PLANNING AND AGRICULTURE

The impact of planning controls on agriculture in the Shire of Bass

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Residents of the Shire of Bass

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis examines the impacts of planning controls on agriculture and rural land use in the Shire of Bass.

The Systems Approach to planning has been used to provide a context for examining the past and emerging policy base, both explicit and implicit, for the introduction and administration of planning controls in the Shire. The impact of land use controls on agriculture and rural land use were examined in physical, economic and social terms using a range of information including Council records, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data and the results of a survey of farmers and small lot owners which was undertaken as part of this research. The following major conclusions were reached.

Agriculture is important to the future of Victoria but like other industries it is subject to a number of influences, some of which are played out on the international level, which have significant implications for the way farming is undertaken. For agriculture to maintain its role in the Victorian economy, improved production efficiency is needed through increased farm sizes and higher levels of technology. Equally important is the need to maintain good quality agricultural land as a resource for the agriculture industry.

Victoria's limited supplies of good quality agricultural land are coming under increasing pressure from inappropriate subdivision, conversion to other uses and land degradation. These factors undermine the State's capacity to maximise agriculture as a competitive strength. The Shire of Bass in south-west Gippsland provides a prime example of a municipality experiencing these problems.

Land use planning has been implemented in the Shire for thirty years but it has been inadequate in addressing the issues which affect agriculture and the rural land base. The planning system fails to incorporate and understanding of the issues which affect agriculture and rural land, has little or no overall policy direction, and is rarely evaluated or monitored to determine the effects it may be having on the uses for which it is planning.

As a result the planning system has developed in an ad hoc fashion which fails to recognise the issues which affect agriculture but rather concentrating on the implementation and administration of regulations such as development and land use controls. These failings, combined with the way the planning system and controls are administered at the local level, are having a range of negative impacts on agriculture

and the rural land base which will have significant impacts locally, and at a State level. Some of these include delays to the necessary improvements to the agriculture industry, loss of prime land from production, increases in property values and changes to the social structure of the Shire.

The Federal and State governments, as well as farmers, recognise that planning can play an important role in the future of agriculture but changes to the way planning approaches rural issues are necessary. The planning system needs a clear direction based on an understanding of the relevant issues, combined with regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Most importantly, rather than relying solely on regulatory controls, planning needs to develop a more proactive and positive approach to rural planning in order to achieve its objectives.

We, the Victorian community, cannot afford to waste our agricultural resources or to let the agriculture industry die. Whilst the planning system cannot provide an answer to all the issues which affect agriculture as an industry, with improvements it can play an important role in ensuring that a sound rural land base is maintained for agriculture to build on and therefore assist the industry to survive and grow.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is recognised as one of Victoria's economic strengths and is considered vitally important to the future of the state. A good land base is essential in order to develop a competitive and sound agricultural industry. However, prime agricultural land is a finite resource, and one which in the Australian and Victorian context is also a limited resource. Once lost from agriculture it is virtually impossible to recover it for that use.

In Victoria high quality agricultural land is coming under increasing pressure from development and land degradation. This is particularly relevant for land located on the metropolitan fringe, which comes under intense pressure for urban and other forms of non-rural development. The Shire of Bass, located in south-west Gippsland, approximately 60 kilometres from Dandenong, is a prime example of a municipality experiencing these pressures.

There is a definite role for planning in facilitating continuing and sustainable use of our agricultural base. But how relevant and effective has planning been in the Shire of Bass in achieving this, and have the controls on land use and development had the desired results? The starting point for this thesis was the hypothesis that planning inadequately addresses agriculture and rural land use, and that this has led to the implementation of controls which have had an adverse impact on agriculture in the Shire. In order to explore this hypothesis this thesis examines the following:-

- The planning process in the Shire of Bass and how this relates to agriculture and rural land use;
- The importance of agriculture in the local context as a physical, economic and social resource;
- The threats facing agriculture and rural land use and the potential consequences of these on the Shire;
- The policy goals (both implicit and explicit) relating to agriculture and rural land use emanating from Federal, State and Local government.
- The effectiveness of planning controls, particularly in relation to the subdivision of land, in achieving the policy goals relating to agriculture and land use planning;
- The existing and potential impacts of planning controls on agriculture and rural land use in the Shire; and

- Farmer and small lot owners' opinions of the relationship between agriculture and planning controls and the impact these controls may have on the future of the Shire.

Whilst the analysis will focus on one municipality, the approach could easily be applied to most rural municipalities in the State, particularly to those located within commuting distance of major urban centres.

2.0 STUDY METHODS

The relevance and impact of planning on agriculture is a topic that has attracted debate (for example Swan & Volum, 1984), but very little or no systematic analysis. Therefore it was necessary to undertake the following research in order to address the hypothesis.

The Systems Approach to planning as developed by McLoughlin (1969) was deliberately chosen as a means of providing a conceptual framework for analysing the impacts of broad agricultural and planning policies and of land use and development controls on rural land use. Studies of the impacts of planning practice elsewhere (such as Reade, 1987; and Healey, 1982) were also used to develop a more detailed understanding of this conceptual framework.

To understand the importance of the relationship between planning policies, land use and development controls on agriculture in the Shire it was necessary to examine the role agriculture plays in the local context as a physical, economic and social resource. To determine the physical characteristics of agricultural land in the Shire, published data on land quality, degradation and landscape value were consulted (for example MPE, 1984; and National Trust, 1985). It was also important to understand the lot structure (farm size) of the Shire, which was determined by using Council Rate records. The economic importance of agriculture was determined by examining the changes to various agricultural industries in the area and the potential effect of these on the Shire. Much of this information was collected through general literature research (see for example Lloyd, 1986; and Annett & Morton, 1990). The social importance of agriculture was determined by examining changes in the structure of the population, employment, education and income within the Shire as revealed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Data. It should be noted, however that the only data available from the 1991 census at this time relates to population numbers.

To establish the relevance of land use planning to agricultural issues and agricultural policies in the local context, it was necessary to examine the range of factors which affect agriculture in the Shire of Bass. These factors range from economic forces to physical constraints and were extracted from published sources (such as Lloyd, 1986; and OOE & DFA, 1991).

It is important to examine the planning policy framework relating to agriculture and rural land use in the Shire in order to understand what direction has been and is being

given to local planning and therefore to the formulation and administration of land use controls. Most of the policies are explicit government documents which are easily examined, such as the *State Agricultural Strategy - 1988*. However, it was also important to examine any implicit policies that may exist, particularly at the local government level. In the absence of any explicit policy statement, Council's policy base resides in the way the planning scheme is administered. Therefore examination of Council's planning register, planning application/amendment files and minutes of meetings was essential in order to determine its implicit policy base. Numerous Council records were used to determine the Policy base and as such not all references used will be cited individually.

Having determined the explicit and implicit policy base, it was then essential to examine how effective the controls in the Planning Scheme have been in achieving the aims of these policies and whether Council's administration of the Scheme accords with the intent of the policies. As explained above, research into Council's records and examination of the Bass Planning Scheme was conducted in order to determine this.

As the major thrust of this research is directed towards examining the existing and potential impacts of planning controls on agriculture and rural land use in the Shire, particularly in relation to the subdivision of land, it was necessary to examine the various decisions made by Council and the controls contained in the Bass Planning Scheme to determine what effect these have had on rural land use and agricultural activity. The impacts of planning can be explored under the headings of physical, economic and social impacts.

In order to determine the physical impacts it was necessary to examine the rate and the type of subdivision that has occurred in the Shire and determine what impact this has had on agriculture. This was achieved by examining Council's plans of subdivision and planning files. To determine the potential physical impacts of subdivisions, an assessment of scheme controls was made against the lot structure to determine the subdivision potential of the Shire and the possible consequences for agriculture.

One of the existing economic impacts of planning controls may be explored by evaluating how the administration of the Scheme has influenced property values. This was determined by examining Council's rate and sale of land records. The potential results of scheme administration on property values were determined by examining the relationship between the physical impacts and the effect on land values and the implications of these for agricultural employment in the area. Additional information

required for this analysis came from general literature research (see, for example Annett & Morton, 1990).

The social impacts of planning controls were more difficult to determine. However, it was considered that comparison of changes in the social structure of the Shire, (including changes in population structure, employment structure, education levels, etc) with the physical impacts of planning controls would provide a basis for understanding current and likely future social impacts. This social background data was sourced from the ABS Census from 1961 to 1991.

Surveys of farmers and small lot owners in the Shire were undertaken to determine farmers' and small lot owners' opinions of planning, its relationship to agriculture and the future of agriculture in the Shire. Two extensive questionnaires were developed, one aimed at farmers and the other small lot owners. The survey process involved dividing the Shire into six sample areas, three of which were coastal and three inland. From each sample area 10 farmers and 10 small lot owners were interviewed. Respondents were selected randomly in order to get an even distribution throughout each sample area, and therefore the Shire. The response rate was excellent and only one person approached refused to participate. A total of 60 farmers and 60 small lot owners were interviewed. Copies of the questionnaires are included as Appendix 1 and a map showing the location of the sample areas and respondents is included as Figure 1. The data collected from the surveys will be reported throughout this thesis where appropriate.

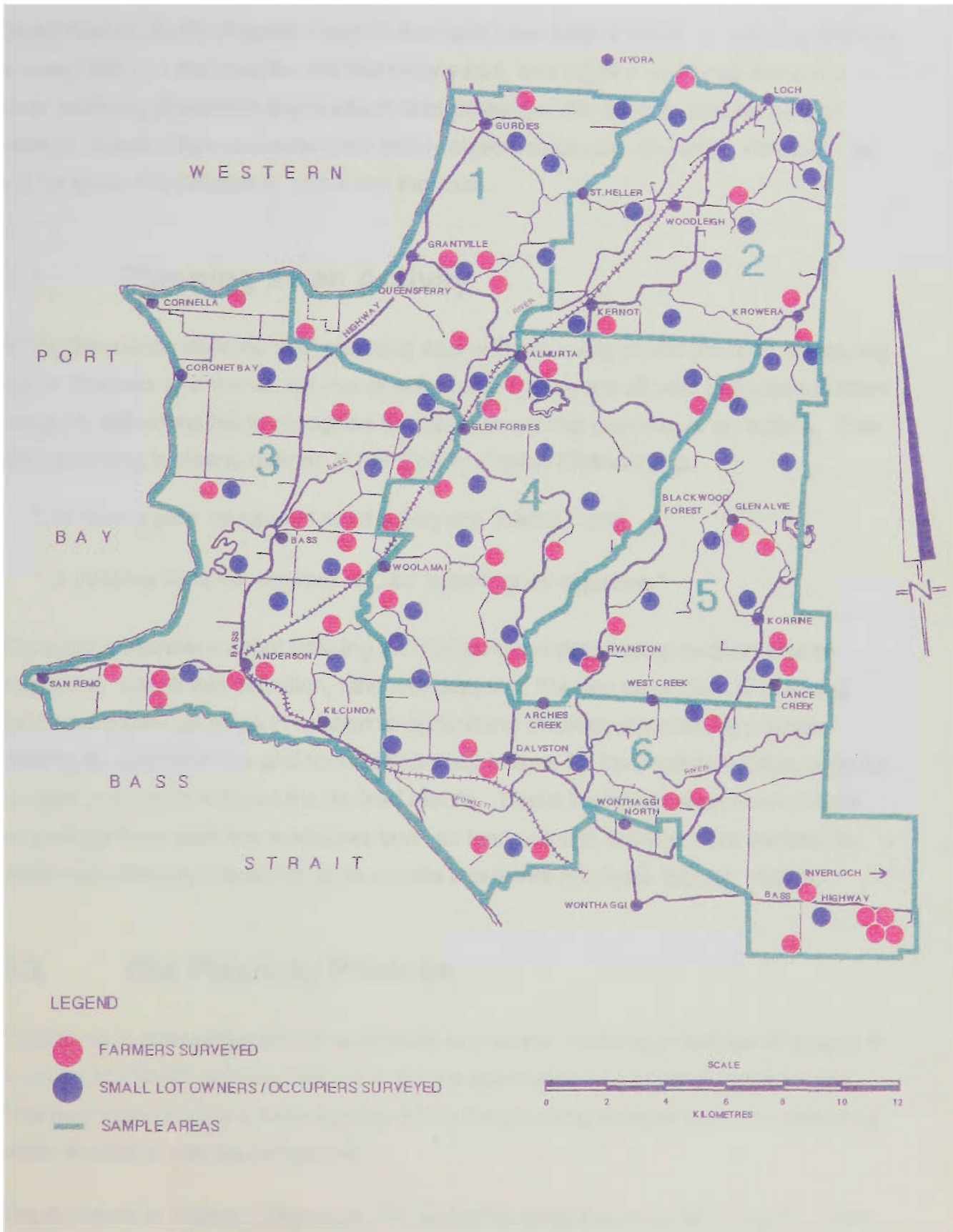


FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS TO SURVEYS OF FARMER AND SMALL LOT OWNERS

3.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS AND AGRICULTURE

Given that all levels of government in Australia have been involved to varying degrees in rural land use planning for the last thirty years, one might expect that there is a clear planning process in place which recognises the role of land use planning in relation to agriculture and sets clear policy objectives to work towards. However, as will be shown in Chapter 6, this is not the case.

3.1 Planning as an Activity

All too frequently definitions of planning deal with achieving public amenity, balancing future interests and the wisest use of resources. These are all very important matters, but such definitions fail to recognise the basic thrust that planning is an activity. The term planning is clearly defined in the *Collins English Dictionary* as,

"..to form a plan, to have in mind a purpose, intend.." and

" a detailed scheme, method etc, for achieving an objective."

Planning is therefore about defining an objective and developing mechanisms to achieve it. Given this definition, land use planning, like any other form of planning (and particularly planning in relation to agriculture) involves determining policies relating to rural land use and formulating mechanisms for the implementation of these policies in order to achieve the desired results. These implementation mechanisms may range from statutory measures such as land use and development controls to other non-statutory measures such as rate incentives (Eccles & Bryant, 1990:5).

3.2 The Planning Process

If planning is conceptualised as an activity or process involving a number of stages, it is useful to identify and discuss the activities associated with each of those stages. This may then provide a base against which the planning process currently operating within the Shire may be compared.

The Systems or Process Approach, developed by writers such as McLoughlin (1969), Chadwick (1971) and Faludi (1973) is seen as the most appropriate model for providing this comparison. It should be noted that the Systems Approach is not a

model derived from how the planning system all too often operates in reality, but rather a perception of how the system should operate (Eccles & Bryant, 1990:7). Whilst each writer's conception of the Systems Approach may vary in terms of the stages and their sequence in the planning process, each recognises that planning is a continuing activity which should distinguish between the policies and the mechanisms formulated to implement those policies, and each writer also places great emphasis on monitoring and evaluation to ensure the continuing relevance of both the policies and the mechanisms chosen to implement them. They also recognise (but to differing degrees) that planning is often undertaken in a volatile political environment whereby policies are altered according to environmental, social, economic and political pressures and that the process must be able to respond to these changes (Eccles & Bryant, 1990:6).

As noted in Chapter 2, McLoughlin's model of the planning process has been chosen to provide a conceptual framework for collecting and analysing empirical data on the impacts of land-use and development controls relating to agriculture in the Shire of Bass. It should be noted that whilst this is a simplification of the planning process it clearly illustrates its major stages. Figure 2 illustrates the stages of the Systems Approach model.

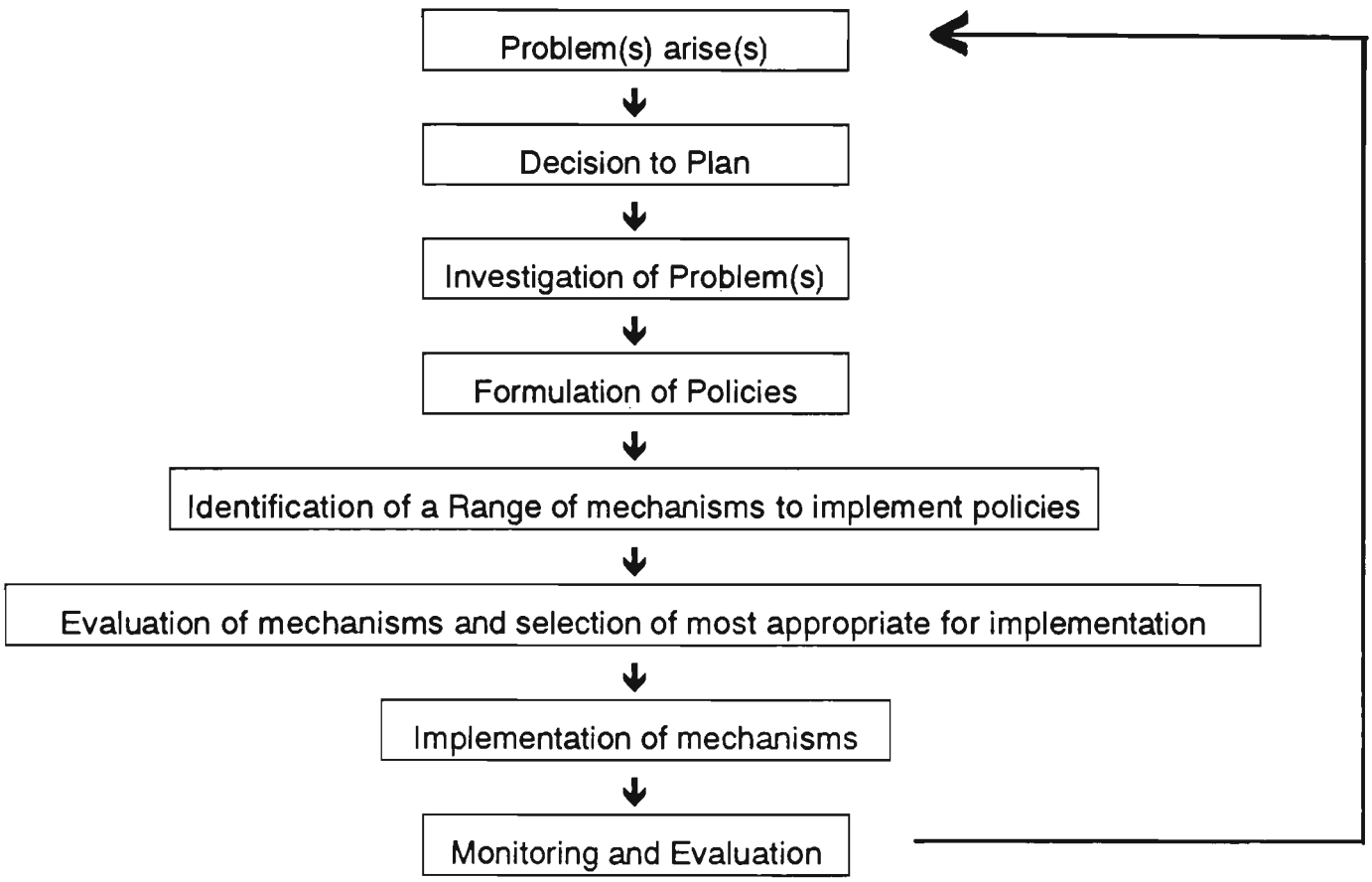


FIGURE 2: SYSTEMS APPROACH TO PLANNING

Source: McLoughlin (1969) as outlined in Eccles & Bryant, (1990:6)

As can be seen from this model, the decision to plan occurs as a response to a particular problem or series of problems. Once the decision has been taken to plan, it is essential that there is a clear understanding of the nature of the problem and that appropriate policies or goals are formulated to address it. Having decided what it is that planning is trying to achieve, it is then necessary to identify a range of mechanisms to implement the various policies and choose those which are likely to have the desired outcomes. Finally, those mechanisms are implemented. One of the most crucial elements in this model is the monitoring and evaluation phase. As planning is recognised as a continuing process, monitoring and evaluation is essential not only to ensure that mechanisms are having the desired results, but also to ensure that the policies are still relevant to the original problem(s) or issue(s). Without such monitoring and evaluation it is extremely difficult for a planning authority to gauge the effectiveness of its actions, or recognise the need to alter policies or implementation mechanisms before the problem becomes irreversible. It is therefore clear for the activity or process to qualify as planning, regular monitoring and evaluation of all stages must occur (Eccles & Bryant, 1991:6,7).

How does this model relate to the planning process undertaken in the Shire of Bass in relation to agriculture? Consideration of the current planning process will not be confined to the actions of the Shire of Bass, but rather examine planning activity at all levels of government which affect agriculture and rural land use in the Shire.

As the first stage of the Systems Approach is the recognition of a problem, this establishes the first major flaw in the system as it actually operates. At the Federal and State level there is identification of the problems associated with loss of agricultural land, particularly through inappropriate subdivision and land degradation, but at the local level there has not been independent recognition of these problems and any recognition and subsequent action has been as a result of pressure from the State Government (see Chapter 6). This lack of recognition of these problems at the local level highlights a fundamental difference in perception between State and Local Government on the issue of rural land use planning.

Until recently the changes and problems affecting agriculture and rural land use have received little or no examination by the planning bureaucracy (as distinct from the agricultural bureaucracy) at either the State or Local government level. As will be shown in Chapter 5, agriculture is undergoing a number of changes which may have a significant impact on the local land base, economy and community which should be addressed when developing planning policies and implementation mechanisms. However, given the lack of understanding of the changes/problems facing agriculture,

this is not occurring. Given this lack of basic information, any mechanisms implemented (for example, development controls) may not be having the desired outcome as a result of this lack of knowledge. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

The Systems Approach postulates that in order to plan properly, policies outlining goals or directions should be developed. In relation to agriculture and rural land use at the Federal, State and Local level, there are no approved explicit policies dealing with the spatial aspects of rural land use at this time. The Federal and State governments have developed several strategies relating to agriculture and economic development which may indirectly impact on land use planning, but which give no specific guidelines (see Chapter 6). At the local level there is an implicit policy base relating to agriculture and rural land use which in many cases in fact contradicts the State's stated position on these issues (see Chapter 6). It is therefore clear that at all levels of government, planning which addresses agriculture and rural land use in a spatial context is occurring in a policy vacuum and that any mechanisms which are implemented lack clear direction.

In order to implement the policy framework, the Systems Approach advocates the development of a range of mechanisms to implement the policy. However, as discussed above, as there is no clear policy framework and little understanding of the issues affecting agriculture, any mechanisms implemented will not have a clear direction. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, a single mechanism in the form of development controls is being implemented at the local level which may be having an adverse impact on agriculture. There has not been an identification of a range of mechanisms that could be used, but rather a reliance on statutory measures.

Monitoring and evaluation of the planning mechanisms to be implemented to ensure they achieve the desired results is an important and continuing stage of the Systems Approach. Section 12 (2) (b) & (c) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* specifies that in preparing a planning scheme or amendment a Planning Authority "must take into account any significant effects which it considers the scheme or amendment might have on the environment", and "may take into account its social effects and economic effects". It should be noted at this point that whilst the focus appears to be on evaluating the effect of statutory controls, this is not necessarily the case. As the Systems Approach states that a range of mechanisms should be developed, this evaluation and monitoring could apply to any statutory and non-statutory measures. As the legislation requires that the significant effects of any planning mechanisms which impact on the environment must be considered, this

would include consideration of such matters as the loss of prime agricultural land. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, in reality this evaluation (as indeed evaluation of economic and social impacts) is rarely made in the Shire of Bass.

As implied by the Systems Approach, in order to qualify as "planning" it is essential that regular monitoring be undertaken to ensure continued relevance of the policies and mechanisms. As with evaluation, the *Planning and Environment Act* makes provision for this monitoring in section 12 (1) (c) which states that a Planning Authority must "review regularly the provisions of the planning scheme for which it is a planning authority". However, there is no specification within the Act of how often the provisions of the scheme should be reviewed, or of what form that review should take. In addition there are no penalties or sanctions prescribed for failing to undertake a reviews. Given the extensive work required to review a scheme and the failure of the Act to ensure that reviews occur, they are generally not initiated by most municipalities (as is the case in the Shire of Bass) as part of the regular ongoing activity of planning. For this reason there is not a clear understanding of the effects of planning controls in place.

Having compared the Systems Approach to planning with the system which operates in the Shire it is clear that the current system falls short of what the activity essentially entails and therefore the current system cannot rightly be referred to as "planning".

3.3 The Objectives of Planning as Defined by Victorian Legislation

In Victoria the objectives of land use planning are specified in section 4 (1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and include those set out below. In addition the Act specifies in section 6 (1) that a planning scheme "must seek to further the objectives of planning in Victoria within the area covered by the Scheme" and that a planning scheme "may make any provision which relates to the use, development, protection or conservation of any land in the area". To ensure this happens it is important to question how useful these objectives are in assisting all levels of government to plan effectively for agriculture and rural land use.

The objectives are:-

"a) to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land;

b) to provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity;

c) to secure a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria;

d) to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value;

e) to protect public utilities and other assets and enable the orderly provision and co-ordination of public utilities and other facilities for the benefit of the community;

f) to facilitate development in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e);

g) to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians."

This is an ambitious list of objectives which are derived from three main Victorian Government policies, (these being the Social Justice, Economic and Conservation Strategies). While these are framed as objectives, they could be more accurately described as broad policy goals and in practice they are a comprehensive checklist of matters that should be taken into account when preparing and amending a planning scheme. They do not, however provide clear guidance on what planning should be trying to achieve in relation to land use and how to base planning decisions (Eccles & Bryant, 1990:36,37), particularly in relation to agriculture, as will be shown in Chapter 6 and are therefore of little assistance when planning for a particular use, especially at the local government level..

In order to demonstrate the problems associated with these objectives in relation to agriculture and rural land use, a few examples will be given as illustrations. The first objective relates to providing for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land, which is extremely broad. With respect to the fair use and development of land, the major question arises of fair to whom? In the case where a farmer is suffering financial difficulties due to a lagging agricultural economy, should the farmer be permitted to subdivide and sell a portion of land, which will be no longer viable for agriculture, when the land is high quality agricultural land and ideally suited to farming, just to reduce personal financial problems? This highlights the question of fair to whom, the individual or the community as whole? This in turn raises the question of who decides what is fair? As planning is largely a local political process, there is great potential to focus on the short-term individual rather than long-term

community rights. This is a typical example of a case that Council would have to consider, but the objective provides no guidance for Council on how to make these decisions.

The objective also encourages the economic development and use of land, but again it is not clear whether this focuses on individual, sectoral, or broad community benefit. In relation to agriculture, and particularly with respect to the subdivision of land, if taken literally this objective could be read as encouraging farmers to maximise the subdivision potential of land as an economic resource, but it could also be read as encouraging increased farm size to improve farm efficiency and therefore the agricultural economy. Whilst these two scenarios contradict each other, they can both comply with this objective, but no direction is given by the legislation on how to address this issue.

Another example can be seen when examining the second objective, which relates to the protection of natural and man-made resources. Good quality agricultural land is clearly a natural resource, and one on which the agricultural industry relies, but no clear guidance is available about how this should be achieved in spatial terms. Does it relate to simply ensuring that agricultural land should be protected from land degradation, or can it be implied that subdivision of land which removes good quality agricultural land from production should be prevented to protect this resource? The objective in no way clarifies this issue. Another problem arises as this objective can be seen as being in conflict with the first objective - for example, how does planning balance the objective of protecting natural resources with providing for the economic use and development of land?

When considered in isolation these objectives may appear clear, however they are not and in fact are very vague. Another problem with these objectives is that they are not prioritised and are very subjective in nature, as is clear in objective (c) which aims to secure a pleasant living and recreational environment. But pleasant for whom and what constitutes pleasant?

By their very nature these broad planning "objectives" have been framed widely so that they can be applied to very diverse situations ranging from an application to develop a block of flats, to an application for an advertising sign and to an application for subdivision of agricultural land. Therein lies their limitations - they are so broadly phrased that they do not provide direction (even by implication) on how these should be implemented by the planning system through the use of either statutory or non-statutory measures, and are therefore not particularly useful when considering the

spatial arrangements of a particular land use, such as agriculture or for providing guidance for the planning system.

4.0 SHIRE OF BASS

The Shire of Bass is an ideal case study to examine the impacts of planning on agriculture at the local level, because it is an area of high agricultural quality, located on the fringe of Melbourne and experiencing increasing pressure for non-rural development. As well as providing general background information, this Chapter will examine the importance of agriculture and rural land in the local context as a physical, economic and social resource. This will in turn provide a context for examining the impacts of planning controls on agriculture within the Shire.

4.1 Background

4.1.1 Location

The Shire of Bass is a rural municipality with an area of 52,000 hectares or 520 square kilometres, located in south-west Gippsland. It is easily accessible along the Bass Highway and is located within 102 kilometres of Melbourne and approximately 60 kilometres from Dandenong. Other major centres such as Korumburra, Leongatha and Wonthaggi are within a half hour travelling distance of the Shire.

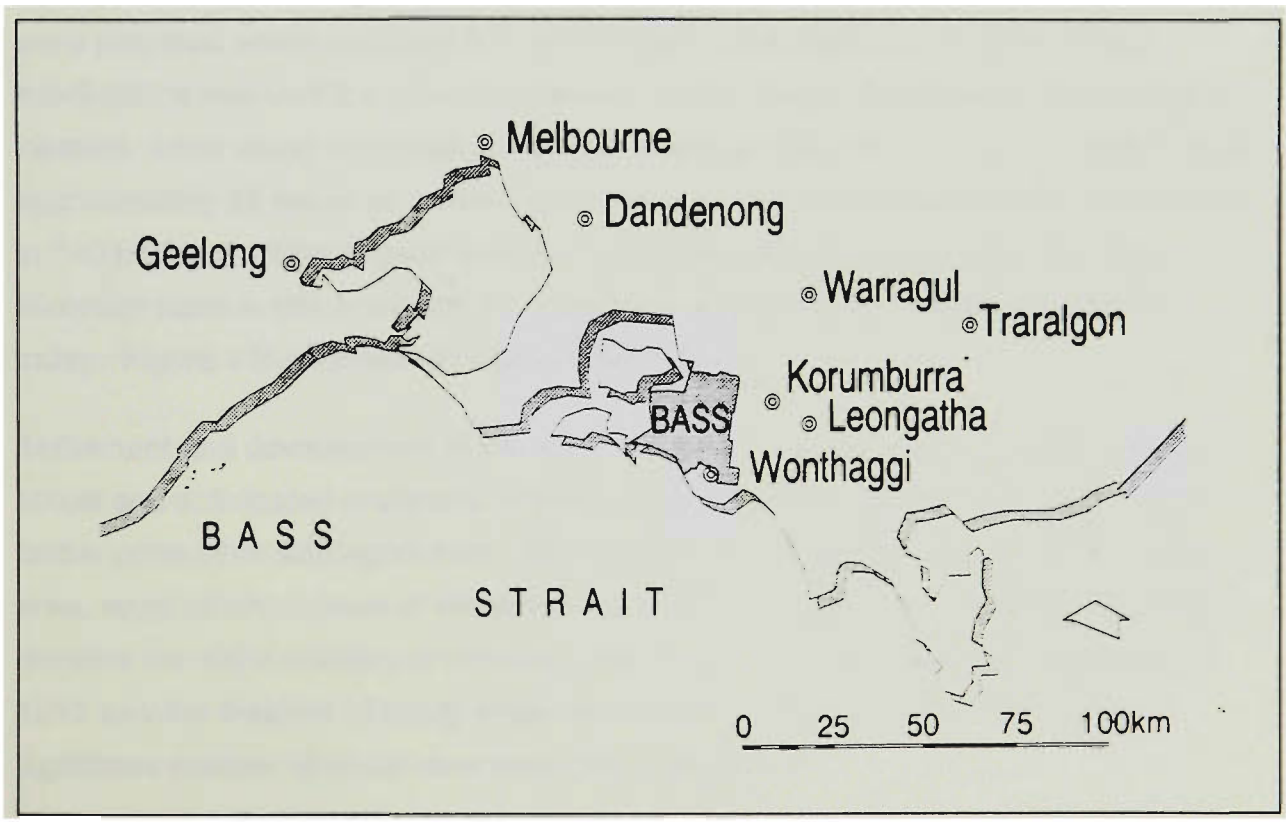


FIGURE 3: LOCATION PLAN

One of the major features of the Shire is that it is has frontage to both Westernport Bay and Bass Strait and offers spectacular views and access to a range of

recreational activities. The Shire has approximately 60 kilometres of sea frontage and given its easy access to Melbourne, is becoming increasingly popular as a holiday/tourist area. The tourist pressure is also accentuated because of the Shire's proximity to Phillip Island, which is a major tourist attraction for Victoria and has a development spill over effect into nearby areas. The location of the Shire of Bass is indicated in Figure 3

4.1.2 History

The Shire of Bass has a long history within the Victorian context as it contains Victoria's third oldest settlement, the Corinella township. Corinella was settled in 1826 as a small fishing village, but the original settlement lasted only a few years because of what was claimed to be poor quality land (White, 1974:27).

In 1850 Surveyor General Hoddle commissioned a survey along the Bass River to find a fresh source of water, select a good site for settlement, mark off some land for sale and, wherever there was land fit for cultivation, to mark it off into portions from 20 to 160 acres (White, 1974:83).

Later the 1869 Land Act gave settlers the right to select land, then on leasehold, for purchase and this brought an influx of people into the area. At this time Parish Plans were prepared which were the first and original subdivisions in the area. These subdivisions involved the creation of Crown Allotments of varying sizes depending on location. Land along the coast line in Corinella was generally included in allotments of approximately 28 hectares, whilst in the hills area the allotments varied in size from 40 to 140 hectares. This original subdivision set the scene for land ownership and allotment sizes in this area and many of these original Crown Allotments still exist today. Figure 4 illustrates the original Parish layout.

Settlement and development of the area has had a chequered history based on the actual and anticipated prosperity of various industries including fishing, coal mining, timber production and agriculture. Whilst there have been various industries in the area, some of which have at times experienced a resurgence or vanished, agriculture remains the major industry and focus in the area. The introduction of the railway in 1910 saw the creation of many small towns such as Woolamai and Glen Alvie, a significant number of which now exist only in name.

After World War II, with the advent of the motor vehicle, the area became popular for weekend/holiday homes. At that time this was only achievable for a small proportion of the Melbourne population, but this has certainly increased over the last twenty

years with increases in living standards and improvements in access with duplication of the South Gippsland Highway.

From initial settlement in 1826 up to 1981 the Shire had a slow growth rate which can be attributed to its location and generally rural character. However, over the last ten years with increased mobility and the rural nature of the area, combined with its landscape qualities, the Shire has experienced a significant resurgence in development pressures, which may in fact threaten the future of agriculture, as will be discussed later in this Chapter.

4.1.3 Origins of Planning in Bass

The need for some form of planning control was recognised by Council in the late 1950s as a direct reaction to urban pressures, and in particular a single proposal by a developer to create the township of Coronet Bay. The proposal involved the subdivision of rural land into 2000 residential allotments with substandard provision of sewerage, road and drainage services. The Council was relatively powerless to stop the subdivision or require proper servicing and accordingly commissioned consultants to prepare an Interim Development Order (IDO) to give Council the power to stop this type of subdivision in the future. Accordingly Council's first formal planning mechanism was approved on October 16, 1962.

The IDO was a blanket type control which specified that all subdivision and development required Council approval. The IDO also included an existing conditions map which reflected existing land uses, this plan eventually became the zoning map as part of the Planning Scheme. Through discussions with the Shire Secretary it was revealed that Council operated under the IDO for 18 years and was satisfied with this type of control as it gave Council the flexibility to consider all applications on their merits and exercise considerable discretion.

In 1969 the Westernport Regional Planning Authority was established. From 1970 until 1982 the Authority also had an IDO for the entire Westernport Region, which reflected the proposed planning scheme. Therefore, until the Planning Scheme was approved in 1982 the Shire was covered by two IDOs. During the time Council operated under its IDO the Shire of Bass was a rural area remote from Melbourne which had maintained its rural economic/physical and social status quo. However in the 1970s, as the area began to experience increased development pressure.

FIGURE 4: PARISH PLAN

To ensure consistent planning throughout the region, the State Government placed increasing pressure on Council to dispense with the IDO and prepare a formal Planning Scheme. Council accordingly prepared a Planning Scheme based on a model developed by the Town and Country Planning Board. Council operated under the IDO having regard for the proposed Planning Scheme when considering applications, while the details of the Planning Scheme were being finalised with the State Government and the Westernport Regional Planning Authority. The Bass Planning Scheme was approved in 1982 and became the principal planning mechanism for the Shire.

