

*PSP* 2.0

Merrimu Precinct Structure Plan  
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country

**Background Report**

March 2026

## ACKNOWLEDEMENT OF COUNTRY

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The **Victorian Planning Authority proudly acknowledges** Victoria's Aboriginal community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

**We acknowledge** Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

**We recognise** and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

**We embrace** the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

**We acknowledge** the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of their unceded Country. We acknowledge their ongoing connection to this land, waterways, and skies, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

The Merrimu precinct is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. This area is represented by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC).

We thank the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for their engagement throughout this project.

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## Plans

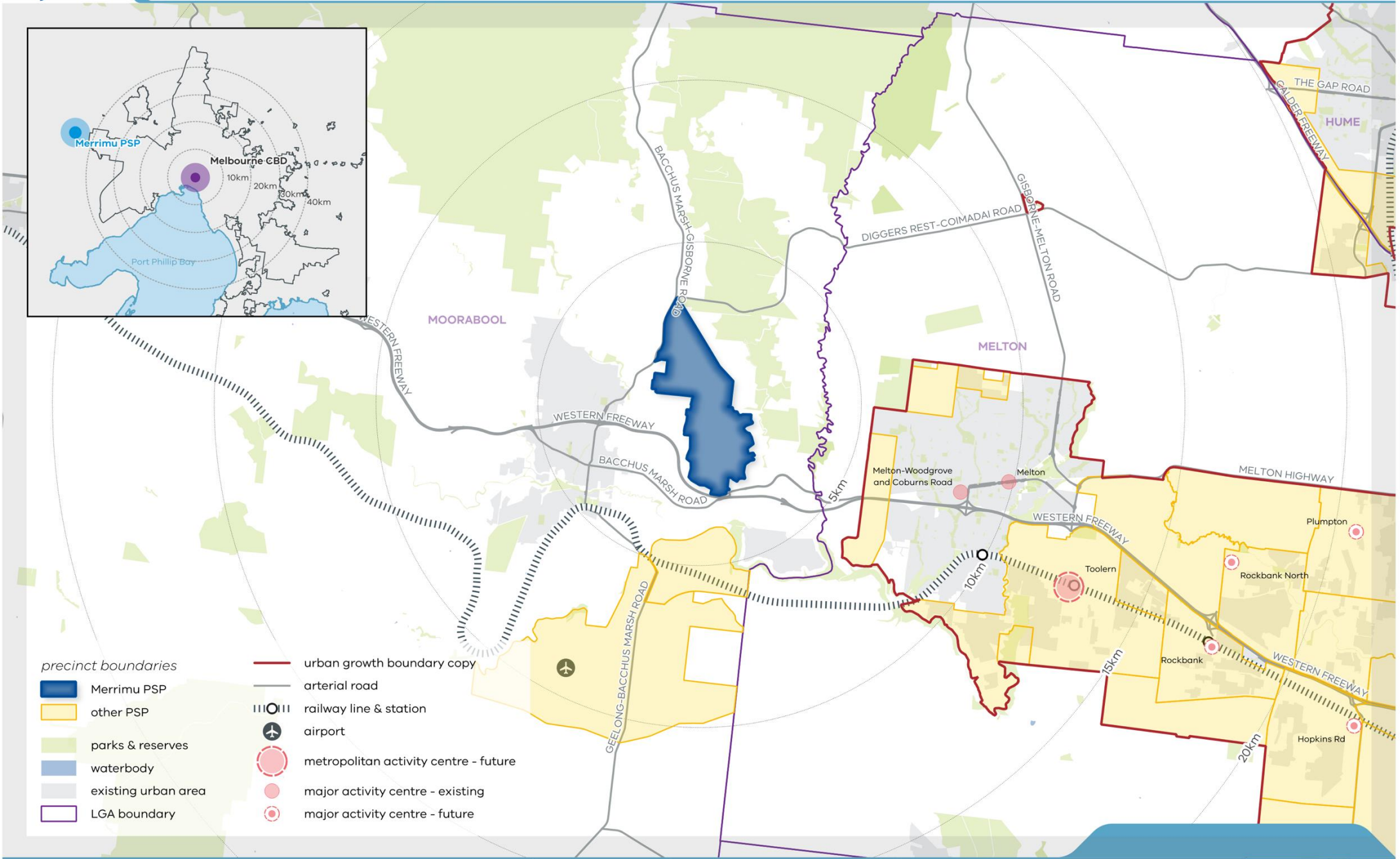
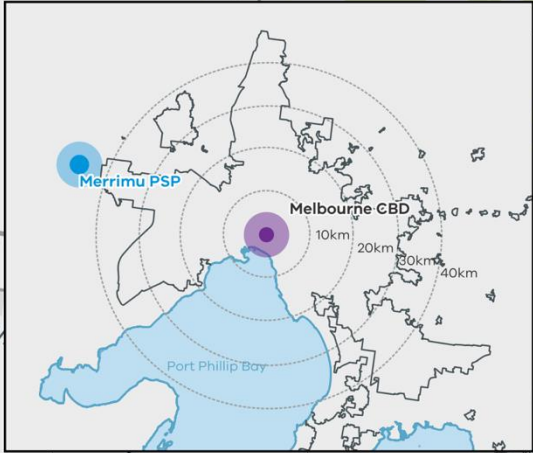
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precinct boundaries

- Merrimu PSP
- other PSP
- parks & reserves
- waterbody
- existing urban area
- LGA boundary

- urban growth boundary copy
- arterial road
- railway line & station
- airport
- metropolitan activity centre - future
- major activity centre - existing
- major activity centre - future

# 1 INTRODUCTION

---

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) in partnership with Moorabool Shire Council has prepared a Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) and Development Contributions Plan (DCP) for the Merrimu Precinct ('the Precinct').

A PSP is a land use and infrastructure plan that guides the development of an area. A DCP is a plan which provides a framework for developers to make a financial contribution as part of land development towards infrastructure identified in the PSP required to service the precinct. Both documents provide certainty for community members and the development community by providing a long-term vision for how an area will develop in the future.

The Merrimu PSP is in the regional city of Bacchus Marsh (refer to Figure 3) and is identified as a growth precinct in the Moorabool Shire Strategic Framework Plan contained within Clause 02.04 of the Moorabool Planning Scheme. It is also identified in the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework (BMUGF), which sets out a high-level framework for the long-term development of the broader Bacchus Marsh area, as well as in Plan for Victoria.

In summary, the Merrimu PSP:

- Implements the outcomes of the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework
- Sets out plans to guide the delivery of quality urban environments in accordance with the Victorian Government guidelines
- Enables the transition of rural residential and non-urban land to urban land
- Sets the vision for how the land should be developed, illustrates the future urban structure and describes the outcomes to be achieved by the future development
- Outlines the projects required to ensure that future residents, visitors and workers within the area can be provided with timely access to services and transport necessary to support a quality and affordable lifestyle
- Sets out objectives, requirements and guidelines for land use, development and subdivision
- Provides government agencies, the council, developers, investors and local communities with certainty about future development
- Sets out an urban structure based on the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods to provide future residents with services to live locally

## 1.1 Purpose of this report

The Background Report summarises the key planning assessments and outcomes that have informed the preparation of the Merrimu PSP.

More specifically, this report:

- Summarises the strategic and physical context of the precinct
- Identifies the land use and development needs for the precinct
- Identifies the planning assessment and balanced outcomes to key issues impacting the PSP
- Outlines how the precinct performs against the PSP Guidelines performance targets
- Outlines how the technical studies have helped to inform the preparation of the PSP.

**Note:** The background report does not provide an assessment of each of the PSP Guidelines features, as they may not be applicable to this precinct.

## 1.2 PSP Guidelines & PSP 2.0 process

The PSP Guidelines is a Victorian Government initiative to ensure the VPA and other planning authorities prepare plans for places that enable best practice, liveable new communities. The PSP Guidelines ensures a consistent, best-practice approach to the PSP process and outlines the intended performance of new 20-minute neighbourhoods to be articulated by PSPs.

In accordance, with Ministerial Direction 12 Urban Growth Zone,

*"in preparing an amendment to incorporate a precinct structure plan in the scheme, or change an incorporated precinct structure plan, a planning authority must demonstrate and show in the explanatory report that the precinct structure plan or any changes to it are in accordance with any applicable Precinct Structure Plan Guidelines approved by the Minister for Planning".*

The PSP 2.0 process is established under the PSP Guidelines and sets aspirational targets including co-design of the PSP, streamlining PSP preparation, and optimising the PSP product to embrace innovation, delivering government policy.

The PSP 2.0 process aims to:

- Achieve up-front, early resolution of issues
- Gain better and earlier information on infrastructure demands to inform agency planning and budget bids
- Update guidance on PSP content reflecting new government policy and promoting innovation
- Provide stronger guidance in PSPs for development staging

The PSP Guidelines acknowledges the diversity of new communities, particularly in regional Victoria and state:

*While the Guidelines maintain a focus on preparing PSPs in Melbourne's new communities, PSPs will also be prepared across regional Victoria's growing cities and towns. While a more nuanced approach to the application of the Guidelines in these areas is required, the same principles, features and targets should be considered in the regional context, particularly where larger growth areas are proposed.*

The [Guidance Note: Applying the PSP Guidelines in regional areas](#) (Regional PSP Guidelines), provides guidance to the planning authority when applying the PSP Guidelines allowing for adaptations to guideline targets in a way that supports the existing character and values of townships, while meeting the needs of future communities.

Further information on the PSP 2.0 process can be found on the [VPA website](#).

Figure 1 illustrates how best practice inputs identified through the PSP process feed into the PSP Guidelines Integrated Framework to deliver a PSP.

## 1.3 Target Adaptation in Regional Areas

The PSP Guidelines identify 20 performance targets to deliver improved outcomes and achieve the hallmarks. The Guidelines acknowledge the diversity of new communities, particularly in Regional Victoria. The Guidelines state:

*While the Guidelines maintain a focus on preparing PSPs in Melbourne's new communities, PSPs will also be prepared across regional Victoria's growing cities and towns. While a more nuanced approach to the application of the Guidelines in these areas is required, the same principles,*

features and targets should be considered in the regional context, particularly where larger growth areas are proposed

The Regional PSP Guidelines provide guidance to the Planning Authority when applying the PSP Guidelines, allowing for adaptations to performance targets in a way that supports the existing character and values of the township, while meeting the needs of future communities. Regional adaptation means that not all PSPs will achieve 100% of the performance targets and therefore justification is required for adapting a target.

It should be noted that many of these targets are already mandated through the Victorian Planning Provisions, meaning they are already requirements of the planning permit process.

Table 1 sets out which targets must be met and those which can be varied and the status of the target in the context of the Merrimu PSP. There are several targets that are proposed to be varied for the precinct. Reasons why these have been varied are summarised in this report.

## 1.4 PSP Guidelines in Merrimu

Merrimu PSP is a Regional PSP that seeks to deliver outcomes responsive to the precinct features and the surrounding area. The context of the surrounding area is set out within this report and rationalises the nuanced approach undertaken in this PSP.

The PSP Guidelines has a hierarchy of elements to explain what needs to be considered and delivered in a PSP. Elements are grounded in state policy and strategy or key future directions for greenfield precincts as determined by the VPA through the preparation process.

The framework for delivering PSPs in accordance with the PSP Guidelines includes a purpose and place-based vision, place-based objectives, principles and performance targets which sit within the hierarchy of elements under the 20-minute neighbourhood metric. Successful implementation of both the coordination and innovation pathways will require significant stakeholder buy-in, and a greater effort and commitment from stakeholders will be required to pursue the innovation pathway for desired outcomes.

PSPs make use of these (and other tools) to give expression to the vision and objectives, including plans, diagrams, tables, and requirements. Further, PSPs provide a mechanism for implementation through guiding the preparation and assessment of planning permit applications for subdivision, use and development.

## 1.5 Progressive certainty

A progressive certainty approach has been applied to enable the Merrimu PSP to advance to public consultation in a timely manner. This means some supporting technical work will be reviewed and finalised concurrent with the public consultation and Standing Advisory Committee processes, for example:

- Transport modelling and Transport Impact Assessment: draft transport modelling and reports have been used in the preparation of the PSP to progress the amendment. The transport work will be finalised once public consultation feedback has been received.
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment: The Cultural Values Assessment is being used to inform the public consultation version of the draft amendment documents while the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment is under preparation.

Where applicable, the draft PSP seeks to identify the specific components of the plan that will be informed by review of the above documents.

Figure 1 Framework for Delivering PSPs

Source: PSP 2.0 Guidance Note, VPA (2021)

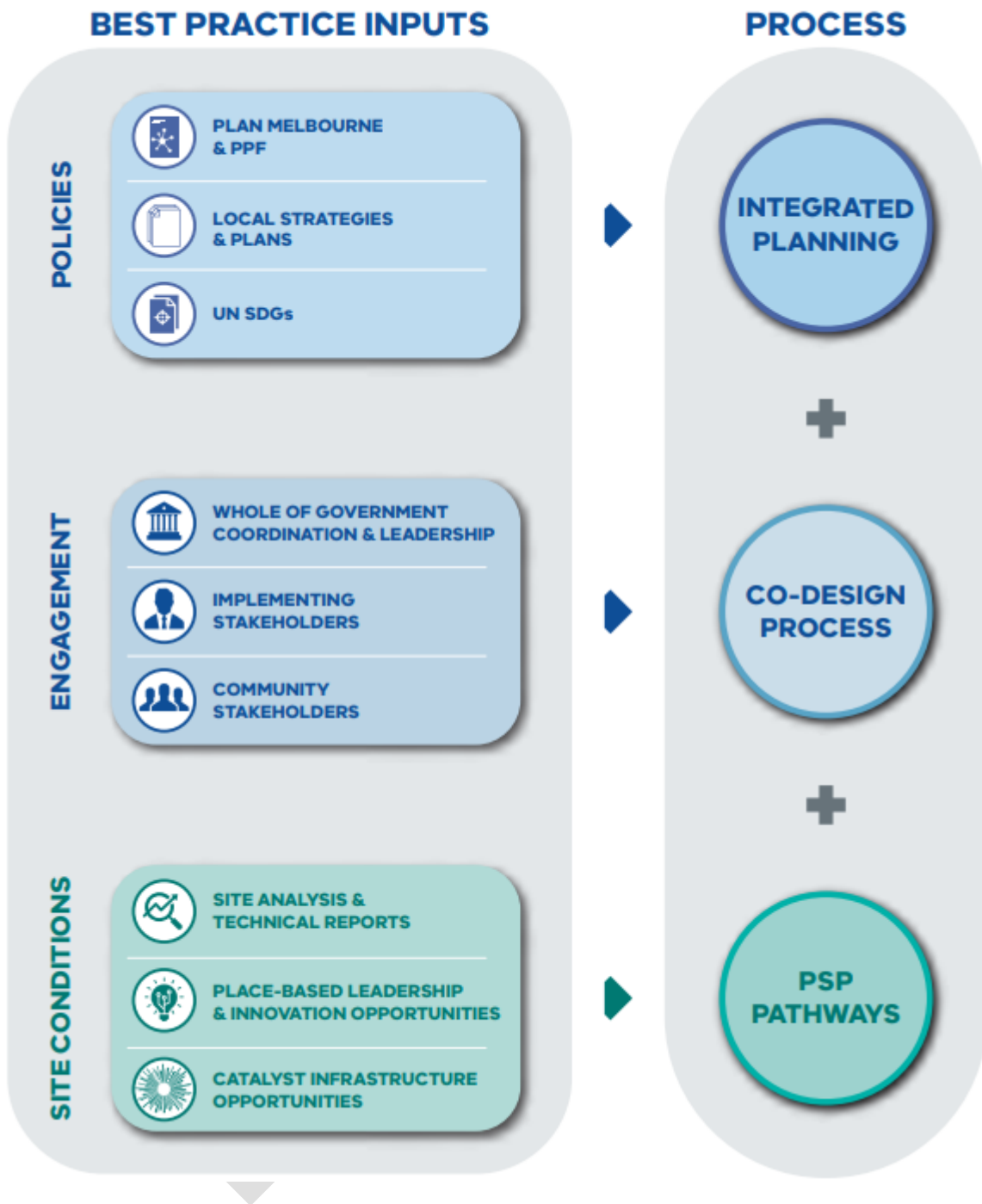


Figure 2 Hierarchy of elements

Source: PSP 2.0 Guidance Note, VPA (2021)

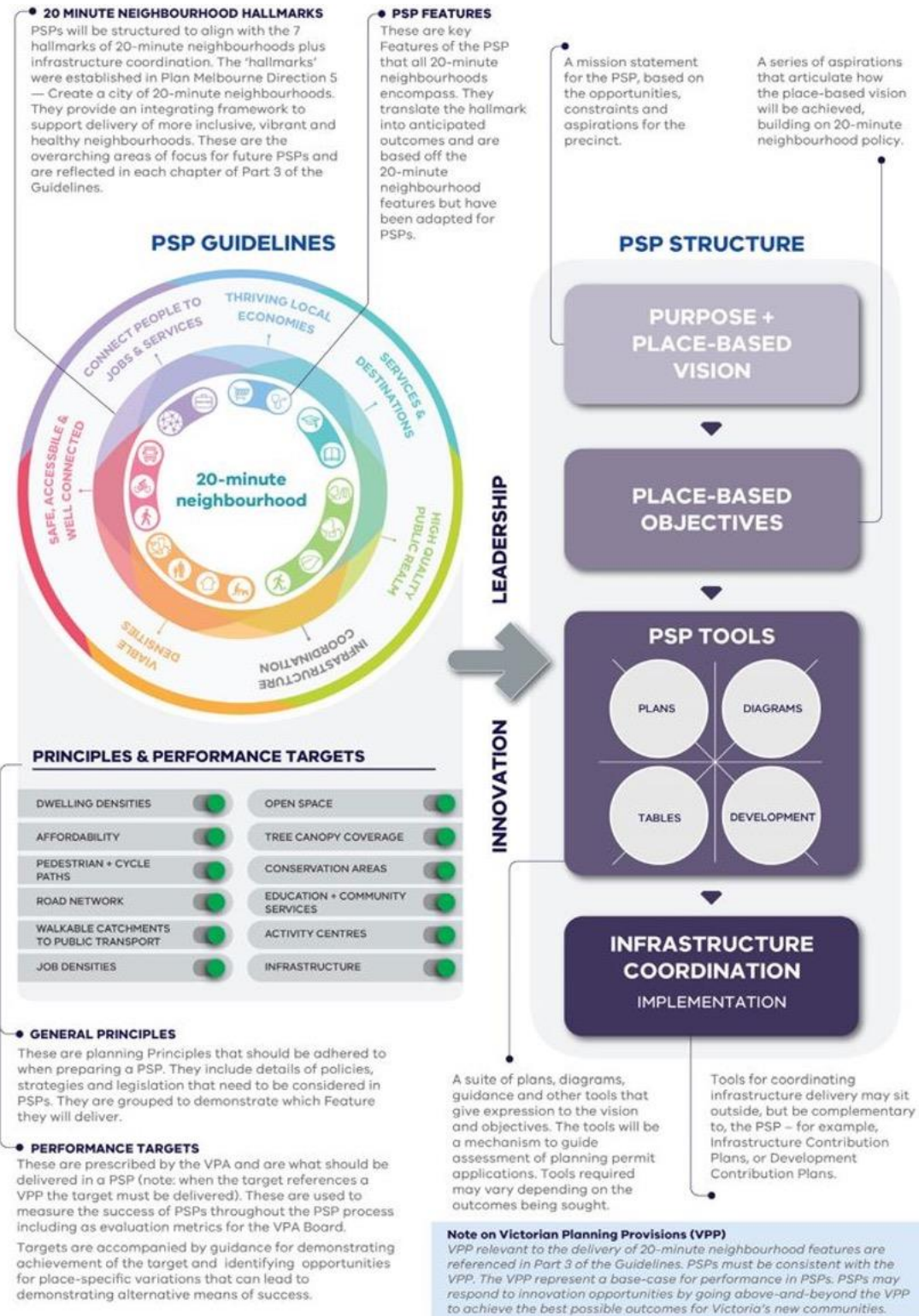


Table 1 PSP targets and regional adaptability

#	Target Summary	Adaption supported?	How is it applied to the precinct?
T1	Amenity areas	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T2	Density Target	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T3	Housing Typologies	✓	Target achieved
T4	Affordable Housing	✓	Target achieved
T5	Arterial Network	✓	Target achievable
T6	Bicycle Paths	✓	Target achievable
T7	Pedestrian Paths	✓	Target achievable
T8	Pedestrian/Cycling Crossings	✓	Target achievable
T9	Public Transport	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation
T10	Local Employment	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T11	Open Space Land Take	✓	Target achieved
T12	Open Space Catchments	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T13	Tree Canopy Coverage	✓	Target achievable
T14	Passively Irrigated Street Trees	✓	Target achievable
T15	Solar Orientation	✓	Target achievable
T16	Conservation Areas	✓	Target achievable
T17	IWM Solutions	✓	Target achievable
T18	Education and Community Facilities	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T19	Activity Centres	✓	Regional Specific Adaptation*
T20	Basic and Essential Infrastructure	✓	Target achievable

\* Regional Specific Adaptation has been made. Further details and rationale on these metrics can be found in Section 4 **Error! Reference source not found.**

## 2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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### 2.1 Federal policy and strategies

#### 2.1.1 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities, and heritage places defined in the EPBC Act as matters of national environmental significance. Areas within the Merrimu PSP precinct have been identified for conservation purposes including to protect EPBC Act species.

The Merrimu PSP and the draft amendment provides statutory tools to ensure adequate protection of these conservation areas consistent with the EPBC Act.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2025A00068/latest/text>

### 2.2 State policy and strategies

#### 2.2.1 Plan for Victoria (2025)

Plan for Victoria was released by the Victorian Government in March 2025. It sets out a long-term plan for the state, particularly for Melbourne, regional cities and centres and small towns across regional and rural Victoria from 2025 to 2051.

Planning for Merrimu PSP implements the pillars identified in Plan for Victoria, particularly Pillar 1: Housing for all Victorians. Map 2 of Plan for Victoria identifies where most homes are to be accommodated, this includes Melbourne, and the three major regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. Map 2 also identifies several regional greenfield projects, which includes the Merrimu PSP area.

Map 4 of Plan for Victoria also identifies housing targets for 2051 for each local government area including Moorabool, which has a housing target of 20,000 homes over the plan period.

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/planforvictoria>

#### 2.2.2 Victoria's Housing Statement (2024)

Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034 establishes the State's goal to deliver 800,000 new homes over the next decade and forms part of a broader plan to accommodate 2.24 million new homes by 2051 across Victoria. The Statement emphasises that new housing must be delivered close to jobs, transport, schools and services, and that regional centres and growing peri-urban communities will play an increasingly important role in meeting this statewide supply.

Bacchus Marsh, as the primary urban centre within Moorabool, is identified in broader growth planning as a key settlement expected to accommodate significant population uplift, with projections indicating the township will grow to around 40,000 residents by 2041. This includes new neighbourhoods in Merrimu, which are already recognised in growth planning as future communities requiring housing, infrastructure and services to support this scale of development.

[https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/DTP0424\\_Housing\\_Statement\\_v6\\_FA\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/DTP0424_Housing_Statement_v6_FA_WEB.pdf)

## 2.3 Metropolitan, regional, and local policies

### 2.3.1 Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan (2014)

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan covers the municipalities of Ararat, Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool, Pyrenees and part of Golden Plains. The plan provides broad direction for the regional growth of land use and development in the Central Highlands region. The Growth Plan acknowledges Bacchus Marsh as a regional centre and key growth location for the peri-urban part of the Central Highlands. Bacchus Marsh will need to ensure it provides the facilities and services to manage continued growth.

The Growth Plan provides strategies to:

- Establish a framework for strategic land use and settlement planning that sustainably accommodates growth.
- Identifies economic, environmental, social, and cultural resources to be preserved, maintained, or developed.
- Provides direction for accommodating growth and change including residential, employment, agricultural, and other rural activities.
- Shows which areas of land can accommodate growth.

The Growth Plan will be used to coordinate, guide and inform the preparation and consideration of future, more detailed local plans and planning permit applications.

[https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/639115/Central-Highlands-Regional-Growth-Plan-May-2014.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/639115/Central-Highlands-Regional-Growth-Plan-May-2014.pdf)

### 2.3.2 Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework (2018)

The BMUGF was developed in 2018 as a joint project between the VPA and Moorabool Shire Council. It was implemented in the Moorabool Planning Scheme Amendment C81. The BMUGF was finalised subsequent to the most recent updates to Plan Melbourne completed earlier in the same year.

The BMUGF highlights that the population of Bacchus Marsh is expected to more than double to 40,000 people by 2040. It explicitly set out to support growth in locations with the capacity to accommodate the largest increases in population and that are self-sufficient for infrastructure, such as schools and community centres.

The BMUGF nominates the Merrimu Growth Precinct as a Strategic Outcome Area. It recognises the future population of Merrimu will create large-scale demand for activity centres and community facilities and highlights the opportunity the precinct presents to deliver local jobs, including retail employment opportunities and jobs in health, community and educational services.

Regarding transport needs to service the Precinct, the BMUGF identifies that developer contributions from Merrimu's growth can be leveraged to deliver infrastructure that will benefit the wider district, including the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR). The BMUGF also includes the following related Precinct Planning Principles applicable to the Merrimu PSP;

- Ensure the sequencing of Merrimu responds to land supply and demand analysis and is able to deliver the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road.

- Undertake traffic modelling to identify the maximum number of lots which can be developed prior to the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road being constructed, and the local road network improvements necessary to facilitate such development.
- Prepare a precinct staging plan, to demonstrate how the maximum number of lots can be developed in the precinct prior to the BMELR being constructed.

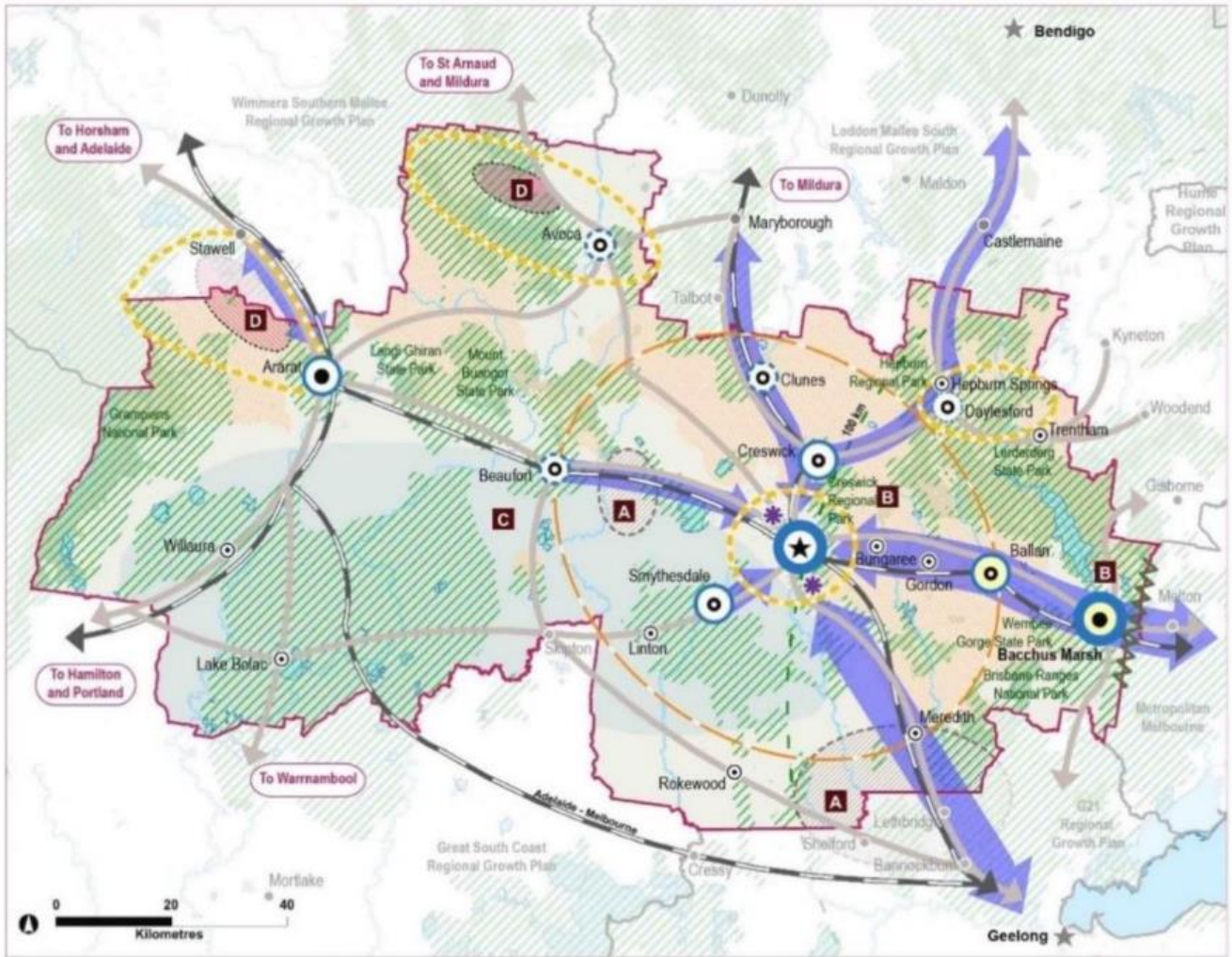
The BMUGF establishes that the delivery of Merrimu is integral to the expected population growth of Bacchus Marsh and to the economic prosperity and development of the town and the wider region.

