precinct in accordance with clause 52.16 of local planning schemes. The NVPP sets out the requirements for the protection and removal of native vegetation for a defined area or precinct. The NVPP must be approved by the Commonwealth Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Arts.</p> <p>In the case of the growth corridors, the plans are a tool used to protect Commonwealth listed ecological communities.</p> <p>The plans are prepared using native vegetation assessments and mapping to standards specified by DELWP.</p> <p>Native vegetation precinct plans must be prepared based on the time-stamping maps and dataset, which cover all native vegetation patches within the precinct, and will be supplemented by surveys of individual trees where relevant.</p> <p>The plans are incorporated into the relevant local planning scheme. Native vegetation precinct plans are prepared in accordance with Biodiversity Precinct Structure Planning Kit, and in accordance with the MSA program report, must be consistent with the prescriptions.</p> <p>Offsets relate to actions to make reparation for the loss of native vegetation arising from removal or destruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the NVPP for the sample of Precincts select and tested that the NVPP was developed in accordance with clause 52.16 of the local planning schemes and Biodiversity Precinct Structure Planning Kit;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each NVPP to gain an understanding of the process undertaken to identify native vegetation areas within each precinct that will require the plan to be developed;</li> <li>• Reviewed offsets relating to the specific precinct and gained an understanding of the process of identifying potential vegetation for destruction and the criteria for offset applied;</li> <li>• Tested compliance with the vegetation offset requirements established in accordance with the Native Vegetation Management Framework (2002); and</li> <li>• Traced offsets stipulated within each NVPP to the habitat compensation statement (where applicable).</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Conservation Management Plans</b></p> <p>A Conservation Management Plan is prepared where there is an important population of species that require particular management (e.g. Growling Grass Frog, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Golden Sun Moth, Matted Flax Lily etc.)</p> <p>They outline how matters of national environmental significance and state significance will be protected and managed within a precinct and must be prepared where there are important populations or habitats of threatened species within the growth corridors that require particular management.</p> <p>The plans are prepared as part of the precinct structure planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained the Conservation Management Plans for the sample of Precincts selected and assessed consistency with the sub-regional species strategies for the particular Growth Area;</li> <li>• Interviewed responsible officers that developed each Conservation Management Plan and gained an understanding of the process undertaken to identify the species within the area that would require a conservation management plan; and</li> <li>• Followed up on the further actions that were noted to take place per the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the sample of Precincts selected.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance with the MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Planning Permits</b></p> <p>Planning permits must be issued generally in accordance with the Precinct Structure Plan and include any implementation provision outlined. Development cannot proceed unless the requirements (as set out in the CHMP, NVPP and the Conservation Management Plan) are met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed planning permits issued and assessed for compliance with the PSP; and</li> <li>• For development that occurred, verified that the following was finalised:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural Heritage Management Plan</li> <li>- NVPP; and</li> <li>- Conservation Management Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>
<p><b>Prescriptions</b></p> <p>Prescriptions have been drafted for most matters of national environmental significance. All prescriptions require approval by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.</p> <p>Requirements from the Prescriptions have been incorporated into the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See testing for Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>See outcomes for Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>
<p><b>National Park or Reserve Management Plans</b></p> <p>National Park or Reserve Management Plans have been developed to reserve land for conservation or recreational purposes under the <i>Victorian Crown Land Reserves Act 1978</i> or <i>Victorian National Parks Act 1975</i> depending on the final decision regarding the tenure of the land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted interviews with responsible officers of each growth area and gained an understanding of the process of identifying land that will be reserved for conservation or recreational purposes; and</li> <li>• Reviewed each land discussed for inclusion within the Reserve Management Plans of the applicable growth area.</li> </ul>	<p>As land acquisition has only occurred recently, there is currently no Reserve Management Plan in place. The land is currently being managed under the Interim Management Plan. Management guidelines for the acquired land have been developed and will form the basis of a management plan prepared by Parks Victoria upon assignment of land. The Interim Management Plan covers the appropriate management, data and weed control of the site.</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)

Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Interim Management Plans</b></p> <p>Prepared for private property that has been embarked to form part of the grassland reserve although is yet to be acquired. It must be prepared in accordance with the Victorian <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained details of the Interim Management plan for the precincts sampled; and</li> <li>• Interviewed the responsible officer to obtain an understanding of the current status of the Interim Management Plan.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no exceptions or general observations noted. Based on the testing performed this element was prepared in accordance MSA Program Report, in all material respects.</p>
<p><b>Quarries and Mines</b></p> <p>Native vegetation removal associated with the Earth Resources Industry (Quarries and Mines) is exempt from the requirements of the Victorian <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> and the planning scheme.</p> <p>The detailed planning of future quarries within the Urban Growth Boundary will be undertaken in accordance with relevant prescriptions approved by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment. This will be affected by amending the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Primary Industries (now Department of State Development, Business and Innovation) to require that the prescriptions approved by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment will be applied to all future quarries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing could not be performed due to information not being made available to DELWP and RSM Bird Cameron.</li> </ul>	<p>None</p>

## APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF WORK PERFORMED (CONT.)




Elements of the MSA Program	Audit Approach	Outcomes
<p><b>Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure</b></p> <p>The Regional Rail Link is a 50 kilometre railway connection from west of Werribee to Southern Cross Station via the Melbourne-Ballarat railway, connecting at Deer Park. The MSA Program is concerned with the west of Werribee to Deer Park section of the Regional Rail Link, which is approximately 30 kilometres long.</p> <p>The final Strategic Impact Assessment Report for the MSA Program assesses the potential impacts of implementing the MSA Program Report on matters of national environmental significance. The final alignment is outlined in the MSA Program Report.</p> <p>The Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor is 70 kilometres long and it links Werribee, Melton, Tullamarine and Craigieburn/Mickleham and connects to the E6 Transport Corridor, which links Donnybrook to the Metropolitan Ring Road at Thomastown.</p> <p>The final Strategic Impact Assessment Report for the MSA Program assesses the potential impacts of implementing the MSA Program Report on matters of national environmental significance. The proposed corridor is outlined in the MSA Program Report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews were conducted with the relevant responsible officer;</li> <li>• We reviewed the following documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ecological Plan for the Regional Rail Link;</li> <li>- Regional Rail Link Development Plan;</li> <li>- Regional Rail Link Environmental Management Plan; and</li> <li>- Approval and sign-off of each document above.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reviewed consideration given to the management of storm-water run-off from the Regional Rail Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>The MSA Program Report requires the following to be performed for the Outer Metropolitan/E6 Transport Corridor Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of an Environmental Impact Report;</li> <li>• conduct a public consultation on the Environmental Impact Report; and</li> <li>• development of Development Plans.</li> </ul> <p>We noted that as at the date of this report this project had not commenced and none of the above were completed and therefore could not be reviewed as part of this assurance engagement.</p>






## APPENDIX 2 – COMPLIANCE AND RISK RATINGS

The risk and compliance ratings applied to assess the issues identified are as follows:

### Compliance Rating

Rating		Description	Action
Level 1		Evidence of non-compliance with audit criteria.	These should be addressed as a matter of high priority, within one to three months
Level 2		Issues which could possibly result in non-compliance with audit criteria but where no evidence of actual non-compliance was found. However, there is considered to be insufficient formal evidence of controls in place or being actioned in relation to these issues.	These should generally be addressed within three to six months.
Level 3		Housekeeping matters and opportunities for improving internal controls and procedures relating to compliance.	These should be addressed within six to twelve months.

### Risk Ratings

Rating		Description	Action
High		Issues which may have a major impact on the Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues require senior management attention with regular monitoring and reporting at executive meetings.
Medium		Issues which may have a moderate impact on the Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues require management attention with regular ongoing monitoring.
Low		Issues which have a minor impact on Victorian Governments implementation of endorsed Program Report in relation to Stage 2 of the MSA Program.	These issues are the responsibility of management with regular monitoring and reporting at staff meetings.

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**Assurance - Business Advisory - Corporate Finance  
Financial Services - Risk Advisory - Tax - Turnaround & Insolvency**

**For more information, please contact**

Mr Jean-Marc Imbert

Director

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Melbourne Victoria 3000

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**[rsmi.com.au](http://rsmi.com.au)**

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RSM Bird Cameron is a member of the RSM network. Each member of the RSM network is an independent accounting and advisory firm which practises in its own right. The RSM network is not itself a separate legal entity in any jurisdiction.

## Appendix 2: PSPs gazetted under the MSA Program

PSP name	Within BCS area	Year PSP gazetted	Planning scheme amendment
Alfred Road (Wyndham Vale)	Yes	2013-14	C159
Blackforest Road South (Wyndham Vale)	Yes	2013-14	C169
Botanic Ridge	Yes	2012-13	C133
Cardinia Road Employment Area	No	2010-11	C130
Clyde North	No	2011-12	C153
Craigieburn (R2)	No	2010-11	C120
Cranbourne East	No	2009-10	C119
Cranbourne North Stage 2	No	2011-12	C125
Diggers Rest	Yes	2011-12	C121
East Werribee Employment Precinct	Yes	2013-14	C179
Greenvale Central	Yes	2013-14	C154 (Part 1)
Greenvale North (R1)	No	2010-11	C119
Greenvale West (R3)	Part	2010-11	C121
Lockerbie	Yes	2011-12	C161, C81, C161
Lockerbie North	Yes	2011-12	C82 , C162
Manor Lakes (Wyndham Vale)	Yes	2011-12	C154
Melton North	No	2010-11	C83
Merrifield West	Yes	2011-12	C162
Officer	No	2011-12	C149
Point Cook West	Yes	2012-13	C163
Pound Road	Yes	2004-05	C048
Rockbank North	Yes	2011-12	C120
Taylor's Hill West	No	2010-11	C82
Toolern	No	2011-12	C84 (P1) (P2)
Truganina Employment Area	Yes	2009-10	C124
Truganina South	No	2011-12	C123



s22

**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 July 2016 10:46 AM  
**To:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au; s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** MSA Progress Report 2014-15 and boundary change CA 2,6,10,15,26 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** MSA03 Acceptance 2014-15 progress report.pdf; MSA03 Acceptance of boundary change to CA 2-6-10-15-26.pdf

Dears22 and s22  
Please find attached a letter of acceptance of the MSA Progress Report for 2014-15 and another letter of acceptance for the proposed boundary change to Conservation Areas numbers 2, 6, 10, 15 and 26.

Please contact s22 if you have any questions regarding the attached correspondence.

Hard copies will be placed in the mail today.

*Kind Regards*

s22  
Senior Compliance Auditor  
Ph.s22  
Monitoring and Assurance  
Environment Standards Division.  
Department of the Environment  
GPO BOX 787, CANBERRA ACT 2601

---

**From:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 May 2016 10:05 AM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au; s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au  
**Subject:** MSA Progress Report 2014-15

Hi s22

Please find attached the final version of the MSA Progress Report for 2014-15. Apologies for the delays around this.

Happy to discuss the report and let me know if you have any questions.

s22

s22 | Manager, Melbourne Strategic Assessment Ecological Program | Biodiversity Division  
Environment and Climate Change | Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning  
Level 2, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002  
s22

[www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au)





Our reference: SA03

s22

Manager, Melbourne Strategic Assessment Ecological Program  
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning  
Level 2, 8 Nicholson St  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear s22

**Re: Melbourne Strategic Assessment (SA03) - Approval of 2014-15 Progress Report**

I refer to your email dated 20 May 2016 in which you submitted the Melbourne Strategic Assessment Progress Report 2014-15.

Officers of the Department of the Environment (the Department) have reviewed the Progress Report and consider that it provides sufficient information on the progress of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment to date.

In accepting the 2014-15 Progress Report the Department notes that the report was received 11 months after the end of the 2014-15 financial year, and in the future it is expected that the report be sent through in a timely manner.

In addition to this the Department note that the Melbourne Strategic Assessment has not made sufficient progress on a number of conservation targets relating to Matters of National Environmental Significance, including the targets for:

- land secured for the Western Grassland Reserves
- land secured the Truganina South Conservation Reserve
- habitat secured for the Golden Sun Moth
- habitat secured for the Spiny Rice-flower, and
- habitat secured fir the Matted Flax-lily

The Department also notes the Reasonable Assurance Qualifications that were identified in the Audit of Stage 2 of the program and the Victorian Government's response to these identified issues.

The Department will continue to work with the Victorian Government to ensure that the conservation outcomes for Matters of National Environmental Significance are achieved in delivering the Melbourne Strategic Assessment.

Should you have any queries about any matters raised in this letter please contact s22, s22 or email s22@environment.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

s22  
Acting Director  
Monitoring and Assurance Section  
Compliance and Enforcement Branch

22 July 2016

s22

**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 4 January 2017 9:07 AM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** FW: WGR concept plan [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** Letter to Ms Collins DoE\_WGR Concept Plan.pdf; Concept Plan final\_reduced.pdf  
  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

**From:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, 16 December 2016 8:40 AM  
**To:** s22 @environment.gov.au>  
**Subject:** WGR concept plan

Hi s22

Please find attached the WGR concept plan and letter to Monica. We consider this plan, combined with our other tools (management guidelines, bayesnets etc) fulfils the program report requirements for a reserve management plan for the WGR.

Thanks  
s22

s22 | Manager MSA Ecological Program | Biodiversity  
Energy, Environment and Climate Change | Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Address, Suburb, Victoria Postcode  
s22





Department of Environment,  
Land, Water and Planning

FOI 181013  
Document 10a

8 Nicholson Street  
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002  
www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Ms Monica Collins  
Assistant Secretary Compliance and Enforcement Branch  
Department of Environment and Energy  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA 2601

Dear Ms Collins

**WESTERN GRASSLAND RESERVE CONCEPT PLAN**

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has produced a Concept Plan for the Western Grassland Reserve to provide the strategic framework and direction for the establishment, use, zoning and infrastructure management within the reserve.

The Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA) Program Report (DSE, 2009) commits the Victorian Government to prepare a Reserve Plan for the Western Grassland Reserve. As land for the Western Grassland Reserve is progressively acquired over several years, reserve management planning will occur at two scales:

1. On-ground management of ecosystems and species to address outcome commitments directed by "Management requirements to meet outcomes: Western Grassland Reserves". This document is updated annually and forms the management agreement between DELWP and the land manager, Parks Victoria.
2. A strategic framework to guide the development and infrastructure management of the entire reserve over the establishment period. This commitment is met through the Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan.

If you have any questions about the enclosed Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan please contact s22 [redacted] Manager MSA Ecological Program on s22 [redacted] or

s22 [redacted] delwp.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely

**James Todd**  
Director- Knowledge and Decision Systems

15 / 12 / 16

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# Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan

Internal working document for Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment,  
Land, Water and Planning.

24 NOVEMBER 2016



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## Executive summary

The Western Grassland Reserve will protect the largest remaining concentration of volcanic plains grasslands in Australia. It will increase the extent of protected critically endangered Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain from two per cent to 20 per cent. Located next to the western growth corridor of metropolitan Melbourne, the reserve will also be a significant natural asset for the region's growing population.

The aim of the Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan is to guide the establishment of the whole reserve by providing a strategic framework and direction for the establishment, spatial zoning and opportunities for use and infrastructure management of the park over the acquisition period. The following is the vision for the reserve:

*The Western Grassland Reserve will maximise the area of habitat available to resident plant and animal species, in particular threatened species, and will enable management activities critical to the long term survival of plant and animal species. The Reserve will be a regional destination where the public can appreciate and learn about the biodiversity objectives of the reserve.*

The primary objective of the reserve is ecological management but it also has secondary objectives such as protection of history and heritage, education and knowledge, and community health and wellbeing.

An analysis of the current ecological values and landscape character zones has been prepared to inform the preparation of the Concept Plan. In addition, visitor experiences have been identified that are compatible with the vision and objectives of the reserve.

The Concept Plan has been developed using the following criteria:

- Allow visitor visitation and experiences without impacting on the existing biodiversity values of the reserve. Locate facilities to in areas compatible with user needs and in modified parts of the reserve;
- Through consultation with stakeholders assess the type and scale of facilities to be included in the reserve;
- Explore options for reuse of existing assets where possible and appropriate; and
- Consider the surrounding land use and recreational opportunities to guide how the reserve fits into the broader regional context and what is needed.

More detailed assessments of ecological, cultural and heritage values will be required as land parcels are progressively acquired and actions are implemented. This includes the preparation of business cases to determine the feasibility of capital works and ongoing maintenance.

This is an internal working document for Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to guide decisions on the development and infrastructure management within the reserve. It is recommended the Concept Plan is reviewed as appropriate dependent on the rate of progress of the reserve, but at least every 10 years to enable an assessment of the progress in the implementation of the vision for the reserve. It will also provide an opportunity to supplement the Concept Plan with additional information obtained as sites are acquired.

Once site acquisition reaches an appropriate level, a Master Plan should be prepared for the reserve. The preparation of the Master Plan should include public and stakeholder engagement to gain community insights as well as sharing information about the reserve which should assist with growing public appreciation of the reserve.