4.2 Physical Importance of Agriculture

4.2.1 Agricultural land quality in Bass

Two reports assist in determining the agricultural quality of land within the Shire. The first of these is the *Rural Land Mapping Project* (MPE, 1984) and the other is *Assessment of Agricultural Quality of Land in Gippsland* (DOA, 1984).

The *Rural Land Mapping Project* was an exercise undertaken by the Ministry for Planning and Environment in consultation with the Department of Agriculture to map the agricultural quality of rural land in the Shire of Bass and other municipalities. The report recognises that good quality agricultural land is a valuable natural resource which requires protection, and that once lost to other uses, especially urban uses, it becomes virtually unrecoverable.

The assessment of agricultural quality of land was based primarily on the physical characteristics of the land and accordingly the following four factors were considered:-

- **Existing Land Use** - the current agricultural use of the land;
- **Productivity** - the production potential of the land based on the existing land uses.
- **Versatility** - the ability of the land to accommodate a range of different uses whilst maintaining its usefulness.
- **Non-physical Criteria** - inputs into agricultural quality but not related to physical features.

Having assessed these factors, the results of the versatility/productivity rating were combined to determine the agricultural quality of the land. The agricultural quality of land was then grouped into five classes ranging from Very Low to Very High. The five

class agricultural quality scale was designed to be applicable throughout the State and therefore it may be inadequate to show sufficient variations at a local scale. The results of this project reveal that the Shire of Bass is rated as having High to Very High agricultural quality land and that the predominant grazing, dairying and pea growing activities are considered of State or Regional Significance. The amount of land in each class is approximately equal as shown in Figure 5. The report recommends the protection of good quality agricultural land for commercial farming purposes and that appropriate zoning and subdivision controls be applied in order to protect this resource (MPE, 1984:22).

The report also recognises that land degradation is common in the Shire in terms of medium to large scale landslides, terracettes and creep (particularly in the Strzelecki Ranges) which have significant implications for agriculture (MPE, 1984:72). Figure 6 indicates the areas of landslip hazard.

Assessment of Agricultural Quality of Land in Gippsland (DOA, 1984) is the second assessment of the agricultural quality of land in Gippsland. This assessment is based on inherent land and climate characteristics which affect the versatility and productivity of land for agricultural purposes. The report was prepared as a result of development pressures in certain areas and in particular the Westernport Region, of which the Shire forms part, in order to provide a sound information base on which to make land use planning decisions.

In assessing the agricultural quality of land, a number of indicators were selected to determine the inherent quality of land, including:-

- **Versatility** - the capability of land to cater for a wide range of agricultural uses which are flexible enough to face changing circumstances.
- **Inherent Productivity** - the ability of land and the climate to contribute to the growth and development of plants and animals.
- **Capability** - the bio-physical processes which affect land such as soils, climate and topography.
- **Suitability** - the capability of the land and the consideration of additional socio-economic factors which have a significant effect on the use of land for agriculture.

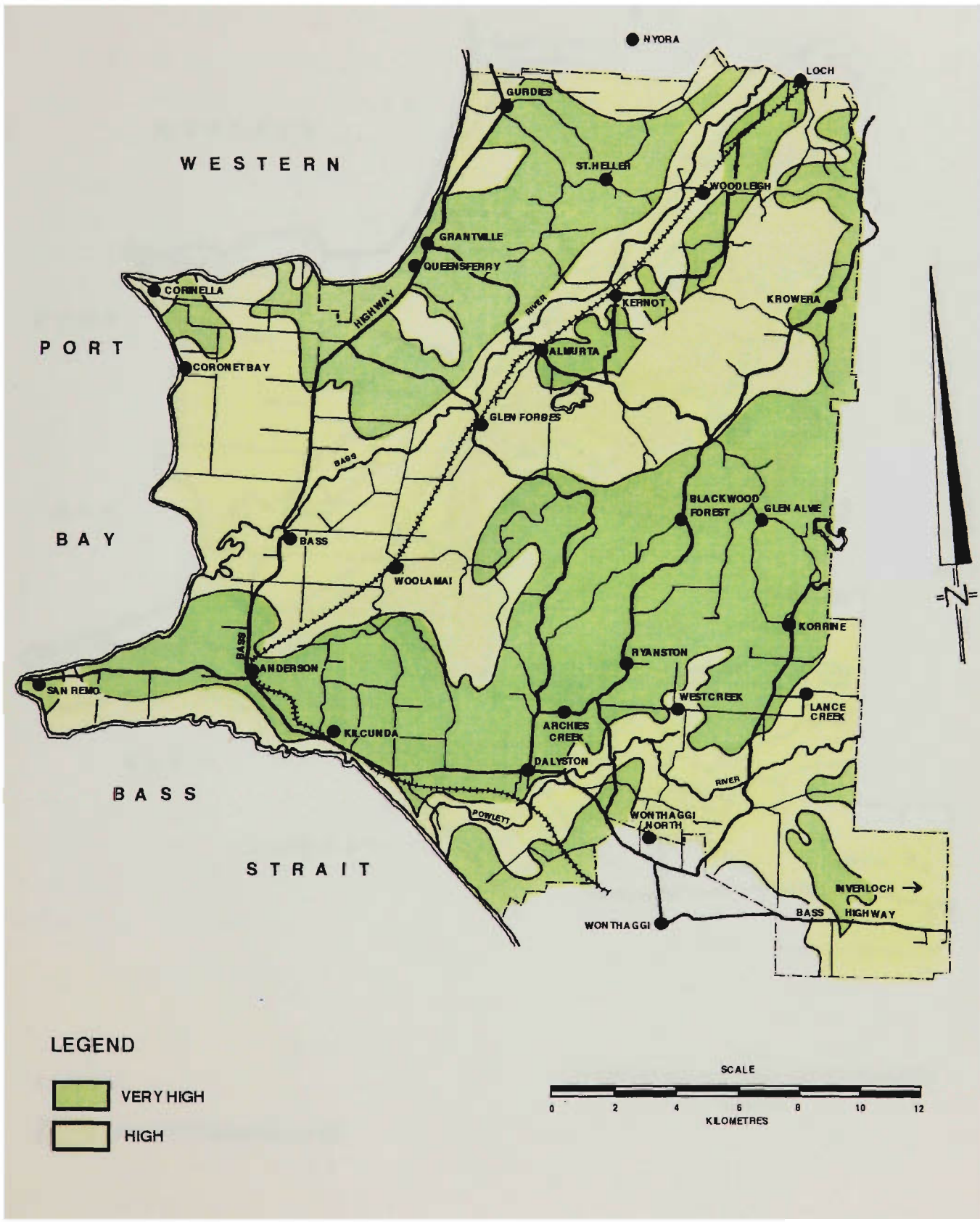


FIGURE 5: AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY IN BASS

Source: Rural Land Mapping Project (MPE, 1984)

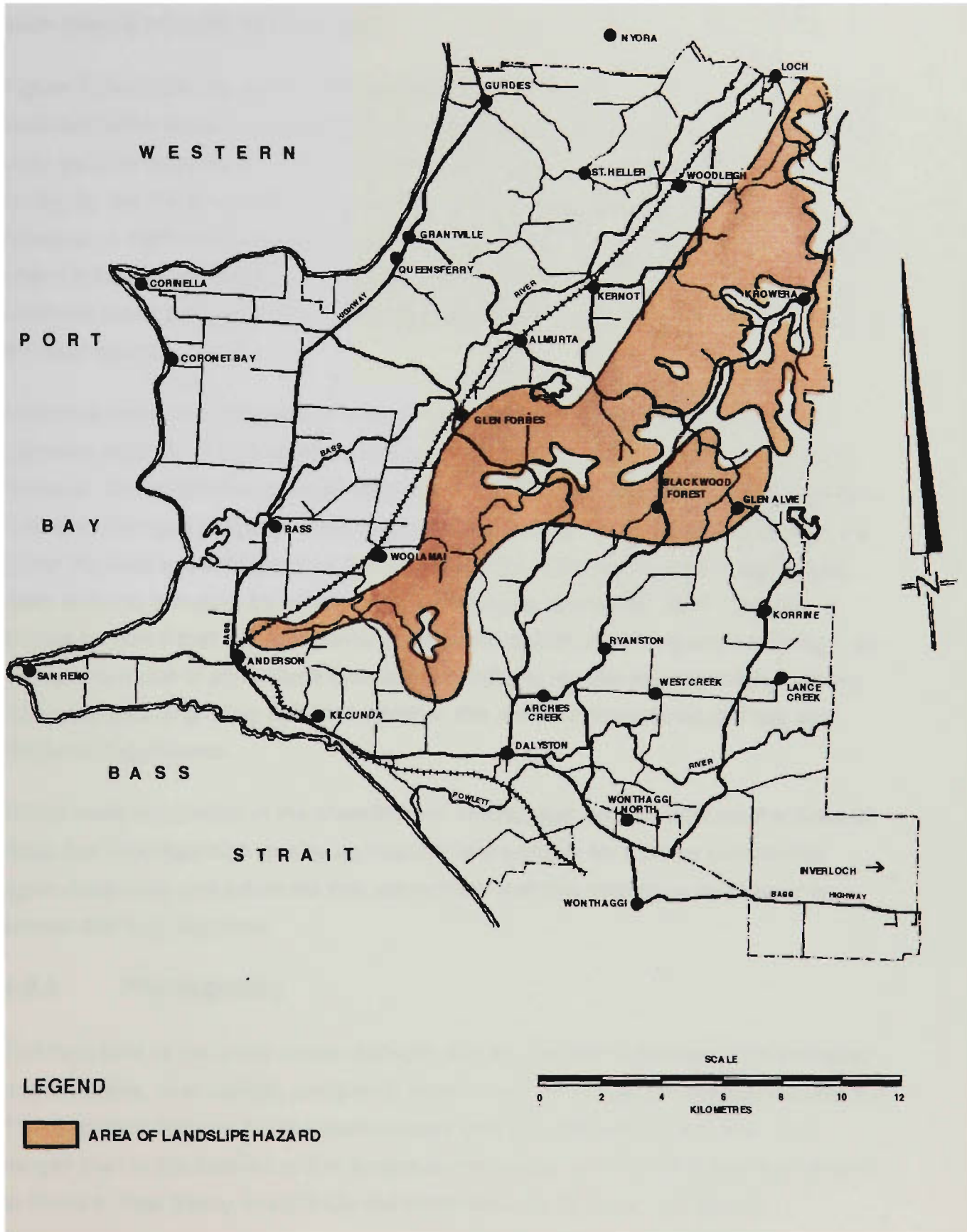


FIGURE 6: AREA OF LAND SLIP HAZARD IN BASS

Source: Rural Land Mapping Project (MPE, 1984)

Agricultural quality was divided into five agricultural classes and one non-agricultural class (ie public land). The classes range from high quality land suitable for a number of agricultural uses in Class 1 down to marginal land in Class 5. A brief description of each class is included as Appendix 2.

Figure 7 illustrates the results of this assessment and shows that most of the Shire is included within Class 3, indicating that the land is generally of limited versatility, but very good for dairying and grazing. Possibilities exist for orchards and extensive cropping, but the area is not suitable for intensive vegetable growing. There is, however, a significant area of Class 3a land located around the township of Woolamai which is considered highly versatile and capable of the majority of agricultural uses, provided there are greater inputs in order to achieve higher production and to maintain the land quality.

From this report it is evident that whilst the Shire is not naturally suited to highly intensive agriculture, it is ideally suited to dairying and grazing activities. There are, however, areas which can be used for more intensive agricultural purposes provided they are managed properly. The report also states that a low rating of land does not mean the land is worthless, as it can often form the basis for extensive agricultural uses and can therefore be important to the agricultural industry (DOA, 1984:3). It should be noted that this assessment considers market gardening and cropping to be the optimum use of agricultural land and accordingly classes this land higher, giving less emphasis to grazing activities which in this area are considered of State and Regional Significance.

Whilst there is variation in the classification of land, both reports indicate the Shire of Bass has important high quality agricultural land suitable for a range commercial agricultural uses and advocate that appropriate methods should be developed to ensure that it is protected.

4.2.2 Physiography

The land form of the Shire varies distinctly and encompasses exposed and sheltered coastal plains, river valleys, undulating foothills and steep highly dissected hill country. The Strzelecki Ranges are the predominant land form feature in the Shire. The ranges start at the foothills of the Anderson Peninsula, run in a north-easterly direction to Powlett River Valley and then to the north-west, as indicated in Figure 8.

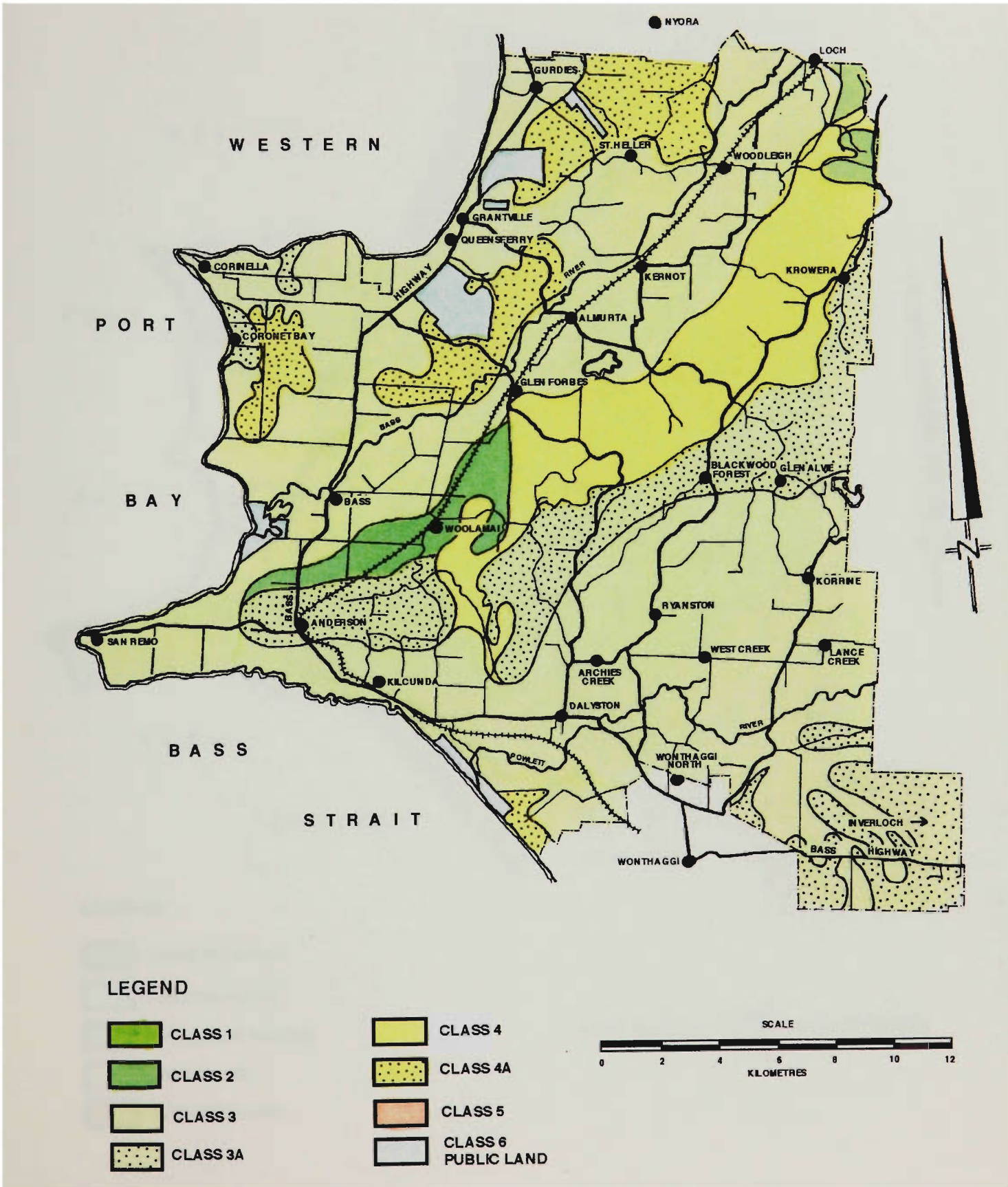


FIGURE 7: AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY IN BASS

Source: Assessment of Agricultural Quality of Land in Gippsland (Swan & Volum, 1984)

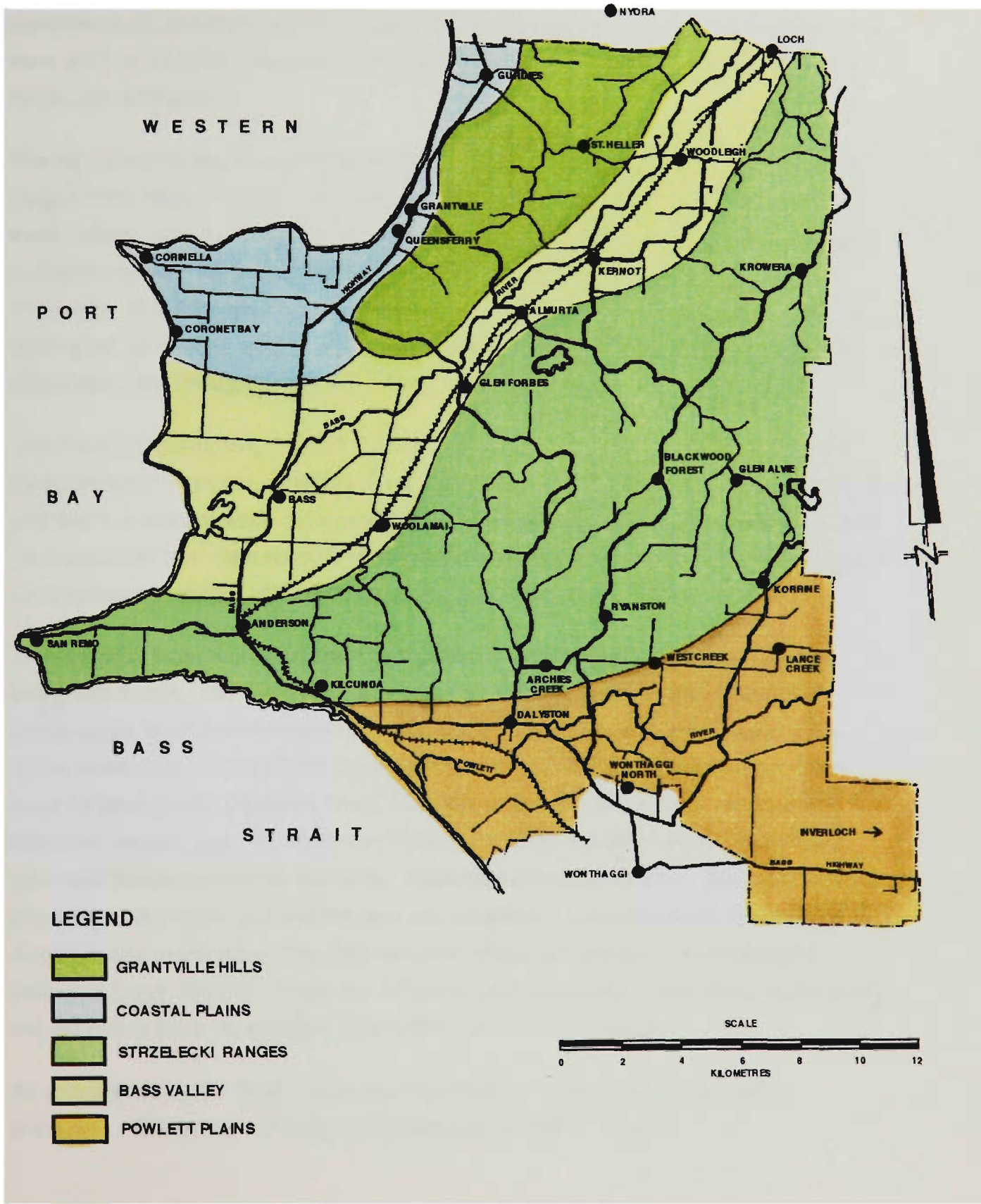


FIGURE 8: PHYSIOGRAPHY

Source: Rural Land Mapping Project (MPE, 1984)

4.2.3 Landscape qualities

The landscape qualities of the Shire were examined in a report entitled *Rural Land Mapping Project* (MPE, 1984). This report highlights a growing recognition of the importance of attractive rural landscapes and the role they play as a psychological contrast to the typical urban environment that most people live in, and as a place of recreation and tourism.

The report concludes that the Shire has a very attractive and diverse landscape which ranges from steep highly dissected mountainous country with narrow ridge lines and deep valleys, offering excellent views in all directions, to undulating bushland and flat mangrove swamp areas, providing general greenness throughout the year (MPE, 1984:66). The Shire also has a number of features with special botanical, zoological, geological, geomorphological and archaeological interest, which all contribute to the landscape value of the area (MPE, 1984:71).

The *Rural Land Mapping Project* considers that the landscape is one of the Shire's most important resources, adding to its pleasantness and attractiveness for recreation and tourism and therefore recommends that the landscape character of the rural area be maintained and enhanced. It is recommended this should be achieved through the development of management and planning guidelines (MPE, 1984:71).

The National Trust has recognised certain landscape features within the Shire as being significant. The Trust classifies such landscapes in two ways. Classified Landscapes are "..those parts of the physical environment, both natural and man-made which in the Trust's view are essential to the heritage of Australia and which must be preserved." (National Trust, 1985:6). Within the Shire there are four classified landscapes - the Anderson Peninsula, Bass Hill, Bass River Delta/Flood plain and Settlement Point, Corinella. Recorded Landscapes are "..those parts of the physical environment both natural and man-made which contribute to the heritage of Australia and which should be recorded and whose preservation is encouraged." (National Trust, 1985:6). There are 2 Recorded Landscapes in the Shire, these being the extensive Bass River Valley and Settlement Point, Corinella.

As recognised by the Trust, these are important landscapes which should be protected. The location of these landscapes is shown in Figure 9.

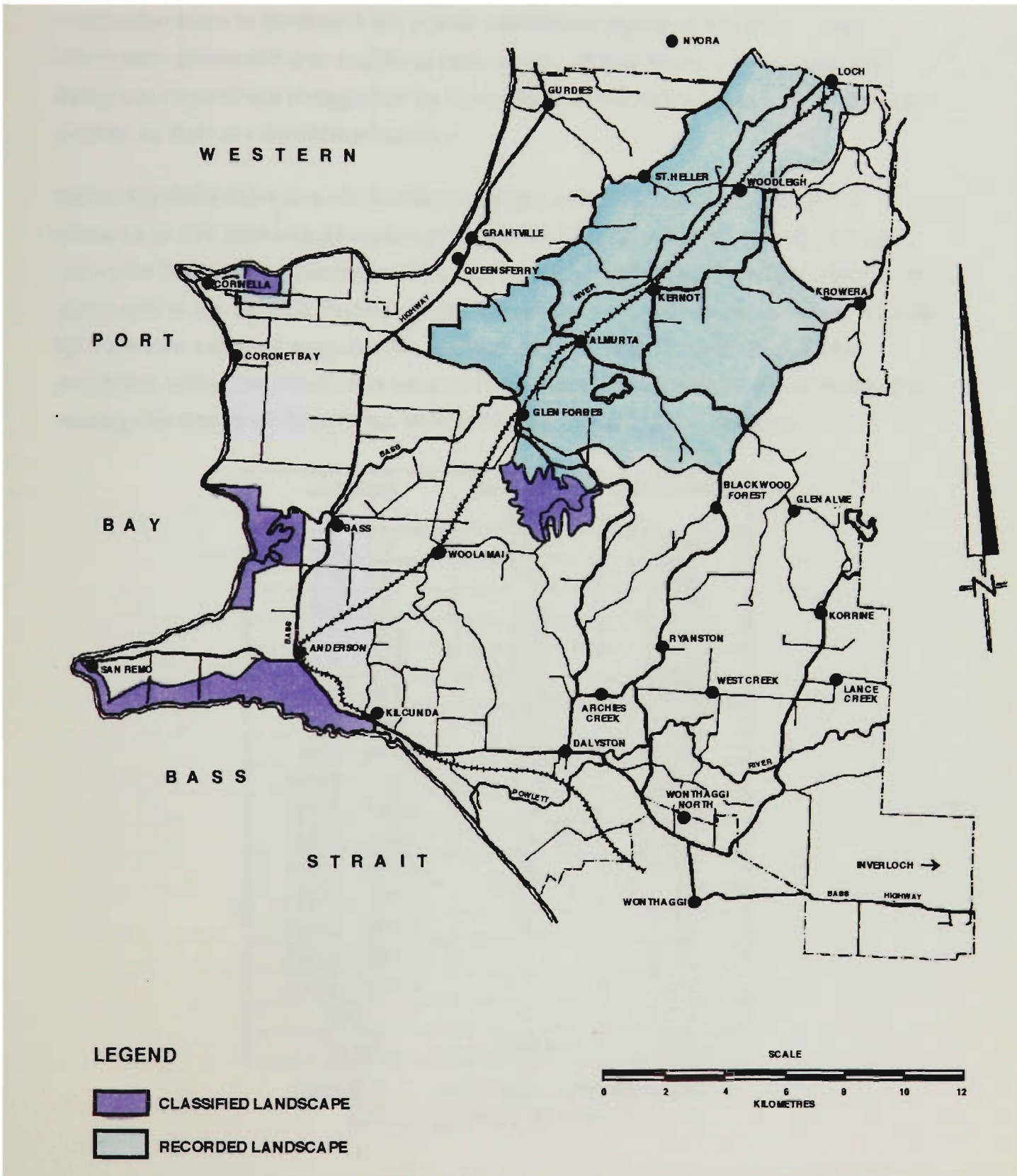


FIGURE 9: LANDSCAPE QUALITY IN BASS

Source: National Trust of Australia (Victoria) (1985)

4.2.4 Lot sizes

The ability of the agricultural industry to operate effectively is determined by a wide range of factors including the size of rural holdings, as different agricultural activities have different land requirements. The Council's rate records provide an ideal information base to determine the overall subdivision layout of the Shire. The information presented only relates to rural areas. All lots below 0.4 hectares within designated townships (designated by Council's Rate Records) have been deliberately omitted as they are considered urban.

Within the Shire there are 1064 rural properties, with lot sizes ranging from 0.4 hectares to 556 hectares as shown in Table 1 and Figure 10. The average lot size within the Shire is 40.8 hectares. The size category containing the largest number of allotments is the 20-39.9 hectare range, accounting for 21.3% of all rural lots. The 40-59.9 hectare category accounts for 16.6% of all rural lots. Only 1.2% or twelve properties within the Shire have an area in excess of 180 hectares. Even though the average lot size is 40.8 hectares, 60% of all rural lots are below this size.

Lot Size	Number of Lots	Percentage
0.4 - 1.9	108	10.1%
2.0- 3.9	80	7.5%
4.0 - 9.9	119	11.2%
10.0 - 19.9	100	9.4%
20.0 - 39.9	227	21.3%
40.0 - 59.9	177	16.6%
60.0 - 79.9	100	9.4%
80.0 - 99.9	69	6.5%
100.0 - 119.9	31	2.9%
120.0 - 139.9	22	2.1%
140.0 - 159.9	9	0.8%
160.0 - 179.9	10	0.9%
180.0 - 199.9	2	0.2%
200.0 - 299.9	6	0.6%
300.0 - 399.9	1	0.1%
400.0 - 499.9	2	0.2%
500+	1	0.1%
Total	**1064**	**100%**

TABLE 1: LOT SIZE COMPOSITION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

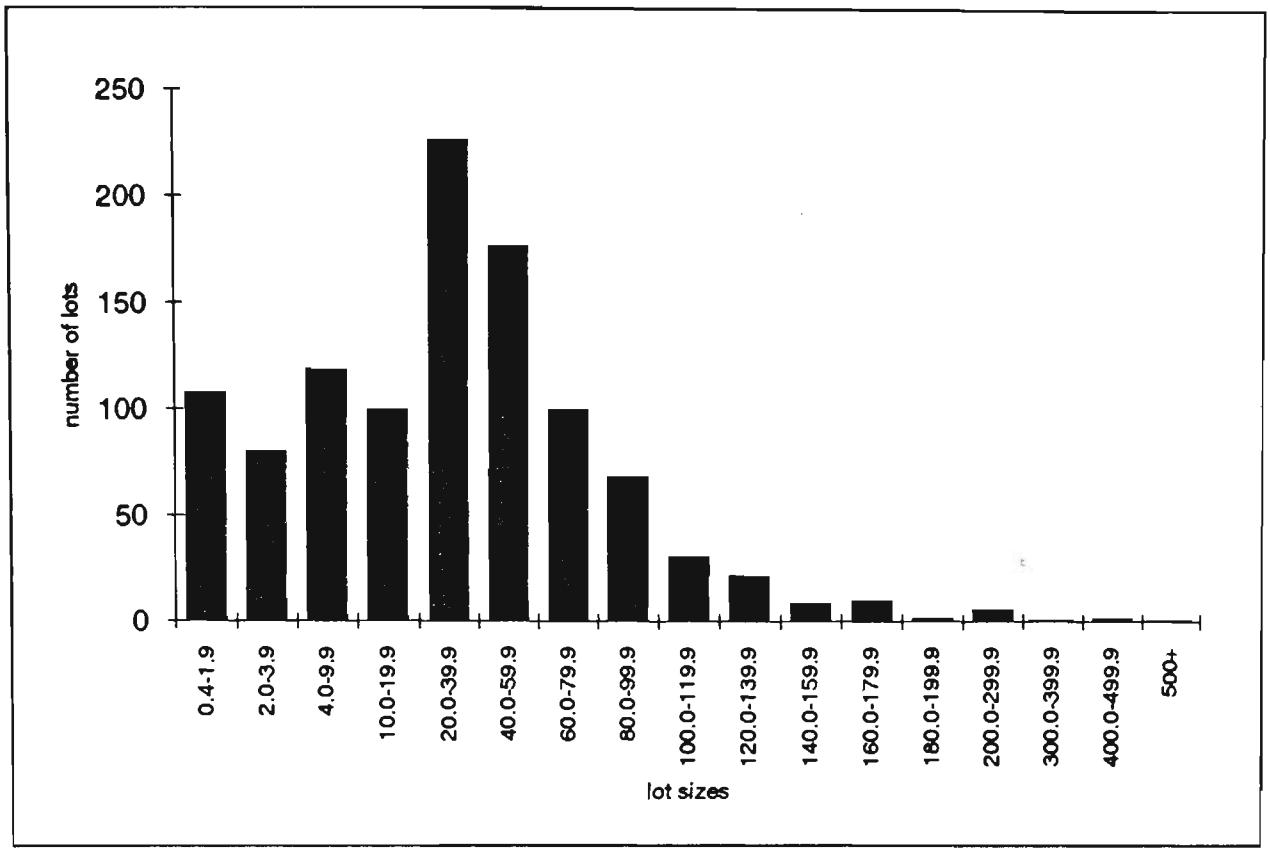


FIGURE 10: LOT SIZE COMPOSITION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

Lot sizes vary according to location. This is particularly relevant as 40 hectares of flat land has far greater agricultural capacity than 40 hectares in the steep country, given the ability to use machinery. In order to determine whether there is any relationship between lot size and location eight districts (based on Parish boundaries) within the Shire were selected for comparison (this excludes those lots within the township, classed urban in Council's rate records). These districts were chosen in order to demonstrate the differences in lot sizes between the coastal and inland districts and therefore where the greatest demand for subdivision, particularly small lot subdivision, exists. Coastal districts chosen include Corinella, Grantville, Kilcunda and San Remo. The inland districts include Archies Creek, Almurta, Glen Forbes and Krowera. It should be noted when looking at this data that some of these districts are larger than others and subsequently the number of lots in each varies, therefore making an exact comparison difficult. The purpose of this section however, is to illustrate the locational variation in lot sizes between the coastal and inland areas, rather than a direct comparison. Table 2 and Figure 11 illustrate the lot size composition of each district.

Table 2 and Figure 11 illustrate that the coastal districts are characterised by small lots below 20 hectares and that the larger lots from 20 hectares upwards can be found in the inland districts. This can also be attributed to the original Parish subdivision as shown in Figure 4. It is therefore clear that there is a direct relationship between

allotment size and location, with the greatest pressure for small lot subdivision being experienced in the coastal areas.

	COASTAL TOWNSHIPS					INLAND TOWNSHIPS				
LOT SIZE	CORINELLA	GRANT-VILLE	KILCUNDA	SAN REMO	TOTAL	ARCHIES CREEK	ALMURTA	GLEN FORBES	KROWERA	TOTAL
0.4 - 0.9	3	12	1	5	21	6	4	3	4	17
1.0 - 3.9	3	7	5	4	19	5	1	8	1	15
4.0 - 9.9	15	17	2	7	41	6	2	14	3	25
10 - 19	6	13	3	3	25	2	0	6	3	11
20 - 39	10	5	8	4	27	12	6	10	9	37
40 - 59	4	6	9	1	20	9	3	14	18	44
60 - 79	5	5	4	0	14	6	4	5	5	20
80 - 99	1	2	3	0	6	2	1	5	3	11
100 - 119	0	2	1	0	3	1	2	1	0	4
120 - 139	1	2	0	1	4	0	2	0	1	3
140 - 159	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
160 - 179	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	2
180 - 199	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
200 - 299	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
300 - 399	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
400 - 499	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
500+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	48	72	36	27	183	50	28	69	48	195

TABLE 2: LOCATIONAL VARIATIONS IN LOT SIZE COMPOSITION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

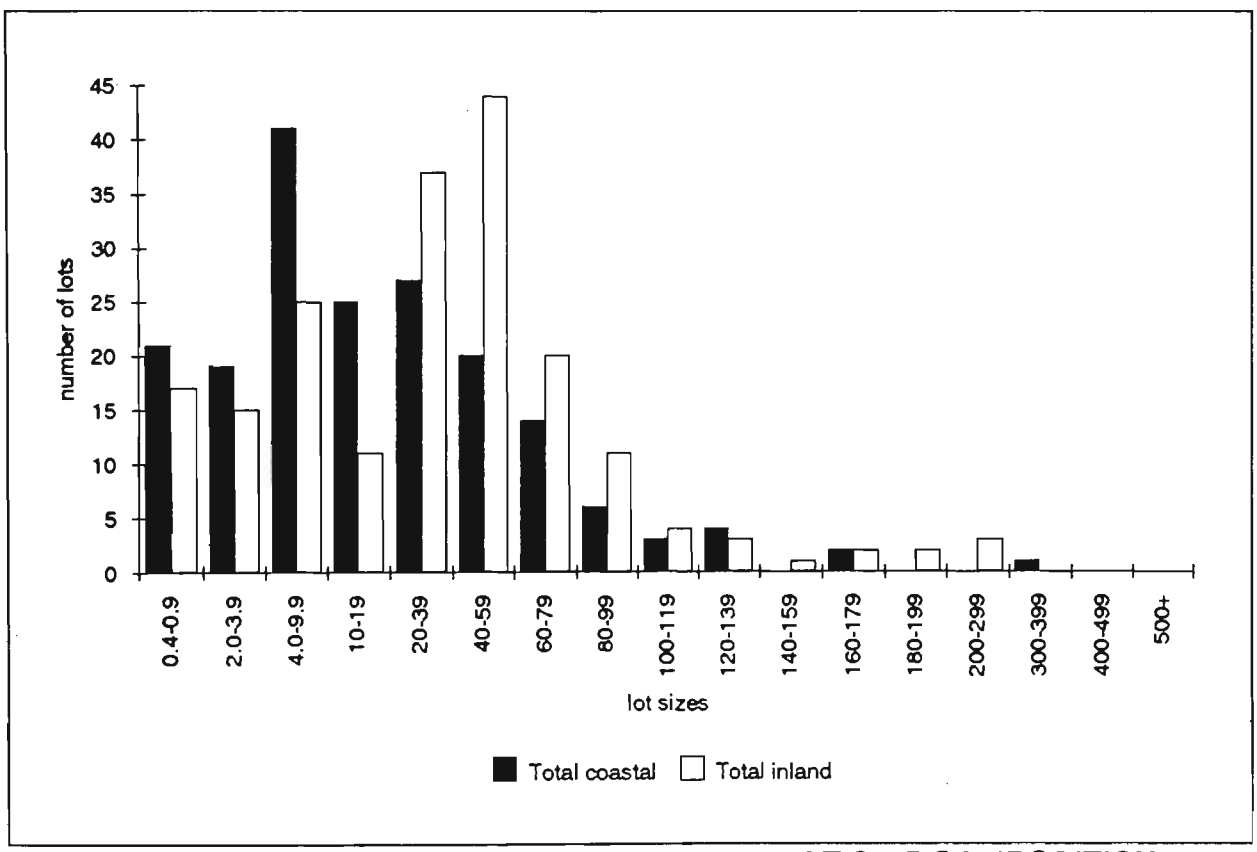


FIGURE 11: LOCATIONAL VARIATIONS IN LOT SIZE COMPOSITION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

4.3 Economic Importance of Agriculture

4.3.1 Major agricultural uses

The major agricultural industries within the Shire include dairying, beef and sheep grazing and cropping, whilst there are also some smaller agricultural uses such as deer breeding and viticulture and an increasing number of stud farms. However, these industries are undergoing a number of changes which will have a significant impact on the Shire.