We refer to the Head, TfV in this report to acknowledge their statutory role in overseeing Victoria's integrated transport network and ensuring alignment with statewide transport objectives. While the report is being prepared within the broader Department of Transport and Planning, certain decisions, approvals, and strategic directions fall under the Head, TfV's legislated responsibilities. Including this reference ensures the report accurately reflects governance arrangements and decision-making authority.

<https://vpa.vic.gov.au/project/bacchus-marsh-urban-growth-framework/>

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Figure 3 Growth directions (Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan)



**SETTLEMENT NETWORK**

- ★ Ballarat - Regional city    ● Regional centre    ● Town    ○ Small town    ★ Regional city external to the region    ● Settlement external to the region
- Major growth    ○ Medium growth    ○ Support sustainable change    ○ Contain growth
- Designated identified growth centre in Plan Melbourne<sup>(1)</sup>    ⚡ Settlement break

(1) Plan Melbourne (Chapter 6 – State of Cities) identifies Bacchus Marsh and Ballan as peri-urban towns with potential to attract housing and population growth out of Melbourne

**MELBOURNE AND BALLARAT HINTERLANDS**

- Areas within 100 km of central Melbourne    ○ Ballarat hinterland

**CONNECTIVITY**

- ➡ Key relationship    ➡ Key road corridor    ➡ Key rail corridor

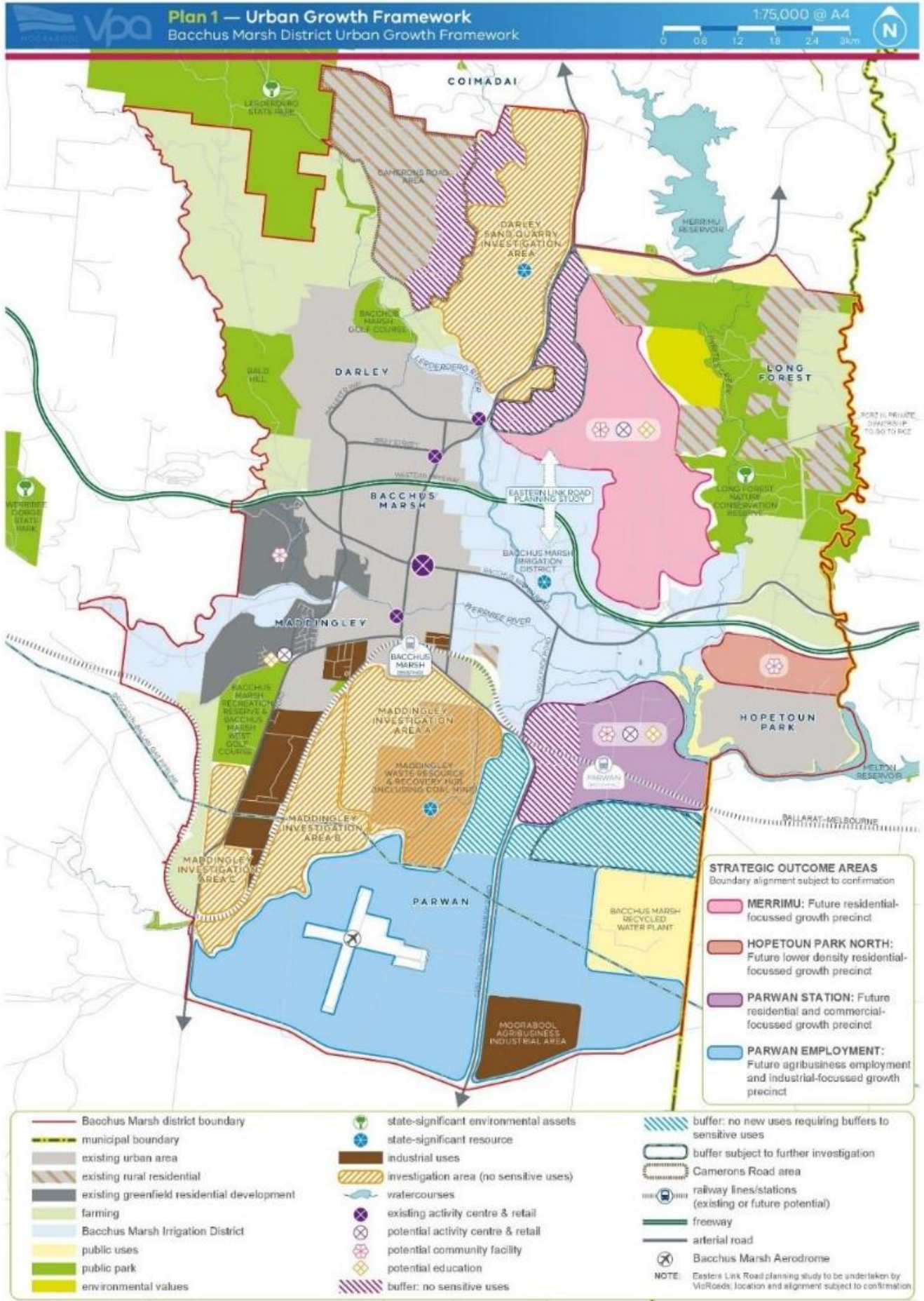
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- ★ Regional employment assets in Ballarat    ● Key tourism precinct
- ⓐ Intensive agriculture    ⓑ Horticulture    ⓒ Broadacre cropping and grazing    ⓓ Viticulture

**ENVIRONMENT**

- ▨ Areas containing high value terrestrial habitat    ▨ Declared water supply catchment    ● Public land
- Lakes and wetlands    — Rivers

Figure 4 Growth Framework Plan (Bacchus Marsh UGF)



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## Whole of Country Plan

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 is a community-directed strategy developed by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to guide the management, protection, and restoration of their lands and waterways. It empowers Traditional Owners to make decisions based on cultural, moral, and legislated authority. The plan focuses on sustainable practices, such as cultural burning, to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage for future generations.

Extensive assessment of the Precinct has been completed in ongoing consultation and engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (ACHIA) and Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) has been undertaken in support of the PSP.

<https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Wurundjeri-Woi-wurrung-Whole-of-Country-Plan-2025-2035.pdf>

### 2.3.3 Planning Policy Framework

The Planning Policy Framework (PPF) contains statewide, regional and local planning policies, which articulate the land use and development outcomes sought by the Moorabool Planning Scheme (the Planning Scheme).

<https://planning-schemes.app.planning.vic.gov.au/Moorabool/ordinance/00>

#### Clause 11 – Settlement

The PSP will enable an increase in land for residential use to provide for the projected population growth of the municipality. Complementary community facilities such as schools, recreational and passive open spaces and commercial uses that are well connected will create a desirable place to live.

#### Clause 12 – Environment

The PSP ensure the retention of significant biodiversity through the creation of conservation areas to protect nationally significant flora and fauna. Biodiversity outcomes must be undertaken in accordance with EPBC Act approvals.

Stormwater flows will be managed through an integrated system that aims to manage flows beyond the Precinct to be generally kept in line with Melbourne Water Guidelines and CSIRO Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines. The Precinct will incorporate a network of open waterways that will provide for both drainage and open space features.

Areas of open space have been provided in locations where it is necessary to conserve areas of cultural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and manage bushfire risk. The distribution of open space within the Precinct ensures that a significant majority of residential properties have access to open space within the 20-minute neighbourhood model.

#### Clause 12.01 – Biodiversity

The PSP identifies significant biodiversity areas to be retained and identifies less significant vegetation that is appropriate for removal to accommodate development.

EPBC Act approvals will ensure nationally significant environmental matters are protected. Conservation areas will be created to protect nationally important biodiversity within the Precinct. A Native Vegetation Precinct Plan (NVPP) will ensure appropriate consideration of any removal of native vegetation at a State level.

### Clause 16 – Housing

The PSP encourages a mix of dwelling types and genuine housing diversity that will service the broader community.

#### Clause 16.01 – Residential development

Housing in the Precinct will be fully serviced. New residents will have access to existing and future services and employment opportunities in the community, in adjacent developed neighbourhoods and through the provision of new infrastructure and uses generating employment in the Precinct. The PSP sets out a range of housing densities to be provided in the Precinct.

### Clause 17 – Economic development

The Precinct will provide local employment opportunities while locating residents in proximity to employment in regional areas. The PSP respects the ongoing operation of the irrigation district to the south and sand quarries to the north and east as important economic drivers for the area. The Precinct provides a mix of medium to high density dwellings around the activity centres and will also plan for larger rural blocks to create an appropriate interface between residential and rural residents.

#### Clause 17.01 – Employment, 17.02 – Commercial

The PSP provides for three activity centres that provides for local employment opportunities and a range of community and retail facilities to serve the community. The PSP also identifies an area of the Precinct for social enterprise.

### Clause 18 – Transport

The Precinct will be well connected to the existing arterial road network, via Gisborne Road and Old Western Highway. The local connector road network has been established to prioritise local road movements and ensure a lower speed environment that encourages active transport whilst ensuring good connectivity. The Precinct will be bus capable and well connected to major road networks such as the Old Western Highway and Gisborne Road.

Movement throughout the Precinct will encourage a variety of more sustainable travel modes by incorporating a network of shared paths and incorporating roads that are bus capable thereby linking into the public transport network. Hence the PSP provides a choice of travel modes throughout the Precinct.

#### Clause 18.01 – Land use and transport, 18.02 – Movement networks

The Precinct will be strongly integrated with the existing and planned local road network, creating a permeable community. Movement will be facilitated from the north to the south of the precinct through an integrated road network for private car and bus, and shared pedestrian and bike paths for active transport. The network will efficiently connect the community with local activity centres.

### Clause 19 – Infrastructure

Key local infrastructure to service the precinct will be delivered via means of a Development Contribution Plan. This includes active open space, local road improvements and improvement of connections to the arterial road network. The timely delivery of infrastructure will be related to the ultimate delivery of the precinct over time. Ultimately, the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR) is planned to be delivered to complement the regional road network.

#### Clause 19.02 – Community infrastructure

Three Government schools and one non-government school are proposed in the Precinct. Two new community facilities will be provided in the northern and southern town centres respectively. A network of active and passive open space reserves will be provided within the Precinct.

#### Clause 19.03 – Development infrastructure

A Development Contributions Plan (DCP) has been prepared in support of the PSP which outlines infrastructure funding for the precinct.

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## 3 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

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### 3.1 Local context

#### 3.1.1 Land ownership pattern

The Merrimu PSP contains a total of 128 individual land parcels. Most of the landholding is controlled by three entities. Bacchus Marsh Developments, Mondous Property Group and ResCom own circa 75% of the total Net Developable Area (NDA) within the Precinct.

#### 3.1.2 Surrounding land use

The precinct is generally bounded by the Gisborne Road and the Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District (BMID) in the west, the Western Freeway in the south and the Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve and Bence's Road in the east. The Merrimu Reservoir is located approximately 1.5km north-east which connects to Coimadai Creek. The Boral, Hanson, and Barro Quarries are located directly west of the PSP area.

The Merrimu PSP sits within a cluster of strategically planned growth areas forming the future urban structure of Bacchus Marsh. The Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework (BMUGF), approved in 2018, identifies Merrimu, Parwan Employment and Hopetoun Park as interconnected growth precincts designed to accommodate long-term residential, employment and commercial expansion while protecting key environmental and cultural assets.

#### **Parwan Employment**

The Parwan Employment precinct is located on the lands of the Wadawurrung, south of the Bacchus Marsh town centre. The precinct is approximately 2,500ha, incorporating over 80 separate properties, including the existing Bacchus Marsh aerodrome. The precinct is bordered by Parwan Creek to the north, Nortons Road and the wastewater plant to the east, Nerowie and Glenmore Roads to the south and Bacchus Marsh – Balliang Road to the west.

The precinct offers the potential for significant economic and employment growth for Bacchus Marsh and will deliver a range of compatible industrial and agricultural uses.

The precinct is bisected by Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road. Parwan Creek forms a distinctive interface with the precinct, with the riverine corridor contributing to the area's amenity. Bingham Swamp, located in the southeast, is another key environmental and heritage asset.

Planning for the Parwan Employment Precinct has now recommenced after the rediscovery of the critically endangered Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon (VGED).

#### **Hopetoun Park North**

The precinct is located immediately north of the existing Hopetoun Park township, bordered by the Western Freeway to the north, Hopetoun Park Road to the east, and a natural escarpment to the west. The area covers approximately 62 hectares.

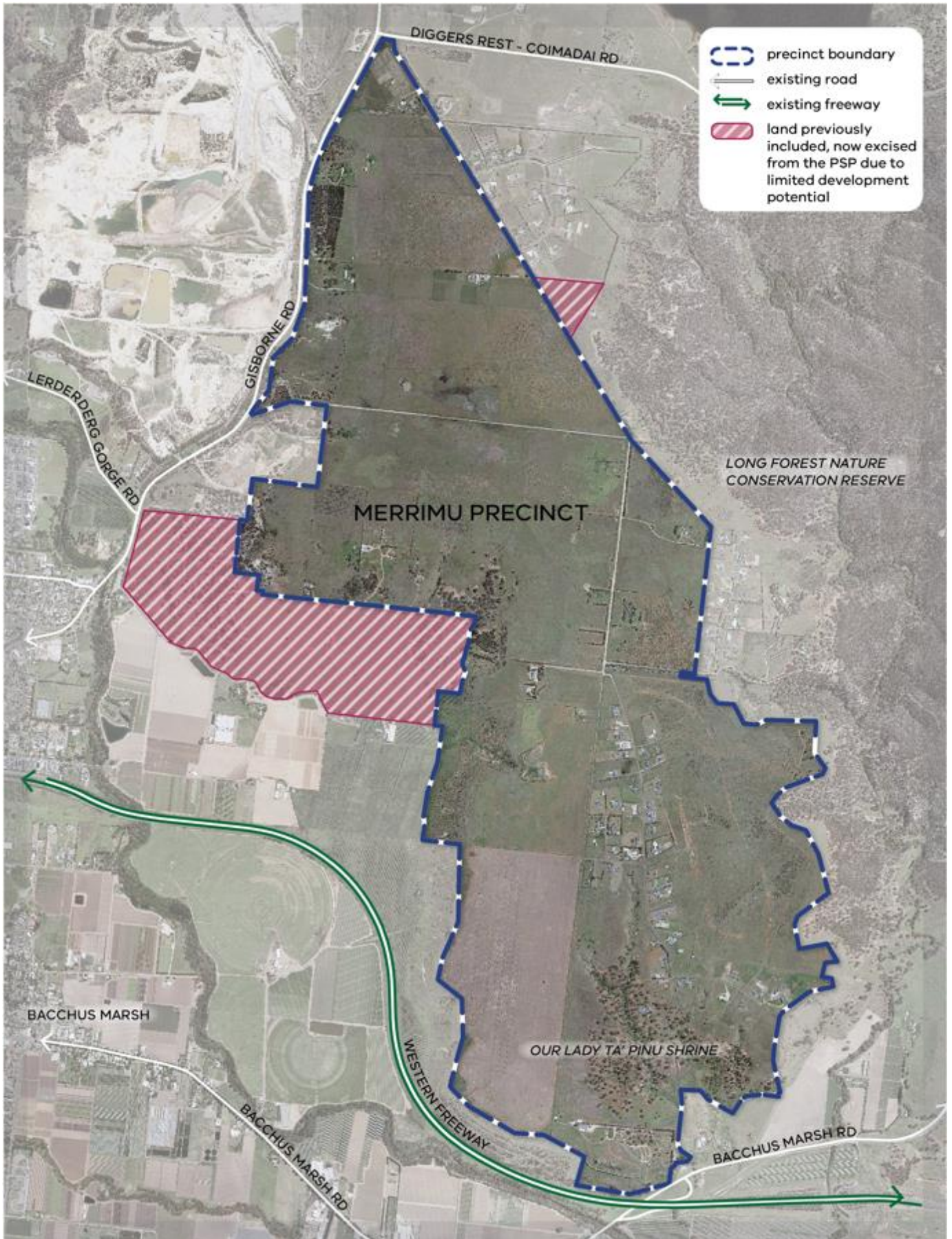
The land is held by three major landowners, with the rezoning proponent controlling 58 hectares. A proposed Planning Scheme Amendment seeks to rezone the precinct from the Farming Zone to the Neighbourhood Residential Zone, supporting a master-planned community which is anticipated to deliver circa 400 dwellings.

Council has resolved to progress Amendment C103moor, with the proposal having undergone public exhibition in 2025. Council requested an Independent Planning Panel, which held hearings

in late 2025. The Panel has since released its report, and Council will determine the next steps based on its recommendations.

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Figure 5 Precinct aerial



### 3.2 Cultural heritage values

The Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the precinct area is the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC).

WWCHAC is the RAP for and on behalf of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung are recognised as the Traditional Custodians of their lands and waters across greater western, northern, and eastern Melbourne. The VPA has consulted with WWCHAC and the Traditional Custodians of the land to help ascertain the important cultural values that signify the precinct.

*We proudly acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community and their rich culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.*

*We recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Custodians to Country and acknowledge their contribution to the care and management of land, water, and resources.*

*We embrace Reconciliation and working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung voices are heard.*

### 3.3 Post-contact cultural heritage

The Merrimu precinct has several post contact heritage sites proximate to the precinct. Symington's Brewery is in the south of the precinct and is included in the Victorian Heritage Inventory, and the Hopetoun Cemetery and former Leahy's Residence, which are located proximate to the precinct's southern boundary, are both identified in the Victorian Heritage Register.

The PSP has planned for the incorporation of these heritage places into the delivery of the precinct and for them to be recognised within, and well-integrated with, subdivision development.

### 3.4 Topography & waterways

The Merrimu and Bacchus Marsh area sits within the Victorian Uplands and Western Volcanic Plain, characterised by basalt plateaus, steep escarpments, woodlands and waterways.

The landscape is defined by the elevated Merrimu plateau and the ecological and cultural values associated with Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve. The topography across the precinct is shown in Figure 6 below.

Landscape features recognised for protection in the Merrimu PSP include:

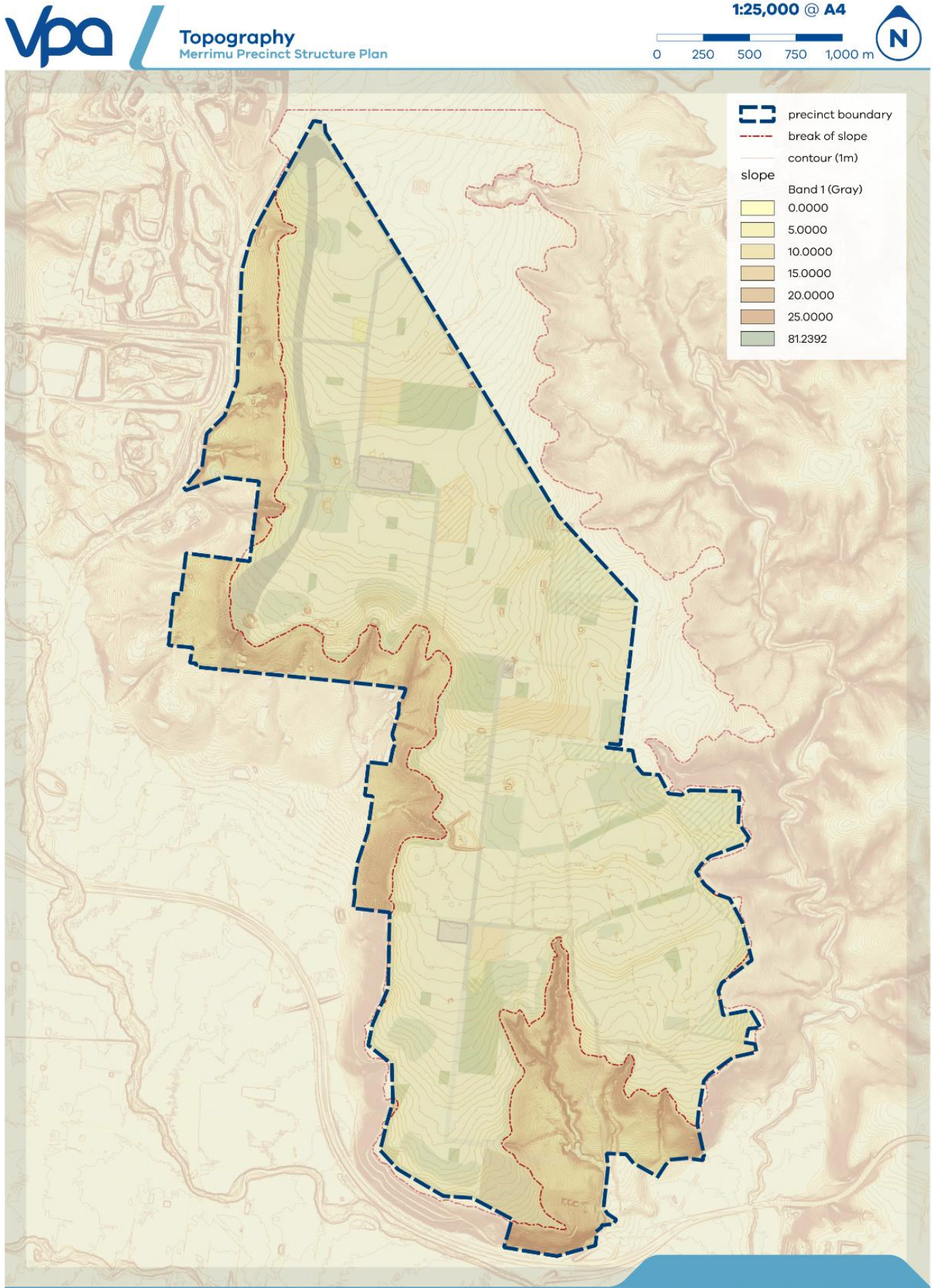
- Escarpments and ridgelines, which include sensitive topography forming the visual edges of Bacchus Marsh, and key view lines from township gateways and transport corridors.
- Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve, which incorporates significant remnant vegetation, biodiversity values and sensitive interfaces with cultural and ecological importance.
- Agricultural valley landscapes including fertile market-garden patterns forming the Bacchus Marsh valley identity.
- Dry stone walls which are remnants of the district's pastoral history and rural landscape pattern.

The Merrimu precinct is primarily located on an elevated flat plateau that is created by a confluence of geological features that include the Bullengarook Flow and the Werribee Formation. There are smaller areas of sloping land in the west and south-east.

There are gullies located on the plateau edge in the south-west and the south, but no permanent water courses exist within the precinct. The area has historically been cleared and used for agricultural purposes.

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Figure 6 Topography



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### 3.5 Flora and Fauna

Most of the precinct is highly modified due to past and current agricultural and farming practices and is dominated by pasture supporting non-indigenous grasses and weeds. Much of the indigenous vegetation and terrestrial fauna habitat remaining within the precinct are confined to escarpments or agricultural areas not subjected to historical cropping activities.

A total of 161 flora species (83 indigenous and 78 non-indigenous or introduced) were recorded within the EHP report during the field assessment. The nationally significant Spiny Rice-flower was recorded during targeted surveys across the Study Area. The State significant Fragrant Saltbush *Rhagodia parabolica*, Melbourne Yellow-gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *connata* and Bacchus Marsh Wattle *Acacia rostriformis* were recorded within the Study Area, with Spiny Rice flower also being listed as State significant. These four species are also listed as Generally Protected Flora under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG Act), with another ten species recorded within the Study Area being listed as Restricted Use Protected Flora under this Act.

Surveys recorded 74 species of fauna, including 65 native species and nine introduced species. Based on habitat condition and the proximity of previous records, there is suitable habitat within the Study Area for 11 nationally significant fauna species, including the nationally significant Golden Sun Moth *Synemon plana* which was confirmed to be present within several properties within the precinct.

Based on past and current mapping, a total of three significant ecological communities were recorded within the Study Area:

- 22.618 hectares of the nationally significant Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain ecological community;
- 26.014 hectares of the State significant Rocky Chenopod Open Scrub ecological community; and
- 70.515 hectares of the State significant Western (Basalt) Plains Grasslands ecological community.

An additional report prepared by Aecom mapped 58 patches of native vegetation totalling 15.35ha, as well as a total of 24 native trees, consisting of Grey Box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* and Bull Mallee *Eucalyptus behriana*. A total of 74.4 ha of suitable habitat for Golden Sun Moth was also mapped.

### 3.6 Water

The existing Bacchus Marsh drinking water is primarily supplied from Merrimu Reservoir with connection to the Greater Melbourne water supply system. Wastewater generated in the existing Bacchus Marsh area is managed by Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plant (RWP), also known as Bacchus Marsh RWP.

Greater Western Water is responsible for funding trunk infrastructure and shared assets. Developers are responsible for providing reticulation assets and temporary reticulation works and the cost to connect the development to the Western Water network. Class A recycled water is not available in Bacchus Marsh.

Interim sewerage supply to the Merrimu Precinct is via an upgrade to the Tipperary sewer pump station. The Bacchus Marsh Recycling Water Plant has sufficient capacity to treat the forecast sewerage generated from Bacchus Marsh area in the short to medium term.

### 3.7 Stormwater drainage

Alluvium Consulting Australia (Alluvium) were engaged by Melbourne Water to undertake a Stormwater and Groundwater investigation within the Merrimu PSP area.

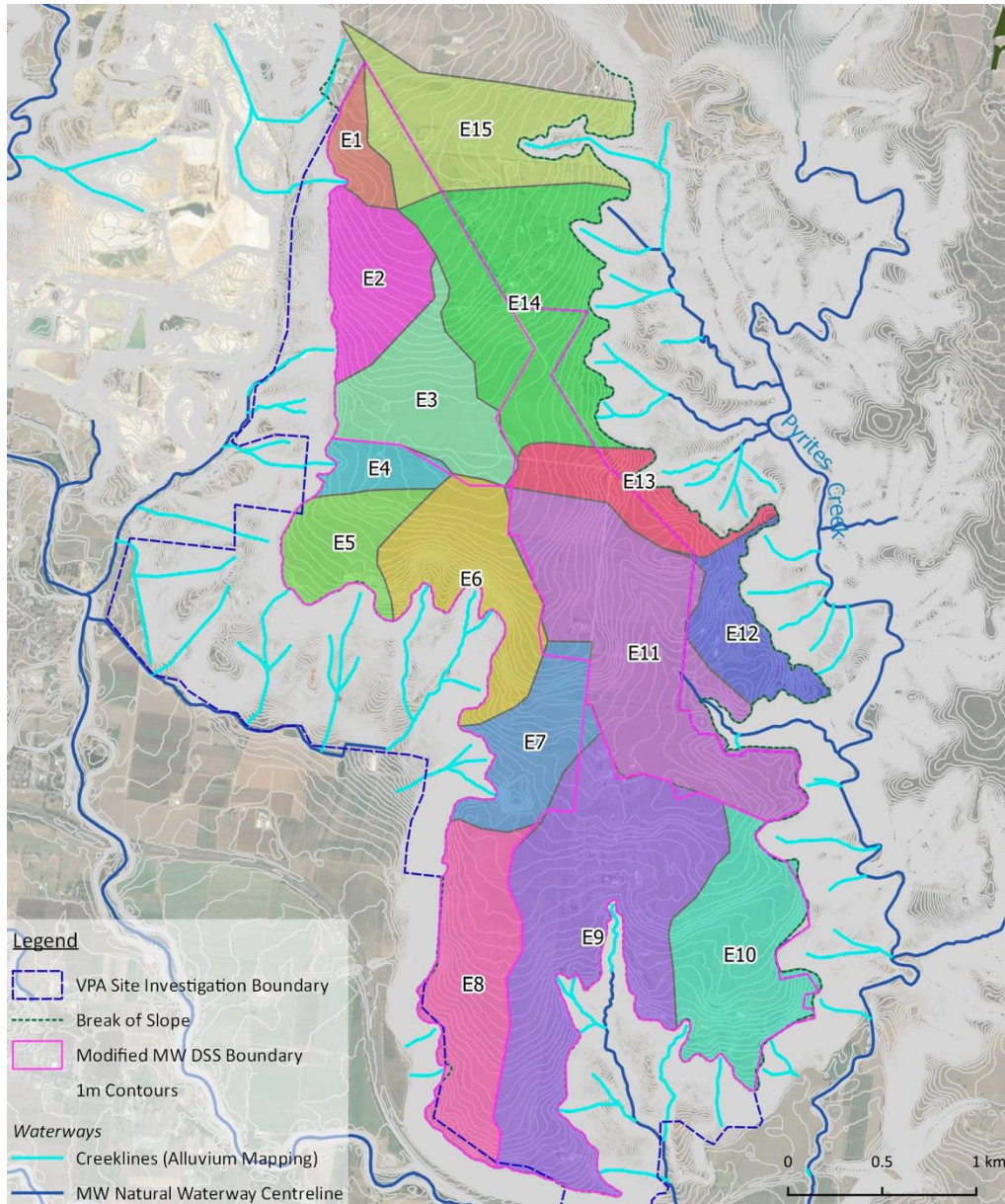
A Bacchus Marsh wide Integrated Water Management (IWM) report was prepared by ARUP. A Merrimu PSP specific IWM has also been prepared by RAIN Consulting.