# 1 Aims

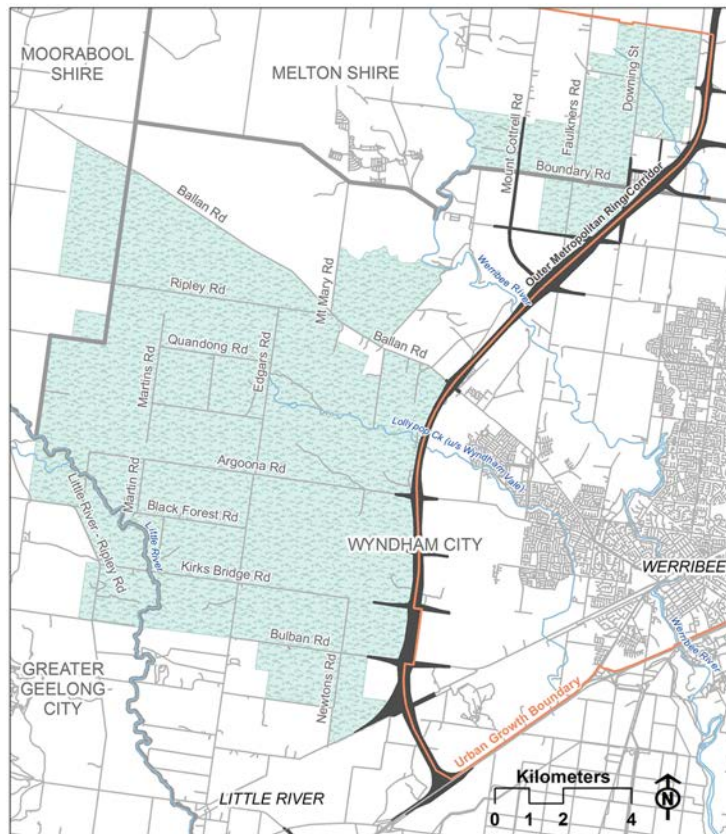
## 1.1 Western Grassland Reserve

The Victorian Government is committed to the protection and management of native grasslands in Melbourne's west. This commitment was the outcome of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (DSE, 2009) and is linked to the expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary. It is a mitigation measure required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC).

The Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA) Program Report (DSE, 2009) commits the Victorian Government to the preparation of a Reserve Plan for the Western Grassland Reserve. As land for the reserve will be progressively acquired over many years, reserve management planning will occur at two scales:

- On-ground management of ecosystems and species to address MSA commitments directed by the MSA ecological program including adaptive management response models, targeted research and detailed site inventory information. Reserve management plans are prepared at a parcel level and updated annually. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will also publish a document concerning management decision systems for vegetation communities and species to be completed by 2017.
- A Strategic Concept Plan to guide the development and infrastructure management of the entire reserve over the establishment period. This strategic concept plan provides a vision of how the reserve will be used and managed as a reserve including public access and broader opportunities.

Figure 1.1:  
The proposed locations of the  
Western Grassland Reserve (Source:  
DELWP)



## 1.2 Concept Plan

The aim of the Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan is to guide the establishment of the whole reserve by providing a strategic framework and direction for the establishment, spatial zoning and opportunities for use and infrastructure management of the park over the acquisition period.

The Concept Plan forms part of a broader policy framework for the reserve as outlined in Figure 1.2. The Concept Plan is one of multiple documents that will inform management decisions at a land parcel scale. For instance, detailed vegetation and fauna surveys conducted at a land parcel once it is secured, and the best ecological management of these values will ultimately inform what aspects of the concept plan may or may not be applicable at a parcel scale. It is anticipated that the Concept Plan may be updated as additional information is obtained through parcel assessments, or more information is available on future planning of open space and conservation activities in the surrounding region that would lead to considerable changes to the concept plan design. For this reason the Concept Plans aims to provide vision and direction without being over prescriptive given incomplete knowledge on the distribution of ecological values and future planning in surrounding areas. In addition, more detailed land parcel plans will be prepared for key aspects of the reserve identified in the Concept Plan as that land is secured.

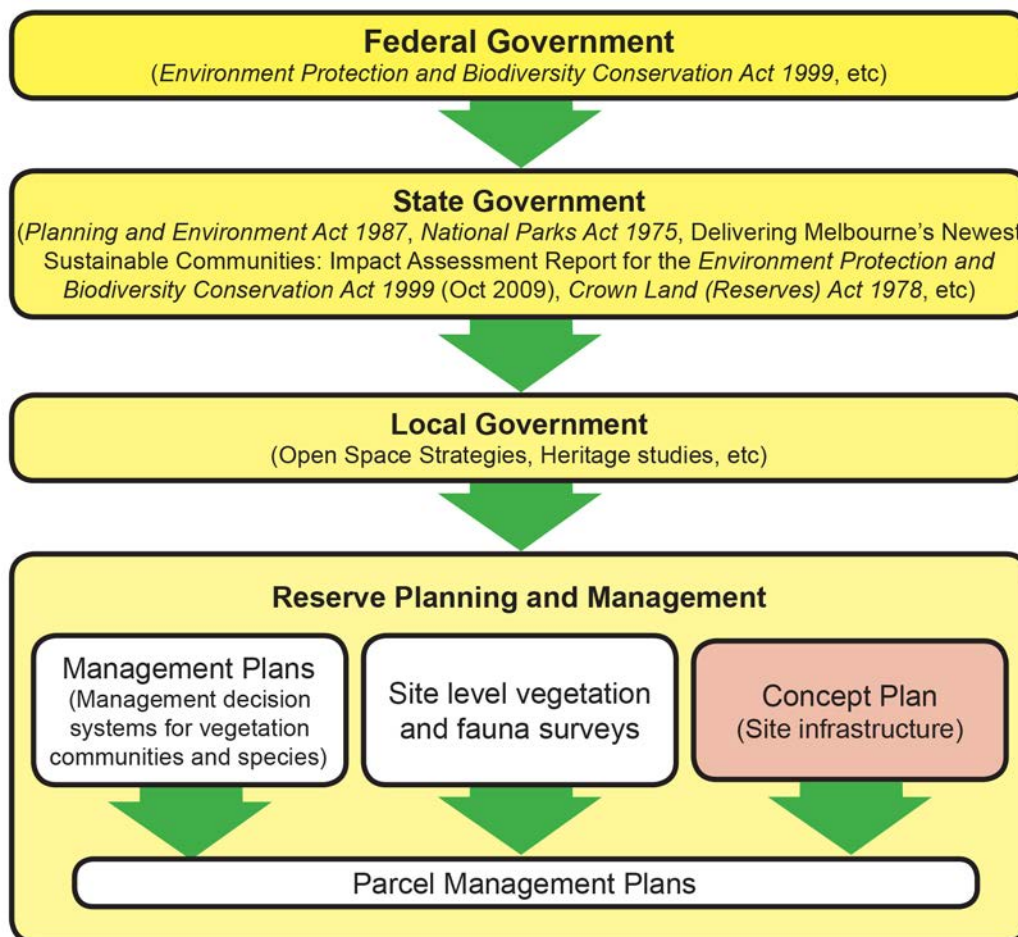


Figure 1.2: Western Grassland Reserve policy framework

## 2 Study area

The proposed Western Grassland Reserve is located approximately 30 kilometres to the west of Melbourne and 15 kilometres to the north of Geelong. The Reserve consists of two large areas with the northern portion in the area known as Mount Cottrell and the southern portion in the areas known as Quandong and Mambourin. The reserve extends across the municipal areas of Wyndham, Geelong, Melton and Moorabool.

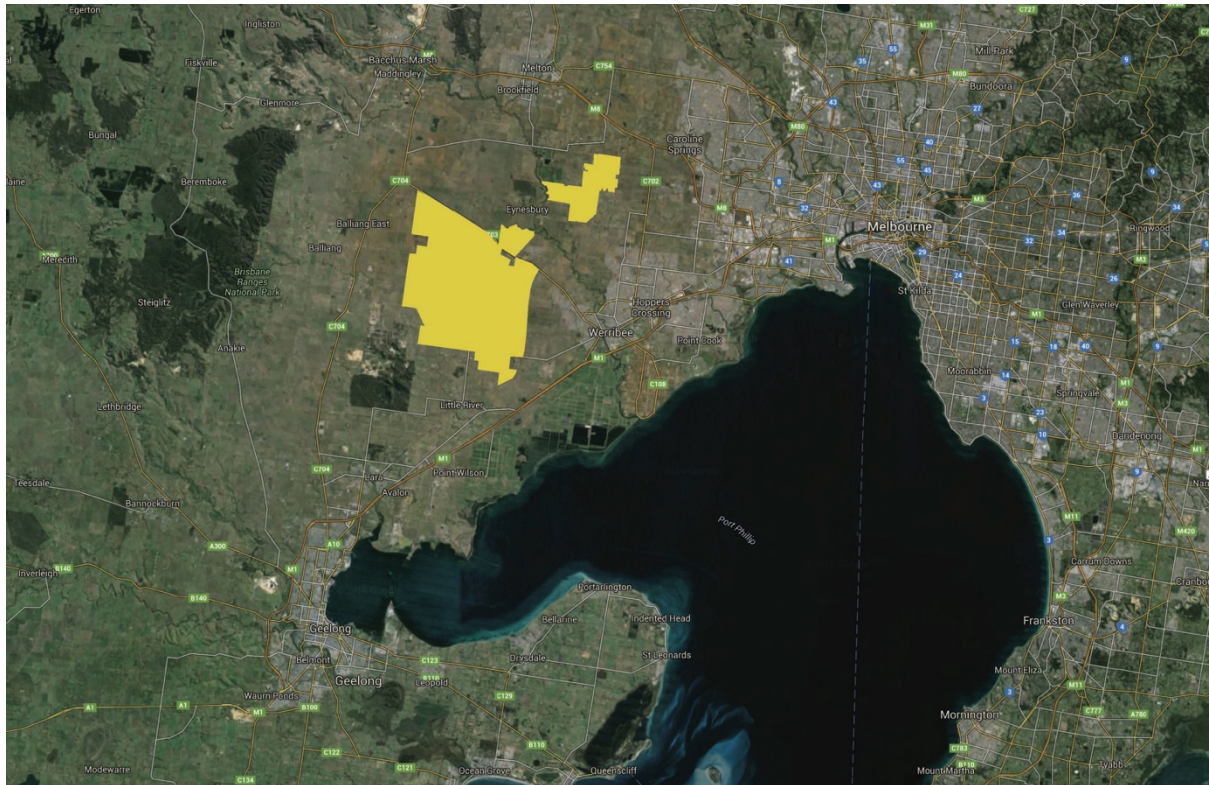


Figure 2.1: *Western Grassland Reserve context plan.*  
*The proposed Western Grassland Reserve extents are highlighted in yellow.*



## 3 Vision and objectives

The Western Grassland Reserve will protect the largest remaining concentration of volcanic plains grasslands in Australia. It will increase the extent of protected critically endangered Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain from two per cent to 20 per cent. Located next to the western growth corridors of metropolitan Melbourne, the reserve will also be a significant natural asset for the region's growing population.

### 3.1 Vision

The following vision statement has been prepared which is based on the recommendations of the "Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities: Impact Assessment Report for the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999" (DSE, Oct 2009)

*The Western Grassland Reserve will maximise the area of habitat available to resident plant and animal species, in particular threatened species, and will enable management activities critical to the long term survival of plant and animal species. The Reserve will be a regional destination where the public can appreciate and learn about the biodiversity objectives of the reserve.*

The Western Grassland Reserve will be protected as a National Park to ensure the protection and management of this nationally significant area in perpetuity.

### 3.2 Objectives

The following objectives have been identified following a review of strategic documents and stakeholder consultation.

#### *Primary objective*

- Ecological management.  
Maximise the protection, enhancement and restoration of native grasslands and their associated habitats. This includes the use of ecological grazing and traditional land management practices such as fire.

#### *Secondary objectives*

- History and heritage.  
Protect sites of archaeological and cultural significance within the reserve.
- Education and knowledge.  
Foster public appreciation of indigenous grasslands through public awareness and on site information. The reserve will also be a place of ongoing research where ecologists and scientists investigate the values and qualities of the reserve, and the species within it.
- Community health and wellbeing.  
Provide public access to support broader community physical and mental health outcomes.

These objectives have guided the development of the Concept Plan and inform the establishment of the reserve.

### 3.3 Land Reserve Status

It is envisioned that the majority of the Western Grassland Reserve will eventually be protected as a National Park under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The reserve will protect a consolidated area of Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, Seasonal Herbaceous Wetland (freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains and habitat for a range of flora and fauna species protected under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. However, this includes land of various landuse history, and vegetation and habitat condition. The Strategic Impact Assessment notes that the reserve will protect some degraded areas which may require interim management activities or provide opportunities for alternative land uses that may not be compatible with a National Park.

This means the reserve may consist of land parcels with different reserve statuses based on the values and proposed management actions for the sites. In all cases an interim reserve status will be required until such time as a consolidated area is land is available to begin the establishment of a National Park. The majority of land parcels will be acquired and protected initially as nature conservation reserves under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*. In some cases an alternate land reservation status may be required on parcels with little native vegetation etc., that may require management actions such as cropping to maintain their values that would not be suitable within a National Park.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is currently preparing an approach to land reserve status for the reserve and any solution will ensure areas of native vegetation are protected to a sufficient level required to act as an offset. Until this approach is finalised the concept plan assumes the reserve will be protected as a National Park in the long term, meaning most land uses including visitor and recreational use planning will be guided by the *National Parks Act 1975* and associated policy.

## 4 Site conditions

The following provides a summary of current site conditions along with the identification of issues and opportunities that are relevant to the development of the Concept Plan.

### 4.1 Topography and views

The topography of the reserve is typical of the Werribee plains, with landscape features such as Mt Cottrell, Green Hill and the You Yangs rising above the relatively flat western plains. Waterways such as the Werribee River and Little River provide distinctive incisions in the otherwise flat landscape.

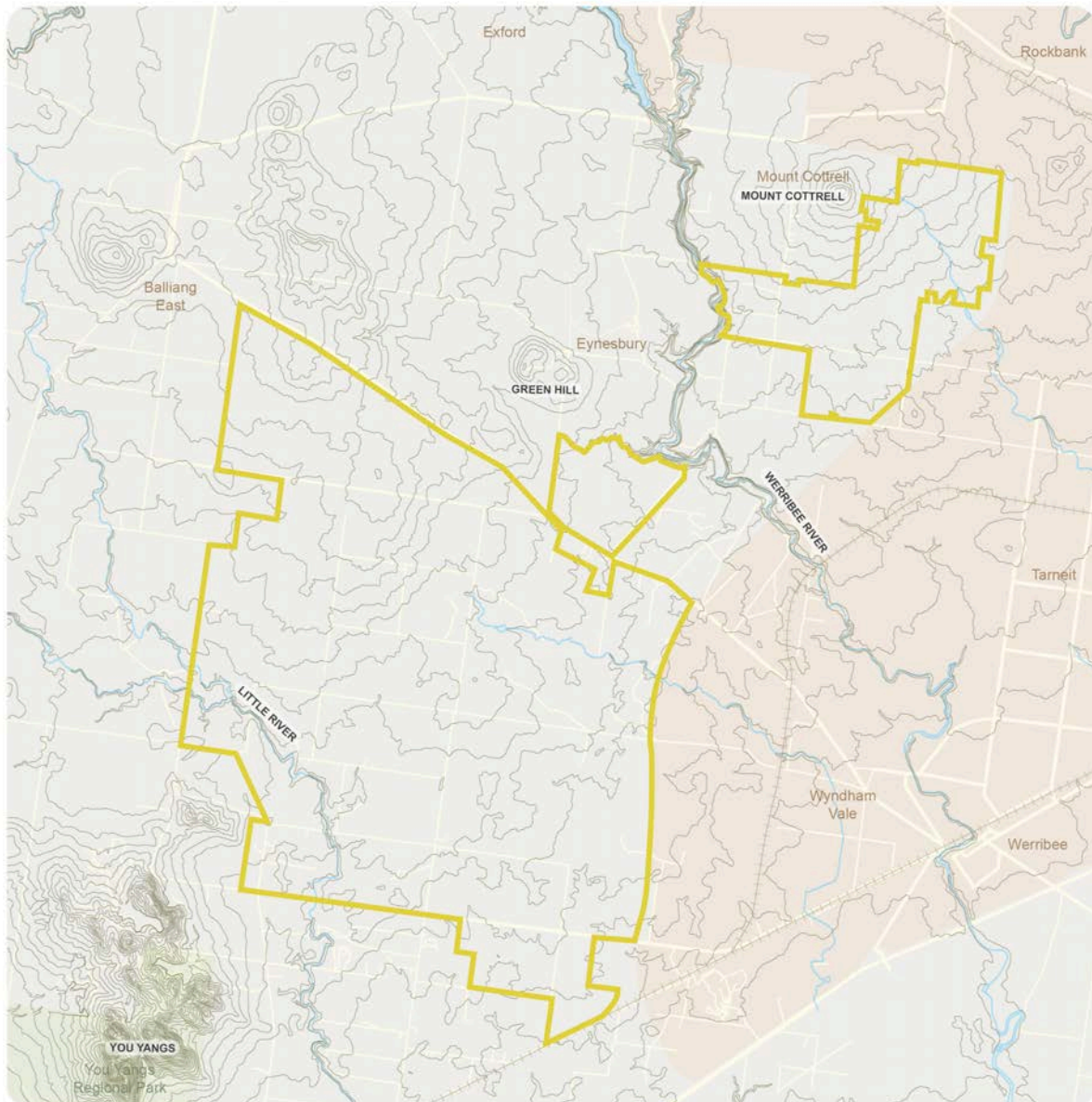


Figure 4.1: Site topography

The relatively flat topography enables views to the surrounding area. The northern sections of the reserve feature views to the Macedon Ranges. The eastern section of the reserve has views to the Brisbane Ranges and You Yangs. At higher points within the reserve there are views back towards Melbourne across the western suburbs and Port Phillip Bay. Two high voltage power lines pass across the reserve acting as distinctive reference points within the landscape. Major waterways

such as the Werribee River and Little River feature attractive rocky outcrops and escarpments along their lengths with areas of permanent water. A number of wetlands are located in the southern portion of the reserve, some of which are surrounded by River Red Gums.