Land Use and Agriculture in the Westernport Region (Annett & Morton, 1990) details various agricultural statistics for the various major industries on a municipal basis. The information, however, fails to provide details of land areas dedicated to each industry. Throughout the report the information relating to the Shire also includes statistics for French Island.

Dairying

It can be seen from Table 3 the number of dairy farms within the Shire has steadily decreased. Over a ten year period from 1979 to 1989 the number of licensed farms fell by 85, dropping from 250 to 165, representing a 34% decline. The number of cows in production, (both in milk and dry) has also decreased from 18,863 to 16,785 (or 11%) over the same period. Although there has been a decrease of 2078 cows over this period, the total litres of milk produced within the Shire has in fact increased by 19.8%, from 58,237,640 litres per year in 1979 to 69,755,693 litres in 1989. Therefore, even though there has been a reduction in the number of farms and cows, the rate of production has in fact increased, which can be attributed to better farm management practices and increased emphasis on superior breeding.

Year	Licensed Farms	Cows in Milk/Dry
1979	250	18,863
1980	234	19,746
1981	235	18,883
1982	232	18,168
1983	-	19,094
1984	-	18,450
1985	-	18,233
1986	-	17,861
1987	191	16,397
1988	175	16,479
1989	165	16,785

Note: "-" denotes information not available

TABLE 3: CHANGES TO THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

Source: Annett & Morton 1990

Beef

The trend of a reduction in the number of farms while production levels increase (as experienced in the dairy industry) is also reflected in the beef industry as indicated in Table 4. Over the 1979-1989 period the number of farms with beef cattle has fluctuated, but has decreased in overall terms from 312 in 1979 to 254 in 1988, then increasing to 296 in 1989. This constitutes a 5.1% overall decline in the number of farms with beef cattle between 1979 and 1989. Throughout this period the total number of beef cattle has increased by 6.2% from 38,423 in 1979 to 40,803 in 1989. This trend indicates that beef grazing is becoming increasingly intensive in the area.

Year	Number of Farms	Number of Cattle
1979	312	38,423
1980	330	42,264
1981	346	43,458
1982	348	40,881
1983	329	39,956
1984	308	38,212
1985	312	38,485
1986	333	40,723
1987	254	39,243
1988	254	40,042
1989	296	40,803

TABLE 4: CHANGES TO THE BEEF INDUSTRY

Source: Annett & Morton 1990

Sheep

Sheep grazing has been a far more volatile industry than dairying and beef due to international market forces and commodity prices as illustrated in Table 5. The number of sheep farms within the Shire has decreased over a ten year period by 33% from 88 in 1979 to 59 in 1989. The greatest number of sheep farms was in 1981 at 92. The sheep industry has also experienced great variations in stock levels with an overall increase of 11.2% from 33,277 in 1979 to 36,046 in 1989. During this period peak stock levels of 56,000 were experienced in 1988 followed by a dramatic decline of nearly 20,000 in one year.

Year	Number of Farms	Number of Sheep
1979	88	33,277
1980	86	39,687
1981	92	40,919
1982	88	36,703
1983	87	38,000
1984	86	42,000
1985	86	44,000
1986	76	40,000
1987	58	49,000
1988	57	56,000
1989	59	36,046

TABLE 5: CHANGES TO THE SHEEP INDUSTRY

Source: Annett & Morton 1990

Cropping

The cropping industry, which includes vegetable growing and orchards, forms only a minor part of the total agricultural activity in the Shire. The greatest amount of land dedicated to cropping was in 1986 when 91 hectares were under cultivation, but this only involved 6 producers. The maximum number of seven producers was recorded in 1985, but details on the area committed to cropping are not available. Table 6 illustrates the number of producers and the total area committed to cropping between 1979 and 1989.

Year	Number of Producers	Area under crops
1979	2	-
1980	3	-
1981	4	-
1982	-	-
1983	3	56
1984	4	85
1985	7	-
1986	6	91
1987	3	58
1988	3	32
1989	6	38

Note: '-' Denotes information not available

TABLE 6: CHANGES TO THE CROPPING INDUSTRY

Source: Annett & Morton, 1990.

In conclusion, whilst production levels of the major industries between 1979 and 1989 have either been maintained or improved, within the ten year period there has been an overall loss of 210 farms, representing a significant decline.

4.3.2 Supporting infrastructure

When examining the importance of agriculture in the local economic context it is important to recognise that the farm is not the only source of income, as agriculture forms the core of an entire industry/support network and therefore has a significant multiplier effect on the local and regional economy. An illustration of this industry chain is included in Figure 12.

Land Use and Agriculture in the Westernport Region (Annett & Morton, 1990) concluded that the service industries and infrastructure that exist in the Westernport region can be divided into two sectors. The first sector includes those businesses that directly supply and service farms and have an input into the production of goods (ranging from the suppliers to contractors and veterinarians). The second sector includes those who are involved with the goods produced or outputs (ranging from tanker drivers, slaughter men and food producers). The report identified the following supporting infrastructure which exists in the Westernport region as shown in Table 7.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENT	NUMBER OF SERVICES
SECTOR 1, General Services And Supplies	
Farm produce and supplies	8
Farm Contractors	+17
Fertiliser Companies	13
Agricultural Chemical sellers	10
Farm consultants and Advisers	34
Herd improvement centres	8
Stock and Station Agents	24
Stock feeds and concentrates	13
Veterinarians	+30
Milking machine services and suppliers	8
SECTOR 2, Livestock Industries	
Livestock Transport Agents	13
Saleyards	4
Abattoirs	15
Slaughterhouses	5
Knackeries	5
Dairy Factories	5
Other dairy product manufacturers	4
Poultry farms and dealers	34
Poultry processors and suppliers	10
Wool brokers	4
Total	**+264**

TABLE 7: AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Source: Annett & Morton, 1990

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all industries, but rather an indication of the multiplier effect that agriculture has on other industries in the area, many of which form the basis of the rural economy. Table 7 and Figure 12 illustrate that agriculture plays a vitally important role in maintaining the economy of the Westernport region, and the Shire. Should agriculture be significantly reduced in the area the reduction would also have a multiplied negative effect on the economy of the region. In order for many of the rural centres to survive and function properly, it is essential that a healthy agricultural industry be maintained in the region.

4.3.3 Employment in agriculture

Having established that agriculture is an important employment base in the region, it is important to examine the number of people employed in agriculture in the Shire and any changes that have occurred. Rather than undertake an examination of the general employment structure (this will be dealt with in Chapter 4.4.2) this section will focus on the changes in the number and proportion of the population involved in agriculture over the last thirty years, and establish whether these trends are consistent with those for the State as a whole.

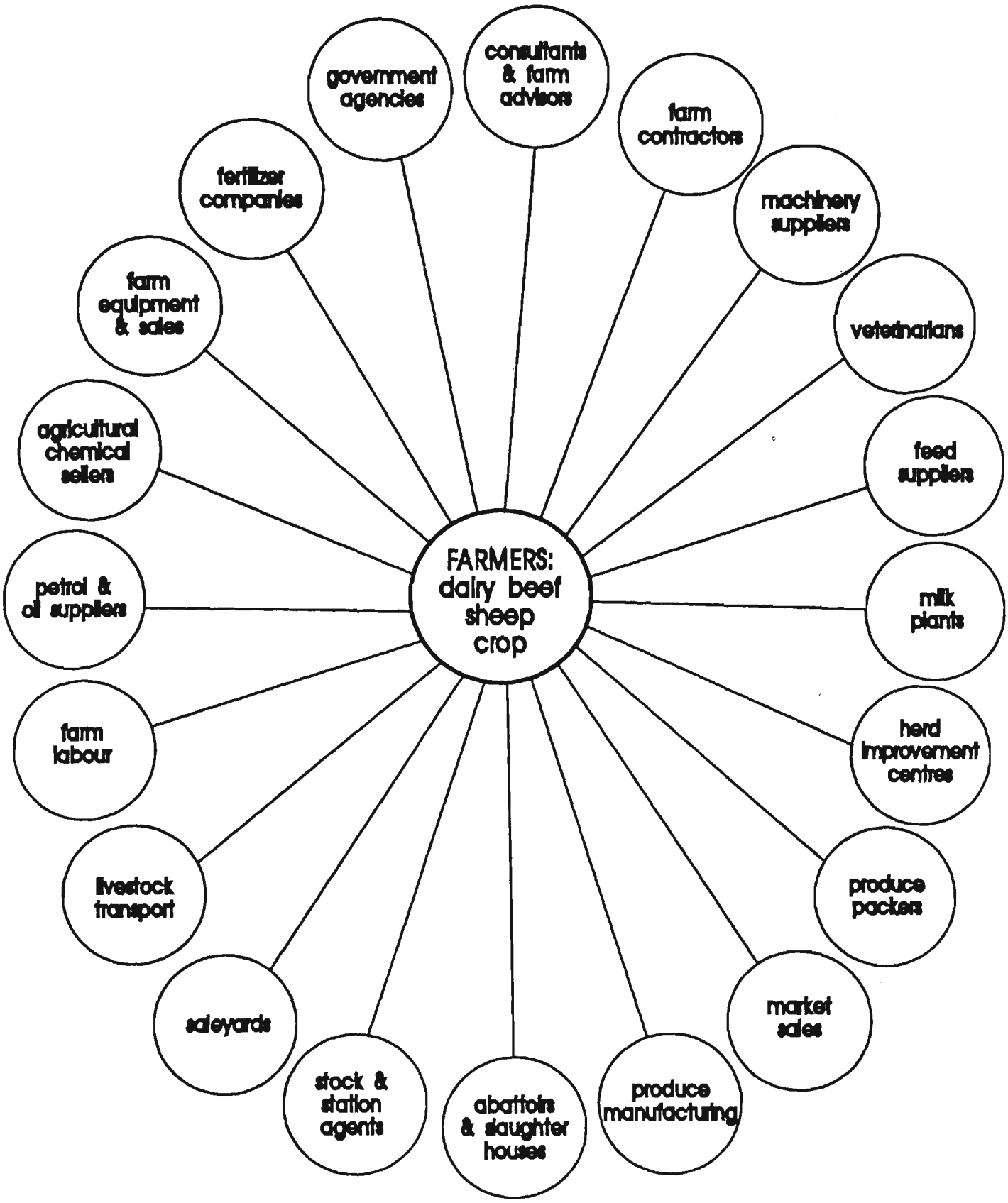


FIGURE 12: AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Source: Land Use and Agriculture in the Westernport Region (Annett & Morton, 1990)

Figure 13 and Table 8 illustrate employment changes in agriculture in the Shire between 1961 and 1986. From this data it is clear that the number of people involved in agriculture has declined dramatically over this 25 year period. In 1961, 896 people (69.7% of the workforce) were employed in agriculture, which illustrates a strong reliance on this industry at the local level. However this figure had dropped to 584 people (33.3% of the workforce) in 1986. This constitutes an overall decline of one third which is a large decline to be absorbed by a small community. In addition, given the current trends in agriculture, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, it is expected that this figure will further decline, which may have major consequences for the future of the Shire.

	SHIRE OF BASS		TOTAL VICTORIA	
Year	People employed in Agriculture	Proportion of Workforce	People employed in Agriculture	Proportion of Workforce
1961	896	69.7%	105,268	8.6%
1966	865	57.8%	107,433	7.8%
1971	753	53.1%	95,649	6.5%
1976	748	44.3%	105,924	6.7%
1981	662	46.1%	97,968	5.8%
1986	584	33.3%	80,702	4.6%

TABLE 8: CHANGE IN AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT 1961-1986

Source: ABS. Census of Population and Dwellings Data 1961 - 1986

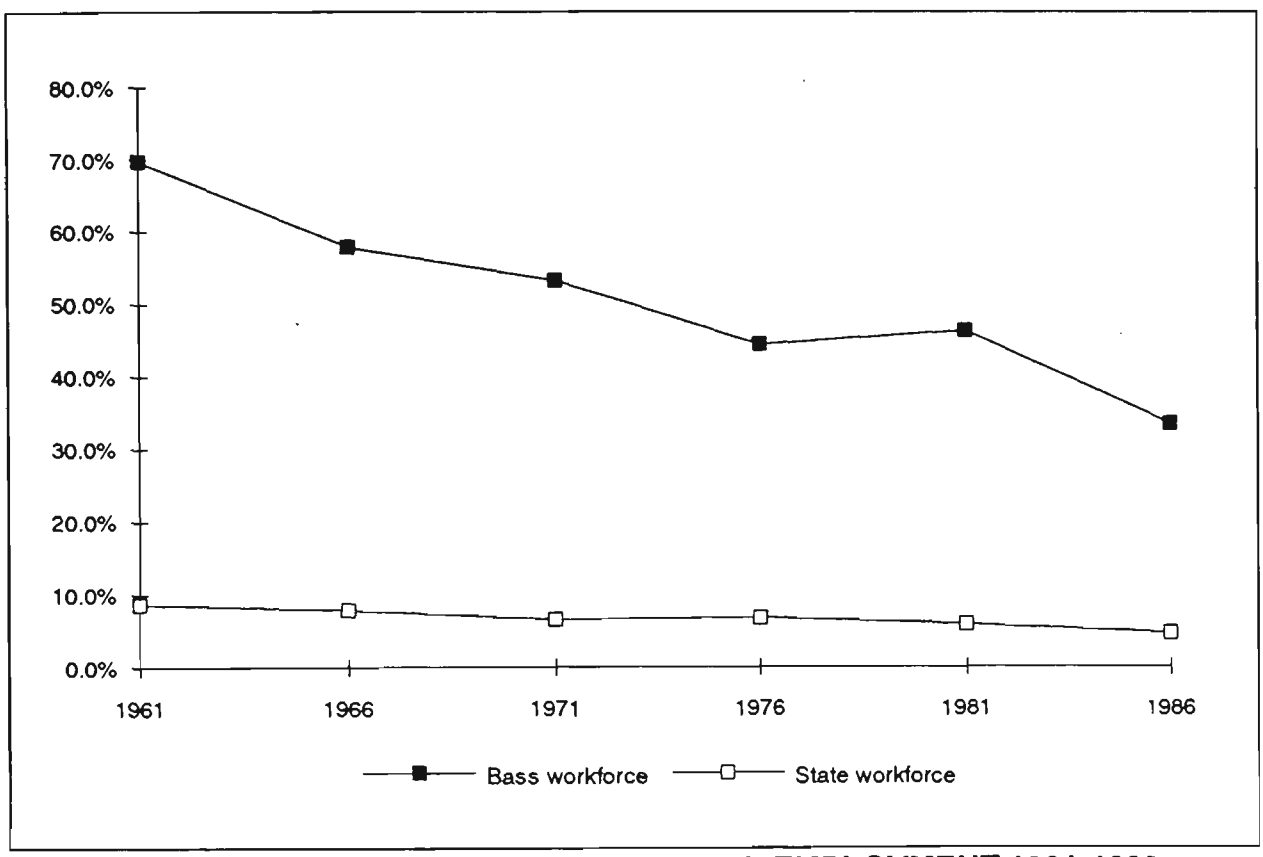


FIGURE 13: CHANGE IN AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT 1961-1986

Source: ABS Census Population and Dwellings Data 1961 - 1986

The Shire has a much heavier reliance on agriculture than the State, which is to be expected as the State figure also includes the urban population of major centres. However, what is clear is that the decline in agricultural employment in the Shire has been at a much greater rate than for the State, which has declined from 8.6% of the workforce in 1961 to 4.6% in 1986. The consequences of this rapid rate of decline are greater at the local level as there is limited opportunity to absorb these changes within a small community.

4.3.4 Site values

Land values can have serious implications for agriculture at the local level because they affect the ability of farmers to extend their farms, determine local rates and increase the attractiveness of subdivision to supplement farm income.

In order to establish land values it was necessary to examine Council's Rate Records which include site valuation details - all valuations are based on Capital Improved Value (CIV). Council's valuation records are updated every six years and all properties were last valued in 1988. Discussions with the Council Valuer indicated that since 1988 all properties within the Shire have generally increased in value by 25% (considered to be a conservative estimate). As Council's valuation data have not been updated since 1988, for the purposes of this research all valuations were readjusted to account for the increase by increasing all site values by a standard 25%. All values were then standardised to a site value per hectare figure in order to allow a comparison and then averaged out within the same lot ranges to provide a single site value per hectare.

From this information it is evident that land value is directly related to the size of land holdings and the smaller the property the higher the value per hectare. Table 9 and Figure 14 illustrate site values according to the size of the land holding.

Figure 14 shows that lots under one hectare have the highest per hectare site value at approximately $67,666 and that lots of around one hectare averaged $44,762. From this point, the value of land decreases as the size of the lots increase. The value per hectare stabilises at around 20 hectares at approximately $4,500 per hectare and can fluctuate between $2,500 and $5,000. This variation in site value for larger properties is mainly the result of locational factors and the quality of the land.

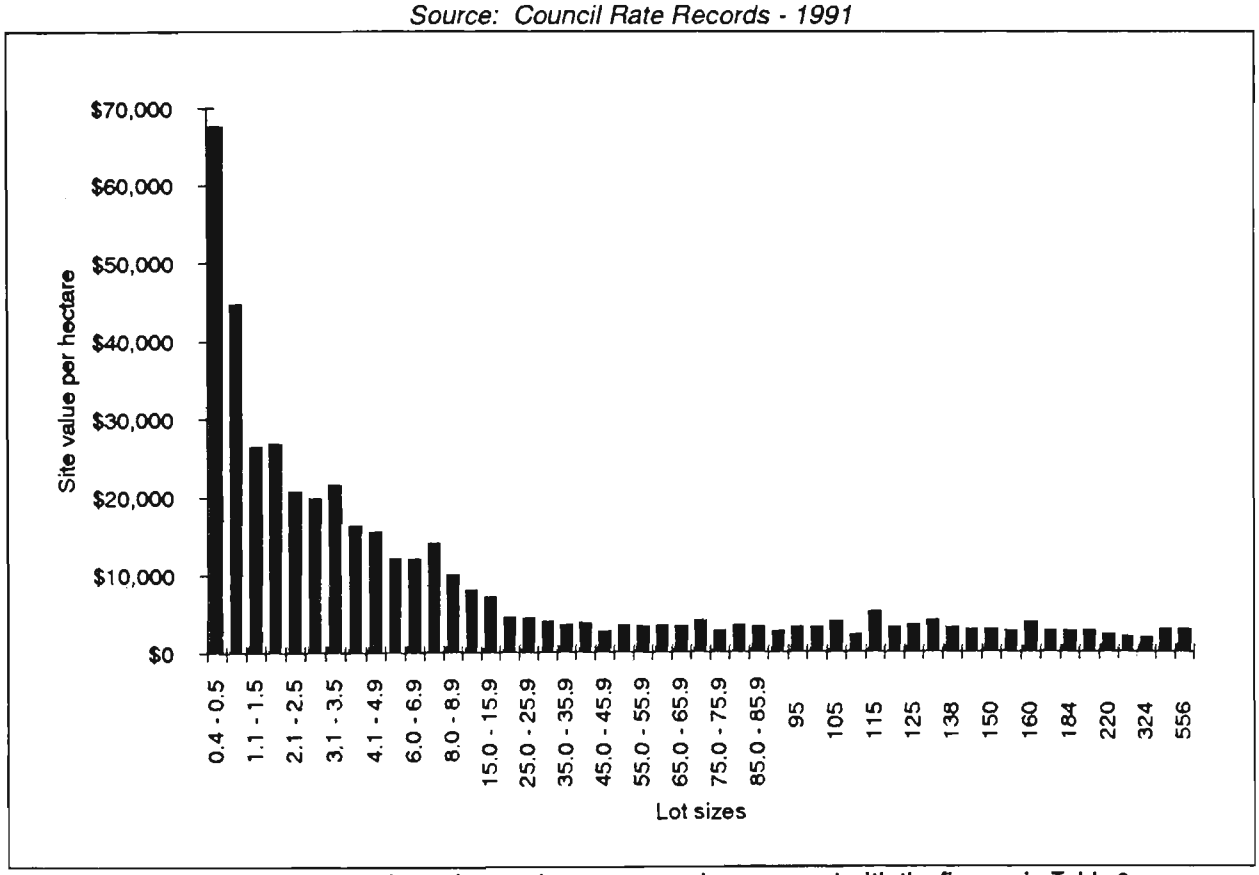
Lot Size (Hectare)	Value per Hectare ($)
0.4 - 0.5	67,666
0.6 - 1.0	44,762
1.1 - 1.5	26,510
1.6 - 2.0	26,889
2.1 - 2.5	20,762
2.6 - 3.0	19,880
3.1 - 3.5	21,566
3.6 - 4.0	16,307
4.1 - 4.9	15,519
5.0 - 5.9	12,087
6.0 - 6.9	12,095
7.0 - 7.9	14,120
8.0 - 8.9	10,051
10.0 - 10.9	8,124
15.0 - 15.9	7,245
20.0 - 20.9	4,602
25.0 - 25.9	4,493
30.0 - 30.9	4,074
35.0 - 35.9	3,569
40.0 - 40.9	3,861
45.0 - 45.9	2,739
50.0 - 50.9	3,524
55.0 - 55.9	3,433
60.0 - 60.9	3,508
65.0 - 65.9	3,394
70.0 - 70.9	4,096

Lot Size (Hectare)	Value per Hectare ($)
75.0 - 75.9	2,874
80.0 - 80.9	3,528
85.0 - 85.9	3,272
90.0 - 90.9	2,751
95	3,289
100	3,231
105	3,992
111	2,331
115	5,243
120	3,280
125	3,617
130	4,080
138	3,231
144	2,909
150	2,951
155	2,753
160	3,869
175	2,777
184	2,763
199	2,721
220	2,290
254	1,982
324	1,938
451	2,913
556	2,944

Note: Lot ranges have been selected to represent changes in value only.

TABLE 9: SITE VALUE PER HECTARE

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991



Note: lot sizes are not shown in even increments and correspond with the figures in Table 9.

FIGURE 14: SITE VALUE PER HECTARE

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

Location also has a significant influence on land values and this can be illustrated by comparing the value of land in the same eight districts used to compare lot sizes as discussed in Chapter 4.2.4. Comparing the locational variations on site values can be difficult, for as has already been demonstrated, each district varies in size and lot composition and therefore comparisons are offered as an approximation of valuation only.

	COASTAL TOWNSHIPS					INLAND TOWNSHIPS				
LOT SIZE (HA)	CORI-NELLA	GRANT-VILLE	KILCUN-DA	SAN REMO	AVERAGE	ARCHIES CREEK	ALMURTA	GLEN FORBES	KROW-ERA	AVERAGE
0.4 - 0.9	82,666	53,571	88,571	62,676	71,871	17,222	23,391	30,280	24,881	23,944
1.0 - 3.9	19,586	26,656	25,917	46,797	29,739	17,010	22,500	22,077	18,560	20,037
4.0 - 9.9	14,816	14,987	12,141	21,040	15,746	7,958	10,643	9,798	9,947	9,587
10 - 19	7,280	5,840	6,431	9,609	7,290	5,422	-	6,059	4,092	3,893
20 - 39	5,251	4,462	4,352	6,652	5,179	3,779	3,411	3,978	3,161	3,582
40 - 59	4,547	5,629	3,927	7,259	5,341	3,300	3,735	3,118	3,137	3,323
60 - 79	3,896	3,563	3,894	-	2,838	3,464	3,520	3,127	2,960	3,268
80 - 99	4,443	3,461	3,398	-	2,826	3,206	3,920	2,485	2,993	3,151
100 - 119	-	3,522	3,267	-	1,697	2,854	3,170	4,554	-	2,645
120 - 139	3,829	2,917	-	4,757	2,876	-	3,092	-	2,247	1,335
140 - 159	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,909	-	-	727
160 - 179	-	2,450	-	5,935	2,096	-	3,793	2,756	-	1,637
180 - 199	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,721	2,763	1,371
200 - 299	-	-	-	-	-	334	3,367	3,173	-	1,719
300 - 399	-	-	-	1,938	485	-	-	-	-	-
400 - 499	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
500+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: All figures are in Dollars, and "-" denotes no lots in this size range.

TABLE 10: SITE VALUE BY LOCATION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1990

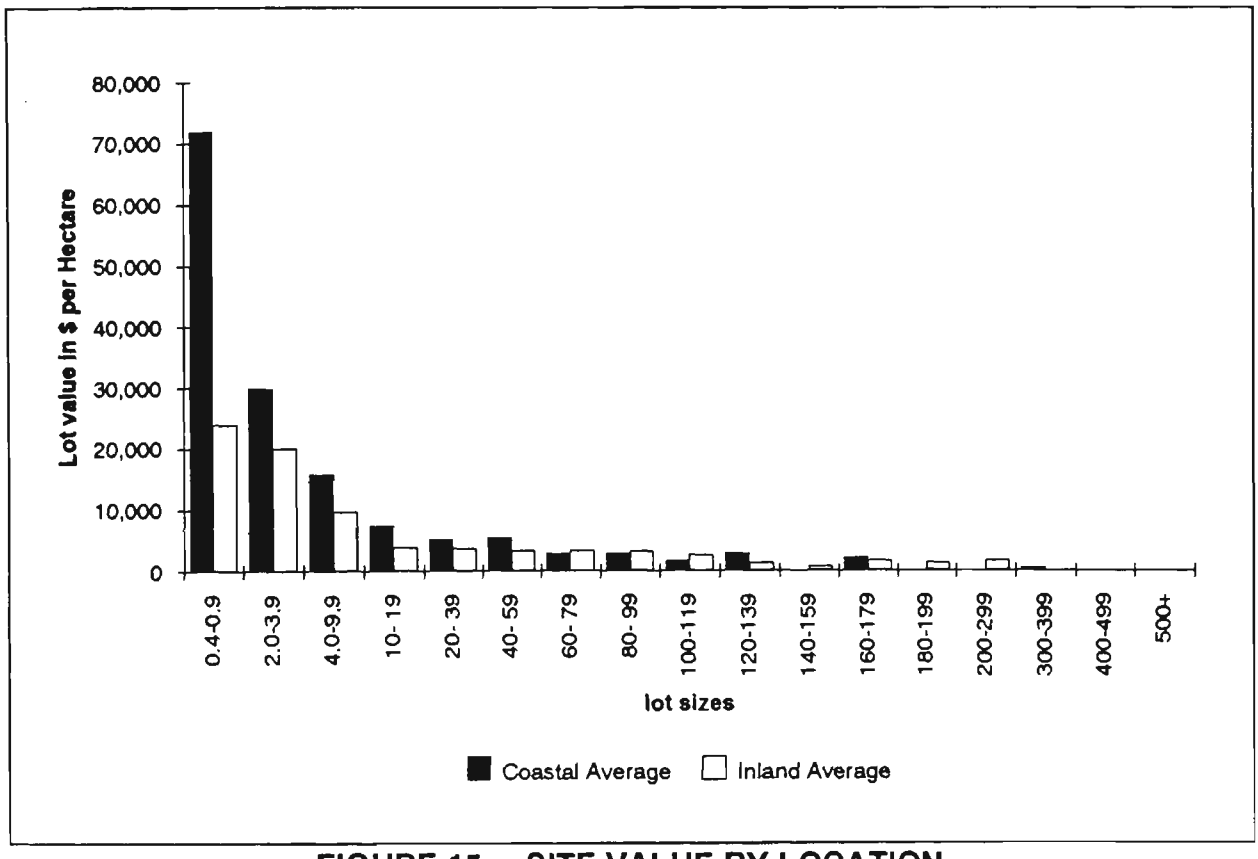


FIGURE 15: SITE VALUE BY LOCATION

Source: Council Rate Records - 1991

It can be seen from Table 10 and Figure 15 that the greatest variations in valuation relate to the smaller lots in the coastal areas rather than to the larger land holdings. The value per hectare of lots under 10 hectares is much greater in the coastal areas than inland. Once the land holdings reach over 10 hectares the site value per hectare then evens out to be comparable both in the coastal and inland areas. However overall, it is clear that land in the coastal areas has generally higher land value than in the inland areas.

4.4 The Social Importance of Agriculture

In order to understand the wider implications of agriculture in the local context the socio-economic and demographic structure of the population are examined and compared to State wide trends.

4.4.1 Population growth

The Shire has experienced sporadic population growth over the last thirty years as can be seen in Table 11 and Figure 16. This growth is expected to continue in the future. The population increased in total from 3851 in 1961 to 4904 in 1991, a total increase of 1053 or 27.3% over this period. However, this growth has not been consistent. Between 1971 and 1981 the population of the Shire declined by 818 to reach an all time low of 3131. 1981 also marked the start of a rapid growth period whereby the total population increased by 1773 people to peak at 4904 in 1991, a 56.6% increase over 10 years. This growth rate clearly illustrates that the Shire is experiencing increasing pressure for urban development, which is likely to have a significant impact on the rural land base. These growth rates are expected to continue, as population forecasts by the Departments of Treasury and Planning and Housing estimate that by the year 2031 the population of the Shire will be 9,620, almost doubling the population in 1991.

The growth rate of the Shire has been far more extreme and erratic than that of the State in general, which has also experienced fluctuations as can be seen in Figure 16.

As the Census data is normally collected during the week, the data does not truly represent the total population growth, as it does not account for weekend or holiday residents in the Shire. Council's rate records indicate that there are 2893 houses within the Shire and according to the 1991 Census, 974 houses were vacant on the night of the Census, which could be attributed to the fact that the full time occupants were not at home on the night, or more likely that the majority of these vacant houses

are holiday homes and generally only used on the weekends and holidays. Given this, it is expected that the total population of the Shire would be much higher than indicated by the Census. There is however no reliable way to estimate the total full and part time population of the Shire.

YEAR	POPULATION SIZE		PERCENTAGE INCREASE	
	BASS	STATE	BASS	STATE
1961	3,851	2,930,113	-	-
1966	3,857	3,219,526	0.16%	9.88%
1971	3,742	3,502,351	-2.99%	9.65%
1976	3,949	3,646,983	5.38%	4.94%
1981	3,131	3,833,443	-21.24%	6.36%
1986	4,145	4,019,478	26.33%	6.35%
1991	4,904	4,243,719	19.71%	7.65%
1996	5,160	4,657,500	6.65%	14.12%
2001	5,510	4,889,600	9.09%	7.92%
2011	6,680	5,301,200	30.38%	14.05%
2021	8,240	5,680,300	40.51%	12.94%
2031	9,620	6,260,400	35.83%	19.80%

TABLE 11: POPULATION GROWTH

Source: ABS Census Population and Dwellings Data 1961-1991 & DPH - DoT Population Projections 1992

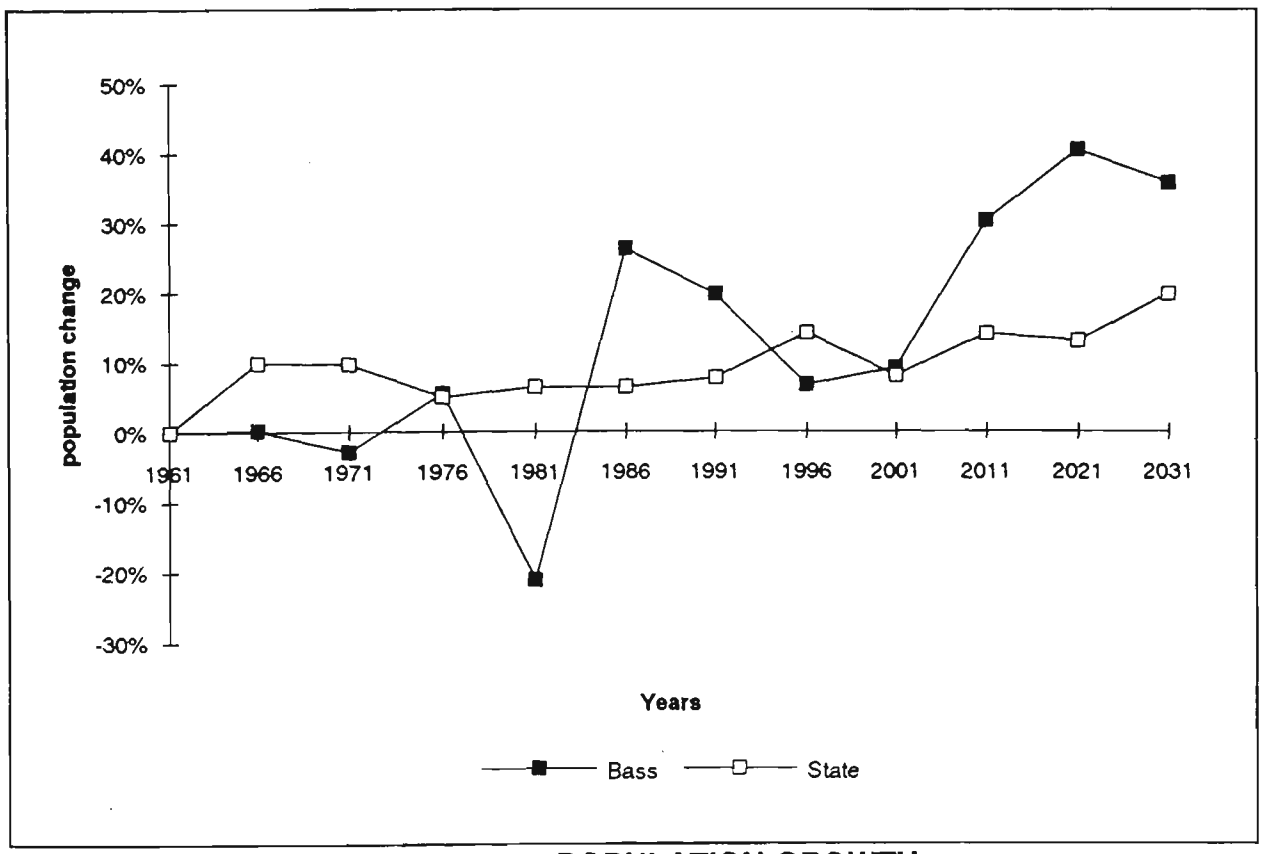


FIGURE 16: POPULATION GROWTH

Source: ABS Census Population and Dwellings Data 1961 1991 & DPH - DoT Population Projections 1992

4.4.2 Occupational structure

While the changes in agricultural employment were discussed under economic factors, this section will not go into detail about changes in agricultural employment, but rather provide an overview of the occupational structure by industry of the Shire in comparison with State trends.

