

Mount Alexander Shire Council

# Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2024–2029

Working together for a healthy, connected shire





# Acknowledgement of Country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the traditional custodians of this land, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive. We acknowledge their continued practise of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their Country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

Council recognises the Victorian Government's Recognition and Settlement with both the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.





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# Executive summary

This Roadside Conservation Management Plan (the Plan) is a guiding document designed primarily for use by Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) staff to inform clear and consistent decision making relating to the management of rural roadsides across the Shire. It will also help to inform community, landowners, contractors and other management authorities on matters of roadside conservation.

The roadside network throughout the Shire is a complex mix of uses, values and opinions, and presents many challenges in carrying out effective management. Our road network is governed by multiple items of legislation which guides the direction of this Plan and supports its implementation.

Roads have several functions, and as such, there are multiple stakeholders with diverse interests. While the primary function of roads must be to provide safe and effective transit, roadsides contain important biological values and provide crucial habitat connectivity in a fragmented landscape. Roadsides contain a cross-section of most habitat types found across the Shire, many of which are now rare or threatened, some nationally. Importantly, roadsides provide a snapshot and a direct genetic link to the flora that once covered the region. Remaining habitats provide support for populations of common species, while some sites support populations of threatened species.

Mount Alexander Shire Council manages approximately 1,188 kilometres of rural roads (equates to 2,376 kilometres of roadside) for multiple outcomes – protection and enhancement of biodiversity and habitat, managing fire risks and ensuring vehicle access and public safety. With the complexities surrounding the Shire's roadsides, the Plan summarises the legislative requirements that Council is obliged to abide by with achievable actions to protect, maintain and enhance the valuable ecological communities and environmental assets intrinsic to our vast rural roadside network.

With good management, the integrity and quality of the Shire's roadsides can be enhanced. The Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2024-2029 aims to protect the important ecological values contained on roadsides whilst ensuring appropriate fire risk mitigation and maintenance of road safety.







## 2 Background

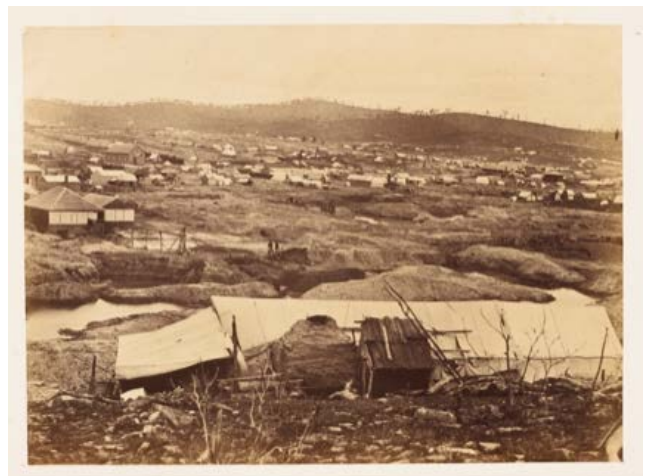
The Mount Alexander Shire region is an ancient landscape with a rich geological and human history. Over tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people put the region's founding cultural layer in place, with cultural heritage such as scar trees, rock wells, artefacts and ancient meeting places, many of which are evident today.

The Mount Alexander Shire largely lies within Dja Dja Wurrung country, but also extends into Taungurung country in the far south-eastern corner of the Shire. Dja Dja Wurrung people (Djaara) have a rich living culture, with a vision for Country that states *'Our lands and waters are in good condition and actively managed to protect our values and to promote the laws, culture and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung People'*.

The early to mid-1800s brought great change to the region as European's began to arrive, taking up residence in the area. Much evidence of early European settlement and mining remains today. From the time of European settlement until the late 1940s, much of the original native vegetation of the Shire was cleared, initially for mining, and later for agriculture as townships, communities and other developments prospered.

The landscape has been dramatically altered, primarily through a reduction or sometimes a complete loss of native flora and fauna communities. In many areas what remains are isolated patches of native vegetation in an otherwise largely cleared landscape. Roadsides often contain the last remnants of native vegetation and are therefore considered a significant ecological refuge.

While road reserves were initially established to provide legal access and a route from one place to another, they have since evolved to cover a range of activities and functions such as service corridors for gas, electricity, drainage, sewage and communication infrastructure and are now increasingly being recognised for their environmental importance.



**Figure 1. Altered landscape of the goldrush period.**



# 3 Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to promote good management of roadside vegetation particularly in relation to environmental values. The Plan defines the strategic framework and management principles which will guide actions within the road reserves to promote good management of roadside vegetation on Council managed roads throughout rural areas of the Shire.

The specific objectives of the Plan are:

- Maintain and enhance biodiversity values, including landscape habitat connectivity and habitats for rare and threatened species and communities.
- Increase resilience of vegetation by enhancing quality and applying a restoration mindset.
- Prevent the spread of noxious weed species across title boundaries, including the protection of productive agricultural land.
- Manage fire risk on rural roadsides.
- Increase community awareness of roadside values.
- Minimise impacts to roadsides as a result of road construction works.
- Prevent unlawful, unpermitted and other degrading activity on rural roadsides.

- Identify and protect cultural and heritage values.
- To guide how Council Officers incorporate conservation management when planning and carrying out construction and maintenance works within a road reserve.

Related Mount Alexander Shire Council strategies and plans:

- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Environment Strategy 2015-2025
- Climate Change Strategy (2023)
- Urban Tree Policy 2023-2028
- DRAFT Tree Management Guideline
- Electric Line Clearance Management Plan 2024-25
- Road Management Plan (2021)
- Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan: Mount Alexander Shire (2017)
- Mount Alexander Shire Municipal Fire Management Plan (2018)
- Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020
- DRAFT Urban Nature Strip Guideline





## 4 Scope

This Plan applies to:

- all Council managed rural roadsides which are outside township boundaries
- employees, including full time, part time and casual employees
- contractors engaged by the Organisation to work within the roadside
- land care groups authorised to work within the roadside
- other management authorities working within the roadside

This Plan does not apply to:

- roadsides in townships / urban zones
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) managed roadsides
- tracks and fire trails within Crown land such as State Forests and Regional Reserves
- works in the road formation or within the road maintenance envelope





## 5 Rural roads

The Road Management Act 2004 defines a roadside as: “any land that is within the boundaries of a road (other than the shoulders of the road) which is not a roadway or a pathway and includes the land on which any vehicle crossing or pathway which connects from a roadway or pathway on a road to other land has been constructed

*Example: Any nature strip, forest, bushland, grassland or landscaped area within the road reserve would be roadside”*

The roadside includes crossings (crossovers) that are constructed or otherwise from the roadway or pathway to other land (e.g. driveways).

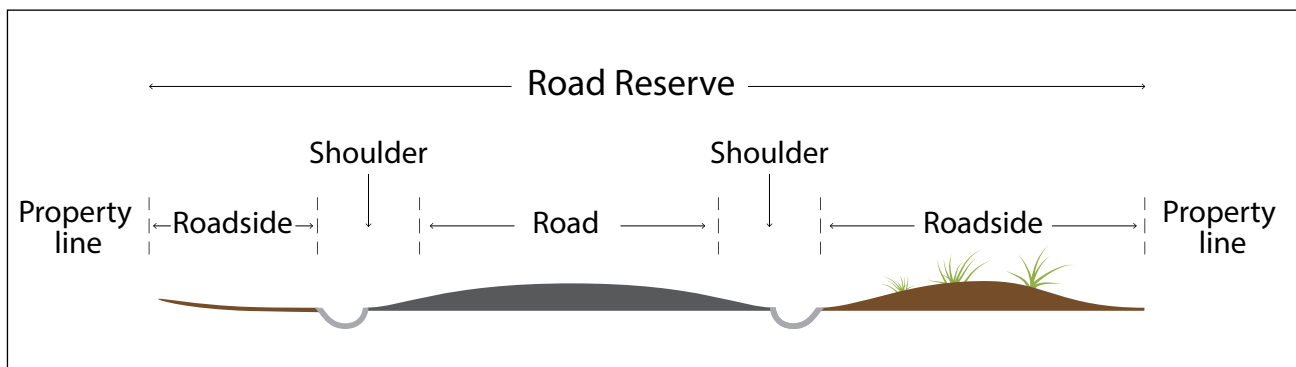


Figure 2. Roadside definitions



Figure 3. Management zones within a road reserve



# 5.1 Rural road responsibilities

Section 37 of the *Road Management Act 2004* specifies the responsible road management authority for various road classifications. Within rural areas of the Mount Alexander Shire, several authorities are responsible for the management of

the road network and management of roadside vegetation.

Table 1 summarises the managing authorities of rural roadsides within the Mount Alexander Shire.

Table 1. Road management responsibilities

Authority	Management Areas	Examples
Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) <i>(formerly known as VicRoads)</i>	Freeways, highways, major arterial roads (rural).	Calder Freeway Pyrenees/Midland Highways Calder Highway (Elphinstone to Malmsbury) Castlemaine-Maldon Road Creswick-Newstead Road Kyneton-Redesdale Road Bridgewater-Maldon Road Bendigo-Maldon Road Hepburn-Newstead Road
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) <i>(Includes Parks Victoria)</i>	Roads within National Parks, State Parks, Regional Reserves	Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park Mount Alexander Regional Park Maldon Historic Reserve Muckleford State Forest Sandon State Forest Walmer State Forest
MASC	Municipal roads (also known as Local roads) Major Arterials within urban zones	Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park Mount Alexander Regional Park Maldon Historic Reserve Muckleford State Forest Sandon State Forest Walmer State Forest
Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC)	Municipal roads (also known as local roads), major Arterials within urban zones	
In consultation with other road management and utility authorities, Council will manage rural roadsides to:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensure safe property access</li><li>• protect service assets</li><li>• minimise fire impact</li><li>• protect cultural heritage and amenity values</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide safe transport corridors</li><li>• protect and enhance environmental assets</li></ul>		



## 5.2 Unused road reserves

Throughout the road network, there are numerous road reserves identified as unused. An unused government road was originally set aside for a public road but never formally constructed or, has long ceased to be maintained.

Some government roads have been declared surplus to Council's road network and in some instances, long-term leases have been negotiated between adjoining landowners and DEECA for the purpose of agricultural grazing. These leases do not offer exclusive rights to the licensee. A license can be cancelled if Council requires the road to be opened at any stage for traffic purposes.

Depending on the land use history, unused road reserves can add significantly to the indigenous vegetation values of the roadside network and can contain relatively undisturbed remnant vegetation communities.

Council maintains responsibility for vegetation matters in an unused road reserve under its management in line with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and is responsible for noxious weed control under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.



Figure 4. An example of an unmade road reserve that is considered to be of high conservation value.



## 5.3 Legislation

A wide range of federal, state and local, legislation is applicable to roadsides and their management.

Federal and State biodiversity legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* provide protection for species and ecological communities. The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* outlines land management responsibilities such as weed and pest animal control for landowners and managers.

At a local level, the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme includes provisions to protect native vegetation under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Appendix 1 outlines the relevant legislation and their implications on the Plan.