**Issues and opportunities:**

- **A reserve the scale of the Western Grassland Reserve enables an appreciation of the natural landscape and its relationship to the broader topography.**
- **Whilst visually unattractive, the powerline easements provide distinctive reference points which may assist users of the reserve to orientate themselves.**
- **The waterways and wetlands within the reserve provide areas of interest such as rocky outcrops and ecological diversity which provide opportunities for visitor experiences.**

## 4.2 Climate

The Avalon weather station (located to the south of the southern portion of the reserve) has a mean annual rainfall of 457.8mm<sup>i</sup>. Open parts of the reserve are exposed to the strong winds that are synonymous with the Werribee plains with Avalon weather station having a yearly mean daily wind run of 402km (compared to Melbourne Regional Office station having a yearly mean daily wind run of 234km)<sup>ii</sup>.



Figure 4.2: View to the You Yangs from within the reserve

**Issues and opportunities:**

- **There is little shelter from weather within the reserve. Exposure to wind and sun should be considered when locating facilities for public use.**

## 4.3 History and historic sites

The Werribee Plains were inhabited, used and managed by Aboriginal people, and the Western Grassland Reserves includes sites and artefacts of cultural significance. Root crops were actively managed through fire and some re-planting of plant material. Very early accounts of the Werribee Plains confirm that they were frequently burnt (Fleming 1803, Hovell 1824 (in Moloney 2006), Batman 1835, King 1837 (in Moloney 2006)). Unfortunately, we know little of the timing, coverage or frequency of management burns. Most of the herbaceous species with subterranean storage organs are edible, and were available in large numbers. The Murnong (*Microseris* sp.) is the most frequently mentioned, and was once extensive on the Werribee Plains (Gott 1999). Game would no doubt have been available on the plains, and fish including eels in the rivers; but we have little direct evidence of their utilisation. At least one significant cultural site is known within the reserve: the Wurdi Youang stone arrangement.

The Registered Aboriginal Party for much of the grassland reserve area (west of Werribee River) is the Wadawurrong (also known as Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation) There is currently no Registered Aboriginal Party to the east of the Werribee River but multiple groups wish to be recognised as the Registered Aboriginal Party. DELWP and Parks Victoria will work with all relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties and archeological professionals to determine the best approach to ensure appropriate information on cultural heritage sites is identified and these sites are managed in a suitable way. Initial discussions with the Wadawurrong have identified interest and future opportunities for aboriginal cultural tourism. Dependent on an agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* there may also be future opportunities for joint land management.

A range of sites of historic significance are located within the reserve or in close proximity. These include old farm settlements and dry stone walls. The Geodetic Survey of Victoria (H1957) and Mambourin Bombing Range (Victorian War Heritage Inventory) fall within the reserve and are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. This is not a comprehensive listing of historic sites and the establishment of the reserves provides an opportunity for further surveys and research of historic sites.

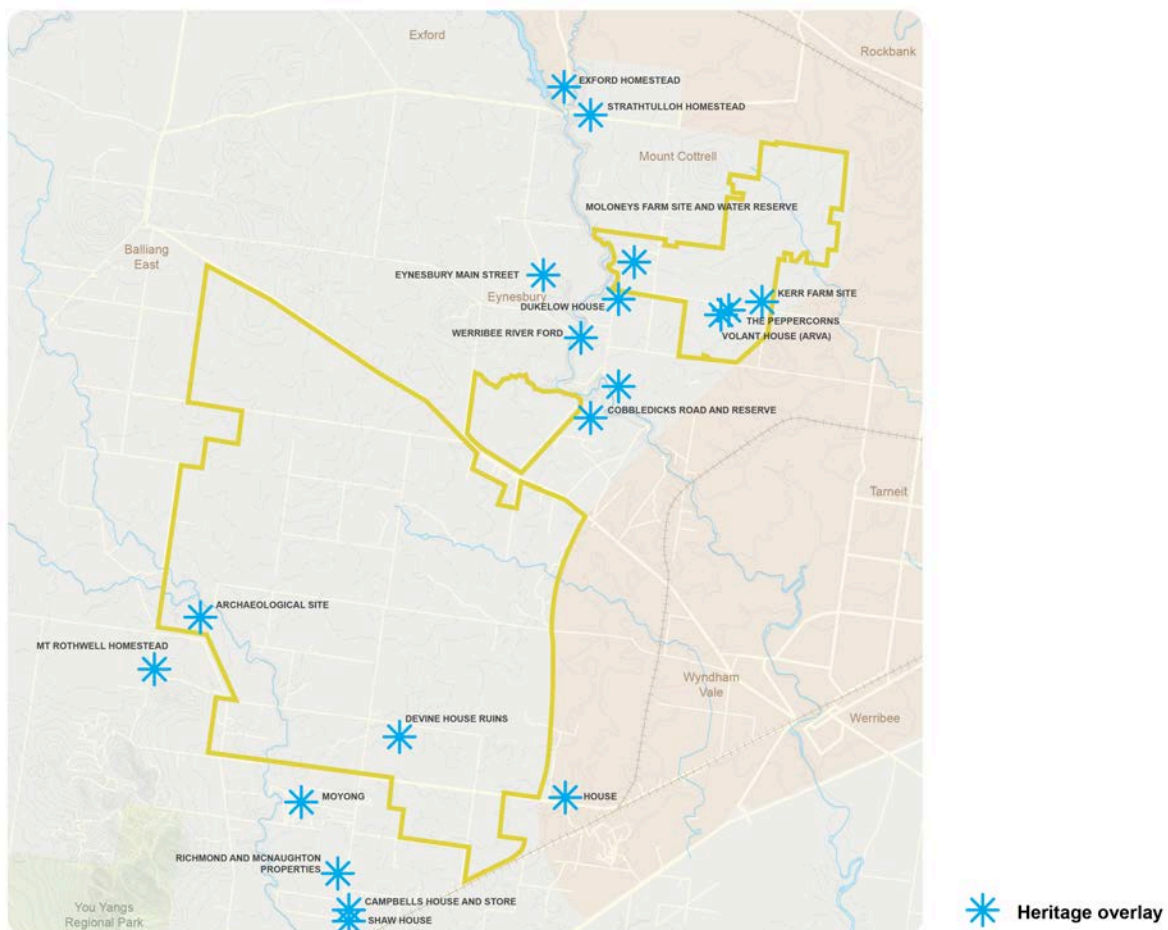


Figure 4.3: Known Historic sites

**Issues and opportunities:**

- **Opportunity for aboriginal involvement in management of the reserve.**
- **Opportunity for aboriginal tourism to form part of the visitor experience.**
- **Opportunity to include historic sites as part of the visitor experience.**

- **More detailed site assessments can make recommendations regarding heritage status, controls and the suitability of public access to sites (such as drystone walls and old buildings) to ensure they are appropriately protected.**

#### 4.4 Flora and fauna

A broad scale assessment of the grassland distribution and categorisation of the grassland types has been prepared by the DELWP. This information was prepared using a range of techniques including remote mapping and analysis of aerial photos.

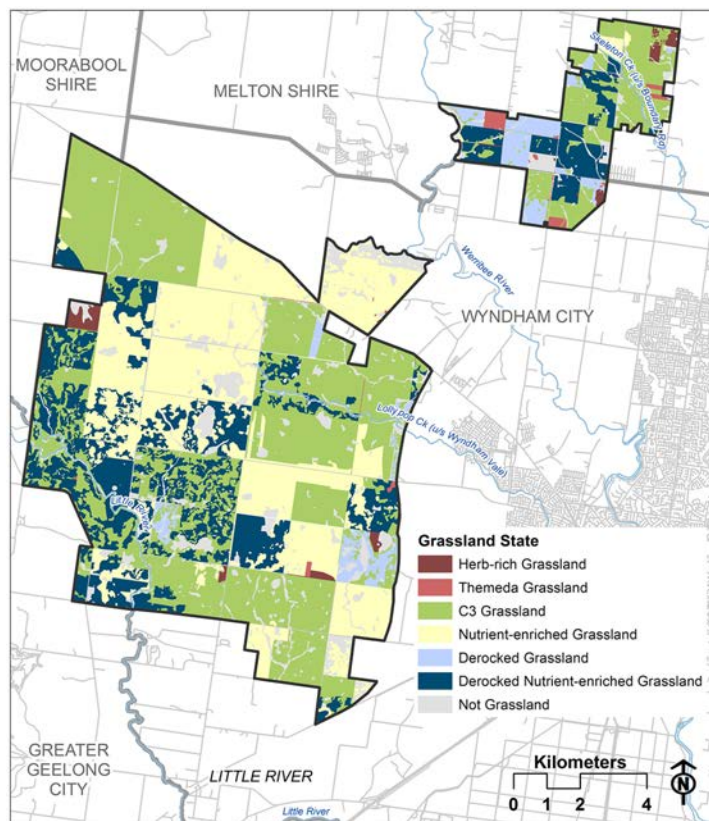


Figure 4.4: Grassland distribution and categorisation (source: DELWP)

Management plans for the reserve outline strategies to manage weeds and progressively enhance the quality of native grasslands. More detailed analysis of the grassland qualities will be prepared as land parcels are acquired or as additional studies are completed.

Vegetation and fauna surveys will be conducted on land parcels once secured in the Western Grassland Reserve. Surveys have only been conducted on a small proportion of the reserve but have already identified;

- Golden sun moth (listed as Critically Endangered under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999)
- Spiny Rice Flower (listed as Critically Endangered under the EPBC Act)
- Striped Legless Lizard (listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act)
- Black falcon (listed as Vulnerable in Victoria) and Spotted Harrier (listed as Near Threatened in Victoria)
- The Eastern Bent-wing Bat (listed as Critically Endangered in Victoria)
- The Tussock Skink (listed as Vulnerable in Victoria)
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Black Wallaby
- At least 11 species of bat

- Arachnid sampling recorded spiders belonging to at least ten taxonomic families.
- A diversity of birds, reptiles and flora.

Previous recent surveys (less than 6 years) in the Western Grassland Reserves have identified Striped Legless Lizard and Fat-Tailed Dunnart. Introduced species such as Black Rat, Cat, European Rabbit and Red Fox have also been observed.

It is highly likely that additional species will be identified as more land within the reserve is secured and surveyed. Population sizes are also likely to increase as land management practices are altered. Vegetation and Fauna inventory reports for each parcel are made available on the Department's website.

**Issues and opportunities:**

- **More detailed site assessments enable mapping of environmental values and establishment of management priorities.**
- **Strategies to manage and enhance the quality of native grasslands have already been developed and are being applied as sites are acquired.**

#### 4.5 Existing trees

Trees have been planted along fence lines to create wind breaks or habitat corridors. Native and exotic trees have also been planted around existing dwellings and buildings along with scattered trees being located in paddocks or along roadways. The highest concentration of tree plantings appears to be in the parts of the reserve near the power lines. This may indicate they have been planted to screen views in addition to acting as wind breaks, or it may be a reflection of particular land management practices employed by a few property owners.

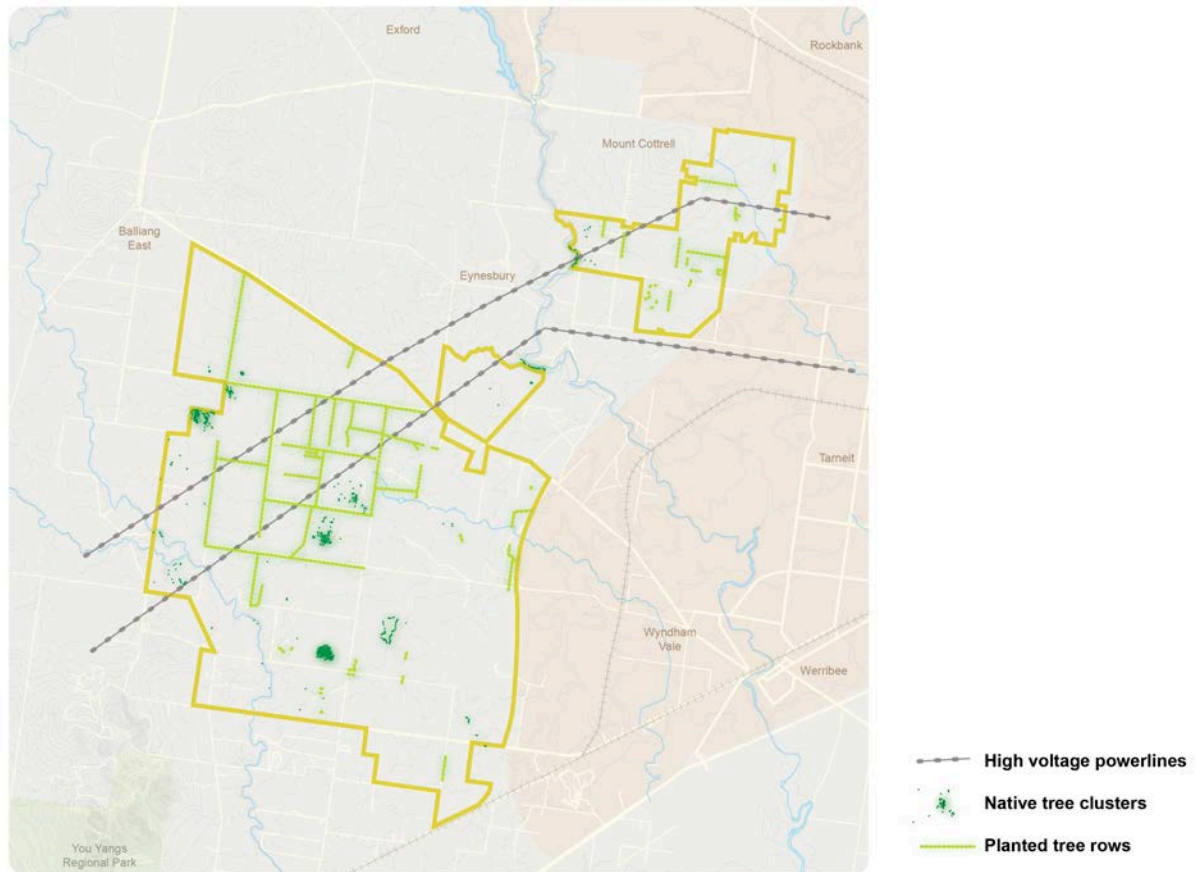


Figure 4.5: Existing tree distribution

Native trees and shrubs are also scattered across the reserve with large clusters of plants located around wetlands and along waterways.