	BASS		STATE	
Industry of Occupation	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Agriculture/Forest/Fish/Hunting	584	40.28%	80,702	4.72%
Mining	7	0.48%	35,418	2.07%
Manufacturing	120	8.28%	325,469	19.02%
Electricity/Gas/Water	17	1.17%	37,341	2.18%
Construction	120	8.28%	108,275	6.33%
Wholesale/Retail	165	11.38%	322,272	18.84%
Transport/Storage	51	3.52%	83,245	4.87%
Communication	21	1.45%	35,842	2.10%
Finance/Professional/Business	62	4.28%	173,661	10.15%
Public/Administration/Service	66	4.55%	96,042	5.61%
Community Services	135	9.31%	301,652	17.63%
Recreation/Personnel/Other Services	80	5.52%	88,784	5.19%
Non-classified	22	1.52%	22,084	1.29%
Total	**1,450**	**100.00%**	**1,710,787**	**100.00%**

TABLE 12: OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

Source: ABS Census Population and Dwellings Data 1986

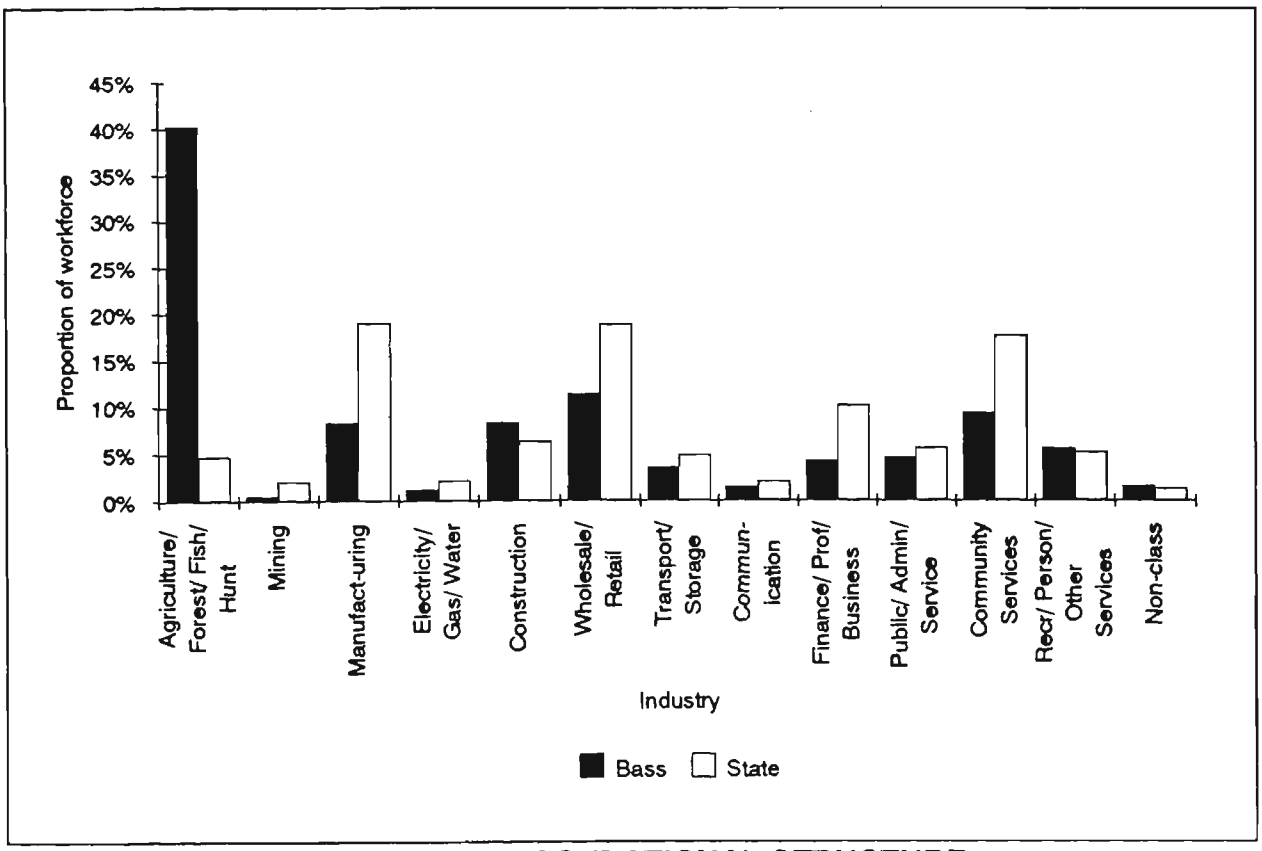


FIGURE 17: OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

Source: ABS Census Population and Dwellings Data 1986

A detailed comparison of changes in occupational structure by industry over the last thirty years is difficult, given changes to the base on which the ABS Census is

conducted. This examination will therefore focus on the employment structure in 1986 as shown in Table 12 and Figure 17.

It is clear from this Table that other than agriculture the major employment sources for the Shire include the wholesale/retail sector (165 people - 11.38%), community services (135 people - 9.3%) and construction and manufacturing (120 people each - 8.28%). However, the number of people in the finance/professional/business sector is quite low at 62 people (4.28%). Similar variations can also be found at the State level, but with higher proportions in each group where wholesale/retail (322,272 people - 18.84%), community services (301,652 people - 17.63%), manufacturing (325,469 people - 19.02%) constitute the major employment sources, but at the State level the proportion of people employed in the finance/professional/business sector is much greater at 173,661 or 10.5%. The major difference is that employment in Bass has a far greater reliance on agriculture in comparison to the State.

4.4.3 Unemployment

Determining the change in unemployment in the Shire over the last thirty years is difficult given changes in the way the information is collected by the ABS. The most relevant information on unemployment was sourced through the Small Area Labour Market Data produced by the Department of Employment Education and Training. This information is available in this form only from 1984 as presented in Table 13 and Figure 18. It is clear from this data that over the period from 1984 to 1992 unemployment levels have fluctuated, but have generally increased. The greatest unemployment level in the Shire was experienced in 1991 with 286 (12.7%) of the labour force being unemployed. This trend has generally been representative of unemployment levels across the State. But what are the implications of this for agriculture and the Shire? Whilst the State and Shire both have unemployment, the State has a more diverse economic/employment base and the population a wider skills base than the local level. Therefore alternative employment opportunities in the State are greater than at the local level where there is a more restricted employment base. Therefore improvements in unemployment levels may take longer in the Shire than across the State. For a small municipality such as Bass, which is predominantly structured around an agricultural economy and has relatively few alternative employment options, the longer term implications are greater than for the State.

	BASS		STATE	
Year	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1984	74	5.0	145,001	7.7
1985	77	5.1	130,613	6.9
1986	114	7.0	123,342	6.2
1987	82	4.9	128,145	6.2
1988	118	6.2	132,408	6.4
1989	111	5.4	105,392	4.9
1990	80	3.8	113,998	5.1
1991	286	12.7	223,895	10.2
1992	201	9.5	256,932	11.6

TABLE 13: PROPORTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE UNEMPLOYED

Source: ABS Small Area Labour Market Data - 1992

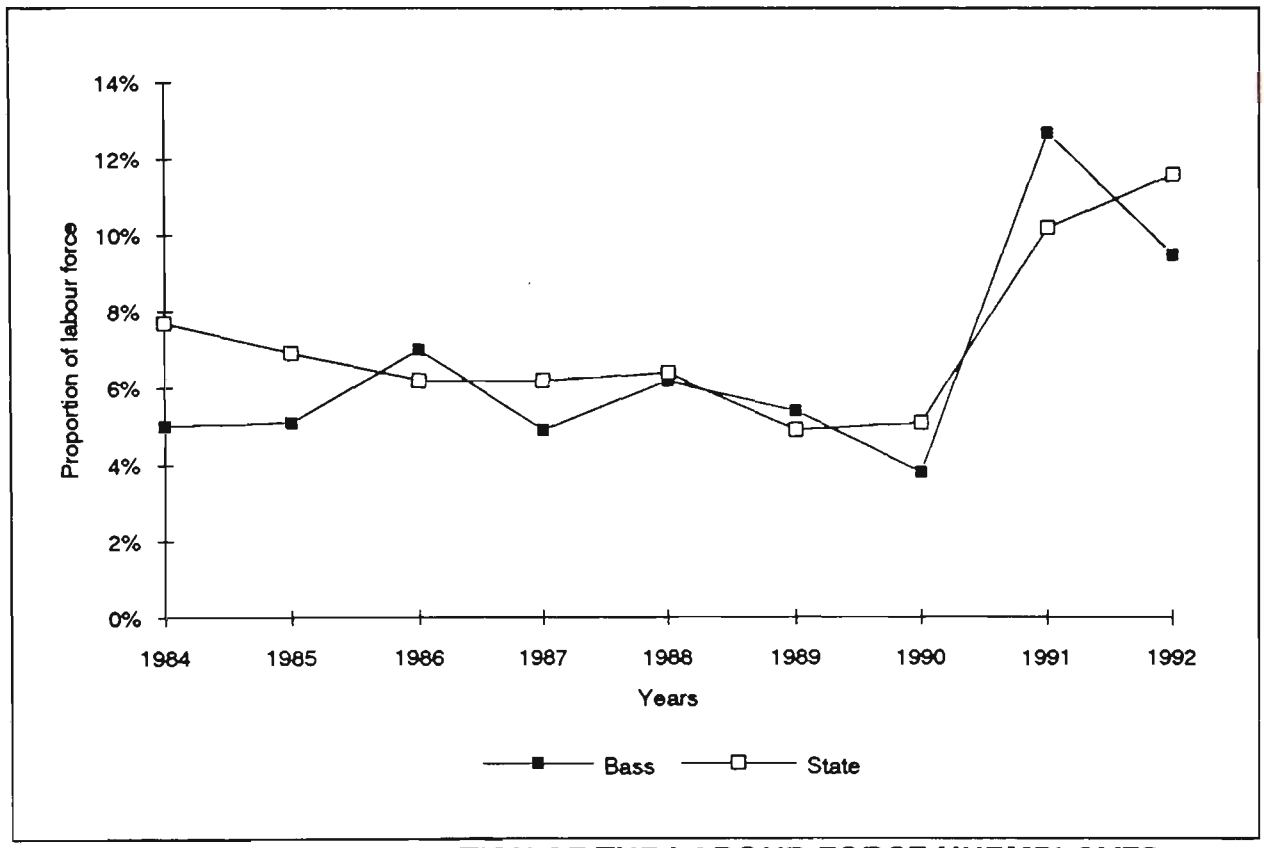


FIGURE 18: PROPORTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE UNEMPLOYED

Source: ABS Small Area Labour Market Data - 1992

4.4.4 Education levels

In 1971, 88% of the Shire's population had no qualifications, this has steadily improved and in 1986 only 64% of the population had no qualifications, this represents a 24% increase. The State average has experienced a similar trend and over the same period the number of people with no qualifications had improved from 79% to 60%, this represents a 19% increase. Whilst originally the Shire had a greater proportion of unqualified people than the State this is beginning to level out as shown in Table 14.

	SHIRE OF BASS				STATE			
Year	**1971**	**1976**	**1981**	**1986**	**1971**	**1976**	**1981**	**1986**
Degree or Higher	13	12	33	65	49,130	71,103	120,648	166,120
Diploma	62	66	95	103	89,823	99,146	115,149	118,081
Trade	206	268	210	284	312,131	339,357	251,940	279,716
Other	34	12	99	298	48,710	36,214	175,301	338,715
Not Qualified	2,211	2,165	1,774	1,968	1,883,401	1,753,734	1,832,965	1,861,451
Not Stated	0	277	144	368	0	349,754	250,619	334,807
Total Workforce	**2,526**	**2,800**	**2,355**	**3,086**	**2,383,195**	**2,649,308**	**2,746,622**	**3,098,890**

	SHIRE OF BASS				STATE			
Year	**1971**	**1976**	**1981**	**1986**	**1971**	**1976**	**1981**	**1986**
Degree or Higher	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Diploma	2%	2%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Trade	8%	10%	9%	9%	13%	13%	9%	9%
Other	1%	0%	4%	10%	2%	1%	6%	11%
Not Qualified	88%	77%	75%	64%	79%	66%	67%	60%
Not Stated	0%	10%	6%	12%	0%	13%	9%	11%
Total Workforce	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

TABLE 14: EDUCATION LEVELS

Source: ABS Census of Population and Dwellings Data 1971 - 1986

Of those people who have a formal education, the majority are included in a category entitled "other" which refers to those who completed HSC, but went no further. Within the Shire the proportion of the workforce in this section has increased from 1% in 1971 to 10% in 1981 and at the State level the proportion of the workforce in this group increased from 2% to 11%. Over the period 1971 - 1986, the percentage of people with trade qualifications in the Shire has remained stable at around 8 - 10%, whilst the State average has declined from 13% to 9%.

The proportion of the workforce with tertiary qualifications has increased only marginally at both the State and Shire level. In 1971 only 1% of the Shire and 2% of the State had a Degree/higher or Diploma, and this only increased to 2% and 5% respectively in 1986.

While the majority of the population with no qualifications is decreasing, the number of people with either formal or informal qualifications is increasing only marginally in accordance with the State trends. The major increases have been in the "Other" and "Not Stated" category which for both the Shire and the State have increased from 0% in 1971 to 12% and 11% respectively in 1986.

4.4.5 Income levels

A detailed analysis of the change in income levels of the residents of the Shire and State is a difficult task given inflationary factors. In order to provide a useful picture of

recent income levels this section will concentrate on the 1986 ABS data as shown in Table 15 and Figure 19.

Income Levels $	BASS Person	BASS Household	STATE Person	STATE Household	BASS Person	STATE Person	BASS Household	STATE Household
NIL	330	14	352,848	10,670	11%	11%	1%	1%
1 -2000	118	10	126,966	4,506	4%	4%	1%	0%
2001 - 4000	206	15	118,773	7,336	7%	4%	1%	1%
4001 - 6000	650	149	439,186	86,174	21%	14%	10%	6%
6001 - 9000	390	77	284,630	57,929	13%	9%	5%	4%
9001 - 12000	300	226	260,681	110,665	10%	8%	15%	8%
12001 - 15000	222	172	259,172	88,185	7%	8%	12%	7%
15000 - 18000	221	88	300,310	85,136	7%	10%	6%	6%
18001 - 22000	159	133	270,976	120,209	5%	9%	9%	9%
22001 - 26000	82	84	158,198	92,026	3%	5%	6%	7%
26001 - 32000	82	117	149,040	147,560	3%	5%	8%	11%
32001 - 40000	23	99	73,046	145,097	1%	2%	7%	11%
40001 - 50000	13	58	31,154	108,894	0%	1%	4%	8%
50001+	12	34	28,267	125,343	0%	1%	2%	9%
NOT STATED	279	184	245,645	145,203	9%	8%	13%	11%
Total	3,087	1,460	3,098,892	1,334,933	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 15: INCOME LEVELS - 1986

Source: ABS Census of Population and Dwellings Data 1986

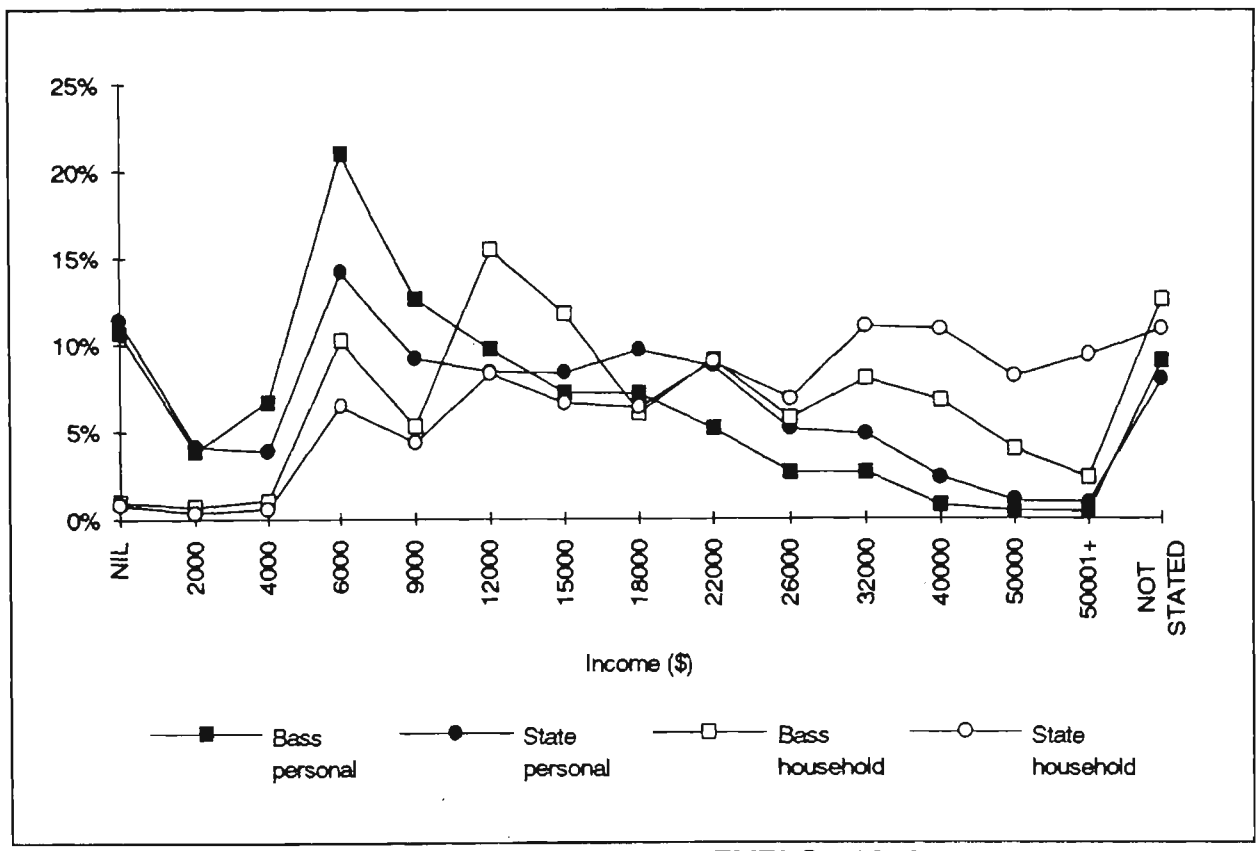


FIGURE 19: INCOME LEVELS - 1986

Source: ABS Census of Population and Dwellings Data 1986

It is evident that the residents of the Shire are generally in the low income bracket when compared to the State average. Within the Shire, 73% of the population earn less than $15,000 annually (based on personal income), compared to 58% at the State level. The State has a greater proportion of the population that earn over $15,000 than the Shire.

The low personal income rates of the Shire population may be attributed to number of factors including the following:-

- a high percentage of retirees or pensioners in the area;
- the difficulty in determining clear profit from agricultural enterprises after expenses; and
- a general reluctance to provide specific details of personal income.

However, these issues aside it can be concluded that the residents of the Shire are generally low income earners, as the single largest group at 21% earn between $6,000-9,000 per year.

From the data prescribed in this Chapter, a number of conclusions can be drawn:-

a) The Shire is experiencing significant levels of population growth, thus highlighting the increasing pressure for urban development;

b) Whilst agriculture remains the major single employment base in the Shire, the number of people employed in agriculture has significantly declined. In addition, no real alternative is available to accommodate these people and accordingly the number of unemployed is increasing.

c) The population of the Shire lack post secondary qualifications and other formal training and will therefore find it increasingly difficult to find alternative employment.

d) The residents of the Shire are largely low income earners and as there is little alternative employment available, it is considered that this area may experience increased social problems in the future.

In summary, agriculture and rural land in the Shire is a significant physical, economic and social resource for the Shire, the region and the State. It is therefore essential that any decisions relating to agriculture and rural land use should take all of these factors into consideration when making decisions which could affect this vital resource.

5.0 ISSUES FOR THE LONG TERM FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE SHIRE OF BASS

As discussed in Chapter 3, in order to plan effectively it is essential that there is a clear understanding of the issues being addressed and the nature of the problems which led to the decision to plan in the first place. In order to examine the relevance of planning to agriculture this Chapter will examine the various issues which affect the long-term future of agriculture in general and also particularly in relation to the Shire of Bass.

5.1 Pressures for Rationalisation

The agricultural industry in Australia and world-wide is characterised by cycles of boom and bust, although it is generally recognised as being on a long-term downward slide. Australia's agricultural industry is unstable with respect to income and output and we are considered to be in one of the worst rural recessions ever experienced. In the 1950s the average weekly farm income was double that of other sectors, but this has dropped significantly to just 30% of other average weekly earnings in only thirty years (Lloyd, 1986:(xv)). This is a dramatic drop and evidence of the long-term decline in farming, highlighting the need to rationalise the agricultural industry if it is to survive and compete.

But what makes our agricultural economy so volatile and what effect does this have on our farmers? The three broad explanations in order of priority are:-

- The long-term world wide trend of falling farm incomes relative to other incomes;
- The large and frequent cyclical fluctuations on world commodity markets, in particular the recent slump in agricultural prices; and
- Factors specific to Australia both in the long and short term.

These explanations are outlined in the following sections.

1. The long term world wide trend of falling farm incomes relative to other incomes.

The long-term world wide drop in farm incomes has been the inevitable consequence of economic growth, especially rapid technological advances and increases in living

standards (Lloyd, 1986:3). Technological advances have resulted in increased agricultural production and therefore there is a call for larger farms with less emphasis on human labour. This has been coupled with the slow adjustment of the resource base to these problems, creating a surplus of farmers, especially small inefficient farmers who are unable to compete (Lloyd: 1986:5). In order to address this, farmers have to recognise the current trend and they have three basic options - get bigger and better, get out, or stay and remain disadvantaged and incapable of competing whilst recognising theirs was a lifestyle decision.

2. The large and frequent cyclical fluctuations on world commodity markets, in particular the recent slump in agricultural prices.

In many other countries, especially the United States and the countries of the EEC, the low incomes of farmers are met by increased levels of domestic protection. This has a spill over effect on the international markets with the dumping of produce and drastic fluctuations in commodity prices which have resulted in the subsequent loss of Australia's more traditional markets, thus affecting our agricultural economy. In simple terms, the inefficiencies of the agricultural sector in these countries are being met by their Government through subsidisation and this only serves to export the problem to other countries, including Australia (Lloyd, 1986:(xvi)).

Australia's access to an increasingly over supplied and unstable market has declined and, except for wool, Australia's contribution to the international agricultural market is only approximately 20% of total output. Australia, therefore, is not considered to be a major economic force on the world market and cannot dictate international commodity prices.

But protectionism in other countries is not the only influence. Overall reduced economic growth in the world economy and increased production in other countries such as China and India have also had a significant effect.

3. Factors specific to Australia both in the long and short term.

The decline in the agricultural economy has not only been effected by overseas influences; there have also been a number of influences from within this country.

Since World War I consecutive governments have adopted policies on tariffs, orderly marketing, industry stabilisation and land and irrigation policies. All of these provided in one way or another tariffs, subsidies, tax incentives, etc to help farmers through the bad times. Although seen as solutions to agricultural problems at the time, these

have led to the retention and expansion of inefficient markets as the industry was insulated from the need to rationalise and adjust to the changing world economy (Lloyd, 1986:(xvi)).

No one government can be directly blamed for the downturn in the rural economy as there are many factors which impact upon it. So much so that even if the Australian government were able to significantly turn around the rural economy, it would only be a temporary relief, as the real determinants are played out on an international scale. We will continue to be largely dictated to by international actions and the health of our economy will largely depend on the actions of other countries (Lloyd, 1986:(xvii)).

Despite these factors, agriculture is still vitally important to the Australian economy and we need to develop a much larger, stronger and more efficient agricultural economy in order to survive or even compete. It is therefore important that farmers understand the influences on the economy, the long term outlook and how they may be able to confront the almost inevitable outcome.

What is required to develop a more efficient and competitive agricultural base and economy, given that we are unable to significantly alter world prices and trade polices? To identify the solutions we must look at our rural base as a start to make changes. Although often proposed, subsidisation is not the answer, because it only leads to the setting of artificial prices and delay in the necessary readjustment of our industry. We need to develop an efficient and competitive agricultural industry based on larger and more efficient farms, whilst responding to the inevitable welfare needs of our farmers that have been displaced through the necessary rationalisation process. The government recognised this issue in *Managing the Rural Down Turn 1991* and recommended the following:-

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

1. Rural Adjustment Scheme

Continue with this scheme which is aimed at helping farmers through tough times associated with readjustment, but not at the expense of modernisation. Some of the suggested measures include:-

- Income support mechanisms;
- Sickness benefits;
- Pensions; and
- Loans.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The real answers are in the long term solutions:-

1. **Education**
   Improve farmer education in farm management, business studies, skills and other relevant areas.

2. **Improve Efficiency**
   Increase agricultural research and other measures to help farmers to become more efficient, including farm rationalisation.

3. **Encourage**
   Encourage production diversification, sound farm management practices and diversity of off farm sources of income

   (DFA, 1991).

One of the biggest factors affecting the rationalisation of the agricultural industry is that farming in Australia is not only an industry it is also a lifestyle, unlike any other sector of the economy. This complicates the necessary readjustment of the agricultural industry, as many farmers who are inefficient producers are unwilling to leave their farms and lifestyles for the sake of the economy and are therefore willing to remain inefficient producers (Lloyd, 1986:6). It is now essential that farmers recognise that whilst farming is a lifestyle, it is also a major industry that requires rationalisation and it must be treated this way in order for the industry to become competitive and survive. This is particularly relevant for the Shire of Bass where the economic and social structure of the region and community is heavily geared towards agriculture and where the land base is of high quality for agriculture. Therefore for the industry to survive, continue to support the community and make the most of the high quality agricultural resource, changes must be made at the local level to ensure this rationalisation occurs and planning has an important role in ensuring this occurs.

5.2 The Viability of Farming and Minimum Allotment Size

One of the ways recognised by the government to improve farm efficiency is through farm rationalisation, this involves increasing the size of farms and maximising new technology. Therefore reducing the number of small inefficient producers. Farmers must get bigger in order to make this possible. Whilst planning may not be able to

directly influence technological improvements and production levels it does have the ability to influence the size of land holdings and therefore farm size.

When examining the appropriate farm size to achieve this rationalisation, the question of viability inevitably arises, for example how much land is required to produce effectively and make a living whilst achieving sound land management practices? The answer to this question is not clear cut and therefore it is important to examine the concept of viability, particularly in times of economic recession when many farmers state their farms are no longer viable as a justification to allow subdivision to boost low incomes.

It has been recognised that there are three types of viability - economic viability, technical viability and landscape viability.

5.2.1 Economic viability

Economic viability relates to the amount of money or profit that can be generated from the farm. This is influenced by whether the emphasis is on profits, providing a reasonable standard of living, willingness to break even, or on the loss of income offset by tax incentives and capital gains. As is evident, this concept of economic viability greatly depends on the expectations of the farmer.

Economic Viability is influenced by the following factors:-

- **Trade** - prices for goods produced;
- **Costs** - the cost of equipment and fuel;
- **Expectations** - expectations of what constitutes profit and a reasonable standard of living;
- **Debt** - level of debt on property an equipment; and
- **Bank Rates** - interest rates being charged.

5.2.2 Technical viability

Technical viability relates to the farm size required in order to operate the farm effectively, which is extremely difficult to determine due to the various agricultural pursuits, individual levels of mechanisation and changes to industry requirements.

Technical Viability is influenced by:-

- **Mechanisation** - the level of on-farm technology used to operate the farm;

- **Agricultural Quality of Land** - the suitability of the land for that agricultural land use;
- **Modern Farming Techniques** - technology such as feed lots and hydroponics significantly affect the amount of land required for farming; and
- **Degree of Land Degradation** - amount of land useable for agriculture.

5.2.3 Landscape viability

Landscape viability relates to the minimum size of a property required to maintain the landscape quality of the area.

Landscape viability is influenced by:-

- **Quality** - the quality of farm management and its affect on the landscape; and
- **Size** - the size of land holdings given the location of nearby farms.

Often, and especially in times of economic hardship, farmers claim that planning controls in place are making farming unviable. But as has been shown, it would be extremely difficult to list all the requirements for viability, given the range of factors affecting it. Planning controls may have an influence on these three types of viability by establishing minimum lot sizes and development standards. However, the overall affect of planning controls on farm viability would be minimal in comparison to other factors such as international commodity prices, bank interest rates and even seasonal variations in production.

One of the questions often asked about planning controls and viability relates to the size of allotments and subdivision minimums. Given the complexities of defining viability combined with changing industry requirements, it is extremely difficult to establish a minimum viable rural allotment size and discussions with regional officers of Department of Food and Agriculture were unable to identify appropriate lot sizes for particular uses.

As discussed in Chapter 2 a survey of farmers was undertaken, one of the questions asked was how much land they considered would be needed to farm viably and support a family from the various activities that they undertake on their farm. It should be noted when considering this data that we are not aware of the full level of debt or income of these farmers, or of the level of lifestyle to which they aspire, but the information does provide an important insight into how much land farmers consider they need in order to undertake the broad hectare activities which predominate in the Shire. The data from this part of the survey are included in Table 16.

In relation to dairy farming it is clear from Table 16 that 80 hectares is considered to be the absolute minimum area required in order to farm viably, but the majority of respondents consider that over 120 hectares is required. The responses of those farmers involved in beef grazing varied to a greater extent, because not all farmers interviewed farmed full time, and many farmers had beef to supplement their income from other farming and non-farming activities. Accordingly several respondents considered that 28 hectares would be a viable area to graze beef, but the majority of respondents considered that between 120 and 320 hectares is required. This recognition that larger farms are required in order to farm viably was also evident in relation to sheep grazing where the minimum area considered viable was 80 hectares and the largest area was 320 hectares.

LOT SIZE (ha)	DAIRY	BEEF	SHEEP
28	-	1	-
60	-	3	-
80	8	3	1
100	3	1	1
104	2	-	-
108	-	1	-
120	6	5	-
140	2	1	-
160	1	1	1
166	1	1	1
180	1	-	-
200	1	11	4
208	-	1	-
240	-	1	4
320	-	2	1
Don't Know	1	4	-
Total	26	36	13

TABLE 16: MINIMUM FARM SIZE REQUIRED TO FARM VIABLY ACCORDING TO FARMERS

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

It is evident from this survey that farmers involved in the various agricultural industries recognise that larger farms are required in order to farm viably and that 80 hectares is generally considered the minimum necessary farm size. This reinforces the point that in order to rationalise the agricultural industry it is important that measures are taken to ensure that farms are retained in sizes which facilitate viable agriculture, this includes increasing farm size and planning can play a role in achieving this. Note that as outlined in Chapter 4, 85.5% of all rural lots in the Shire are below 80 hectares. In order to expand, farmers will be required to purchase or lease additional land. As discussed in Chapter 4, property values of lots below 20 hectares are

disproportionately high and combined with a lagging rural economy, it will be increasingly difficult for existing farmers to increase farm size and therefore rationalise their farming operations. This will ultimately result in a largely inefficient local agricultural base unless they receive assistance.

5.3 Loss of Agricultural Land and Competing Land Uses

There is growing concern by the State government about the loss of agricultural land to other uses, in particular to urban development and land degradation. There is currently no reliable estimate available of the exact amount of rural land converted to non-agricultural uses in recent years, but there are indications that it has in fact been significant, especially around the urban fringes of Melbourne and major regional centres.

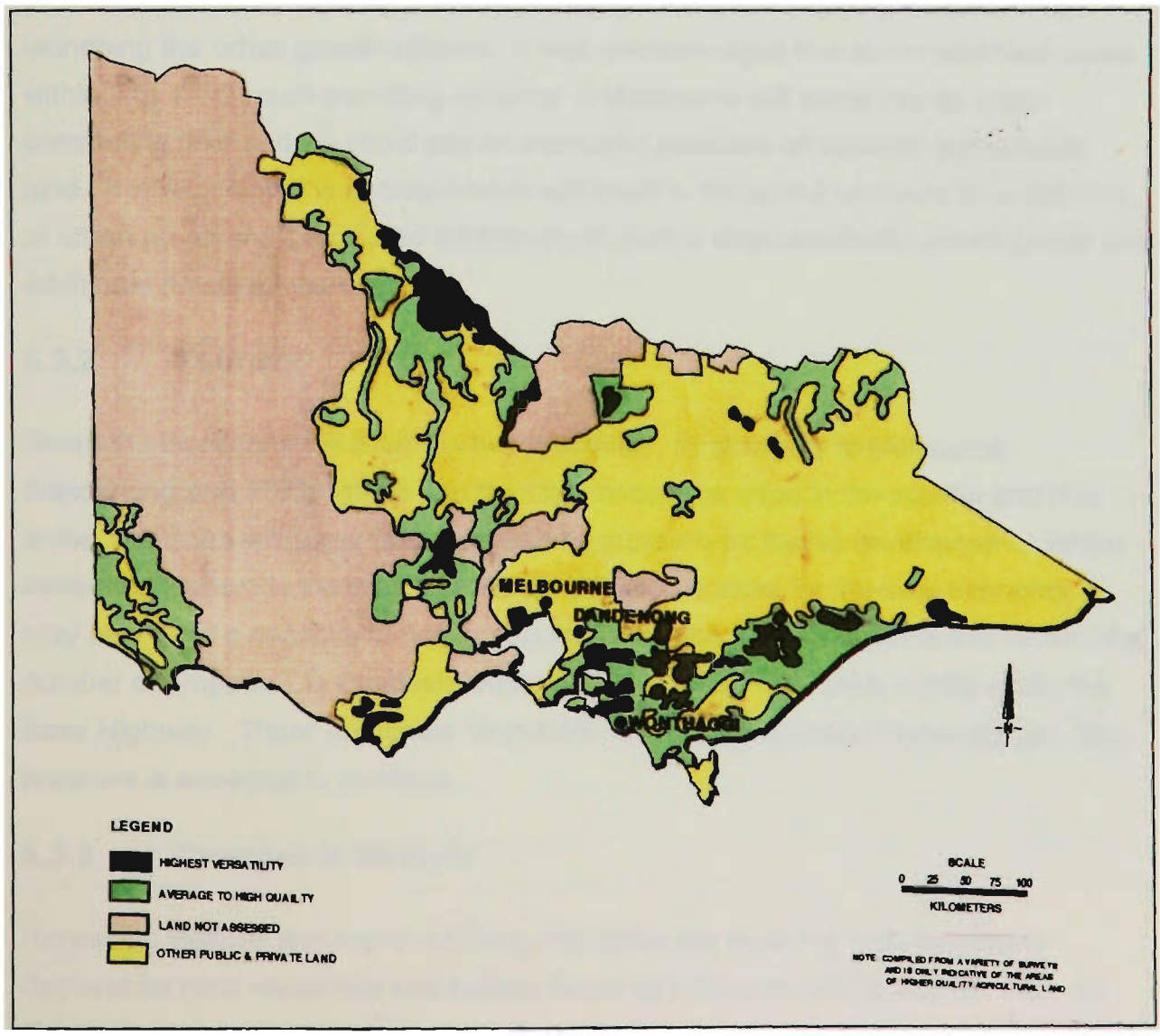


FIGURE 20: AGRICULTURAL QUALITY OF LAND IN VICTORIA

Source: A Review of Rural Land Use in Victoria

Good quality agricultural land in the Victorian context is a limited resource as can be seen in Figure 20, which illustrates that some of the best agricultural land in the State is located in South-west Gippsland, of which the Shire of Bass forms part.

This area is experiencing increasing pressure on agricultural land. But what are some of the causes of the loss of agricultural land in the State and the Shire of Bass? The following are some possible explanations:-

5.3.1 Urban encroachment

Future urban growth is one of the major threats to agricultural land within the Shire. The South-Eastern Growth Area is one of Melbourne's major metropolitan growth areas which will extend to the east of Pakenham and be a major focus for housing, industry and commerce. It is within a one hour drive of the Shire. This short commuter distance is already having a significant impact on the Shire as many people living in Bass commute to Dandenong for employment. This existing and potential pressure was recognised by the Minister for Planning and Housing in his speech launching the urban growth options. It was acknowledged that towns and rural areas within 1 to 1 1/2 hours travelling distance of Melbourne will come into an urban commuting field and we could see an increased pressure on valuable agricultural land. It is expected this encroachment will result in increased pressure for extension of urban areas and associated infrastructure, formal rural-residential development and additional house lot excisions.

5.3.2 Tourism

Given the location of the Shire on two coastlines, its proximity to Melbourne, Dandenong and Phillip Island and the high landscape value in the coastal and hills areas, the Shire will come under increasing pressure for tourist development. Whilst increased tourism in the area may be a well needed boost for the local economy, it may also have a negative impact on agriculture in the area. The Shire has received a number of proposals to establish tourist developments in the area, mostly along the Bass Highway. These proposals have been for theme parks and tourist shops. This pressure is expected to continue.

5.3.3 Changes in lifestyle

Increasing mobility and improved living standards are resulting in an increased demand for rural residential and holiday home development (OOE & DFA, 1991:17). Given the proximity of the Shire to Melbourne, this will result in increased pressure on agricultural land. It is clear that significant pressure for future urban growth already

exists in the Shire, as shown in Chapter 4. This is likely to continue and accelerate given past trends, thus having a significant impact on valuable agricultural land in the Shire.

5.3.4 Changing nature of farming

The nature of farming is changing from full-time to a combination of full and part-time. Part-time farmers are defined as those who do not derive their full income from the farm and have alternative sources of income whilst undertaking farming activities (OOE & DFA, 1991:17). Part-time farming does not maximise productive capacity and therefore make the best use of the land, but these farmers often have more money to invest in the development and maintenance of the farm (OOE & DFA, 1991:18). This can have significant implications in areas which are ideally suited to agriculture, such as the Shire of Bass. One of the advantages of part time farming is that the land can be returned to commercial agriculture much easier than if it was used for urban purposes.