# 6 Landscape context

## 6.1 Catchment management regions

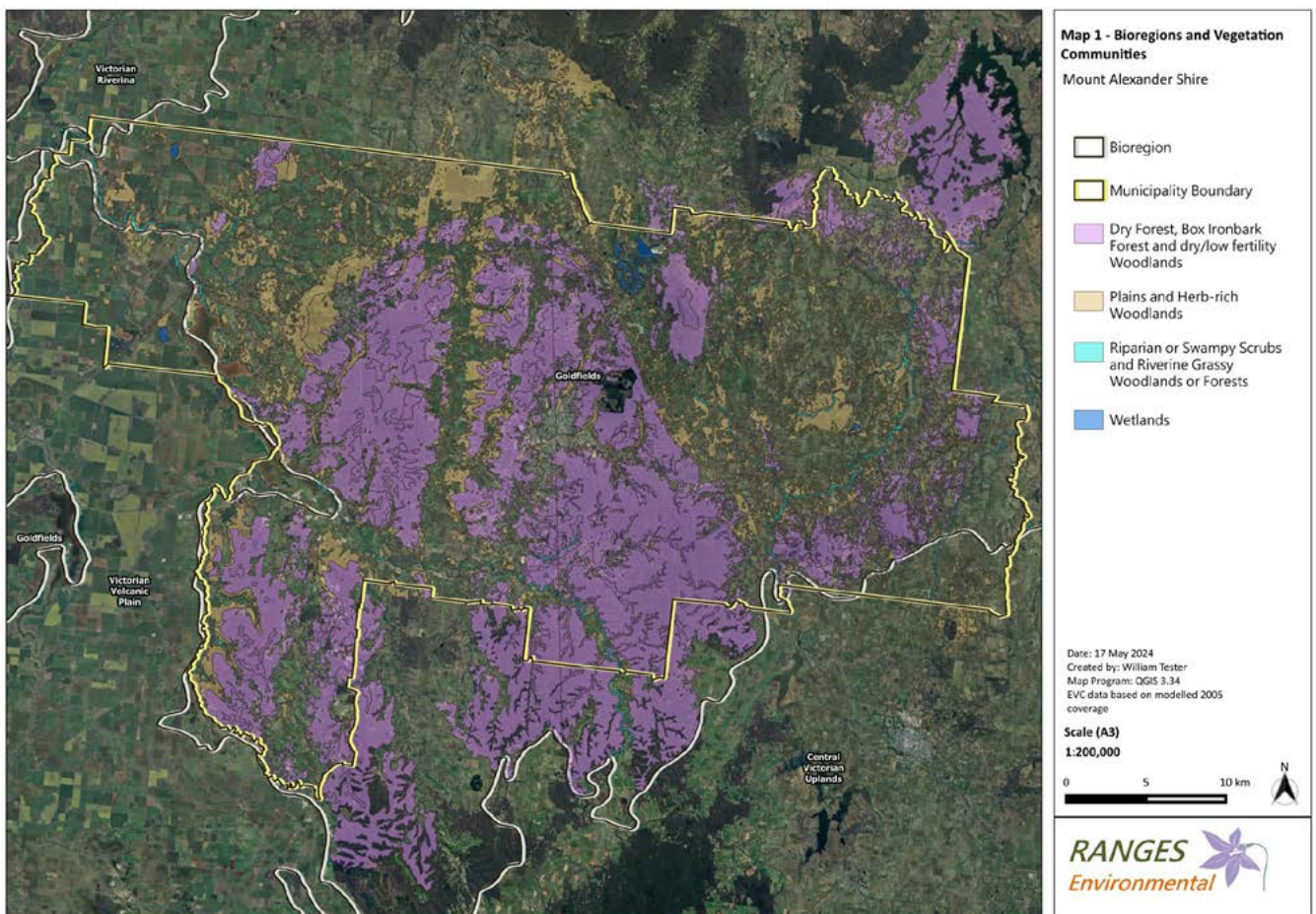
Victoria is divided into 10 catchment and land protection regions. Integrated catchment management is undertaken by the regional Catchment Management Authority and Melbourne Water to coordinate the management of land, water and biodiversity, the framework of which is established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The Mount Alexander Shire lies within the North Central catchment and land protection region.

## 6.2 Bioregions

Bioregions are a landscape-scale approach to classifying the environment, using a range of attributes such as climate, geomorphology, geology, soils and vegetation. There are 28 bioregions identified within Victoria (DELWP 2017a).

As shown in Map 1, the Mount Alexander Shire falls mostly within the Goldfields bioregion. The south-eastern extent of the Shire at Langley and surrounds is within the Central Victorian Uplands bioregion, the north-western extent falls within the Victorian Riverina, and the westernmost extent around Baringhup West and between Newstead and Joyces Creek occurs within the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion.



Map 1 – Bioregions and Vegetation Communities within Mount Alexander Shire



### 6.3 Ecological vegetation classes

An Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) is a native vegetation type with classification based on its floristic, life form, environmental and ecological characteristics (DEPI 2013). The benchmark for an EVC describes the attributes of the vegetation type in its mature natural state, which reflects pre-settlement conditions.

Although significantly reduced since settlement, a number of EVCs persist throughout the Shire. Many of these EVCs are largely depleted or endangered with roadsides providing protection amongst a predominantly degraded landscape. The following EVCs found within Mount Alexander Shire are classed as Endangered:

- Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland
- Creekline Grassy Woodland
- Creekline Herb-rich Woodland

- Floodplain Riparian Woodland
- Granitic Hills Woodland
- Grassy Woodland
- Plains Grassy Woodland
- Plains Woodland
- Red Gum Swamp
- Scoria Cone Woodland
- Stream Bank Shrubland
- Swamp Scrub
- Swampy Riparian Woodland
- Wetland Formation

In addition to the threatened EVCs, the Australian Government’s Protected Matters Search Tool (PMST) reveal five nationally listed Ecological Communities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* that are present or may occur in the Shire:

<b>Critically Endangered:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands</li><li>• Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain</li><li>• Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain</li></ul>
<b>Endangered:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grey Box Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of South Eastern Australia</li><li>• Buloke Woodlands of the Riverina and Murray Darling Depression Regions</li></ul>

The Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 also includes a threatened list of ecological communities that require protection. Mount Alexander Shire is home to four of these communities:

- Creekline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields)
- Northern Plains Grassland
- Grey Box - Buloke Grassy Woodland
- Western Basalt Plains (River Red Gum) Grassy Woodland

An ecological community is a naturally occurring group of native plants, animals and other organisms that are interacting in a unique habitat. A community’s structure, composition and distribution are determined by environmental factors such as soil type, position in the landscape, altitude, climate and water availability. Types of ecological communities listed under national environmental law include woodlands, grasslands, shrublands, forests, wetlands, marine, ground springs and cave communities.<sup>1</sup>

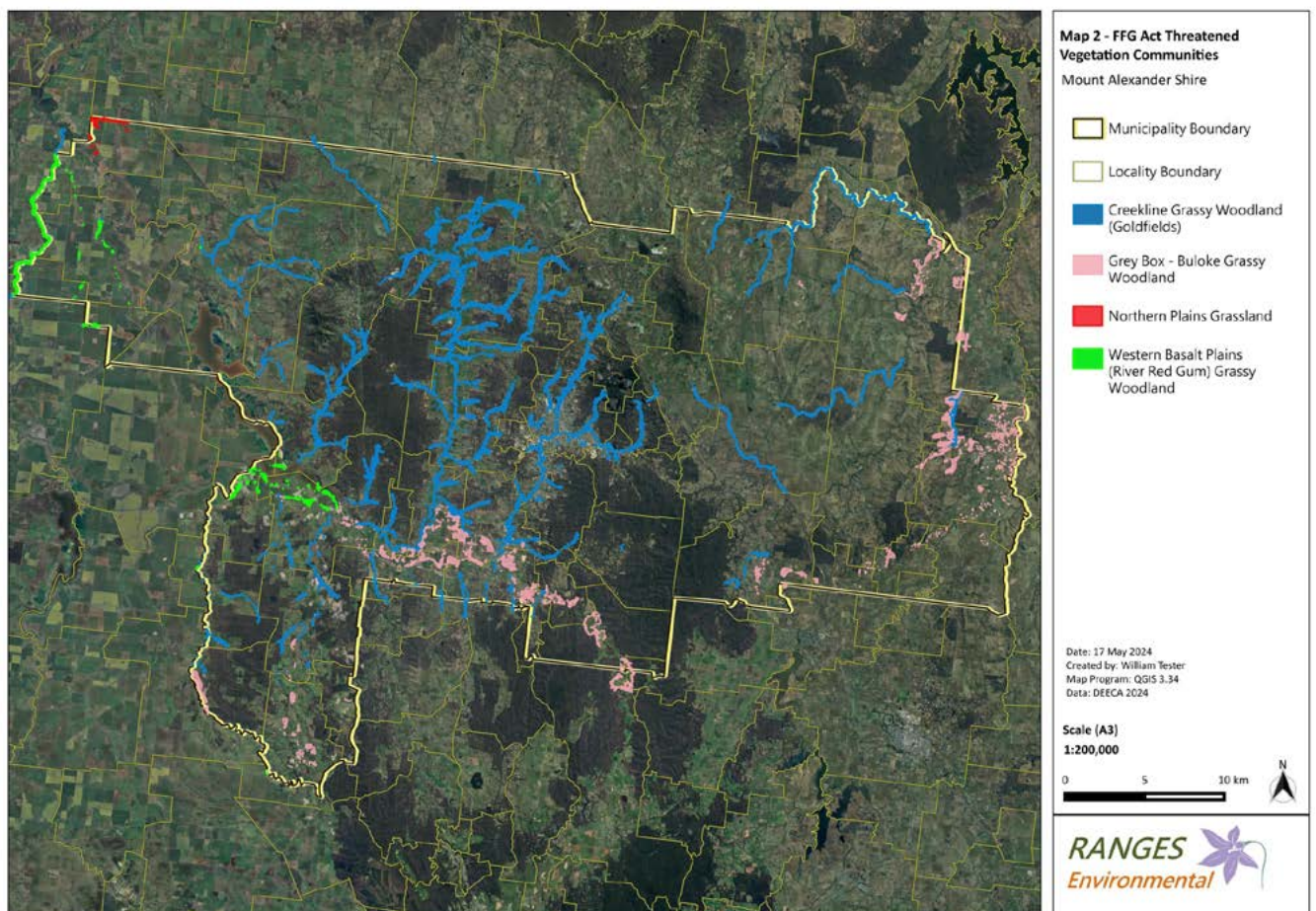


The native plants and animals within an ecological community have different roles and relationships that, together, contribute to the healthy functioning of the environment. Protecting native communities also supports ecosystem services such as clean air, clear land and clean water. These all contribute to better productivity of our land and water, which benefits people and society.<sup>2</sup>

The extent of the Shire's four ecological communities is in decline. While federal

and state databases reveal past and modelled extent, ground-truthing is required to confirm the extent and ongoing presence of these communities locally, highlighting the importance of regular roadside monitoring and flora surveys.

Map 2 illustrates the extent and locations of *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* listed threatened vegetation communities. These locations are modelled based on remaining EVCs and Bioregions.



**Map 2 - *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* Threatened Vegetation Communities**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/communities>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/communities>



## 6.4 Threatened flora

Shire roadsides support numerous plant species that are listed as threatened under Victorian State and Federal legislation. An example of this is a population of the Critically Endangered Spiny Rice-flower discovered on a roadside west

of Baringhup. This highlights both the importance of roadsides as sanctuaries for threatened species and the importance of conducting regular monitoring and ecological surveys.

**Table 2. Threatened flora known to occur in Mount Alexander Shire**

Common Name	Botanical Name	State: Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Federal: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
Buloke	<i>Allocasuarina luehmannii</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/a/alloc/alloc.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/a/alloc/alloc.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	
Castlemaine Spider-orchid	<i>Caladenia clavescens</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/calad/caccla.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/calad/caccla.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	
Clover Glycine	<i>Glycine latrobeana</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/glyci/gllat.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/glyci/gllat.htm</a>	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Dwarf Cassinia	<i>Cassinia diminuta</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/cassi/cadim.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/cassi/cadim.htm</a>	Endangered	
Emerald-lip Greenhood	<i>Pterostylis smaragyna</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/p/ptero/ptsma.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/p/ptero/ptsma.htm</a>	Endangered	
Flat-leaf Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea platyphylla</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/p/pulte/pupla.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/p/pulte/pupla.htm</a>	Endangered	
Golden Cowslips	<i>Diuris behrii</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diuri/dibeh.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diuri/dibeh.htm</a>	Endangered	
Goldfields Grevillea	<i>Grevillea dryophylla</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/grevi/grdry.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/grevi/grdry.htm</a>	Endangered	
Inland Red-tip Greenhood	<i>Pterostylis rubescens</i> <a href="https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/flora/taxon/012d6d17-3265-4b45-82c9-9a0e71512759">https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/flora/taxon/012d6d17-3265-4b45-82c9-9a0e71512759</a>	Endangered	
Lanky Buttons	<i>Leptorhynchos elongatus</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/l/lepto/leelo.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/l/lepto/leelo.htm</a>	Endangered	
Late-flower Flax-lily	<i>Dianella tarda</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/ditar.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/ditar.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	
Matted Flax-lily	<i>Dianella amoena</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/diamo.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/diamo.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	Endangered



Common Name	Botanical Name	State: Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Federal: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
Small Milkwort	<i>Comesperma polygaloides</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/comes/copol.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/c/comes/copol.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	
Small-flower Grevillea	<i>Grevillea micrantha</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/grevi/grmic.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/g/grevi/grmic.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	
Southern Shepherd's Purse	<i>Ballantinia antipoda</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/b/balla/baant.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/b/balla/baant.htm</a>	Critically Endangered	Endangered
Southern Swainson-pea	<i>Swainsona behriana</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/s/swain/swbeh.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/s/swain/swbeh.htm</a>	Endangered	
Spiny Rice-flower	<i>Pimelea spinescens</i> subsp. <i>Spinescens</i> <a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=21980">http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=21980</a>	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered
Sutton Grange Greenhood	<i>Pterostylis agrestis</i> <a href="https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/taxa/557977-Pterostylis-agrestis">https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/taxa/557977-Pterostylis-agrestis</a>	Critically Endangered	



**Figure 5. Castlemaine Spider-orchid (*Caladenia clavescens*) (FFG: Critically Endangered)**  
Photo: Bronwyn Silver



**Figure 6. Matted Flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*) (FFG: Critically Endangered, EPBC: Endangered)** Photo: Karl Just



## 6.5 Threatened fauna

The diverse vegetation communities found on roadsides throughout the Shire provide suitable habitat and movement corridors

integral to the survival of locally occurring threatened fauna species.