The Merrimu PSP area and the four proposed drainage schemes encompass the Merrimu plateau, the surrounding escarpment and limited floodplain area to the north of the Werribee River are shown in Figure 7 below.

Melbourne Water has prepared a Development Services Scheme (DSS) for the Merrimu area. The DSS is a plan for the drainage, waterway and water quality treatment works required to provide the most effective and environmentally sound stormwater management to protect river health from changes in storm water runoff from the proposed urban development.

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Figure 7 Existing catchments of mapped tributaries (Alluvium, 2019)



### 3.8 Existing transport network

#### 3.8.1.1. External Road Network

##### **Gisborne Road (Route C704)**

Gisborne Road is a Declared State Arterial (Road Zone – Category 1) which extends 32km between Main Street, Bacchus Marsh and Station Road, Gisborne. To the south of Main Street in Bacchus Marsh, it continues as Grant Street and then Parwan Road/Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road, with Route C704 connecting to Geelong.

In the vicinity of the study area, Gisborne Road is configured with two northbound traffic lanes to allow for overtaking on the ascent, and one southbound traffic lane. The road reservation varies and is predominantly at least 60m wide with a pinch-point at the bridge crossing of the Lerderderg River. The bridge is configured with a 6m wide carriageway carrying one traffic lane in each direction.

The posted speed limit is 80km/h, reducing to 60km/h on the approach to the Bacchus Marsh Township.

### **Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road (C706)**

Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is a Declared State Arterial (Road Zone – Category 1) which extends approximately 25km in an east-west direction between Old Calder Highway in Diggers Rest and Gisborne Road at the northern boundary of the Merrimu Investigation Area.

In the vicinity of the site, Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is configured with one traffic lane in each direction within a 46m road reservation. Between Gisborne Road and Bences Road, the traffic lanes are separated by a narrow raised median. A separate left-turn deceleration lane is provided for traffic entering Bences Road from Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road.

### **Western Freeway (M8)**

The Western Freeway is a Declared State Freeway located to the south of the precinct. The Western Freeway/Highway is the Victorian part of the principal route linking Melbourne and Adelaide and extends between the Western Ring Road and the South Australian border.

In the vicinity of the site, it is configured with a divided carriageway carrying two traffic lanes in each direction separated by a wide median.

A full diamond interchange is provided at Gisborne Road, and freeway off-ramps are provided at Bacchus Marsh Road for vehicles travelling in both directions.

### **Bacchus Marsh Road/Old Western Hwy (C802)**

Bacchus Marsh Road (The Avenue of Honour)/Old Western Highway is a State Arterial Route (C802) which passes through the centre of the Bacchus Marsh Township. The eastern end changes name to High Street and connects to Melton.

Flanagans Drive intersects Old Western Highway immediately east of the eastbound freeway off-ramps. In the vicinity of Flanagans Drive, the arterial Route C802 is configured with a single traffic lane in each direction.

## **3.8.2 Internal/Local Road Network**

### **Buckleys Road**

Buckleys Road is classified as a level "A2" rural road under Council's Register of Public Roads, and is a gravel road which extends approximately 2km in an east-west direction between Bences Road and Gisborne Road. The western end descends steeply downwards towards Gisborne Road.

The existing gravel carriageway varies in width between 4.7m and 7.8m, within a 20m road reservation.

### **Bences Road**

Bences Road is classified as a level "A1" rural road under Council's Register of Public Roads. The road reservation extends approximately 5.7km south from Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road and terminates at the northern boundary of Our Lady Ta Pinu Marian Centre.

The northern 1.5km section is sealed with a 6.8m (approx.) carriageway within a 22m road reservation. The central section of Bences Road is constructed with a 7.3m (approx.) gravel carriageway. South of Flanagans Drive, Bences Road is an unconstructed (paper) road.

### Flanagans Drive

Flanagans Drive is classified as a level "A1" rural road under Council's Register of Public Roads and extends approximately 2.7km north from Bacchus Marsh Road/Old Western Hwy, bending west at its northern end to form an informal link to Bences Road.

Flanagans Drive is configured with a sealed 6.5m (approx.) carriageway within a 20m road reservation.

### O'Connell Road

O'Connell Road is classified as a level "A1" rural road under Council's Register of Public Roads and extends approximately 1.4km north-east then east from Lerderderg Park Road, terminating at a dead-end.

O'Connell Road is currently configured with a varying width gravel carriageway, with some sections insufficient for two-way traffic, within a 20m road reservation. The south-western end has significant vegetation within the road reserve.

### Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR)

In 2025 Transport Victoria identified a preferred alignment for a future Eastern Link Road to divert heavy vehicle traffic out of the centre of Bacchus Marsh, as shown in [Figure 9](#) **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

The BMELR passes through the Merrimu PSP area. The alignment is still subject to a planning approval process, and the land has not yet been reserved in a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO).

A preferred alignment has been identified for the BMELR. There are currently no funding or timing commitments for the project, so the PSP needs to protect the preferred corridor. Transport modelling to inform the PSP has been undertaken based on scenarios both with and without the BMELR to future proof the precinct.

### Public Transport

There are no existing public transport services within the precinct or along the arterial road frontages. The PSP proposes developer-funded interim bus services.

Bacchus Marsh has a railway station located at the southern end of the Bacchus Marsh Township which connects to Melbourne and Ballarat via V/Line services.

There are three connecting bus services which currently serve Bacchus Marsh, as follows:

- Route 433 connects between the town centre and the Hillview Estate via the railway station,
- Route 434 connects between the railway station and Telford Park via the town centre, and
- Route 435 connects between the railway station and Darley via the town centre.

### Active Transport

The Principal Pedestrian Network Strategy developed by Moorabool Shire Council identifies key pedestrian corridors across the municipality and the precinct area to support walking as a primary mode of local transport. It prioritises routes that link residential areas to key destinations such as schools, shops, parks, and public transport stops.

There is no Principal Pedestrian Network within the Merrimu Investigation Area or along the arterial road frontages, however Bences Road and Flanagans Drive have been identified as the "Long Forest Proposed Hike and Bike Network" in the Moorabool Hike and Bike Strategy (Moorabool Shire Council, 2014) shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 8 Locality map with transport connections (Traffix Group, 2025)

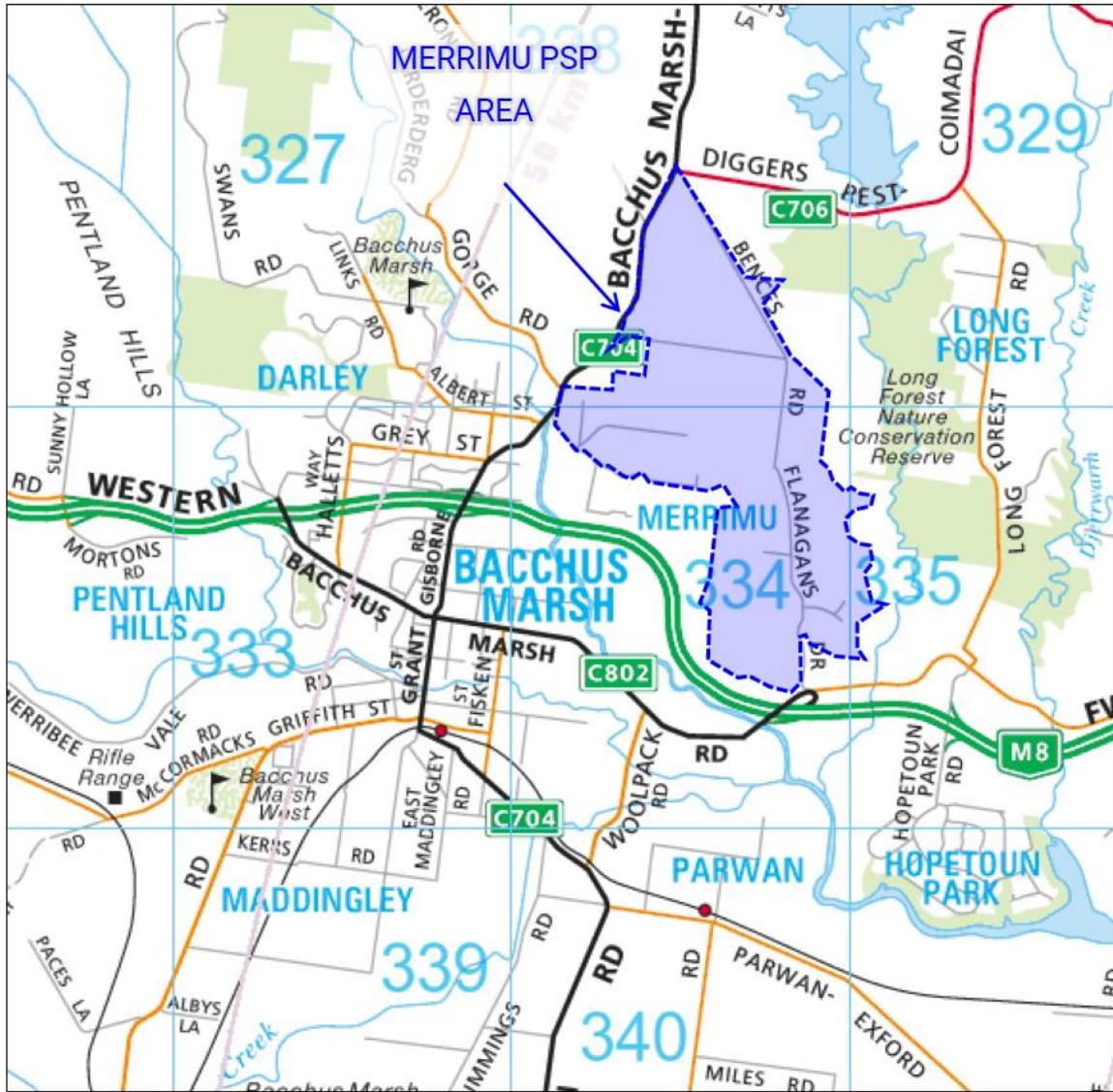


Figure 9 BMELR Preferred Alignment (RRV 2023)

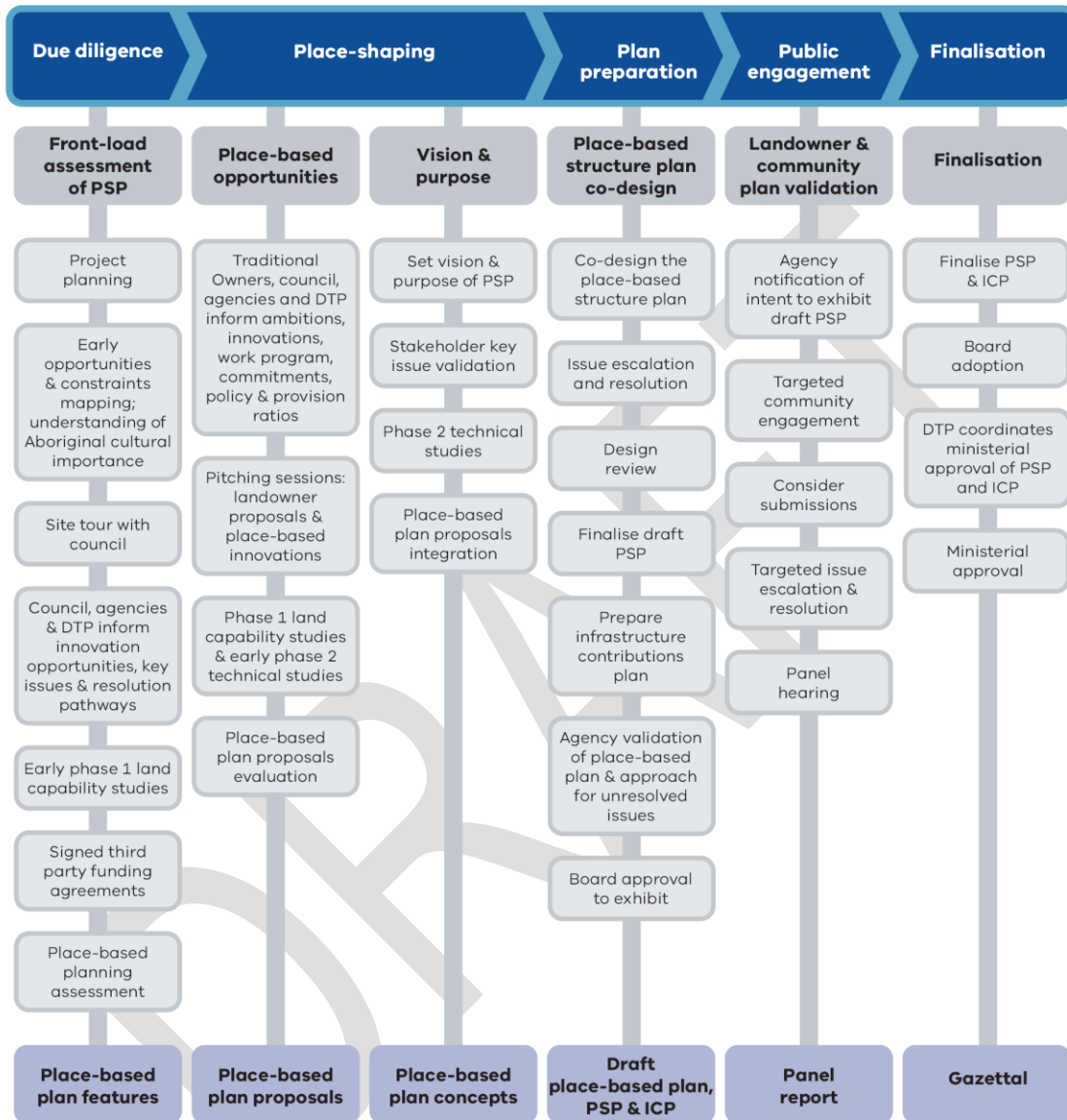




## 4 MERRIMU PSP PREPARATION

This section provides an overview of the PSP process for preparation of the Merrimu PSP, including details of the background reports undertaken to inform the PSP. Merrimu PSP was prepared in line with the PSP 2.0 process as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11 PSP 2.0 process



### 4.1 Boundary changes

The Merrimu PSP area was identified as the Merrimu Growth Precinct, a Strategic Outcome Area in the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework (2018).

In February 2026 the PSP boundary was reduced by approximately 100ha to reflect the limited development potential of the areas south of the escarpment adjoining O’Connells Road and Wells Road. Any intensification of development in these areas would necessitate a costly upgrade to the existing Lerderderg Park Road and Gisborne Road intersection that would not be cost effective for this development to pay for. In addition – it was deemed unfeasible from a cost perspective to extend O’Connells Road up the escarpment and into the rest of the precinct – meaning that these areas were effectively isolated from the rest of the precinct, with limited access to key local infrastructure and services. As a result – it was felt that they were better suited to remaining in their current form.

Similarly – the triangle of land north east of Bences Road was excised from the precinct to maintain a standard precinct boundary and prevent isolated development from occurring on the eastern side of Bences Road. These changes are shown on the precinct aerial on Figure 5 above.

## 4.2 Vision & purpose for Merrimu PSP

### PSP vision

The Merrimu PSP will be a vibrant, diverse community that celebrates housing diversity, open space, connectivity, and the environment. It will plan for approximately around 24,000 people in 8000 homes, 1800 jobs and will provide housing typologies and mixed-use activity centres within the precinct. Space has been allocated for four schools across the precinct – one non-government K-9 school, two public primary schools, and one public secondary school. The Precinct will also respond to its existing and surrounding character and will celebrate its cultural and historical heritage.

The Merrimu Precinct will build on the established identity of Bacchus Marsh as a town rich in open landscapes, cultural heritage, and food production. 3453% of the area has been reserved for open space, conservation, and landscape preservation, maintaining its rural character.

The western escarpment offers potential for a continuous linear parkland corridor, serving as a strategic active transport link and recreation trail. In homage to the area's agricultural history, the opportunity for community gardens, productive landscapes, and a central urban farm have been identified and provided for within the Precinct. The PSP also emphasises the protection and celebration of cultural and historical heritage, with specific objectives, requirements, and guidelines embedded throughout the PSP.

Consideration has been given to viable densities across the Merrimu PSP. The expected future population will be supported by dwellings across the spectrum of housing typologies. From spacious residential neighbourhoods to compact modern town environments, the Merrimu Precinct has been designed to cater for a diverse community. More compact urban neighbourhoods will centre around one of three mixed-use activity centres and be designed to maximise street character and activation. Dwellings located on the sloping land in the south-west and south-east will respond to unique landscape values, aspect, and topography.

One of the eight hallmarks of the Merrimu PSP is to be safe, accessible, and well connected. A network of walkable neighbourhoods will leverage planned infrastructure, including a connection to Gisborne Road (and the planned Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR)), and will be supported by a series of local connector roads that can accommodate high frequency public transport. High amenity and walkable streets and trails will encourage people to cycle and walk to key local destinations. The PSP incorporates the alignment for the future BMELR – a new north-south arterial road that is planned to divert heavy and through traffic away from the Bacchus Marsh town centre and to help accommodate traffic generation from future development.

Merrimu will be home to resilient communities with early access to a range of facilities, including health care, education, recreation, and community infrastructure. These will be focussed within three mixed-use activity centres to maximise walkability and achieve best practice 20-minute neighbourhood outcomes. The larger centre in the north will provide a range of hybrid workspaces comprising commercial office space and co-work facilities. A smaller activity centre in the south and a Local Activity Centre in the central area will ensure all residents are within a walkable catchment of key services.

A significant network of activated open spaces and linear parks will respond to the precinct's unique landscape setting and connect diverse neighbourhoods within the precinct. Two new community centres, two three new sports reserves, and 298 new local parks and urban spaces

will ensure strong community connectivity and access to open space, encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Environment and sustainability are at the heart of the Merrimu PSP. Tree canopy targets, solar orientation, conservation areas, and integrated water management solutions each contribute to a greener Merrimu. Innovative street designs strive to improve canopy coverage, reducing heat island effect, thereby enhancing amenity. Ecologically significant parts of the landscape will be revived and enhanced through the retention of the significant Spiny Rice Flower and rehabilitation and preservation of other threatened species located within extant native vegetation. The construction of wetlands and water retention facilities provides high amenity open spaces and ensures adequate flood protection and water quality.

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## PSP purpose

The purpose of the PSP is to embed the vision for the Merrimu Precinct through the preparation of an orderly and integrated place based spatial plan.

- The PSP aims to deliver:
  - A unique and contextually appropriate urban environment that responds to its surrounding landscape character, topography and environmental constraints.
  - Diverse housing types to meet a range of affordability needs.
  - A network of safe, walkable neighbourhoods connected by a comprehensive and attractive street and path network.
  - Well located activity centres, community facilities and public spaces that provide convenient access to everyday economic and social needs and services.
  - A network of local parks, parkland and conservation areas that support a healthy and thriving local community and environment.
  - The timely delivery of integrated transport options, including public and active transport.
  - Development of an integrated stormwater and erosion control approach that responds to the site's soil constraints.
  - Incorporation of significant areas of vegetation and biodiversity into the future urban landscape and open space network and enhance connectivity to existing and proposed green spaces.
  - Integration with existing developed areas of Bacchus Marsh and provide community facilities and open spaces that complement and enhance the region.

The purpose of the PSP is to activate these outcomes by:

- Providing the planning conditions for private industry delivery.
- Identifying and, where appropriate, providing the shared funding for a diverse range of open spaces and community infrastructure.
- Ensuring planning permit applications will generate the necessary population to support investment in critical infrastructure.

## 4.3 Co-design workshop

The VPA in collaboration with Moorabool Shire Council held a co-design workshop in July 2022 to inform the preparation of the Merrimu PSP, as part of the PSP 2.0 process. The workshop brought together approximately 85 participants, including landowners, government agencies, technical consultants, and key stakeholders. The workshop was facilitated by consultants Ricardo Australia.

The purpose of the co-design workshop was to provide an opportunity for creative collaboration between stakeholders including landowners, state government agencies, local government and the VPA to:

- Review, discuss and validate the draft Merrimu place-based plan.
- Receive genuine feedback and test levels of support for the draft plan.
- Capture innovative ideas to shape and inform the PSP.
- Build partnerships to achieve the PSP vision and purpose.
- Involve stakeholders in the PSP process and work through competing agendas.

Workshop participants completed a series of collaborative exercises to validate precinct elements, identify issues and opportunities, and test ideas for the future structure of the precinct. The engagement centred on four core themes that shaped the emerging Place Based Plan:

**Theme 1 – Access and Movement:** Focus on the role of the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR), internal road hierarchy, active transport connections, and managing steep escarpment interfaces. **Activity Centres and Employment:** Consideration of the future local town centre location, its relationship to ridgelines and views, and links to the Parwan Employment Precinct.

**Theme 2 – Community Facilities and Schools:** Identification of suitable co-located facilities, walkable catchments, and opportunities for early delivery to support a new standalone community.

**Theme 3 – Open Space, Landscape and Cultural Heritage:** Protection of escarpments, Long Forest Reserve interface, biodiversity values, landscape character, and culturally sensitive areas

**Theme 4 – Sustainability and Environmental Response:** Integrated water management, bushfire considerations, sodic soil constraints, and the need to embed climate responsive design principles.

## 4.4 Preparation of background reports and technical studies

The background reports and technical studies are integral to the preparation of the Merrimu PSP to inform and support the elements and future urban structure of the precinct. A summary of the reports can be found at Appendix A and the full reports are available on the Merrimu PSP website at <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/project/merrimu/>.

Some of the technical reports were prepared to cover the Merrimu, Parwan Station PSP and Parwan Employment Precinct precincts.

Some reports are still in draft or under preparation. As discussed in Section 1.5, a progressive certainty approach is being applied in these circumstances, and the VPA will continue to work on the finalisation of these reports. For transport matters where progressive certainty is being applied, the sections below include consideration of the emerging questions and opportunities.

To facilitate the timely delivery of the precinct structure plan and to avoid duplication, the VPA is utilising some technical reports commissioned by Bacchus Marsh Developments Pty Ltd/Stamoulis Property Group, the largest landowner within the Merrimu precinct, as well as some technical work undertaken by other parties. These technical reports are subject to VPA quality assurance and oversight from the VPA, Council and relevant Government authorities.

The final outcomes shown in the PSP may differ to the specific recommendations contained in a particular technical report, as the PSP also responds to feedback received from agencies during the Agency Validation phase of the project.

## 4.5 Plan preparation and agency validation

Following the preparation of final supporting documentation and reports in early 2025, VPA commenced Agency Validation with all key stakeholders. This process was coordinated through December 2025 and a draft version of the PSP was circulated to key agencies.

During this process, VPA held regular discussion with Moorabool Shire Council and agencies, including Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Melbourne Water and the Department of

Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to resolve key issues and refine the draft amendment package ahead of public consultation.

Table 2 Summary of Background Reports

Technical Report	Consultant	Status
Golden Sun Moth and Striped Legless Lizard Surveys	EHP	Completed 2018
Ecological Assessment Flora	EHP	Completed 2018
Ecological Assessment for State Significant Value	EHP	Completed 2019
Ecological Values Areas 1–6	EHP	Completed 2020
Existing Ecological Conditions	EHP	Completed 2021
Consolidated Existing Ecology Conditions Report	EHP	Draft 2025
Bacchus Marsh Retail and Economic Assessment	HillPDA	Completed 2023
Merrimu Retail and Economic Assessment	GapMaps	Completed 2025
Additional Geotechnical Investigation – Soil Sodicity & Dispersiveness Assessment	Coffey	Completed 2020
Sodic–Dispersive Soils Peer Review & Assessment	WSP	Completed 2023
Sodic Soil Extensive Analysis, Methodology & Peer Review	Streamology	Completed 2024
Merrimu & Parwan Precinct – Preliminary Tree Assessment (Part 1–3)	Homewood	Completed 2022
Bushfire Assessment & Development Report	Southern Cross	Completed 2021
Bushfire Addendum	Southern Cross	Completed 2024
Integrated Water Management Strategy	Rain Consulting	Completed 2025
Integrated Water Management	ARUP	Completed 2025
Aboriginal & Historical Heritage Assessment – Bacchus Marsh UGF	EHP	Completed
Desktop Aboriginal & Historical Heritage Assessment (Gap Study)	EHP	Completed
Aboriginal & Historical Heritage Assessment – Additional Areas 1–4	EHP	Completed
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (ACHIA)	EHP	Draft 2025
Drystone Wall Assessment	EHP	Completed 2025
Cultural Values Assessment	WWCHAC	Completed 2025
High-Level Utility Servicing & Infrastructure Assessment	Creo	Completed 2023
Land Capability Assessment	Jacobs	Completed 2018
Addendum to Land Capability Assessment	Jacobs	Completed 2020
Land Capability Assessment Desktop Review	Arcadis	Completed 2025
Landscape & Visual Character Assessment	Tract	Completed 2025
Landscape & Visual Character Assessment	Hansen	Completed 2025
Transport Impact Assessment Report	Traffix	Draft 2024
Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment	ASR	Completed 2024
Open Space Strategy	Ethos Urban	Completed 2022
Evaluation of Separation Distance	ERM	Completed 2020

Acoustic Report	Marshall Day	Completed 2023
Native Vegetation Precinct Plan	WSP	Completed 2026
Economic & Social Benefits Assessment	Ethos Urban	Completed 2025
Social & Affordable Housing Study	UrbanXchange	Completed 2023
PSP Placemaking Vision Document	Hoyne	Completed 2022
Land Valuations & Acquisition Assessment	M3	Completed 2025
Strategic Transport Modelling Report	Clarity	Draft 2026

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## 5 PSP OUTCOMES AND VPA POSITION

This section describes how the VPA has provided a place-based response to the features and performance targets within the Merrimu PSP and therefore follows the PSP and PSP Guidelines structure. Some of the PSP Guideline targets have been re-ordered within the PSP for simplicity.

### 5.1 Target summary and adaptation

The PSP Guidelines identifies 20 performance targets to deliver improved outcomes and achieve the hallmarks. The Guidelines acknowledge the diversity of new communities, particularly in regional Victoria and state:

*While the Guidelines maintains a focus on preparing PSPs in Melbourne's new communities, PSPs will also be prepared across regional Victoria's growing cities and towns. While a more nuanced approach to the application of the Guidelines in these areas is required, the same principles, features and targets should be considered in the regional context, particularly where larger growth areas are proposed.*

The Regional PSP Guidelines provides guidance to the planning authority when applying the PSP Guidelines allowing for adaptations to performance targets in a way that supports the existing character and values of townships, while meeting the needs of future communities. Regional adaptation means that not all PSPs will achieve 100% of the performance targets and therefore justification is required for adapting a target. It should be noted that many of these targets are already mandated through the Victorian Planning Provisions, meaning they are already requirements of the planning permit process.

The Guidelines have set out which targets must be met and those which can be varied depending on the status of the target in the context of the Merrimu PSP. There are several targets that are proposed to be varied for the precinct. Reasons for why these have been varied are noted in relevant sections of the report.

### 5.2 Viable Densities

*To deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable.*

#### 5.2.1 Housing density

##### **PSP Performance targets summary**

- 
- T1 The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 30 dwellings or more per Net Developable Hectare (NDHA) within:**
- 400m walkable catchment of an activity centre or train station
  - 50m of open space (both credited and encumbered open space), boulevards and major public transport routes, including but not limited to the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN) or similar.

**Option for regional adaptation?** Adapted  
**Performance:** Place based response

- 
- T2 The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 20 dwellings or more per NDHA across the entire PSP area.**

**Option for regional adaptation?** Adapted  
**Performance:** Achieved/Place based response

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**T3 The PSP should facilitate increased housing diversity, with at least three distinct housing typologies to be included in higher density areas (defined by T1).**

Target achievable

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**T4 Set a minimum target for provision of affordable housing in accordance with affordable housing policy, evidence, and guidance.**

Target achievable

### Planning assessment

Section 3.1 of the PSP relates to the Guidelines hallmark 'Viable Densities'. The stated purpose of the hallmark is "to deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable". Three key features are identified as essential, to be delivered by the PSP:

- F1. Housing diversity
- F3. Affordable housing options
- F4. Safe streets and space

The delivery of these features and corresponding targets in the context of the Merrimu PSP is assessed below.