#### Issues and opportunities:

- **Opportunity to reinstate the landscape character of a continuous grassland plain by removing introduced tree plantings.**
- **Existing trees may provide habitat for species currently using the reserve. Some trees may be retained in certain locations permanently or for a period of time to retain existing habitat. Replacement of native habitat may be required prior to removing exotic trees.**
- **Tree plantings provide shelter and screening and in certain locations they may be linked to the history of the reserve (such as near old homes). Opportunity to retain existing trees to enhance visitor experiences.**

#### 4.6 Roads and rail

The condition of existing roads is highly varied. Two main roads pass through the reserve with Ballan Road (C703) in the north and Kirksbridge / Bulban Roads to the south. All other roads in the reserve are unsealed. The proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring (E6 reservation) runs along the eastern boundary of the reserve. It is proposed to contain a freeway and rail (interstate freight and high speed passenger). There is potential to create direct access to the grasslands from the road, although it is expected that not all of the proposed access points from the Outer Metropolitan Ring will be needed west into the reserve



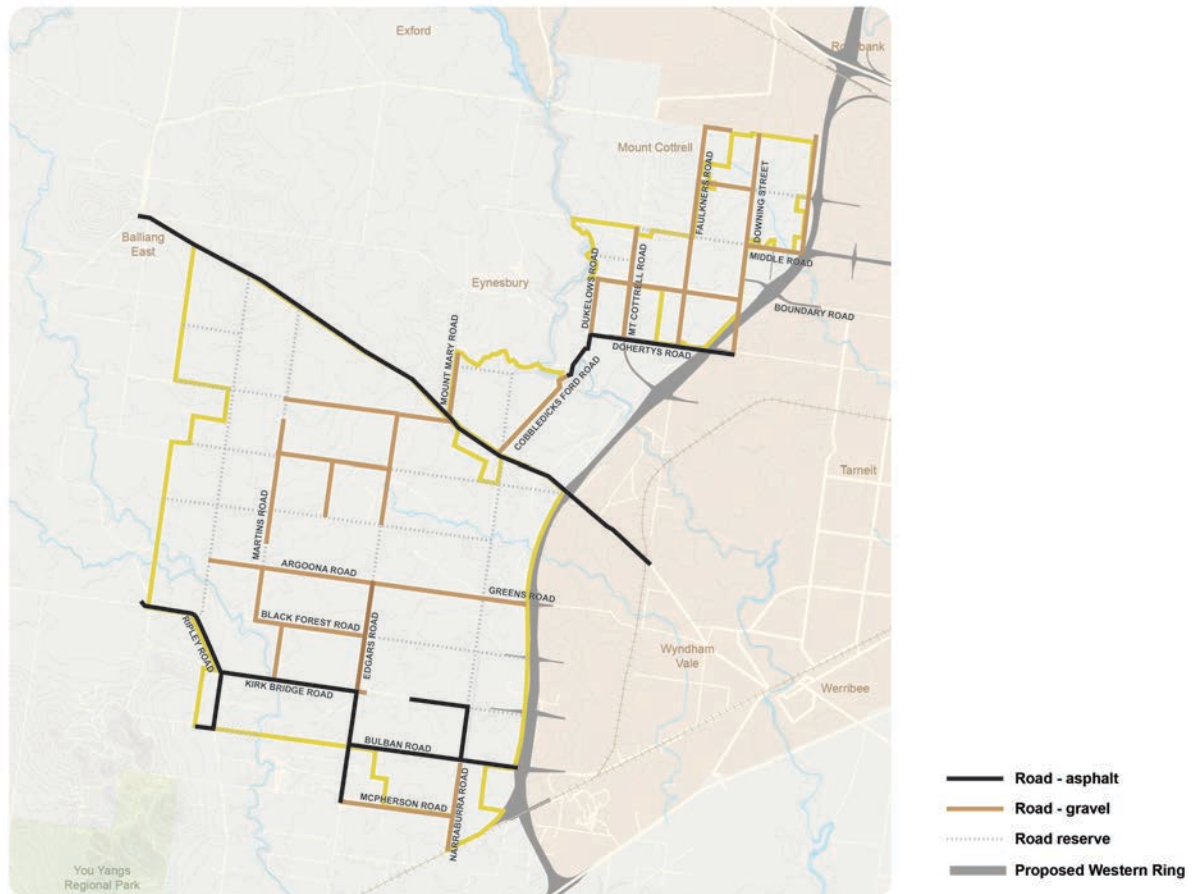


Figure 4.6: Existing road network

The reserve is located between existing or future residential areas and nature reserves such as the You Yangs. Within these areas are a number of current or proposed trails that could be extended in or across the reserve. The You Yangs is also a recognised destination for mountain biking with a trail network already established. Road cyclists currently use the sealed sections of Bulban, Edgars, Kirks Bridge and Little River-Ripley Road.

**Issues and opportunities:**

- Existing road network enables good access to the grasslands in the short and longer term for both management and public access.
- Existing roads provide a physical barrier between habitat areas. Opportunity to progressively remove redundant roads from public access as sites are acquired.
- Opportunity to adaptively reuse existing roads.
- Opportunity to encourage cycling as a way to provide low-impact visitor access to the reserve.
- Interfaces with current and future roads likely to require treatments to reduce hazards to wildlife, park users and road users. Those responsible for new roads or road upgrades may need to consider enabling habitat and recreational links across major roads.

## 4.7 Water

Little River and the Werribee River are the only permanent waterways within or adjoining the reserve. A number of ephemeral wetlands and waterways such as Lollipop Creek are also located within the reserve. Dams have been constructed within the reserve and in certain locations infrastructure has been constructed to supply water for grazing stock.

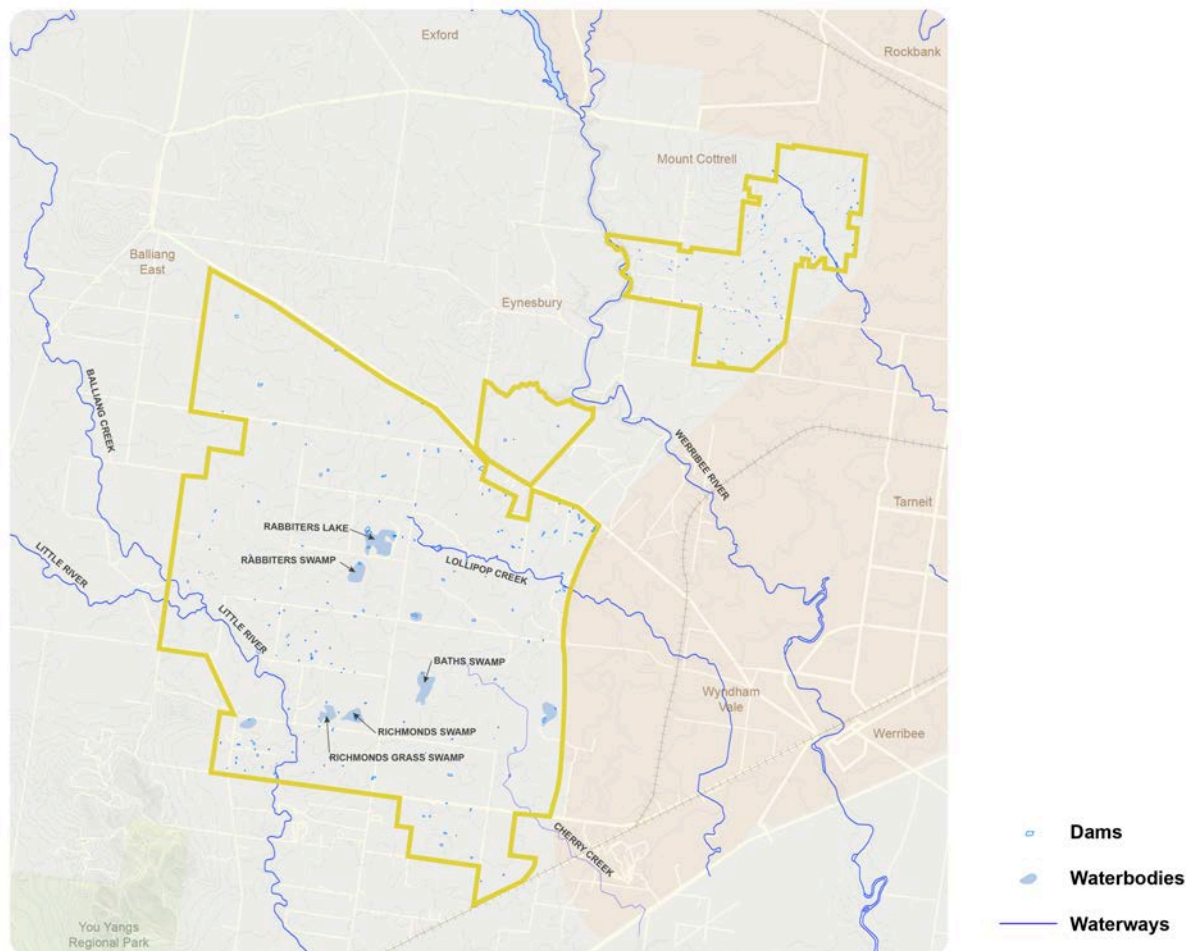


Figure 4.7: Waterways and water bodies

### Issues and opportunities:

- **Opportunity to reinstate existing catchments through the removal of farm dams and associated infrastructure.**
- **Opportunity to adaptively reuse existing infrastructure to provide for future management and user requirements.**
- **Interim management may require the retention of water sources for grazing animals.**
- **Provision of water bodies is likely to have an impact on the ability for the reserve to sustain populations of native fauna. It may be necessary to retain 'artificial' water bodies to sustain specific species.**

#### 4.8 Existing buildings utilities, infrastructure and industry

Existing homes and farm-related buildings and structures are located within the reserve. More detailed assessments will reveal the quality of these buildings however they appear to be quite varied. Opportunities are likely to exist for adaptive reuse of buildings especially as they may include features such as service connections, structures, etc. that could be adapted for use in visitor or maintenance facilities. Boundary fences and stock management fences are widespread across the reserve.

Two high voltage powerlines run between the northern and southern portions of the reserve. Very good mobile coverage is available across the reserve with some existing telecommunications infrastructure located in the reserve. Sewer, water and gas infrastructure is also located in part of the reserve. Where they are required to ensure supply of services outside the reserve or may be used within the reserve for visitation or management purposes they will remain. On-going access will be required to maintain some utilities infrastructure including a gas main running along the eastern boundary of the southern reserve. There are also existing licences in place for mining within the reserve.

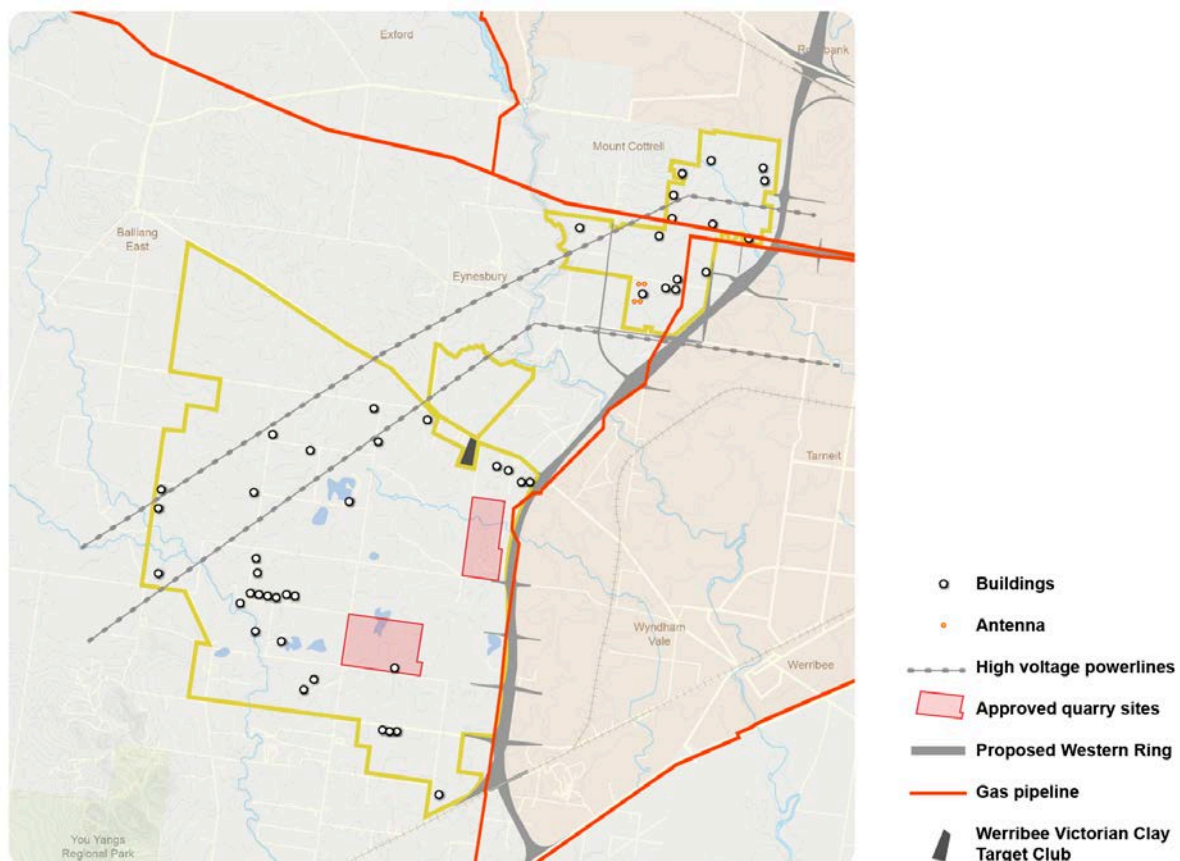


Figure 4.8: Existing buildings, utilities, infrastructure and industry

#### Issues and opportunities:

- Opportunity to adaptively reuse existing buildings, structures and service infrastructure to provide visitor or management facilities
- Existing infrastructure is likely to require regular maintenance inspections. Where possible existing infrastructure could be integrated into the ongoing functions of the reserve or removed where it will have no ongoing use.
- Opportunity to combine infrastructure such as fire management and infrastructure maintenance tracks with other park uses.

- **Opportunity for farm related infrastructure such as dams, windmills, fences to be maintained where ecological grazing will be used as a management method**
- **Opportunity to remove fences and other farming infrastructure where not required, to reinstate the landscape character of a continuous grassland plain**
- **The location of proposed visitor facilities should have consideration of existing or adjacent land uses such as amenity impacts of quarries and shooting ranges.**

#### 4.9 Ecological burning and bushfire management

Grassland communities are well adapted to fire events, which reduce biomass levels and help maintain a diversity of grassland species. Ecological burning regimes will be used within the Western Grassland Reserve as a management tool to maintain species and habitat diversity, to create niches required for restoration, remove elevated soil nutrients, and to assist with reducing perennial weed cover.

Two types of fire events are likely to occur in the WGR; ecological burns and unplanned bushfires. DELWP and Parks Victoria (Land Manager for the grassland reserves) must be able to control both planned ecological burns and unplanned bushfires within the reserve to ensure risks to community and assets are reduced. Permanent strategic fuelbreaks will be required across the reserve and consist of gravel tracks about 3-4 metres wide. As far as possible existing roads will be used as fuelbreaks, however some additional tracks will be built. These tracks will be used for fuel breaks, park access and management and in most cases can also be available as walking and cycling tracks.

Preliminary fire management plans have been prepared for the reserve and Figure 4.9 gives an indication of the location of these fuel breaks. The final location of the fuel breaks will be dependent on detailed site assessments following land acquisition.

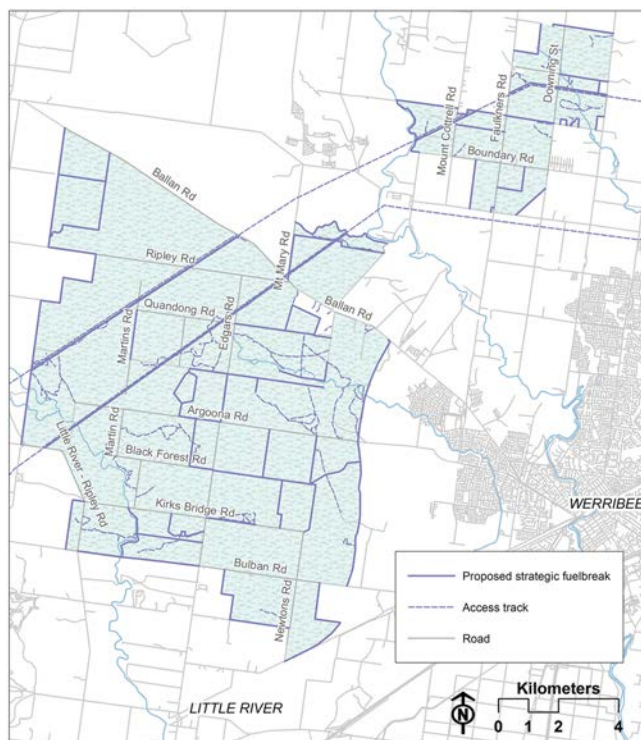


Figure 4.9: Existing fire management plan (source: DELWP)

**Issues and opportunities:** Fire is a natural part of native grasslands. Fire management planning and infrastructure are an essential aspect of managing site risks and ecological values.

- **Opportunity to combine infrastructure such as fire management tracks with other uses such as walking and cycling trails.**

## 5 Analysis

There are a range of potential visitor experiences that could be included within the reserve in addition to essential management infrastructure. This section provides an analysis of the site conditions and qualities that will inform the location of key elements of the Concept Plan.

### 5.1 Ecological qualities

Preliminary studies and initial site investigations have started the identification of current and anticipated ecological qualities. The plan in figure 5.1 maps known ecological qualities such as existing grasslands distribution, waterways and wetlands. An offset of approximately 200 metres beyond each of these areas has been identified as a zone likely to contain additional values or have a high potential for ecological enhancement.

Environmental qualities are not static. They will change over time in response to management practices. More detailed mapping will provide further information on current ecological qualities and the impacts of altered land management.