**Table 3. Threatened fauna known or likely to inhabit roadsides**

Common Name	Scientific Name	State: Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Federal: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
Brown Treecreeper	<i>Climacteris picumnus</i> Brown Treecreeper - eBird		Vulnerable
Brush-tailed Phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i> Brush-tailed Phascogale (swift.net.au)	Vulnerable	
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i> Barking Owl - eBird	Critically Endangered	
Brown Toadlet	<i>Pseudophryne bibronii</i> Brown Toadlet (swift.net.au)	Endangered	
Crested Bellbird	<i>Oreoica gutturalis</i> Crested Bellbird - eBird	Endangered	
Eltham Copper Butterfly	<i>Pultenaea platyphylla</i> Eltham Copper Butterfly - Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida (butterflies.net.au)	Endangered	Endangered
Golden Sun Moth	<i>Synemon plana</i> Golden Sun Moth (swift.net.au)	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Hooded Robin	<i>Melanodryas cucullate</i> Hooded Robin - eBird	Vulnerable	Endangered
Little Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i> Little Eagle - eBird	Vulnerable	
Painted Honeyeater	<i>Grantiella picta</i> Mielero Pintado - eBird	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Powerful Owl	<i>Dianella tarda</i> <a href="https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/ditar.htm">https://castlemaineflora.org.au/pic/d/diane/ditar.htm</a>	Vulnerable	
Speckled Warbler	<i>Pyrrholaemus sagittatus</i> Speckled Warbler - eBird	Endangered	
Swift Parrot	<i>Lathamus discolor</i> Swift Parrot - eBird	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered





In addition to these State and Federally listed threatened flora and fauna, there is a vast array of other species that, while they may be present in other nearby locations or at other locations across Victoria, they are locally uncommon within the Shire, remaining in only a few key locations on roadsides or other vulnerable locations.

The fragmented nature of the existing landscape puts these locally rare species at risk of localised extinction.

Localised extinctions, when occurring in multiple regions can be significant and contribute to more species being formally listed as threatened species. These locally rare and uncommon species need more consideration and are the ideal focus of further assessment.



## 6.6 Habitat corridors

Through a long history of agricultural and domestic land use, the landscape of the Mount Alexander region has been drastically altered. Roadsides provide crucial movement corridors for threatened and common fauna species.

Tree canopy connectivity and large hollow-bearing trees provide important habitat features for birds and arboreal mammals including the Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*, White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaea* and Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*.

Native understorey shrubs provide a food source and protective cover for scrub and woodland birds such as the Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus* and Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*. An intact groundstorey of herbs and native tussock grasses with logs and leaf litter provide habitat for invertebrates that are a valuable food source for other fauna, as well as suitable habitat features for ground-dwelling mammals such as the Short-beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, Yellow-footed Antechinus *Antechinus flavipes* and Common (or Slender-tailed) and Fat-tailed Dunnart's *Sminthopsis murina* and *Sminthopsis crassicaudata*.



Figure 7. Echidna on a Baringhup roadside. Photo credit Will Tester



## 7 Roadside conservation management

This following section outlines best practice procedures in the management, protection and enhancement of rural roadside ecological values. This section is to be referred to by Council staff prior to undertaking works on roadsides and used to inform landowners, community and contractors of appropriate and inappropriate management actions.

Council is responsible for municipal roads and the adjacent roadside. Any works not undertaken solely by the Organisation requires the consent of Council to ensure:

- care is taken in assessing and managing risks associated with working in the road reserve,
- all works are undertaken within relevant guidelines, working to best practice and adhering to relevant legislation; and
- that no illegal or unpermitted activities take place.

A number of threats exist that have negative impacts on the ecological values of roadsides. To minimise these threats and allow for compliance and enforcement, Victorian state native vegetation regulations, along with state and federal biodiversity legislation provide a legislative framework in which the Plan operates.





## 7.1 Roadside conservation

Rural roadsides within the Mount Alexander Shire contain many conservation, landscape and heritage values that require protection and careful management. A large proportion of the original native vegetation of the region has been lost due to agricultural practices, rural living growth and weed invasion. Many roadsides support important environmental assets in the form of remnant native vegetation and wildlife habitats that were once widespread throughout the landscape. Roadsides further connect existing patches of remnant vegetation and complement land and habitat restoration efforts such as revegetation, including on private land.

In many areas, roadsides provide clear examples of vegetation communities that once were widespread across the Shire. These isolated patches of remnant vegetation are valuable because they link areas of key habitat, playing an important part in providing corridors for the movement of native fauna. This conservation imperative is notably relevant at the municipal scale, where key decisions are made by both private and public land managers and where significant changes to management can often occur over a relatively short period.

Rural roadsides are integral in the conservation of valuable biodiversity and can provide one or more of the following:

- Habitat for wildlife, locations for endangered and rare plants (flora) and animals (fauna)
- Vegetated corridors for fauna movement (habitat connectivity)
- Source of diverse genetic resources e.g. native plant seed and propagation material for local habitat restoration
- Important historic, cultural and natural landscape values

- Complement restoration efforts occurring on adjacent freehold land
- Complement ecological values occurring on adjoining freehold as well as Crown land
- Provide aesthetic values for tourism and residents that live in a rural setting, intrinsic to the Australian bush.
- Assistance with controlling land degradation and maintaining road integrity e.g. erosion, water overflow management
- Ecosystem services e.g. improving water quality, water table control, carbon sequestration and improving air quality
- Windbreaks and shelter belts e.g. for livestock and crops in adjacent paddocks
- Ecological assets of rural roadsides





## 7.2 Conservation values assessment

Rural roadsides within the Mount A roadside ecological assessment was undertaken by *Ecology Australia* in 2014. The methodology of the assessment combined records of threatened species, potential occurrence of listed ecological

communities, data from a 2007/08 assessment by North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) and some field assessments. Results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Conservation value of roadsides in the Mount Alexander Shire.**

Conservation Value	Roadside Length	% of Roadside Length
High	451km	19%
Medium	639km	27%
Low	1286km	54%

While this assessment provides some insight into the possible condition of roadsides, it cannot be deemed accurate enough to properly inform roadside management decisions, due to the age of the data and the predominantly desktop-based assessment methods applied to the conservation values.

In practice, the subsequent ground truthing of results often raises inaccuracies in this data. To properly protect and restore roadside ecological condition, accurate and up-to-date data is needed to inform management decisions.

While the roadside conservation value data from previous assessments provides a foundation, it is recommended that future surveys of roadside conservation value do not rely on desktop modelling but use a methodology that is efficient, repeatable and captures the actual on-ground condition of roadsides. The recommended methodology is the Rapid Habitat Assessment (RHA), which is a process designed to evaluate the condition and structure of environmental habitats to ensure assessments are efficient and replicable.







## 7.3 Significant vegetation

Some sections of rural roadsides are signed to alert and demarcate areas of significant vegetation. Whilst this practice has provided some benefits, these areas can now be somewhat difficult to interpret with many sites seemingly harbouring little to no vegetation of any significance or conservation value. This well-intentioned action from the past has served to create confusion for local community, land managers and anybody working within a road reserve.

This Plan seeks to emphasise that the roadside network as a whole is significant and while differing levels of conservation value are contained within a roadside, the roadside network is able to be restored by limiting degradation, stopping the incremental losses to vegetation and soil quality and increasing the condition and resilience of roadside vegetation as a whole, whilst satisfying other road management requirements such as safe and effective transport and fire risk.

A greater emphasis will be placed on communicating Councils management of rural roadsides to the community, adjoining landholders, contractors and within Council with clear messaging as to the important environmental asset that is the roadside network. This will be achieved through dissemination of information contained within this Plan via the Council website and social/ print media and ensuring uptake within Council units as to the direction of this Plan.

Significant Roadside Area signage will be reviewed on a case by case basis but as Council communication regarding roadsides and management actions improve, signage will either be removed or perhaps replaced by different environmental asset messaging.

## 7.4 Weed management

Invasive weeds pose a significant threat to biodiversity along rural roadsides. The spread of weeds can be caused by machinery, vehicles, people, livestock, animals, wind, water and movement of soil. Particular high threat weeds include those ranked on the Advisory List of Environmental Weeds in Victoria (Arthur Rylah Institute 2018) and those classed as noxious under the *Catchment and Land Protection (CaLP) Act 1994*.

Environmental weeds are species that threaten natural ecosystems and can outcompete native flora, resulting in adverse impacts to native fauna and ecosystem function. Some weed invasions can also facilitate erosion or increase fire risk.

Under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, weeds that are, or have the potential to become a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment, or community health are declared noxious. It is the responsibility of Council under the Act to manage declared noxious weeds on municipal roadsides, take all reasonable steps to eradicate regionally prohibited weeds and prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds.

Private landowners are responsible for the management of noxious weeds on their own property.

Table 5 highlights some of the species that form Council's ongoing roadside weed control program. This list comprises species listed as declared noxious species under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* but also known and problematic environmental weeds that are an emerging and increasing demand on Council resources. This list is not static as seasonal and climatic influences and events require specific action on other pest species at certain times, however this list forms a large part of regular control activities with the view to **protect, maintain, enhance** and **restore** the environmental assets on the rural roadside network.



**Table 5. Priority roadside weeds**

Common Name	Botanical Name
Artichoke Thistle	<i>Cynara cardunculus</i>
African Boxthorn	<i>Lycium ferocissimum</i>
African Love-grass	<i>Eragrostis curvula</i>
Apple	<i>Malus sp.</i>
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Blue Periwinkle	<i>Vinca major</i>
Boneseed	<i>Chrysanthemoides monilifera</i>
Briar rose	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>
Bridal Creeper	<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>
Cape/ Montpellier Broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
Cape Tulip	<i>Moraea flaccida</i>
Chilean Needle Grass	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>
Cootamundra Wattle	<i>Acacia baileyana</i>
Early Black Wattle	<i>Acacia decurrens</i>
English broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Espartillo	<i>Amelichloa caudata</i>
Flax-leaf broom	<i>Genista linifolia</i>
Galenia	<i>Galenia pubescens</i>
Gazania	<i>Gazania linearis</i>
Plum	<i>Prunus sp.</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Horehound	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>
Toowoomba Canary Grass	<i>Phalaris aquatica</i>
Spanish Heath	<i>Erica lucitanica</i>
Serrated tussock	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>
Spanish Heath	<i>Erica lusitanica</i>
St John's Wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>
Tree Lucerne	<i>Chamaecytisus palmensis</i>
Wheel Cactus	<i>Opuntia robusta</i>

For further information on these and other local weed species, refer to the 'Your guide to the Weeds of Central Victoria' booklet, a cross-Council publication of the weeds of Central Victoria.



### 7.4.1 Weed prevention

Throughout the Shire, there is a long history of roadside disturbance of vegetation and soil. With increased awareness of sustainable land management and work practices, improved vegetation quality byway of reduced roadside degradation will limit weed incursion, promote resilient indigenous flora and lead to reduced maintenance costs over the long-term.

Prevention is a more effective management tool than treatment. Movement of machinery is a major cause of the spread of weed seeds, particularly grassy weeds such as African Love-grass *Eragrostis curvula*, Chilean Needle-grass *Nassella neesiana* and Serrated Tussock *Nassella trichotoma*.

As a general rule, there should rarely be a need for machinery or vehicles to be on a

roadside. To prevent the spread of weed seeds, any machinery and vehicles used as part of any works on a roadside, must be cleaned prior to and after undertaking any works.