### Proposed adapted targets

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**T1 The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 30 dwellings or more per Net Developable Hectare (NDHA) within:**

- 400m walkable catchment of an activity centre or train station
- 50m of open space (both credited and encumbered open space), boulevards and major public transport routes, including but not limited to the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN) or similar.

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**Adapted Target:** The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 25 dwellings or more per Net Developable Hectare (NDHA) within:

- 400m walkable catchment of an activity centre or train station
- 50m of open space (both credited and encumbered open space), boulevards and major public transport routes, including but not limited to the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN) or similar.

---

**T2 The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 20 dwellings or more per NDHA across the entire PSP area.**

**Adapted Target:** The PSP should facilitate increased densities with an average of 19 dwellings or more per NDHA across the entire PSP area

## 5.2.2 Housing diversity

*Diversity of housing, including lot size and built form, to meet community needs, increased housing densities and integrated housing located close to existing and/or proposed services, transport and jobs.*

### PSP Performance Target

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**T3 The PSP should facilitate increased housing diversity, with at least three distinct housing typologies to be included in higher density areas (defined by T1).**

## Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

### **T3 Target achievable**

#### **Planning assessment**

The PSP appropriately delivers the PSP Guidelines' feature of 'housing diversity.'

The PSP includes three types of residential catchments. These include the activity centre catchment within 400 metres of the local town centre, an amenity area catchment within 50 metres of areas with higher amenity such as public open space, and the balance area.

The preferred residential type differs within the three catchments to facilitate diverse housing options and create unique character within the precinct itself. The built form types encouraged in the three precincts is summarised below:

The PSP includes Table 1 Housing Density and Diversity which specifies the target typologies that are expected within the development areas.

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'housing diversity' as being "diversity of housing, including lot size and built form, to meet community needs, increased housing densities and integrated housing located close to existing and/or proposed services, transport and jobs."

The relevant performance targets are T3 and T4 which specify an overall development density of 20 dwellings per net developable hectare (NDHa) across the PSP in metro areas, and 30 dwellings per NDHa proximate to local centres. T3 provides for at least 3 distinct housing typologies to be delivered in higher density areas. Overall densities for non-metro PSP's are to be developed to suit the local context.

PSP Plan 3 – Housing identifies three distinct housing catchments: town centre, amenity area and balance area. Each catchment applies a tailored density setting and associated typology mix consistent with its intended function and broader urban structure.

Town centre areas are required to deliver an average density of 30 dwellings per NDHa, with development characterised by activated ground floors and residential forms appropriate to a mixed-use environment. To support diversity, at least two housing typologies should be provided, including shop-top apartments, strata-title apartments and integrated mixed-use developments of 2 or more storeys.

Amenity areas provide a transition between the town centre and surrounding residential (balance) areas, and are designated a density of 25 dwellings per NDHa. Development will comprise a mix of medium-density forms, ranging from conventional dwellings to low-rise apartments. Planning applications must demonstrate delivery of at least three distinct housing typologies, including townhouses, small-lot products, semi-detached dwellings and 2–3 storey apartment forms.

Balance areas apply the lowest density, at 15 dwellings per NDHa, and are characterised by traditional detached dwellings with generous setbacks, tree-lined streets and opportunities for gentle density. Supported typologies include detached dwellings, small lot products and semi-detached homes that maintain established suburban character.

The planned density of development in amenity areas is approximately 25 dw per NDHa, which is consistent with the outcomes sought by T1. The overall development density across the precinct is 19 dw per NDHa, which is slightly lower than the outcomes specified by T2 in terms of the Regional-

specific adaptations outlined in Section 5.1 but responds to the place specific context of the precinct.

**CATCHMENT: Town centre**

Facilitate walkable neighbourhoods, activate and promote surveillance and activity within the centre.

**TARGET TYPOLOGIES:**

To support delivery of diverse housing outcomes in balance areas, the PSP and applicable planning applications should enable opportunities to deliver at least two (2) different housing typologies. The mix of dwelling typologies should include, but is not limited to:

- Shop top apartments (2+ storeys)
- Owners' corporation/strata title apartments (2+ storeys)
- Integrated developments (2+ storeys)

**CATCHMENT: Amenity area**

Encourage higher density at areas that provide local amenity such as open spaces and community facilities.

**TARGET TYPOLOGIES:**

To support delivery of diverse housing outcomes in amenity areas, applicable planning applications should enable opportunities to deliver at least three (3) different housing typologies. The mix of dwelling typologies should include, but is not limited to:

- Conventional front-loaded house and land (1-2 storeys)
- Small lot front-loaded duplex (1-2 storeys)
- Semi-detached house and land (1-2 storeys)
- Small lot front/rear-loaded townhouse (1-3 storeys)
- Low-rise apartments (2-3 storeys)

**CATCHMENT: Balance area – standard density residential**

Applies to land located outside of the nominated amenity areas.

- Conventional front-loaded detached dwellings (1-2 storeys)
- Semi-detached or duplex dwellings (1-2 storeys)
- Small lot detached dwellings (1-2 storeys)

Retirement villages, residential aged care facilities, disability and special needs housing could be potentially included within the Merrimu PSP future land uses via private development.

**VPA position**

The Merrimu PSP precinct will facilitate the delivery of at least three different housing typologies within the residential development areas of the precinct.

The implementation of this will be achieved by subdivision with varied lot size, use of the Small Lot Housing Code which is also to be incorporated into the Scheme and, subsequent permits which may be issued.

The PSP appropriately delivers the PSP Guidelines' feature of 'housing diversity.'

### 5.2.3 Affordable housing options

*Affordable housing options – including social housing – that provide choices for very low, low and moderate-income households.*

#### PSP Performance Target

- 
- T4 Set a minimum target for provision of affordable housing in accordance with affordable housing policy, evidence, and guidance.**

#### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

- T4 Target achievable**

#### Planning assessment

The VPA undertook an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment to evaluate the likely demand for social and affordable housing within the East of Aberline Precinct. This work was completed by the VPA and informed the policy response in the PSP. Affordable housing is defined in accordance with Section 3AA of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, as housing that is appropriate for very low- to low- income households, based on household income levels and housing costs.

The VPA utilised the Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Model (the model), prepared by SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) for the VPA., which updated the Affordable Housing Needs Assessment prepared by BMDA and Urban Xchange based on subsequent changes to the PSP and dwelling yield. The model brings together a range of inputs relating to future statewide demand for affordable housing and makes recommendations as to how this demand could be distributed at a more localised level. The model takes as its starting point the statewide projected demand for affordable housing from Victoria in Future (VIF).

The demand assessment model suggests a 2% affordable housing target and a 10% social housing target across the precinct with a high proportion of 1-bedroom dwellings.

The PSP acknowledges the findings of the Affordable and Social Housing Demand Assessment, which identifies a combined demand for 12% of total dwellings as affordable (2%) and social (10%) housing, with a significant emphasis on 1-bedroom dwellings.

The housing strategy developed through precinct planning responds to this by:

- Objectives, requirements and guidelines in the PSP section 3.1 Viable densities seek to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in short-term developments or on large subdivision sites, ensuring a coordinated approach to provision.
- Table 3 of the PSP provides a clear policy guidance, setting a 2% affordable housing target and a 10% social housing target across the precinct. These targets reflect the findings of the Affordable and Social Housing Demand Assessment and aim to support housing diversity, inclusiveness, and access to secure housing options within the growing community.
- Allocating 7 hectares of land as a designated town centre area and 158 hectares of land as designated amenity areas to accommodate diverse housing types, including smaller dwellings suited to affordable and social housing.
- Supporting delivery of 12% affordable housing precinct-wide, consistent with the VPA example modelling, through targeted medium-density formats such as units, duplexes, and townhouses.

- Prioritising the location of housing choice areas near services, public transport and community infrastructure to support suitability and cost efficiency for lower-income households.
- Delivering a 1-bedroom dwelling mix of up to 61% within the affordable housing component in line with assessed demand, while maintaining a balanced supply of 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom options.

The PSP approach offers sufficient flexibility to accommodate potential partnerships with registered housing agencies and reflects staged delivery aligned with land values and infrastructure provision.

The VPA sought the landowner agreement to mandate the affordable housing target. This was unsuccessful.

### VPA position

The PSP appropriately plans for and promotes provision of affordable housing consistent with the PSP Guidelines.

The VPA has set a guideline within the PSP to achieve a 12% per cent target for social and affordable housing within the Merrimu PSP, in line with Moorabool Shire Council's current strategy and action plan.

## 5.3 Safe, accessible, and well-connected

### 5.3.1 Safe streets and spaces

*Be safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport.*

#### PSP Performance Targets

---

**T5 The arterial road network should provide a 1.6km road grid with safe and efficient connections, adjusted where necessary to reflect local context.**

Target achievable

---

**T6 Off-road bicycle paths should be provided on all connector streets and arterial roads, connecting where possible with the Principal Bicycle Network and Strategic Cycling Corridors.**

Target achievable

---

**T7 All streets should have footpaths on both sides of the reservation.**

Target achievable

---

**T8 Pedestrian and cyclist crossings should be provided every 400–800m, where appropriate, along arterial roads, rail lines, waterways, and any other accessibility barriers.**

Target achievable

---

**T9 95% of dwellings should be located within either of the following walking distances:**

- 800m to a train station
- 600m to a tram stop or
- 400m to a future bus route or bus capable road

**Option for regional adaptation?** Adapted

**Performance:**

Place based response

**Planning assessment**

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'safe and secure streets' as *"diverse streetscapes and neighbourhoods that support the type of density and housing preferred in the local area."*

There are no specific targets that are applicable to this feature, however, the Guidelines note that the PSP should consider variations to urban form and the scale and composition of streets to support diverse housing and increased densities.

**VPA position**

Merrimu will provide a permeable road network for both car access throughout, and a safe network for alternative modes of transport to promote cycling and walking, instilling both cycling and shared paths throughout the precinct through connector and arterial roads and linear open space. Truck access to the local activity centre will be facilitated through the connector network and future arterial route.

The PSP proposes the following place-based response to this feature:

- The PSP includes a full suite of plans and diagrams to depict the preferred future urban structure, including a Place Based Plan (Plan 3), a Housing Plan (Plan 4), and a Movement Network Plan (Plan 5) that shows the proposed layout of major street connections, location of future parks and open spaces, and distribution of residential density.
- The PSP includes a range of requirements and guidelines relating to the design and delivery of streets, opens spaces, and housing that are consistent with the PSP features articulated in the Guidelines.
- The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of 'safe streets and spaces'.
- The PSP delivers 82% of dwellings within 400m to a future bus route or bus capable road

Whilst the Head, TfV has been consulted on road network and cross sections, further work is required to ensure that the road network and cross sections are finalised to the satisfaction of the Head, TfV and the VPA, prior to finalisation of the PSP.

**5.3.2 Movement and place**

*A transport network that balances the role of the movement of goods, people and places, and that is safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport.*

**PSP Performance Target**

- 
- T5 The arterial road network should provide a 1.6km road grid with safe and efficient connections, adjusted where necessary to reflect local context.**

**Regional PSP Guidelines**

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

- T5** Target achievable

**Planning assessment**

The VPA has undertaken a strategic transport modelling and integrated transport assessment to understand and validate the future road network within the Merrimu precinct. The assessment

explored connectivity within the precinct and to its surrounding contexts, whilst also examining pedestrian and cycling movement networks.

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'movement and place' as being "A transport network that balances the role of the movement of goods, people and places."

The relevant performance target for this feature is T5, which specifies that a PSP should provide a 1.6km road grid with safe and efficient connections, adjusted to reflect local context.

As shown on the Place Based Plan (Plan 3) and the Movement Network Plan (Plan 5) The PSP proposes to establish a local road network comprised of a combination of new connections and upgrades to existing roads, which includes:

- Buckley's Road – improvement to connector Street in the west and boulevard connector in the east
- Bences Road – improvement to connector Street in the north
- New north south connector street network throughout the precinct
- Lindsay Avenue – improvement to connector street
- Flanagan's Drive - improvement to connector street in the north and secondary arterial road (local) in the south

The local network of connector streets will provide primarily for local movements. The proposed connector street network complements the wider arterial network and is also shown on the Place Based Plan and Movement Network Plan.

In considering the appropriateness of the proposed road network, Clarity Consulting have undertaken a Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment, and Traffix Group have prepared an Integrated Transport Assessment. Both the Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment and Integrated Transport Assessment are still in draft, as further updates are required to finalise the reports to the satisfaction of the Head, Transport for Victoria (Head, TfV), and potentially in response to submissions from other parties.

A further summary of these reports and their findings are contained in Appendix A, with the key findings being:

- The proposed local road network will provide an appropriate level of strategic transport connectivity, both within the precinct and at key points of integration with adjoining areas, and wider regional network. This is consistent with T5 of the Guidelines.
- Additional work is required to adequately assess the impacts of traffic generation from full build out of the Merrimu PSP on the internal road network and external road network in the immediate vicinity of the PSP to ensure the safety and efficiency of the wider road network is maintained. As discussed in Section 1.5, a progressive certainty approach is being applied, and further work will continue to be undertaken into this.

In addition to these findings, the PSP also proposes the following place-based provisions in response to the feature:

- Objectives 6 and 7 relate to providing a transport network that is well integrated with adjoining areas and connected to key destinations. The objectives are proposed to be implemented by Requirement 5 and 13, and Guidelines 10-12 which relate to the design of subdivisions and the street network.

## VPA position

The VPA has ensured that the road network provides for safe and efficient connections. The PSP provides an outcome that responds to the current movement networks of the surrounding context, whilst integrating a future transport network based on equitable and efficient access to key destinations both within and outside the precinct boundaries.

### 5.3.3 Walkability and safe cycling networks

*A high amenity, safe, accessible, direct and comfortable walking and cycling environment.*

#### PSP Performance Targets

- T6** Off-road bicycle paths should be provided on all connector streets and arterial roads, connecting where possible with the Principal Bicycle Network and Strategic Cycling Corridors.
- T7** All streets should have footpaths on both sides of the reservation.
- T8** Pedestrian and cyclist crossings should be provided every 400-800m, where appropriate, along arterial roads, rail lines, waterways, and any other accessibility barriers.

#### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

- T6-8** Target achievable

#### Planning assessment

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'walkability and safe cycling networks' as being "a high amenity, safe, accessible, direct and comfortable walking and cycling environment."

The relevant performance targets for this feature are T6-8 inclusive. T6 and T7 specify that, where possible, the arterial and connector street network should provide walking and off-road cycling paths that connect with the Principal Cycle Network and Strategic Cycling Corridors. T8 specifies pedestrian and cycle crossings should be provided at 400-800m intervals along potential barriers to accessibility such as arterial roads and waterways.

The PSP proposes the following place-based response to this feature:

- Plan 5 Movement shows the proposed location and alignment of future on and off-road shared paths that follow the arterial road and connector street networks, as well as dedicated off road paths along the escapement locations and the future BMELR alignment.
- The proposed active transport network is designed to provide complete coverage within the precinct and provide safe and efficient links back to Bacchus Marsh.
- Indicative cross sections for the street network are provided in Appendix 4 of the PSP, which show how the on and off-road shared user paths and footpaths are to be provided. This is consistent with T6 and T7 of the Guidelines.
- The Movement Plan also shows the location of proposed intersections and dedicated pedestrian signals, which have been spaced at approximately 400m along the road network considering local conditions. This is consistent with the outcomes specified by T8 of the Guidelines.

- Objectives 5,6 and 9 relate to providing safe and accessible connections between key destinations and reducing the reliance on private vehicles. The objectives are proposed to be implemented by Requirements 6-11, and Guidelines 14-22 which relate to the design of subdivisions and the street network.

Off-road cycle and pedestrian networks were identified throughout the open space network to ensure both direct access to jobs and services from local and wider catchments, and to provide for recreational and tourist use.

To ensure safe cycling and pedestrian activity, all effort has been made to separate cycling from walking paths where possible. This in turn will promote micro-mobility access to jobs in the future.

### VPA position

The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of 'walkability and safe cycling networks.'

To ensure safe and effective movement patterns, pedestrian and cyclist crossings have been applied every 400–800m, where appropriate, along the arterial road, rail lines, waterways, and any other accessibility barriers.

## 5.3.4 Local public transport

*A public transport network that is supported by high-intensity uses and connectivity between key destinations and major trip generating facilities.*

### PSP Performance Target

- 
- T9 95% of dwellings should be located within either of the following walking distances:**
- **800m to a train station**
  - **600m to a tram stop, or**
  - **400m to a future bus route or bus capable road**

### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

- T9** Adaptation may be required.

### Planning assessment

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'public transport as being "A public transport network that is supported by high intensity uses and connectivity between key destinations and major trip generating facilities."

The relevant performance target for this feature is T9, which states that 95% of planned future dwellings within the PSP should be located within a specified distance to a train station (800m), tram stop (600m), or future bus route or bus capable road (400m). This target is specific to metro areas.

Plan 5 Movement sets out an extensive and logical network of bus capable street. The 400m catchment from these streets depicted in the plan shows at least 95% of the planned future dwellings are within 400m of a planned future bus route or bus capable road.

BMD (the largest landowner within the precinct) proposes the introduction of a developer-funded interim bus services to Bacchus Marsh town centre and railway station. If delivered – this service will serve as a supplement to future publicly funded public transport provision.

**VPA position**

The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of Public Transport.

The Merrimu PSP achieves the following:

- 82% of dwellings within public transport walking distance

**5.4 Connect people to jobs and higher order services**

*Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher order services*

**5.4.1 Local employment opportunities**

*Local economic activity and employment opportunities that provide jobs and services close to where people live.*

**PSP Performance Target**


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**T10 The provision of land for local employment and economic activity should be capable of accommodating the minimum job density target of one job per dwelling located within the wider growth corridor.**

**Regional PSP Guidelines**

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T10** Adaptation may be required.

**Planning assessment**

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'local employment opportunities' as being *"local economic activity and employment opportunities that provide jobs and services close to where people live."*

There are no specific performance targets applicable to this feature, however, the Guidelines note that the PSP should include an Employment and Activity Centre Plan that identifies appropriate locations for mixed use employment.

As discussed above, Plan 12 Employment and Activity demonstrates that 85% of all dwellings are within a walkable distance from an Activity Centre.

Section 3.3 of the PSP relates to the Guidelines hallmark 'Connect People to Jobs & Higher-Order Services'. The stated purpose of the hallmark is to "Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher order services".

The hallmark identifies two key features required to be delivered by a PSP:

- F8. Well-connected to public transport, jobs & services within the region
- F9. Local employment opportunities

The delivery of these features and corresponding targets in the context of the PSP is assessed below.

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'well-connected to public transport, jobs & services within the region' as being *"Diverse economic activity, employment and investment within regional, state and nationally significant areas."*

The relevant performance target for this feature is T10, which states that land sufficient for local employment and economic activity should be provided to facilitate one job per dwelling located within the wider growth corridor.

The PSP proposes the following place-based response to this feature:

- Plan 12 – Employment and Activity Centres shows the proposed location and spatial distribution of employment generating activities in the PSP. This includes three mixed-use activity centres, as well as community facilities that will incorporate employment generating uses.
- Though T10 seeks to achieve a greater job density, this is based on a metro context. A reduction to T10 is appropriate, particularly given the connectivity to other key employment locations including Melbourne Airport and Melbourne CBD.
- The PSP appropriately enables a location that is well connected to public transport, jobs & services in the region through the provision of a bus capable road network and a developer funded bus service.
- Further work is required to mitigate the impacts of PSP traffic on the external road network and its ability to cater for reliable public transport connectivity.

### VPA position

The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of 'local employment opportunities.'

## 5.5 High quality public realm

### 5.5.1 Open space targets

*Networks of open space and facilities that optimise the use of available land and provide equitable access to sport and recreation, leisure, environmental benefits, cultural benefits and visual amenity.*

### PSP Performance Targets

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#### **T11 The open space network should seek to meet the following minimum targets:**

- **Within residential areas (including activity centres):**
  - 10% of net developable area for local parks and sports field reserves.
  - 3–5% of net developable area set aside for local parks.
  - 5–7% of net developable area set aside for sports field reserves.
- **Within dedicated employment and/ or economic activity areas, 2% of the net developable area for local parks.**

**Option for regional adaptation?** not adapted

**Performance:** Achieved

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#### **T12 Open space and sports reserves should be located to meet the following distribution targets:**

- **A sports reserve or open space larger than 1 hectare within an 800m safe walkable distance of each dwelling**
- **A local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of each dwelling.**

**Option for regional adaptation?** Adapted

**Performance:** Place based response

**T13 Potential canopy tree coverage within the public realm and open space should be a minimum of 30% (excluding areas dedicated to biodiversity or native vegetation conservation).**

Target achievable

**T14 All streets containing canopy trees should use stormwater to service their watering needs.**

Target achievable

**T15 Design of the street network should be capable of supporting at least 70% of lots with a good solar orientation.**

Target achievable

**T16 All conservation areas identified in relevant Commonwealth, state and local government strategies should be retained in accordance with relevant legislation.**

Target achievable

**T17 IWM solutions should meaningfully contribute towards the actions and targets from the relevant Catchment Scale Public Realm & Water Plans and any relevant water-related strategies, plan, or guideline (including the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018–2028*).**

**Option for regional adaptation?** not adapted

**Performance:** Achieved

### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T11–12** Adaptation may be required

**T13–16** Target achievable

### Planning assessment

The VPA commissioned a community infrastructure and open space assessment to determine the required provision and land take of recreation reserves within the Merrimu precinct. This assessment considered not only the future population of the precinct, but also the needs of the wider district including the existing township and future growth areas.

The Merrimu PSP proposes to deliver 50.56 hectares of unencumbered passive open space (credited open space) across a network of well-distributed local parks (approximately 30). This represents 2.8% of the NDA of the PSP and within the target range set by PSP Guidelines. In addition to this credited passive open space supply, it is anticipated that the Merrimu PSP will deliver approximately 335 hectares of encumbered public open space (uncredited open space) consisting of:

- Conservation reserves (approximately 41 hectares);
- Waterways and drainage reserves / retarding basins (approximately 60 hectares); and
- Escarpment Regional Parklands (approximately 187 hectares).

The assessment recommended the provision of 3 sports reserves, totalling 27 hectares – or 6.34 % of total residential net developable area being allocated to active open space. It was advised that this land could facilitate:

- 7 football/cricket ovals

- 10 soccer pitches
- 6 netball courts

### VPA position

The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of 'heritage, green streets and spaces.'

- 
- T11 The open space network should seek to meet the following minimum targets:**
- **Within residential areas (including activity centres):**
    - 10% of net developable area for local parks and sports field reserves
    - 3–5% of net developable area set aside for local parks
    - 5–7% of net developable area set aside for sports field reserves
  - **Within dedicated employment and/ or economic activity areas, 2% of the net developable area for local parks.**

- 
- T12 Open space and sports reserves should be located to meet the following distribution targets:**
- **A sports reserve or open space larger than 1 hectare within an 800m safe walkable distance of each dwelling**
  - **A local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of each dwelling.**

- 
- T17 IWM solutions should meaningfully contribute towards the actions and targets from the relevant Catchment Scale Public Realm & Water Plans and any relevant water-related strategies, plan, or guideline (including the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018–2028*).**

#### Adapted Target:

- 
- T12 Open space and sports reserves should be located to meet the following distribution targets:**
- **97% of dwellings are within an 800m safe walkable distance of a sports reserve or open space larger than 1 hectare**
  - **A local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of a local park.**

The Place Based Plan (PBP) has designated local parks required to meet the open space accessibility target, ensuring that all dwellings are located within a 400-metre safe walking distance of a local park, consistent with the Target T11 and partially consistent with T12. These local parks are strategically distributed across the precinct to provide equitable and walkable access to informal recreation opportunities, such as playgrounds, picnic areas, and small-scale open space amenity.

A further estimated 79% of the precinct will be set aside for uncredited open space, of which much will be high amenity in the form of drainage, conservation and landscape values (escarpment) areas. All, if not most, uncredited open spaces will include walking and cycling networks to promote passive recreational use.

## 5.5.2 Green streets and spaces

*Treatment of the public realm (including public infrastructure) that creates a safe, comfortable, high amenity and resilient environment.*

### PSP Performance Targets

- 
- T13 Potential canopy tree coverage within the public realm and open space should be a minimum of 30% (excluding areas dedicated to biodiversity or native vegetation conservation).**

---

**T14 All streets containing canopy trees should use stormwater to service their watering needs.**

---

**T15 Design of the street network should be capable of supporting at least 70% of lots with a good solar orientation.**

### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T13–15** Targets achievable.

### Planning assessment

#### Local recreational spaces and facilities

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'local recreational spaces and facilities' as being "networks of open space and facilities that optimise the use of available land and provide equitable access to sport and recreation, leisure, environmental benefits, cultural benefits and visual amenity."

The relevant performance targets for this feature are T11 and T12. T11 sets a minimum provision target for open spaces at 10% of NDA, comprised of local parks (3-5%), and sports and reserves (5-7%). T12 requires all dwellings to be within walkable distance of a local park (400m) or reserve (800m).

#### Heritage, green streets and spaces

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'heritage, green streets and spaces' as being "treatment of the public realm (including public infrastructure) that creates a safe, comfortable, high amenity and resilient environment."

The relevant performance targets for this feature are T13, T14 and T15, which relate to the provision of canopy trees (T13 and T14) and lots with good solar orientation (T15).

To support the PSP, Homewood completed a Preliminary Tree Assessment to assess existing vegetation and its suitability for retention. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments have also been prepared by Tract and Hansen, to identify areas of significant value within the precinct.

Objective T13 and T14 relates to retaining/protecting natural features, to enable a positive contribution to local character, amenity and ecology. This objective is achieved through the Requirements 40, 43, 48 and 47, and Guidelines 10, 25, 26 and 56 of the PSP.

#### Cultural Heritage

In addition to the above, extensive assessment has been completed in ongoing consultation and engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, who are the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the Merrimu PSP. An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments (ACHIA) and Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) has been undertaken in support of the PSP. Public facing versions of these documents will be released once finalised.

## VPA position

Guidelines and requirements in the PSP are tailored to promote good solar orientation and ensure that applications to subdivide land are accompanied by a landscape plan illustrating a tree canopy coverage of an average of 30%. The PSP also includes cross sections that identify protected trees within central medians and nature strips, and local parks are located where possible to include existing large trees.

### 5.5.3 Environmental and biodiversity value

*Protected and enhanced areas of significant environmental and biodiversity value, such as native vegetation, waterway corridors and grasslands.*

#### PSP Performance Target/general principle

**T16 All conservation areas identified in relevant Commonwealth, state and local government strategies should be retained in accordance with relevant legislation.**

#### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T16** Target achievable

#### Planning assessment

The Guidelines describe the features of 'environmental and biodiversity value' as being "protected and enhanced areas of significant environmental and biodiversity value, such as native vegetation, waterway corridors, natural wetlands and grasslands."

The relevant performance target for this feature is T16, which states that all conservation areas identified in relevant Commonwealth, state and local government strategies should be retained in accordance with relevant legislation.

The PSP proposes the following place-based response, to ensure that significant environmental and biodiversity values are protected and enhanced:

- Plan 6 Public Realm shows the proposed location of conservation areas, which are distributed throughout the PSP and relate to 40.7 hectares of land.
- Requirement 33 requires the sensitive management of conservation and landscape value areas.
- Requirement 35 requires frontage roads to conservation areas to incorporate indigenous species and avoid species that could behave as environmental weeds.
- Requirement 38 specifies that any paths or infrastructure with conservation areas must be designed to avoid and minimise disturbance to native vegetation and habitats.
- Requirement 76 ensures future permit applications demonstrate how they appropriate response to the conservation areas, they are required to demonstrate how subdivision, and/or buildings or works will avoid and minimise impacts.

#### VPA position

Conservation concept plans are included in the Appendix of the PSP order to provide further information on environmental values and areas that will be retained given their environmental

and biodiversity value. A Native Vegetation Precinct Plan (NVPP) regulates the removal and retention of vegetation with the precinct.

#### 5.5.4 Sustainable water/integrated water management

*Sustainable water, drainage and wastewater systems that enhance catchment resilience and maintain or enhance the safety, health and wellbeing of people and property now and in the future.*

#### **PSP Performance Target/ General Principle**

**T17 IWM solutions should meaningfully contribute towards the actions and targets from the relevant Catchment Scale Public Realm & Water Plans and any relevant water-related strategies, plan, or guideline (including the Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018–2028).**

#### **Regional PSP Guidelines**

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T17** Target Achievable

#### **Planning assessment**

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'sustainable water' as being "sustainable water, drainage and wastewater systems that enhance catchment resilience and maintain or enhance the safety, health and wellbeing of people and property now and in the future."

The relevant performance targets for this feature are T17, which states that IWM solutions should meaningfully contribute towards the actions and targets from the relevant Catchment Scale Public Realm & Water Plans and any relevant water-related strategies, plan, or guideline.

