02.01 Context

02/12/2022
C195yran

02.01-1 Municipal profile

02/12/2022
C195yran

Yarra Ranges is located on the eastern fringe of metropolitan Melbourne with an area of approximately 244,700 hectares.

Yarra Ranges' diverse settlement pattern comprises suburban areas on the eastern fringe, low density communities within the Dandenong Ranges and its foothills and an extensive Green Wedge area that includes scattered rural towns, extensive rural residential areas and rural communities. A network of activity centres serves these communities.

Around 70 per cent of Yarra Ranges' population live in its suburbs and towns (which occupy only around 3 per cent of its total land area). The remaining population lives throughout the rural areas. There are over 55 suburbs, towns and small rural communities within Yarra Ranges.

Yarra Ranges has a large proportion of public land. 166,396 hectares is Crown Land, the majority of which is managed by the Victorian Government as national parks, protected water catchments, state forests and other reserves. An additional 4,894 hectares (2 per cent) is land owned and managed by Yarra Ranges Council as parkland or land used for municipal purposes.

The municipality has a population of approximately 149,300 (ABS, 2016), that is forecast to grow by only 8 per cent annually. Most of the increase is expected to be in the established urban areas of Lilydale, Chirnside Park and Mooroolbark, which have opportunities for additional higher density housing that is accessible to employment, community facilities and public transport.

The population of the municipality is expected to age over the next 20 years with a decline in people aged between 10 and 24 years of age and substantial increases in people over 70 years of age.

02.01-2 Environment

02/12/2022
C195yran

The environmental and scenic rural characteristics of Yarra Ranges support a rich biodiversity and extensive areas of productive agricultural land.

The municipality contains some of the most environmentally important areas in Victoria. Its mountain ranges and valleys contain extensive areas of botanically and zoologically significant remnant indigenous vegetation that provide important habitat for wildlife.

The natural ecosystems of Yarra Ranges reflect its diverse landscape of forested mountain ranges and foothills, dissected by a network of waterways and the broad floodplain of the Yarra River.

The varied geology, favourable soils and relatively high and reliable rainfall in the municipality supports many areas of tall forests and a range of other ecosystems and fauna, including many rare and threatened species such as Yarra Gum, Helmeted Honeyeater, Leadbeaters Possum and Powerful Owl.

Yarra Ranges contains the headwaters of two major waterways, including the Yarra River and its tributaries, and the upper portion of the Dandenong Creek catchment. The Yarra River, upstream of the Yering Gorge pumping station, is an important water supply catchment for Melbourne.

02.01-3 Economy

02/12/2022
C195yran

Yarra Ranges has a diverse economy. Manufacturing represents the most valuable sector of the local economy, with other key employment sectors being tourism, construction, property and business services, retail trade and agriculture.

Retail

The retail sectors in Yarra Ranges provides more than 5,000 jobs. Major concentration of retail employment is in the two activity centres of Lilydale and Chirnside Park. Smaller concentrations of retail floorspace are distributed throughout Yarra Ranges' network of neighbourhood activity centres.

Some bulky goods retail development is located along sections of the Maroondah Highway and Canterbury Road in Chirnside Park, Lilydale and Kilsyth.

Office

There are approximately 45,000 square metres of office floorspace in Yarra Ranges which is mostly concentrated in activity centres. It comprises a mix of purpose-built office space and shopfront offices. Although Yarra Ranges has a relatively low proportion of office-based employment it is estimated that offices provide between 2,000 to 3,000 jobs.

Industrial

Yarra Ranges contains a mix of well-established industrial areas with two main areas located in Lilydale and Kilsyth. Smaller local industrial precincts are located in rural towns throughout the municipality.

Forestry remains a source of economic activity in some of the towns of the upper Yarra Valley. Related local industry also includes the timber processing facilities that are located to access timber reserves in the Central Highlands forests to the north, and the Gippsland forests to the east.

Yarra Ranges also contains ongoing hard rock quarry operations at Montrose, Coldstream and Launching Place which provide a regionally important source of material for building and road construction.

Agriculture

The Green Wedge areas support a significant agricultural sector with approximately 30,000 hectares of land being used for farming. Additional cleared areas retain potential for future agricultural use. Yarra Valley has local and international recognition as a fine food and wine producing area. Livestock grazing, floriculture and other forms of horticulture continue to contribute to the local economy.

Tourism

Yarra Ranges is a significant tourist destination with major attractions for local, interstate and overseas visitors, with major attractions including Puffing Billy, the wineries and landscapes of the Yarra Valley, national parks, State trails, golf courses and rural towns such as Healesville and Warburton and the Dandenong Ranges.

Tourism related businesses are significant contributors to local employment in Yarra Ranges in particular in Green Wedge areas.

02.01-4
02/12/2022
C195yran

Built form

The suburbs, towns and rural landscapes of Yarra Ranges have their own visual identity which is valued by residents and visitors.

Yarra Ranges has a rich diversity of heritage places that draw together links to the traditional custodians, the Wurundjeri people and the subsequent phases of European settlement.

Many of Yarra Ranges' residential neighbourhoods offer a visually attractive and spacious living environment dominated by canopy trees and established gardens, which are valued by local residents.

02.01-5 Infrastructure

02/12/2022
C195yran

Yarra Ranges has a vast network of public open space assets ranging from local parks and recreational facilities, multi-purpose community facilities and regionally significant facilities such as the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail, serving its diverse communities and attracting visitors from other parts of Melbourne.

Most communities in Yarra Ranges have a high dependency on motor car transport due to the dispersed settlement pattern and limited public transport infrastructure.

Yarra Ranges is linked to the metropolitan Melbourne arterial road network through key routes such as the Maroondah Highway, Canterbury Road, the Burwood Highway, Wellington Road and Eastlink. Transport access to the towns of the Yarra Valley are largely reliant on the Warburton Highway. The Melba Highway and Maroondah Highway provide major roads links to the north east of Victoria.

Yarra Ranges is served by two railway lines and a network of bus routes that provide links between the stations, activity centres, surrounding suburbs and more distant communities.

The suburban areas and rural towns of Yarra Ranges are generally fully serviced by reticulated services infrastructure including electricity, gas, water, sewerage, stormwater drainage and telecommunications, however many low-density residential areas are not sewered.