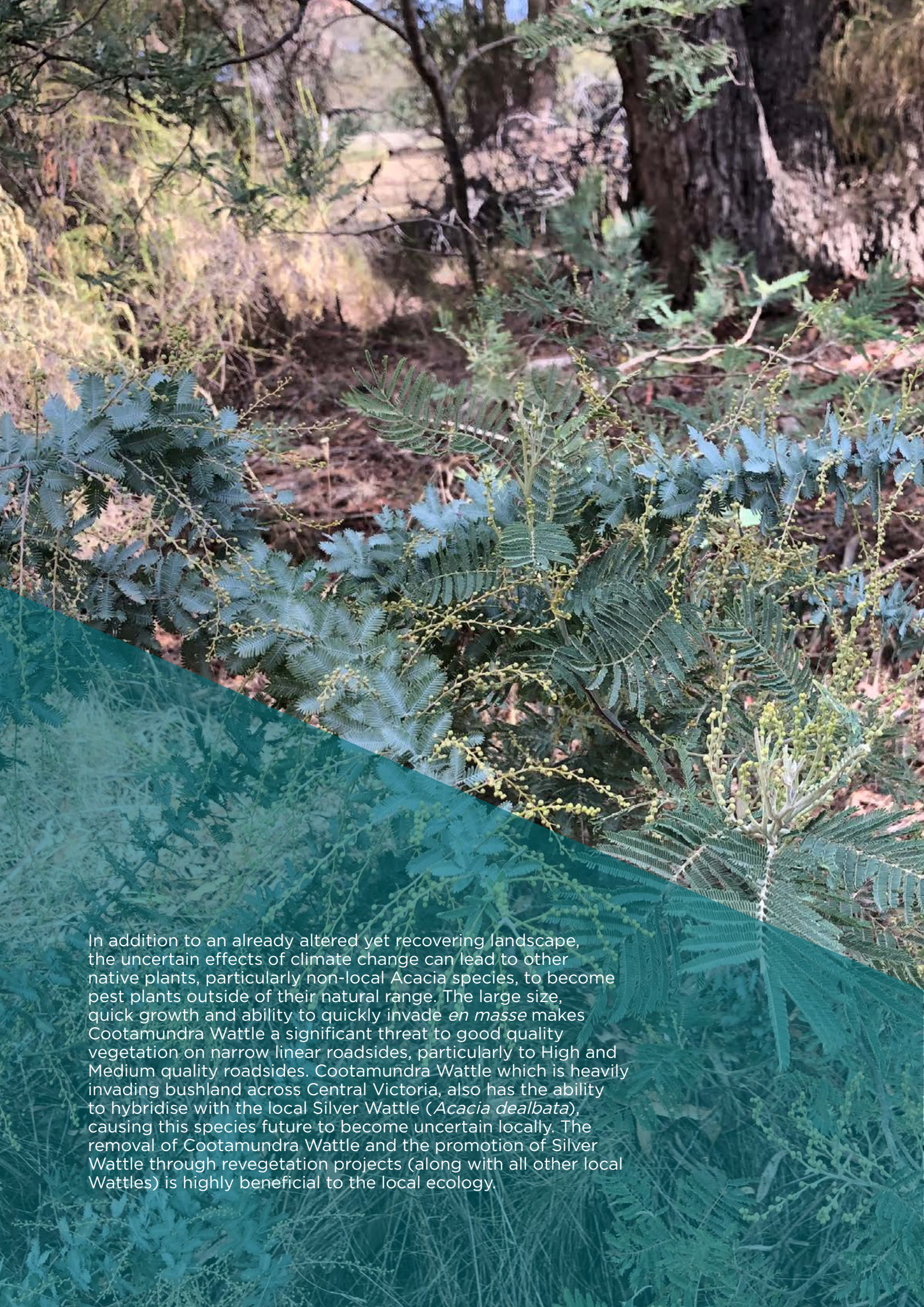
Further to vehicle/ machinery hygiene, the following actions should be considered to avoid the spread of weeds:

- Work is to commence in an area of high conservation value prior to moving to an area of lower conservation value
- Where practical, plan for works to be undertaken when weeds are not in flower or seed
- Maintain healthy indigenous vegetation communities to prevent weed colonisation
- Contain road construction works to the road and shoulder, with no machinery on the roadside



Figure 8. Germinating and established Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*) seedlings, invading a High to Medium conservation value roadside from adjoining private land.





In addition to an already altered yet recovering landscape, the uncertain effects of climate change can lead to other native plants, particularly non-local *Acacia* species, to become pest plants outside of their natural range. The large size, quick growth and ability to quickly invade *en masse* makes Cootamundra Wattle a significant threat to good quality vegetation on narrow linear roadsides, particularly to High and Medium quality roadsides. Cootamundra Wattle which is heavily invading bushland across Central Victoria, also has the ability to hybridise with the local Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*), causing this species future to become uncertain locally. The removal of Cootamundra Wattle and the promotion of Silver Wattle through revegetation projects (along with all other local Wattles) is highly beneficial to the local ecology.



### 7.4.2 Weed control

Due to their linear nature, roadsides and the vegetation that they contain have a high susceptibility to weed incursion and weed control is a significant component in the conservation management of roadsides. Management of weeds and vegetation condition on rural roadsides is managed by Council, utilising the services of suitably qualified and skilled contractors.

The use of herbicide plays an important and invaluable role in roadside weed control. If used inappropriately, indiscriminately or by unskilled and unqualified personnel, it can cause significant damage to environmental assets. Any works involving the use of herbicide on roadsides must be approved by Council's Natural Environment Officer.

Importantly, routine roadside vegetation monitoring by Council and the scheduling of regular follow-up maintenance works will, over time, lead to greatly reduced herbicide inputs on the rural roadside network and the eventual eradication of historic woody weed infestations. This will also create higher value and more resilient and intact vegetation communities with improved resistance to further weed invasion.

Any roadside works proposed by an environmental community group such as Landcare or an individual, requires the consent of Council's Natural Environment Officer. The Natural Environment Officer will assess the proposed work,

the appropriate skill, knowledge and qualification of the environmental community group or individual before recommending if a *Works Within Road Reserve* permit be issued.

The following must be adhered to in the management of weeds on municipal roadsides:

- All weed control works must be engaged by, or approved by Council's Natural Environment Officer
- Herbicide use is only to be undertaken by suitably qualified and skilled personnel
- Herbicide use to be conducted when conditions are appropriate with an aim to reduce herbicide use over time
- Off-target spray damage to be minimised through use of selective herbicide, large droplet size to minimise drift, close-range spraying and by personnel trained in plant identification
- Leave large woody weeds in situ to ensure herbicide can take effect through the entire plant. Following treatment, retained woody weeds can provide habitat, minimise disturbance and enable establishment of successive vegetation
- Weed control is conducted to prevent the spread of problematic weed species and satisfy Council's legislative responsibilities with the aim of increasing the quality and resilience of indigenous roadside vegetation



Figure 9. Incorrect treatment of Gorse with a non-selective herbicide



Figure 10. Correct treatment of Gorse with a selective herbicide





Figure 11. An example of high quality native vegetation, resilient to weed invasion



## 7.5 Revegetation and restoration

The revegetation with indigenous canopy trees along roadsides that are in poor ecological condition (Low and some Medium value sites) will improve future habitat connectivity. It would also increase the overall environmental and functional value of roadsides, assist to naturally decrease weeds, resist further weed invasion and play a key role in starting the restoration process on degraded roadsides and other land throughout the Shire.

Species selection and tree spacing would be consistent with the relevant Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) with reference to local road reserves, patches of remnant vegetation, written text such as field guides and historic surveys and other local and/or internal knowledge.

Revegetation works and methods must be planned to minimise disturbance and undertaken in line with best practice to:

- Maintain clearance from above and below ground services
- Ensure appropriate planting density based on EVC guidelines
- Use indigenous species of the appropriate vegetation type and provenance for the site
- Allow sufficient room from fence lines to enable future maintenance
- Not impede traffic line of sight or compromise any future road maintenance activities such as maintenance of table drains and guide posts
- Not introduce additional future safety hazards to road users
- Accommodate ongoing maintenance activities.

Mount Alexander Shire Council is required to ensure that any proposed works will not be in conflict with priorities in Council's *Municipal Fire Management Plan*.

Other restoration work on rural roadsides should also be promoted and encouraged including the installation of nest boxes (not appropriate on urban roadsides), habitat modifications to existing dead standing trees, protections for existing woody debris and the reintroduction of woody debris for increased structural habitat. Adjacent private landholders should be encouraged to replicate and protect vegetation on private land to provide increased environmental values and greater habitat connectivity.



**Figure 12. Mechanical removal of blackberry and gorse and the rectification of drainage issues causing significant sedimentation to a local waterway**



## 7.6 Fire management

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, it is the duty of every municipal council and public authority to take all practicable steps to prevent the occurrence of fires and to minimise the danger of the spread of fire on or from:

- Any land vested in it or under its control or management, and
- Any highway, road, street, lane or thoroughfare the maintenance of which is charged upon it.

### 7.6.1 Fuel management

Mount Alexander Shire Council undertakes fuel management activities to achieve its obligations under the CFA Act, Road Management Act and other relevant acts and regulations.

Control of high threat weeds through Council's noxious and environmental weed control program is not only a primary goal of ecological management, but in instances of large woody weeds or robust grassy weeds, biomass reduction of introduced weeds will substantially reduce fuel loads and lessen fire risks.

Additional vegetation management works may also be required to reduce fuels in key strategic locations and these are assessed, prioritised and planned through the Mount Alexander Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP), a sub-committee of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC), which consists of representatives from Council, Fire Agencies, Victoria Police, land managers and other members as determined by the MEMPC.

Council maintains an internal annual fuel treatment plan based on the priorities set by the MFMP.

In addition to increasing the quality of indigenous vegetation on roadsides, there are various other methods of fuel management that may be employed to mitigate fire risks along Council managed roadsides. Techniques may include some species modification to achieve strategic

fire breaks, mechanical approaches such as slashing and mulching, as well as ecological, cultural, and hazard reduction burns.

Council uses DEECA's '*Overall fuel hazard assessment guide 4th ed, 2010*' to evaluate fuel hazards and determine appropriate treatment methods. Environmental assessments (values checks) are conducted before any treatment activities, adhering to DEECA's '*Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2012*'. Removal of vegetation for fire management purposes must not be reactive and where possible, must be conducted in a way that minimises negative impact to native vegetation. Removal of vegetation for fire management is only permitted with the approval of Council's Natural Environment Officer and Municipal Fire Prevention Officer.

### 7.6.2 Road shoulder program and other strategic slashing

Council's Works Unit conduct an annual program along sealed roads throughout the Shire to reduce vegetation on the road shoulder and around the installed guideposts to improve sight distances and to reduce the risk of fire caused by vehicles stopping on the road shoulder. This spraying and slashing program is conducted on the road formation edge and not on the roadside and is an important element of Council's fire management program.

As part of this annual fire management program, the Works Unit also carry out the slashing of strategic roadsides as detailed in 7.6.1 Fuel management, informed by the MFMP and Council's Natural Environment Officer and documented on Council's GIS mapping system for operational staff reference. Roadside slashing operations, carried out by both staff and contractors must adhere to Council's Standard Operating Procedure outlined in the *Annual Grass Slashing Program - Fire Prevention and Weed Hygiene - September 2016 Final*.



### 1.1.3 Burning

#### Planned burning

Planned burning is conducted in Victoria by land managers to reduce overall fuel hazards in bushland, forests, grasslands and public reserves. Council engages the Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management Victoria, and contractors to carry out planned burns on land vested under its management or directly owned.

Planned burns are initiated upon identifying fuel-based or ecological risks, reviewed by the MFMPC. Recommendations are then submitted to the Regional Joint Fuel Management Committee (JFMC) for assessment and inclusion in the annual Joint Fuel Management Plan, following ecological evaluations. Final approval for these burns lies with the MFMPC before implementation proceeds.

#### Ecological burning

Ecological burns can provide multiple benefits including minimising fire risk by reducing fuel loads and allowing for natural regeneration of fire dependent plant species. When conducted in a sensitive manner, ecological burns encourage regeneration of native plants and help to restore habitat for local fauna by reducing the excess biomass of exotic annual grasses and flammable/heavily invasive perennials. Post-burn, the capacity to target regrowth of weed species and achieve control is improved.



Figure 13. A Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 listed threatened species, Spiny Rice Flower (*Pimelea spinescens* subsp. *spinescens*) and other grassland species recolonising following ecological burns and weed control works.

Before deciding on the appropriateness of an ecological burn, consideration is given to:

- The burn history of the location, pre and post European arrival
- The practicality of a roadside burn with regards to traffic management
- Location of strategic fuel breaks to ensure the burn is contained
- A pre-burn ecological assessment to determine the risks and benefits i.e. what plant species would benefit from a fire and what species may be averse to fire
- The most appropriate seasonal and climatic conditions for the burn
- Support and approval from adjoining landholders
- Appropriate planning and financial commitment to ensure the program is followed through

If present, Chilean Needle-grass *Nassella neesiana* is known to survive fire and can form monocultures in a post-fire environment. Mapping of known locations of Chilean Needle-grass should continue to be undertaken in order to avoid fire in these areas (or ensure prompt follow-up control when fire does occur) and to ensure proper vehicle/machinery hygiene to prevent further spread throughout the Shire.



Figure 14. The site of an ecological burn. On the left of the photo, the fresh regrowth of Kangaroo Grass tussocks and on the right, Kangaroo Grass and weedy annual grasses that have not been burnt for 3 years.



#### 7.6.4 Cultural burning

Cultural burning is a practice used by First Nations people to improve the health of Country and its people. Environmentally, it has very similar outcomes to ecological burning.

Fire has been used for over 60,000 years to manage land, plants and animals. European colonisation has severely limited these burning practices over large parts of Australia. In recent years there has been an increasing acceptance and awareness of the importance of ecological and cultural burning in mitigating the effects of extreme bushfires and the importance of the use of fire to traditional owners to care for Country.