In considering the appropriate response to the feature, a Bacchus Marsh wide Integrated Water Management (IWM) report was prepared by ARUP. A Merrimu PSP specific IWM has also been prepared by RAIN Consulting.

In summary, the RAIN Consulting report recommends the following:

- Managing flows and protecting sensitive landscape by designing the drainage network and siting wetlands/retarding basins to limit concentrated discharge on erosive sodic soils, in line with the sitewide stormwater management strategy and Melbourne Water's emerging Development Services Schemes.
- Locating stormwater outlets in geotechnically stable zones to avoid further erosion along escarpments and improve long term catchment health. -term catchment health.
- Integrating WSUD to regulate hydrology and enhance water quality
- Incorporating wetlands, bioretention systems and water sensitive road designs to treat stormwater, moderate flow peaks and protect downstream waterways, consistent with the IWMP's stormwater management requirements.
- Ensuring staged development aligns with ultimate drainage infrastructure and best practice stormwater performance standards. -practice stormwater performance standards.
- Reducing potable water demand through alternative water sources by applying rainwater harvesting on lots over 300 m<sup>2</sup> for toilet flushing, laundry and garden irrigation, reducing reliance on potable supply and increasing system resilience
- Exploring stormwater harvesting to irrigate active open spaces and reduce long term irrigation demands on the potable network. -term irrigation demands on the potable network.

- Supporting urban cooling and canopy objectives by Implementing passive street tree irrigation within the road network to enable healthier canopy growth, improve liveability, and reduce urban heat, noting this is a feasible, place based intervention for Merrimu.
- Integrating IWM initiatives with open space networks to maximise co-benefits for greening, amenity and education.

### VPA position

The PSP appropriately enhances catchment resilience and maintains or enhances the safety, health and wellbeing of people and property now and in the future.

## 5.5.5 Bushfire interfaces

### Planning assessment

A Bushfire Assessment and Development Report has been prepared by Southern Cross Town Planning Pty Ltd in response to the requirements of the Moorabool Planning Scheme.

The report assesses the Merrimu precinct from a bushfire perspective, and considers how the future development of the precinct can be designed to mitigate and respond to the potential impact of bushfire.

Merrimu is wholly within a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) and the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) covers eastern parts of the site near Long Forest Estate.

This report responds to the planning framework for bushfire management, as identified in the Planning Policy and Local Planning Policy Frameworks and relevant provisions of the Moorabool Planning Scheme and Planning Practice Note 64.

### VPA position

The Bushfire Assessment and Development Report proposes a Bushfire Mapping and Response Plan (see

Figure 12 below), which outlines appropriate buffers and setback requirements. These buffers and setbacks will directly influence the achievable residential density within each study area.

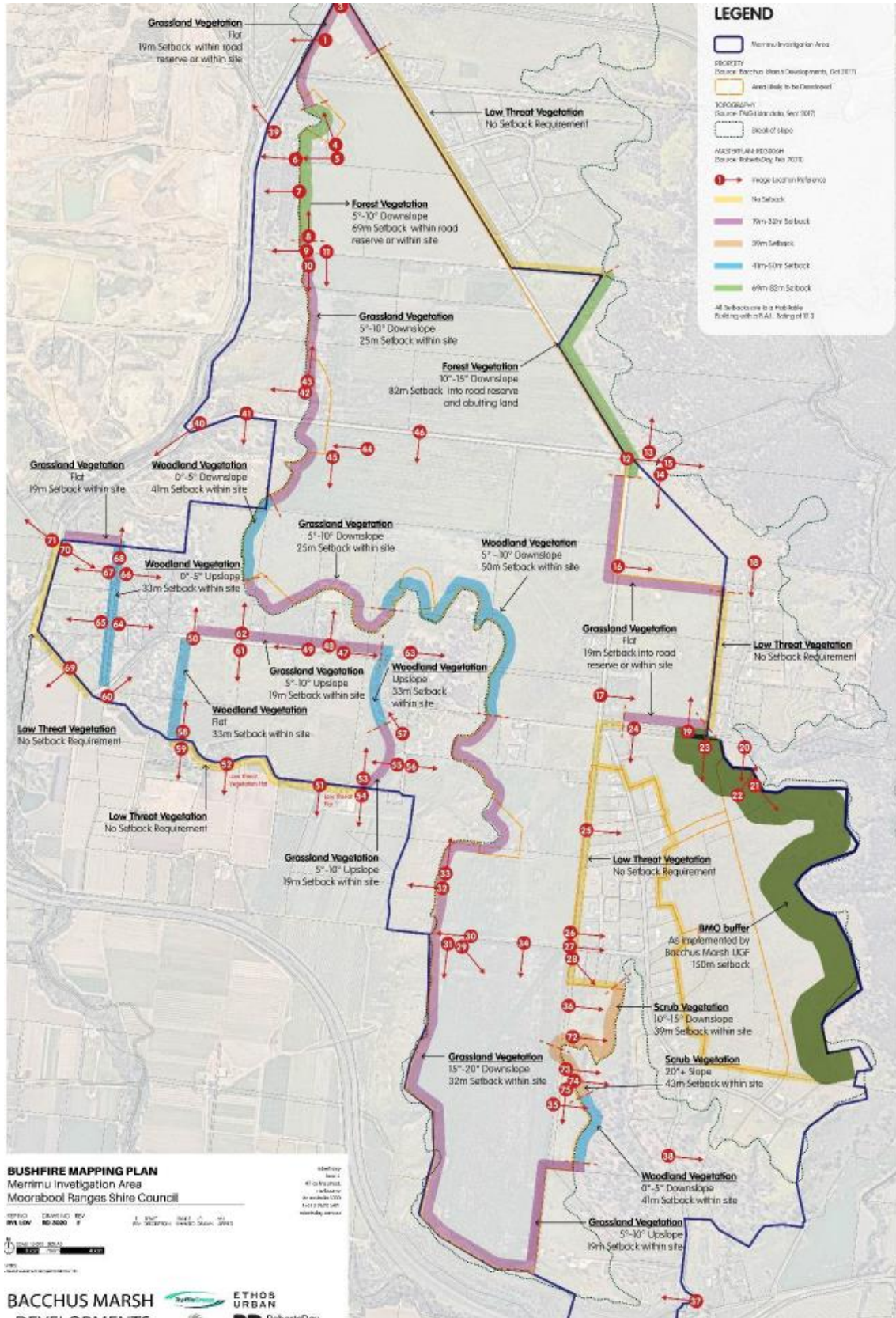
Drainage and public open space reserves are likely to be positioned on the perimeter of the developable area, which assists in achieving good urban design outcomes and increases the separation distance between future development and the bushfire hazard.

All urban development must be edged by perimeter roads or dedicated emergency vehicle access tracks to ensure reliable emergency access and provide a hard-surface buffer between built form and the fire hazard.

Each site is also required to have a minimum of two road access points to support safe evacuation and emergency egress.

Parts of the precinct defined as forested land or woodland will generally be set aside or will remain for conservation purposes.

Figure 12 Bushfire Mapping and Response Plan



## 5.5.6 Sodic and dispersive soils

### Planning assessment

Alluvium Consulting Australia (Alluvium) were engaged by Melbourne Water to undertake a Stormwater and Groundwater investigation within the Merrimu PSP area. Alluvium carried out a Phase 1 study in 2019 to generate a baseline to provide an indication of the likely geomorphic response to hydrological change on the plateau. The interaction between geomorphic processes and response of vegetation to potential geomorphic change was considered.

The 2019 study highlighted the extremely sensitive nature of sodic dispersive soils in the study area.

WSP (2022) undertook a desktop-based peer review of works to date covering the Merrimu PSP and a risk assessment to assist the VPA in understanding the implications of sodic soils within the precinct. The escarpment areas have a high association with both slopes greater than 15% and the Werribee Formation, a known risk factor for sodic soil in the region.

WSP (2022) identified a high-risk area along the escarpment, including slopes greater than 15% and a 100-metre buffer.

The Merrimu Sodic Soil Peer Review (April 2025) was prepared by Streamology to undertake a peer review of the information, reports and recommendations relating to sodic soil and future urban development within the Merrimu PSP. The focus of the review was on the sodic soil management recommendations developed by WSP (2022).

Where the presence of sodic soils is confirmed, a Sodic Soil Management Plan should be prepared, detailing site-specific engineering considerations. The Environment Protection Authority recommends that the VPA undertake a sodic soils assessment at the time of amendment to address any potential impact of sodic soils across the precinct. The Environment Protection Authority suggested that soil testing would enable the VPA to prepare more targeted application requirements for managing sodic soils.

### VPA position

The 100-metre buffer (now referred to as the investigation zone) will require further investigation to confirm whether there is a risk of exposure and disturbance of sodic and dispersive soils, and if so, the mitigation measures and controls required for development within this zone.

Further investigations within this zone should comprise soil sampling to the depth of proposed excavation and with a density as outlined in DSE (2010). Laboratory testing should include Emerson class, to understand dispersity, and exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP) to understand sodicity.

Where sodic/dispersive soils are identified, development can proceed with the appropriate controls to address the level of risk identified. Individual mitigation measures used in isolation are unlikely to be sufficient and several measures will be required depending on factors like the extent of exposure, the proposed works, and the level of risk. Mitigation measures may include a combination of measures such as application of hydrated lime or gypsum, soil compaction, clay capping, topsoiling and revegetation.

Based on the desktop assessment undertaken as part of the Land Capability Assessment (LCA), the Merrimu precinct is at low risk for occurrences of acid sulfate soils. However, there remains a medium to high risk for dispersive sodic soils and for soils with high reactivity across the precinct area, with a notably high-risk area for dispersive soils in proximity to the escarpment.

The LCA recommends that: an exploratory soil and groundwater investigation be undertaken at sites that have been identified as having a moderate potential contamination risk ranking to determine potential site specific constraints to the future development of each site. These investigations may likely include targeted sampling informed by observations made during site inspections and review of historical aerials.

For properties allocated a low to moderate potential contamination risk ranking where a property inspection has not been undertaken, The LCA recommend that this be undertaken on a property-by-property basis prior to development, to determine the need for any further intrusive assessment works.

The LCA also recommends removal of potentially contaminating infrastructure (e.g. septic tanks and above and underground storage tanks if present) followed by soil validation sampling; and classification and appropriate removal (if required) of various stockpiles and dumped materials observed in isolated areas. This would also include subsequent validation of the surface soils following removal. It is noted that sampling and visual inspection of some stockpiles may indicate that the material is suitable for re-use as part of future development, therefore, removal may not be required in all instances.

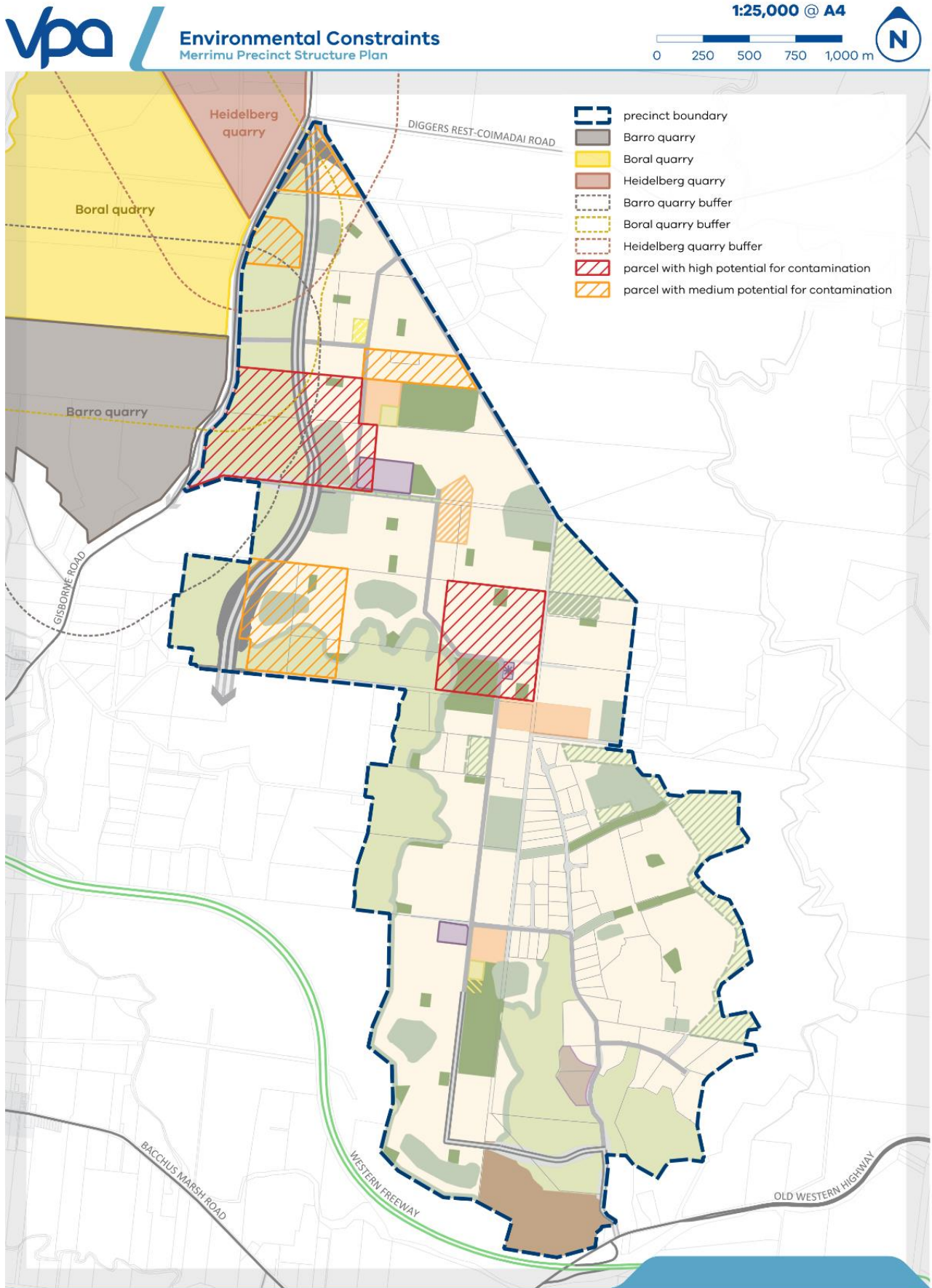
### **VPA Position**

The VPA will implement a green corridor (identified on the Place based plan as “Landscape Values”) along the escarpment of the Merrimu Plateau, thereby preventing development on the slopes of the plateau. This will ensure development avoids these high-risk areas as they are prone to erosion.

The VPA will also require proponents to prepare sodic and dispersive soils management plans as a permit condition to be implemented during construction.

The DTP proposes that the conservative approach taken in the amendment ordinance will sufficiently address sodic soils at the planning permit stage, as opposed to the strategic planning stage, as suggested by the Environmental Protection Authority.

Figure 13 Identified medium and high-risk potentially contaminated sites



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## 5.6 Services and destinations

### 5.6.1 Local schools

*Education and community infrastructure and facilities that are located to equitably and efficiently maximise their accessibility and shared use.*

#### PSP Performance Target

**T18 The location of dwellings should achieve the following accessibility targets in relation to education and community facilities:**

- 70% of dwellings located within 800m of a government primary school
- 100% of dwellings located within 3,200m of a government secondary school
- 80% of dwellings located within 800m of a community facility
- 80% of dwellings located within 800m of a health facility.

**Option for regional adaptation?** Adapted

**Performance:** Place based response

#### Regional PSP Guidelines

In accordance with the Regional PSP Guidelines:

**T18 The location of dwellings should achieve the following accessibility targets in relation to education and community facilities:**

- 62% of dwellings located within 800m of a government primary school
- 100% of dwellings located within 3,200m of a government secondary school
- 56% of dwellings located within 800m of a community facility
- 80% of dwellings located within 800m of a health facility.

#### Planning assessment

A Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment for the Merrimu PSP was prepared demonstrating quantitative estimates of the community infrastructure demand generated by primary, secondary and tertiary study areas.

##### Government primary schools

The community infrastructure needs assessment demonstrated the need to set aside land (3.5 hectares per site) for two Government Primary Schools within the Merrimu PSP. It should be noted that there is likely to be some capacity at existing Government primary schools (e.g. Coimadai Primary School) to meet some of the early enrolment demands generated by the PSP.

The Department of Education (DE) will need to be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its support for this recommendation and the proposed location of each school site.

##### Government secondary school

The demand estimate generated by the wider study area demonstrated a total of approximately two (2) government secondary school enrolments at full development. One (1) government secondary school has been proposed within the Merrimu PSP.

A second Government Secondary School is likely to be required to service the entire Merrimu precinct. In terms of a preferred location for this second Government Secondary School, the Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment strongly endorses one of Moorabool Shire Council's

current key advocacy priorities to the State Government: returning the current Council Civic Centre site located in Darley to its original intended use as a Government Secondary School. Given that the one and only Government Secondary College servicing the Study Area (Bacchus Marsh College) currently has more than 1,000 enrolments, the need to address capacity constraints in the near future looms as key priority for Bacchus Marsh given projected population forecasts for the Study Area.

The Department of Education (DE) and Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) will need to be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its support for this recommendation and the proposed location of the Government secondary school site.

### **Non-government primary school**

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) has expressed an interest in establishing a K-9 Catholic School in the Merrimu PSP which will cater for Catholic primary school needs in the Study Area. This assessment supports the establishment a new Catholic school site within the Merrimu PSP based on MACS' expression of interest and that a 5.5 hectare site be identified within the PSP as non-Government school site.

The preliminary view of this assessment is that the Merrimu PSP will not be identified as a priority location for other independent primary school provision. However, existing service providers such as Bacchus Marsh Grammar should be consulted to confirm provision needs across the Study Area.

### **PSP Guidelines Target**

The PSP Guidelines metric test was completed to ensure that the performance targets were achieved for school provisions within the precinct.

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'local schools and community infrastructure' as being "education and community infrastructure and facilities that are located to equitably and efficiently maximise their accessibility and shared use."

The relevant performance target for this feature is T18, which specifies accessibility targets for key pieces of community infrastructure, including that 70% of planned dwellings should be within 800m of a government primary school, and 80% of dwellings should be within 800m of a community facility.

### **VPA position**

The PSP ensures that

62% of dwellings are within 800m of a government primary school, and 56% of dwellings are within 800m of a community hub. A 14% reduction in Target T18 is appropriate given the varied dwelling types, regional context, and topographic constraints across the PSP.

The PSP appropriately delivers on the Guidelines feature of 'local schools and community infrastructure'.

The strategic assessment of the location of the government primary school is supported by the 'Victorian Government School Site Selection Criteria – Toolbox' and the Department of Education. The necessary requirements from the selection criteria have been included in the PSP.

## 5.6.2 Community infrastructure

### Planning assessment

The community infrastructure needs assessment determined the level of community facility required for the demand generated from the primary and secondary study areas. The assessment recommends the provision of:

- 1 Level 1 Community Centre (approximately 1,200 square metres of floor space) located on a 0.8 hectare site; and
- 1 Level 2 Community Centre (approximately 1,500 square metres of floor space) located on a 1 hectare site.

A Level 1 community centre is the base community centre model for PSP locations and typically consists of: 1) sessional kindergarten rooms (up to 4 rooms licensed for 33 places); 2) maternal & child health services (typically 2 to 3 consulting rooms) and 3) General community meeting spaces available for hire (approximately 200 m<sup>2</sup>).

A Level 2 community typically consists of all the elements of a Level 1 community centre plus the following components: 1) a Neighbourhood House / Adult Learning Centre (incorporated into general community meeting space allocation shown below) and 2) a larger quantity of general community meeting spaces available for hire (approximately 500 m<sup>2</sup>). Level 2 community centres are also suitable venues for library lounges like those provided in the Truganina Community Centre and the Manor Lakes Community Centre, both located in the City of Wyndham.

It is recommended that the proponent discuss with Moorabool Shire Council the preferred location, potential configuration and service functions of each of the proposed centres.

### VPA position

The future urban structure situates two community facilities within easy access to residential development and closely connected to schools, sports reserves and the activity centres, providing active transport access to the local community and safeguarding public transport access for the wider community in the future. They are directly located adjacent to the proposed future P-6 government primary schools and in vicinity to the proposed local activity centres to allow integration of complimentary facilities and promote a vibrant neighbourhood core.

## 5.6.3 Kindergarten provisions

### Planning assessment

In June 2022 the State Government announced its \$9 billion package over the next decade, for four-year-old kinder to be recast as 'pre-prep', with every Victorian four-year-old entitled to a free, 30-hour-a-week program, up from the current 15 hours.

As part of the new policy setting the demand estimates support the need for 12 kindergarten rooms across the study area to cater for both 3 and 4 year old sessional kindergarten programs.

The community infrastructure assessment recommends that up to 12 stand-alone / sessional kindergarten rooms are provided across the Merrimu PSP to cater for both 3 and 4 year old sessional kindergarten programs (note: the demand estimates under the current policy setting would equate to needing 6 kindergarten rooms). This assessment recommends that 4 kindergarten rooms should ideally be incorporated into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP Part 1.

The remaining stand-alone / sessional kindergarten demand (4 rooms) should preferably be met by integrating kindergarten facilities within either the proposed Government Primary School and / or potential non-Government Primary School. However, this recommendation will require further consultation and confirmation with the Department of Education (DE) and the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS).

This recommendation requires further consultation and confirmation with the Department of Education and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools.

Neither DE nor MACS mandate their education facilities to include kindergarten facilities on school sites. If neither DE nor MACS commit to the inclusion of kindergarten facilities on education sites, the remaining sessional kindergarten demand (1 to 2 rooms) may need to be incorporated within the proposed Level 2 multipurpose community centre.

### VPA position

The community infrastructure assessment identifies the current and potential future policy setting for the '3 & 4 Year Old Sessional Kindergarten' provisions. Based on the assessment, the VPA has planned to accommodate the demand that is expected in the Merrimu PSP through 4 rooms collocated with government primary schools, and 4 kindergarten rooms should ideally be incorporated into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP Part 1.

## 5.7 Thriving local economies

### 5.7.1 Activity centres

*Activity centres that can accommodate the range of jobs, services, amenities, activities and housing that support their role and function, and meet the changing economic, climate and social needs of a place.*

#### PSP Performance Target

**T19 80–90% of dwellings should be located within 800m of an activity centre.**

<b>Option for regional adaptation?</b>	<b>Adapted</b>
<b>Performance:</b>	<b>Place based response</b>

#### Regional PSP Guidelines

**T19** Adaptation may be required. Local convenience centres should be included to meet day-to-day needs of residents, having regard to the potential impact to existing town centres.

#### Planning assessment

The Guidelines describe the feature of 'thriving local economies' as being "activity centres that can accommodate the range of jobs, services, amenities, activities and housing that support their role and function, have strong transport links and meet the changing economic, climate and social needs of a place."

The relevant performance target for this feature is T19, which states that 80-90% of dwellings should be within 800m of an activity centre.

The PSP ensures that 85% of dwellings are within in a walkable distance from an activity centre, exceeding the target specified by T19 by 7%.

The PSP appropriately delivers the Guidelines feature of 'thriving local economies'.

## 5.8 Infrastructure co-ordination

*Directing the staging and location of development within a PSP to:*

- *use available capacity in existing infrastructure*
- *support the orderly and economic extension or augmentation of existing infrastructure*
- *match the timely provision of new infrastructure.*

*This will include directing the location and timing of development and identifying trigger points for the provision of required infrastructure.*

### PSP Performance Target

**T20 Identify all basic and essential infrastructure with spatial requirements on the Future Place-based Plan (e.g. open space, schools, community centres, integrated water management, etc.).**

**Option for regional adaptation? Not adapted**

**Performance: Achieved**

### Planning assessment

The order in which a precinct develops can play a critical role in creating a thriving community. These early staging decisions can have a long legacy. If not carefully managed, they can result in a range of accessibility, safety, economic, environmental, and social problems that can take many years to resolve. The objectives and strategies of the Merrimu PSP Staging Plan are outlined in Table 32 of the PSP.

The following items also influence the staging of development for Merrimu:

- proximity to the existing township, and road infrastructure.
- proximity to existing and future servicing infrastructure and utilities (as recorded in this Background Report).
- proximity to existing or proposed development fronts or serviced land
- proximity to significant public transport infrastructure or public transport services
- proximity to existing or committed community infrastructure such as schools.
- financial analysis of the DCP

The PSP has included a staging plan (Plan 10: Infrastructure and Development Staging) to guide the orderly release of land for development in accordance with infrastructure delivery across the PSP. This plan will represent preferred development staging as determined at the time of preparation, considering the local and regional context and the infrastructure requirements of new developments.

### VPA position

Section 3.6 of the PSP outlines a series of Requirements that must be met and Guidelines that should be considered when delivering development in accordance with Plan 13: Infrastructure and Development Staging.

### 5.8.1 Existing and future utility infrastructure

Creo prepared the High-Level Utility Servicing and Infrastructure Assessment, which noted the following:

- Greater Western Water is the responsible authority for potable water, recycled water and sewer.
- Powercor is the responsible authority for electricity.
- APA GasNet is the responsible authority for gas transmission pipelines within Victoria and AusNet Gas Services is responsible for the gas distribution network. The transmission line runs south of Bacchus Marsh near the Western Water sewer treatment plant. Gas supply does not extend into the Merrimu Precinct. There is an existing City Gate gas interchange in Rowsley Station Road which provides gas supply to Bacchus Marsh. VPA notes that Victoria Planning Scheme Amendment VC250 was gazetted on the 1st of January 2024 which prevents a permit being granted to connect to reticulated natural gas when constructing a new dwelling, apartment development or subdividing land for residential purposes in accordance with clause 53.03.
- NBN Co is open to working with the other Utility Service Providers (USPs), governments and other entities to cater for growth in the precinct.

### 5.8.2 Electricity

ABS 2022 shows there are approximately 9,926 dwellings in the Bacchus Marsh SA2 area, currently supplied from the BMH Zone Substation (2 × 10/13 MVA transformers), which is already approaching a cyclic N rating of approximately 40 MVA.

The proposed additional ~8,000 dwellings represents approximately an 80% increase in dwellings, with an estimated cyclic demand of around 72 MVA. This exceeds the combined capacity of the existing sub-transmission lines supplying BMH.

As a result, Powercor have advised (in March 2026) that the Merrimu PSP will necessitate new 66 kV sub-transmission infrastructure, including:

- Approximately 18 km of new sub-transmission line from MLN and DPTS to BMH, and
- Approximately 36 km of upgrading of existing sub-transmission assets.

In addition, while there are plans to replace the existing BMH transformers with 25/33 MVA units, the forecast load growth will also require installation of a third 25/33 MVA transformer at BMH to maintain N-1 network capability.

PSP Infrastructure Considerations, to ensure future delivery of the required sub-transmission infrastructure:

- The proposed 66 kV sub-transmission lines are expected to traverse the Merrimu PSP area, generally following:
  - Old Western Highway
  - Western Freeway
- Corridor allowance should also be considered along:
  - Flanagans Drive
  - Lindsay Avenue, and
  - the main connector streets linking these corridors

### 5.8.3 Water

Interim potable water supply to the Merrimu Precinct can be serviced from the existing elevated tank in Dodemaide Circuit. This interim strategy would require the construction of a smaller suitable sized trunk main from Western Water's tank site along Dodemaide Circuit to Bences Road.

Western Water have also advised that the initial stages of the Merrimu precinct can be serviced from the existing water tank located in Dodemaide Circuit. This interim strategy would require the construction of a smaller suitable sized trunk main from Western Water's tank site along Dodemaide Circuit to Bences Road. The number of lots that this interim strategy can support has yet to be determined by Western Water.

New water infrastructure required to service the area will include the following:

- Construction of a smaller suitable sized trunk main from Western Water's tank site along Dodemaide Circuit to Bences Road

### 5.8.4 Sewer

Interim sewerage supply to the Merrimu Precinct is via an upgrade to the Tipperary sewer pump station. The Bacchus Marsh Recycling Water Plant has sufficient capacity to treat the forecast sewerage generated from Bacchus Marsh area in the short to medium term. Significant upgrades to the Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plant would be required to cater for the future Merrimu, Parwan and Bacchus Marsh areas.

Western Water have advised that the likely sewer strategy to ultimately service the Merrimu Precinct would be to either construct a new sewer pump station or a further upgrade to the Avenue of Honour sewer pump station. It is likely that a new rising main will be required along Woolpack Road or similar path to go to the Bacchus Marsh recycled water plant.

New sewer infrastructure required to service the area will include the following:

- Upgrade to Tipperary Flats Road Water Pump Station (WPS) or a further upgrade to the Avenue of Honour sewer pump station.

### 5.8.5 Planning for Mobile Telecommunications

Residents and communities expect to have access to a reliable mobile service, much in the same way they expect to have access to water and electricity. While the provision of fixed line and broadband telecommunications services are mandated in developments, mobile connectivity is not effectively planned for despite being just as essential as broadband.