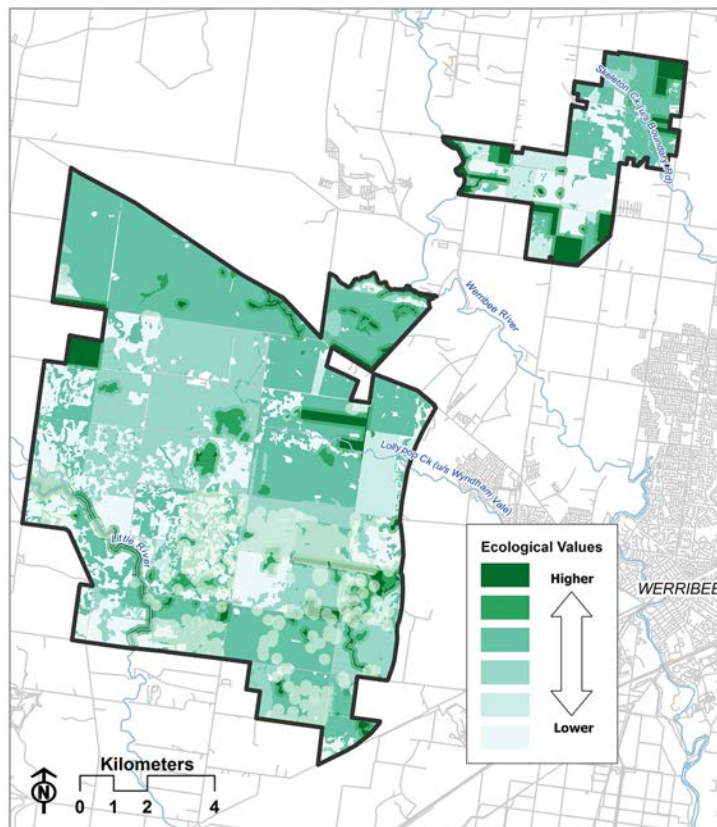


Figure 5.1: Western Grassland Reserve ecological qualities (source: DELWP)

As identified in the Concept Plan objectives the primary objective for the Western Grassland Reserve is the protection, management and enhancement of the biodiversity values of the reserve. Thus the ecological values of the reserve are the primary directive of the Concept Plan design, and may also be the reason for changes to the design as more information on the distribution of biodiversity values is known following the acquisition of land parcels.

## 5.2 Landscape Character Zones

The broader landscape character of the Western Grassland Reserve, including visual landscapes, historic land uses and existing infrastructure, will impact the type of experiences visitors will have within the reserve and the way that they interpret and interact with it. For instance, landscapes modified by large powerlines may limit a visitor's ability to appreciate the site as a natural landscape, while an old farm house and stone walls provide opportunities to identify with the region's farming heritage. In this way the varying landscape character across the reserve has informed the development of the Concept Plan.

The following landscape character zones have been identified within the reserve and were mapped to help describe and locate some of the visitor opportunities:

- **Scenic Landscapes.**  
A chance to experience a landscape which is likely to have existed prior to European settlement. The reserve provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in a broad scale native grassland. In sections of the reserve it will be possible to experience a grassland with wildflowers and wildlife such as birds and kangaroos and without fences, buildings and treelines. The indigenous heritage adds to the story and offers a unique, authentic experience.
- **Farming heritage.**  
The reserve contains a number of relics which explain the farming history of the region and which are worthy of retention. Over time the landscape context of these relics will change as the surrounding landscape becomes a native grassland. Visitors will increasingly gain an insight to the experiences of the first farmers of the region.
- **Modified landscape.**  
The presence of infrastructure such as powerlines and telecommunication towers visually overwhelms the landscape, especially a grassland reserve with few vertical elements to screen these views. In the same way the noise generated by a major road detracts from the natural qualities of a landscape. High ecological values can exist in these locations but the visitor experience is altered.

The character zones have been applied to the plan in Figure 5.2 based on the following parameters:

- **Modified landscape**
  - 2km offset from powerlines
  - 500m offset from Outer Metropolitan Ring corridor
  - 200m offset from Ballan Road and Mt Cottrell Road
  - 200m offset from shooting facilities in Ballan Road
  - 100m offset from the approximate extent of quarries
- **Farming heritage**
  - 500m offset from known historic sites within the reserve.
- **Scenic landscapes**
  - Significant waterbodies and watercourses
  - The balance of the reserve.

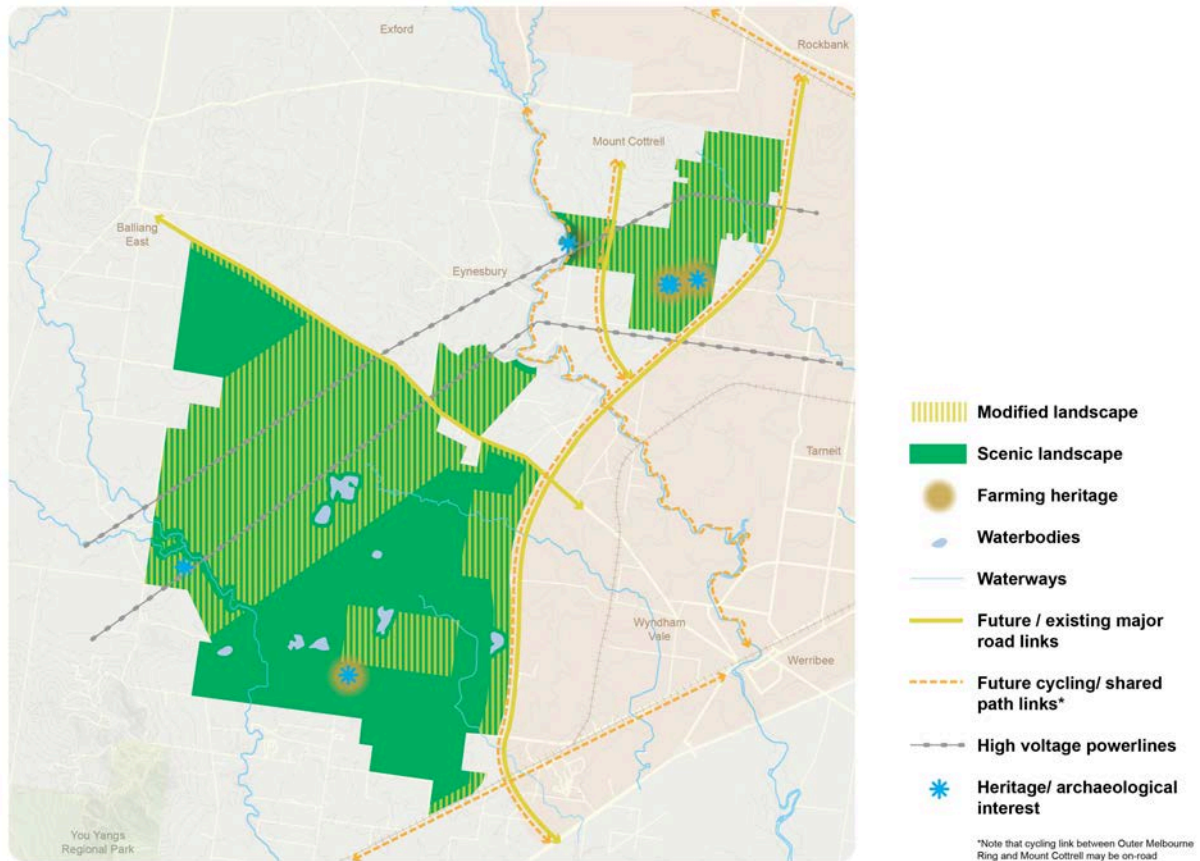


Figure 5.2: Landscape character zones

### 5.3 Visitor experiences

The general public typically finds it difficult to distinguish native grasslands from exotic pastures and weeds. The reserve provides an opportunity to educate and inform the community of the values of the grasslands. Providing high quality, publicly-accessible experiences within the reserve will foster broad appreciation of the importance of the reserve.

The level and type of public access to the reserve needs to balance the quality of visitor experiences with environmental sensitivities. Priority should be given to locating visitor facilities in previously disturbed areas such as existing farms that may include infrastructure such as buildings, fencing, access roads, paths and services that can be adaptively reused. However, some of the more sensitive parts of the reserve are also likely to be the most interesting and picturesque. Existing wetlands and waterways, for example, are landscapes that combine ecological, cultural and scenic qualities such as open water, birds, wildlife, established trees and rocky outcrops. Selective access to these areas will be necessary to provide high quality visitor experiences, but access may need to be highly structured to protect ecological values.

The following are a range of visitor experiences that have been identified as being compatible with the vision and objectives of the reserve. These are scalable options that will require further assessment to determine their viability and timeframe for implementation.

### 5.3.1 Grassland Learning Centre

Information centres in large open spaces range from the inspiring and uplifting through to underwhelming and unnecessary. Many factors contribute to the creation of a successful facility. For the Western Grassland Reserve a range of options were considered including small scale information signage and larger scale permanently-staffed facilities.

Prioritising education as a key component of the information facility was seen as strongly aligning with the objectives of the reserve and making such a centre viable. The size and unique ecological values of the grasslands, in addition to its close proximity to metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong, make the reserve a logical place for visits by school groups. The extremes of weather would require a facility which has indoor learning spaces for groups of 50 – 100 people. The creation of such a facility with associated visitor amenities, access roads, paths and car park would become the main centre of activity within the reserve. It could be the location of facilities for reserve management staff as well as potentially having a café and facilities for community use. A regional playground could be included to provide facilities for visiting primary school students in addition to younger children visiting the centre. Demonstration gardens could incorporate species present in the grassland to encourage the public to include them in their gardens at home.

Centres such as Ecolinc, Iramoo and Werribee Zoo already provide education on ecology of the western plains and grasslands. Further investigations will be necessary to ascertain the level of demand for a new facility, potential partners and the programs offered.



*Figure 5.3: Ecolinc Bacchus March is an example of education facility linked to school learning programs*



### 5.3.2 Trails and viewing areas

Walking is the most popular physical recreation activity in Australia<sup>iii</sup>. Cycling and mountain biking are also increasing in popularity as forms of recreation, in addition to being sustainable methods of transport. The relatively flat topography of the reserve will enable the creation of a trail network within the reserve and to surrounding areas (such as residential areas and the You Yangs) that would cater for a broad range of users with varying levels of mobility.

#### Walking Trails

Opportunities exist to create short and longer walks within the reserve. The following is a proposed hierarchy of trails and associated infrastructure.

- Short walks (less than 1 hour, less than 5km).  
These trails link car parking and picnic areas to destinations such as wetlands or historic sites. Trails should be designed to provide access to visitors of all abilities which may require paths constructed of concrete, boardwalks, additional seating and shelters at rest areas.
- Longer walks (1 – 4 hours, 5 – 20km).  
Longer walks provide visitors with a more adventurous, nature-based experience. These walks may require visitors to have a higher level of mobility as they traverse rockier terrain.

Grasslands are a somewhat unique plant community in that they don't require formal trails for them to be explored. In the same way that trails can be routed along a beach without requiring trail construction, an informal trail can be created by slashing grass to guide visitors through the reserve. This method also allows different routes to be created from one year to the next to reduce the human impacts in any one location. This is likely to be the most cost effective means of creating longer trails. More formal trails may be created over time in response to demand or to improve access.

Directional and information signage should be included along all trails. All access points to the reserve should be designed to prevent easy access by motorised trail bikes except for on designated riding tracks/ roads. Trails should be separated from maintenance and access tracks where possible to create a more authentic nature based experience, but will primarily be designed in a way to limit the impact foot print on the grassland values.

#### Cycling and mountain biking

Cycling and mountain biking are increasingly popular activities. The You Yangs Regional Park is already a recognised destination for mountain biking with an established trail network. The following items should be considered regarding cycle facilities within the reserve:

- To encourage bicycle riding and an alternative way of accessing the reserve, bicycle racks should be provided at all picnic areas. The number of racks installed should increase in response to demand.
- Concrete off-road paths should be constructed to link high activity areas (such as the Grassland Information Centre) with adjoining residential areas and trail networks such as the Outer Metropolitan Ring and along waterways.
- Construction of on-road cycling lanes and off-road bicycle trails as part of road upgrades (both within and adjoining the reserve) should be encouraged.
- The You Yangs Regional Park will continue to be the primary destination for mountain biking. However, the proposed trail network in the Western Grassland Reserve should be constructed to enable use by mountain bikes, especially in areas where it provides a connection between residential areas and the You Yangs.

- The creation of links between the northern and southern portions of the reserve will enable cycle touring through the reserve and to surrounding areas. Creating clearly defined external links to train stations and the You Yangs would further encourage these activities.



Figure 5.4: Mountain biking in the You Yangs Regional Park

### 5.3.3 Picnic areas and play

The close proximity of the reserve to metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong as well as major transport corridors is likely to create a high number of incidental and day visitors. These visitors are likely to be seeking areas for a short break or slightly longer visits (such as place to meet friends and family for a gathering or lunch). Five sites within the reserve will be created to cater for these visitors with picnic facilities located in close proximity to all car parks. Picnic facilities should include shelters, paths, barbecues, picnic sets, seats and signage. Picnic areas would be created near, but separated from, camping and accommodation sites.

Playgrounds are often a feature of regional open spaces as they complement other recreation activities. The Grassland Learning Centre has been identified as the location for a regional playground within the reserve. This location would provide the facilities necessary to support a regional playground. On weekdays it would be used by visiting primary school students and on weekends it would be a destination for children and families. It is anticipated that all other play space needs would be catered for within surrounding urban areas outside the reserve.

### 5.3.4 Camping and accommodation

Camping and other forms of accommodation could be included in the reserve. The inclusion of camping and accommodation has as implications for the types of experiences that can be provided within the reserve and surrounding area. Tourism strategies such as the *Wyndham City Tourism and Event Strategy 2012/13 – 2015/16* (EC3, 2011) has identifying nature-based tourism as a potential growth area for the region, especially activities that include evening and morning activities which encourage overnight stays. Overnight stays increase visitor expenditure in the region which supports local employment and economic development.

An overview of affordable or nature based accommodation (caravan parks and camping) currently available in the region is provided in Figure 5.5. Also included on the plan is the location of train stations as these can be important connections for cycle touring. It highlights the lack of accommodation facilities in close proximity to the reserve.

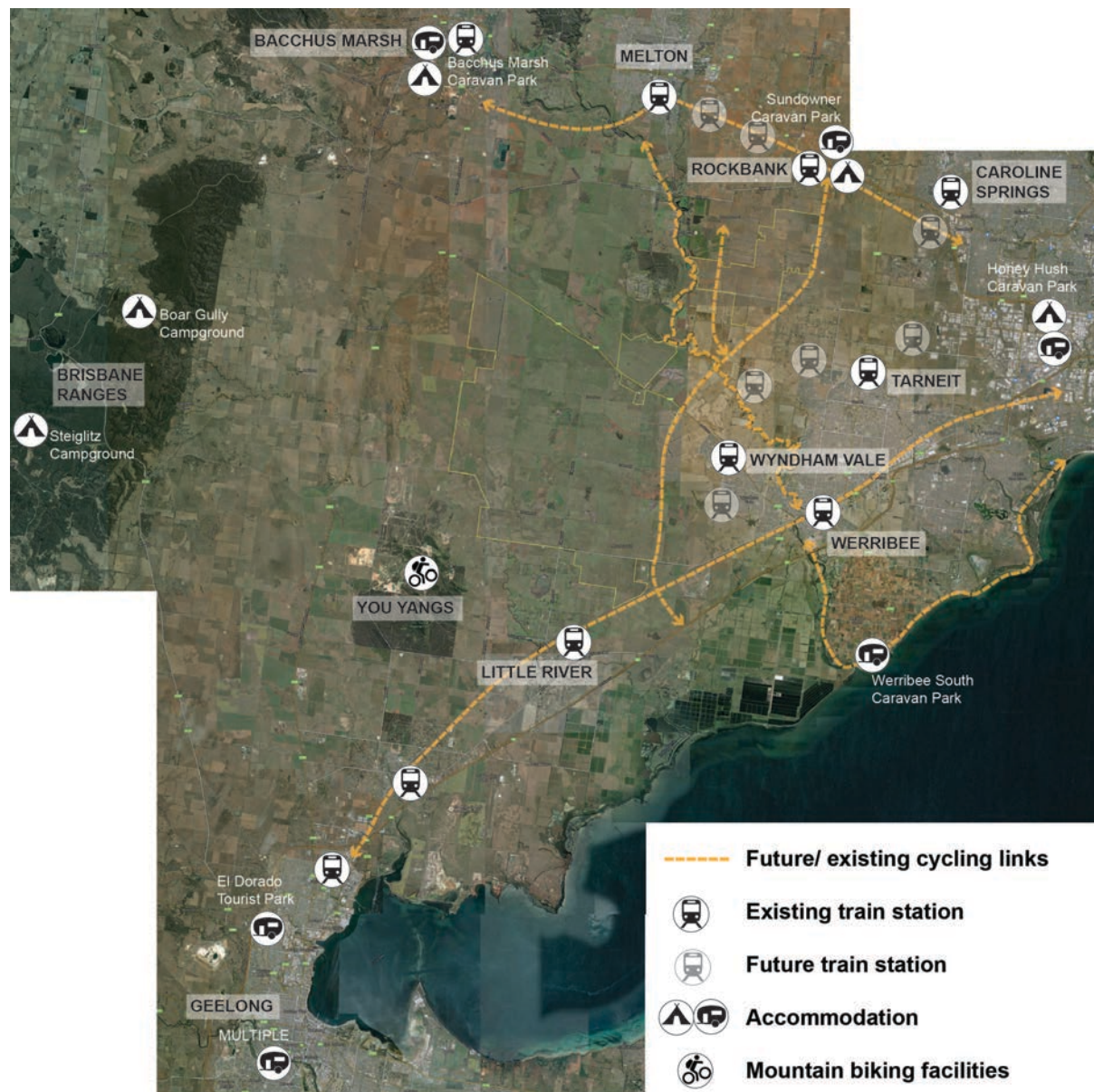


Figure 5.5: Overview of currently available affordable or nature based accommodation (caravan parks and camping) and train stations in close proximity to the reserve.