In Victoria, the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy aims to support Traditional Owners through policy direction and a framework for undertaking cultural burning as a way of caring for Country. Locally on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, the Djandak Wi Strategy<sup>3</sup> has been developed by Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) to re-establish the practice of Djandak Wi (Country Fire). Where appropriate, these strategies offer an exciting opportunity to partner with traditional owners, including DJAARA and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council to integrate their principles to achieve shared objectives of risk reduction for our communities and the healing of upside-down Country.

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<sup>3</sup> Djandak Wi Strategy (<https://djadjawurrung.com.au/dja-dja-wurrung-fire-strategy-a-tool-for-change/> )





Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra* is a summer active species that was once dominant across South-Eastern Australia. As a summer active species, it remains green over the regions harsh summer months, particularly if there is some summer rainfall. Its gradual loss from the landscape has resulted in the dry, brown country that Australian summers have become associated with. Kangaroo Grass responds well to and proliferates with the use of fire such as in cool season, or ecological burns. It burns very predictably and is of a low fire hazard.

Far more protections need to be offered to this species where it remains and more focussed attention should be placed on returning it to the landscape where its increased presence would greatly assist biodiversity and fire mitigation alike.



## 7.7 Cultural heritage

Roadsides throughout the Mount Alexander Shire can contain important indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage. In accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, as the land manager, Council has an obligation to protect these sites.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* describes cultural heritage to include archaeological, anthropological, contemporary, historical, scientific, social, or spiritual significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, the Victorian Government has entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, to formally recognise these peoples as the traditional owners of the land where the Mount Alexander Shire exists. Under this agreement, Council is required to enter into a Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) with traditional owners where significant upgrades to roads that existed prior to the 25 October 2013 (the date of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement) are planned. The LUAA is designed to manage activities on public land that may impact the rights of traditional owner groups.

The *Victorian Heritage Act 1995* defines non-indigenous cultural heritage as places and objects of cultural heritage significance and can include buildings, structures and trees.

Works on roadsides have the potential to impact on sites of cultural significance. Prior to carrying out works, there is a legal obligation to identify areas of cultural heritage and ensure impacts are avoided, minimised or mitigated. Aboriginal Victoria or Heritage Victoria must be contacted prior to the commencement of work at a cultural heritage site or if heritage places or artefacts are discovered.

## 7.8 Minimising the impacts of works

Due to the various activities undertaken on road reserves and adjoining properties, conflicting objectives can arise. The following provide guidance on activities that are permitted and their limitations.

### 7.8.1 Crossovers

Landowners are able to construct and maintain one accessway (crossover) across a roadside from the property boundary to the road formation up to a maximum width of six (6) meters. The construction of a proposed new crossover will require a Council issued *Works Within Road Reserve* permit.

All practical opportunities must be explored to place the crossover in a location that avoids the removal of native vegetation and in particular, areas of High and Medium conservation value.

Council's Engineering Unit will assess an application for a *Works Within Road Reserve* permit to construct a crossover. This may require advice from Council's Natural Environment Officer or a consulting ecologist for an assessment of a site's environmental values.



Figure 15. Excessive removal of vegetation on either side of a new crossover.



### 7.8.2 Fencing - construction and maintenance

A planning permit is usually required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation (remove native vegetation) under Clause 52.17 of the Mount Alexander Shire Council Planning Scheme. Removal of vegetation without a permit may result in enforcement action.

There are existing protections to native vegetation and large areas of the Shire are included in an Environmental Significance Overlay and Vegetation Protection Overlay. It is recommended that prior to the maintenance or replacement of any fence that may require vegetation removal, advice should be sought from Council's Statutory Planning Unit before proceeding with any works.

There are limits to the amount of native vegetation that can be removed to maintain or construct a fence. Native

vegetation can be removed up to a combined maximum total width of four (4) metres along the fence line. This may consist of any combination of width distances on either side of the fence that totals four (4) metres. For example, two (2) metres on one side and two (2) metres on the other, or (1) metre on one side and three (3) metres on the other side.

Note that if one side of the fence is already cleared to a width of four (4) metres or more, regardless of when this clearing occurred (e.g. a cleared paddock), then up to 1 metre of native vegetation can be removed on the other side of the fence. This is to remove a limited amount of native vegetation that may hamper the construction or maintenance of the fence.

While there are area limits within this exemption, the exemption does not automatically allow this amount of native vegetation to be removed.

**Figure 16. Excessive removal of vegetation to construct a fence**





When relying on this exemption the removal of native vegetation must only be to the *minimum extent necessary*. To meet this requirement, consider the following:

- the exemption is intended to allow maintenance or construction of the fence, not to remove all the native vegetation that could fall on the fence at some point in time
- retain the following native vegetation if its removal is not necessary to enable maintenance or construction of a fence:
  - branches overhanging the clearance area
  - trees with trunks partially in the clearance area
  - ground cover.

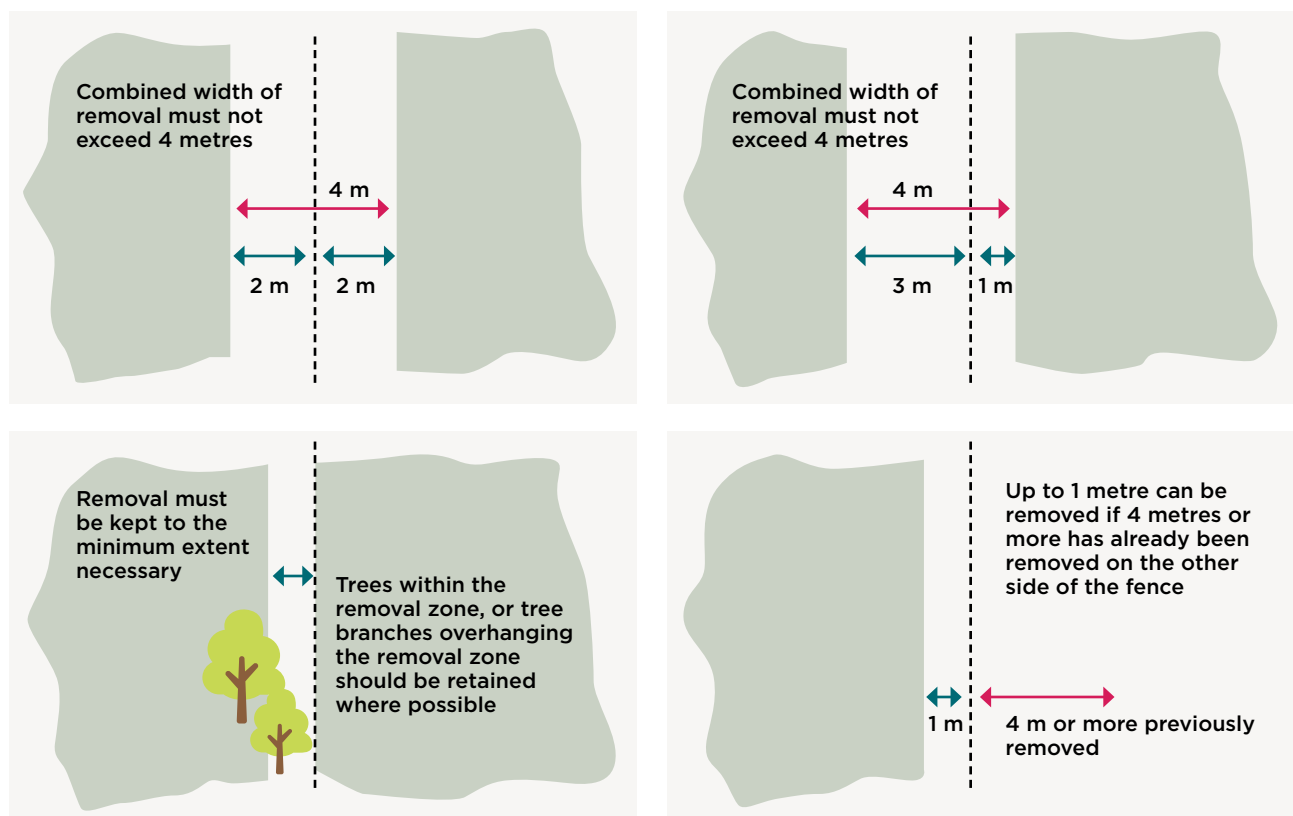


Figure 17. Allowances and limitations of the Exemptions from requiring a planning permit to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation (DELWP 2017)



When constructing new fences, barbed wire should be discouraged unless necessary in the management of certain land use activities e.g. cattle grazing. Barbed wire is known to be harmful to a range of fauna species and contributes to the death or permanent injury of tens to hundreds of thousands of animals each year. More than 60 Australian species are known to become entangled in barbed wire, particularly high-risk taxa include kangaroos as well as bats, gliders and owls (Van der Ree 1999). Refer [wildlifefriendlyfencing.org/](http://wildlifefriendlyfencing.org/) for further information.

### 7.8.3 Construction of pathways and tracks

Landholders, individuals, groups or contractors wishing to construct a walking, cycling or horse-riding pathways or track, must apply to Council for a *Works Within Road Reserve* permit. On receipt of the permit application, Council will consider the proposed works impact on roadside environmental assets and any statutory obligations to protect them.

Any proposed paths/tracks need to be located/aligned to avoid native vegetation. If vegetation is to be removed (including native grasses, shrubs, herbs and forbs), a Planning Permit is required.





## 8 Road maintenance, construction and widening

In Victoria, native vegetation removal is regulated under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 through local planning schemes. A permit is usually required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation unless an exemption applies.

In line with the Mount Alexander Shire planning scheme, Clauses 52.16 and 52.17 of the Road Safety exemption allows for the removal of native vegetation to the *minimum extent necessary* to maintain the safe and efficient function of an existing road. This exemption applies to vegetation removal for maintenance within the road maintenance envelope.

In some cases, removal of limbs or trees beyond the maintenance envelope will be required to maintain the safe and efficient use of the road. This, as with all works on roadsides, must be done to the minimum extent necessary with the least amount of impact to native vegetation where it doesn't cause an obstruction or hazard.

Following hazardous tree and/or branch removal, large limbs (>10cm diameter) should be retained in situ to increase the roadside's habitat value. Smaller branches and foliage can be mulched within the maintenance envelope but mulch must be removed from the site.

Before undertaking tree works on a roadside, Council's Natural Environment Officer and Tree Management Officer should be involved in the works planning.

Removal of native vegetation for the construction of new roads or major renovation to existing roads (such as widening) is subject to permit requirements and must be conducted to the minimum extent necessary. The following also applies to road construction:

- An assessment is to be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to works to determine the ecological values and biodiversity impacts in the area
- Information requirements for a planning application is to include (as a minimum) an assessment under Victoria's Native Vegetation Regulations and Clause 52.17 of the Mount Alexander Shire Council Planning Scheme.
- Works must demonstrate no or minimal impact on locally significant or threatened species or communities
- Provision of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan

On approval:

- A Construction and Environmental Management Plan shall be implemented during the roadworks
- Any vegetation and trees to be retained are to be protected with temporary tree/vegetation protection fencing and signed as 'no go zones'
- 'No go zones' must be clearly marked on site plans
- Vegetation removal must be limited to that outlined in the endorsed permit
- Fill, rubbish, spoil and weeds must be removed from site and disposed of responsibly.



## 8.1 Maintenance and construction of drains and culverts

The removal of native vegetation for maintenance of a table drain is exempt from permit requirements as per the Road Safety Exemption.

If the construction and maintenance of culverts or drains within the road reserve is beyond routine maintenance outlined in the Road Safety Exemption and has impacts on native vegetation, a Planning Permit is required.

The construction of cut-off/mitre drains should occur no more frequently than every 100 meters if practicable or as is required by the steepness of the gradient

and to any other requirement and specification for best practice operations. In areas of moderate or high conservation value, consultation with Council's Natural Environment Officer is to occur prior to construction of a new cut-off/ mitre drain to avoid impact to native vegetation.

The cleaning and maintenance of table drains, and cut-off/ mitre drains should only occur when it is necessary to restore drain capacity. Allowing a certain amount of leaf litter, debris and sediment to build up slows down the rate of run-off and reduces erosion and turbidity issues in waterways.

Some seasonal drainage lines that occur within roadsides contain highly significant vegetation and ecosystems.



**Figure 18.** Locally rare species, only known from two remaining roadsides within the Shire, finding favour on the edge of a mitre drain



**Figure 19.** Significant wetland vegetation in a roadside drainage line



## 8.2 Installation of utilities/services

If the installation of minor utility services impacts on native vegetation, a permit is required under Clause 52.17 of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme. Vegetation removal for ongoing maintenance of installed utilities is exempt from permit requirements, provided it is done to the minimum extent necessary.

Native vegetation removal for the construction of new major utility works by or on behalf of a utility services provider is exempt from permit requirements providing the removal of native vegetation is undertaken in accordance with the written agreement of the secretary to DEECA and must be undertaken *to the minimum extent necessary* (DELWP 2017).