There are no known constraints in telephone or internet infrastructure within the Bacchus Marsh district.

Reliable indoor and outdoor mobile access is no longer considered optional, but rather crucial for economic and social participation, including accessing government services. More importantly, it is critical for community safety, providing an essential lifeline to emergency services during natural disasters and other emergencies.

The Commonwealth Government has acknowledged the importance of mobile coverage in their February 2024 update to the Telecommunication In New Developments (TIND) Policy. The TIND policy previously only covered the provision of fixed voice and broadband services.

Under the updated policy, developers are expected to engage Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (MNIPs) and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to consider mobile connectivity early in

the planning phases of residential developments. The TIND policy targets residential developments with more than 50 lots and requires developers to identify suitable sites for mobile telecommunications infrastructure such as a pole or tower to be built upon.

### 5.8.6 Planning for NBN

The Merrimu Precinct is within NBN's fixed wireless network. This type of network transmits data using radio signals instead of cables. Businesses and homes can use fixed-wireless antenna technology to access broadband internet.

To ultimately service the Merrimu Precinct will require a fibre to the premises (FTTP) network to be rolled out.

NBN Co, as the responsible agency, will determine the requirements for initial and ultimate fibre optic-based telecommunication services to proposed development within the Merrimu Precinct. Application and registration requirements for the provision of telecommunication services to the proposed development will be made through NBN Co by each individual development within the Merrimu Precinct.

## 5.9 Public Acquisition Overlay for Public Purpose Land

The VPA has identified public purpose land projects through a coordinated precinct planning process that applies relevant State and local planning policies, the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines, and targeted technical and agency input. Details of the process are as follows:

- Policy alignment:
  - Clause 14.02-1S – Catchment planning and management: guided the identification of land for drainage corridors, flood storage, wetlands, and waterway protection.
  - Clause 18.02-3S – Road system: ensured the provision of safe and efficient movement, coordinated intersection upgrades, and integration with the arterial and connector road network.
  - Clause 19.02-4S – Social and cultural infrastructure: informed the siting and design of community facilities to meet current and future needs.
  - Clause 19.02-6S – Open space: supported the provision of active open space to meet the sport and recreation needs of the future community.
- Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines: applied the Guidelines' principles of integrating land use and infrastructure, locating facilities for accessibility, and sequencing delivery to match population growth.
- Technical evidence: informed by specialist studies including the Traffix Integrated Transport Assessment Report, ASR Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment, and relevant environmental and flood modelling.
- Agency consultation: engaged with DEECA, Melbourne Water, Greater Western Water, DTP (Transport), and Council to inform functional requirements, design standards, and delivery sequencing.
- Precinct integration: embedded projects within the PSP land use framework to maximise net developable area while achieving service, environmental, and accessibility objectives.
- Land acquisition: applied Public Acquisition Overlays (PAO) to secure land where coordinated development may not occur in a timely or sequential manner.

This approach ensures public purpose land is identified, located, and protected in a way that is consistent with the Victorian Planning Policy Framework and the PSP Guidelines, underpinned by robust technical evidence and agency input, and sequenced to meet the long-term needs of the precinct.

When requested by the acquiring authority (in this case, Council), the VPA applies a PAO to secure land for a public purpose in accordance with the Planning Policy Framework, the PSP Guidelines, and the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986. The process also aligns with the considerations outlined in the Victorian Government's Guide to Victoria's Planning System - Chapter 6: Acquisition and Compensation.

### Acquiring Authority

- A PAO is only applied where there is a clearly identified acquiring authority willing and able to take ownership of the land.
- Council confirmed in writing its role as acquiring authority, the intended public purpose, and the ongoing management responsibility for the land.

### Policy and Strategic Justification

- The proposed PAOs are supported by relevant clauses of the Victorian Planning Policy Framework (e.g., Clause 14.02-1S, 18.02-3S, 19.02-4S, 19.02-6S).
- The proposed acquisition must align with the PSP Guidelines and PSP and DCP objectives, ensuring integration of land use and infrastructure.

### Evidence-Based Need

- The location and extent of the PAO is informed by technical assessments (e.g., transport, drainage, community infrastructure, open space, biodiversity) and agency standards.
- Land identified must be essential to the function of the infrastructure or facility and cannot be delivered solely through standard subdivision provisions.

### Timing and Sequencing

- Proposed PAOs are applied where delivery of the public purpose may not occur in a timely or coordinated manner through adjoining development.
- The timing of acquisition is linked to development triggers, but the PAO provides certainty for long-term delivery regardless of staging.

### Minimising Impact on NDA and Existing Uses

- PAO boundaries are defined to meet functional requirements while minimising impact on net developable area.
- Acquisition is avoided where possible on existing businesses and residences to minimise displacement and social impacts.
- Where unavoidable, the approach to acquisition will follow the principles under the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986.

### Affected Landowner Consultation

- The VPA and acquiring authority consult with affected landowners to explain the purpose, timing, and implications of the PAO, and to consider reasonable alignment adjustments to reduce impacts.

## Funding Considerations

- Inclusion of PAO lands in the DCP depends on whether the acquisition is for shared, plan-wide benefit infrastructure.

DRAFT

## 6 APPENDICES

### 6.1 Technical report summaries

#### Notes on technical reports

Some of the technical reports were prepared to cover the Merrimu, Parwan Station PSP and Parwan Employment Precinct precincts.

Some reports are still in draft or under preparation. As discussed in Section 1.5, a progressive certainty approach is being applied in these circumstances, and the VPA will continue to work on the finalisation of these reports. For transport matters where progressive certainty is being applied, the sections below include consideration of the emerging questions and opportunities.

To facilitate the timely delivery of the precinct structure plan and to avoid duplication, the VPA is utilising some technical reports commissioned by Bacchus Marsh Developments Pty Ltd/Stamoulis Property Group, the largest landowner within the Merrimu precinct. These technical reports are subject to VPA quality assurance and oversight from the VPA, Council and relevant Government authorities.

The final outcomes shown in the PSP may differ to the specific recommendations contained in a particular technical report, as the PSP also responds to feedback received from agencies during the Agency validation phase of the project.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report is being prepared and will be released in due course.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL VALUES ASSESSMENT (DRAFT)

This report is being prepared and will be released in due course.

#### ARBORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

A Preliminary Tree Assessment (2022) was prepared by Homewood Consulting in order to assess and report on trees located within defined areas in the Merrimu and Parwan Station localities.

##### What is the purpose of the report?

The Preliminary Tree Assessment is an arboricultural report which provides an assessment of the existing trees in order to assist with the preparation of development design, focusing on the identification of high value trees to inform development within the Merrimu PSP.

It is not an assessment of the impact of proposed development on existing trees and is not intended to accompany a planning permit application to Council.

##### What do we know so far?

For the Merrimu precinct, 1028 plotted trees were assigned the following retention values:

- 0 trees were attributed a 'very high' rating
- 23 trees were attributed a 'high' rating
- 209 trees were attributed a 'medium' rating
- 796 trees were attributed a 'low' rating

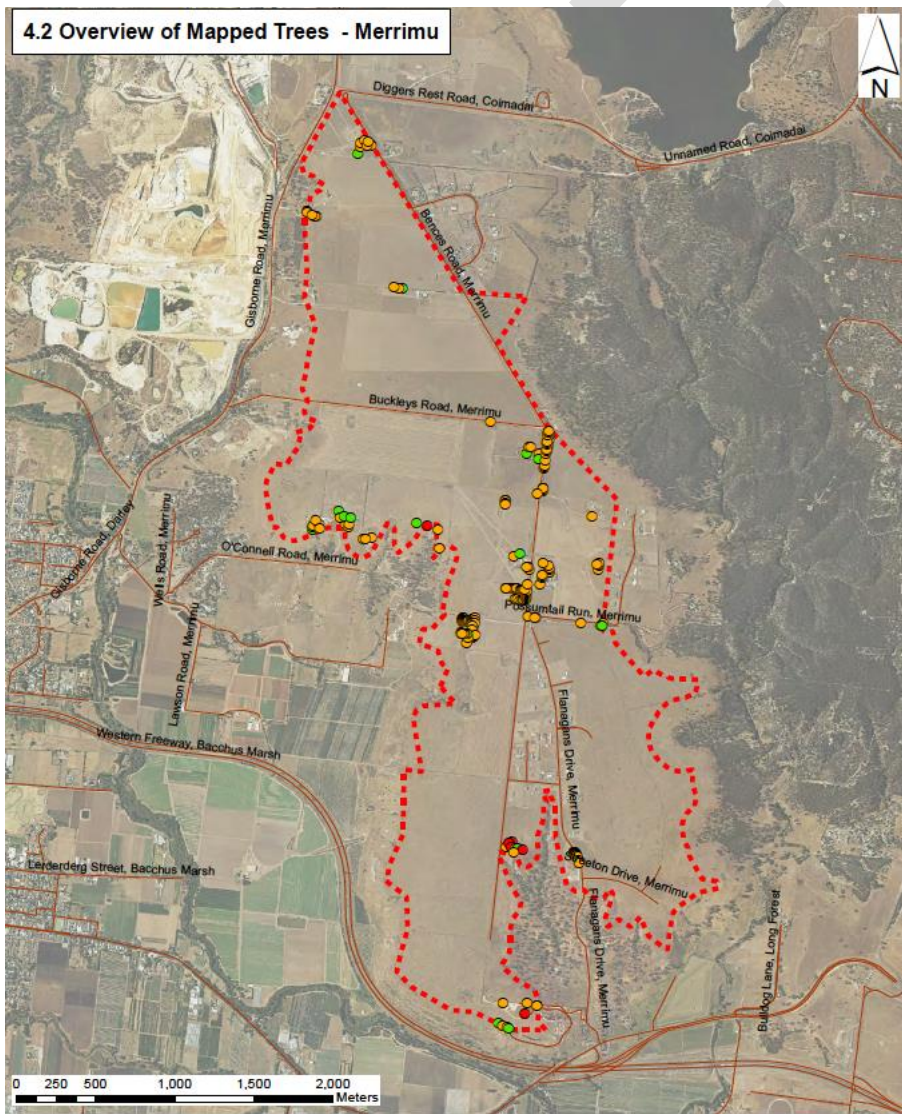
These findings are shown in

Figure 14 below.

With respect to the classification of trees, the report recommends:

- 'High' and 'Very High' retention value trees are the most significant trees and all efforts should be made to retain these throughout the precinct
- 'Medium' retention value trees have a medium to long Useful Life Expectancy (ULE) and where practical, all reasonable efforts should be made to retain these
- 'Low' retention value trees do not need to be a constraint on design intent and outcome

Figure 14 Overview of mapped trees



Legend	
	Assessment Area
	Very High
	High
	Medium
	Low



Date: 04/12/2019  
 Base Image: AerialImage2006  
 Plotted: CB  
 Projection System: GDA Zone 55

## What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

All trees identified as 'high' or 'very high' retention value have been included in the Native Vegetation Precinct Plan as "vegetation to be retained". This plan corresponds to the provisions of Clause 52.16 and the Schedule to 52.16 and effectively means that any native vegetation in the precinct that is not explicitly identified in the NVPP as "must be retained" does not require a planning permit for native vegetation removal.

Whilst the report stated that 'medium' retention value trees should be retained, these trees have not been identified as "must be retained" in the NVPP as the sheer quantum of these trees, if included in the plan, would create considerable difficulties at the planning permit stage. Therefore, only high value trees have been identified. Trees with a moderate rating have been co-located with planned active open space where possible and consistent with other active open space location criteria.

## BIODIVERSITY

Two biodiversity assessments were prepared to inform the PSP, being the Existing Ecological Conditions Report (November 2025) prepared by Ecology & Heritage Partners and the Ecological Assessment (August 2023) prepared by Aecom.

### What is the purpose of the report?

The Existing Ecological Conditions report was commissioned by BMD for land within the Merrimu PSP. The assessment area for this report incorporated most of the PSP, excluding the area known as Long Forest Estate in the south-eastern part of the precinct.

This report summarises the methods and results of ecological studies undertaken within the assessment area, including detailed desktop assessments, vegetation mapping, and habitat assessments, and provides a single consolidated report detailing and methodology and results of all previous investigations. The data is intended to help inform land-use decisions in the preparation of the PSP and NVPP.

Aecom were engaged by Long Forest Unit Trust (Rescom) to undertake a detailed ecological assessment of their site (known as Long Forest Estate). This assessment was intended to identify and quantify the native vegetation and fauna habitat values within this site.

### What do we know so far?

The EHP report found that most of the precinct is highly modified due to past and current agricultural and farming practices and is dominated by pasture supporting non-indigenous grasses and weeds. Much of the indigenous vegetation and terrestrial fauna habitat remaining within the Study Area are confined to escarpments or agricultural areas not subjected to historical cropping activities.

A total of 161 flora species (83 indigenous and 78 non-indigenous or introduced) were recorded within the EHP report during the field assessment. The nationally significant Spiny Rice-flower was recorded during targeted surveys across the Study Area. The State significant Fragrant Saltbush *Rhagodia parabolica*, Melbourne Yellow-gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *connata* and Bacchus Marsh Wattle *Acacia rostriformis* were recorded within the Study Area, with Spiny Rice flower also being listed as State significant. These four species are also listed as Generally Protected Flora under the FFG Act, with another ten species recorded within the Study Area being listed as Restricted Use Protected Flora under the FFG Act.

The EHP surveys recorded 74 species of fauna, including 65 native species and nine introduced species. Based on habitat condition and the proximity of previous records, there is suitable habitat within the Study Area for 11 nationally significant fauna species, including the nationally significant Golden Sun Moth *Synemon plana* was confirmed to be present within several properties within the precinct.

Based on past and current mapping, a total of three significant ecological communities were recorded by EHP within the Study Area:

- 22.618 hectares of the nationally significant Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain ecological community;
- 26.014 hectares of the State significant Rocky Chenopod Open Scrub ecological community; and
- 70.515 hectares of the State significant Western (Basalt) Plains Grasslands ecological community.

The Aecom report mapped 58 patches of native vegetation, totalling 15.35ha, as well as a total of 24 native trees, consisting of Grey Box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* and Bull Mallee *Eucalyptus behriana*. A total of 74.4 ha of suitable habitat for Golden Sun Moth was also mapped.

Aecom identified potential habitat for several FFG Act listed flora and fauna, including four FFG Act listed bird species. The presence of Golden Sun Moth was also confirmed on site.

The Aecom report found that two EVCs occur in the study area: Plains Grassland (EVC 132) and Rocky Chenopod Woodland (EVC 64). The EVCs are within the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion and have a bioregional conservation status of Endangered and Vulnerable respectively. The EVCs recorded were consistent with EVCs modelled within the surrounding landscape and extending into Long Forest NCR.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The EHP report recommended that areas within the Merrimu PSP that have only been subject to a desktop assessment as part of the Desktop Assessment Area or not assessed at all towards the PSPs south-east must also be subject to field assessments to confirm the current quality and extent of native vegetation, as well as the presence of suitable habitat for any significant flora and fauna.

The Aecom report, with respect to the Long Forest Estate, recommended that as many patches of native vegetation and Golden Sun Moth habitat as practicable be incorporated into the design. For this site, those patches within proximity to Long Forest NCR should be considered a priority for retention and management commitments with the future land manager should be agreed upon. In general, larger patches of native grassland and those identified as being of higher quality (i.e. NTGVVP) should be prioritised over smaller, disconnected patches which are unlikely to persist in the face of future urban development. Retention of habitat patches within a design should avoid isolation of patches within a developed area and rather should retain patches connected with Long Forest NCR.

## BUSHFIRE

The Bushfire Assessment and Development Report (April 2021) was prepared by Southern Cross Town Planning to assess the Merrimu precinct from a bushfire perspective, and to consider how the future development of the precinct can be designed to mitigate and respond to the potential impact of bushfire.

### What is the purpose of the report?

This report responds to the planning framework for bushfire management, as identified in the Planning Policy and Local Planning Policy Frameworks and relevant provisions of the Moorabool Planning Scheme and Planning Practice Note 64.

### What do we know so far?

This report outlines the strategies required to mitigate fire risk before urban development can proceed within Merrimu. The assessment identifies primary threats arising from landscape fires originating in the distant Lerderderg State Park and immediate hazards from the Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve and internal vegetation.

To manage these risks, the plan mandates urban design controls, including the establishment of defensible space, safe perimeter roads for emergency access, and setbacks based on surrounding vegetation and topography

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The document proposes a Bushfire Mapping and Response Plan (see below), which outlines appropriate buffers and setback requirements. These buffers and setbacks will directly influence the achievable residential density within each study area.

Drainage and public open space reserves are likely to be positioned on the perimeter of the developable area, which assists in achieving good urban design outcomes and increases the separation distance between future development and the bushfire hazard.

All urban development must be edged by perimeter roads or dedicated emergency vehicle access tracks to ensure reliable emergency access and provide a hard-surface buffer between built form and the fire hazard.

Each site is also required to have a minimum of two road access points to support safe evacuation and emergency egress.

Parts of the precinct defined as forested land or woodland will generally be set aside or will remain for conservation purposes.

## COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The *Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment* (March 2026) was prepared by ASR Research to inform the preparation of the Merrimu PSP, which will set out an integrated vision for the precinct and provide actions for how the area should develop into the future.

### What is the purpose of the report?

This report presents an assessment encompassing the following key information inputs:

- a. An extensive review of statutory and strategic documents contained within the Melton Planning Scheme and documents prepared by Moorabool Shire Council and other State Government agencies. This material has been reviewed as the basis of assessing its relevance to preparation of the MPSP.
- b. The identification of existing and planned community infrastructure (including open space and recreation facilities) in localities generally abutting the MPSP including future PSP areas.

- c. An initial set of quantitative community infrastructure demand estimates for the MPSP and wider Study Area; and
- d. An indicative community infrastructure plan for the MPSP that will form the basis of future discussions with Moorabool Shire Council, the Victorian Planning Authority and other external agencies.

### What do we know so far?

Based on ASR Research assumptions for the *Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment (CINA)*, a dwelling yield of approximately 7,800 dwellings is assumed for the Merrimu PSP, which is expected to generate a potential population of approximately 25,000 people.

The assessment identifies site areas for community facilities but does not specify their location across the PSP.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

Key findings and recommendations of the assessment are summarised below.

#### Public Open Space & Recreation

##### Passive Open Space

The proponents of the Merrimu PSP propose to deliver 50.56 hectares of unencumbered passive open space (credited open space) across a network of well-distributed local parks (approximately 30). This represents 2.8% of the NDA of the PSP and within the target range set by PSP Guidelines. In addition to this credited passive open space supply, it is anticipated that the Merrimu PSP will deliver approximately 335 hectares of encumbered public open space (uncredited open space) consisting of:

- Conservation reserves (approximately 41 hectares);
- Waterways and drainage reserves / retarding basins (approximately 60 hectares); and
- Escarpment Regional Parklands (approximately 187 hectares).

The majority of these encumbered open spaces are likely to provide local residents and regional visitors with important informal open space and recreation opportunities via vegetation restoration measures, the construction of shared pathways, and the inclusion of other parkland amenities (e.g. seating, shade structures, picnic facilities and interpretive signage).

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It is recommended that the proponents of the Merrimu PSP review the current location of proposed passive open space reserves within the residential component of the PSP to ensure they satisfy Target 12 of the PSP Guidelines. Target 12 aims to ensure that open space and sports reserves are located to meet the following distribution target: a local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of each dwelling.

It is also anticipated that employment land component of the Merrimu PSP Part 1 will require one small passive open space of approximately 1,400 square metres.

The public open space needs of the Merrimu Investigation Area will require a separate assessment. However, the preliminary view of this assessment is that, given the relatively low residential yield of this PSP (i.e. 1,400 dwellings), on-site public open space provision will be limited to a mix of unencumbered passive open spaces and encumbered open spaces.

It also recommended that proponents of the Merrimu PSP continue to work closely with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DECCA) and other stakeholders to ensure high quality planning outcomes are achieved as part of waterway systems and proposed conservation reserves.

### Active Open Space

The proponents of the Merrimu PSP propose to deliver 27 hectares of active open space across 3 separate and well-distributed locations (north, central and south). This represents 4.83 % of the NDA of the PSP, well above the target range set by PSP Guidelines. The suggested configuration and function of these reserves should remain indicative until further consultation with Moorabool Shire Council is undertaken. However, for the purposes of this assessment the following indicative allocations are suggested:

- North active open space – approximately 10 hectares;
- Central active open space – approximately 7 hectares; and
- South active open space – approximately 10 hectares

These active open space allocations are consistent with VPA community infrastructure specifications and can cater for multiple playing field configurations (e.g. a 10 ha reserve can cater for 2x AFL /cricket ovals + 2 outdoor netball courts, or 2 cricket ovals / overlaid by 4 soccer pitches + 2 outdoor netball courts).

Although the final decision about the preferred sporting uses at each the three proposed reserves should be determined by Council, it is reasonable to assume that each reserve will include at least one sports pavilion.

It is also recommended that the proponents of the Merrimu PSP review the current location of the proposed active open space to ensure it satisfies Target 12 of the PSP Guidelines. Target 12 aims to ensure that open space and sports reserves are located to meet the following distribution target: a sports reserve or open space larger than 1 hectare within an 800m safe walkable distance of each dwelling.

The active open space needs of the Merrimu Investigation Area will require a separate assessment at later stages of the planning process. However, the preliminary view of this assessment is that, given the smaller lot yield of this component, on-site active open space provision is unlikely to form part of this area. However, it is recommended that the Part 2 component should provide a financial contribution toward both the land acquisition and construction costs associated with the proposed provision of 3 new active open spaces within the Part 1 component of the Merrimu PSP.

## Indoor Recreation Stadiums and Council Aquatic Leisure Centres

The demand and supply estimates support the need for up to 3 indoor multipurpose courts to service the Merrimu PSP. This assessment recommends that a 2 court indoor stadium be incorporated into one of the two Government Primary School recommend for the Merrimu PSP. Alternatively, subject to Council support, a Council owned site (0.6 hectare site) containing a 2 court stadium is also an option. Under this option the site should be co-located adjacent to one of the two proposed Government primary school sites. This facility, if supported, would primarily function as a training facility for sports such as basketball and compliment provision at the two major indoor recreation facilities in Bacchus Marsh / Maddingley (i.e. MARC Stadium and Bacchus Marsh Leisure Centre).

Given Moorabool Shire Council's current advocacy campaign to secure State and / or Federal Government funding for an indoor aquatic leisure centre as part of the MARC precinct in Maddingley, this assessment does not support the inclusion of a council aquatic leisure centre within the Merrimu PSP.

Once the provision strategy for Government schools in the PSP is confirmed by the Department of Education (DE), it is recommended that Council seek State Government / DE support for the inclusion of a two-court stadium.

Private gym provision within the Merrimu PSP will also compliment the proposed MARC Aquatic Leisure Centre (assuming Council secures funding support this proposal) and cater for the demand generated by the PSP.

## Multipurpose Community Centres & Community Services

### Multipurpose Community Centres

This assessment supports the need for 2 multipurpose community centres to be established as part of the development of the Merrimu PSP. Based on the findings of this report and the VPA's specifications for community centres (refer to Appendix 4 for more details), this assessment recommends the provision of:

- 1 Level Community Centre (approximately 1,200 square metres of floor space) located on a 0.8 hectare site; and
- 1 Level 2 Community Centre (approximately 1,500 square metres of floor space) located on a 1 hectare site.

A Level 1 community centre is the base community centre model for PSP locations and typically consists of: 1) sessional kindergarten rooms (up to 4 rooms licensed for 33 places); 2) maternal & child health services (typically 2 to 3 consulting rooms) and 3) General community meeting spaces available for hire (approximately 200 m<sup>2</sup>).

A Level 2 community typically consists of all the elements of a Level 1 community centre plus the following components: 1) a Neighbourhood House / Adult Learning Centre (incorporated into general community meeting space allocation shown below) and 2) a larger quantity of general community meeting spaces available for hire (approximately 500 m<sup>2</sup>). Level 2 community centres are also suitable venues for library lounges like those provided in the Truganina Community Centre and the Manor Lakes Community Centre, both located in the City of Wyndham.

It is recommended that the proponent discuss with Moorabool Shire Council the preferred location, potential configuration and service functions of each of the proposed centres.

### **Early Years Services – Long Day Child Care**

Projected demand estimates support the need to facilitate the establishment of up to 5 large privately provided long day child care centres within the Merrimu PSP. The long day childcare centres should also provide integrated kindergarten programs in order to meet some of the projected demand for 3 and 4 year kindergarten programs.

### **Early Years Services – 3 & 4 Year Old Sessional Kindergarten**

The demand estimates support the need for up to 12 stand-alone / sessional kindergarten rooms in the Merrimu PSP to cater for both 3 and 4 year old sessional kindergarten programs (note: the demand estimates under the current policy setting would equate to needing 6 kindergarten rooms). This assessment recommends that 4 kindergarten rooms should ideally be incorporated into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP Part 1.

The remaining stand-alone / sessional kindergarten demand (4 rooms) should preferably be met by integrating kindergarten facilities within either the proposed Government Primary School and / or potential non-Government Primary School. However, this recommendation will require further consultation and confirmation with the Department of Education (DE) and the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS).

Neither DE nor MACS mandate their education facilities to include kindergarten facilities on school sites. In the event that neither DE nor MACS commit to the inclusion of kindergarten facilities on education sites, the remaining sessional kindergarten demand (1 to 2 rooms) may need to be incorporated within the proposed Level 2 multipurpose community centre.

### **Early Years Services – Maternal & Child Health**

The demand estimates support the need for 5 to 6 MCH consulting rooms to service the Merrimu PSP. It is proposed that this need be met by incorporating 3 MCH consulting rooms into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP. The MCH consulting rooms are also suitable as consulting suites for other complimentary health and allied health services.

### **Early Years Services – Playgroups**

The demand increases generated by the Merrimu PSP for playgroup activities can be accommodated within either flexible community meeting spaces or kindergarten rooms to be incorporated into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP.

### **Early Years Services – Occasional Child Care**

Subject to council support as a direct service provider of occasional child care, the demand increases generated by the Merrimu PSP can potentially be accommodated by utilising one or more of the kindergarten rooms to be incorporated into each of the two multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP. Given that this assessment also supports the establishment a new Neighbourhood House in the Merrimu PSP, an occasional child care service to support users of the Neighbourhood House is considered appropriate.

## Neighbourhood Houses / Adult Education

The demand estimates indicate there is sufficient justification for the establishment of either a new or outreach-based Neighbourhood House service within the Merrimu PSP. It is proposed that this be delivered by incorporating sufficient space within the Level 2 community centre proposed for the Merrimu PSP.

## Libraries

The existing Lerderderg Library in Bacchus Marsh should ideally continue to service the needs of the entire Study Area including the Merrimu PSP. However, further consultation with Council is required to confirm whether long term future library expansion at the existing site is supported and physically feasible. However, it should be noted that a Level 2 Community Centre is suitable for a Library Lounge like those provided in the Truganina and Manor Lakes Community Centres in the City of Wyndham, if Council desires the provision of a library service in the Merrimu PSP area 14.

## Arts / Cultural Facilities

Although it is difficult to determine where in the Study Area future demand for arts and cultural activities will be met, it is reasonable to assume that existing and proposed Council community centres can play a significant role in meeting some of the demand for these activities. It is recommended that developers in the Merrimu PSP confirm Council's position on whether to meet future demand for arts and cultural activities at existing facilities in Bacchus Marsh / Darley / Maddingley, and / or at one or both multipurpose community centres recommended for the Merrimu PSP.

## Education

### Government Primary

This assessment supports the need to set aside land (3.5 hectares per site) for two Government Primary Schools within the Merrimu PSP. It should be noted that there is likely to be some capacity at existing Government primary schools (e.g. Coimadai Primary School) to meet some of the early enrolment demands generated by the PSP.

The location and configuration of the school site should be delivered in accordance with the Victorian Government School Site Selection Criteria – Toolbox (October 2021).

The Department of Education (DE) will need to be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its support for this recommendation and the proposed location of each school site.

### Government Secondary

Over the medium to long term (to the year 2046), a second Government Secondary School is likely to be required in order to service the entire Study Area.

In terms of a preferred location for this second Government Secondary School, this assessment strongly endorses one of Moorabool Shire Council's current key advocacy priorities to the State Government: returning the current Council Civic Centre site located in Darley to its original intended use as a Government Secondary School. Given that the one and only Government Secondary College

servicing the Study Area (Bacchus Marsh College) currently has more than 1,000 enrolments, the need to address capacity constraints in the near future looms as key priority for Bacchus Marsh given projected population forecasts for the Study Area.

The Department of Education (DE) and Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) will need to be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its support for this recommendation and the proposed location of the Government secondary school site.

### **Catholic Primary and Secondary**

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) has expressed an interest in establishing a K-9 Catholic School in the Merrimu PSP which will cater for Catholic primary school needs in the Study Area. This assessment supports the establishment a new Catholic school site within the Merrimu PSP based on MACS' expression of interest and that a 5.5 hectare site be identified within the PSP as non-Government school site.