5.3.5 Land degradation

Land degradation is the deterioration of the land base caused by direct or indirect human intervention in the land system. It has the potential to remove large areas of land from agricultural production for a variety of reasons including erosion, salinity and loss of water quality, etc (OOE & DFA, 1991:33).

Whilst land degradation is not currently a major problem throughout the Shire, there are large areas which either suffer or have the potential to suffer from gully erosion and land slip etc, thus reducing the land's productive capacity. Although this may not be a major problem at the moment, inspection of the Shire indicates there is evidence that land degradation is occurring. Measures should be taken to ensure that the productive capacity of the land is maintained.

5.3.6 Technology

Improvements in agricultural technology, such as hydroponics and feed lots, will have a significant influence on the amount of agricultural land required for production. It should be recognised that innovations in production have an impact on the agricultural quality of land and the amount of land required for agricultural pursuits.

5.3.7 Extractive industry

The Shire has extensive areas of sand deposits which are important metropolitan resources. The claiming of this resource will reduce the amount of land available to agriculture (MPE, 1984:47).

5.3.8 Greenhouse effect

The State Government recognise that by the year 2030 the average Victorian temperature will increase by 2-4 degrees Celsius due to global warming associated with the Greenhouse Effect (OOE & DFA, 1991:44).

Some of the expected consequences of this will be:-

- increases in sea level, which is particularly important given the location of Bass along the coast line, particularly along Westernport Bay;
- increased evaporation rates;
- less runoff;
- increased potential for erosion; and
- changes to agricultural capability.

The full environmental consequences of the Greenhouse Effect are not known, but it is expected they will have a significant impact on agriculture in the area.

In summary, it is clear that agricultural land is coming under increasing pressure and this could have a significant impact on the amount of agricultural land in the Shire. It is expected that not only will these influences continue, but that they will be exacerbated by increased pressure from metropolitan growth and general improvements in living standards.

6.0 POLICY CONTEXT FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LAND USE PLANNING

A sound policy context is an essential element of any effective planning system, as it outlines what is to be achieved and forms the base from which mechanisms are developed, evaluated and monitored to ensure the implementation of the policy. However, as noted in Chapter 3, there are no explicit policies which deal with the spatial aspects of rural land use. There are however, several policies at all levels of government relating to agriculture and economic development which directly or indirectly impact on agriculture and rural land use in the Shire. These major policies include:-

6.1 Federal Government Policy

Economic and Rural Policy

The *Economic and Rural Policy*, released by the Federal Government in April 1986 recognises the importance of agriculture to the Australian economy and the reliance of most country towns on agriculture for survival.

The policy acknowledges that whilst many of the problems faced by rural Australia today are beyond the capacity of any government to resolve directly, the government can play a catalytic role in bringing about many of the possible solutions.

The main aim of this policy is to facilitate the improvement in the national economic performance and social welfare of the rural sector through:-

- Achieving sustained growth of the economy at large with lower inflation and enhancing the ability of all sectors to compete on world markets;
- Developing a more rigorous and outward approach to the industry's structure, including measures such as lowering tariffs and the removal of quota protection. Such reductions are to be undertaken at a rate that can be absorbed by the industry;
- Reducing on farm and off farm costs and encouraging improvements in rural sector efficiency by reducing input costs, conserving important natural resources and removing unnecessary government regulation;

- Developing initiatives at both the international and domestic level to tackle adverse development in the demand for specific rural commodities; and
- Addressing welfare problems in the rural sector.

(Commonwealth Government, 1986).

This policy does not contain any specific land-use recommendations.

Rural and Regional Australia - Statement

The Federal government's *Rural and Regional Australia - Statement*, released in 1989 is a policy statement dealing with social, environmental and economic aspects of rural and regional planning.

The Statement highlights the major goal for the rural environment of achieving sustainable development and economic growth without jeopardising our future productive base or quality of life.

Whilst supporting the principle of appropriate resource use, the strategy also emphasises that responsibility falls on the shoulders of those at the local level, especially local government, to effectively control land use practices in order to ensure the most efficient use of natural resources, but no specific land-use recommendations are made (Commonwealth Government, 1989).

National Soil Conservation Strategy 1989 - Draft

The *Draft National Soil Conservation Strategy 1989* recognises that soil is a non-renewable resource and that the nations' economic well being depends on the responsible use and management of this resource. Therefore careful land use planning is essential if soil resources are to be conserved whilst farming, grazing, timber, housing and recreation needs are met.

Whilst the main aim of the Strategy is to conserve our soil resources and where possible counteract land degradation, it recommends that land capability assessment should be used as a basis for future land-use planning decisions (Commonwealth Government, 1989).

Our Country Our Future

In 1989 the Prime Minister released a statement on the environment entitled, *Our Country Our Future* which commits the government to the concept of ecologically

sustainable development and outlines a series of policies and funding programs to give effect to this commitment (Commonwealth Government, 1989).

6.2 State Government Policy

Victoria: The Next Step

In 1984 the Victorian Government released *Victoria: The Next Step - Economic Initiatives for the 1980s* with the principal objective of maximising the rate of income and employment growth in Victoria over the medium to long-term. The Strategy aims to isolate particular areas where Victoria has competitive strengths which relate to emerging economic trends and for the Government to concentrate resources on enhancing this strength and basing long-term economic development upon them. Agriculture is seen as one of Victoria's nine competitive strengths (Government of Victoria, 1984:139).

Whilst recognising the continued need to support the efficient production and marketing of broad hectare agricultural products and activities such as grazing and cropping, the government intends to place a much greater emphasis on encouraging specialist primary production as these are considered to have the potential for sustainable growth, such as legumes, soya beans and animal breeding (Government of Victoria, 1984:142).

In recognising the importance of agriculture the strategy also recognises the importance of land use issues and states:-

> *"In pursuing its agricultural strategy the Government has a major role to play in ensuring that the optimum use is made of Victoria's soils and water resources. In part it has a crucial role in ensuring that the development of an industry with high growth potential are not retarded or excluded by the unwise use of land, for example inappropriate subdivision ..... efficient and productive rural industry must be encouraged by all appropriate measures." (Government of Victoria, 1984:147).*

Whilst recognising the importance of planning to protect valuable agricultural resources, no guidance is given to identify the best way to achieve this maximum protection.

Protecting the Environment - A Conservation Strategy for Victoria

In 1987 the State Government released the *State Conservation Strategy* with the primary focus of protecting and enhancing our natural and built environment. Underpinning this strategy is the principle of sustainable development that recognises the interdependence of conservation and development.

The major aims of the Strategy are to:-

- maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems;
- preserve genetic diversity;
- ensure the sustainable use of renewable resources; and
- protect natural areas and ecosystems for the non-material needs of society.

  (Government of Victoria, 1987:1)

The Strategy recognises that productive land is crucial to Victoria's prosperity and the long-term future of agriculture depends on maintaining the production capabilities of the soils.

The Government recognises that the statutory planning process can be more effectively used to implement this strategy and that penalties for contravening planning regulations should be reviewed to ensure they are sufficient enough to act as a deterrent (Government of Victoria, 1987:96).

Victoria: The Next Decade

Victoria: The Next Decade released in 1987 is the further development of the *State Economic Strategy*. This strategy confirmed the approach of the original strategy whilst reaffirming the need to increase competitiveness.

The Strategy recognises the continued economic reliance on significant broad hectare commodity crops, whilst promoting specialist high value added goods to improve our competitive base (Government of Victoria, 1987).

Agriculture: A State Strength

Agriculture: A State Strength was developed within the framework of the Economic, Technology, Social Justice and Conservation Strategies and released in 1988.

The Strategy was developed as the government identified certain competitive strengths within the Victorian economy where the State can compete effectively on

national and international markets. The agricultural base in Victoria was identified as one of these competitive strengths because of:-

- a diversity of soils and climatic conditions;
- the relatively mild climate;
- high rainfall;
- the proximity to ports, well developed transport systems and other infrastructure; and
- high capital resources with knowledge and skills base.

(Government of Victoria, 1988:12)

The Strategy takes a targeted approach to planning for agriculture, identifying six key areas where substantial opportunity for growth and development exist at this time, these areas include:-

- Customer driven agriculture;
- Cost efficient agriculture;
- Cleaner agriculture;
- Socially responsible agriculture;
- Development of rural enterprise; and
- Sustainable agriculture.

The Strategy recognises that continued economic prosperity in agriculture rests on the maintenance and enhancements of Victoria's competitive edge which relies on the production of a range of diversified products at a lower cost than our competitors.

The policy makes no reference to land use issues other than promoting the sustainable economic use of physical resources.

A Review of Rural Land Use in Victoria - Discussion Paper 1990

The discussion paper recognises that prime agricultural land is an important natural resource which is being gradually eroded by development pressures and competing uses and that a state wide policy and planning framework for sustainable rural land use is required. The suggested objectives for rural land use include:-

- protecting the productive potential of good quality agricultural land;
- conserving the special environmental qualities of rural areas;

- protecting the land, including soil, water and vegetation from degradation;
- minimising irreversible land use change;
- maintaining flexibility to adjust land use for future needs; and
- providing opportunities for diverse rural lifestyles within the constraints of environmental quality, economics and social equity.

  (OOE & DARA, 1991:48)

Shaping Victoria's Future - A Place to Live

A Place to Live, released in 1992, is a strategy to guide urban development in Victoria over the next forty years and aims to create more livable urban development and achieve a better balance of resources and opportunities between Melbourne and Victoria's regional centres.

The Strategy recognises that over the next forty years Victoria will have to accommodate an additional 1.5 million people and that only one-third of these can be accommodated within the existing built up areas. Further development in the State will be directed into the north and west metropolitan areas and regional centres such as Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley. However it is recognised that this development is likely to have significant environmental implications and as a response the Strategy states that "Development should therefore never be allowed to endanger Victoria's natural assets, the health of its environment or the interests of future generations." (DPH, 1992:19) This has significant implications for rural land use issues.

Rural resources are seen as vital for the well being of cities and maintaining agricultural production and allows us to be self-sufficient in food production and enables us to develop export opportunities. The loss of prime quality soil to urban uses is seen as reducing the number of larger, more economic holdings and results in the loss of efficient food production close to markets and therefore pushing producers onto more marginal land. Rural residential subdivision and development is seen as one of the major threats that needs to be addressed. In order to address these problems the strategy adopts a policy of urban consolidation by proposing to increase urban densities in existing urban areas and therefore reduce the pressure for development on the rural areas (DPH, 1992:28).

Rural land close to urban areas is also seen as important as it provides necessary breathing spaces and attractive recreation areas for urban residents (DPH, 1992:28).

Protecting Victoria's Environment and Natural Resources

This statement, made by the Minister for Conservation and Environment in 1992, is an extension of the State Conservation Strategy and highlights the need to develop and implement a framework for long-term decision making about the environment and the future use of natural resources based on the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). The four key principles of ESD are:-

1. Using renewable resources at a rate that does not exceed their ability to regenerate;
2. Using non-renewable resources prudently and efficiently and where possible produce benefits for future generations;
3. Maintaining biological diversity by conserving our plant and animal species and their habitats; and
4. Controlling the impacts of development by managing and reducing the production of waste and pollution.

   (DCE, 1992:4)

The Statement then focuses on various aspects of the environment and industry including agriculture, timber, fishing, park systems, urban environment, water ways and waste minimisation.

In relation to rural land, the government is keen to achieve sustainable land use by the year 2000 through Land Care programs. It is recognised that overuse of land combined with rabbit plagues and natural disasters has lead to serious land degradation problems for our rural land base which cost Victoria up to $200 million a year in lost production. It is recognised that without a healthy farming sector the future of our rural community and particularly small country towns will be undermined. Whilst the major focus appears to relate to environmental problems, the same issues and principles can apply to rural subdivision.

To achieve development and land use based on ESD principles the Minister states "Balanced, Sustainable development for the long-term can only occur with the benefit of far sighted policy and a commitment from both the Government and the community to the future." (DCE, 1992:24)

Proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy - Amendment S 25

As a direct result of *A Review of Rural Land Use in Victoria, A Place to Live* and *Protecting Victoria's Environment and Natural Resources,* which recognise the

importance of protecting productive agricultural land and achieving environmentally sustainable land management, the State Government (in agreement with the opposition at the time) has moved to introduce a Statewide Rural Planning Policy. This policy aims to provide a comprehensive framework for rural planning across the State and the setting of broad objectives addressing the various environmental, economic and social issues that have been discussed in this Chapter so far. All Councils will be responsible for the implementation of the Policy at the local level. The Policy is being introduced as a Statewide Amendment to all Planning Schemes and has recently been on exhibition and now awaits a panel hearing. If approved in its proposed form it will be Government policy that:-

- Rural land is a valuable resource and protecting and enhancing its diverse values is important as part of ensuring its sustainable use;
- Productive agricultural land be retained for sustainable agricultural uses;
- Features of cultural, archaeological or scientific significance be protected;
- Opportunities for future extraction of significant stone and mineral resources be retained;
- Rural land be protected from pressures of urban encroachment and fragmentation by indiscriminate and inappropriate subdivision;
- Low density residential development be located in urban areas, as it is an urban rather than rural use;
- Urban and residential development be directed to existing urban centres;
- Dwellings be built on rural land only if they support agriculture;
- Infrastructure servicing rural land uses and production be protected and efficiently used;
- Soil be protected from degradation and restoration works be facilitated if soil is degraded;
- Flora and fauna habitat and ecosystem diversity be protected and enhanced;
- The quality and quantity of water resources be protected as a vital resource for both rural and urban areas;
- Rural land use be consistent with land capability;
- Visual amenity and landscape quality be protected and enhanced; and

- Restoration of disturbed land, such as former mines, quarries and timber plantations, be carried out to the highest practical environmental standards. (Government of Victoria - Statewide Amendment S25, 1992)

In addition to the objectives of the policy it is important to consider the major factors that affect it as outlined in the amendment. These include:-

- Agriculture is one of Victoria's competitive strengths and it makes an important contribution to the Victorian economy in terms of employment and production;
- Agriculture needs efficient infrastructure;
- Good quality agricultural land is a vital and limited resource for the future;
- The subdivision and use of rural land for low density residential development is an inefficient use of important land resources and likely to make unreasonable requirements for infrastructure, social services and energy;
- Rural land is recognised as an agricultural resource of long term importance regardless of the effect that market fluctuations, seasonal variations and management skills have on agricultural viability;
- The fact that many existing land holdings are not currently agriculturally viable is not justification for further subdivision or for non-agricultural use;
- Fragmentation of rural land can detrimentally affect its productive potential;
- Containment and consolidation of urban areas will be undermined if poorly planned subdivision of rural land is allowed to continue unchecked;
- Fragmentation of agricultural land can artificially inflate land values and blight the land for agriculture;
- Rural land has significant conservation values and inappropriate use and development can adversely affect flora and fauna habitat and ecosystem diversity;
- Landscape values of rural areas help to provide for the non-material needs of people seeking recreation and refuge from the built environment;
- Some impacts of agricultural practices, such as noise, air or water pollution and odour, may adversely affect neighbouring uses; and
- If agriculture is close to urban areas, problems such as pilfering, dogs and trespassing, are greater.

(Government of Victoria - Statewide Amendment S25, 1992)

Whilst the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy is an important step forward, as it is the first time in thrity years of rural planning that objectives for rural land use have been established, it has two failings. Firstly the objectives do not go far enough. In addition to those issues addressed, the various policies as discussed recognise the need to rationalise farming operations through increasing farm size and the need to promote and facilitate the agricultural sector as an important economic resource for Victoria and Australia, however there is no mention of these in the policy. These two additional objectives, which have been cited in the State and Federal policies as discussed, should and can be addressed through land use planning and therefore should be included as objectives 16 and 17 in the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy. Secondly, as these objectives apply to the entire State they are very generalised and therefore on their own it will be difficult to ensure they are implemented at the local level. It is important to recognise that the Systems Approach considers the policy framework to be part of the process and not the sole answer. Therefore in order to ensure these objectives are achieved it is essential that a comprehensive approach to rural planning be developed. If this does not occur then the policy may be ineffective in ensuring these objectives are actually implemented.

6.3 Regional Government Policy

There is no regional planning authority covering the Shire of Bass. However in 1985 the Westernport Regional Planning and Co-ordination Committee (WRPCC) was established by the Minister for Planning and Environment, under the Planning and Environment Act, to act as an advisory committee and to provide advice on regional planning issues.

The Co-ordination Committee has recognised the need for a rural planning policy for the Westernport area and are in the process of establishing a project to develop a regional agricultural strategy.

6.4 Local Government Policy

The Shire of Bass has no formal local planning policy relating to agriculture and rural land use. However by examining how Council administers and proposes to amend the Bass Planning Scheme it becomes evident that there is a distinct implicit policy base in operation.

In order to determine Council's implicit policy base through the administration of the scheme, it was necessary to consider all decisions made by Council in relation to rural planning applications. To achieve this, all applications were divided into three basic categories of subdivision, development and use and the outcome of these applications are indicated in Table 17. It should be noted that this data relates only to rural applications considered since the introduction of the formal Planning Scheme in 1982. Whilst Council issued permits under an IDO for nearly twenty years prior to the approval of the Planning Scheme, insufficient details of the outcomes of these applications were available in order to examine all permits issued during this time. Therefore a random selection of Council minutes dating back to 1958 was made to provide an indication of the implicit policy framework.

	DEVELOPMENT				SUBDIVISION				USE				Rural applic-ations	All applic-ations
Year	Permit	Refu-sal	Other	Total	Permit	Refu-sal	Other	Total	Permit	Refu-sal	Other	Total	Total	Total
1980	34	0	0	34	18	1	11	30	4	0	0	4	68	100
1981	29	1	4	34	3	0	3	6	4	0	1	5	45	95
1982	37	0	5	42	17	0	0	17	3	1	2	6	65	112
1983	35	0	7	42	20	0	3	23	6	0	0	6	71	107
1984	30	1	12	43	28	0	4	32	8	0	3	11	86	135
1985	53	3	16	72	41	0	6	47	7	2	6	15	134	217
1986	38	0	13	51	65	0	8	73	6	0	5	11	135	219
1987	46	1	15	62	40	1	9	50	19	0	5	24	136	211
1988	41	5	12	58	37	1	11	49	9	1	3	13	120	204
1989	45	0	10	55	46	2	13	61	5	0	4	9	125	217
1990	29	0	4	33	32	0	4	36	8	1	0	9	78	142
1991	28	0	5	33	32	0	6	38	4	0	0	4	75	119
Total	445	11	103	559	379	5	78	462	83	5	29	117	1,138	1,878

Note: Other includes *prohibited, withdrawn, not determined* or *no permit required*

TABLE 17: ADMINISTRATION OF BASS PLANNING SCHEME

Source: Council's Register of Planning Applications

Over the twelve year period from 1980 to 1991 Council refused only 21 applications out of 1,138 considered, which is less than 2%. Why has the refusal rate been so low? Is it because all applications have been satisfactory or is it because Council consider these applications in a particular way? The answer to this question lies in Council's implicit policy base.

Subdivision applications

During the time Council operated under the IDO, it generally issued permits as a mere formality and only subject to minimal conditions, particularly relating to the containment of wastes on site. In considering these applications Council did not require any justification for subdivision and reports to Council on the applications were very brief and contained little or no discussion of the issues or consideration of physical, economic or social impacts.

This situation continued while Council operated under the IDO and having regard to the provisions of the proposed Planning Scheme. In this case the IDO was the official planning document as the Scheme had not yet been approved as discussed in Chapter 4.1.3, but applications also had to be assessed against the provisions of the proposed Scheme. For rural subdivision the IDO specified a minimum allotment size of 4 hectares, while the proposed Planning Scheme recommended 16 hectares. In a number of applications where proposed lots were to be below 16 hectares and the officers report recommended against the application, the Council reversed the recommendation and issued a permit on the basis that it considered the subdivision would not prejudice the proper planning of the area. This is clear evidence that even though Council had adopted a proposed Planning Scheme with more stringent controls, it was willing to support proposals to subdivide land into lesser areas.

In considering these applications Council rarely considered the agricultural impacts of subdivision and seldom required justification for subdivision, thus indicating general support to allow subdivision down to the minimum allowable at the time without question. In a number of cases where the proposal did not meet the requirements of the scheme and Council could not issue a permit, the Council requested the applicants discuss the application with Councillors and accordingly several applications were later resubmitted and approvals given.

Since the approval of the Bass Planning Scheme in 1982 there has been a sudden increase in the number of subdivision applications considered by Council, especially house lot excisions as can be seen in Table 35. Council have been supportive of all applications for house lot excisions and in fact have never refused an application. In considering applications, Council has not required an explanation or justification for the subdivision and basically considered that as the provision existed in the Scheme a permit should be granted. Council minutes reveal that despite Council concerns about the potential for speculation of land, applications for subdivision are seldom refused, even though a number of applications stated the excisions were purely for sale. Council consider excisions assist farm management and provide greater flexibility, but never give any explanation of how.

Council has fully supported applications which involve the resubdivision of land. The Scheme allows for the resubdivision of land provided no more than the original number of allotments are created. In a number of cases this has resulted in the creation of a series of lots unable to support viable agriculture due to size. However, Council did not question the potential impact on agriculture.

In determining rural subdivision applications it can be said that Council generally allows the subdivision of rural land as a mere formality without particular regard for the potential physical, social or agricultural consequences those subdivisions may have. Although Council believes that such subdivision assists farmers to improve farm management and provide greater flexibility, none of the applicants were asked to justify how the subdivision would so assist.

An examination of Council records reveals that since 1980 only five rural subdivisions have ever been refused and the grounds of refusal were related more to access and waste disposal than to the negative impact on agriculture.

Development applications

The majority of applications for rural development have been for dwellings and associated farm buildings and Council has supported most applications.

Council has supported several applications for caretakers' dwellings, which virtually become second dwellings, having had relatively little information as to why the caretakers' dwelling was required.

During the time Council operated under the IDO having regard to the provisions of the proposed Planning Scheme, provision existed for it to consider applications subject to special circumstances. There was no definition of what constituted a special circumstance and in cases where Council considered and supported such applications, it was not necessarily detailed what the circumstances were. Although there were not many of these applications, the Council never refused one on the grounds that the circumstances did not warrant it.

While examining how the Planning Scheme is administered can provide an insight into Council's implicit policy base, so too can an examination of amendments to the original IDO and the Planning Scheme proposed and supported by Council.

Proposed amendments

Amendment 5 to the IDO, adopted by Council in 1980, proposed a large scale 18 kilometre square rural-residential development, with 1 to 2 hectare lots on the Anderson Peninsula. The amendment was not approved in total by the Minister and rural residential development was limited to around the San Remo township.

Amendment 6 to the IDO introduced controls to allow the subdivision of land where it would assist the optimum use of the land for farming purposes, commonly known as

transfer and consolidation provisions. The amendment was approved by the Governor in Council in 1981.

Amendment 9 to the IDO, adopted by the Council in 1980, attempted to reduce the minimum lot size from 40 hectares to 8 hectares to alleviate potential problems caused by the imposition of the 40 hectare minimum by the Minister with the introduction of the formal Planning Scheme, and where Council considered special circumstances existed and the subdivision would not prejudice planning in the area. The amendment was not approved, but the Minister approved the Planning Scheme as part of Amendment 4 in 1982, with the provision of a 2 hectare maximum excision to assist farmers with adjustments to more stringent controls.

Amendment 10 to the IDO, adopted by Council in 1981, proposed to create a new Rural-Residential zone with a 4 hectare minimum subdivision size to reflect existing lot sizes in specific areas. The Minister was not convinced the new zone was justified and accordingly did not approve the amendment.

In response to the Minister imposing a 40 hectare minimum rural allotment size upon approval of the Scheme, Council adopted Amendment L13 to the Planning Scheme in September 1986, which proposed to:-

- reduce the minimum allotment size from 40 to 32 hectares;
- increase the number of permitted small lot excisions from 1 to 2 in order to increase farm flexibility and revive declining rural communities;
- allow subdivision down to 16 hectares in Intensive Farming Zones in order to achieve the optimum use of the land;
- allow 2 houses on each lot above 16 hectares;
- alter tenement provisions to give greater power to allow development of existing lots in rural zones; and
- alter various definitions relating to agriculture.

The amendment was not approved by the Minister in this form.

In conclusion, in the absence of an explicit Rural Planning Policy base it is clear that Council has developed an implicit policy base through the administration of its planning responsibilities over the last thirty years. The following points summarise Council's implicit policy base:-

- Council believes that farming will continue as the dominant land-use and employment source. It does not consider it necessary to impose conditions which may unnecessarily affect the development of rural land;
- Maximum flexibility should be maintained in order to assist farmers to cope with changing economic and industry requirements. Strict subdivision and development controls are considered inappropriate and unnecessarily restrictive on agricultural practices;
- Council considers that larger lot requirements in the Scheme do not necessarily achieve effective farm management and viability; and
- Council considers provisions in the Scheme to be the minimum or "as of right" and therefore exercises little or no evaluation of the merits of the case when considering applications and so development controls become a mere formality of issuing permits.

Given the rural based composition of Council (six of the nine Councillors are farmers) it is considered this implicit policy will continue to be implemented by Council. The Councillors most instrumental in the formulation of this implicit policy base have served on Council for nearly 30 years and are farmers who have also exercised the right to subdivide their properties.

It is clear that by and large Councils' implicit policy is contrary to the existing and proposed policy framework as set up by the State and Federal Governments.

6.5 Conflicting Approaches to Rural Planning

It is clear when examining the policy context that there is a general recognition between the various levels of government that agriculture and rural land are important physical, economic and social resources, but there is conflict about how planning should relate to these. The conflict clearly relates to the following two aspects of rural land use planning:-

1. The fundamental relationship between development controls and agriculture/rural land use; and
2. The nature of the planning mechanisms in operation (ie - the statutory controls).

Although there is a recognition at the State level that agriculture is an important part of the Victorian economy, and there is a need to protect our agricultural land, there have been and are still fundamental differences of opinion between State Government

departments about how these objectives should be achieved. Whilst endorsing the *A Review of Rural Land Use in Victoria* and supporting the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy, the following are examples of documents prepared by the Department of Food and Agriculture which illustrate the varying views within the department on the relationship between agriculture and planning.

Land Use Planning Policy - An Agricultural Perspective

Land Use Planning Policy - An Agricultural Perspective was prepared as a departmental rather than State Government policy by the Department of Food and Agriculture in 1982. Whilst recognising the importance of agriculture to the Victorian economy, it considers that farmers are already considerably constrained by regulatory controls related to health, the environment and conservation, all of which effect efficiency of production. (DFA, 1982:1)

At this time DFA believed that all economic and social aspects of agriculture need to be considered to ensure that planning policies:-

- recognise important agricultural land and direct competing land uses to other areas;
- maintain unfragmented areas of land with higher inherent agricultural capability in agricultural use, wherever practical;
- recognise the dynamic nature of agricultural industries and ensure that farm managers retain maximum flexibility consistent with community requirements;
- provide commercial agriculture with appropriate incentives or compensation in support of planning policy;
- where farming land is to be acquired for other uses, assist farmers either to leave farming or move into new farming areas with a minimum of economic and social penalties; and
- accommodate the legitimate desires of people for varying residential environments in rural areas.

  (DFA, 1982:1)

The document also states that as far as possible policies should not:-

- use agriculturally-based zoning to achieve non-agricultural planning objectives;
- designate specific agricultural uses to land;
- restrict the ability of farmers to adjust to changing circumstances;

- restrict the use of sound management practices in agriculture;
- fragment the location of commercial farms to the extent of significantly disrupting the supporting infrastructure industries;
- cause social or economic hardship to farmers; and
- make assumptions about agricultural industries that are invalidated by changes in markets and technology.

(DFA, 1982:1)

Whilst it is easy to make these generalised statements, they are quite difficult to achieve, as many of these are contradictory. For example, in order to recognise important agricultural land and direct competing land uses to other areas, it may be necessary to impose controls which prohibit the excision of land from farms for sale and direct such development to other non-agricultural areas. However, in doing so this may also restrict the ability of farmers to adjust to changing circumstances and may cause economic hardship. The policy makes no comment on how planning should address these issues.

Assessment of Agricultural Quality of Land in Gippsland

Whilst not a policy, this report recognises that agriculture is an important industry and land use in Victoria and in order to remain efficient, commercial agriculture needs to be responsive to market forces and that it is generally undesirable for agriculture to be constrained by planning regulations which affect size, location, type of farm and the needs of farmers and markets (Swan & Volum, 1984:25).

In considering the importance of agriculture the report recognises that any planning policy which is to encourage agriculture should consider:-

- Identifying the poorer land over which agriculture has little claim;
- Maintaining sizeable areas of land of inherent agricultural quality;
- Recognise the dynamic nature of agricultural industries;
- Use "Farm Rate" and "Urban Farm Rate" for the rating of rural land;
- Assist farmers to either leave farming or move to other farming areas without economic or social penalties when farming land is to be acquired for other purposes; and
- Accommodate the agricultural need for varying sized parcels of land.

(Swan & Volum, 1984:25)

The report also specifies that a planning policy should avoid:-

- Using agricultural zonings to achieve non-agricultural planning goals;
- Designating specific agricultural uses to land;
- Restricting the flexibility of agriculture to change;
- Allocating land to agriculture against obvious natural market forces;
- Fragmenting the distribution of farms to the extent of significantly disrupting infrastructure;
- Causing social or economic hardship to farmers; and
- Making assumptions about the agriculture industry that are invalidated by changes in market and technology.

(Swan & Volum, 1984:26)

Given DFA's position as outlined in these reports, it will be interesting to see how the Department balances its stance with that proposed in the Statewide Rural Planning Policy.

At the local level, whilst recognising that there is a role for planning in rural land use, Council believes there should be maximum flexibility to allow farmers to cope with changing economic and industry requirements and that there is not a direct relationship between planning controls and agricultural efficiency. But the State Government generally believes that controls are necessary to stop the fragmentation of the resource base, even though there is conflict between Departments on how planning should relate to agriculture.

The conflict of approaches to rural planning between the local and state level can be clearly illustrated by the following examples.

Council operated under an IDO for nearly twenty years with a 4 hectare minimum lot size and only prepared a Planning Scheme at the insistence of the State Government. Whilst the Planning Scheme was on exhibition, the Shire requested the Minister to approve a revised IDO to reflect the aims of the proposed Planning Scheme until the scheme had been approved. During this stage the Council proposed to increase the minimum rural allotment size from 4 to 16 hectares. The amendment was referred to the Western Port Regional Planning Authority, which was the regional planning authority at the time, for consideration. The Authority advised that the planning scheme should include the following provisions and that the amendment should reflect these:-

- a 40 ha minimum rural subdivision size to be consistent with adjoining shires;
- an Intensive Farming Zone where appropriate;
- a provision to allow Council to consider smaller lots in order to improve farming efficiency; and
- a statement of intent for each zone.

The Minister approved the Planning Scheme in 1982, but rejected Council's proposed 16 hectare minimum and approved the amendment with the 40 hectare minimum lot size on the basis that a reduction of the minimum lot size would be considered if Council undertook a review of rural planning within the Shire and could justify such a reduction given the results of the Rural Land Mapping Project, which was completed in 1984.

Having operated under the IDO for so long, Council was used to exercising total discretion when considering applications and found it increasingly difficult to come to terms with the imposed changes. As a result Council undertook their first major review of rural planning controls because of concern about the inflexibility and effects of existing planning controls, particularly the 40 hectare minimum imposed by the Minister.

The Council considered their review would address the nature of competing land uses whilst recognising the natural qualities of the land and the agricultural use of rural areas, and would ultimately provide a more flexible approach to farm management. As a result of Council's review Amendment L13 was adopted by Council in 1986 which proposed a number of changes as discussed.

The Council recognised that the subdivision and development provisions of the Amendment would in theory allow greater densities in rural areas but it considered that this would not happen given:-

- the characteristics of the land;
- the need for adequate road frontages;
- the existing size and shape of lots;
- the effect of policy overlays; and
- lack of existing road access.

The Minister advised Council that the existing controls relating to rural lot size should remain. The alternative controls were considered inconsistent with the thrust of the

Rural Land Mapping Project, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.1, which stressed the importance of protecting good agricultural land, and had the potential to put pressure on commercial agricultural uses to compete for land with non-agricultural uses. The Amendment was approved by the Minister in 1990, however the rural subdivision controls were rejected and the 40 hectares minimum lot size with the single excision provision remains. Although this Amendment L13 may have been Council's major review of rural planning the Council have also prepared a number of other Amendments to the previous IDO and the Planning Scheme as discussed which illustrate the different approaches to rural planning. However the effect of these approaches is far more significant at the local level as it is here that the decisions are made which ultimately affect the land base.

In summary, even though the State Government has recognised that rural land use planning is operating in a policy vacuum and have acted to remedy this, the reality is that over the last thirty years, and even today, there is still no clear rural land use policy in place to guide rural planning at any level of government. However, in the absence of this clear policy context there are several policies in place which recognise the important contribution agriculture and rural land makes in the Australian and Victorian context as a physical, economic and social resource and the need to ensure that it is managed properly.

Federal and State government policies recognise that agriculture plays a crucial role in the economic prosperity of the State and indeed the country, but whilst this may be the case there is a great demand to restructure the industry in order to improve efficiency and competitiveness with overseas markets through production diversification, improved technology and farm rationalisation. Directly related to this is the recognition that the long-term future of agriculture depends on the maintenance of the productive capacity of rural land and therefore great emphasis is placed on the wise and sustainable use and development or our rural land.

It is recognised at the Federal and State level that land use planning has an important role to play in the implementation of government policy, especially at the local level, but no guidance is given as to how this is to be achieved. For example, how can local government use the planning system to encourage efficient agricultural production and improved levels of technology and achieve environmentally sound land management practices? Whilst the Federal and State Government policies provide an important contextual framework, they are not specifically concerned with policies in a spatial context and therefore provide little assistance for the development of a

consistent set of land use controls or other measures within the Shire of Bass, or indeed any other municipality.

The State Government has recognised that agriculture and rural land are important to the State and that land use planning has a legitimate role to play, and have only now developed a policy framework to guide rural planning across the State. This policy is the first important step towards achieving the maintenance and protection of significant agricultural areas and environmentally sound land management. However, in questioning if the policy addresses all of the issues affecting agriculture at the moment, the answer would be no. Whilst the policy is a great improvement in terms of setting guidelines on protecting agricultural land from inappropriate subdivision and protecting environmentally sensitive areas it does not address the issues of promoting a vital agricultural economy and encouraging rationalisation of farms through increasing farm size, or provide Council with clear guidance on how these objectives are to be achieved.

Even though there are Federal and State policies relating to agriculture and rural land use, it is the local policy that has the greatest direct impact on rural planning in the Shire and therefore the spatial arrangement of the land base. As has been shown, while the Shire does not have an explicit rural planning policy there is a distinct implicit policy base in operation. The very fact that the policy is implicit rather than explicit presents the first real problem in that it has evolved as a result of local political pressure and is therefore imprecise, open to interpretation and difficult to monitor and evaluate, even if the will and commitment to evaluation were there. It is also evident that the Council's implicit policy, which generally allows subdivision as of right, is largely in conflict with the general intent of the Federal and State policies and in direct conflict with the intent of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy. This is likely to further exacerbate the conflicts in rural planning that currently exist between the State and the Shire. It will require a great deal of negotiation at the State and Local level to ensure a consistent approach to rural planning and implementation of objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy, but it must be do to ensure this vital resource is not wasted.

7.0 RELEVANCE OF LOCAL PLANNING CONTROLS

Once it has been determined what planning is trying to achieve, it is then necessary to identify a range of mechanisms that could be used to implement these objectives and to choose those most likely to achieve the intended outcome. However, while it is recognised that the planning system operating in the Shire is inadequate in relation to rural planning because there is currently no clear policy framework, planning mechanisms are still being implemented at the local level. These mechanisms are essentially those land use and development controls contained in the Bass Planning Scheme.

But how relevant are these controls to the wider policy framework and to the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy? In order to answer this question it is first necessary to examine the structure of the Planning Scheme and the nature of the controls focusing on the Local Section of the Scheme and how they relate to rural land and agriculture.

7.1 The Planning Scheme

A Planning Scheme is subordinate legislation which may set out policies and controls for the use, development, protection and conservation of land within a municipality. All Planning Schemes consist of an ordinance, zoning map(s) and any other maps and plans to which the ordinance refers. The Bass Planning Scheme is divided into three sections covering State, Regional and Local planning.