If any such major works are proposed, regardless of permit requirements, Council is to be notified during the planning process in order for assessments to be undertaken of the proposed works area and ensure Council's statutory obligations are met in relation to the protection of threatened species and communities.

## 8.3 Maintenance of electrical lines

Native vegetation removal required for the maintenance of electrical lines is exempt from permit requirements, provided the removal is conducted *to the minimum extent necessary* and within the requirements outlined in the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020.

Regardless of permit requirements, the relevant authority and their contractors must liaise with Council's Natural Environment Officer and Tree Management Officer prior to any works or maintenance on a roadside. This is to ensure high value environmental assets are not impacted by the works and to ensure the type

of maintenance is consistent with the vegetation in the area and causes no unnecessary damage to soil or vegetation. When notified, Council will undertake a thorough environmental values check which is to consist of the following:

- VBA (Victorian Biodiversity Atlas) query to identify any significant flora and fauna species
- EPBC Protected Matters Search Tool query to identify possible Matters of National Environmental Significance
- A review of internal databases including roadside ecological condition

It is expected that utility companies will conduct their own comprehensive values checking utilising all available resources.

While vegetation removal within the clearance space for powerlines is acceptable, impact to trees beyond the clearance space and impacts to ground storey vegetation from excessive, unnecessary vehicular movement on roadsides is not deemed as being *to the minimum extent necessary*. Impact to native vegetation beyond the clearance space as specified in the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 is therefore subject to permit requirements.

In some situations, total removal of the tree layer beneath power lines could allow for better growth of the indigenous understorey and limit ongoing disturbance to vegetation and soil from a utility companies routine maintenance practice.

A case by case assessment to ensure no negative environmental outcomes are caused from this practice such as leading to an increase in weed invasion through greater access to light and water resources must be undertaken.



# 9 Prohibited activities within roadsides

## 9.1 Illegal dumping of rubbish

The dumping of waste and organic material on roadsides is unsightly and causes detrimental impacts to the natural environment. Green waste in particular can smother native vegetation, result in invasive weed incursions, outcompeting native vegetation and altering nutrient levels in the surrounding area. Other types of waste can cause contamination of land and waterways.

The *Environment Protection Act 2017* provides the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) with powers to pursue sanctions and penalties against environmental polluters.

Illegal dumping of rubbish on the roadside may result in enforcement action by the EPA in line with their authority under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* and/or the Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020.

## 9.2 Wood collection

The collection of wood from roadsides in the Mount Alexander Shire is not permitted. All native vegetation, including standing and fallen trees are protected under the Planning and Environment Act 1997, Council is responsible for compliance and enforcement of this legislation.

Dead, standing trees and fallen logs provide vital habitat for native wildlife, both arboreal and terrestrial contributing to a diverse, healthy ecosystem. Fallen branches and decomposing leaf litter retain moisture, rebuild soil profile and provide conditions for fungi growth, microhabitats for flora diversity and habitat for invertebrates which are important in good soil health and a food source for other fauna.

The collection of larger logs disturbs these processes, removes a significant carbon store from the roadside network, causes damage to vegetation and soil and significantly reduces habitat for a host of wildlife, including threatened species.

Standing and fallen trees and logs may also contain valuable hollows, which can take decades to hundreds of years to form and are essential for the survival of many bird and mammal species. Negative impacts to threatened species as a result of damage to habitat from wood collection activities could see severe penalties to offenders for breaches to the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* and the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Other enforceable legislation which may be breached by roadside wood collection include to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

Some residents rely on firewood as their only source of fuel for heating and cooking. It is important to source firewood legally and responsibly and plan firewood needs well in advance.

The collection of firewood must be conducted on land with permission granted by the landowner such as on some private properties. Firewood can be purchased from sources selling legally collected firewood such as from farm land or from sustainably managed plantations. Managed plantations, or wood lots, could also be a beneficial land use activity on private land, assisting to rehabilitate degraded, cleared paddocks and with practical, economic and environmental co-benefits.

Firewood for personal use can also be collected, free of charge from designated State Forest collection areas during the autumn and spring collection period. This is a managed activity balancing environmental outcomes with community benefit. Rules apply around the timing and the location each year and there are restrictions on how much wood can be collected. These areas of State Forest are managed by Forest Fire Management Victoria and firewood collection is regulated by the Conservation Regulator. For further information and to find your local collection area, visit the Forest Fire Management Victoria website.





Figure 20. Felled, cut up and removed. A dead standing tree bearing hollows that could be home to a host of faunal species, including threatened species.



## 9.3 Landholder modifications

Council manages all vegetation on a municipal rural road reserves and landholders are required to apply for a *Works Within Road Reserve* permit if they wish to undertake any activities on a road reserve.

Native vegetation is protected under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. In addition, there are large areas of the Shire that have an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) or a Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) where a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. It is an offence to conduct any of the below on a roadside without a permit:

- remove or damage native vegetation or soil
- spray any herbicides
- landscaping or planting any vegetation
- park or use any machinery other than at an approved legal crossover point
- remove wood for firewood or any other purpose
- bike riding
- prospecting
- mowing or slashing of vegetation for perceived fire risk, site lines, fear of snakes, 'cleaning up' or to present an entrance or gateway.



**Figure 21. Removal of high quality vegetation on a quiet rural roadside. Mowing or slashing of vegetation to present an entrance or gateway is not permitted.**



**Figure 22. Left: Use of a non-selective herbicide severely degrades soil and damages all vegetation with long-term negative effects. Right: Blanket spraying of non-selective herbicide is an unacceptable form of land management that kills all vegetation and promotes unknown weed growth.**



## 9.4 Agricultural practices

### 9.4.1 Ploughing, cropping and slashing

Ploughing and cropping is not permitted on a rural roadside.

Council undertake slashing on strategic roadsides as part of the Municipal Fire Management Plan. Slashing of native vegetation is not permitted. This practice is detrimental to indigenous vegetation and can reduce reproductive ability, change the nature of vegetation and encourage weed incursions.

Any slashing on a roadside is to be conducted by Council staff or approved contractors. Roadsides included in the slashing program are identified on Councils internal mapping system. Slashing is not permitted outside of these pre-defined and recorded areas.

Mount Alexander Shire Council Standard Operating Procedures and strict hygiene protocols are adhered to, when undertaking works to prevent the spread of weeds and damage to environmental assets.

### 9.4.2 Stock grazing and droving

Stock Grazing and Droving in a road reserve requires a permit under the Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020.

The action of both grazing and droving on roadsides causes impact to native vegetation through soil compaction, trampling of sensitive flora, nutrient enrichment and spread of weeds. When considering an application for a permit, Council must ensure that statutory obligations in the protection of environmental values are upheld. A permit will not be granted on a roadside where adverse impact to environmental assets may occur.

## 9.5 Harvesting wildflowers, foliage and seeds

Harvesting wildflowers, foliage and seeds is not permitted without a permit.

Protected flora includes plant taxa listed as protected under the *Flora and Fauna and Guarantee Act*, plant taxa belonging to communities listed as threatened under *Flora and Fauna and Guarantee Act*, and other designated plant taxa requiring protection (e.g. grasstrees and orchids).

To harvest any component of protected flora, a Protected Flora License or permit is required from DEECA and a Council *Works Within Road Reserve* permit.

## 9.6 Sand, soil and gravel extraction

The extraction of soil or any other materials from a roadside by Council or any third party is not permitted.

Depositing soil, fill, spoil or any other material on any roadside is not permitted.

The removal of soil from the roadside to fill potholes on an unmade road is not permitted.

## 9.7 Horse riding

Horse riding is a popular recreational use along municipal roadsides. Unregulated horse riding can create trails that destroy native ground flora, create soil compaction or pugging and expose areas to weed invasion. Horses also commonly introduce a variety of weed species (particularly exotic grasses) through their droppings and on hooves.

The requirements around horse riding under Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020 state that a person must not ride a horse on Council land:

- if the activity causes damage to the Council land or road
- if the activity causes a nuisance to any person
- where the Council has erected signs on that Council land prohibiting horse riding.

In order to protect important biodiversity values, horse riding should not be undertaken on a roadside with High or Medium conservation value.







# 10 Implementation

## 10.1 How will Council use the roadside conservation management plan?

All Council Officers working on roadsides will be made aware of the Roadside Conservation Management Plan with inductions that refer to the relevant activities and associated constraints in conjunction with relevant standard operating procedures.

Council will communicate this Plan and conduct inductions to other stakeholders including:

- Environmental/Ecological Contractors
- Landowners
- Utility Providers i.e. Powercor
- Community Groups
- Land Management Authorities i.e. DEECA, Parks Victoria
- Civil Works Contractors

To ensure an adequate understanding of the Plan, inductions will detail the Plan's main points with a tailored focus on the intended works. e.g. slasher operators must undergo an induction that specifically outlines machinery hygiene protocols, mapped slashing zones, high-threat weed mapping etc.

## 10.2 How can community use this plan?

This Plan provides guidance on activities that can or cannot be undertaken on a roadside.

Further methods to engage the community on the principles of this plan and roadside biodiversity values include:

- Council to develop further online resources that promote the Plan and roadside biodiversity values
- Education on high threat weeds and how community can identify and manage them on their own properties
- Increased promotion and education on the Shire wide biodiversity values

## 10.3 Compliance and enforcement

Council is responsible for managing municipal roadsides and therefore responsible for the enforcement of the guidelines set out in the Plan. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* provides the legislative framework for Council to prepare the planning provisions and biodiversity strategies. Under the Act, Council is also responsible for enforcement of the provisions and requirements of the planning scheme including the native vegetation regulations set out in Clause 52.17 of the Act.

Any impact to threatened species or communities or other protected flora as a result of action on a roadside will be referred to DEECA or the Federal Minister of the Environment and Water and could result in civil or criminal penalties.

To report a road safety or maintenance issue, contact Council's Customer Service on 5471 1700 or [info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au).

Further information on applicable legislation is included in Appendix 1.



# 11 Roles and responsibilities

In order for the objectives of this Plan to be met, it is important for the various stakeholders to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to roadside conservation. Table 6 summarises these responsibilities.

Stakeholder	Responsibilities
Mount Alexander Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct inductions on the RCMP internally and for contractors</li> <li>• Educate the community on the RCMP</li> <li>• Carry out works in line with the RCMP and other relevant Policies/ Procedures</li> <li>• Monitor roadside condition and update conservation values, as part of routine inspections</li> <li>• Carry out compliance and enforcement as necessary</li> <li>• Engage with community about the RCMP and deliver annual updates</li> </ul>
Environmental/Ecological Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergo induction on RCMP requirements</li> <li>• Ensure staff are trained with a suitable background in flora identification and sound land management practices</li> </ul>
DEECA / Parks Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with MASC before undertaking works on municipal roadsides</li> </ul>
Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to the RCMP for information on rights / restrictions on roadside activities and works</li> <li>• Consult with MASC prior to undertaking works on, or that involve municipal roadsides</li> <li>• Obtain required permits if proposing works on municipal roadsides</li> </ul>
Utility Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with MASC before undertaking works on municipal roadsides</li> <li>• Undergo induction on RCMP requirements</li> <li>• Obtain required permits if proposing impact beyond exemption limits</li> <li>• Conduct thorough biodiversity asset checks of all available sources including the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA), Protected Matters Search Tool etc.</li> </ul>



## 11.1 Decision matrix

Table 7 provides guidance on the requirements associated with roadside works and activities. Further information on exemption requirements is described in *Exemptions from requiring a planning permit to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation: Guidance – (DELWP 2017)*.

Activity	Planning permit required?	Is there an exemption?	Permission of responsible authority required? <sup>4</sup>	Requirements	MASC actions required
Construction of access points	Yes	Yes, crossovers of a limited width, at existing properties only.	Yes, <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> permit application required.	<b>Avoid and minimise</b> vegetation removal through appropriate siting of crossover points, or use of dual access ways.	Planning permit is required to remove native vegetation for any new access point (driveway).  Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage prior to on-site inspection of proposed siting from Council's Natural Environment Officer.
Construction of pathways and tracks	Yes	No	Yes, <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> permit application required.	Construction should avoid native vegetation where possible and should meet Council's strategic goals.	Planning permit is required if native vegetation is to be removed.
Drain and culvert construction or maintenance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Drainage works by Council must comply with guidelines in Council's Road safety and Maintenance Agreement with DEECA.	Refer to the <i>Procedure to Rely on the Road Safety</i> exemption.  Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage prior to on-site inspection of proposed siting from Councils Natural Environment team.
Fencing Construction or Maintenance	No	Yes	Yes, <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> permit application required.	Vegetation removal in the road reserve cannot occur without the consent of Council.	If more than the exempt amount of vegetation to be cleared, Planning Permits apply.  Conduct site assessment to inform consent.

<sup>4</sup> Note: Works Within a Road Reserve permit application is required for third parties only. Council staff or contractors of Council, do not require consent to work in the road reserve.