The following types of accommodation are proposed to be included within the reserve.

- Serviced camping.  
This includes flushing toilets, showers and a camp kitchen for campers.
- Eco cabins.  
The high number of farms within the reserve provide a range of potential locations for this type of accommodation. Existing farms are typically highly disturbed areas and are likely to have pre-existing service connections for power, water and other utilities. The cabins should be positioned to share access roads and trails with other uses whilst being separated from day visitor trails and facilities.
- Boutique accommodation.  
Boutique accommodation is proposed to be created as part of adaptive reuse of existing homes and buildings in the reserve. Such facilities provide the opportunity to retain a connection to the farming history of the area. It may also be possible for this type of accommodation to provide access to the reserve for people with special needs such as people with limited mobility.



Figure 5.6: Examples of Eco cabins at Tidal River Wilsons Promontory Victoria (source: Parks Victoria) and boutique accommodation at Hilltop Cottage, Royal National Park NSW (source: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service)

It is assumed that larger-scale hotel developments would be located outside of the reserve. Such developments could be encouraged at existing homesteads in close proximity to the reserve such as Moyong in a style similar to Eynesbury and Werribee Mansion.

All camping and accommodation would be managed in accordance with Parks Victoria standards and use existing booking systems.

### 5.3.5 Western Grassland Reserve and the broader landscape context

The Western Grassland Reserve is located in close proximity to growth corridors in the west of metropolitan Melbourne. The reserve provides the following opportunities for the planning and construction of this areas:

- The reserve aims to facilitate passive recreation by providing walking and cycling. Access to these facilities will be enhanced by the creation of links to nearby urban areas, public transport, along waterways and other reserves such as the You Yangs.
- Residents of these new communities will have ready access to nature based experiences within the reserve. These provide a range of physical and mental health benefits that will contribute to the broader health and well being of these communities.

Formal recreation facilities such as sports grounds are not appropriate land uses within the reserve. These uses are expected to be located either within growth corridors or in other locations outside the urban growth boundary.

## 6 Concept Plan

The Concept Plan shown in Figure 6.1 has been developed to guide the development of the Western Grassland Reserve. The Concept Plan has been developed using the following criteria:

- Allow visitor visitation and experiences without impacting on the existing biodiversity values of the reserve. Locate facilities to in areas compatible with user needs and in modified parts of the reserve;
- Through consultation with stakeholders assess the type and scale of facilities to be included in the reserve;
- Explore options for reuse of existing assets where possible and appropriate; and
- Consider the surrounding land use and recreational opportunities to guide how the reserves fit into the broader regional context and what is needed.

The following sections provide additional information on key components of the Concept Plan.

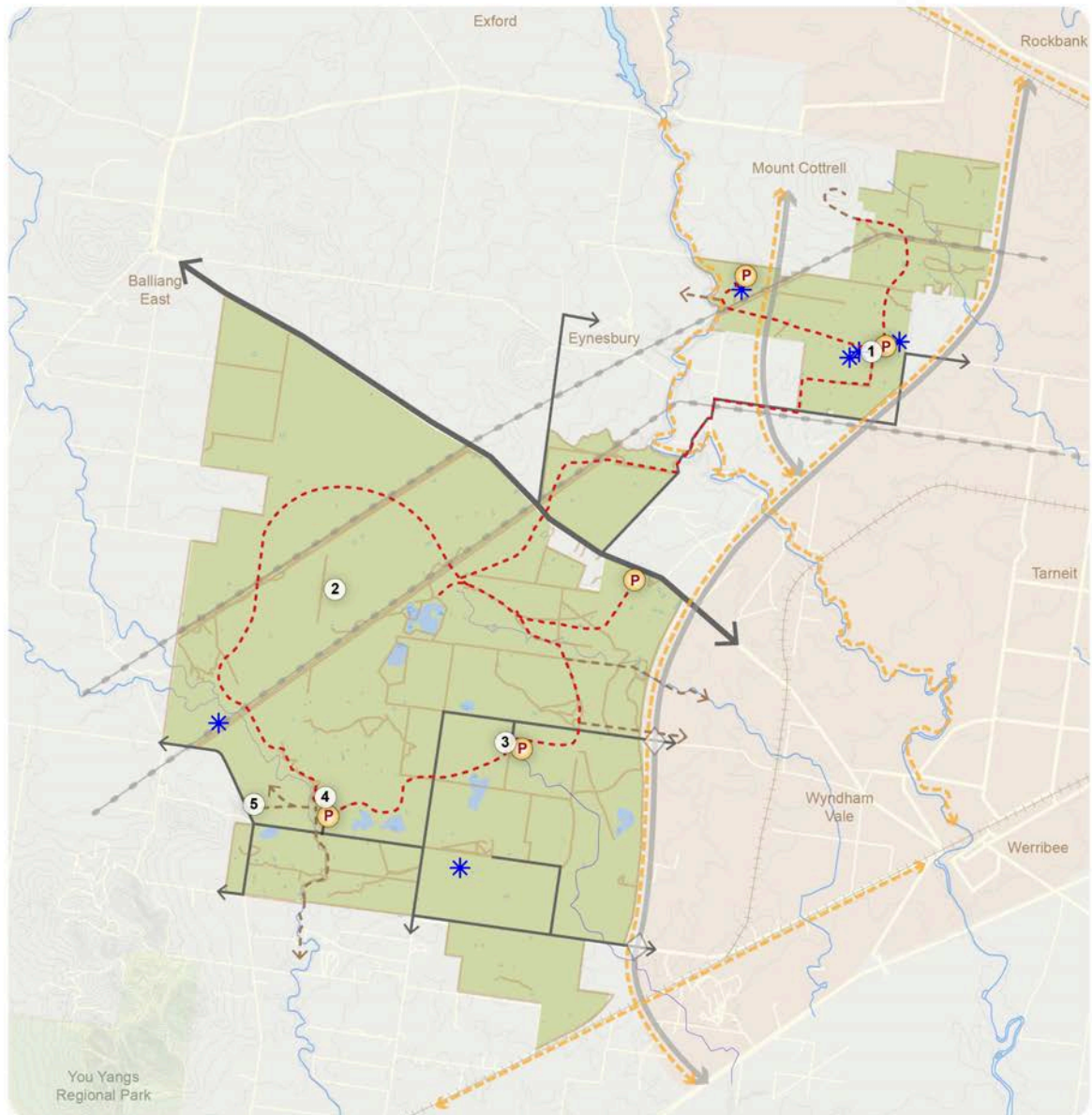


Figure 6.1: Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan

## 6.1 Grassland protection and enhancement

A range of management strategies have been developed to guide the protection, enhancement and re-establishment of grasslands within the reserve. More detailed site assessments as land parcels are acquired will enable more accurate mapping of grassland distribution and quality.

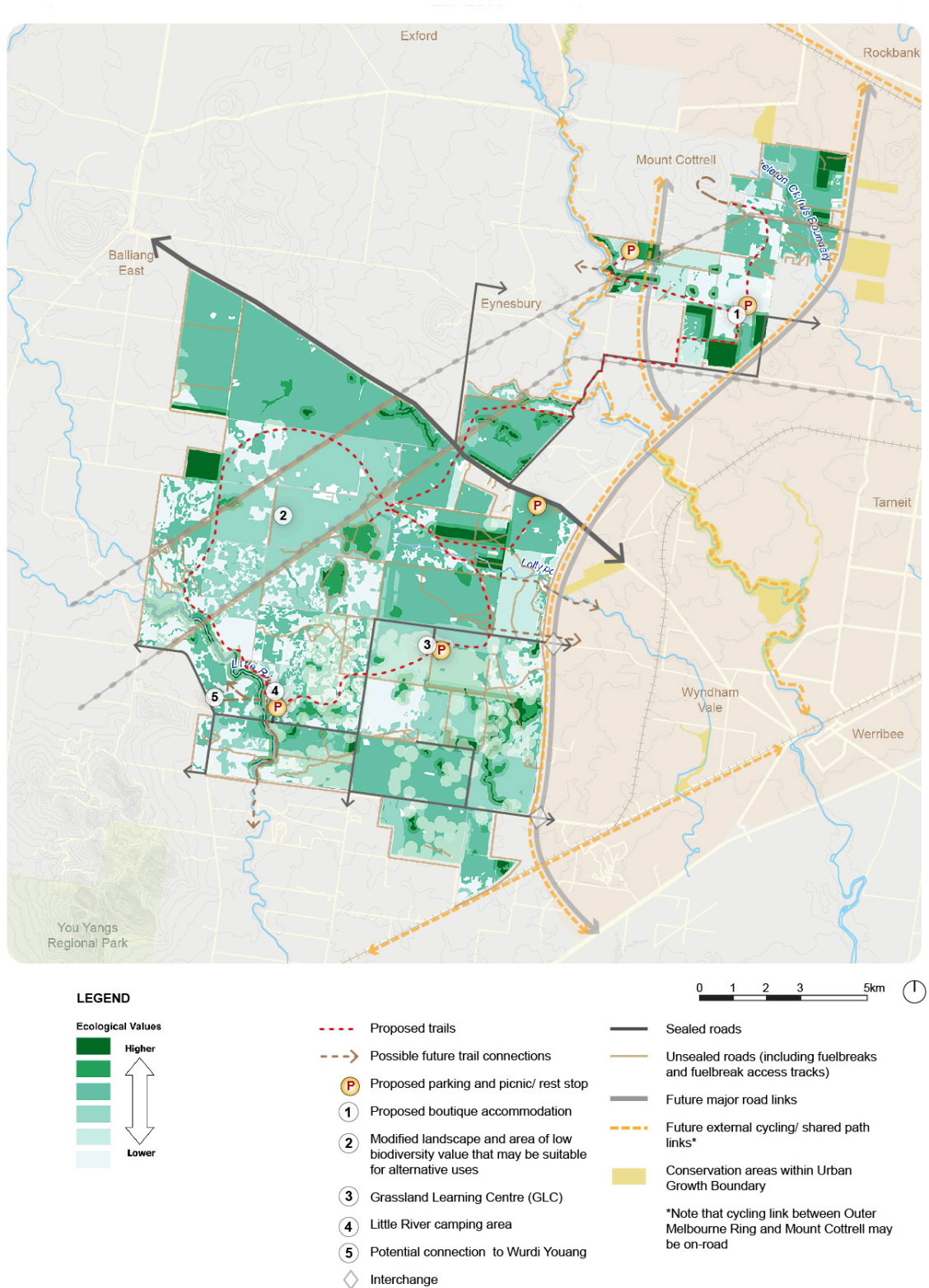


Figure 6.2: Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan overlaid on map of ecological qualities.



## 6.2 Facilities and infrastructure

The following visitor experiences and proposed facilities and infrastructure are considered compatible and have potential to be located within the reserve. Included with each item is commentary on the factors for consideration during the early stages of the reserve development and where possible direction is provided to assist implementation.

### 6.2.1 Identity and branding

An important aspect of a new reserve of this scale and type is public perception - first impressions count. The long-term success of the reserve will be enhanced by undertaking activities that foster public appreciation of the reserve. Increased focus on the identity and branding of the reserve will begin once at least a third of the reserve is acquired or some significant sites identified as visitor nodes are acquired. These activities should include:

- Logo, signage and branding.  
Consistent use of materials and signage will be necessary to identify a reserve of this scale. Proposed logos and signage should be complementary to Parks Victoria standard and style guides. The development of a branding strategy at the early stages of the reserve will allow for it to be progressively implemented over time.
- Website.  
A website that allows the public to interact with the reserve (in the short term it may be one of the few ways to interact) is considered important. The website should have a contemporary look and feel to inform the community of the positive qualities within the reserve, but fit within existing Parks Victoria web guidelines and styling.
- Community newsletter and social media.  
Community newsletters and social media provide the public with the opportunity to build a connection with the reserve as well as providing news and information. These will also be managed through Parks Victoria.
- Community events.  
During the early stages of the reserve being created, prior to the construction of formal facilities, a range of activities could be held to educate and inform the community. Such activities might include guided tours, kite flying and photographic displays. As facilities are constructed within the reserve a program of community events should be developed. Where possible these should provide experiences unique to the reserve but they might also be part of broader community programs run by Parks Victoria or local Councils. These might include astronomy and star gazing, ranger walks, fun runs, bird or wildlife watching and temporary art installations.

### 6.2.2 Grassland Learning Centre

The Grassland Learning Centre is proposed to be located along Greens Road for the following reasons:

- Access.  
A key consideration when identifying potential locations for a centre such as this is accessibility. Greens Road is an existing public road which is proposed to have an interchange connection with Outer Metropolitan Link corridor. In addition, it is close to the eastern edge of the reserve which enables the creation of walking and cycling connections to future residential areas and public transport connections.
- Views.  
In this area it is possible to experience expansive views across the western suburbs of

Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay, Geelong and the You Yangs. It is possible to see the area of the quarry to the south however the broader views dominate the vista. Visibility of the powerlines is significantly reduced by the surrounding topography.

- **Context.**  
The proposed location is an area which has undergone a relatively high level of disturbance whilst still being located close to areas expected to be of higher ecological value. Being located in the southern portion of the reserve, it is in close proximity to the You Yangs Regional Park, Geelong Freeway (which is already a major tourist route linking Melbourne to the Great Ocean Road) and the future camping and accommodation area proposed within the reserve along Little River.
- **Staging.**  
Greens Roads is currently publicly accessible which means access restrictions would not impact the timing of the centre.

Areas along Ballan Road and near Mt Cottrell were considered as an alternative location for the centre. However, the visual impact of the powerlines was seen as significantly reducing the ability to experience the natural qualities of the native grasslands.

### 6.2.3 Roads and vehicle access

The reserve is currently well-serviced by existing roads and road reserves. As existing farms are progressively acquired and added to the grassland reserve, many existing roads will no longer be available as public roads. Detailed site assessments should be completed before any existing roads within or adjoining the reserve are modified as many road reserves are known to have high grassland values.

The following are issues to consider regarding the existing road network, with all outcomes subject to further discussions with VicRoads and/or Council:

- Ripley Road, Kirks Bridge Road, Edgars Road, Bulban Road and Ballan Road (Bacchus March – Werribee Road) are the main roads that cross the reserve. As surrounding residential areas grow it is likely that the traffic volumes on these roads will increase. Fencing will need to be constructed along these roads to restrict vehicle access to the reserve. The type of fencing constructed should have consideration of current and future risk posed by wildlife (such as kangaroos). Where possible future modifications to the road reserves should include improved facilities for on-road cycling (increasing the road verge pavement as a minimum) and an off-road shared trail along at least one side of the road. However, some road reserves within the Western Grassland Reserve protect areas of high quality vegetation and EPBC Act species such as Spiny Rice-flower. These road reserves will be removed in order to protect these values. Edgars Road and Greens Road are proposed to be upgraded to paved roads to reduce dust and recurring maintenance. The road should be designed to be a low speed environment and constructed without kerbs to convey an informal character. Where possible swales, long grass and rocks should be used to discourage vehicles from leaving the road instead of fencing and bollards. These roads would be to provide access to the reserve rather than through traffic and options could be explored to restrict access to during park operating hours.
- It is expected that Mt Cottrell Road will be progressively upgraded to an 'arterial road' as it an identified connection to the Outer Metropolitan Ring. The type of fencing constructed should have consideration of current and future risk posed by wildlife (such as kangaroos). Future modifications to the road reserves should include on-road cycling lanes or an off-road bicycle trail and a concrete pedestrian footpath on at least one side of the road.

- Roads in the northern portion of the reserve such as Faulkners Road, Downing Street and Boundary Road should be progressively phased out from public access to reduce rubbish and car dumping as well as to enable the creation of linked grasslands. It will not be possible to remove these roads from public access entirely with sections of the roads retained to provide access to adjoining properties where necessary.
- Cobbledicks Road and Dohertys Road provide an important link between the northern and southern portions of the reserve. However, Cobbledicks ford is unlikely to be a suitable crossing destination particularly following rain, and this should be explored before any attempt is made to upgrade these roads. It may be necessary for part of the trail to extend into the grassland reserve to achieve appropriate access grades to the trail.