State Section

The State Section of the Scheme mainly deals with government policies and strategic issues affecting the State of Victoria. The use and development of land within the municipality must be consistent with these policies (MPE, 1987:1). Whilst there is currently no reference within this Section to rural land use policy, once approved, the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy will be included in this section of the Scheme. Once the policy is included into the State Section of the Scheme, under section 7(2)(b)(i) of the Planning and Environment Act it will prevail over the Regional and Local Sections of the Planning Scheme, and therefore Council must not issue permits or initiate amendments that will contravene it.

Regional Section

The Regional Section of the Bass Planning Scheme sets out policies and issues which affect the Westernport region, of which the Shire forms part.

There is no reference to rural land use policy within the Regional Section.

Local Section

The Local Section of the Bass Planning Scheme primarily details the specific controls over the use and development of land. These controls must be in compliance with the State and Regional Sections of the Scheme and should ensure that all other government policy is implemented.

The Local Section of the Planning Scheme consists of two parts, the zoning map (which details the zoning of land and any other controls such as overlay controls as shown in Figure 21) and the Scheme Ordinance. The Ordinance details the various controls and provisions which affect each particular zoning or reservation and therefore details how land can be used or developed. In order to determine how the controls in the Local Section of the Scheme affect rural land use and agriculture it is first necessary to examine the main controls which relate to rural land within the Shire.

The Bass Planning Scheme has five zonings and six special Overlay Policy Areas which affect rural land, these include:-

Zones	**Overlay Policy Areas**
Rural Zone	Coastal Policy Area
Intensive Farming Zone	Highway Policy Area
Rural-Residential 1 Zone	Catchment Policy Area
Rural-Residential 2 Zone	Historic Policy Area
Restructure Zone	Geological Hazard Policy Area
	Watercourse Policy Area

Zones

Rural Zone - Clause 20

The Rural Zone is the largest single zone within the Shire and covers approximately 85 % of the municipality. This zoning caters for the majority of agricultural uses, including grazing and dairying.

The purpose of the Rural Zone as detailed in Clause 20(1) is:-

(a) to provide for farming activities within the Shire;

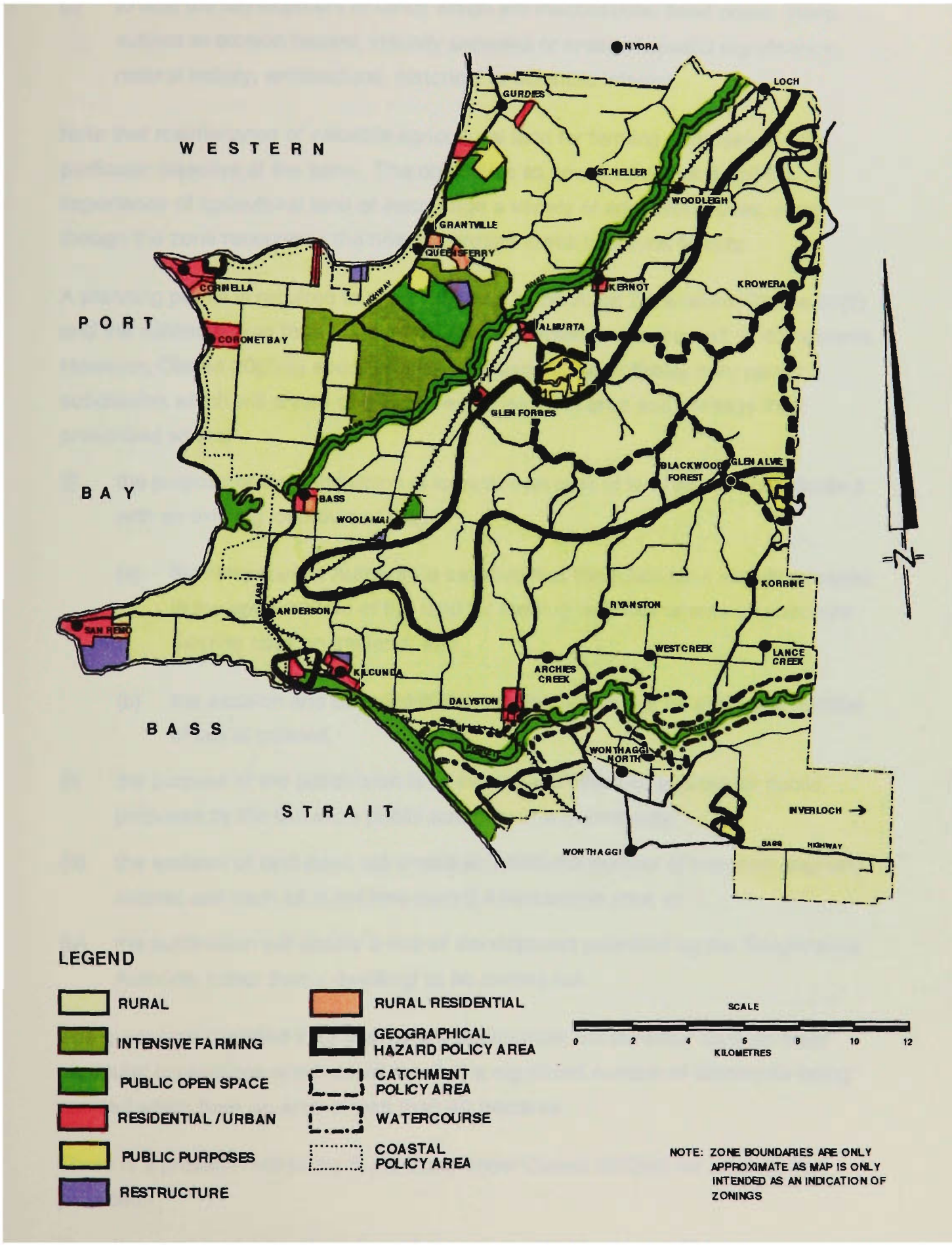


FIGURE 21: ZONING PLAN

Source: Bass Planning Scheme

(b) to channel the demand for rural living into areas which are suitable for the use;

(c) to limit the development of lands which are inaccessible, flood prone, steep, subject to erosion hazard, visually exposed or areas of special significance, natural beauty, architectural, historical or scientific interest.

Note that maintenance of valuable agricultural land for farming purposes is not a particular objective of the zone. The objectives as specified do not detail the importance of agricultural land or encourage a variety of agricultural uses, even though the zone recognises the need to protect areas of natural beauty.

A planning permit is required to subdivide land in the Rural Zone under Clause 20(2) and the minimum area for an allotment, should permission be granted, is 40 hectares. However, Clause 20(2)(c) specifies that the Responsible Authority may permit a subdivision which will create one or more lots lesser in area and frontage than prescribed where:-

(i) the purpose of the subdivision is to excise an area of land and to consolidate it with an existing lot provided that:

  (a) the Responsible Authority is satisfied that the subdivision will either assist in the optimum use of the land for farming activities or take into account existing uses on the land; and

  (b) the excision and consolidation is carried out so that no additional number of lots is created.

(ii) the purpose of the subdivision is to excise land which is required for public purposes by the Crown, a public authority or a municipality;

(iii) the excision of land does not create an additional number of lots than originally existed and each lot is not less than 0.4 hectares in area; or

(iv) the subdivision will enable a use or development permitted by the Responsible Authority (other than a dwelling) to be carried out.

The guidelines specified in (i) and (ii) are appropriate, but the other controls have particular implications which could result in a significant number of allotments being created which have an area of less than 40 hectares.

There is a provision within the Rural Zone under Clause 20(2)(d) for an excision provided:-

(i) the combined area of the two allotments created is at least 40 hectares;

(ii) the area of the excised lot is not less than 0.4 hectares nor greater than 2 hectares;

(iii) only one excision from the tenement[1] may be permitted.

There is no requirement to justify the excision or explain how it is to be used.

Intensive Farming Zone - Clause 20A

The Intensive Farming Zone caters for cropping, market gardening, vegetable growing and horticultural uses in areas of high agricultural quality.

The purpose of the Intensive Farming Zone as detailed in Clause 20A(1) is:-

(a) to provide for and encourage intensive farming activities within the parts of the Shire most suited for that purpose;

(b) to ensure that the soil and ground water resources within the Intensive Farming Zone are efficiently used for intensive farming purposes; and

(c) to ensure that land, soil and ground water resources are used for intensive farming purposes and not for rural residential or hobby farming purposes.

Under Clause 20A(3)(a) a permit is required to subdivide land within this zone. The minimum allotment size is 16 hectares, but under sub-clause (c) Council has the discretion to permit a subdivision which will create one or more lots lesser in area where:-

(i) the purpose of the subdivision is to excise an area of land and to consolidate it with an existing lot provided that:-

  (a) the Responsible Authority is satisfied that the subdivision will either assist in the optimum use of the land for farming activities or take into account existing use on the land; and

  (b) such excision and consolidation is carried out so that no more than the same number of lots as originally existed are created;

1* A Tenement is defined as a lot or all adjoining lots in the same ownership at the 23rd of June 1982. Lots separated by a stream, stream reserve or minor road are deemed to be adjoining.

(ii) the purpose of the subdivision is to excise land which is required for public purposes by the Crown, a public authority or a municipality;

(iii) the excision of land does not create an additional number of lots than originally existed and each lot is not less than 0.4 hectares in area; or

(iv) the subdivision will enable a use or development permitted by the Responsible Authority (other than a dwelling) to be carried out.

The controls under Clause 20A(3)(d) of the Intensive Farming Zone also allow the subdivision of an allotment with a lesser area and frontage than prescribed where the subdivision is to create a lot to be used for intensive farming activities provided:-

(i) the minimum area of any lot to be created is at least 4 hectares; and

(ii) the balance of the land shall have an area of at least 4 hectares, and the use of that land for farming or intensive farming purposes shall not be prejudiced by the reduction in area of the lot: and

(iii) the Responsible Authority is satisfied that the land is suitable for intensive farming activities and that it is the genuine intent of the owner, or purchaser to retain the use of the land for intensive farming activities; and

(iv) the Responsible Authority has forwarded a copy of the application to the Department of Food and Agriculture for comment prior to giving its consent.

Rural-Residential Zones - Clause 21

There are two Rural-Residential Zones in the Scheme and the purpose of these zones as detailed in Clause 21(1) are:-

(a) to encourage rural-residential, rural retreat and similar developments;

(b) to preserve and enhance the amenity of the area for those developments and, in particular:

  (i) to conserve native trees and bushland, where possible, and encourage planting of trees in association with subdivision and development; and

  (ii) to ensure that adequate measures are taken to minimise the adverse effects of fire on residents and property;

(c) to encourage efficient use of water supply mains, roads and other infrastructure; and

(d) to prevent uses, developments, subdivisions and activities inconsistent or incompatible with the objectives of this subclause.

A planning permit is required for the subdivision of land in the Rural-Residential Zones under Clauses 21(2)(a) and 21(3)(a).

Within the Rural-Residential 1 Zone [Clause 21(2)(a)(i)] the minimum allotment size is 1 hectare, however there is provision within the Planning Scheme to allow for the creation of a lot with an area of less than 1 hectare [Clause 21(2)(b)] where:-

(i) the land to be subdivided shall have an area of not less than 2 hectares; and

(ii) no lot shall have an area of less than 0.4 hectares and the average of all lots to be created shall be not less than 1 hectare.

Similar provisions relate to the Rural-Residential 2 Zone, but the minimum allotment size is 2 hectares.

Restructure Zone - Clause 24

The purpose of the Restructure Zone is to make provision for the restructuring of old and inappropriate subdivisions, of which there are several within the Shire.

The subdivision of land within the Restructure Zone is prohibited unless it is in accordance with a restructuring or redevelopment scheme which has been approved by the Responsible Authority and forms part of the Planning Scheme. Planning permits are not required for the consolidation of land unless the consolidation is not in compliance with an approved restructure plan.

Special Policy Areas

Apart from the zoning and ordinance provisions, the local section also has several special policy areas which overlay zonings and reservations and provide an additional form of control directed towards a particular issue. The most relevant of these to rural planning are the Catchment, Geological Hazard, Watercourse, Highway and Coastal Policy Areas.

Coastal Policy Area - Clause 37

The Coastal Policy Area generally relates to areas of natural beauty, interest or importance and of special significance, and all proposals for use and development in

this policy area require planning permission. In considering any application for consent, the Responsible Authority must have regard to the following matters:-

(3)(a) the intensity of human activity which the landscape and the environment of the area can sustain;

(b) the preservation of any existing natural vegetation;

(c) the control of the distribution of public access points to the coastline by boat and road;

(d) the preservation of the view from the waters of Westernport Bay, Bass Strait or its inlets;

(e) the maintenance of natural conditions in an environmentally important area;

(f) the maintenance and improvement of the stability of the coastline;

(g) the protection of the area for its recreational value;

(h) the retention of open farming landscape immediately adjacent to the foreshore area;

(i) the conservation of the areas of environmental significance; and

(j) problems arising from land fill in areas subject to tidal inundation.

Highway Policy Area - Clause 38

This policy area relates to all land within 100 metres of any main road and within this area all proposals for use and development require a planning permit. In considering any application Council must have regard for the following:-

(3)(b) the maintenance and enhancement of views from major roads;

(c) minimising detriment that highway-oriented land use can cause to the proper level of services provided by the roads;

(d) the retention and preservation of vegetation on roadside verges; and

(e) any other matters which in the opinion of the Responsible Authority relate to the proper development of the highway areas.

Catchment Policy Area - Clause 39

This policy area relates to land around the Candowrie Reservoir in Almurta, and is aimed at maintaining water quality. The minimum allotment size and house lot excision controls are the same as the Rural Zone but there is no ability to subdivide

and consolidate land. There is still the ability to consolidate land under the Subdivision Act. This could be considered as an anomaly, as it may prevent the restructuring of rural properties and potentially the creation of larger lots.

Geological Hazard Policy Area - Clause 39B

This policy area affords very limited development potential and generally only relates to the development of land with steep slopes or land which has been affected by mining activities and is therefore unsuitable for development. The major emphasis of the policy area is how development relates to areas of geological hazard and there are no controls over the use of unstable land for agricultural purposes, or the need to rehabilitate such land.

Watercourse Policy Area - Clause 39C

The Watercourse Policy Area generally relates to all land within 100 metres either side of the Bass and Powlett Rivers, and as with the Geological Hazard Policy Area provides very limited development opportunities without consent from the Responsible Authority. In considering any application within this policy area, Council must have particular regard to the specified flood levels and existing drainage patterns to ensure that the development will not impede the floodway capacity.

The Geological Hazard, Watercourse, Coastal and Highway Policy Areas specify that consent is not required to carry out normal farming activities except for the construction of a building or a dam, but this is not the case for the Catchment Policy Area where no reference is made to the need for restrictions on farming activities at all.

In addition to these zones and overlays, Clause 40(2) of the Scheme also states that in considering plans of subdivision, the Responsible Authority shall have regard to the following:-

(a) any overall layout plan adopted by the Responsible Authority for the purpose of indicating forward development proposals for street and road patterns, general land use, car parking, open space or other town planning matter;

(b) the provisions of this Local Section and any other regulations applicable to subdivisions of land;

(c) the suitability of the land for its intended purpose;

(d) the size, dimensions and shape of each lot comprised in the subdivision having regard to the suitability of each lot for its intended purpose;

(e) the suitability of the layout of streets and lots having regard to:

(i) the relationship of the proposed street pattern to existing streets;

(ii) the suitability of the street pattern for extension into adjacent land;

(iii) the discouragement of through traffic;

(iv) the ease of access to all lots by attention to gradients and curves and ease of movement through the subdivision by vehicles and pedestrians;

(v) the location and frequency of intersections and avoidance of cross roads;

(vi) the economy of road lengths, earthworks and drainage;

(vii) the amenity to be gained by careful design and location of streets and lot boundaries, retention of sound existing trees and the achievement of favourable aspects for lots;

(viii) the achievement of good visibility at intersections by appropriate alignment and grading of streets and adequate truncations of property boundaries;

(f) the availability and provision of utility services including water, sewerage, drainage and electricity;

(g) the suitability of the land for the use of septic tanks having regard to slope, topography, water table, soil infiltration rates, rainfall and proximity to watercourses, lakes and other water supplies;

(h) the provision of adequate open space for both active and passive recreation and the location of the open space in relation to other land uses and other recreation areas in the vicinity and shall give particular attention to the provision of adequate open space along each bank of any rivers, creeks and streams in the subdivision;

(i) whether any part of the land is liable to flood;

(j) areas likely to be required for public purpose;

(k) the successive stages in which subdivision is intended to proceed;

(l) the density of the proposed development; and

(m) the provision and location of common property including pedestrian access thereto.

The main emphasis of these matters relates to urban development and does not particularly relate to rural land use.

7.2 Relevance of Controls to the Policy Framework

Having outlined the specific controls included in the Local Section of the Scheme, it is important to question how effective these are in achieving the existing and proposed policy framework. In order to determine this the provisions in the Local Section of the Planning Scheme will be assessed against each of the objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy and the additional suggested objectives from other government policies as outlined in the previous Chapter. To facilitate this assessment a Table has been prepared for each of the objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy as detail in Chapter 6.2 and the two suggested additional objectives. Each table then lists the various zones and overlays which relate to the proposed objective, outlines the statement of purposes for each zone and then makes specific reference to those provisions in the Scheme which support or are contrary to the objectives of the policy framework.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 1 *Rural land is a valuable resource and protecting and enhancing its diverse values is important as part of ensuring its sustainability*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No specific statement to this effect, however Cl 20 (1)(a) states "To provide for farming activities in the Shire."	Cl 20(2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20(2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size. Cl 20 (2)(c) let-out allows subdivision below 40 ha. Cl 20(2)(d) allows excision of 0.4 - 2 ha per 40 ha tenement. Cl 20 (2)(c)(iv) allows subdivision of land below 40 ha to enable a permitted use or development to be carried out.
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A(1)(a) "Provide for and encourage intensive farming activities within the part of the Shire most suited for that purpose." Cl 20A(1)(c) "Ensure that ... land ... resources are used for intensive farming purposes and not for rural-residential or hobby farms."	Cl 20A(3)(b) 16 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20A(3)(c) let-out allows subdivision down to 4 ha.

TABLE 18: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 1

Source: Statewide Amendment S25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The Scheme is largely inadequate for achieving the proposed objective. Whilst there are 2 rural zones which recognise the diverse values of rural land, the actual zone objectives and provisions contained in the Scheme are inappropriate and have the potential to contravene this proposed objective.

The Scheme's zone purposes (particularly in relation to the Rural Zone) fail to recognise that rural land is a valuable resource which needs to be protected and this is of particular concern because the Shire contains such high quality agricultural land as discussed in Chapter 4. The Intensive Farming Zone on the other hand is more appropriate as it recognises areas with greater production potential and the need to ensure this land is used for these purposes, not low-density residential uses. However, there is no clear statement that the land should be protected and enhanced. Whilst this zone may be more consistent with the policy objective, the zone was implemented at the insistence of the State Government as discussed in Chapter 6. In neither zone is mention made of ensuring that the land is used for agriculture in a sustainable manner.

The Scheme also fails in achieving the proposed policy objective through the provisions. As shown, both the Rural and Intensive Farming Zones have minimum lot sizes of 40 and 16 hectares respectively, and whilst these are attempts to stop fragmentation of rural land and protect the rural land base they have little bearing on current agricultural practices and farmers needs (as discussed in Chapter 5), which state an absolute minimum lot size of 80 hectares is required for broad hectare activities.

In addition, each zone also has various let-out clauses which allow the subdivision of land below the minimum lot size, and given Councils' implicit policy base, this could lead to further inappropriate fragmentation of rural land. This potential for further fragmentation is also evident through the existence of excision rights.

In summary, the provisions of the Scheme are contrary to the proposed policy objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 2			
Productive agricultural land be retained for sustainable agricultural uses			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No statement to this effect.	Cl 20A(2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20(2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size. Cl 20 (2)(c) let-out allows subdivision below 40 ha. Cl 20(2)(d) allows excision of 0.4 - 2 ha per 40 ha tenement. Cl 20 (2)(c)(iv) allows subdivision of land below 40 ha to enable permitted use or development to be carried out.
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A (1)(b) "to ensure that the soil and ground water resources ... are used for intensive farming purposes".	Cl 20A (3)(b) 16 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20A (3)(b) 16 ha minimum lot size. Cl 20A(3)(c) let-out allows subdivision down to 4 ha.

TABLE 19: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 2

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

Whilst the major thrust of this proposed objective is to ensure the retention of productive agricultural land for sustainable agricultural uses, the provisions of the Planning Scheme are in fact generally contrary. An Intensive Farming Zone has been implemented to protect those areas considered most suited for intensive agricultural uses, but, as shown in Chapter 4, the entire Shire is of high to very high agricultural

quality and as this land is a vital regional, state and national as well as a local resource, the Scheme should reflect this and ensure the protection of all rural land in the Shire. In addition, the provisions of the two rural zones in effect do not ensure that productive agricultural land is retained because the Scheme has inadequate zone purposes and provisions as discussed with proposed objective 1. Finally, there is no directive in the Scheme, even in the statement of zone purpose, to ensure the agricultural practices are undertaken in a sustainable manner.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 3 ***Features of cultural, archaeological or scientific significance be protected***			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Heritage	Cl 26A (1) "...to identify and protect the 1826 European Settlement site at Corinella."	Cl 26A (4)(a) no additional lots to be created. (b) limited development rights. (c) limited works rights.	none
Rural	Cl 20 (1)(c) "to limit the development of lands which are ... areas of special significance or natural beauty, interest and importance or architectural, historical or scientific interest."	none	none
Historic Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 39A(2) Council to have regard to the historic significance when considering applications.	none
Coastal Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 37(3) Council must have regard to - ability to sustain human activity. - preservation of views. -retention of farming landscape. - conservation of environmentally significant areas.	Cl 37(4) does not affect normal farming activities.
Highway Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 38(3) Council must have regard to maintenance and enhancement of views.	Cl 38(4) does not affect normal farming activities.

TABLE 20: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 3

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The Planning Scheme appropriately addresses the need to protect areas of cultural, archaeological or scientific significance through a specific Heritage Zone, Historic

Policy Area and recognition of these values in the statement of purpose for the Rural Zone. The provisions of the Scheme are in compliance with this proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 4 ***Opportunities for future extraction of significant stone and mineral resources be retained***			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	none	Table to Cl 6 Extractive industry a discretionary use.	none
Intensive Farming	none	Table to Cl 6 Extractive industry a discretionary use.	none

TABLE 21: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 4

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The Shire is recognised as having significant sand resources which are of increasing importance to the metropolitan building industry as noted in Chapter 5. Whilst there is no particular Extractive zone in the Scheme, "extractive industry" is a discretionary use in the Rural and Intensive Farming Zones, thus requiring planning permission. Whilst this may be an indirect means of ensuring opportunities for extraction are retained, the location and existence of these resources in the Shire is not identified in the Scheme and this could lead to conflicting land uses. Whilst recognising these resources in an indirect fashion, the Scheme could be strengthened to implement the proposed objective through the inclusion of an Extractive Industry Zone.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 5 **Rural land be protected from pressures of urban encroachment and fragmentation by indiscriminate and inappropriate subdivision**			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No specific statement however Cl 20(1)(b) states "to channel the demand for rural living into areas which are suitable for the use."	Cl 20 (2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20(2)(c) allows subdivision below 40 ha. Cl 20(2)(d) allows excision of 0.4 - 2 ha per 40 ha tenement.
Intensive Farming	No specific statement however Cl 20A (1)(c) states "to ensure that land ... is used for intensive farming purposes and not for rural residential or hobby farms."	Cl 20A (3)(b) 16 ha minimum lot size.	Cl 20A (3)(c) allows subdivision below 16 ha to 4 ha.
Rural-residential	Cl 21 (1)(b) "to encourage rural-residential, retreat and similar development."	none	Cl 21 (2) & (3) allows subdivision of rural land between 0.4 - 2 ha.

TABLE 22: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 5

Source: Statewide Amendments 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The provisions of the Planning Scheme are largely contrary to this proposed objective. Whilst the Scheme makes specific provision for rural-residential and urban uses, the Rural Zone also indirectly makes provision for this use through excision provisions and the various let-out clauses in the Scheme, even though the zone purpose states that the demand for rural living should be channelled into suitable areas. The Intensive Farming Zone addresses this proposed objective far better in that it recognises that the land should not be used for rural-residential or hobby farm purposes. However, the zone also has various let-out clauses and there is no assurance that once subdivided the land will not be used by the current or subsequent owners for rural-residential purposes. In order to reflect this proposed objective the Scheme needs significant redrafting.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 6 *Low density residential development be located in urban areas, as it is an urban rather than rural use*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural-residential	No statement to this effect.	none	Cl 20(2)(d) allows for the creation of lots between 0.4 & 2 ha in rural areas.
Rural	No statement to this effect.	none	Cl 20(2)(d) allows for the excision of 0.4 - 2 ha per 40 ha in all rural areas.
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A (1)(c) "To ensure that land .... used for intensive farming purposes and not for rural-residential or hobby farm purposes."	none	Cl 20A (3)(c) let-out allows subdivision down to 4 ha.

TABLE 23: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 6

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

Whilst the Scheme makes clear provision for low-density residential development through the Rural-residential Zones, there is no requirement in either the zone purposes or provisions to ensure these developments are located in or near urban areas. A purpose of the Rural Zone is " to channel the demand for rural living into areas which are suitable for the use", but there is no explanation of what constitutes "suitable" and therefore this can almost be an endorsement of this use in all rural areas, which is clearly contrary to the aims of this proposed objective. In addition, the provisions of the zone also allow low density development in the Shire via the excision provisions and are therefore contrary to the aims of the proposed objective. The Intensive Farming Zone also has failings in that whilst an aim is to ensure that the land is used for intensive farming and not rural-residential/hobby farm purposes, there are let-out clauses allowing subdivision down to 4 hectares. While this subdivision must be based on agricultural needs, there is no way of ensuring that the future use of the land remains agriculture, and therefore this could also lead to the creation of low density residential development away from urban areas. In summary, the Scheme provisions are contrary to this proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 7 *Urban and residential development be directed to existing urban areas*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Future Residential	Various zones to cater for urban development in the Shire at varying densities and all located in or adjacent to urban areas.	Cater for residential development with minimum control.	none
Village	"	"	"
Residential	"	"	"
Residential Development	"	"	"
Residential Special	"	"	"
Rural-residential	"	"	"
Rural	No statement to this effect.	none	Cl 20(2)(d) allows for the creation of low density residential lots 0.4 - 2 ha (which are considered urban) throughout the rural areas of the Shire.

TABLE 24: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 7

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

Whilst the Planning Scheme contains a number of residential zones designed to cater for a range of densities, potential exists through the provisions of the Rural Zone to allow extensive urban development away from existing urban areas. Low density development of 0.4 - 2 hectares is considered to be an urban rather than rural use as outlined in the factors affecting the policy. However, the excision provisions in the Rural Zone allow the creation of lots in this size range throughout the rural areas in the Shire. Therefore, the rural provisions in the Scheme are largely contrary to this proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 8 Dwellings be built on rural land only if they support agriculture			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No statement to this effect.	none	Cl 20(2)(e) allows construction of a dwelling on any lot above 40 ha as of right with no tie to agriculture. Cl 20(2)(d) allows a dwelling on any excision between 0.4 - 2 ha with no tie to agriculture.
Intensive Farming	No statement to this effect.	Cl 20A (4)(b) states a second dwelling may be provided to accommodate a person working on the land. Cl 20A(4)(c) the Responsible Authority must be satisfied the second house is justifiable having regard to the nature of intensity of agriculture and other activities on the land.	Cl 20A (4)(b) states a second dwelling may be provided for a member of the family of the owner.

TABLE 25: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 8

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

There is no requirement in the Scheme, either through a zone purpose or provision, to ensure that single dwellings must support agriculture. Within the Rural Zone a house is an "as of right" use provided the site is 40 hectares or above. If the site is smaller a planning permit is required. There is no requirement that single dwellings relate to agriculture. In addition, the provisions of the Rural Zone allow the excision of 0.4 - 2 hectares of land for either an existing or proposed dwelling which also have no tie to agriculture.

In the Intensive Farming Zone a house is a discretionary use requiring a planning permit, but Council does not have to give consideration to the relationship between the purpose of the dwelling and the agricultural activity. Within this zone there is also provision for the erection of a second dwelling, known as a Caretakers Residence. In considering such applications Council must be satisfied that the second dwelling is justified having regard to the nature and intensity of the agricultural or other activities on the land. Whilst this justification is required, a second dwelling may also be provided for a member of the family of the owner, which bears no necessary relationship to agriculture. In summary the provisions of the Scheme are contrary to the intent of the proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 9 *Infrastructure servicing rural land uses and production be protected and efficiently used*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
none	none	none	none

TABLE 26: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 9

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The protection and efficient use of the extensive rural infrastructure is an important aim of the proposed policy, but the Scheme does not address this objective in any way.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 10 *Soil be protected from degradation and restoration works be facilitated if soil is degraded*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Supportive scheme provision**	**Negative scheme provision**
Rural	Cl 20(1)(c) "to limit the development of lands which are inaccessible, flood prone, steep, subject to severe erosion hazard ..."	none	none
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A (1)(b) "to ensure that the soil and ground water resources ... are efficiently used for intensive farming purposes."	none	none
Geological Hazard Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 39B (4) in considering any application the Responsible Authority must have regard to: a) confining development to areas safe from geological hazard. b) maintaining and improving slope stability by appropriate siting and design of development	Cl 39B(5) normal farming activities are not affected and do not require consent.

TABLE 27: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 10

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

Protection of the soil from degradation and ensuring the restoration of degraded soils is only vaguely addressed by the Planning Scheme.

Whilst the purpose of the Rural Zone states that the development of lands with certain characteristics should be limited, it only deals with development and not land practices, such as ploughing or over grazing, on land which could be subject to degradation. In addition, in discussing areas of erosion the emphasis is on severe erosion rather than erosion in general.

The purpose of the Intensive Farming Zone states that soil and ground water resources should be efficiently used for intensive farming uses but, as with the Rural Zone, there are no supporting provisions to ensure this occurs.

A specific Geological Hazard Policy Area has been established in the Scheme, and whilst this policy applies to the development of land subject to erosion, it does not address land use issues or farming activities. In addition, there is no reference to the need to restore degraded land. In achieving this proposed objective it is considered that whilst addressing it in part, the provisions of the Scheme are largely inadequate.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 11 Flora and fauna habitat and ecosystem diversity be protected and enhanced			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	Cl 20(1)(c) "to limit development of lands which are ... of scientific interest."	none	none
Highway Policy Area	none	Cl 38(3)(d) must have regard for the preservation of vegetation on roadside verges.	none
Coastal Policy Area	none	Cl 37(3) must have regard for:- a) the preservation of any existing vegetation. e) the maintenance of natural conditions in any environmentally important area. i) areas of environmental significance.	none
Statewide Native vegetation retention and re-establishment provisions	Native vegetation be protected and conserved and:- a) habitat for native plants and animals is protected. b) Ecological process and genetic diversity be maintained. c) to ensure that all Victorian species of flora and fauna, native ecosystem and communities can survive, flourish and retain their potential for evolutionary development.	7-2.1 a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation on lots above 0.4 ha.	none

TABLE 28: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 11

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

Apart from the Statewide Native Vegetation Retention and Re-establishment provisions as detailed in the State Section of the Scheme, little or no provision exists in the Scheme for the protection and enhancement of flora and fauna habitat and ecosystem diversity. The statement of zone purpose for the Rural Zone is the only provision in the Local Section of the Scheme which addresses this proposed objective (albeit indirectly) by stating "to limit development of lands which are ... of scientific interest." However this is very vague and there no supporting provisions in the Scheme. Both the Coastal and Highway Policy Areas state that when considering applications Council must have regard to the preservation of natural vegetation. But these relate to specific isolated areas and are generally related to landscape rather

than ecological maintenance. In addition, the Geological Hazard Area makes no reference to the need to protect existing vegetation to minimise land degradation.

Whilst this objective is to be dealt with in detail in the State Section of the Scheme (instigated by the State Government) there is little reference to the proposed objective in the Local Section of the Scheme.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 12 ***The quality and quantity of water resources be protected as a vital resource for both rural and urban areas***			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No statements to this effect.	none	none
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A(1)(c) "to ensure that the ... ground water resources within the Intensive Farming Zone are efficiently used for Intensive Farming purposes."	none	none
Catchment Policy Area	none	Cl 39 (3) all applications for subdivision must be referred to the Rural Water Commission prior to the Responsible Authority giving consent.	Cl 37(4) does not prohibit normal farming activities.
Watercourse Policy Area	none	none	none

TABLE 29: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 12

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

There are two zones and two overlay areas which could apply to the protection of the quality and quantity of water resources. The Rural Zone makes no mention of this issue, either through the statement of zone purpose or the provisions. Whilst a purpose of the Intensive Farming Zone is to ensure that ground water resources within the zone are efficiently used for intensive agricultural purposes, it does not provide any guidance on how this should be achieved. In addition, ground water supplies in the rest of the Shire and the importance of water as an urban resource are not addressed.

The Catchment Policy Area relates to land around the Candowrie Reservoir. Whilst not explicitly stated, the intent of the policy area is to ensure the maintenance of water quality in the reservoir. Although all applications for subdivision (which reflect the

provisions of the Rural Zone) are referred to the Rural Water Commission for comment, there are no further requirements to ensure the maintenance of water quality, in fact it is stated that this policy does not affect the carrying out of normal farming practices, which through overgrazing, excessive fertilisation, etc, could significantly affect water quality. The Watercourse Policy Area does not address these issues at all, as it only relates to ensuring that development is not adversely affected by flood levels from the Bass or Powlett Rivers.

The rural provisions of the Scheme inadequately address the proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 13 ***Rural land use be consistent with land capability***			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	Cl 20(1)(c) "to limit the development of lands which are inaccessible, flood prone, steep, subject to erosion hazard, visually exposed or are areas of special significance or natural beauty, interest and importance or architectural, historical or scientific interest."	none	none
Intensive Farming	Cl 20A(1)(a) "to provide for and encourage intensive farming activities within the parts of the Shire most suited to that purpose."	none	none
Catchment Policy Area	Highlight areas with specific capability features.	none	none
Geological Hazard Policy Area	Highlight areas with specific capability features.	Cl 39B(4) must have regard for:- a) confining development to areas safe from geological hazard.	Cl 39B(5) nothing can be deemed to prevent or require consent for normal farming activities.
Watercourse Policy Area	Highlight areas with specific capability features.	Cl 39C(3) must have regard to the existing drainage pattern and its effectiveness and suitability to cope with any development.	Cl 39C(4) nothing can be deemed to prevent or require consent for normal farming activities.

TABLE 30: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 13

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

One of the major aims of the proposed policy is to ensure that rural land use is consistent with land capability and to achieve sustainable land use. But the Scheme does not explicitly address this issue.

The Rural and Intensive Farming Zones, Geological Hazard and Watercourse Policy Areas all recognise the need to limit development of land which has certain constraining characteristics. However there are no additional controls or supporting provisions in the Scheme which would assist in and ensure the implementation of this objective. In addition, all of these provisions relate to the development of rural land and do not address the need to ensure that rural land use and farming practices are consistent with land capability. In fact, the Geological and Watercourse Policy Areas actually state that nothing can be deemed to prevent or require consent for normal farming activities, which could lead to carrying out activities which are contrary to this proposed objective.

The provisions of the Scheme inadequately address this proposed objective.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 14 ***Visual amenity and landscape quality be protected***			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	Cl 20(1)(c) "to limit the development of lands which are ... visually exposed ... natural beauty ..."	none	none
Intensive Farming	No statement to this effect.	none	none
Coastal Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 37(3) Must have regard for:- (a) the intensity of human activity which the landscape and the environment of the area can sustain. (d) the preservation of the views from the waters of Westernport Bay, Bass Strait and its inlets. (h) the retention of open farming landscape immediately adjacent to the foreshore.	none
Highway Policy Area	No statement to this effect.	Cl 38(3)(b) must have regard for the maintenance and enhancement of views from major roads.	none

TABLE 31: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 14

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The need to protect and enhance visual amenity and landscape quality is addressed by the Scheme. The Rural Zone has an explicit purpose aimed at this objective and when considering any application for subdivision of land Council must have regard to various related issues as outlined earlier in this Chapter. In addition, the Coastal and Highway Policy Areas list matters that should be taken into consideration when assessing applications, this list makes clear reference to the intent of this objective. However, given that a large proportion of the Shire is recognised by the National Trust as being of significant landscape quality, rather than indirectly state that landscape quality should be maintained, it would be more appropriate to establish a Landscape Policy Area to clearly recognise those areas of high landscape value.

