

Mount Alexander Shire Council Land Management Rate Program Guidelines

What is the Land Management Rate Program?

The objective of the Land Management Rate program (LMRP) is to support and encourage responsible land management that improves the condition of the natural environment on privately owned land across Mount Alexander Shire.

Successful applicants will receive the Land Management Rate (LMR), consisting of a 20% reduction off the general property rate for the next financial year (2021/2022).

Who is eligible?

To be eligible to participate in the LMRP, landholders must own a property greater than 20 hectares and/or be a registered farm business. (A property less than 20 hectares can be eligible if it is operating as a registered farm business).

If your property was rated as LMR during the last two financial years, your LMR status will automatically roll over to 2021/2022 and you do not need to reapply at this time.

What must I include in my application?

Eligible landholders who meet the minimum standards for participation are required to submit the completed application form that:

- Describes how they will meet their duty of care (see below for further information)
- Describes what additional action/s or project/s they will undertake over the following financial year (2021/2022).
- The inclusion of a property map describing the location of proposed works and actions is to be included - this can be a simple 'mud map'.

What do I need to do to receive the LMR?

To participate in the LMRP, landholders must firstly meet their 'duty of care' as defined in the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act).

The CaLP Act is a state law that aims to protect primary production and the environment from the effects of pest plants and animals. The CaLP Act defines the roles and responsibilities for, and regulates the management of, noxious weeds and pest animals. It is not the role of Council to provide financial incentives to landholders to meet their obligations under this state legislation.

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Council's position however, is that landholders must meet their basic 'duty of care' under the CaLP Act if they wish to be considered for the LMR.

'Duty of care' as implied in the CaLP Act means that landholders are responsible to take all reasonable steps to:

- avoid causing or contributing to land degradation which causes or may cause damage to land of another land owner
- conserve soil
- protect water resources
- eradicate regionally prohibited weeds and prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds
- prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate, established pest animals

In addition to the 'duty of care' requirements under the CaLP Act, at least **one additional land or water management action** must be completed over the next financial year (2021/2022). This may include any of the following:

- Control of pest plants and animals other than regionally prohibited or controlled species
- Prevention and control of erosion and salinity
- Revegetation (with local native species)
- Protection of remnant vegetation
- Improvement of river/wetland health
- Increase in soil carbon content and soil health
- Application of approved sustainable farming practices with current relevant certification.

How will the program be implemented and monitored?

Landholders participating in the LMR are required to provide a report on progress/actions through a standard template and appropriate attachments. These templates are currently being developed.

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To ensure that landholders receiving this rate are acting in accordance with the objectives of the program and actively undertaking their proposed actions:

- A small number of randomly selected property visits will be conducted by Council officers through a pre-arranged schedule with landholders.
- An audit of the program will be undertaken once every three years to evaluate its effectiveness and efficiency. This audit will include a survey of recipients.

How do I apply?

You must apply by submitting the on-line application form at Council's website at www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/LMR.

For those who are unable to access the online form, hard copy applications are available at the Customer Service Centre located on the corner of Lyttleton and Lloyd Streets in Castlemaine.

Applications will be received until 5pm Friday 23 April 2021.

Do I need to apply if my property was rated as LMR during the 2020/2021 financial year?

No. The current three-year cycle of the program ends on 30 June 2021. However, as Council will soon review its Rating Strategy, which will include a review of the LMR program, any property currently receiving the rate, will automatically have its LMR status rolled over to 2021/2022. As a result, you will not need to reapply for your LMR status for the 2021/2022 year.

If, on adoption of a new Rating Strategy, any change is made to the LMR program, you will be advised in due course. Public consultation on the Rating Strategy will be undertaken in the coming months, and you will be welcome to provide your feedback on the LMR program.

If you also own an eligible property that is not currently on the LMR and you would like to apply for the LMR for that property, please refer to our website www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/LMR for:

- General information about the program.
- The minimum standard for participation.
- Information on how to complete and access the online application form.

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