In addition to publicly accessible roads, the reserve will also include a number of management, maintenance and emergency access tracks. Such tracks are a necessary part of the reserve however the presence of tracks can detract from the natural qualities of the landscape. The following factors should be considered when determining the location of tracks:

- The distribution of tracks should be limited to that which is necessary to safely and efficiently manage the reserve. They should be designed and constructed to minimise site impacts including reducing soil erosion and the creation of dust.
- It is highly likely that existing farm driveways, roads and tracks can be adapted to provide suitable access for maintenance, management and emergency vehicles within the reserve.
- Further discussions with utility providers should be undertaken to determine the distribution and standard of maintenance access points and trails required for existing utilities such as powerlines and pipelines. Where possible and appropriate tracks should be located to cater for multiple uses to minimise site impacts and recurring maintenance costs.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring provides the opportunity to improve access to the reserve especially for visitors travelling from further afield. The following opportunities exist with the creation of this transport corridor:

- A direct access from the corridor to the reserve enables the creation of gateways and an entry experience. Greens Road (Argoona Road) is the proposed location for the main entry to the reserve. It is currently a publicly accessible road which could be progressively upgraded as facilities such as the Grassland Learning Centre are constructed.
- Mt Cottrell Road is proposed to link directly to the Outer Metropolitan Ring which will enable a direct connection to the northern portion of the reserve. The connection will also generate additional traffic in this location which will negatively impact upon the 'natural' qualities of the reserve. Fencing is anticipated to be necessary to reduce risks associated with wildlife and traffic. Where possible habitat links should be constructed to retain habitat connections across the road.
- A shared trail network is proposed to be constructed along the corridor. Trails within the reserve should be linked at key locations to the proposed trail.
- The existing public transport network is proposed to be extended as part of the transport corridor. The establishment of trail networks within the reserve connecting to train stations is a high priority as it provides visitors and staff with alternatives to driving.

Concept plans for the Outer Metropolitan Ring note an interchange will be constructed at either Bulban Road or Kirksbridge Road. A final decision on the interchange is likely to be influenced by a range of factors. The following issues should be considered when determining the final location:

- Existing road reserves often contain significant remnant vegetation. Detailed studies of existing flora and fauna (along with archaeological and cultural values) should inform the location of the interchange and associated road widening which is likely to be required.

- In the event Kirksbridge Road is the preferred alignment Bulban Road should be discontinued as a through road. This would reduce risks posed by wildlife such as kangaroos and strengthen the habitat links in this area of the reserve.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring corridor is located at the interface between the natural qualities of the Western Grassland Reserve and suburban areas. Interface treatments with the corridor will need to address the following issues:

- Fencing along the corridor will need to prevent wildlife such as kangaroos creating traffic hazards. Suitable fencing along the corridor will also assist with preventing domestic animals (such as cats and dogs) entering the reserve.
- Appropriate buffers will need to be created to manage fire risks.
- It is likely that proposed plantings along the corridor will be sympathetic to the plant communities along the transport corridor.
- Collaborative management practices will be necessary to effectively and efficiently control pests (such as rabbits and foxes) and weeds.

#### 6.2.4 Trails and picnic areas

A number of trails and picnic areas are proposed within the reserve. These have been located in close proximity to areas of interest and ecological value whilst minimising trails that might pass through areas of high value. The following is a description of the proposed trails and picnic areas shown in Figure 6.3. Picnic areas have been positioned to provide parking and setoff points for trails.

##### *Picnic areas*

- Little River. This picnic area would be located in close proximity to camping and accommodation facilities proposed along Little River to enable shared use of infrastructure such as access roads and trails.
- Grassland Learning Centre. Picnic facilities in this area would be in close proximity to the proposed playground and be capable of catering for larger groups.
- Ballan Road. Providing a designated area for drivers along this busy road encourages visitors to experience and learn about the qualities of the grassland. The proposed location is separated from shooting ranges, high voltage powerlines and the proposed Outer Melbourne Ring. To enhance the visitor experience there would be an access road to the picnic area to provide a buffer to Ballan Road.
- Peppercorns. Picnic facilities are proposed to be located in this area to capture views back towards Melbourne (either from picnic areas or as part of trails) as well as an opportunity to experience historic features of the reserve such as old buildings and drystone walls.
- Moloneys Farm. As with Ballan Road, providing a designated area for drivers along this road will encourage visitors to experience and learn about the qualities of the grassland.

##### *Short walks (less than 1 hour, less than 5km).*

- Richmond Swamp. Opportunity to experience the wetlands and associated wildlife.
- Bath Swamp. Walk to an ephemeral wetland as part of the broader loop track.
- Werribee River. The trail could include viewing points along the river corridor along with information about aboriginal heritage.

##### *Longer walks*

- Rabbiter Lake. Medium distance walk which could be aligned to also follow sections of Lollipop Creek.
- Mount Cottrell. Trail connection linking across to the top of Mount Cottrell or to a viewing area below the hill top.

- Loop Track. Longer walk within the reserve with multiple set off point locations.
- North-South Link. Trail connecting the two portions of the reserve. In the short term the trail would follow existing road reserves and be realigned as alternative links (such as along Werribee River) become available.

Final trail alignments would be determined following detailed site assessments. Factors to consider include user experience, views, potential site disturbance and suitability of terrain. Careful design will also be required to limit any impact to the environmental values, particularly wetlands, such as viewing platforms and boardwalks that help manage visitor access.

Names used to describe these walks and picnic areas are based on current descriptions. It is recommended that further consultation with key stakeholders including the Registered Aboriginal Parties be undertaken to assign agreed names to key destinations prior to facilities being promoted or made publicly accessible. This process might include an opportunity for broader community participation such as the public voting on a shortlisted selection of names.

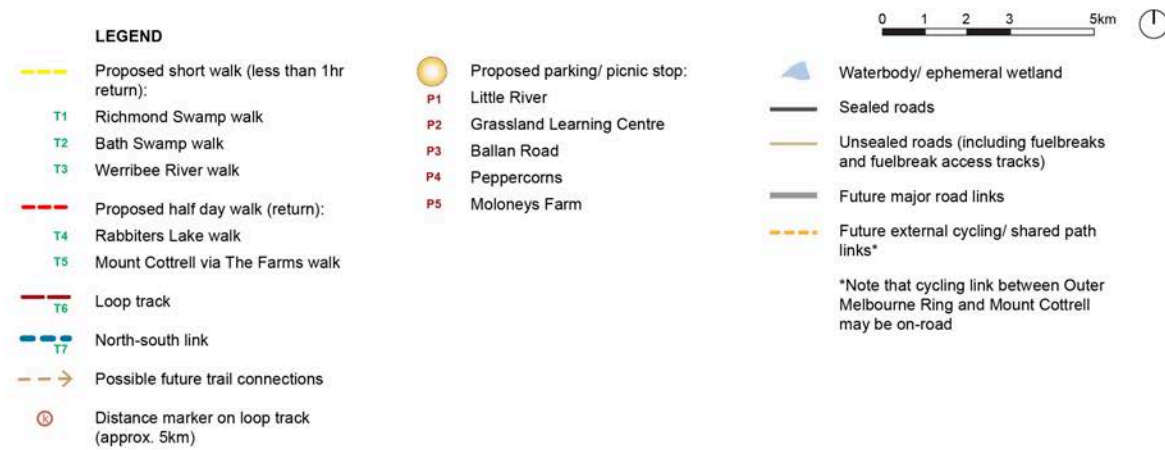
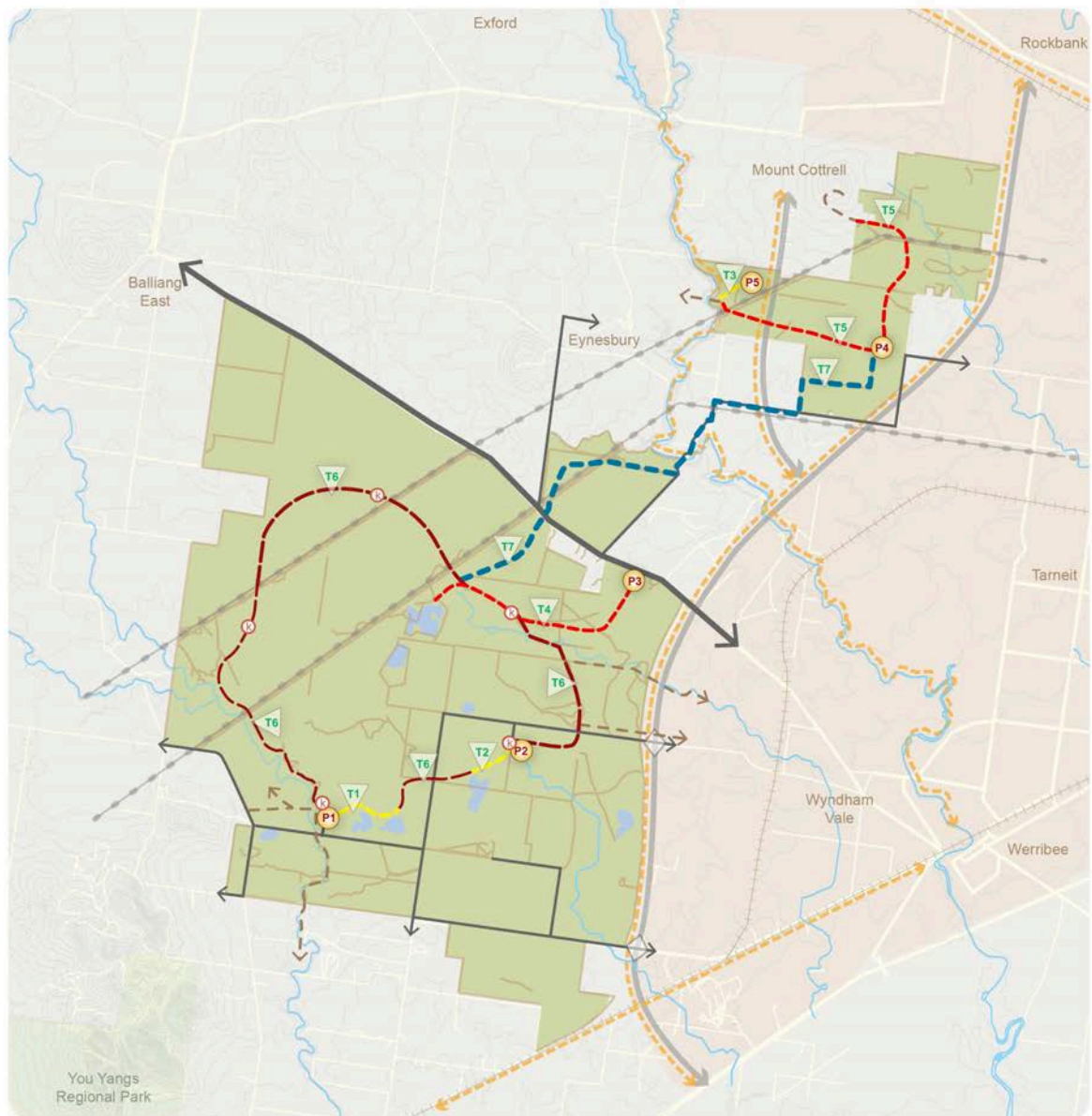


Figure 6.3: Proposed trails and picnic areas

The potential to create a multi-day walk within the reserve was considered. A multi-day walk would typically include camping sites approximately 15 km apart and be capable of accommodating larger groups such as school groups. The current size and shape of the reserve makes it difficult to create such a walk, however it may be possible to create one in the future as open space links beyond the reserve are created.

A regional playground is proposed to be located at the Grassland Learning Centre. This would be designed to cater for children of all ages and incorporate themes and 'nature play' elements.



Figure 6.4: Nature themed playground at Canberra Arboretum (source: TCL)

### 6.2.5 Camping and accommodation

The following camping and accommodation options are proposed to provide a range of ways for the public to experience the grasslands.

- Serviced camping is proposed in the Little River Camping Area.
- Eco cabins are proposed to be included in the Little River Camping Area. This area lends itself to this option due to the high number of farms in this area and the proximity to areas of interest such as Little River, wetlands, You Yangs and Wurdi Youang.
- Boutique accommodation is proposed to be created at the historic property 'Peppercorns'. It is possible additional sites for this type of accommodation will be identified as sites are acquired.

More detailed studies will be necessary to assess the feasibility of each option including a detailed economic, environmental and safety analysis.

### 6.2.6 Aboriginal tourism

Wurdi Youang has the potential to provide a unique, authentic experience of indigenous culture within a nature based setting. Working with traditional owners' successful design of this precinct may enable the creation of a unique overnight visitor experience.

More broadly the reserve provides various opportunities for indigenous cultural education and tourism. DELWP will work collaboratively with traditional owners during the establishment of the reserve to determine suitable opportunities.

### 6.2.7 Education and Research

Providing facilities to support education and research is a key objective and may include the following:

- Interpretive signage should be installed at key locations to provide the public with information about the reserve. Key themes for signage include flora and fauna, geology, archaeology, farming history and management practices such as the use of fire.
- It is anticipated the reserve will become a destination for ongoing academic research in to native grasslands and species establishment. Infrastructure to support such activities should be incorporated in the Grassland Learning Centre or maintenance facilities.
- Options for "artist in residence" or "scientist in residence" programs should be explored as part of adaptive reuse of existing buildings within the reserve. Such programs have the potential to provide new insights to the reserve as well as encouraging visitor engagement.

### 6.2.8 Art

Temporary and permanent art installations should be included within the reserve to provide the following benefits:

- Create unique destinations and experiences with the potential to alter public perceptions of native grasslands
- Contribute to the overall image and identity of the reserve
- Enable expressions of aboriginal culture

The location of art installations should be determined in consultation with relevant stakeholders.



### 6.3 Other site uses

The concept plan is based on the assumption large parts of the reserve will ultimately be reserved as a National Park. For this reason land use, and in particular recreational activities, are guided by the *National Parks Act 1975* and associated policy. The following guidance on the suitability of land uses within the Western Grassland Reserve has been informed by discussions with primary stakeholders, and the *National Parks Act 1975* and associated policy including work conducted by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (River Red Gum Forests Investigation 2008 and Statewide Assessment of Public Land 2015). These are not exhaustive lists, but provide some guidance for current planning within the reserve.

Activities considered to be permitted within the Western Grassland Reserves:

- Bushwalking, nature conservation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
- Camping in designated areas
- Overnight stays in designated accommodation

Activities for further investigation:

- Research, subject to a permit
- Push bike riding on designated paths
- Ecological management techniques including ecological burning and grazing regimes
- Orienteering and rogaining

Activities that may require further investigation and broader stakeholder and community consultation:

- Native grass seed farming
- Apiculture, subject to the outcome of research into the ecological impacts and park management requirements
- Horse riding on designated tracks
- Model planes and drones (excluding formal facilities)
- Solar power generation (in degraded areas with the aim of making the reserve carbon neutral)

It is noted that many of these uses will be site dependent and would be most likely to occur in degraded areas of the reserve. If considered compatible with the objectives of the Western Grassland Reserve the activities would need to occur on sites with a compatible reserve protection status.

Uses not seen as compatible with the aims and objectives of the reserve include:

- Formal recreation facilities such as sports grounds
- Motorised sports and activities such as car racing
- Motorbikes and trail bikes (other than on public roads where normal regulations apply)
- Converting quarries to landfill sites
- Other activities which detract from the environmental values and the appreciation of the natural qualities of the reserve
- Dumping spoil from surround land development
- New utility infrastructure (aside from further investigations into renewable energy options as described above)
- Hunting and use of firearms
- Dog walking and camping with Dogs
- Cats
- Overnight camping with horses

- Firewood collection
- Prospecting and metal detecting
- Mineral exploration and mining including stone extraction

## 6.4 Community involvement

Providing opportunities for active involvement within the reserve by community groups and through events provides physical and mental health benefits. In addition, community participation contributes to the broader public value placed on the reserve and can assist with reducing maintenance and management costs.

Opportunities for the community to “get involved” with the park could include the following:

- Participation with community fitness groups such as walking, running or cycling groups
- Participation in community environmental groups which might be involved in nature-based activities such as bird watching, photography or star gazing
- Involvement in programs to report sightings of wildlife
- Involvement in community events and festivals held within the reserve which might be linked to other community groups within the region

Opportunities for community involvement should progressively be introduced as the reserve is created.

## 6.5 Management and maintenance

A range of management and maintenance issues have been considered in the preparation of the Concept Plan. The proposed management structure for the reserve has already been agreed upon with DEWLP responsible for the acquisition of land and Park Victoria undertaking the site management.

### 6.5.1 Service infrastructure

Existing utility such as power, gas and water infrastructure will remain within the reserve except where removed as part of a dwelling and associated infrastructure. The concept plan aims to locate visitor areas away from ‘above-ground’ existing utilities. Construction of new utilities within the reserve will be discouraged.

Liaison is required with service authorities to establish agreed standards and protocols for access and site impacts for existing service infrastructure. Existing roads will be maintained as internal management tracks reducing the need for additional access tracks.

Some utilities such as above ground power lines will require a strategic fuel break if situated near grasslands allocated to an ecological burning regime. The draft fuel break plan for the reserve considers the location of powerlines and plans accordingly to minimise the area of fuel breaks. However, biomass management regimes will be confirmed at a site level once land parcels are secured and existing utility infrastructure will be a key consideration in this decision.

### 6.5.2 Quarrying

Currently approved quarries are expected to be progressively phased out as their approvals lapse. Liaison with quarry operators should occur to minimise impacts (such as visual impacts, pests, weeds

and dust) and develop site management plans to address risks such as fire. Existing sites should be remediated and made safe in accordance with legislative requirements.