Whilst the Scheme does address this objective, improvements to the Scheme could be made to ensure this proposed objective is reflected in the Scheme.

PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 15			
Restoration of disturbed land, such as former mines, quarries and timber plantations be carried out to the highest practical environmental standards			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
None	none	none	none

TABLE 32: PROPOSED OBJECTIVE 15

Source: Statewide Amendment S 25 & Bass Planning Scheme

The final proposed objective relates to the restoration of disturbed land to the highest practical environmental standards, however there is no provision in the Scheme to achieve this.

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVE 16 *Increase farm size in order to facilitate the rationalisation of the agricultural industry*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
Rural	No statement to this effect.	Cl 20(2)(c)(i)(a) & (b) allows the creation of one or more lots lesser in area where it will be consolidated with an existing lot provided the Responsible Authority is satisfied it will assist farming or reflect current land use and so that no additional lots are created.	Cl 20(2)(b) 40 ha minimum lot size. Cl 20 (2)(c) let-out allows subdivision below 40 ha. Cl 20(2)(d) allows excision of 0.4 - 2 ha per 40 ha tenement. Cl 20 (2)(c)(iv) allows subdivision of land below 40 ha to enable permitted use or development to be carried out.
Intensive Farming	No statement to this effect.	Cl 20A(3)(c)(1)(a) & (b) allows the creation of one or more lots lesser in area where it will be consolidated with an existing lot provided the Responsible Authority is satisfied it will assist farming or reflect current land use and so that no additional lots are created.	Cl 20A(3)(c) let-out allows subdivision down to 4 ha.

TABLE 33: SUGGESTED OBJECTIVE 16

Source: Bass Planning Scheme

As discussed in Chapter 5, and reflected in various State and Federal Government policies, in order to facilitate the rationalisation of farms and therefore develop an efficient rural industry, it will be essential for farms to increase in size. Therefore this additional objective was suggested for inclusion in the proposed policy. Neither the Rural nor Intensive Farming Zones recognise this need in the statement of zone purposes, and whilst there is provision in the Scheme to transfer and consolidate land (therefore creating larger farms) the scheme has several provisions and let-out clauses which negate this. In addition, once the land has been consolidated to create a larger farm, it then has additional subdivision rights and this may in effect increase subdivision potential and further fragment rural land. The Scheme inadequately addresses this need to encourage larger farms and assist improved efficiency, and in fact facilitates the creation of rural lots which are recognised by farmers as being inadequate for viable agricultural practices. The Scheme inadequately addresses this suggested objective.

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVE 17 *Promote and facilitate agriculture as an important economic resource for Victoria and Australia*			
Zone Overlay	**Zone Purpose**	**Scheme provisions supporting this objective**	**Scheme provisions not supporting this objective**
none	none	none	none

TABLE 34: SUGGESTED OBJECTIVE 17

Source: Bass Planning Scheme

It is also suggested that an objective should be included in the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy to promote and facilitate agriculture as an important economic resource for Victoria and Australia and therefore reflect existing State and Federal Government policies, however the Scheme in no way addresses this.

In summary, the provisions of the Planning Scheme inadequately address the objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy and the supporting policy framework. In three cases only minor modifications would be required, but the majority of the controls are inadequate, or directly contrary to the intent of the policy framework, or do not addresses certain issues at all.

But why does the Scheme fail to address these issues so badly? The answer to this question is quite simple. This is the first time in thirty years of rural planning in the Shire of Bass, and the State, that a clear policy framework setting out the objectives for rural land use planning have been established and against which we can compare the provisions of a Planning Scheme. Therefore, the controls in place have evolved over time as a response to a variety of issues, rather than being developed in a comprehensive manner. This evolution of controls, which are largely inappropriate and inadequate, has been exacerbated by the failing of the planning system operating in Victoria to evaluate and monitor the effects of planning controls to ensure they are having the desired outcome. This problem is not unique to the Shire of Bass as it is likely that the majority of rural Planning Schemes in the State would be in a similar position. Therefore the responsibility for these failings does not rest entirely with Council, but rather with the State Government for not previously providing this direction.

Once the objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy are finalised and approved after extensive consultation there will be an ideal opportunity for all municipalities to review their Schemes to ensure each Scheme implements the policy at the local level. This review should also be taken because, as discussed earlier in

this Chapter, the State Section of the Scheme prevails over the Local Section and controls such as these which are clearly contrary to the intent of the policy should be amended. However, given the Shire of Bass' implicit policy base, and the conflicts experienced between Council and the State government in relation to rural planning, it is likely that Council may be reluctant to make the necessary extensive changes to the Planning Scheme. While this may be so, it is the duty of Council as a Responsible Authority, under section 14(a) and (b) of the Planning and Environment Act, to administer, enforce and implement the objectives of the Planning Scheme. As the policy will be part of the Scheme, Council will be bound by the existing legislation to ensure that the Local Section of the Scheme accords with and implements the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy.

Another important factor to consider is whether the Planning Scheme is in fact the most appropriate method to ensure that the various objectives of the policy are implemented This question is particularly relevant in this case study where there are such differences of opinion between the State and Local Government on the relationship between planning and rural land use as discussed in Chapter 6.

8.0 THE IMPACTS OF LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS IN THE SHIRE OF BASS

So far it has been established that the provisions of the Bass Planning Scheme do not reflect the existing and proposed policy framework of the State and Federal government relating to rural planning. Nor do they reflect the changing needs of the agricultural industry. Therefore the question arises, if the controls in place are not adequate, what impacts are they having on agriculture and the rural land base in the Shire and what are some of the likely future impacts? The impacts of planning controls may be categorised under three general headings - physical, economic and social.

8.1 Physical

The physical impacts are probably the most significant as they can act as a catalyst for other social and economic impacts. The subdivision of rural land is a major physical impact arising from the administration of planning controls. This subdivision can occur in three ways (not including amendments to the scheme) - the creation of new rural allotments, the excision of small lots, and the transfer and consolidation of land. Prior to 1962 there was no formal control over subdivision within the Shire and therefore this examination can only effectively begin at 1962 with the introduction of the first planning mechanism, the Shire of Bass Interim Development Order.

8.1.1 Creation of rural lots

The rate of subdivision over the last 30 years has fluctuated but has significantly increased with the creation of an additional 483 rural lots during this time, as can be seen from Table 35 and Figure 22. For the purpose of this analysis properties over 4 hectares in area were considered, as this is the minimum rural lot size allowable under the Intensive Farming Zone.

Up until 1970 the number of rural lots created remained low at between 1 to 9 per year. However, 1970 saw the trend change when the number of lots created peaked at 16. From 1970 to 1980 the rate of subdivision fluctuated between 16 and 38 lots per year, however this rate of subdivision significantly declined in 1984 when only 6 lots were created. This was followed by an equally significant increase, when in 1989

41 lots were created, the highest number of lots created in any one year. While there have been fluctuations, it is evident that the rate of subdivision of rural land has increased significantly over the years and especially since 1982, which marked the introduction of the formal Bass Planning Scheme which introduced minimum lot sizes.

The subdivisions have involved the creation of a range of lot sizes as can be seen from Table 36 but the majority of lots created have been in the 10 - 19 hectare size, followed by the 40 - 49 hectare size and the 4.1 - 9.9 hectare range. These smaller lots were generally created in the late 1970s early 1980s, whereas the most recent subdivisions have been in the 40 - 49 hectare range. Given the need to rationalise the number and size of farms and the area farmers believe is required in order to farm viably, as discussed in Chapter 5, it is clear that this type of subdivision, whilst allowed by the Scheme, will in fact retard the necessary rationalisation of farming and therefore hamper the growth of the agricultural sector.

Year	Number of lots created under 4 hectares	Total area of lots created under 4 hectares	Number of lots created over 4 hectares	Number of transfers and consolidations
1961	1	1.6	6	0
1962	3	2.4	6	0
1963	0	0	6	0
1964	0	0	9	0
1965	3	2.4	6	0
1966	1	0.4	3	0
1967	0	0	6	0
1968	1	1.6	1	0
1969	5	16	7	0
1970	4	8.8	16	0
1971	1	4	5	0
1972	5	6	10	0
1973	3	2.4	8	0
1974	2	1.3	15	0
1975	0	0	13	0
1976	2	4.8	6	0
1977	4	4.6	23	0
1978	2	4.4	20	0
1979	5	16.4	26	0
1980	13	41.3	38	0
1981	8	28.3	13	1
1982	5	18	17	4
1983	8	12.4	12	3
1984	7	13	6	0
1985	45	90.7	33	1
1986	23	43.9	29	3
1987	46	91.4	36	5
1988	18	36.7	29	4
1989	33	66.4	41	3
1990	27	55.4	37	1
Total	**275**	**574.6**	**483**	**25**

TABLE 35: SUBDIVISION TRENDS FROM 1961 TO 1991

Source: Council's sealed plans of Subdivision and Consolidation

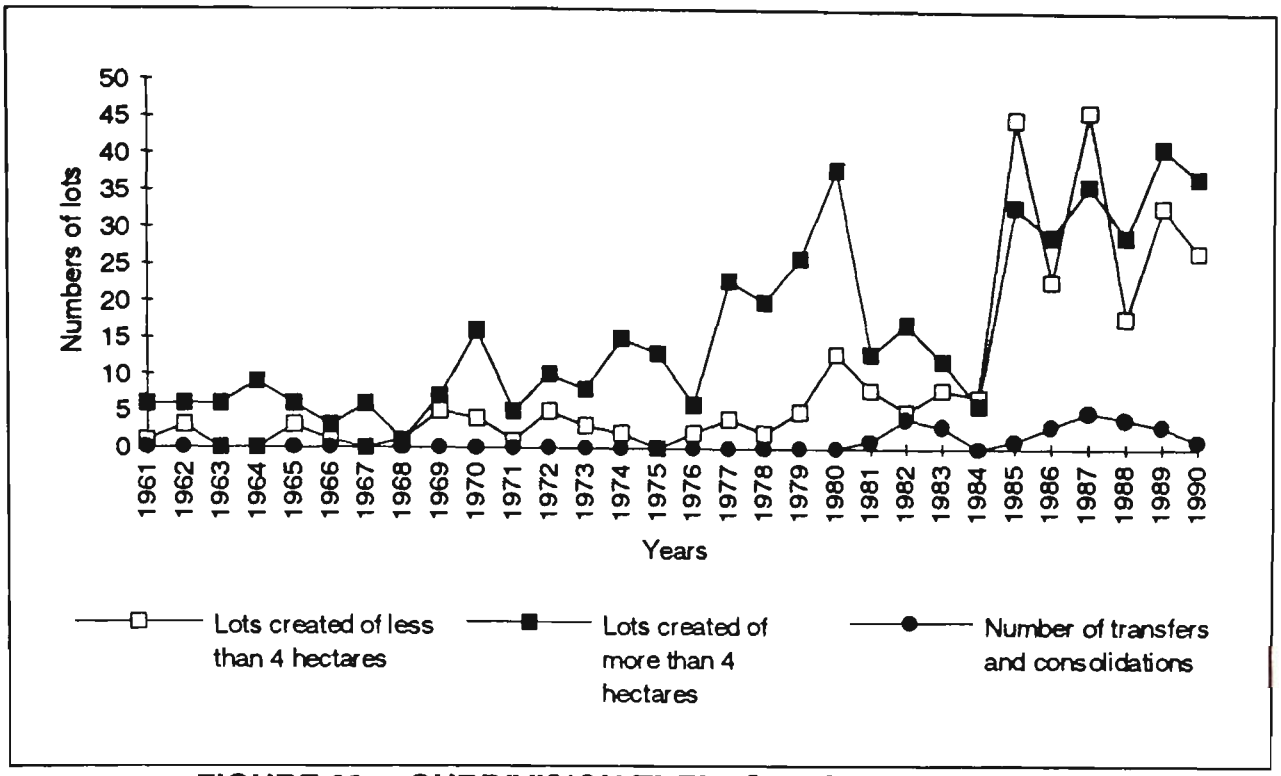


FIGURE 22: SUBDIVISION TRENDS FROM 1961 TO 1991

Source: Council's sealed plans of Subdivision and Consolidation

YEAR	LOT SIZES IN HECTARES															TOTAL
	4.1-9.9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	100-109	110-119	120-129	130-139	140-149	
1961	1	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1962	-	2	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1963	-	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1964	-	2	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1965	1	1	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1966	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1967	-	1	1	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1968	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1969	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
1970	9	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	16
1971	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1972	2	3	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	10
1973	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
1974	1	4	3	2	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
1975	-	3	6	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
1976	2	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1977	6	14	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
1978	4	8	5	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
1979	3	10	6	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	26
1980	9	16	4	4	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	38
1981	6	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
1982	2	6	2	3	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	17
1983	2	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	12
1984	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1985	2	2	3	7	8	3	1	2	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	33
1986	1	4	1	3	12	1	3	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	29
1987	6	1	3	6	7	6	2	-	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	36
1988	3	1	2	2	9	5	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	1	29
1989	1	-	2	7	10	8	7	1	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	41
1990	2	1	2	8	10	4	3	1	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	37
Total	73	91	54	58	85	38	28	10	18	11	3	8	4	0	2	483

Note: " - " denotes no lots created in this range

TABLE 36: SUBDIVISION - RANGE OF LOT SIZES

Source: Council's sealed plans of Subdivision and Consolidation

8.1.2 Excisions

For the purpose of this analysis lots of less than 4 hectares are considered as excisions. From Table 35 and Figure 22 it can be seen that prior to 1980 the rate of subdivision was quite low with 5 or less excisions created per year, and in fact there were several years when there were none at all. At this time the maximum number of lots created in any one year was 5 and the maximum area lost from production was 16 hectares in 1969. However, up until 1980 the average area lost from production through this form of subdivision per year was 3 hectares. This trend dramatically changed in 1980 when 13 small lots were created with a total area of 41.3 hectares. This trend then slowed down over the next four years until 1985 when the number of excisions escalated to 45 with a total area of 90.7 hectares, and then peaked in 1987 with 46 lots with a total area of 91.4 hectares. From this point the number of excisions declined to 27 in 1990, with an area of 55.4 hectares. It is evident that the number of small lot excisions has increased dramatically since 1980 and peaked around 1985 and 1987 which, interestingly, corresponds with property booms. In total, over the period from 1961 to 1990, 275 small lot excisions were created, which has resulted in the loss of 574.6 hectares from agriculture.

It is interesting to note that provisions for excisions were approved by the Minister for Planning and Environment in 1982 as part of Amendment 9 to the IDO in order to assist those farmers who were disadvantaged by the introduction of the 40 hectare minimum when the Scheme was approved, which is about the same time as the rate of excision escalated. It is doubtful, however, that the Minister would have expected this rate of subdivision when introducing the provision, as it was intended to alleviate hardship and not be a mechanism for "as of right" subdivision, which is the way the Shire has administered the provision. Prior to 1982 there was no specific provision for excisions, although people could apply for a permit to create one, however the number created prior to this was minimal in comparison. It can therefore be said that there is a direct relationship between the introduction of an excision provision and the increase in the number of excisions.

But this figure only relates to those people who have exercised their current rights under the Planning Scheme to excise land. There are many other people who have either chosen not to exercise their rights or have not got around to it. Whilst recognising what subdivision has occurred, it is also important to establish an estimate of how many additional lots could be created and how much additional land could be lost to agriculture if everyone excised land according to the Scheme provisions.

In order to determine this it was necessary to first establish how many lots have subdivision potential. As 40 hectares is the minimum area required to qualify for an excision, properties were grouped into lots of 40 hectares. Those properties with the potential to be subdivided into 40 hectares were then multiplied by the number of excisions permitted under the Scheme as represented in Table 37. Given the current excision provisions and the existing cadastral base, there is potential for the excision of an additional 693 lots. As excisions can be between 0.4 and 2 hectares in area, this could potentially result in the loss of an additional 1,386 hectares (at 2 hectares) or 329.3 hectares (at 0.4 hectares) of rural land from production. Therefore in total, the excision provisions in the Scheme have the potential to remove approximately 2,000 hectares from production in this Shire alone, which has an area of 52,000. This is a significant amount of land to be removed from production.

Lot Size Range	No of Lots in each Range	No of 40 ha lots which can be created	Total no of additional 40 ha lots	No of excisions allowed	Total number of excisions allowed	Total area of 2 ha excisions (ha)	Total area of 0.4 ha excisions (ha)
40 - 79.9	277	0	0	1	277	554	110.1
80 - 119.9	100	2	200	2	200	400	80
120 - 159.9	31	3	93	3	93	186	37.2
160 - 199.9	12	4	48	4	48	96	19.2
200 - 239.9	4	5	20	5	20	40	8
240 - 279.9	2	6	12	6	12	24	57.6
280 - 319.9	0	7	0	7	0	0	0
320 - 359.9	1	8	8	8	8	16	3.2
360 - 399.9	0	9	0	9	0	0	0
400 - 439.9	0	10	0	10	0	0	0
440 - 479.9	2	11	22	11	22	44	8.8
480 - 519.9	0	12	0	12	0	0	0
520 - 559.9	1	13	13	13	13	26	5.2
Total	**430**	-	**416**	-	**693**	**1386**	**329.3**

TABLE 37: SUBDIVISION POTENTIAL IN THE SHIRE OF BASS

Source: Council Rate Records & Bass Planning Scheme

Determining the full subdivision potential of the Shire is a difficult task and whilst these figures are considered to be a conservative estimate, the following points should be taken into consideration when examining this information:-

a) The number of excisions could potentially be higher given the various let-out clauses in the Scheme and the fact that Council has the discretion to approve subdivisions with lesser area for specific reasons as described in Chapter 7. Given Council's implicit policy base, it is also unlikely that these subdivisions would be opposed by Council. The number could also be higher as people are able to undertake transfers and consolidations to ensure they have an allotment of sufficient area to justify an excision.

b) These estimates are based on information from Council's rate records. The records include some properties that are rated with other properties and therefore it is difficult to identify all the lots which have subdivision potential.

c) A number of excisions have already occurred and therefore some lots may no longer have potential for excisions.

When considering the effect of these excisions on agriculture, the loss of land to farming is not the only physical impact, as the introduction of these lots into rural areas also creates the potential for conflicts between rural-residential and farming uses. As discussed in Chapter 2 a survey of farmers and small lot owners was undertaken to determine their opinions of certain issues. To examine this issue all farmers interviewed were asked whether they considered that small lot or rural-residential development is having a negative impact on farming in the area, 60% of all respondents (both farmer and small lot residents) believed that it is.

Of the farmers interviewed, 35 (58.3%) stated they believe that increased small lot/rural residential development is having a negative impact on farming, whilst 23 (38.3%) believed they are not. Two respondents were unsure. Note the respondents were able to give more than one answer. The following were cited as the negative impacts of this form of subdivision:-

Impacts	Number of Responses	Percent
Loss of good agricultural land	27	45.0%
Conflict with normal farm management practices	2	3.3%
Bad land management practices on small lots	12	20.0%
Increases in land values	11	18.3%
Other	7	11.6%
Total	**59**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 38: IMPACTS OF SMALL LOTS ON FARMING ACCORDING TO FARMERS

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

The responses given by those answering "Other" included:-

- increasing tourism in the area;
- they don't produce anything;
- create inequities in servicing and rating;
- farms get spread apart and are therefore harder to service; and
- make farms less viable, often taking houses and sheds from once viable farms.

The majority of those who live on the small lots, at 37 (61.6%), also believe such excisions and rural-residential development are having a negative impact on farming, whilst 22 (36.6%) believed they are not. The negative impacts cited by these 37 respondents include the following, note the respondents were able to give more than one answer:-

Impact	Number of Responses	Percent
Loss of Agricultural land	25	41.6%
Bad land management practices on small lots	7	11.6%
Increases in land values	6	10.0%
Other	13	21.6%
Total	**51**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 39: IMPACT OF SMALL LOTS ON FARMING ACCORDING TO SMALL LOT OWNERS

Source: Small Lot Residents Survey - 1991

The responses given under "Other" included:-

- Getting rid of big farms;
- Increases in burglary and theft;
- Lots not big enough to make a living;
- Changing the nature of the area; and
- Area becoming too populated.

It is therefore clear that not only do excisions have a physical impact on agriculture through the loss of land to production, they can also have a real or perceived negative impact on agriculture through conflicting land uses.

8.1.3 Transfers and consolidations

Transfer and consolidation refers to the subdivision of land from one title and the inclusion of this land in another title so that no more than the original number of titles exist. It is therefore the swapping of land and is one of the ways to increase farm size and assist in rationalisation of the agricultural industry. The ability to transfer and consolidate land came into the Planning Scheme in 1982 and since that time only 25 plans of transfer and consolidation have been sealed by Council.

As can be seen from Table 35 and Figure 22 the number of transfer and consolidations has remained low with the maximum number of 5 occurring in 1987. Several of these consolidations were undertaken in order to rationalise title

boundaries or to get road access, but the majority involve the consolidation of larger titles for farming purposes.

In summary, the provisions of the Scheme have had a direct physical impact on agriculture and the Shire through the creation of a significant number of inappropriate lots which reflect their speculative rather than agricultural value. Therefore the controls in the Scheme are directly assisting in the fragmentation of the rural land base and removing it from production, and whilst the Scheme does facilitate farm rationalisation these provisions do not seem to be successful.

8.2 Economic Impacts

The Planning Scheme provisions and the way in which Council administers the Scheme are having a number of economic impacts.

8.2.1 Retarding farm rationalisation

It is recognised that agriculture is in the midst of one of the worst rural recessions ever experienced and that it is vitally important to the economy of Victoria and Australia that we establish a more efficient agricultural industrial base in order to become more competitive (see Chapter 5). One of the main ways to achieve this is through the rationalisation of farms with a greater emphasis on increasing farm size to improve levels of efficiency through technological innovation. However, as demonstrated earlier in this Chapter, it is clear that one of the reasons why rationalisation is not occurring within the Shire is because inappropriate subdivision is occurring at an alarming rate. While it is possible these subdivisions could in fact be helping to increase farm size through consolidation, the evidence indicates that this is not the case and the current subdivision is fragmenting land into small holdings.

8.2.2 Lost production

Given the agricultural quality of land, the Shire has great potential to contribute to the local, regional, state and national economy if the land base is managed properly. However as demonstrated, with the continual and rapid loss of agricultural land, this is not occurring and it is difficult to estimate how much lost production and income is occurring as a result.

As indicated in Chapter 4 there has been a reduction in the overall number of farms in all sectors except cropping (which only forms a minor part of agricultural production in the Shire). Levels of production, whilst fluctuating, have remained relatively stable

over the last 10 years. However with 38.2% of all rural lots in the Shire being below 20 hectares, it is clear that very large areas of the Shire are not being used for efficient agricultural production and therefore not maximising productive capacity. In addition, as there is the potential for further excisions in the Shire which could result in an additional 1,386 hectares lost from production, this could have a significant impact on production levels and a corresponding effect on the local economy.

It is recognised that many of the lots between 2 and 40 hectares may be used for part-time or hobby farm purposes and may in fact be producing agricultural products, but they do not generally have the high levels of production and technology, product diversification or rates of economic return required to make a significant contribution to the economy that a fully operational farm would have.

It is acknowledged that subdivision of rural land is not the only explanation for loss of production as the general economic climate would also have a significant impact. But loss of land for agriculture will significantly and permanently effect potential levels of production in the future.

8.2.3 Loss of employment in agriculture

As indicated in Chapter 4, employment in agriculture in the Shire declined by 36.4% (312 people) between 1961 and 1986. It is difficult to determine to what extent this decline can be attributed to the loss of land from production through subdivision or to the general economic climate on a state, national and international level. Whilst it is accepted that the major contributor would be the general economic climate, inappropriate scheme provisions which result in the loss of productive land and retardation of the necessary rationalisation of farming would also have a significant impact on employment.

But the impact on employment should not be seen as only relating to the loss of farmers. As discussed in Chapter 4, agriculture is the core of an entire industry network and therefore a decline in general agricultural production and the number of farmers will have an important multiplier effect on employment throughout the region, thus contributing to wide spread unemployment in the area across all sectors. Therefore, planning which facilitates the inappropriate fragmentation and removal of land from production, as is occurring in the Shire, can lead to further unemployment across the State.

Whilst it can also be legitimately said that the rationalisation of farms will lead to greater reductions in the number of farmers than the effect of subdivision, there are a

number of issues that need to be addressed. Rationalisation will result in a reduction in the number of farmers in the short term, but will not necessarily result in a cumulative decline in agricultural employment across the board in the long-term. Improved efficiency with increased levels of production may well provide the necessary stimulus to develop a more competitive sustainable agricultural economy and therefore provide additional employment from the local to state level. In comparison small lot subdivision will not necessarily provide significant impetus for long-term economic growth or provide additional employment opportunities.

8.2.4 Rising land values

It is recognised that while land values are largely determined by the general economic climate, they are also determined by size and location, which are influenced by planning controls.

As discussed in Chapter 4.3.4 and illustrated by Table 9 and Figure 15, the highest site value per hectare is in the 0.4 - 0.5 hectare range which average $67,666 per hectare and only begins to even out at around 20 hectares where the average site value is $4,602 and declines to $3,190 per hectare for sites above 40 hectares. These high values for lots below 20 hectares do not reflect the true value of the land for agriculture, but rather are more representative of their potential for sale or exchange value.

This rise in property values on the basis of speculative rather than agricultural values can be directly related to the provisions of the Planning Scheme which permits the subdivision of land into lots of 0.4 - 2.0 hectares and the way Council administers the Scheme, which has resulted in increases in the number of lots created in this size range as shown in Table 35 and Figure 22. Conversely, it is also clear that the planning controls may have a stabilising impact on land values as it is indicated that land values begin to even out at around 20 hectares at $4,602 per hectare, which is still relatively high, whilst clearly stabilising around 35 hectares at $3,569 to reflect the current agricultural use value rather than its exchange or sale value. Therefore, subdivision controls such as the 40 hectare minimum currently in place can have an important stabilising impact on land values. In summary, planning controls have the ability to not only inflate but also stabilise land values.

In order to fully demonstrate that scheme provisions allowing small lots can influence land values based on speculative rather than agricultural values, it is interesting to compare when these excisions are created and sold. Table 40 and Figure 23 illustrate land sale details of lots between 0.4 - 2.0 hectares and a comparison of

when these lots were created to when they were last sold. Within the Shire there are 138 rural lots which range from 0.4 to 2.0 hectares and 84% of these have been sold. From Figure 23 it is evident that the majority of these excisions were sold either the same year or within one year of being created. This information suggests that these lots are generally being subdivided purely for sale and therefore their value reflects their sale or exchange value rather than agricultural land use value.

When sold	Number of lots
Same year	32
Within one year	47
Within two years	8
After two years	29
Total sold	**116**

TABLE 40: SALE OF EXCISED LOTS

Source: Council Rate Records

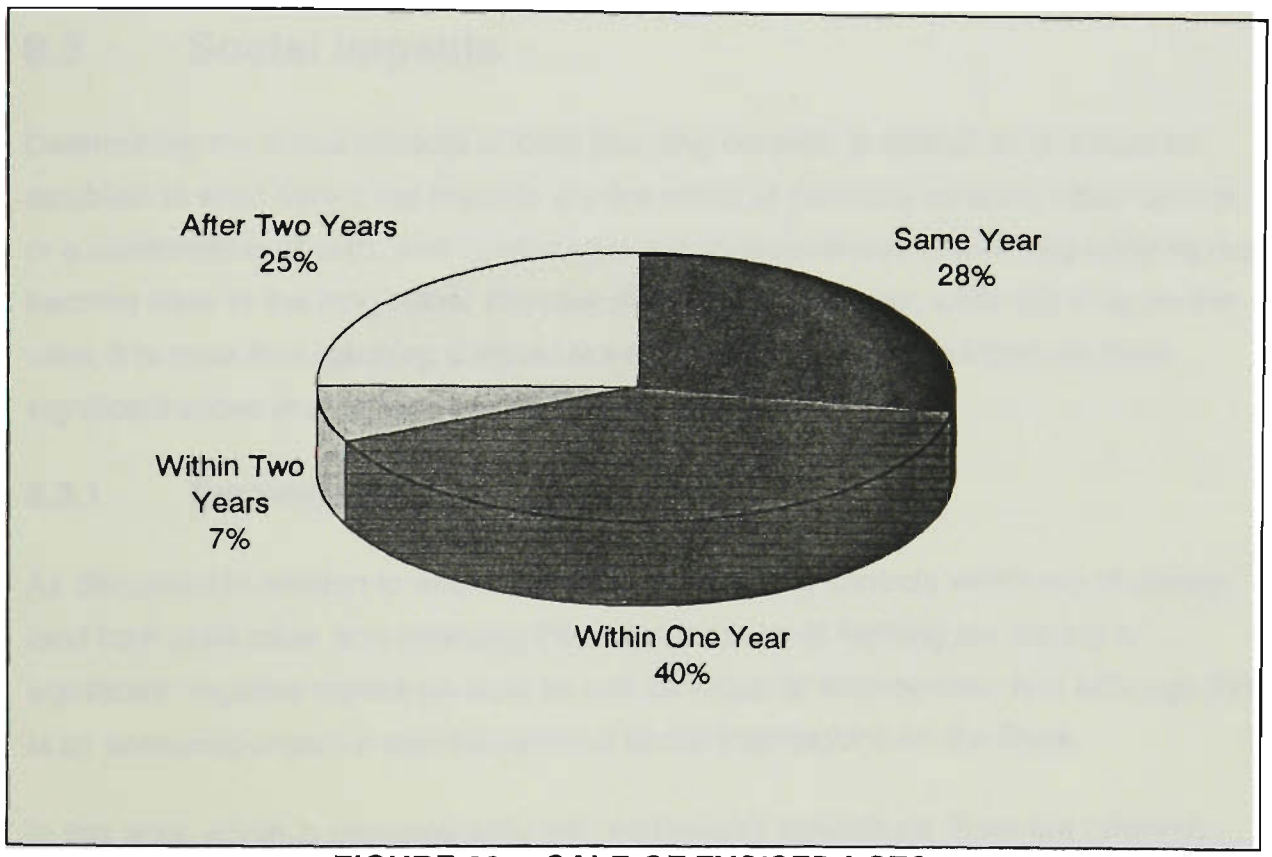


FIGURE 23: SALE OF EXCISED LOTS

Source: Council Rate Records

But what impact does this have on agriculture? The answer to this is three fold:-

1. The necessary rationalisation of farming requires the creation of larger farms and therefore farmers will have to increase farm size, but subdivision controls which increase land values make it increasingly difficult for farmers to buy additional land, thus preventing rationalisation.

2. Scheme provisions which allow the subdivision of land into small lots with high land values increase the attractiveness of this form of subdivision, especially at a time when commodity prices are low, therefore increasing the pressure for further fragmentation of the rural land base.

3. Increases in land values and development can have a significant impact on rates thus creating financial problems for farmers in the future. The rural rating in the Shire is 8.44% of the Net Annual Value (NAV), and the NAV is 5% of the Capital Improved Value (CIV). To illustrate the effect this may have on rural rates, consider a 80 hectare farm located in Almurta which has a property value of $313,600, as discussed in Chapter 4. The rates on this property would be $1,323 a year. As subdivision around this area occurs the value of this property would increase as would the rates the farmer would have to pay.

8.3 Social Impacts

Determining the social impacts of local planning controls is difficult as it is hard to establish to what extent the impacts are the result of planning controls, other factors, or a combination of both, and because the full consequences of planning controls only become clear in the long rather than the short term. However, while this may be the case, it is clear that planning controls are creating an environment that will have significant social implications for the Shire in the future.

8.3.1 Employment

As discussed in relation to economic impacts, planning controls which are removing land from production and retarding the rationalisation of farming are having a significant negative impact on local as well as regional employment, and although this is an economic impact it also has serious social implications for the Shire.

In this area, which is predominantly geared towards agriculture, there are relatively few alternative employment opportunities available to absorb those who are no longer employed, either directly on farms or in the supporting industries. When considering the educational levels of residents in the Shire the implications of this become greater. It is widely acknowledged that it is increasingly important to have qualifications or skills to gain employment. However, education levels of the Shire residents still remains significantly low. Therefore, with the decline in agricultural employment combined with a lack of alternative employment opportunities and the low skills/qualification base of the population, it is expected that unemployment levels in the Shire will continue to increase as shown in Table 13 and Figure 18. This has the potential to create large

scale social problems, particularly in the Shire of Bass, which has below State average levels of income and is isolated from major centres. It is therefore expected that there will be an increased need for additional social services at the local and state level to support these people.

Whilst it could be said that increased population through rural-residential or hobby farm development will revive a declining rural economy, there is no substantial evidence available to prove this. It should be recognised that this form of development is not the solution to lagging employment and lagging economy, for in addition to a loss of agricultural production it has several added economic problems associated with it, including:-

1. Low density development has serious hidden long-term cost implications for the municipality in terms of service provision. Although located in rural areas, most of the needs of residents are urban rather than rural in nature, ie road maintenance and rubbish collection.

2. As employment in the area is generally limited, many people will commute to larger centres as already occurs, especially to Dandenong, to seek employment. Commuting for employment does not necessarily support or develop the local economy.

3. Whilst many people may buy everyday goods in the area, when it comes to larger items such as electrical goods and furniture, many people will in fact travel to larger commercial centres in order to get a better range of goods and cheaper prices, therefore taking business away from the local economy.

Many of these are hidden costs which only become evident in the long-term. Council should consider these issues when considering applications for subdivision of land.

8.3.2 Small lot owners

As has been discussed previously in this Chapter, planning controls which allow and have resulted in the creation of numerous small lots, particularly through the excision provisions, have significant social implications for the residents and the Shire in the long term.

Determining the social implications of this form of living could only really be achieved by interviewing the residents. As discussed in Chapter 2 a survey of farmers and small lot owners was undertaken and as part of this survey a series of questions were asked of each of the small lot owners to determine what they consider are the social impacts of this form of living. In order to determine the social impacts of planning it

was first necessary to ascertain why residents chose to live on rural-residential lots in the first place. The most popular answer to this question at 30 respondents (50%) was to have a country lifestyle, the second being to enjoy the views - at 27 respondents (45%), and thirdly - at 10 respondents (16.7%) was to make a living from an agricultural pursuit, although through inspection of these properties it was evident that very few were actually doing this. Other reasons included to retire, to be near family and because it was cheaper.

After establishing why people came to the area, they were asked what they consider are the benefits they experience living in this area. Again the most popular response was to have a country lifestyle - 54 respondents (90%). The second most popular response was the area had a better community - 11 respondents (18.3%) and the third that it is cheaper to live in this area - 9 respondents (15%).

As a comparison, residents were then asked to outline what they considered were the problems with living in the area. The majority of people - 26 respondents (43.3%) believed they experienced no problems. However of those who believed that there were problems cited the lack of rubbish collection - 9 respondents (15%), isolation - 8 respondents (13.3%) and reliance on cars and lack of social and entertainment facilities, both at 7 respondents (11.7%) as the biggest problems.

The final question posed was whether living in the area came up to their expectations and the overwhelming answer of yes with 57 respondents (95%).

It is clear that whilst some people have concerns about certain aspects or rural-residential living, most people are satisfied. However, while this may be the case, it is important to recognise that the majority of people questioned are new to the area and this type of living as 31 respondents (51.6%) have lived on their properties for only one year or less. It is therefore fair to say that for most small lot owners this is a relatively new living experience and that the full social consequences of this form of living will not be experienced for a number of years when the novelty begins to wear off. It may be that if these people were interviewed again in 10 years time with the same questions, the responses would be quite different and there would be an increased awareness of problems such as isolation and reliance on the car, all of which would be exacerbated if these residents become one of the increasing numbers of unemployed.

The social implications, such as isolation, will have significant servicing implications for the Shire in the long term and whilst these residents do in fact pay rates, it is

questionable whether the amount they pay adequately covers their needs both for the short and long term.