### **Other Independent Primary and Secondary**

The preliminary view of this assessment is that the Merrimu PSP will not be identified as a priority location for other independent primary school provision. However, existing service providers such as Bacchus Marsh Grammar should be consulted to confirm provision needs across the Study Area.

### **TAFE / University**

Given its proximity to the Cobblebank Metropolitan Activity Centre (the type of centre more appropriate for higher order community infrastructure forms such as universities and TAFEs) the provision of a higher education site within the Merrimu PSP is not recommended. However, existing higher education providers such as Victorian University and Federation University (both of which deliver TAFE programs and service the west of Melbourne and Moorabool Shire) should be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its future TAFE provision strategy for the Study Area.

## **Law Courts, Police & Emergency Services**

### **Police**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh Police Station, this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a new police station in the Merrimu PSP. However, Victoria Police should be consulted as part of the external agency engagement process to confirm provision needs in the Study Area and assess the implications for the Bacchus Marsh Police Station.

### **Fire Services**

The preliminary view of this assessment is that the Merrimu PSP may require a fire station to service future population growth and that a 2,500 square metre site be identified within the PSP as an emergency services site. However, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) should be consulted to confirm its provision strategy for fire services within the PSP and surrounding catchment area.

### **Ambulance Services**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh Ambulance Branch (which opened in 2020), this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a new ambulance station in the Merrimu PSP. However, the Department of Health (DH) and the Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA) should be consulted as part of the external agency consultation process to confirm its future provision strategy for ambulance services in the Study Area.

### **State Emergency Services**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh SES Unit, this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a new SES facility in the Merrimu PSP. However, the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority (ESIA) should be consulted to confirm its future provision strategy for SES services within the Study Area.

### **Law Courts**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Court and located in a higher order activity centre, this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a law court in the Merrimu PSP. However, the Department of Justice and Community Safety should be consulted to confirm its position on the future of the Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Court.

## **Health**

### **Acute / Sub-Acute Health Services**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh Hospital and will be serviced in future by the new Melton Hospital (anticipated to open in 2029), this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a new public acute / sub-acute health service in the Merrimu PSP. However, the Department of Health (DH) and the Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA) should be consulted to confirm its future acute / sub-acute health provision strategy for the Study Area including future long term plans for the Bacchus Marsh Hospital.

### **Community Health Services**

Given the Study Area is currently serviced by the Bacchus Marsh Community Health Centre, this assessment does not recommend the establishment of a new community health service in the Merrimu PSP. However, the Department of Health (DH) and the Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA) should be consulted to confirm its future community health provision strategy for the Study Area including future long term plans for the Bacchus Marsh Community Health Centre.

## **Aged Care & Other Services for Older Persons**

The demand for aged care places in the Study Area will increase significantly over the forecast period. However, an assessment of need undertaken by the Australian Government for the broader Aged Care Planning Region (ACPR) within which the PSP is located (i.e. the Grampians Region) will determine when and how many places will be funded. Although not a short-term priority, the proponents of the PSP are encouraged to monitor market interest from existing residential aged care providers and assess the longer-term feasibility of including a residential aged facility within the development. However, the provision of such a facility should not be a mandatory requirement of the planning approval process.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS ASSESSMENT

### What is the purpose of the report?

The *Economic and Social Benefits Assessment* (November 2024) was prepared by Ethos Urban to undertake an economic assessment to establish the urgent requirement to unlock new residential development in Bacchus Marsh and evaluate the economic and social benefits from the completion of the Merrimu PSP to the Victorian economy.

The report establishes that the Merrimu PSP is crucial for addressing the acute housing supply shortage in the region and meeting the state's housing targets, projecting the creation of over 7,000 dwellings and leveraging \$4.8 billion in capital investment.

### What do we know so far?

According to the report, there is clear merit in broadening the range of housing typologies beyond what has traditionally been delivered in Bacchus Marsh. Introducing options such as semi-detached townhouses and terraces is intended to create more affordable and diverse housing choices, particularly for downsizers and first-home buyers.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

In response to retaining rural character, the report states: "The Merrimu township will be defined by its high-quality, diverse, connected, mixed-use walkable residential neighbourhoods. Lower density development will be located on the sloping land in the south west to minimise the visual impact of the township from established urban areas as directed by the Bacchus Marsh UGF." Furthermore, in response to housing diversity and typologies, the Vision expands: "The unique setting of the site offers the opportunity for design responses that capture views to the surrounding landscape and the parkland through design and orientation." To enhance social value, the report recommends providing medium-density townhouses and terraces in close proximity to activity centres, along with opportunities for retirement living.

## HISTORIC HERITAGE

### What is the purpose of the report?

The *Dry Stone Wall Assessment and Management Plan* (October 2025) was prepared by Ecology & Heritage Partners, following identification of several potential dry stone walls (DSWs) across the Merrimu PSP area as part of the previous *Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment* undertaken by EHP in 2020.

This assessment provides a revised assessment of all potential DSWs on those properties and to provide management recommendations for removal or retention prior for the preparation of the Merrimu PSP and subsequent development purposes.

### What do we know so far?

The study area contains several stone walls and features previously identified but not investigated during the preparation of the AHHA (Minos et al. 2020) (Map 3). The most prominent of the walls is DSW3, being the most intact and likely to be an historical DSW.

The walls in the study area have only limited historical significance at the local level, mainly as a contributor to the history of pastoralism and farming across the broader landscape, rather than for their individual characteristics or association with notable historical activities or figures. Likewise, although one of the walls have some aesthetic qualities, this is contributory to the broader rural landscape, which is currently undergoing massive change from urban development. The walls themselves are not considered to have archaeological value, and their broader scientific value is also limited due to their general poor condition and integrity. The construction style is typical of walls in the area and offers no substantial opportunities for further scientific research.



**Plate 13:** DSW 3 looking northwest showing the length and extent of the wall (I. Ostericher 2025)

#### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

In summary, only DSW3 has sufficient intactness and historical significance to consider retention and/or reconstruction subject to additional consultation with Moorabool Shire Council.

There is one partially intact DSW within the study area and two deconstructed potential dry stone walls (DSW6 and Potential DSW Segment B). It is likely that most will be affected and partially or entirely removed to accommodate the development plan under the PSP.

The table below sets out the management recommendations for the features investigated in this study.

**Table 12: DSW Management Recommendations (Retention/Removal)**

Wall Segment	DSW Management Recommendations
DSW1 2621 Gisborne Road, Merrimu 3340	DSW1 is located on the western boundary of the study area, and is not included in the Heritage Overlay ' DSW1 is not of historical value as it was constructed by the previous landowner using a tractor in order to clear the paddock. Management recommendation – <b>removal</b>
DSW2 2621 Gisborne Road, Merrimu 3340	DSW2 is located within property 1, and is not included in the Heritage Overlay DSW2 is not of historical value, as it was created by the previous landowner for the purpose of a cactus garden. Management recommendation – <b>removal</b>
DSW3 146 Bences Road, Merrimu 3340	DSW3 is located along the eastern boundary of the study area, and is not included in the Heritage Overlay Management recommendation – <b>for potential retention pending Council consultation</b>
DSW5 345 Bences Road, Merrimu 3340	DSW5 is located within property 14, and is not included in the Heritage Overlay The conclusion of this assessment is that DSW5 is of no historical value as it is in poor condition and appears to relate to recent paddock clearing activities. Management recommendation – <b>removal</b>
DSW6 332 Bences Road, Merrimu 3340	DSW6 is located within property 9 along the western boundary of the property and is not included in the Heritage Overlay The conclusion of this assessment is that DSW6 is of no historical value as it is in poor condition appearing to have been completely deconstructed and displaced. Management recommendation – <b>removal</b>
Potential DSW Segment B 2677 Gisborne Road, Merrimu 3340	The potential DSW is located within property 4, along the southern boundary of the property, and is not included in the Heritage Overlay Management recommendation – <b>removal</b>

## HIGH LEVEL UTILITY SERVICING

### What is the purpose of the report?

The *High Level Utility Servicing and Infrastructure Assessment* (January 2023) was prepared by Creo Consulting in order to undertake a high-level utilities servicing assessment report for the Merrimu precinct and identify current services and utilities infrastructure capacity issues within the precinct, noting identified key opportunities and constraints for the provision of servicing and utility infrastructure to full service the PSP into the future.

This report is limited to research on utility services including sewer, potable water, recycled water, electricity, gas, and telecommunications. The report will identify the existing services within and in close proximity to the PSP and the proposed servicing arrangements for future urban development of the PSP.

### What do we know so far?

#### Water and Sewer

Interim potable water supply to the Merrimu Precinct can be serviced from the existing elevated tank in Dodemaide Circuit. This interim strategy would require the construction of a smaller suitable sized trunk main from Western Water's tank site along Dodemaide Circuit to Bences Road.

Western Water is responsible for funding trunk infrastructure and shared assets. Developers are responsible for providing reticulation assets and temporary reticulation works and the cost to connect the development to the Western Water network. Developers are also responsible for the financing costs associated with bringing forward the provision of shared assets and temporary shared works that Western Water had programmed to be constructed at a future date. The ESC guidelines determine that Western Water may levy a charge that will cover the financing costs associated with bringing forward the provision of Shared Assets. This is referred to as an Incremental Financing Cost charge.

- Western Water have advised that an existing network of DN100 and DN225 mains are located along Bences Road. These mains have limited capacity to service additional lots and cannot be relied upon for initial stages.
- To ultimately service the Merrimu Precinct a DN600 main will be required to be constructed from the Merrimu Water Filtration Plant (WFP) down Bences Road and Flanagans Drive as development progresses. The construction of these works is earmarked for the year 2033. Western Water has advised that the capacity of the Merrimu WFP is circa 15,000 lots. Noting that the current number of lots being supplied in Bacchus Marsh is circa 8,000, there is currently capacity in the Merrimu WFP for interim development of the Merrimu precinct.
- Western Water have also advised that the initial stages of the Merrimu precinct can be serviced from the existing water tank located in Dodemaide Circuit. This interim strategy would require the construction of a smaller suitable sized trunk main from Western Water's tank site along Dodemaide Circuit to Bences Road. The number of lots that this interim strategy can support has yet to be determined by Western Water.

Interim sewerage supply to the Merrimu Precinct is via an upgrade to the Tipperary sewer pump station. The Bacchus Marsh Recycling Water Plant has sufficient capacity to treat the forecast sewerage generated from Bacchus Marsh area in the short to medium term. Significant upgrades to the Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plant would be required to cater for the future Merrimu, Parwan and Bacchus Marsh areas.

The Tipperary sewer pump station (SPS) services fewer than 100 lots.

Western Water have advised that the said existing pump station could be upgraded to service the initial stages of the Merrimu Precinct. Western Water have determined that the existing rising main can service a total of 500 lots. The location of these 500 lots is not constrained to the southern end of the PSP

Western Water have advised however that the likely sewer strategy to ultimately service the Merrimu Precinct would be to either construct a new sewer pump station or a further upgrade to the Avenue of Honour sewer pump station. It is likely that a new rising main will be required along Woolpack Road or similar path to go to the Bacchus Marsh recycled water plant.

Class A recycled water is not available in Bacchus Marsh.

#### Electricity

- Bacchus Marsh is serviced from the Bacchus Marsh zone substation (BMH) which is located on the corner of Bacchus Marsh-Balliang and Kerrs Road, Maddingley. BMH is currently supplied by a 66kV sub-transmission line from Brooklyn terminal station with backup supply via a 66kV subtransmission line from the Ballarat terminal station via an auto changeover scheme at BMH. Currently, the BMH zone substation is comprised of two 10/13.5 MVA transformers operating at 66/22kV.

- Powercor has advised that a new 25/33MVA third transformer at BMH zone substation will be required at an estimated cost of \$7 million. This augmentation of the BMH substation is proposed by 2025 and will bring extra capacity and be able to supply additional load.
- To service the initial stages of the Merrimu precinct will require the high voltage conductors surrounding the Merrimu precinct to be augmented. Powercor will need to complete additional design and modelling to confirm the future network loads and to what extent the Merrimu Precinct can be serviced with power.
- Existing 22kV high voltage overhead supply along Bences Road can provide electrical supply to initial stages of the development. Zone substations and sub-transmission network augmentation would likely be funded by Powercor as part of the shared upstream network augmentation. Out of sequence upgrades to the 22kV feeder network may incur cost to the Developer, however this cannot be confirmed until an application is made.
- Electricity supply will ultimately be serviced within the Merrimu PSP via underground high and low voltage cables located within existing and proposed road reservations. Supply to each individual dwelling within the development will be by low voltage underground cable. Substation sites will be required at approximately 300 metre intervals and the locations will be finalised as part of the overall electrical design for the development.

#### Gas

Gas supply does not extend into the Merrimu Precinct. Interim gas supply to a maximum 250 dwellings can be extended from the existing 150mm diameter main located in Bacchus Marsh Road.

#### Telecommunications

The Merrimu Precinct is within NBN's fixed wireless network. To ultimately service the Merrimu Precinct will require a fibre to the premises (FTTP) network to be rolled out.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

It is recommended that the maximum number of lots that can be serviced from this interim water system prior to the need to construct the ultimate DN600 main from the Merrimu Water Filtration Plant (WFP) down Bences Road and Flanagans Drive as development progresses is confirmed.

It is recommended that the progressive upgrades (and associated costs) required to cater for the future roll-out of the Merrimu, Parwan and Bacchus Marsh areas is confirmed.

It is recommended to confirm whether the installation of a new 25/33MVA third transformer at BMH zone substation will have the capacity to cater for the future Merrimu, Parwan and Bacchus Marsh areas.

It is recommended to confirm the scope of augmentation that would be required to service more than 250 dwellings with gas now that the Parwan City Gate Interchange Station has been constructed to service the Parwan Employment Precinct, and whether the Parwan City Gate Interchange Station has capacity to provide adequate gas supply to Merrimu precinct.

On 12 March 2026, Powercor issued updated comments further to their response from Agency Validation (December 2025). The updated comments state:

- ABS 2022 shows there are approximately 9,926 dwellings in the Bacchus Marsh SA2 area, currently supplied from the BMH Zone Substation (2 × 10/13 MVA transformers), which is already approaching a cyclic N rating of approximately 40 MVA.
- The proposed additional ~8,000 dwellings represents approximately an 80% increase in dwellings, with an estimated cyclic demand of around 72 MVA. This exceeds the combined capacity of the existing sub-transmission lines supplying BMH.
- As a result, the Merrimu PSP will necessitate new 66 kV sub-transmission infrastructure, including:
  - Approximately 18 km of new sub-transmission line from MLN and DPTS to BMH, and
  - Approximately 36 km of uprating of existing sub-transmission assets.
- In addition, while there are plans to replace the existing BMH transformers with 25/33 MVA units, the forecast load growth will also require installation of a third 25/33 MVA transformer at BMH to maintain N-1 network capability.
- PSP Infrastructure Considerations, to ensure future delivery of the required sub-transmission infrastructure:
  1. The proposed 66 kV sub-transmission lines are expected to traverse the Merrimu PSP area, generally following:
    - a. Old Western Highway
    - b. Western Freeway
  2. Corridor allowance should also be considered along:
    - a. Flanagans Drive
    - b. Lindsay Avenue
    - c. and the main connector streets linking these corridors

## **INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT**

### What is the purpose of the report?

The Integrated Water Management Issues and Opportunities Report (May 2025) was prepared by Arup in order to set out the methodology undertaken to shortlist Integrated Water Management (IWM) opportunities for the Merrimu PSP, and to determine recommendations for IWM solutions.

### What do we know so far?

The report outlines the context, policy drivers and requirements for IWM, summarises the site context, explains how a long list of options were shortlisted, how each shortlisted option was appraised, and recommendations and next steps. This report is for Merrimu PSP, however the description of site context and shortlisting of options considered the wider Bacchus Marsh region, which also includes Parwan Station PSP and Parwan Employment Precinct.

## What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The shortlisted IWM options, following a stakeholder workshop with VPA, DEECA, Moorabool Shire Council, Greater Western Water and Melbourne Water, is shown below.

Shortlisted Option	Precinct relevance for opportunity
1. Rainwater tanks in all new homes	✓
2. Rainwater harvesting transfer to Merrimu Reservoir for potable supply	✓
3. Passive irrigation of street trees with stormwater	✓
4. Precinct-scale stormwater harvesting a. For open space irrigation b. For non-potable supply to homes	✓
5. Aquifer injection instead of piping down escarpment	✓
6. Stormwater infiltration into Alluvium formation	✓
7. Class A recycled water supply to PSP	✓
8. Class B/C recycled water supply to open spaces throughout precinct	✓
9. Transfer stormwater to Melton Reservoir and then to Merrimu Reservoir for potable supply	✓

## LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

Two land capability assessments were prepared to inform the PSP, being the *Land Capability Assessment* (March 2018) prepared by Jacobs and the *Land Capability Assessment – Desktop Review* (April 2025) prepared by Stantec.

### What is the purpose of the report?

Jacobs was engaged to undertake a Land Capability Assessment for the Merrimu PSP. The primary objective of this assessment is to identify opportunities and constraints related to the hydrological, hydrogeological, geotechnical and contaminated land conditions in the precinct, related to the nature of the area itself and current, past and/or future land uses.

Stantec was engaged to undertake a review of the existing Jacobs LCA as part of the preparation of the Merrimu PSP, in line with the current state of knowledge around policy and guidelines, and the introduction of the Environment Protection Act 2017. This includes a review of the potential risks (and if required changes) to the existing LCA associated with the hydrological, hydrogeological and contaminated land conditions previously identified.

### What do we know so far?

The project area is underlain by highly reactive residual basaltic clays over basalt rock, with an indicative site classification of Class H2 to E. These conditions present typical geotechnical considerations for development in the area, including foundation design responses, potential differential settlement and excavation behaviour, but do not represent a constraint to development.

Localised areas of uncontrolled fill, poor drainage, erosion features and potential land instability may be present and will require consideration during detailed planning and infrastructure design.

No significant hydrogeological or hydrological constraints were identified that would render the land unsuitable for development. Shallow groundwater is likely to occur near Pyrites Creek and the Lerderderg River and may influence excavation and construction methods in these areas.

Local surface water flows and water quality will need to be appropriately managed to maintain existing drainage patterns and protect downstream waterways, consistent with standard urban development practice.

Several localised areas of interest with moderate potential contamination risk were identified, associated with historical rural land uses, fill stockpiling, limited quarrying activities and agricultural or aviation-related infrastructure. Potential off-site contamination sources were assessed as low risk.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

Key recommendations from the Jacobs LCA included:

- It is recommended that a site inspection is undertaken by an engineering geologist in order to map geological features, such as erosion and land instability features, to assist with further planning of the proposed development area.
- Further drilling and collection of soil and rock samples for the purposes of assessing the engineering properties for building foundation, road design and slope stability assessments.
- In order to determine the depth to groundwater as well the hydraulic properties of the aquifers, drilling and installation of groundwater monitoring wells is recommended. This will be applicable in terms of assessing the risk of groundwater inflow into future excavations for construction purposes. There is no formal driver for this, it is recommended to understand this risk.
- Water quality control management measures will need to be implemented to ensure that the quality of surface water runoff and the health of downstream waterways is not adversely impacted during the development.
- It is recommended that an exploratory soil and groundwater investigation be undertaken at AOI that have been identified as having a moderate potential contamination risk ranking to determine potential site specific constraints to the future development of each AOI. These investigations may likely include targeted sampling informed by observations made during site inspections and review of historical aerials;
- For properties allocated a low to moderate potential contamination risk ranking where a property inspection has not been undertaken, Jacobs recommend that this be undertaken on a property-by-property basis prior to development, to determine the need for any further intrusive assessment works;
- Removal of potentially contaminating infrastructure (e.g. septic tanks and above and underground storage tanks if present) followed by soil validation sampling; and
- Classification and appropriate removal (if required) of various stockpiles and dumped materials observed in isolated areas. This would also include subsequent validation of the surface soils following removal. It is noted that sampling and visual inspection of some stockpiles may indicate that the material is suitable for re-use as part of future development, therefore, removal may not be required in all instances.
- The Stantec review of the Jacobs LCA determined that there was no change in potentially contaminated land risks within the Merrimu PSP since the original LCA was undertaken.



## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

### What is the purpose of the report?

Tract were engaged to prepare a *Landscape Character Assessment and Framework Plan* (June 2025) on behalf of the VPA. This report provides a landscape character assessment of the Merrimu precinct within its regional and local context. The purpose of the land character assessment is to:

- Undertake a landscape, environmental and visual assessment that provides a basis for environmentally sustainable design, site conservation and rehabilitation
- Provide a site-specific foundation structure for the development of the precinct
- Provide an overarching Landscape Framework to inform the Merrimu PSP

The Landscape Framework aims to identify strategic requirements to guide future site development based on the landscape and visual conditions identified in the Merrimu precinct, and to inform development patterns, site characteristics and connections for the future PSP.

## What do we know so far?

The Merrimu Precinct is located east of Bacchus Marsh town centre and comprises approximately 906 hectares, including agricultural land, waterways, escarpments and conservation areas. While identified as a growth area, the report emphasises that this should not prescribe a landscape of low value, noting the importance of the precinct's rural landscape setting, scenic amenity and visually prominent landforms. The future precinct is intended to be "a growth area nestled within the landscape, and not a landscape within a development site".

The precinct is primarily located within the Western Plains and The Uplands landscape character types. The Western Plains are characterised by flat volcanic plains and agricultural grasslands, while The Uplands comprise dramatic rises, steep escarpments, ridgelines and plateaus cut by river gorges, creating a strong visual and topographic identity.

Key landscape features identified as having High Scenic Quality include:

- The Lerderderg River, Pyrites Creek and associated escarpments
- Hilltops and ridgelines of the Merrimu Plateau
- The Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve

Moderate scenic quality areas include the Werribee River and alluvial floodplains, while agricultural land and existing urban areas are generally assessed as having lower scenic quality

## What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

A high-level visual assessment, including Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) modelling, found that:

- Visibility from the Bacchus Marsh Valley is largely limited to the escarpments, with the plateau generally not visible from the valley floor
- Areas of moderate to high visual sensitivity are concentrated along the escarpment edges, where high landscape value coincides with elevated visibility
- There is theoretical visibility to and from key gateways, the Western Freeway, and Bacchus Marsh Road, particularly in foreground and middle-ground views

Key constraints identified include steep slopes (>10%) with high erosion risk, highly visible escarpment edges, sodic and dispersive soils, bushfire management requirements along the Long Forest Reserve interface, and sensitive hydrological features such as drainage lines and wetlands. Opportunities include retention of mature vegetation, enhancement of water bodies, creation of bio-links to the Long Forest Reserve, alignment of streets to capture views, and reinforcement of landscape gateways

The Landscape Framework Plan adopts a three-tiered approach:

- Primary Framework – Conservation, focusing on protection of steep slopes, high-risk erosion areas and high visual sensitivity landscapes
- Secondary Framework – Management, guiding development in areas of moderate slope and risk through buffers, setbacks and erosion management
- Tertiary Framework – Enhancement, promoting bio-links, street tree planting, WSUD integration, scenic road alignments and landscape buffers along major infrastructure such as the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road

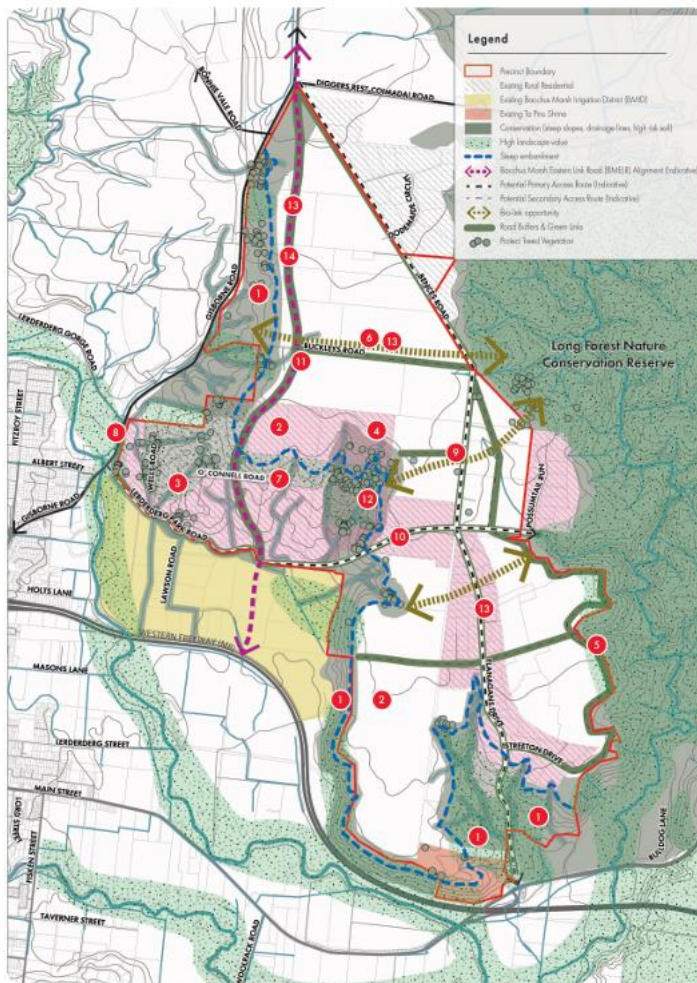


Figure 24. Merrimu PSP Proposed Landscape Framework

## NOISE ASSESSMENT

What is the purpose of the report?

The Darley Sand Quarry Access and Exit Traffic Noise Desktop Review (April 2023) was prepared by Marshall Day in order to undertake a desktop study of potential noise impacts from quarry trucks accessing and exiting the Darley Sand Quarries from Gisborne Road to a proposed residential development in the Merrimu PSP.

What do we know so far?

This study is intended to provide contextual information regarding the level of quarry truck noise in isolation, and in the context of traffic on Gisborne Road, in terms of both long term and short term noise levels from trucks accessing and exiting the Darley Sand Quarries.

The study is limited to the assessment of quarry truck noise on Gisborne Road and at the two quarry entrances opposite the residential development. An assessment of truck or industrial noise within quarry boundaries against EPA Publication 1826 Noise limit and assessment protocol for the control of

noise from commercial, industrial and trade premises and entertainment venues has not been undertaken.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The results of the assessment indicate the contribution of noise from quarry trucks to average (LAeq) and typical maximum (LA10,18h) traffic noise from Gisborne Road is negligible, given the number of other vehicles using the road.

The assessment indicates that the risk of noise impact including the risk of sleep disturbance from quarry trucks entering and exiting the quarry sites to future dwellings is low. Maximum noise levels from quarry trucks at the nearest intersections are expected to be comparable to, if not lower than maximum noise levels from traffic on Gisborne Road. Noise from quarry trucks at these intersections are therefore not expected to pose any greater risk of sleep disturbance than traffic on the road.

Further assessments may be required to be considered during subsequent planning stages for the PSP to understand cumulative impacts of traffic noise from the surrounding road network on the PSP, that is not limited to quarry truck noise to determine if any further mitigation measure are required.

The Noise reporting does not consider noise mitigation requirements for the BMELR through the siting and location of sensitive uses. Further work is required to address this to the satisfaction of Head TfV.

## RETAIL AND ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

### What is the purpose of the report?

The Peer Review of Moorabool Retail Strategy & Background Report (2024) and Merrimu PSP Retail Assessment (March 2025) was prepared by GapAdvisory in order to peer review the previously prepared Moorabool Retail Strategy (2024).

The Moorabool Retail Strategy offers a comprehensive analysis to guide strategic planning for the Bacchus Marsh area, particularly considering expected growth up to the year 2041. The report recognises the significant role of the Merrimu precinct in accommodating future growth in the area, noting that Merrimu alone is expected to support a population of between 13,400 and 20,000 people.

### What do we know so far?

The review considers that the potential need for retail floorspace across the Moorabool Shire was understated in the previous assessments. The Background Report to the Strategy does not include an allowance for inflow demand into the Shire in its assessment of the future retail floorspace demand projections/requirements.

Based on analysis of the spending behaviours in the Shire, this inflow demand could potentially add 20-25% to the total demand numbers currently modelled. Any bulky goods retail offer would also attract demand from outside the LGA, which would mean that the allowance for around 12,000-24,000sqm of bulky goods retail is understated as well by around 20-25%.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The review recommends a 3-centre scenario, with a preference for 2 large neighbourhood centres and 1 smaller centre, to allow for the flexibility for two large supermarkets, given the large end-state population.

Overall, it recommends a total floorspace provision of at least 10,000 sq.m of retail floorspace (plus ancillary non-retail uses of around 3,500 sq.m = 13,000 – 14,000 sq.m) and no bulky goods/large format retail within the precinct – as this would be better suited elsewhere (on major roads).

Under a 2 large neighbourhood centres outcome, the potential supportable retail outcome could be closer to 13,000 – 14,000 sq.m of retail floorspace (and up to 18,000 sq.m of total retail and ancillary non-retail floorspace).

## SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

What is the purpose of the report?

The Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2025) was prepared by SGS and VPA. The purpose of this report is to inform key stakeholders – Moorabool Shire Council, landowners, the development industry and community housing providers – on the local affordable housing needs or housing assistance demand within Merrimu, including the expected types of housing required (e.g., dwelling size and depth of housing assistance needed).

What do we know so far?

The Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Model prepared by SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) for the VPA brings together a range of inputs relating to future statewide demand for affordable housing and makes recommendations as to how this demand could be distributed at a more localised level. The model takes as its starting point the statewide projected demand for affordable housing from Victoria in Future (VIF). The model distributes this projected demand at the statistical area 2 (SA2) level. This aims to ensure an equitable distribution of affordable housing based on the number of people projected in each SA2, and moderates this distribution further based on:

- A PSP area's relative entrenched disadvantage, based on the Socio-Economic Index for Advantage (SEIFA), to avoid concentrating disadvantage.
- A PSP area's access to employment and essential services, because travel costs (time and money) can have larger adverse impacts on vulnerable groups
- A PSP area's amenity and quality of life, because locating affordable housing in areas with good access to open space and community infrastructure provides residents with improved health and recreation opportunities.

What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The demand assessment model suggests a 2.4% affordable housing target and a 9.9% social housing target across the precinct with a high proportion of 1-bedroom dwellings.

## SODIC SOILS AND LAND CONTAMINATION

What is the purpose of the report?

The Merrimu Sodic Soil Peer Review (April 2025) was prepared by Streamology in order to undertake a peer review of the information, reports and recommendations relating to sodic soil and future urban development within the Merrimu PSP. The focus of the review was on the sodic soil management recommendations developed by WSP (2022).

## What do we know so far?

WSP (2022) undertook a desktop-based peer review of works to date covering the Merrimu PSP and a risk assessment to assist the VPA in understanding the implications of sodic soils within the precinct.

The risk assessment examined both short- and long-term impacts and considered soil erosion, and impacts to waterways, buildings and infrastructure. The risk level was allocated primarily based on slope with slopes greater than 15% classified as the highest risk. The risk assessment identified the risk on the plateau for both soil erosion and building and infrastructure as low-moderate. Along the escarpment the risk for soil erosion and to building and infrastructure was rated as high. The escarpment areas have a high association with both slopes greater than 15% and the Werribee Formation, a known risk factor for sodic soil in the region.

WSP (2022) development a high-risk area that incorporated the slopes greater than 15 % along the escarpment with an additional 100-metre buffer around these steep slopes. The 100-metre buffer was not intended to exclude development in these areas and WSP state that the buffer was included to ensure additional investigations are undertaken and management controls are implemented if required.

## What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The review found that:

- The methodology employed by WSP (2022) in their risk assessment of soil erosion is a reasonable approach. They have considered the key elements which indicate higher risk including slope and exposure of the highly sensitive Werribee Formation.
- A 100 m buffer around the high-risk slopes was incorporated as a precautionary measure. We consider this to be a reasonable approach in the face of data gaps or limited information.
- There is no support or evidence within the literature for determining an appropriate setback width to manage potential disturbance of sodic and dispersive soils. Existing guidance and research on sodic soils is limited to their impact on agricultural activities, therefore there is little quantifiable support for setbacks and their appropriate sizing. Typically, where there are significant data or knowledge gaps such as this a precautionary approach to managing potential risks is adopted.
- The 100 m buffer incorporated into the WSP (2022) high risk zone does not exclude development from this zone.
- The 100-metre buffer (now referred to as the investigation zone) will require further investigation to confirm whether there is a risk of exposure and disturbance of sodic and dispersive soils, and if so, the mitigation measures and controls required for development within this zone.
- Further investigations within this zone should comprise soil sampling to the depth of proposed excavation and with a density as outlined in DSE (2010). Laboratory testing should include Emerson class, to understand dispersity, and exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP) to understand sodicity.
- Where sodic/dispersive soils are identified, development can proceed with the appropriate controls to address the level of risk identified. Individual mitigation measures used in isolation are unlikely to be sufficient and several measures will be required depending on factors like the extent of exposure, the proposed works, and the level of risk. Mitigation measures may include a combination of measures such as application of hydrated lime or gypsum, soil compaction, clay capping, topsoiling and revegetation.

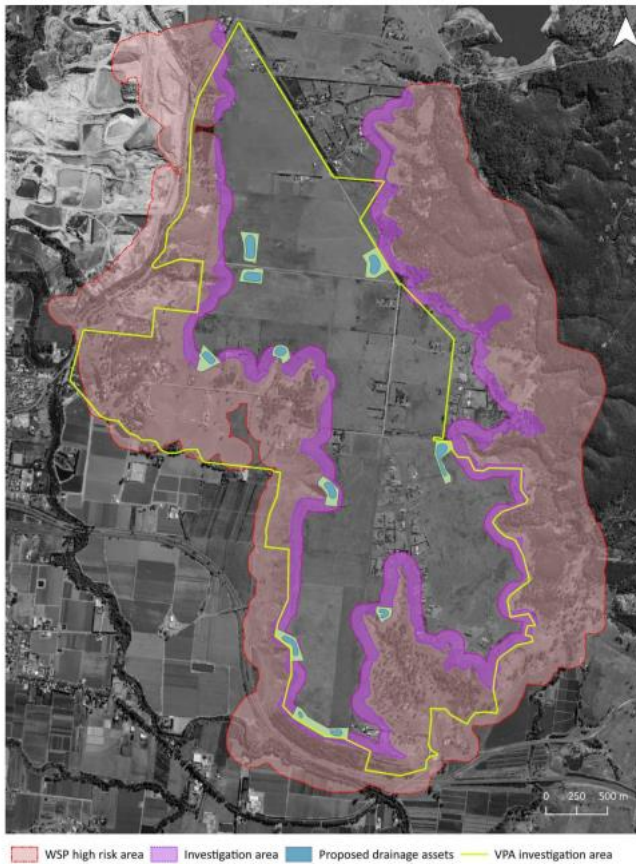


Figure 6. High risk erosion area (in red). Initial mapping from WSP included both the red and purple areas as high-risk and represented the area on steep slopes plus a 100-metre buffer from these slopes. We have divided these areas into the high-risk area (i.e. steep slopes) in red and the investigation area (WSP's 100-metre buffer) in purple. Proposed drainage assets are also included in blue/green.

## **INTEGRATED TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT**

Integrated Transport Assessment (Traffix Group, March 2025) – with a February 2026 addendum

The Integrated Transport Assessment (ITA) considers the transport infrastructure needs to facilitate development of the Merrimu PSP including public transport provision, pedestrian and cycling networks as well as access for private motor vehicles including access point locations, intersection upgrades and road cross-section requirements. The analysis is informed by staged traffic modelling and intersection design requirements.

The underlying traffic volumes used in the ITA are informed by the Strategic Transport Modelling.

### What do we know so far?

The Merrimu PSP includes amenities and initiatives to increase internal capture and reduce reliance on private vehicles, including early provision of community infrastructure, retail and employment spaces, and will support hybrid work by providing flexible working spaces within the neighbourhood centres and designing dwellings with home-office potential. The first development stage is anticipated to include a town centre and a developer sponsored bus link to Bacchus Marsh town centre and railway

station to establish sustainable travel behaviours from day one. The Head, TfV supports the early uptake of sustainable modes, however has requested further information on the proposed developer sponsored bus link to confirm feasibility.

Vehicular access to the precinct will be provided via new and upgraded intersections to the surrounding arterial road network including along Gisborne Road, Bacchus Marsh Road and Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road. Further work is still required to confirm the capacity and feasibility of intersection upgrades being proposed through the planning process.

The internal PSP road network has been designed to function independently of the planned Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR). In addition, the internal PSP connector road network has been designed to discourage any external through traffic and minimise any impacts on established rural residential lots within the precinct.

Transport modelling undertaken to date indicates that some level of development from the Merrimu PSP can be accommodated whilst maintaining acceptable traffic flows within the PSP and on the wider network. The triggers for when upgrades will be required as road links and intersections exceed capacity either in the form of localised interventions or the BMELR still need to be determined through further work. Notwithstanding this, transport modelling indicates that as the Merrimu PSP progresses towards full build out, delivery of the BMELR will provide better access to the PSP and broader network efficiency and transport benefits.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

- **Rear-Loaded Properties:** To accommodate the higher traffic volumes anticipated on the central connector road (which links Flanagans Drive and Buckleys Road) during the interim period (before the BMELR is built), it is recommended that abutting properties along this central connector road be rear loaded.
- Access to properties around Flanagans Drive is limited to local roads, which may limit capacity for future subdivision. Flanagans Drive 'rural connector street' cross section excludes footpaths and on street parking, relying solely on a 2-way bicycle path on the western side.
- The proposed Flanagans Drive rural connector street cross section may limit subdivision potential of the current larger lifestyle allotments if appropriate visitor car parking and appropriate pedestrian infrastructure are not provided along this portion of the road. The northern portion of Flanagans Drive is not designated a connector road and this may have less impact on future subdivision potential.
- Further work is required to adequately demonstrate that traffic generation from the PSP can be safely managed on to the external network, without impeding on traffic flow on the broader network and reliance on the BMELR.

### Emerging questions / opportunities to consider

Whilst the Head, TfV has been consulted on the preparation of the ITA, there are still various unresolved concerns, which are summarised below. As such, further work is required to be undertaken to ensure that the draft ITA is finalised to the satisfaction of the Head, TfV and VPA, prior to finalisation of the PSP

#### **Place Based Plan**

Further analysis is required to confirm that the proposed road network can accommodate traffic volumes generated by the PSP both internally and externally on to the broader network. This includes managing internal traffic flows at Buckleys Road and the East-West Connector.

The ITA states that the BMELR should include a connection between RD-03 and the BMELR, known as the East West Connector Road to reduce congestion and traffic impacts on Buckleys Road and the town centre including IN-04). The PSP includes a Requirement to discontinue this connection at the time of delivery of the BMELR as the design of the current BMELR alignment does not include this connection. The Head, TfV will assess the ongoing need for this connection at the time of delivery of the BMELR.

The ITA will need to assess options to manage traffic flows without this secondary connection to the BMELR. An option that could be assessed in the further work includes assessing an earlier trigger for the roundabout option at the Buckleys Road and Gisborne Road intersection to better manage traffic flows along Buckleys Road. However, the following matters need further consideration regarding the intersection of Buckleys Road and Gisborne Road:

- While the ITA states that the Buckleys Road and Gisborne Road intersection can operate as a Give Way controlled T-intersection until full build out with the BMELR in place, further consideration needs to be given as to the potential need to restrict movements for safety reasons
- The exhibited DCP proposes a roundabout at this location, which would allow for all movements to be safely accommodated
  - The ITA will need to be updated with consideration to the above, as well as confirming its constructability.
- Confirming the feasibility of any proposed intersection upgrade of Buckleys Road and Gisborne Road given the known cultural heritage sensitivities and constraints due to existing topography.

Additionally the ITA must include an assessment of the following on managing internal traffic flows :

- a) the roundabout proposed at Gisborne Road, Diggers Rest Coimadai Road and Bences Road
- b) The left in/ left out arrangement on the eastern leg of RD-03.

If this further analysis and update of the ITA confirms that PSP traffic is unable to be managed without a secondary connection to the BMELR, further discussions with the Head, TfV will be required as well as consideration for DCP apportionment for the intersection.

Furthermore, additional consideration needs to be given to the spacing of the proposed intersection with the BMELR and Buckleys Road and IN-04. Further work will be required to be undertaken to demonstrate the interaction between the intersections to the satisfaction of the Head, TfV.

### **Broader External Network Impacts**

Further work is required to clearly demonstrate to the Head, TfV that the traffic modelling and intersection analysis undertaken to date proves that the existing arterial road network can operate safely and efficiently once the PSP is fully developed.

Further information is also required to address safety impacts on key arterial roads including Gisborne Road, Diggers-Rest Coimadai Road and Bacchus Marsh Road, as well as key intersections including the Western Freeway interchange at Gisborne Road. The Merrimu PSP is expected to generate significant traffic volumes on rural high-speed roads, that have existing safety concerns, and an assessment is required on the safety implications of this.

In considering the Strategic Transport Modelling Report outputs, the ITA will need to be updated to identify interventions for the external network to support the full build out of the PSP, by defining the scope and timing of intervention, including preparation of Functional Layout Plans (FLPs) and costings for DCP inclusion.

While this work is being done, the exhibited DCP includes allowance for State arterial road upgrades on Bacchus Marsh Road and Gisborne Road and intersection upgrades based on current findings of the ITA which include that there will be significant congestion on Gisborne Road and Bacchus Marsh Road as they exceed capacity in sections resulting from full build out of the PSP. The scope of these works will need to be refined through the further updates to the ITA.

### **External Intersection Upgrades**

The ITA proposes intersection upgrades with the existing and future arterial road network to allow for access to the development. The Head, TfV has provided feedback on the external intersection designs proposed by the ITA, specifically in relation to the need to ensure the safety of the proposed connections and ensure compliance with relevant guidelines. Prior to the finalisation of the PSP the ITA will need to be updated to ensure that all requirements have been considered. The required updates are likely to result in changes to FLPs and costs.

### **Intersection of Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road and Bences Road (IN-10)**

The ITA proposes a T-intersection upgrade at Diggers Rest Coimadai Road and Bences Road to allow for access to the development.

As an alternative - a 4-leg single lane roundabout design for the intersection has been developed which connects Gisborne Road, Diggers Rest- Coimadai and Bences Road. This design will result in a much safer outcome for all users. The ITA will need to be updated to include this design and consider its impacts on the wider network.

### **Interchange of Western Freeway and Gisborne Road**

This interchange is a key bottleneck for traffic flow along Gisborne Road. There is the potential for the performance and safety of the Gisborne Road Interchange to be directly impacted by traffic generation from the Merrimu PSP.

A SIDRA assessment will need to be undertaken for the interchange to assess capacity and identify any possible interventions that could increase the capacity at this location. Similarly SIDRA assessments for the intersections of Bacchus Marsh Road and Western Freeway Offramp and Woolpack Road and Bacchus Marsh Road will be required prior to the finalisation of the PSP.

### **Intersection of Flanagans Drive and Bacchus Marsh Road (IN-09)**

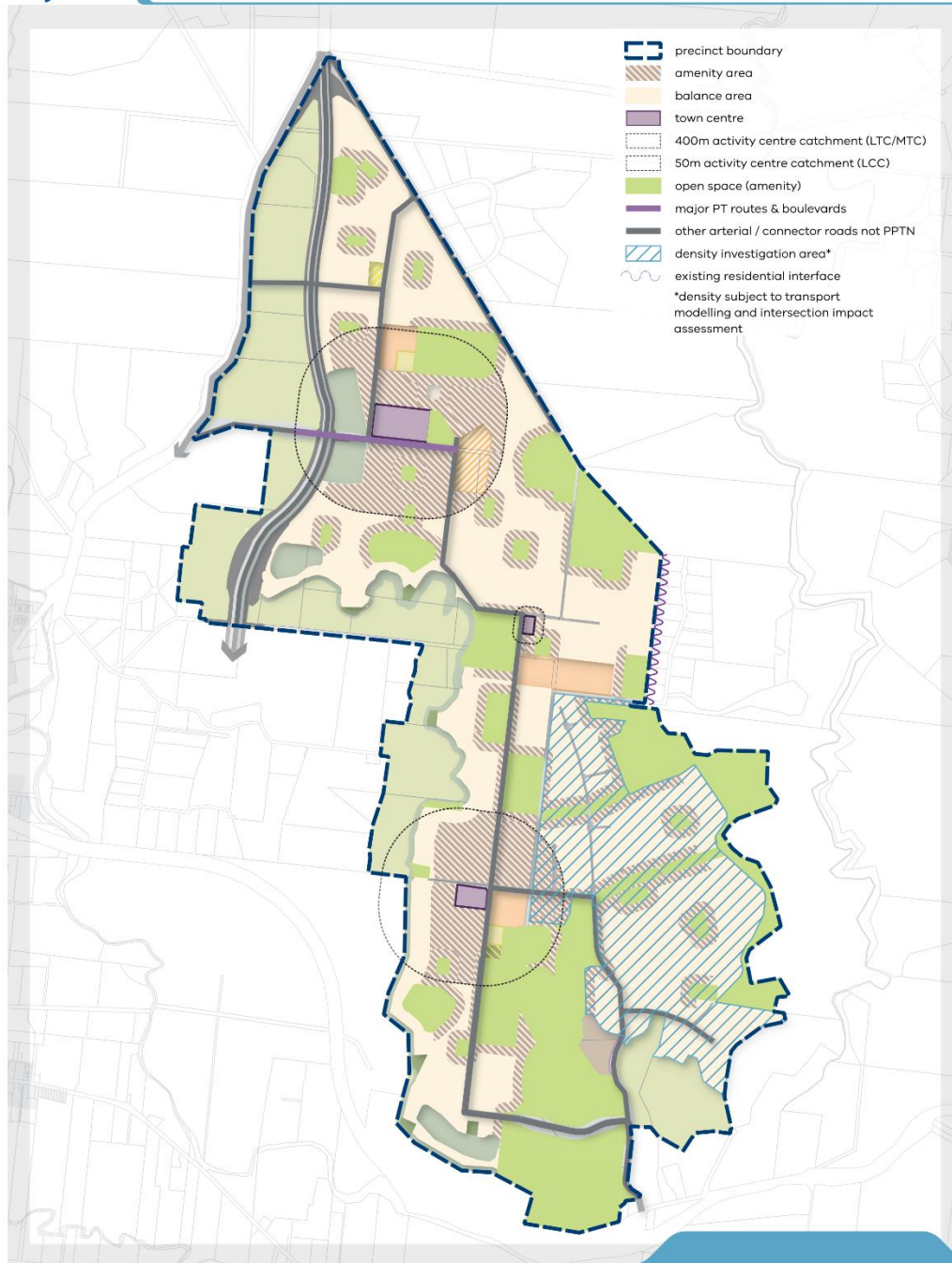
The current intersection design proposed for Flanagans Drive and Bacchus Marsh Road (IN-09) as part of the March 2025 Traffix Group ITA requires further testing to ensure that it does not result in unacceptable Levels of Service and queues on Bacchus Marsh Road.

Further work is required to demonstrate that the proposed residential densities within the PSP can be safely accommodated by this intersection or what further upgrades would be required. The Head, TfV requires further information on:

- How traffic from Stages 4 and 5 (as defined in the ITA) of the development can be safely accommodated at this intersection.

- The ITA states that at such a time the BMELR interchange is built, IN-09 will need to be upgraded to include two left-turn lanes into Flanagans Drive to minimise the queue lengths. There are known significant heritage sensitivities at this location which will limit the constructability of any upgrade at this location. Therefore, FLPs are required to be provided to confirm feasibility.
- Further work is required to demonstrate adequate capacity at the intersection to accommodate precinct traffic. Even if, Stage 7 (as defined in the ITA) was allowed post BMELR delivery, the ITA will need to demonstrate how the required upgrades to IN-09 can be practically achieved given the physical constraints at this location.
- Future updates to this intersection will need to demonstrate how it can accommodate the proposed densities within the "investigation area" shown on Plan 3 - Housing.

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## STRATEGIC TRANSPORT MODELLING REPORT

Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment (Clarity Consulting, March 2026)

What is the purpose of the report?

The *Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment (2026)* was prepared by Clarity. The purpose of this report is to examine the traffic impacts of the proposed development of the Merrimu PSP and understand future transport planning considerations.

The Project involves preparing a Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment (STMA) to examine traffic impacts of the proposed development of the PSP and understand future transport planning considerations. It includes a review of the validation of the VITM 2018 Reference Year model, as well as forecasting future traffic conditions without the development (Reference Case), as well as with the development (Project Case) in an ultimate 2056 horizon year. A 2056 Project Case without the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road (BMELR) has also been produced.

### What do we know so far?

The 2056 Project Case model includes the latest proposed land use and transport networks for the Merrimu PSP. Overall, the Project Case includes an increase of around 24,850 residents, 1,500 jobs and 2,900 school enrolments across the PSP compared to the Reference Case.

Modelling uses a 2056 horizon year to reflect ultimate development and regional network conditions, consistent with VITM practice.

This report details the results of the VITM 2056 Reference Case, and 2056 Project Case model runs. The strategic transport modelling assessment shows that traffic volumes noticeably increase in the Project Case as compared to the Reference Case on the network surrounding by the PSP. A comparison of the proposed road network and modelled Project Case volumes demonstrates that the proposed road classifications will be appropriate for the expected traffic volumes in the Merrimu PSP.

The Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment models BMELR as an ultimate regional network assumption only. This does not imply a funding commitment.

### What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

The draft report concludes that a comparison of the proposed road network and modelled Project Case volumes demonstrates that the proposed road classifications will be appropriate for the expected traffic volumes in the Merrimu PSP under the scenario that assumes the BMELR at full build out.

However, under this scenario it is noted that the volume-capacity ratio plots identify that the Western Freeway will be carrying additional traffic in the peak directions with the Merrimu PSP and this leads to it nearing its capacity in the Project Case. The speed on these sections of the Freeway does not deteriorate significantly demonstrating that traffic performance would likely not be materially affected and that the extra traffic can be sufficiently accommodated.

An additional Project Case scenario was assessed which does not contain the BMELR, the scenario was compared to the 2056 Project Case to identify the potential impacts of the BMELR not being developed. The outputs from this scenario test demonstrate that the study area road network will be under significantly more strain in 2056 if the BMELR is not built. Without the BMELR, local roads such as Gisborne Road, Bacchus Marsh Road and Woolpack Road will be significantly more congested as the road network is not fully able to support proposed developments, including the Merrimu PSP and Parwan Employment Precinct.

## Emerging questions/opportunities to consider

Even with the BMELR in place, at full build out the report currently identifies that there are changes in performance and speeds on Western Freeway, with some evidence of improvements in the VC ratio, which would be at the expense of more traffic and congestion on the local road network. If the BMELR was not built, upgrades and further mitigation would need to be considered at locations such as Flanagan's Drive and along Gisborne Road.

The Head, TfV has identified further work that is required to be undertaken to confirm the findings of the Strategic Transport Modelling Report, as discussed below. Once finalised, the conclusions and modelling outputs from this report will need to inform an updated Integrated Transport Assessment. Further work is required to finalise both reports to the satisfaction of the Head, TfV and VPA.

The outcomes from this required further work may result in changes to the exhibited DCP, as the final modelling outcomes will directly inform which external road and intersection upgrades are included in the DCP, their scope, and apportionment. This work should also incorporate consideration of any changes to the network (including scope of roads and intersections) arising from submissions to the PSP.

### **Modelling Methodology**

Further information will be required regarding the assumptions used for trip generation rates per household within the modelling. There are inconsistencies in trip generation numbers quoted across the STMA and ITA. This requires resolution because trip generation directly influences intersection performance, external road upgrades, and DCP apportionment.

Trip generation rates are required to be comparable and realistic to ensure impacts on the surrounding network can be modelled with confidence. It is unclear from the modelling what proportion of trips have been allocated to public transport and Head TfV will require confirmation of this as part of updates prior to PSP finalisation. The Head, TfV also requires further information on the proposed Developer sponsored bus service, including a time commitment for operation and integration with existing services.

### **Broader Network Impacts**

Further information is required to clearly identify the road links that will exceed capacity prior to the full development of the PSP, particularly identifying locations across the external network that as a direct result of the added traffic volumes generated by the PSP fail. This includes determining timing and triggers for when interventions may be required, as well as the scope. This assessment is required to be undertaken for 2056 Project Case with and without the BMELR.

Mitigating impacts on key infrastructure allows for the function of the overall transport network to be maintained to provide safe access to future residents of the Merrimu PSP, as well as the broader Bacchus Marsh community.

It is acknowledged that growth in traffic volumes even in the absence of the Merrimu PSP may warrant some upgrades to the network particularly by 2056, however this does not discount the need to quantify the impact of traffic generation from the Merrimu PSP on the broader network to ensure the integrity of the network and safe access for future residents can be maintained.

### **Trigger for BMELR**

In line with the Precinct Planning Principles outlined in the BMUGF for the Merrimu PSP, the Strategic Transport Modelling Assessment is required to identify if a traffic generation/ lot trigger is required for when the BMELR will be need to be delivered to accommodate for traffic generation from the Merrimu PSP, and if so what that trigger should be.

Traffic modelling undertaken to date confirms that the BMELR will be required to divert traffic volumes from the existing road network prior to the full build out of the Merrimu PSP. However, further work is required to understand at what point of the BMELR is required. The transport modelling report will need to quantify the percentage of traffic using the BMELR – including at future intersections with the BMELR – from the Merrimu PSP, to inform consideration of potential apportionment of developer contribution towards state road upgrades.

## ROAD ALIGNMENT FEASIBILITY

What is the purpose of the report?

The Preliminary Road Alignment Feasibility Advice (February 2026) was prepared by SMEC to provide concept design and cost estimations for key transport infrastructure projects.

Specifically, Smec's scope comprises the following projects:

- Buckleys Road Upgrade
- Flanagans Drive Upgrade
- East-West Connector – between Bences Road and Flanagans Drive

What do we know so far?

The 3 transport projects are summarised in the below table.

Table 1 - Merrimu Road Projects

Item No.	Project No.	Item	Project Description	Design Requirements
1	RD-01	Buckleys Road	Connector Street (Gisborne Rd to Bacchus Marsh Eastlink Rd West Extent)	2 lanes – 50 km/h
2	RD-02	Flanagans Drive	Connector Street (Bacchus Marsh Rd to Lindsay Ave)	2 lanes – 50 km/h
3	RD-03	East-West Connector	Secondary Arterial (Bences Rd to Flanagans Dr)	Interim 2 lanes – 60 km/h Ultimate 4 lanes – 60 km/hr

### Notes

1. Design speeds are based on typical design speeds for VPA benchmark designs.

The Merrimu Precinct sits on an elevated plateau that is currently serviced by existing roads of steep grade. The existing road alignments border on, or exceed vertical alignment grade limits specified in the Engineering Design and Construction Manual (EDCM) and persist for longer than the recommended distance. These conditions present unique constraints for road design and future

challenges for future road traffic at the development site. SMEC therefore deems the current vertical alignment broadly unsuitable for the Merrimu precinct.

SMEC proposes a design which cuts the existing surface to improve the vertical inclines. The design is a balance between minimising cut volumes while maintaining a best-possible vertical alignment. Nevertheless, deep cut and wide batters are necessary in places, and may lead to greater land-take.

## What does this mean for the Merrimu PSP?

### Buckleys Road:

Buckleys Road existing alignment straddles the PSP boundary to the southern side of the road reserve between Ch 0 and Ch 400. Due to the gradeline requirements, the use of batters would encroach over the PSP boundary of the existing Buckleys Rd road reserve. For this reason, the alignment has been shifted north to avoid this encroachment. Retaining walls were considered along the road to minimise the road reserve as an alternative, however not progressed with in the design.

The approach to Gisborne Road was a design consideration due to the combined effects of increased traffic volumes and a significant downhill grade on the intersection approach. To mitigate the associated risk of rear end accidents on the approach, the approach gradeline was flattened by providing 15 m of 3% grade (equivalent to one 12.5 m design truck length), with the remaining 40 m deceleration distance accommodated on the vertical curve as the grade gradually increases.

### Flanagans Drive

SMEC proposes a design which retains the current horizontal alignment as far as practical. Existing property access locations, including Streeton Drive, are to be maintained due to current landowners having no plans to develop their land. As a result, the proposed gradeline has been designed to accommodate and align with these access points as far as practical.

The grade on Flanagans Drive is proposed to meet the absolute-maximum grade of 10%. This grade line comprises of 2 shorter sections of 10% grade with a flat section in the centre to allow vehicle speeds to recover. This design is an improvement to the existing alignment which contains slopes of greater than 10%. Reducing the grades below 10% would result in access to existing properties being impacted by the works.

### East-West Connector

The proposed East West Connector (DRG-0203, MC10) ties into Flanagan's Drive at CH 200, at the location nominated for IN-08 in the DCP, and runs south of the existing creek bed, cutting into the existing slope. This was favoured over a later tie-in as it avoids costs associated with construction over the creek bed.

The road alignment generally sits below the existing surface at a typical depth of 2-4m and meets the existing surface. The maximum grade is 6% in line with arterial road requirements. The cut levels led to wide batters on the left side alignment.

The alignment is located near land with cultural and heritage significance. Further engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung will likely be required to minimise potential impacts on these values..

### Emerging questions/opportunities to consider

DTP's preferred alignment for the BMELR currently does not include an intersection with the proposed East West Connector Road. As such, the connection through to Gisborne Road along the East West Connector Road may be discontinued upon delivery of the BMELR. Further work is required to be completed to understand the impacts of this on accessibility for the Merrimu PSP.

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Merrimu Precinct Structure Plan  
**Background Report**

March 2026