### 6.5.3 Existing farm infrastructure and site contamination and heritage

Site contamination assessments should be undertaken where potential risks (such as asbestos and storage of hazardous materials) are identified as properties are acquired. Risk management protocols should include potential risks associated with areas formerly used to test explosives such as the Mambourin Bombing Range. Steps should be taken to progressively eliminate contamination within the reserve.

#### 6.5.3.1 Existing buildings

- All buildings within the reserve will be removed, unless identified as required for a specific purpose or cultural heritage protections apply. All buildings and structures will be assessed for heritage values prior to any demolition.
- Parks Victoria may choose to retain houses or sheds as work stations. This decision will be based on the location and suitability of existing infrastructure, and the timing of infrastructure availability and needs. A business case is required to inform retention of facilities for this purpose.
- There is potential that existing buildings may present a suitable opportunity for visitor uses such as accommodation or art gallery. A business plan should be prepared to inform the retention of identified buildings which includes consideration of the suitability of the location for the proposed activity, ecological sensitivities and ease of access.
- Where cost effective buildings to be removed from the reserve may be made available for alternative uses.

#### 6.5.3.2 Dams and stock management infrastructure

- The decision to maintain or remove dams and stock management infrastructure will depend on the likely biomass management regime for the site. However, dams and other infrastructure associated with the management of stock will generally be maintained due to the difficult and expense of reinstating this infrastructure if required at a later date.
- The decision to remove a dam may also be driven by the benefits of reinstating natural hydrology at the site.
- Where dams or stock infrastructure are situated on a site of high grassland values allocated to a burning regime that is unlikely to change, this infrastructure may be removed.
- The timing of dam removal should consider the availability of grass seed and ability to rehabilitate the area.
- Dams may also be prioritised for removal where they are not needed to support grazing and are providing harbour for pest animals.

#### 6.5.3.3 Trees and Plantations

- Due to the cost of removal of larger tree plantations and orchards compared with the restoration and maintenance of these areas, large plantations will generally remain within the reserve. Depending on the final reserve status of the WGR and the location of the plantation, they may remain as functioning plantations and either privately leased or managed as part of a visitor 'farm' experience. The decision to maintain a plantation or orchard will require a more detailed business plan and environmental assessment to ensure continuation of the use would not impact the surrounding grassland values.
- With the exception of large plantations as noted above, all non-local and non-indigenous species to be removed unless:

- The trees are located near other elements of European/ farming cultural importance such as historic houses and other buildings to be maintained, or dry stone walls;
- The trees are located on land parcels that will be grazed and are considered to be required as shelter for stock; or
- They are potentially providing benefit to surrounding flora species.
- The removal of non-native trees should consider providing alternative native habitat for fauna species prior to the removal of non-native trees.

#### 6.5.3.4 Fences

- Given the cost associated with building new fences, existing fences will not be removed from a site unless it is considered highly unlikely that a fence will be required in future. This means that (in the establishment phase in particular) fences will not be removed unless they present a safety risk or there is confidence that the fence is not required to manage stock or disturbance.
- However, fences associated with historic sites and buildings should be assessed for their heritage value prior to any proposed removal. For instance, the fence around a homestead garden may contribute to the heritage values of the site. This will again be dependent on any safety risks associated with the fence.
- Similarly, new fences will only be built where required to:
  - Contain stock as part of a grazing regime.
  - Protect high value areas from disturbance. For instance, to discourage visitors accessing the area.
- The need for fences is likely to be higher in the establishment phase to manage boundaries between private and Crown land and while public access to roads etc. is less restricted.
- Fencing will be required along some of the boundaries of the Western Grassland Reserve depending on the interface.
- Alternative options to fences will be favoured for managing disturbance from cars such as swales, long grass, rocks, bollards etc. where possible.
- New fencing and gates should be constructed in accordance with Parks Victoria standards and be compatible with fire management practices.
- Where a fence borders an area to be burnt as part of an ecological burning regime, the fence will be 'burnt-through' and replaced by a fire proof fence if required.

#### 6.5.3.5 Cropping and Agriculture

- The Western Grassland Reserve includes areas of active or abandoned croplands. The appropriate management regime for these areas will be determined at a site level through the management decision processes described elsewhere.
- However, it is likely that cropping may be maintained in some cropped areas as a method of controlling biomass, weeds and elevated soil nutrient levels. These areas may continue using zero tillage (or no-till farming), cropped and harvested without the addition of fertilizer to help reduce the level of available nitrogen in the upper layers of the soil profile or biomass ploughed into the soil to help manage weeds.
- Cropped areas also provide an opportunity to sow (typically after scrapping of the nutrient enriched topsoil) native species for native seed production.
- The use of cropping as a management tool should be considered when assigning a reserve status to land parcels in the Western Grassland Reserve. Further work is also required to determine the best management model for cropping areas for instance cropping areas through lease agreements, or the use of contractors.

#### 6.5.4 Historic features

All features of historic importance such as those listed in the Heritage Victoria Inventory, or under local heritage overlays will be protected. However, existing heritage listings are unlikely to be comprehensive, and assessments will be conducted at probable historic sites before any works such as demolition of buildings or structures. Over time the reserve will provide an opportunity for further historic surveys and studies.

All dry stone walls within the reserve are to be retained.

Most historic sites will be retained in their current condition without providing additional access or infrastructure. However, some sites of historic importance (such as historic farms) may be suitable for visitor facilities. Further exploration will be required to determine the suitability of facilities to ensure effective interaction without impacting on the historic values and the preparation of a business case to assess the costs to repair and maintain facilities.

#### 6.5.5 Traditional Owner heritage

Traditional owner cultural heritage mapping and appropriate management planning will occur in collaboration with the relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties to ensure sites of traditional owner cultural heritage will be protected.

Some sites of indigenous heritage importance may be suitable for visitors. Consultation with the indigenous community will be necessary to identify potential sites and determine their suitability for visitor interaction without impacting on cultural values. Once sites are identified, a business case should be prepared to determine capital and operational costs as well as potential funding sources and management arrangements.

#### 6.5.6 Ecological burning and fuel breaks

Fire is a natural part of the Australian landscape and ecology of native grasslands. Fire management strategies and plans are currently being prepared for the reserve and individual land parcel as they are acquired. Public education regarding the use of fire as a traditional land management practice should be included as part of site information.

DELWP has developed a strategic fuel break plan for the Western Grassland Reserve. However, the location of these breaks is likely to require adjustments as land is acquired and more information on the biodiversity values of each land parcel is known. Burning regimes for the reserve may be altered as better knowledge on and understanding is gained in the management of native grassland systems.

Changes to fuel break design are likely to be required and from a planning perspective should consider:

- The biodiversity values of the reserve.
- The location of existing roads and tracks that can act as fuel breaks minimising the need to establish new fuel breaks.
- The location of existing infrastructure, or potentially new visitor infrastructure that is not compatible with ecological burning.
- Maximising opportunities to provide access for fire vehicles to assist burning and suppression activities.

## 7 Staging and Implementation

The reserve will be created over stages as existing properties are acquired. Funding is currently in place for land acquisition and ecological management. Additional funding will need to be sourced for capital works projects and recurring initiatives such as education programs. Short to long term partnerships are likely to be an effective way to achieve the vision for the reserve.

The next 10 – 20 years will be a dynamic phase in the evolution of the reserve. A regular process of planning and review will provide multiple benefits including improved decision making, increased public awareness and clarity regarding funding requirements.

It is recommended the Concept Plan is reviewed as appropriate dependent on the rate of progress of the reserves, but at least every 10 years. This will enable an assessment of the progress in the implementation of the vision for the reserve. It will also provide an opportunity to supplement the Concept Plan with additional information obtained as sites are acquired.

Once site acquisition reaches an appropriate level, a Master Plan should be prepared for the reserve. The preparation of the Master Plan should include public and stakeholder engagement to gain community insights as well as sharing with the public with information about the reserve which should assist with growing public appreciation of the reserve.

Detailed plans for key elements of the reserve (such as activity nodes) should be prepared in accordance with the appropriate processes and approvals.

## Bibliography and endnotes

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Aerial images sourced from Google Maps

Photographs by Fitzgerald Frisby Landscape Architecture except where otherwise credited.

### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw\\_087113.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_087113.shtml)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/ncc/cdio/cvg/av>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4177.0>



Our reference: SA03

Mr James Todd  
Director, Knowledge & Decision Systems  
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning  
Level 2, 8 Nicholson St  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Mr Todd

**Re: Melbourne Strategic Assessment (SA03) – Western Grassland Reserve  
Concept Plan**

I refer to your letter dated 15 December 2016 in which you submitted the Western Grassland Reserve Concept Plan (Concept Plan) to the Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department).

Officers of the Department have reviewed the Concept Plan and consider that it provides an adequate strategic framework and direction for the establishment, use, zoning and infrastructure management within the Western Grassland Reserve.

The Department will continue to work with the Victorian Government to ensure that the conservation outcomes for the Western Grassland Reserve are achieved in delivering the Melbourne Strategic Assessment.

Should you have any queries about any matters raised in this letter please contact s22 [redacted] @environment.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 's22' followed by a horizontal line.

s22 [redacted] r  
A/g Director  
Monitoring and Assurance Section  
Compliance and Enforcement Branch

13 January 2017



s22

**From:** s22 @delwp.vic.gov.au  
**Sent:** Monday, 20 February 2017 12:04 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** messaging re 2020.docx  
**Attachments:** messaging re 2020.docx

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Hi s22 and s22

Attached is the draft initial messaging I provided during our meeting.

Thanks  
s22

s22 | Manager MSA Ecological Program | Biodiversity  
Energy, Environment and Climate Change | Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Address, Suburb, Victoria Postcode  
s22



The rate of purchasing land for the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (including Western Grassland Reserves and Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve) is dependent on the extent of received “offset” fees, as development progresses in Melbourne’s growth corridors. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is making every effort to accommodate landholders who wish their land be acquired early in the process; for some landholders it will be several years before their land is acquired.

At all times, DELWP will ensure that sufficient offsets have been secured to meet the obligations of all clearing under the MSA to date

To establish the order of priority for land acquisition DELWP has developed a Land Prioritisation Strategy which has been sent to landowners in the PAO area. This strategy is published on the DEPI website at: <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/biodiversity/melbourne-strategic-assessment>. The strategy outlines the prioritisation criteria and process for future land acquisitions, and includes consideration of personal hardship circumstances.



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment and Energy**

## Strategic assessment of Melbourne's urban growth boundary

Under national environment law—the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)—the federal environment minister may agree to undertake a strategic assessment on the impacts of actions under a policy, plan or program.

### Background

In December 2008, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development released a report entitled *Melbourne @ 5 million*. The report provided forecasts for Melbourne's future population growth, and detailed the need to accommodate an additional 600,000 new dwellings over the next 20 years within a revised urban growth boundary.

### Agreement

On 4 March 2009, the federal environment minister signed an agreement with the Victorian Government to undertake a strategic assessment under national environment law of the expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary. On 16 June 2009, the strategic assessment agreement and terms of reference were amended to better reflect the intention of this assessment.

[Strategic assessment agreement with the finalised terms of reference \(PDF - 1.63 MB\)](#)

[Strategic assessment agreement - Attachments \(PDF - 232.37 KB\)](#)

[Strategic assessment agreement - Attachments \(RTF - 3.11 MB\)](#)

### Public comment

The Victorian Government released a series of draft reports for public comment between 17 June and the 17 July 2009 including:

- *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities*: a report describing the urban growth boundary expansion,
- *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities*: a report describing the regional rail link,
- *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities*: a report describing the outer Melbourne ring road, and
- *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities*: a report describing the impacts on nationally protected matters for the strategic assessment (EPBC Act).

### Endorsement

On 2 February 2010, the federal environment minister endorsed the program document *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities: Program report* (December 2009). This was the first strategic assessment in Australia to reach the endorsement stage. The endorsement of this program allows the minister to consider giving approval to actions that are taken in accordance with the endorsed program.

[Signed Endorsement Notice - Signed Endorsement for the Melbourne Urban Growth Boundary \(PDF - 19 KB\)](#)

[Program Report 2009](#)

## Approvals

The Minister has approved four classes of actions under the endorsed program.

[Regional rail link project \(PDF - 898.73 KB\)](#)

[Melbourne 28 precincts \(PDF - 1.23 MB\)](#)

[Melbourne's Northern, North Western and Western Growth Corridors \(PDF - 973.26 KB\)](#)

[Melbourne's Northern, North Western and Western Growth Corridors \(DOCX - 203.7 KB\)](#)

[Melbourne's South Eastern Growth Corridor \(PDF - 1.47 MB\)](#)

[Melbourne's South Eastern Growth Corridor \(DOCX - 91.24 KB\)](#)

## Conservation Strategies

The endorsed Program included a commitment by the Victorian Government to prepare a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the four growth corridors, and accompanying sub-regional strategies for the growling grass frog, golden sun moth and southern brown bandicoot, and for these strategies to be approved by the minister.

The minister has approved the following strategies:

1. *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors* (Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, June 2013) - approved 2 August 2013
2. *Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Golden Sun Moth* (Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, May 2013) - approved 2 August 2013
3. *Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Growling Grass Frog* (Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, May 2013) - approved 2 August 2013
4. *Sub-regional Species Strategy for the Southern Brown Bandicoot* (Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, January 2014) and *Supplement: Habitat Connectivity* (Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, July 2014) - approved 7 August 2014.

The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy has identified 36 conservation areas by applying the protection requirements of the approved prescriptions for matters of national environmental significance. The requirements in the prescriptions relating to offsetting, salvage and translocation and conservation management plans have been incorporated into the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy will therefore give effect to the prescriptions to ensure protection of matters of national environmental significance.

The strategies can be downloaded from the [Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries website](#).

## Prescriptions for matters of national environmental significance

On 16 April 2010, the federal environment minister approved several prescriptions for ecological communities and threatened species associated with the Melbourne strategic assessment. These

prescriptions specify requirements for protection of nationally protected matters that must be followed in preparing precinct structure plans and in undertaking individual developments. Prescriptions have been approved for:

- Natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Grassy eucalypt woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Golden sun moth
- Striped legless lizard
- Southern brown bandicoot
- Growling grass frog
- Matted flax-lily
- Spiny rice-flower
- Migratory species.

These prescriptions can be found on the [Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries' website](#).

## Victorian Government websites for the Melbourne strategic assessment

[Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries](#)

[Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure](#)

## Changes to Melbourne's urban growth boundary

The expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary passed through the Victorian Parliament (amendment VC68). This amendment put in place Public Acquisition Overlays for the 15,000 hectare Western Grassland reserve. The Victorian Government gazetted this amendment on 6 August 2010.

More detailed information on the amendment can be found on the [Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure's website](#).

In 2011, the Victorian Government identified an additional 6000 hectares of land for 'logical inclusions' in the growth corridors. These 'logical inclusions' are not covered by the endorsed Program and any actions likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance in these areas will require separate EPBC Act referral, assessment and approval.

Further information on these 'logical inclusions' is on the Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure at: [Logical Inclusions Advisory Committee](#).

## Further information

[Melbourne @ 5 million](#)

[Strategic assessments](#)

[Melbourne Urban Development - Policy Statement for Environment Protection and Biodiversity](#)

[Conservation Act 1999 \(EPBC Act\) referrals](#)

[Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries](#)



The State election will be held on Saturday 24 November 2018. During the caretaker period (commencing 6pm, 30 October 2018) content will only be added to this website in line with the [caretaker conventions](#).

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FOI 181013  
Document 17

Melbourne Strategic Assessment

# Progress Reporting

**The MSA Program produces regular progress reports which track the Program's delivery of the conservation commitments.**

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The [Monitoring and Reporting Framework \(MRF\)](#) sets out requirements to ensure transparent reporting of the implementation of the MSA Program's conservation activities, and their level of success.

These reports are a key part of keeping the public and the Commonwealth Government informed on the MSA Program's progress, and a valuable input to the MSA Program's [adaptive management](#) approach to conservation.

Under the MRF, DELWP produces two kinds of progress reports:

- Each year, on the delivery of the MSA Program's key outputs
- Every five years, on the achievement of the MSA Program's key outcomes

This reporting period allows for sufficient tracking of results and an interpretation of data in the context of natural changes to species populations and ecological communities associated with weather, climate and other ecological characteristics.

## Key documents

### Progress Report 2014-15

[Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program: Progress Report 2014-15 \(PDF, 4.5 MB\)](#)

[Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program: Progress Report 2014-15 \(accessible\) \(DOCX, 3.3 MB\)](#)

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### Progress Report 2015-16

[Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program: Progress Report 2015-16 \(PDF, 1.7 MB\)](#)

[Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program: Progress Report 2015-16 \(accessible\) \(DOCX, 1.6 MB\)](#)

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### Progress Report 2016-17

[Melbourne Strategic Assessment Program: Progress Report 2016-17 \(PDF, 4.6 MB\)](#)



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For more information about the MSA program reporting, or to request an accessible version of the progress reports, please contact [msa.conservation@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:msa.conservation@delwp.vic.gov.au)

DELWP general enquiries: **136 186**

VicEmergency Hotline: **1800 226 226**

Local Government Switchboard: **03 9208 3333**

**Deaf, hearing or speech impaired?** Please contact the National Relay Service on **133 677** or [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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