

The West RFA Region

Boundaries

The West RFA region covers approximately 5.8 million hectares from the western outskirts of Melbourne to the Victoria-South Australia border. The Great Dividing Range forms much of the northern boundary. The region covers the Shires of Glenelg, Moyne, Corangamite, Colac-Otway, Surf Coast, Greater Geelong, Golden Plains, Moorabool, Ballarat, Southern Grampians and Ararat. Sections of the Shires of Hepburn, Pyrenees, Northern Grampians, Horsham, Yarriambiack and West Wimmera are also included in the region.

Features

The region is distinguished by the Western Volcanic Plains, which form an area of low relief between the Otway Ranges and uplands to the north. Many rivers flow into a series of lakes, the largest being Lake Corangamite. The Grampians and Otway Ranges are the dominant landform features, with a significant influence on weather patterns, which in turn affects vegetation distribution.

Land tenure

Eighty three per cent of the region (4.8 million hectares) is **private land**, mostly cleared and used for a range of agricultural and industrial pursuits. There are extensive areas of privately owned plantations in the south-west and east.

Seventeen per cent of the region (1.1 million hectares) is **public land** covered mostly by native forest and generally concentrated in the Midlands, the Otway Ranges, along the Great Dividing Range and in the region's south-western corner. The public land is known for its mountain and coastal landscapes, diverse range of flora and fauna, timber resources, and tourism and recreational opportunities.

State forest occupies 411,000 hectares, or 41 per cent of the public land.

Conservation reserves, including National Parks, State Parks and Flora and Fauna Reserves, occupy a similar proportion of the public land, 44 % or approximately 437,000 hectares. Remaining public land includes other public land and water bodies.

People

The West region's population was 570,188 in 1996. Ballarat (population 64,831) is the largest city, followed by Warrnambool (26,052), Horsham (12,591), Bacchus Marsh (11,279), Colac (9,793), Portland (9,664) and Hamilton (9,248). Smaller towns include Ararat (6,890), Stawell (6,272), Port Fairy (6,232), Daylesford (3,278) and Camperdown (3,153). Geelong is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the West region and has a population of 125,382. More information about the region's people and communities is in the fact sheet on the Social Assessment.