Activity	Planning permit required?	Is there an exemption?	Permission of responsible authority required? <sup>4</sup>	Requirements	MASC actions required
Fire Protection	No	Yes	Yes, by both Council and CFA and in consultation with DEECA in accordance with the procedure.	Clause 52.12 describes the bushfire protection exemptions.	Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage prior to on-site inspection from Councils Natural Environment Officer.
Firewood collection	Not permitted on Council managed land, including roadsides.				
Harvesting wildflowers, foliage and seeds	Yes (FFG Act)	No	Yes, under FFG Act	Permits for collection of native flora are administered by DEECA. <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> application may be required.	<i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> application may be required.
Installation of services	Yes	Yes	Yes	The utility service provider must maintain or construct a utility installation in accordance with the written agreement of DEECA.	Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage. Ensure exempt removal is done to the minimum extent necessary.
Installation and maintenance of electrical lines	No, if existing easement, Yes, if new vegetation removal on a new easement.	Yes, Council and electricity distribution companies have exemptions.	No	Electrical distribution companies are responsible for maintaining power lines in rural areas, and Council responsible in urban areas. Both are exempt from requiring a permit to remove native vegetation providing works comply with the Code of Practice prepared under Section 65 of the <i>State Electricity Commission Act 1958</i> .	Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage.



Activity	Planning permit required?	Is there an exemption?	Permission of responsible authority required? <sup>4</sup>	Requirements	MASC actions required
Slashing	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Works that remove or disturb native vegetation require a planning permit.</p> <p>Slashing is only permitted for fire management purposes. Cultivation is not allowed on roadsides.</p>	<p>Ploughing fire breaks must be conducted within the guidelines of the <i>Roadside vegetation management – fire exemption for roadsides</i> legislation and with approval of the CFA.</p> <p>Conduct desktop check of conservation values, listed species and cultural heritage.</p>
Ploughing and cropping	Ploughing and cropping on roadsides is not permitted.				
Revegetation/ Restoration of roadsides	No	No	Yes, <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> permit application required.	All proposals must comply with requirements relating to traffic management, asset maintenance and fire protection.	Revegetation should be encouraged, particularly on medium or low-conservation roadsides. Species planted should match the EVC of the site and follow best practice. Planting of exotic vegetation, particularly noxious or environmental weeds, is not permitted.
Road maintenance, construction and widening	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Agreement with DELWP allows for some low impact construction works and safety projects.</p> <p>Routine maintenance does not require offsets.</p> <p>Construction does require offsets and consultation with DEECA.</p> <p>All major projects require an Environmental management plan (EMP).</p>	Follow procedure INTERNAL19/681 for assessment and approval steps.
Sand, soil and gravel extraction	Extraction of soil, sand or gravel from roadsides is not permitted.				



Activity	Planning permit required?	Is there an exemption?	Permission of responsible authority required? <sup>4</sup>	Requirements	MASC actions required
Stock movement, grazing and droving	Yes	No	Yes	There are limitations to stock grazing or droving. Mount Alexander Shire Council Local Law 2020 applies.	Refer to Mount Alexander Shire Council Local Law 2020
Stockpiles and dump sites	Yes, if native vegetation is impacted	No	Yes, <i>Consent to work on road reserve</i> required	Road maintenance, construction and widening works should be planned so stockpiles and dump sites are not required.	If stockpiles and dump sites are required then they are to be located away from native vegetation.
Unused road reserves – vegetation management	Yes, if native vegetation is impacted.	No	Yes, permission required from DEECA.	Council is responsible for the management of unused road reserves under the <i>Land Act 1958</i> and DEECA is responsible for the issue of licences for respective uses of these areas.	Council can consult with DEECA Public Land Services where information is required about unused road reserves.
Weed spraying	Yes, if native vegetation is impacted.	No	Yes, <i>Works Within Road Reserve</i> permit application required. (unless by Council staff or Council contractors)	Operators must have appropriate chemical handling licence (contractors, Council staff or private landholders) and proficient species identification skills.	Best-practice spraying must be adhered to, to prevent damage to native vegetation. Operators provided with roadside vegetation mapping and weed mapping.



## 11.2 Action plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing/ Frequency
1 Undertake updated rapid habitat assessments of roadside ecological condition	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	June 2027
2 Update internal mapping system with CaLP Act listed weeds, <i>Nassella sp.</i> infestations, roadside ecological condition	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit	Ongoing
3 Conduct internal induction on the RCMP through face to face training and site visits during spring	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit/ Engineering	October 2024
4 Improve data collection procedures and capability to increase detail of ecological information of environmental assets	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, IT	June 2025
5 Check all GPS locations of grader turnaround points and ensure mitre/cut-off drain locations are recorded on internal mapping system	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, Works Unit	June 2025
6 Make mapping system available on portable devices for all staff working on roadsides	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit, IT	June 2026
7 Revisit and address all locations in the road shoulder slashing program and increase detail including areas strategic for fire control	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit/ Municipal Fire Prevention Officer	By November 2024 and ongoing
8 Circulate the RCMP to contractors and other managing authorities and conduct inductions prior to undertaking works	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit/ Engineering	December 2024 and ongoing
9 Update the <i>Work Within Road</i> permit process to incorporate conservation management consideration.	Engineering / Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	December 2024
10 Prepare FAQ's/ quick reference guide regarding conservation management practices and issue of a <i>Work Within Road Reserve</i> permit	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Engineering/ Communications Unit	December 2024
11 Develop publicly available online maps showing rural/ urban zoning and outlining relevant landowner obligations/ restrictions	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, IT	June 2025



Action	Responsibility	Timing/ Frequency
12 Conduct community engagement/ education on roadside conservation values through media releases, website content, social media, community/landholder engagement and FAQ.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	Ongoing
13 Continue ecological burning practices in native grassland in Baringhup West and explore opportunities to expand regime, including cultural burning and build capacity	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, Municipal Fire Prevention Officer, CFA, DJAARA/Djandak	Ongoing
14 Conduct compliance and enforcement procedures	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit, Local Laws, Engineering	Ongoing
15 Assess Significant Roadside Area signage on a case by case basis with a view to removing these signs as community messaging increases regarding Council's management of environmental roadside assets	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/ Works Unit	Ongoing
16 Seek opportunities of in-house partnership to enhance biodiversity and ecological values while reducing fire risk on Council managed land (This could include but not be limited to review of Councils Fire Management Programs conducted on roadsides and other Council managed land.	Emergency Management/ Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Units	Ongoing
17 Review the Plan and report on actions	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions mid term review - Dec 2027</li> <li>• Plan review - five years.</li> <li>• Report on actions - annual</li> </ul>



# Appendix 1. Policy context

## Legislation

This Plan includes requirements set by local, state and federal legislation. All works conducted on roadsides by Council and other stakeholders must comply with the relevant legislation. Table 5 outlines the applicable legislation, policies, standards and strategies that affect the Plan at all levels of jurisdiction.

Table 8. Legislation applicable to the Plan

Level	Regulations	Description
Federal Legislation	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)	<p>The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) is Australia's main piece of national environmental legislation. It provides a framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important plants, animals, habitats and places. This includes threatened species, ecological communities and matters of national environmental significance.</p> <p>Many EPBC listed communities and species of flora and fauna occur in the Mount Alexander Shire that require protection under the EPBC Act. Data on the location and status of these species and communities and their specific management requirements are available online from the Federal Government website on EPBC Act List of Threatened Species and Ecological Communities available at: (<a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened">http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened</a>).</p>
State Legislation	Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006	All Victorian Aboriginal archaeological sites (registered and unregistered) are protected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 which prevents the disturbance of cultural sites or objects. If works on a roadside have the potential to impact on Aboriginal heritage, First Peoples Relations Victoria or the relevant Registered Aboriginal Party are to be consulted.
	Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010	The purposes of this Act are to advance reconciliation and promote good relations between the State and traditional owners and to recognise traditional owner groups based on their traditional and cultural associations to certain land in Victoria. Under the Act, a settlement package can include a Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) which allows traditional owners to comment on or consent to certain activities on public land and a Natural Resource Agreement to recognise traditional owners' rights to take and use specific natural resources and provide input into the management of land and natural resources.
	The Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994	<p>The Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP) sets out a framework for managing noxious weeds and pest animal matters to prevent degradation to catchments. The Act is applicable across all public and privately managed land throughout Victoria.</p> <p>Under the Act, all landowners are required to take all reasonable steps to conserve soil, protect water resources, eradicate regionally prohibited weeds and pest animals and avoid contributing to land degradation which causes or may cause damage to the land of another landowner.</p> <p>Listed noxious species under the Act are the highest priority for management under this Plan.</p>



Level	Regulations	Description
State Legislation	The Country Fire Authority Act 1958	<p>Section 43 of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 requires public authorities, including municipal councils and VicRoads, to take all practicable steps to prevent the occurrence of fires, and to minimise the danger from the spread of fires on or from land which the authority owns, manages or maintains.</p> <p>The Act states that a Municipal Fire Prevention Plan is required that must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas which are at particular risk;</li> <li>• Specify how these are to be treated; and,</li> <li>• Specify who is responsible for treating those risks</li> </ul>
<b>Road Safety Exemption</b>		
DEECA Agreements		
<p>The Mount Alexander Shire has an agreement with DEECA to access the Road Safety Exemption under Clause 52.17 in accordance with the Procedure to rely on the road safety exemption in planning schemes (2018).</p>		
<b>Fire Management Exemption</b>		
<p>Under the Roadside vegetation management for bushfire risk mitigation purposes: Guidelines for road managers (DELWP), a permit is not required when native vegetation is to be removed, destroyed or lopped (by the road manager) to reduce fuel loads on roadsides to minimise risk to life and property from bushfire on an existing public road.</p>		
The Electrical Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020		<p>The Electrical Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations control the clearance required between trees and powerlines for safety and powerline protection. Powerline companies and their contractors must comply with these for tree clearing and pruning activities. The removal of vegetation outside these areas is subject to permit requirements.</p>
The Flora and Fauna Guarantee ACT 1988 (FFG Act)		<p>The Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act) is Victoria's main piece of biodiversity legislation. It provides a framework to protect listed threatened flora, fauna and ecological communities. Further to threatened species, the FFG Act outlines protected flora that cannot be collected, killed, injured or disturbed on public land without a 'Protected Flora License' or Permit from DEECA. The FFG Act also outlines a number of threatening processes which should be avoided where possible.</p>



Level	Regulations	Description
State Legislation	Planning and Environment Act 1987	The Planning and Environment Act 1987 sets out the objectives for land use planning in Victoria and the legislative framework for achieving these objectives. The Act requires municipalities to prepare and administer local planning schemes that include strategic policies in the protection of biodiversity. The Act also sets out processes for enforcing planning schemes and planning permits.
	The Road Management Act 2004	The Road Management Act outlines management responsibilities of Council to provide a safe and efficient road network as outlined in the Road Management Plan. Generally, this applies only to the maintenance envelope which is outside the scope of this Plan. However, circumstances apply where vegetation outside the maintenance envelope is hazardous.
	Victorian Native Vegetation Regulations	<p>Victoria's Native Vegetation Regulations are designed to achieve the outcome of 'no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation'.</p> <p>The regulations state that impact to native vegetation must be avoided and minimised wherever possible, and then offset where it cannot be avoided and minimised. Offsets can be purchased via the native vegetation credit register and provide for the protection of similar vegetation elsewhere to compensate for the loss of native vegetation.</p>
Local Legislation, Policies, and Strategies	Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan: Mount Alexander Shire (MEMP)	<p>The MEMP aims to build the capability of individuals, communities, businesses and the environment to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies such as flood and fire, and identify and implement actions to improve outcomes for the Mount Alexander community.</p> <p>Fire management on roadsides should be conducted in line with the Plan and relevant Standard Operating Procedures.</p>
	Mount Alexander Shire Local Laws 2020	Under the Local Government Act 1989, Council has the power to create and enforce local laws. Those laws relating to roadsides as covered in the RCMP include limitations on stock grazing or droving and horse riding.
	Mount Alexander Planning Scheme	The local planning scheme outlines land use rights across the Shire. Planning tools such as zones and overlays provide guidance on what activities and works can be conducted on certain parcels of land. On roadsides, overlays such as Vegetation Protection Overlays (VPOs) and Environmental Significance Overlays (ESOs) can provide protection to environmental assets additional to that of the Native Vegetation Regulations.



Level	Regulations	Description
Local Legislation, Policies, and Strategies	Road Management Plan 2021	The Road Management Plan establishes systems and standards for the management of road infrastructure. This area is outside of the RCMP which covers the roadside. However, some works in the scope of Roadside Management have the potential to impact on the roadside.
	Mount Alexander Environment Strategy 2015-2025	Under the Strategy, priority Area 7 'Protect natural environment assets' states that 'to improve the condition of priority natural environment assets, Council must make the best use of available resources.  Significant environmental assets occur on roadsides and should therefore be protected under the Environment Strategy.
	Mount Alexander Climate Change Strategy	This strategy describes how Council will respond to climate change in our own operations, partner with our community to respond to climate change and advocate to support our response to climate change.





## Appendix 2. Victorian noxious weeds list

Current July 2017

### SCHEDULE 1

#### State Prohibited Weeds

Common name	Botanical name
Alligator weed	<i>Alternanthera philoxeroides</i> (Mart.) Griseb.
Bear-skin fescue	<i>Festuca gautieri</i> (Hack.) K. Richt.
Black knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i> L.
Branched broomrape	<i>Orobanche ramosa</i> L.
Camel thorn	<i>Alhagi maurorum</i> Medik.
Giant knotweed	<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i> (F. Schmidt ex Maxim) Ronse Decr.
Giraffe thorn	<i>Acacia erioloba</i> E. Mey
Hawkweed	<i>Hieracium</i> spp.
Horsetail	<i>Equisetum</i> L. spp.
Ivy-leafed sida	<i>Malvella leprosa</i> (Ortega) Krapov.
Japanese knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i> (Houtt.) Ronse Decr.
Japanese knotweed hybrid	<i>Fallopia x bohémica</i> (Chrtek & Chrtkova) J.P.Bailey
Karoo thorn	<i>Acacia karroo</i> Hayne
Lagarosiphon	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i> (Ridl.) Moss
Lobed needle grass	<i>Nassella charruana</i> (Arechav.) Barkworth
Marijuana	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.
Mesquite	<i>Prosopis</i> spp.
Mexican feather grass	<i>Nassella tenuissima</i> (Trin.) Barkworth
Nodding thistle	<i>Carduus nutans</i> L.
Parthenium weed	<i>Parthenium hysterophorus</i> L.
Perennial ragweed	<i>Ambrosia psilostachya</i> DC.
Poverty weed	<i>Iva axillaris</i> Pursh.
Salvinia	<i>Salvinia molesta</i> D.S. Mitch.
Tangled hypericum	<i>Hypericum triquetrifolium</i> Turra
Water hyacinth	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i> (Mart) Solms



## SCHEDULE 2

### Regionally Prohibited Weeds (P), Regionally Controlled Weeds (C), or Restricted Weeds (R)

Common name	Botanical name	Corangamite	East Gippsland	Glenelg	Goulburn	Mallee	North Central (MASC)	North East	Port Phillip Westernport	West Gippsland	Wimmera
African boxthorn	<i>Lycium ferocissimum</i> Miers	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
African daisy	<i>Senecio pterophorus</i> DC.	P	R	C	P	R	P	P	C	P	P
African feather grass	<i>Pennisetum macrourum</i> Trin.	P	P	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
African love grass	<i>Eragrostis curvula</i> (Schrad.) Nees	C	C	R	C	R	C	C	C	C	R
Amsinckia	<i>Amsinckia</i> spp.	P	C	P	C	R	C	C	C	P	R
Angled onion	<i>Allium triquetrum</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Apple of Sodom	<i>Solanum linnaeanum</i> Hepper & P.-M.L. Jaeger	R	C	R	R	R	R	P	C	C	R
Arrowhead	<i>Sagittaria</i> L. spp.	P	P	P	C	P	C	C	P	P	P
Artichoke thistle	<i>Cynara cardunculus</i> L.	C	R	R	P	C	C	P	C	P	R
Asparagus fern	<i>Asparagus scandens</i> Thunb.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Athel pine/ tamarisk	<i>Tamarix aphylla</i> (L.) H. Karst.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Bathurst burr	<i>Xanthium spinosum</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Bellyache bush	<i>Jatropha gossypifolia</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i> L.	R	P	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	C
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> L. agg.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Boneseed/ Bitou bush	<i>Chrysanthemoides monillifera</i> (L.) Norl.	C	P	C	C	C	P	P	C	C	C
Bridal creeper	<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i> (L.) Druce	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Bridal veil creeper	<i>Asparagus declinatus</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Buffalo burr	<i>Solanum rostratum</i> Dunal	R	R	R	C	R	R	P	P	R	P
Californian/ Perennial thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i> (L.) Scop.	C	C	C	C	R	P	P	C	C	C
Caltrop	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> L.	C	R	C	C	R	C	C	P	P	C

Common name	Botanical name	Corangamite	East Gippsland	Glenelg	Goulburn	Mallee	North Central (MASC)	North East	Port Phillip Westernport	West Gippsland	Wimmera
Cape broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i> (L.) L.A.S. Johnson	C	C	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	C
Cape tulip (one-leaf)	<i>Moraea flaccida</i> (Sweet) Steud.	C	C	C	P	P	C	C	C	C	C
Cape tulip (two-leaf)	<i>Moraea miniata</i> Andrews	P	P	C	P	P	C	C	C	P	P
Cat's claw creeper	<i>Dolichandra unguis-cati</i> (L.) L.G. Lohmann	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Chilean cestrum	<i>Cestrum parqui</i> L'Her.	R	P	R	C	R	R	C	P	P	C
Chilean needle grass	<i>Nassella neesiana</i> (Trin. & Rupr.) Barkworth	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Climbing asparagus	<i>Asparagus plumosus</i> Baker	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Devil's claw (purple-flower)	<i>Proboscidea louisianica</i> (Mill.) Thell.	R	R	C	C	R	R	C	P	R	R
Devil's claw (yellow-flower)	<i>Proboscidea lutea</i> (Lindl.) Stapf	R	R	C	C	R	R	C	P	R	R
Dodder	<i>Cuscuta</i> L. spp.	R	R	R	C	R	R	C	C	P	P
English broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i> (L.) Link	C	P	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	P
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Mill.	C	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Fireweed	<i>Senecio madagascariensis</i> Poir.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Flax-leaved broom	<i>Genista linifolia</i> L.	C	P	R	R	R	R	P	C	C	C
Gamba grass	<i>Andropogon gayanus</i> Kunth	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Golden thistle	<i>Scolymus hispanicus</i> L.	C	R	P	C	R	C	P	C	R	R
Gorse/ Furze	<i>Ulex europaeus</i> L.	C	P	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Great mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> L.	R	C	R	C	R	R	C	R	R	R
Ground asparagus	<i>Asparagus aethiopicus</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Hardheads/ Russian knapweed	<i>Rhaponticum repens</i> (L.) Hildalgo	P	R	P	C	C	C	P	P	R	C



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Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i> Jacq.	R	C	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	C
Hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i> L.	C	R	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	R
Hoary cress	<i>Lepidium draba</i> L.	C	R	R	C	C	R	P	C	C	R
Horehound	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Hymenachne, Olive hymenachne	<i>Hymenachne amplexicaulis</i> (Rudge) Nees	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Illyrian thistle	<i>Onopordum illyricum</i> L.	R	P	R	P	R	C	P	P	R	R
Khaki weed	<i>Alternanthera pungens</i> Kunth.	R	P	R	C	R	C	P	P	R	C
Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Madeira vine	<i>Anredera cordifolia</i> (Ten.) Steenis	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Mimosa, giant sensitive plant	<i>Mimosa pigra</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Noogoora burr/ Californian burr	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i> L.	P	R	C	C	C	C	C	C	P	P
Opuntiod cacti	<i>Austrocylindropuntia</i> Backeb. spp.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Opuntiod cacti	<i>Cylindropuntia</i> (Engelm.) F. M. Knuth spp.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Opuntiod cacti	<i>Opuntia</i> Mill. spp. (except <i>O. aurantiaca</i> Lindl., <i>O. monacantha</i> Haw., <i>O. robusta</i> H.L. Wendl. ex Pfeiff., <i>Opuntia stricta</i> (Haw.) Haw., <i>O. ficus-indica</i> (L.) Mill.)	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Ornamental asparagus	<i>Asparagus africanus</i> Lam.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Ox-eye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> Lam.	C	R	R	C	R	R	R	C	C	R
Pampas lily-of-the-valley	<i>Salpichroa organifolia</i> (Lam.) Thell.	R	P	R	R	R	R	C	C	R	R

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Parkinsonia/ Jerusalem-thorn	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Paterson's curse	<i>Echium plantagineum</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Pond apple	<i>Annona glabra</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Prairie ground cherry	<i>Physalis hederifolia</i> A. Gray	C	R	R	C	C	C	C	C	R	P
Prickly acacia	<i>Acacia nilotica</i> (L.) Delile subsp. <i>indica</i> (Benth.) Brenan	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Prickly pear (drooping)	<i>Opuntia monacantha</i> Haw.	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	C	P	C
Prickly pear (erect)	<i>Opuntia stricta</i> (Haw.) Haw.	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	C	P	C
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i> L.	C	C	C	P	R	R	P	C	C	R
Rubber vine	<i>Cryptostegia grandiflora</i> R. Br.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Saffron thistle	<i>Carthamus lanatus</i> L.	R	C	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	C
Sand rocket/ Sand mustard	<i>Diplotaxis tenuifolia</i> (L.) DC.	R	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	R	R
Scotch/ Heraldic thistle	<i>Onopordum acanthium</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	P	C	P	C	R
Serrated tussock	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i> (Nees.) Hack. ex Arechav.	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	P
Silverleaf nightshade	<i>Solanum elaeagnifolium</i> Cav.	C	R	P	C	C	C	C	P	R	C
Skeleton weed	<i>Chondrilla juncea</i> L.	R	R	C	R	R	R	R	P	R	R
Slender/ Shore thistle	<i>Carduus tenuiflorus</i> Curtis/ <i>C. pycnocephalus</i> L.	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	R
Soldier thistle	<i>Picnomon acarna</i> (L.) Cass.	R	R	R	C	R	P	C	P	R	R
Soursob	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i> (Savi) Ten.	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	R



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Spiny broom	<i>Calicotome spinosa</i> (L.) Link	C	R	R	R	R	R	P	P	R	C
Spiny burr grass/ Gentle Annie	<i>Cenchrus longispinus</i> (Hack.) Fernald	R	R	P	C	C	C	C	P	R	C
Spiny emex	<i>Emex australis</i> Steinh.	R	R	R	C	C	R	C	P	R	P
Spiny rush	<i>Juncus acutus</i> L.	R	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
St Barnaby's thistle	<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i> L.	P	P	P	C	R	R	C	P	P	C
St. John's wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
St. Peter's wort	<i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i> Fr.	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	R	R
Star thistle	<i>Centaurea calcitrapa</i> L.	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	P	C	R
Stemless thistle	<i>Onopordum acaulon</i> L.	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	P	R	R
Stinkwort	<i>Dittrichia graveolens</i> (L.) Greuter	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	R	R
Sweet briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	C
Thorn apple (common)	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L.	R	R	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	R
Thorn apple (long-spine)	<i>Datura ferox</i> L.	R	R	C	C	R	C	C	C	C	R
Thorn apple (recurved)	<i>Datura inoxia</i> Mill.	R	R	C	C	R	C	C	P	P	R
Tiger pear	<i>Opuntia aurantiaca</i> Lindl.	C	P	P	C	P	P	P	C	C	P
Topped lavender	<i>Lavandula stoechas</i> L.	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	R	R	R
Tree of heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i> (Mill.) Swingle	R	C	C	C	R	R	C	C	C	R
Tufted honeysuckle	<i>Melianthus comosus</i> Vahl	R	R	R	C	R	R	R	C	C	R
Tutsan	<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i> L.	R	C	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	R
Variegated thistle	<i>Silybum marianum</i> (L.) J. Gaertn.	R	C	R	C	R	R	C	C	C	R
Viper's bugloss	<i>Echium vulgare</i> L.	C	C	C	C	R	R	C	C	C	C

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Wheel cactus	<i>Opuntia robusta</i> H.L. Wendl. ex Pfeiff.	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	P	R	C
Wild garlic	<i>Allium vineale</i> L.	R	R	R	P	C	C	C	R	R	C
Wild mignonette	<i>Reseda luteola</i> L.	Restricted weed (R) statewide									
Wild teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i> L. subsp. <i>fullonum</i>	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	R
Wild watsonia	<i>Watsonia meriana</i> (L.) Mill. var. <i>bulbillifera</i> (J.W. Mathews & L. Bolus) D.A. Cooke	C	C	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	R
Willows	<i>Salix</i> spp. (except <i>Salix alba</i> var. <i>caerulea</i> (Sm.) Sm., <i>Salix alba</i> x <i>matsudana</i> , <i>Salix babylonica</i> L., <i>Salix</i> X <i>calodendron</i> Wimm., <i>Salix caprea</i> L. 'Pendula', <i>Salix matsudana</i> Koidz 'Aurea', <i>Salix matsudana</i> Koidz 'Tortuosa', <i>Salix myrsinifolia</i> Salisb., and <i>Salix</i> X <i>reichardtii</i> A. Kern.)	Restricted weed (R) statewide									



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