The planning controls currently in place and the way in which they are being administered are having significant negative physical and economic impacts on agriculture and the rural land base and may assist in creating social problems for the Shire in the short and long term. It therefore must be recognised by decision makers at all levels that the decisions they make can and do have wider implications that do not just affect one property or one municipality, but potentially the State and the Nation. This is not to say that decision makers should not make decisions, for that in itself has serious implications, but rather that decisions should be made within a strategic framework which is designed to achieve specific aims. It is also essential that the full implications of all planning mechanisms and decisions be fully considered, and if planning mechanisms are not having the desired outcome, that they are in fact modified to ensure these problems do not continue.

9.0 KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDES TO PLANNING CONTROLS

So far the focus has been on planning controls, their limitations and their impacts from a government perspective. This Chapter presents data on the knowledge and attitudes of farmers and small lot owners to those controls as revealed by the survey process as discussed in Chapter 2. The results of these surveys is presented in two sections. The first section deals specifically with the results of the 60 farmers interviewed and the other relating to the 60 small lot owners interviewed.

9.1 Farmers

Planning Scheme

All too often we assume that people understand the planning process and the controls in place, but it became evident through the interview process that this was not the case.

When asked whether they were aware that there is a Planning Scheme controlling the use and subdivision of land in the Shire, it was surprising to discover that only 37 (61.6%) of respondents knew there was a Scheme. Respondents were then asked whether they knew and could specify what zones/overlays affect their land. Only 17 (28.3%) of the 60 respondents correctly identified these controls, 2 (3.3%) attempted but were incorrect in their identification and 41 (68.3%) stated that they did not know what zone they were in.

When asked whether they considered the existing planning controls over rural land are appropriate 18 (30.0%) believed that they were, 14 (23.3%) believed they were not and the greatest proportion at 29 (48.3%) did not know the controls. Those people who believe the controls are not appropriate were asked to explain why. Of these 14 respondents, 7 (11.6%) believed they were too tight and 7 (11.6%) believed they were too loose.

What becomes evident from this data is that the majority of the farming population have no real knowledge of planning controls and how they affect them. This highlights there is a failing within the planning system to explain its role and intent.

Controls over subdivision

When asked if they believed that there should be controls over the subdivision of rural land it was interesting to find that the majority of farmers at 49 (81.6%) answered in the affirmative. Only 11 (18.3%) believed there should not be such controls. Respondents were then asked to explain why they thought there should or should not be controls. Respondents were able to give more than one answer. The following responses were received:-

Reason	Responses	Percent
Stop good agricultural land being carved up	36	60.0%
Control speculative increases in land values.	11	18.3%
Stop the proliferation of small lots which generally have bad land management practices	16	26.6%
Total	**63**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 41: REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD BE CONTROLS OVER SUBDIVISION

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

Reason	Responses	Percent
Farmers should be able to subdivided their land as they choose	5	8.3%
Lots can be sold to help become more viable	2	3.3%
Everyone else is doing it	1	1.6%
Total	**8**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 42: REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD NOT BE CONTROLS OVER SUBDIVISION

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

Other responses in support of controls included:-

- small lots are better located in one area;
- once the land is gone it is too late;
- loss of agricultural land means we lose the ability to feed ourselves and therefore the price of food will increase;
- stop unscrupulous people making "a quick buck"; and
- there should be no more subdivision.

It is clear from this that the majority of respondents believe there should be controls over the subdivision of land in order to maintain the productive rural base and minimise the negative impacts that such subdivision can have on agriculture, but there

is still a section of the farming community which believes they should be able to do what ever they choose with their land.

Excision & rural-residential development

Respondents were asked whether they consider there should be provision for house lot excisions in rural areas. Given that the majority of farmers participating in the survey believe that small lots are having a negative impact on farming, it is interesting to note that 45 (75.0%) of the 60 farmers interviewed believe there should be provision for excisions, and only 14 (23.3%) believe there should not, thus highlighting a fundamental contradiction of recognising they have a negative impact but wanting to maintain that option. One did not know.

Those respondents in favour of excisions were asked what would be an appropriate size for an excision and the following responses were received.

Lot Size (hectares)	Respondents	Percent
0.4	6	13.3%
0.8	1	2.2%
1	7	15.6%
2	22	48.9%
4	2	4.5%
no limit	1	2.2%
don't know	6	13.3%
Total	45	100%

Note: Figures relate to number of respondents

TABLE 43: APPROPRIATE EXCISION SIZE

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

It is clear that the majority of respondents believe the current 2 hectares to be an appropriate size for a house lot excision.

These respondents were asked how many allotments they considered should be permitted per hectare. Most respondents found it difficult to respond on a per hectare basis and therefore answered on a per farmer basis. The following results were discovered.

Number of excisions	Respondents	Percent
1 excisions	14	31.1%
2	4	8.8%
No limit	9	20.0%
depend on circumstances	5	11.1%
don't know	13	28.8%
Total	45	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of respondents

TABLE 44: NUMBER OF EXCISIONS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

Five respondents (11.1%) believe the number should depend on the circumstances of the case and 13 (28.8%) said they didn't know.

Respondents were asked to detail under what circumstances should excisions be approved and the following responses were given. Respondents were able to give more than one answer.

Reasons given	Responses	Percent
For a family member to live on	23	41.1%
To help obtain finance	5	8.9%
To sell	7	12.5%
To provide a future nest egg	4	7.1%
Because its a farmer's right	13	23.2%
Other	4	7.1%
Total	**56**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents

TABLE 45: REASONS GIVEN TO JUSTIFY ALLOWING EXCISIONS

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

It is evident that while farmers consider that small lot subdivision is having a negative impact on farming in the area in terms of loss of agricultural land, bad land management practices on small lots and increases in land values, the majority still wish to retain the option for this type of subdivision, and whilst they state it is for a family member, details of sale as discussed in Chapter 8 reveal that this is generally not the case as they are used for sale purposes.

Consolidation

All farmers were questioned on whether the area they farmed was on one or several titles. It became clear that the majority of farmers at 41 (68.3%) farmed land that was in multiple titles ranging from two to fourteen in number. When asked whether they would consolidate these titles, 36 (87.8 % of those with multiple titles) said no. The most popular explanations for this were that it is easier sell in separate titles, separate

titles are worth more, that consolidation costs money and that the need had never really arisen. It is therefore clear that the farmers recognise the speculative value of smaller land parcels and at this stage have no intention of consolidating titles. Therefore demonstrating the difficulty with achieving farm rationalisation.

Future role of farming in the Shire

When asked whether they considered that farming would remain the major land use in the Shire of Bass over the next thirty years, 44 (73.3%) believed that it would. However 15 believed that it would not. Those who believed it would not were asked what they considered would take over and the following responses were given. Respondents were able to give more than one response.

Land use	Responses	Percent
Urban	4	16.0%
Rural-Residential	7	28.0%
Hobby Farms	11	44.0%
Holiday Homes	1	4.0%
Stud farms	2	8.0%
Total	**25**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 46: FUTURE MAJOR LAND USE

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

Respondents were also asked whether they consider farming will remain the major employment base for the Shire in the future and it was interesting to note that less than half thought that it would at 22 (36.6%), whilst 36 (60.0%) believed that it would not. Two were unsure.

Those who thought that it would not remain the major employment base were asked what they thought would replace it and the following responses were received, respondents were able to give more than one answer.

Employment type	Responses	Percent
Manufacturing	2	4.8%
Tourist Industry	12	29.3%
Retail	1	2.4%
Service Industry	3	7.3%
Nothing	18	43.9%
Other	5	12.2%
Total	**41**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 47: FUTURE MAJOR EMPLOYMENT BASE

Source: Farmer Survey - 1991

It is interesting to see that farmers recognise that there are few alternative employment opportunities available in the area and consider tourism as the only option available.

Need for planning

The final question then asked of farmers was whether they consider planning should ensure that farming continues as the major land use in the Shire in the future. The answer was a very clear yes for 56 (93.3%) of respondents, while the remainder of respondents believed it should be left up to market forces.

While many farmers insist that they should have the ability to subdivide land, even though many recognise that it may cause potential problems and acknowledge the contradiction in their responses, most still believe that planning controls have an important role to play in relation to agriculture.

9.2 Small Lot Owners

Whilst it is important to understand the levels of knowledge and opinions of farmers on the relationship between planning controls and agriculture, it is also important to understand the view of small lot owners. These respondents were asked similar questions to the farmers.

Excisions & rural-residential development

Respondents were asked whether they consider there should be a limit on the number of small lot subdivisions allowed. A total of 53 respondents(88.3%) believed that there should be, even though they themselves are living on these type of lots.

Future role of farming in the Shire

The respondents were then asked the same questions relating to the future of farming and the Shire as were asked of farmers. When asked whether they considered that farming would remain a major land use in the Shire of Bass over the next thirty years the majority at 43 (71.7%) believed it would. Of those who thought that it would not, the following were given as alternative land uses:-

Land use	Responses	Percent
Urban	2	13.3%
Rural-Residential	4	26.6%
Hobby Farming	4	26.6%
Tourism	5	33.3%
Total	**15**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of responses not respondents.

TABLE 48: FUTURE MAJOR LAND USE

Source: Small Lot Resident Survey - 1991

When asked whether they consider farming will remain the major employment base for the Shire, 32 (53.3%) believed that it would. Of the 28 (46.6%) who thought that it would not the following alternatives were given:-

Industry	Respondents	Percent
Manufacturing	3	10.7%
Tourism	16	57.1%
Service Industry	2	7.1%
Nothing	3	10.7%
Don't Know	4	14.3%
Total	**28**	**100%**

Note: Figures relate to number of respondents.

TABLE 49: FUTURE MAJOR EMPLOYMENT BASE

Source: Small Lot Residents Survey - 1991

The need for planning

The final question of whether they consider planning should ensure that farming continues as the major land use in the Shire revealed a similar result to that of the farmers with 54 (90.0%) of respondents answering that it should. Respondents were asked to justify why and the following responses were given:-

- The area has important good agricultural land which should not be lost;
- Maintain the rural atmosphere of the area;
- Don't want too many people down here;
- Area relies heavily on agriculture; and
- Don't want the area to become the next Mornington Peninsula.

Of those who believe that planning should not ensure that farming remain the major land use, the following reasons were given.

- The area is so close to Melbourne it is impossible;
- If farming was viable it would remain the major land use;

- It is not economically viable to do so; and
- Things change and we have to go with them.

From the responses it is clear that the majority of small lot owners recognise this is an important agricultural area that needs to be protected, and in most instances this is what has attracted them to the area. However whilst recognising this, the main reason for supporting planning controls is to maintain their own lifestyles rather than protect agriculture. As with the farmers, most respondents recognised their contradiction of view points but believed they had answered honestly.

In summary, it is clear that both farmers and small lot owners generally believe planning controls have an important role to play in ensuring the future of agriculture in the area. Whilst this may be the case, it also becomes evident that many of the respondents also believe that although subdivision is having a negative impact on agriculture, they should also have the right to maximise their subdivision potential. This highlights one of the most fundamental contradictions in rural planning - that farmers want the protection that planning can offer, but do not want the restrictions that are required in order to achieve this. Whilst it is easy to dismiss this attitude as "wanting your cake and eating it too" it does raise a very important question of how much weight should planning place on statutory controls to achieve it aims, or are there other more appropriate methods available to achieve the same results? This question will be answered in the next Chapter.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Agriculture is a vitally important economic resource for this country. It constitutes one of our major export industries and forms the core of an entire industry network. To ensure the economic well being of this country, it essential that the agricultural industry be developed to its full potential.

But the factors which affect agriculture are not static or solely of a local nature. The state of the world economy, international and domestic trade policies, technological innovation and seasonal variations all have important implications for agriculture in Australia, as well as world-wide which must be addressed. In Australia our agricultural industry is unstable and we are said to be in one of the worst rural recessions ever experienced. But whilst this may be so, as agriculture is vitally important to this country we must improve it if it is to compete and even survive. Given the nature of the factors which affect agriculture, the State and Federal governments recognise that some of the answers lie in our own backyard.

One of the main changes that is considered necessary is the reduction in the number of small inefficient producers, with an emphasis on increased farm size with greater levels of technology to increase production. Technological innovation in agriculture means that larger farms are required in order to be cost-effective. Put simply, in order to survive farmers have to get bigger and better.

Although these changes may seem harsh, we must face the challenges that lay ahead and recognise that changes must be made in the interests of the community as a whole, whilst responding to the welfare needs of those farmers no longer involved in agriculture. If we do not face the facts and make the necessary changes, our agricultural industry will continue to decline and we may lose one of our most important economic resources.

Equally important as improving the structure of our agricultural industry is the need to maintain a sound rural land base, for without this, it will be virtually impossible to maximise our agricultural potential. Maintaining the agricultural land base is important as good quality agricultural land is a limited and finite resource in Australia, and one in which Victoria has a significant advantage. Therefore as a State, we are in an ideal position to make a significant contribution to the national agricultural economy. Therefore, we should ensure this important resource is managed wisely.

Although our rural land is a vital resource, it is coming under increasing pressure. Urban development, inappropriate subdivision and land degradation have all taken

extensive areas of valuable rural land in Victoria out of production, thus reducing our agricultural capacity. The Shire of Bass has been a prime example of this. The Shire has some of the best agricultural quality land in the State and supports industries of State and Regional significance. The Shire of Bass is located within easy commuter distance of metropolitan Melbourne, has high landscape values, is located along the coast and on route to one of Victoria's most popular tourist attractions - Phillip Island. The area is coming under increasing pressure for urban development, including rural-residential subdivision. As a result, large areas of the Shire are being removed from production through subdivision and this is having a negative impact on agriculture both locally and on a statewide basis. There has been a reduction in the number of farms in production, stock levels and agricultural employment. These changes have not, however, been the result of the rationalisation process, but rather of general economic trends and bad land use planning.

Planning is concerned with establishing policies and implementing mechanisms to achieve these policies. The Systems Approach advocates that planning is a continual process which incorporates several essential stages. The first stage involves an investigation of the issues which affect the use for which you are planning and then setting goals to be achieved. Having established the goals, it is necessary to identify a range of mechanisms that could be implemented to achieve them, evaluating the effectiveness of each and implementing the most appropriate mechanisms. One of the most important stages of this approach to planning is continual monitoring and evaluation of the goals and the implementation mechanisms to ensure they are still relevant to the issue and are having the desired outcomes. Planning cannot be undertaken as a "once off" action and be expected to be effective; it is a continual process and therefore must operate as such.

But the planning system in operation fails to meet the most vital stages of this process and inadequately addresses the issues which affect agriculture. One of the major problems with rural planning in the Shire of Bass is that there is not a common recognition between Local and State government of the problems affecting agriculture and what role planning should play in addressing these issues. Another major problem is that there is no clear policy framework to guide rural planning. Although there are State and Federal Government policies which recognise the importance of agriculture, stress the need to promote a healthy agricultural industry and rural land base and recognise the important role planning can play in achieving this, none give clear direction as to how this should be achieved. As a result there is no clear direction for rural planning. The State Government have recognised this problem and recently developed a Statewide Rural Planning Policy to be included in the State

Section of all Planning Schemes. Whilst this is the first rural land use policy aimed at guiding rural planning and is an important step forward, like all other State and Federal policies it is very generalised and provides no clear indication on how the policy objectives are to be achieved, particularly at the local level.

The Systems Approach advocates the identification of a range of mechanisms to achieve policy goals, and the evaluation of each to ensure the implementation of the most appropriate mechanisms. The current planning system relies solely on land use and development controls through the planning scheme as the form of planning. But there is no evaluation of these controls to determine what effect they may have.

While the current planning system cannot monitor the continued relevance of the goals to the issues, because there are no explicit goals, the system also fails to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the only mechanisms in place (the land use and development controls). As a result of this, there is no clear understanding of the effect of these controls on agriculture and the rural land base.

As the current planning process lacks direction and is seldom evaluated or monitored to ensure its continued relevance, it does not operate as a continual process and therefore cannot legitimately be referred to as "planning". The current planning process would be more appropriately called regulation administration.

Land use controls, particularly in relation to subdivision, have been developed and implemented over time which have little or no relevance to the issues which affect agriculture and rural land use. Whilst it is clear that the emphasis is on rationalisation by increasing farm size, the Scheme contains several inappropriate subdivision provisions and various let-out clauses which allow the further fragmentation of this important resource. These controls are therefore in direct conflict with the important changes that the agricultural industry must undergo. In addition, when comparing the controls in the Scheme with the proposed statewide Rural Planning Policy, it is clear that the controls inadequately address the proposed objectives and that there are several controls in place which are directly contrary to the aims of the policy. Once the policy is approved it will be important that the rural provisions of the Bass Planning Scheme (and probably all rural planning schemes) are reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the intent of the policy.

But these controls are not just inappropriate because of their wording. Due to the way in which they are administered they are in fact having very real negative physical, economic and social impacts on agriculture and the Shire. Since the introduction of subdivision controls the rates of subdivision have increased significantly, particularly

house lot excisions. As a result, large areas of rural land have been removed from production. In addition, these low density subdivisions are causing land use conflicts between legitimate farming practices and rural-residential development. The controls which allow for such subdivision are also having significant economic impacts on agriculture in the Shire. Further inappropriate fragmentation of the rural land base is retarding the necessary rationalisation of farms and increasing the number of small inefficient producers, it is taking land out of production and is therefore reducing agricultural productivity. It is also increasing land values and making it difficult for those farmers who wish to get bigger and improve their operations by purchasing additional land. As a consequence, there are significant implications for employment, not only in the Shire but also the region. Agriculture forms the core of an extensive industry network and decreasing levels of production have a cumulative negative impact on employment in the region.

Whilst many may recognise the physical and economic impacts of the controls on agriculture and rural land base, few recognise the social impacts. The Shire population is geared towards agriculture, particularly employment and eduction levels. Changes to the agricultural industry are resulting in declining agricultural employment and given the few alternative employment opportunities available in the area there has, and will continue to be an increase in the levels of unemployed, thus having social implications for the Shire. In addition, the creation of dispersed rural-residential lots throughout the Shire, with little access to social services could lead to expensive servicing demands on the Shire and problems resulting from isolation. Because the current planning system does not incorporate an evaluation and monitoring process the effects of these controls have not been examined and they have continued unchecked.

The State and Federal Governments recognise that the major responsibility for controlling land use practices and ensuring the most efficient use of natural resources lies with Local Government. However no clear direction has been given on how this is to be achieved. As a result of a lack of an explicit direction for rural planning, Council has developed an implicit policy base over the last 30 years through the way it administers its planning responsibilities. Council's implicit policy base however, differs from the approach proposed by the State Government. Council allows subdivision down to the minimum specified in the planning scheme almost as of right, with little or no consideration for the full physical, environmental and social implications of proposals in general and specifically in relation to their affects on agriculture. Whilst it is difficult for Local Government to come to terms with, it is essential that Council understands that whilst the future of agriculture is played out on an international scale,

the real decisions which affect our rural land base are made at the Local Government level. Council should therefore consider the full physical, economic and social implications of its decisions and weigh up the short-term economic gain for the individual against the long-term economic gain for the community as a whole. Whilst it is recognised this is not easy, given the close political nature of local government and the complexities of the issues, if it is not done then we risk losing a very important physical and economic resource forever.

Many farmers do not want to subdivide their land but they see subdivision as a means of boosting flagging farm incomes. General economic trends are resulting in declining farm incomes and an industry structure which has too many small inefficient farmers. We cannot afford to let every farmer who has falling incomes to subdivide his or her land, as it can severely damage the rural land base and would be at the expense of the agricultural industry and the State economy. This pressure for subdivision will continue, however, until the necessary rationalisation process has been undertaken and measures to help the rural sector are put in place. But subdivision should not be seen as the answer to problems facing agriculture, as it is clearly not. But planning is not and should not be a form of compensation for an ever increasing number of farmers who cannot compete because the necessary rationalisation process is not occurring. For if this was the case, then we would be sacrificing our rural land base and destroying our chances of maximising agriculture as a long term economic resource. Alternative measures should be put in place to cope with the income needs of these farmers. Planning is about achieving a goal, not sacrificing a vital resource based on a series of short term problems. A longer term perspective is required.

While the current system of land use and development controls has not been responsive and appropriate to the needs of agriculture and rural land use, this is not to say that this form of planning should be abandoned. The Planning Scheme provides an important statutory backstop, but the controls in place should be improved to ensure they reflect the needs of agriculture and are consistent with the new direction for Rural Planning as exemplified by the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy.

Statutory planning should not be the only mechanism that planning can utilise to achieve its goals, as regulations have only limited potential. In order to achieve its objectives it is essential that planning take a more positive approach to rural planning, which incorporates both positive mechanisms as well as a regulatory backstop. Many of the objectives of the proposed Statewide Rural Planning Policy call for positive actions, such as prevention of land degradation, ensuring that land management is undertaken in a sustainable manner. These objectives cannot be achieved through

regulations. This shift in emphasis from regulation to proactive measures would not necessarily involve legislative changes. Whilst the Planning and Environment Act states that the Planning Scheme will be the principal form of planning, it also states that opportunities exist for planning to incorporate any measures to achieve objectives.

Some proactive measures that could be included in the Scheme to help improve rural planning, and should be examined include:-

- Development of performance based criteria where developments and subdivision are assessed on their quality and ability to meet certain criteria (for example restoration of degraded areas). These could form the basis of a code for rural development.
- Development of guidelines to help Council in the consideration of permit applications, the preparation and assessment of amendment proposals and strategic planning.
- Development of an Agricultural Overlay Zone to identify important agricultural areas that should be protected. Within this area it may be appropriate to develop initiatives to assist farmers to manage the land in a sustainable manner and increase farm size and levels of production, recognising this is a resource of great significance for the State. This approach should be taken across the State and not only in this Shire.

It is naive to think that planning, even with an improved system based on proactive measures with a relevant supporting regulatory backstop, can provide the answers for agriculture. It is essential that the other government initiatives be developed and implemented to achieve the objectives of rural planning as identified in various State and Federal government policies. Some of the measures include:

1. Assistance to help those farmers who are to be displaced through the rationalisation process to relocate.
2. Rating incentives could be very useful in encouraging farms to undertake their farming practices in a sustainable manner, protect environmentally sensitive areas, prevent land degradation and restore degraded areas, just to name a few.
3. Education to assist farmers to understand the changes that agriculture is undergoing and the likely implications. Education would also be important to improve farmers business skills, and land management techniques to ensure that farming is undertaken in a sustainable manner.

4. Assistance through the Extension Officer Program through the Department of Agriculture, to help improve land management.

5. Provide financial assistance to those farmers who wish rationalise their farming operations and increase farm size and levels of technology.

Whilst planning cannot provide all the answers for agriculture and rural planning, if done properly, it can play a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the rural land base in a form that will assist agriculture to contribute to the economic stability and well being of our State and country, for today and especially tomorrow.

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APPENDICES

FARMER INTERVIEW

RESPONDENT NO. _____

LAND TYPE. _____

1. Which of the following activities do you undertake on a commercial basis on this farm?

(may pick more than one)

☐ - dairying

☐ - beef grazing

☐ - sheep grazing

☐ - crop growing

☐ - other

please specify _____

_____

2. Approximately what proportion of the farm is used for these activities?

	0%	25%	50%	100%
- dairying				
- beef grazing				
- sheep grazing				
- crop growing				
- lease out				
- other				

3. Do you live here full time? **Yes / No**

* If not,

- where do you live? _____
- what is your main occupation _____

4. What is the total area of all the land that you farm? _____ hectares.

Is any portion of the land that you farm unsuitable for agriculture? **Yes / No**

If yes, how much ? _____

If yes, for which of the following reasons

(may pick more than one)

☐ - too steep

☐ - too wet

☐ - bad soils

☐ - bushland

☐ - other

please specify _____

_____

If you have livestock, what are your stock numbers?

- Milk cows _____
- Beef cattle _____
- Sheep _____
- Other _____

please specify _____

On what basis do you occupy the land that you farm?

☐ - Freehold

☐ - Lease

☐ - Freehold/Lease

☐ - Share Farmer

☐ - Manager

☐ - other

please specify _____

If a combination what is the area of each?

- Freehold _____
- Lease _____

* If freehold or combination, do you own the property outright (of that part which is freehold) or is it mortgaged?

☐ - owned

☐ - mortgage

☐ - part owned/mortgaged

* If leased, how long have you leased the land? _____

* If leased, do you lease the land from a member of your family? **Yes / No**

* If leased, does this land abut your property? **Yes / No**

* If leased, why do you lease the additional land?

(may pick more than one)

☐ - insufficient land on farm

☐ - can't afford to buy additional land

☐ - land is better quality

☐ - cheaper than farming own farm

☐ - other

please specify _____

_____

10. Is the property that you farm all on one title? **Yes / No**

* If not, how many titles are there? _____

* If not, what is the area of each title ?

- Title 1 _____ hectares
- Title 2 _____ hectares
- Title 3 _____ hectares
- Title 4 _____ hectares
- Title 5 _____ hectares
- Title 6 _____ hectares
- Title 7 _____ hectares
- Title 8 _____ hectares
- Title 9 _____ hectares
- Title 10 _____ hectares

11. Do you intend to consolidate any of your existing titles? **Yes / No**

* If yes why? _____

_____

* If not, why not? _____

_____

12. How many years have you farmed this property? _____

13. Did you inherit the property? **Yes / No**

14. Since purchasing/inheriting the farm have you purchased any additional land for farming?

Yes / No

* If yes, how much? _____ hectares.

15. Do you intend to purchase any additional land in the future? **Yes / No**

* If yes,

- how much? _____ hectares
- would it abut your property? **Yes / No**
- would you consolidate it with other titles? **Yes / No**

16. Do you intend to continue farming here until you retire? **Yes / No**

* If yes, what do you intend to do with the farm when you do retire from farming?

- ☐ - sell and leave
- ☐ - stay and farm part-time
- ☐ - stay and lease out the land
- ☐ - stay and employ a manager/employee
- ☐ - share farm
- ☐ - let the family take over
- ☐ - subdivide and stay on part
- ☐ - subdivide and sell out
- ☐ - cancel the lease
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

If not what do you intend to do with the farm?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - sell out and farm elsewhere
- ☐ - sell out and give up farming
- ☐ - lease out all or part
- ☐ - subdivide and sell all
- ☐ - subdivide, sell part and stay
- ☐ - let the family take over
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

17. How many people live on the farm? _____

18. How many people work on the farm full-time? _____

19. Do you employ anyone, outside family members to work on the farm? **Yes / No**

* If yes,

  - How many full time _____
  - How many part time _____
  - Doing what activities _____

  _____

20. Does the household rely on income other than from the farm? **Yes / No**

21. Does anyone living on the farm work elsewhere? **Yes / No**

* If yes, how many? _____

* If yes, who are they and what do they do?

	WHO	OCCUPATION	FULL/PART TIME	WHY THEY WORK OFF THE FARM
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Why they may work off the farm?

a) - farm can't generate enough income

b) - others not interested in farming

c) - have skills or qualified in other areas

d) - farms not big enough

e) - other

please specify _____

22. Have you recently invested significant capital to improve the farm? **Yes / No**

* If yes, on what? _____

_____

_____

_____

23. Do you have any plans to invest significant capital to improve the farm in the near future?

Yes / No

* If yes, on what?

(may pick more than one)

☐ - general repairs

☐ - replace existing equipment

☐ - change agricultural use

☐ - build a new home

☐ - other

please specify _____

* If no, why not? _____

24. Do you currently stock/crop the farm to its maximum capacity? **Yes / No**

* If not, which of the following would explain why?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - can't afford to
- ☐ - don't want to
- ☐ - don't need to
- ☐ - don't have the necessary equipment
- ☐ - don't have enough labour
- ☐ - market not available for goods
- ☐ - commodity prices are a deterrent
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

25. Have you ever subdivided the farm before? **Yes / No**

(subdivision includes houselot excisions)

* If yes,

- in which years _____
- into how many lots _____
- what was the average area of each of the lots _____
- how many of these lots do you still own _____

26. Which of the following explains why you subdivided the land?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - for a family member to live
- ☐ - to sell in the short term
- ☐ - to sell in the long term
- ☐ - to help obtain finance
- ☐ - to provide for a possible future "nest egg"
- ☐ - because it was allowed
- ☐ - other

please specify_____

27. Do you intend to subdivide your land in the future? **Yes / No**

* If yes,

- into how many lots _____
- into what size lots _____
- when _____
- why do you intend to subdivide the land

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ . for a family member
- ☐ . to sell in the short term
- ☐ . to sell in the long term
- ☐ . to help obtain finance
- ☐ . to help provide a 'nest egg'
- ☐ . because it is allowed
- ☐ . other

please specify _____

28. Have you ever been approached by a developer to subdivide your land? **Yes / No**

29. In this area, how much land do you consider is needed to farm viably and support a family from the farming activities that you undertake?

- dairy _____ hectares
- beef grazing _____ hectares
- cropping _____ hectares
- sheep _____ hectares
- other _____ hectares

30. Do you believe there should be controls over the subdivision of rural land? **Yes / No**

* If yes, why? **(may pick more than one)**

☐ - stop good farming land from being carved up

☐ - prevent management practices conflicts with small lot neighbours.

☐ - control the speculative increases in land values

☐ - stop the proliferation of small lots which generally have bad land

☐ management practices

☐ - other

please specify _____

_____

* If not, why? **(may pick more than one)**

☐ - rural subdivision is not seen as a problem.

☐ - farmers should be able to subdivide the land as they choose.

☐ - lots can be sold to help to become more viable.

☐ - subdivision helps to get more money

☐ - other

please specify _____

31. What do you consider should be the minimum allowable rural allotment size in this area?

(not including excisions) _____ hectares

32. Do you consider that there should be provision for house lot excision in rural areas?

Yes / No

* If yes, what size should a house lot excision be ? _____ ha

* If yes, how many excisions per hectare? _____

* If yes, under which of the following circumstances should excisions be given?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - for a family member to live on
- ☐ - to help obtain finance
- ☐ - to sell
- ☐ - to provide for a future nest egg
- ☐ - because its a farmers right
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

33. Do you believe that increased small lot/rural residential development is having a negative impact on farming in this area? **Yes / No**

* If yes, in which of the following ways?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - loss of good agricultural land
- ☐ - conflicts with normal farming management practices
- ☐ - bad land management practices on small lots
- ☐ - increases in land values
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

34. Have you experienced any conflicts with small lot owners over management practices on your farm? **Yes / No**

* If yes, which of the following would characterise the problems?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - the use of chemical/fertilizers
- ☐ - noise
- ☐ - odours
- ☐ - stock problems
- ☐ - hours of work
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

35. Have you had any direct experience of small lot owners causing you problems of:

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - dogs
- ☐ - bad land management on small lots
- ☐ - trespassing
- ☐ - leaving gates open
- ☐ - theft
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

36. Are you aware that there is a Planning Scheme controlling the use and subdivision of land in the Shire of Bass? **Yes / No**

* If yes, what zones/overlay controls affect your land?

Their answer My answer

_____ _____

37. Do you know the smallest size you can subdivide your land to? **Yes / No**

Their answer _____ My answer _____

38. Have you ever applied for a planning permit? **Yes / No**

* If yes, for which of the following:

(may pick more than one)

☐ - to build a house

☐ - to erect any farm buildings

☐ - to subdivide land

☐ - to use the land for a specific purpose

☐ - to transfer and consolidate land

☐ - other

please specify _____

* Was the permit granted? **Yes / No**

* If not, what reason was given:

(may pick more than one)

☐ - access

☐ - waste disposal

☐ - loss of agricultural land

☐ - inappropriate use

☐ - other

please specify _____

39. Do you believe the existing planning controls over rural land are appropriate? Yes / No

* If not,

☐ - are they too tight

☐ - are they too loose

40. Do you consider that farming will remain the major land use in the Shire of Bass over the next thirty years? **Yes / No**

* If not, which of the following do you consider will take over?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - urban
- ☐ - rural-residential
- ☐ - hobby farms
- ☐ - urban/holiday homes
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

41. Do you consider that farming will remain a major employment base for the Shire of Bass in the future? **Yes / No**

* If not what do you consider will take over?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - Manufacturing
- ☐ - Tourist industry
- ☐ - Retail
- ☐ - Service industry
- ☐ - Nothing
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

42. Do you consider that planning should ensure that farming continues as the major land use in the Shire of Bass in the future? **Yes / No**

NOTES

RURAL-RESIDENTIAL/EXCISION INTERVIEW

RESPONDENT NO. _____

LAND TYPE. _____

1. HOUSE LOT EXCISION - RURAL-RESIDENTIAL

2. What is the area of this property? _____ hectares

3. When did you buy or inherit the property? _____

4. Is this your primary place or residence? **Yes / No**

* If yes, since when? _____

* If not, when do you live on this property? **(may pick more than one)**

- ☐ - weekends
- ☐ - holidays
- ☐ - during the week
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

* How long have you been coming here on this basis? _____

* If not, where is your primary place of residence?

_____

5. Where was your last place of residence? _____

6. What do you use the property for? **(may pick more than one)**

- ☐ - residential only
- ☐ - grazing domestic pets (nominal or no income)
- ☐ - minor agricultural activities (supplementary income)
- ☐ - major agricultural activity (main income)

* If the property is used for an agricultural activity, what is it?

_____

7. If the site is an excision did you buy the property from a member of your family or other relative? **Yes / No**

8. Are you satisfied with the size of the property? **Yes / No**

* If not, what would be an appropriate size? _____ hectares

* If not, why not? _____

_____

_____

9. Do you experience any management problems on your property? **Yes / No**

* If yes, what are they? **(may pick more than one)**

- ☐ - weeds
- ☐ - domestic pets
- ☐ - maintenance/upkeep
- ☐ - stock problems
- ☐ - lack of knowledge experience
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

10. Have you experienced any problems from adjoining or nearby farms over farm management practices? **Yes / No**

* If yes, which of the following would characterise the problems?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - the use of chemical/fertilizers
- ☐ - noise
- ☐ - odours
- ☐ - stock problems
- ☐ - hours of work
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

11. What are your reasons for moving to this property?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - family provided the land
- ☐ - to be near the family
- ☐ - to have a country lifestyle
- ☐ - its cheaper
- ☐ - to make a living from an agricultural pursuit
- ☐ - to retire
- ☐ - got a job here
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

12. Having lived here, what do you consider are the benefits you experience?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - none
- ☐ - family farm employment
- ☐ - better community
- ☐ - near family
- ☐ - the country lifestyle
- ☐ - cheaper
- ☐ - alternative employment
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

13. What do you consider are the problems with living here?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - none
- ☐ - isolation
- ☐ - lack of human services (including medical and child care)
- ☐ - lack of public transport
- ☐ - lack of shopping facilities
- ☐ - lack of educational opportunities
- ☐ - problems with neighbouring farms
- ☐ - lack of employment opportunities
- ☐ - lack of social and entertainment facilities
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

14. Has living here come up to your expectations? **Yes / No**

* If not, why not? _____

_____

15. Do you believe that increased small lot/rural residential development is having any impact on farming in the area? **Yes / No**

* If yes, in which of the following ways?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - the loss of agricultural land
- ☐ - conflicts with normal farm management practices
- ☐ - bad management practices on small lots
- ☐ - increases in land values
- ☐ - increased innovation/new farming techniques
- ☐ - increases in employment
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

_____

16. Do you believe there should be a limit on the number of small lot subdivisions allowed in the Shire? **Yes / No**

17. Do you consider that farming will remain the major land use in the Shire of Bass over the next 30 years? **Yes / No**

* If not, which of the following do you consider will predominate?

(may pick more than one)

- ☐ - urban
- ☐ - rural-residential
- ☐ - hobby farms
- ☐ - tourism
- ☐ - other

please specify _____

18. Do you consider that planning should ensure that farming in the Shire of Bass continues as the major use? **Yes / No**

* If no, why not _____

_____

* If yes, why? _____

_____

19. Do you consider that farming will remain a major employment base for the Shire of Bass in the future? **Yes / No**

* If not, what do you consider will take over?

(may pick more than one)

☐ - manufacturing

☐ - tourist services

☐ - retail

☐ - services

☐ - nothing

☐ - other

please specify _____

20. What is your and/or your partners occupational status?

PERSON	OCCUPATION	FULL PART	LOCATION
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

21. Are you involved in any farming activity other than what you may carry out on your land? **Yes / No**

* If so do you help on a family farm? **Yes / No**

22. Do you have any children **Yes / No**

* If yes, how many? _____

* If yes, in what age group

0 - 2	☐ ☐
3 - 4	☐ ☐
5 - 9	☐ ☐
10 - 14	☐ ☐
15 - 20	☐ ☐
21 +	☐ ☐

AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY

APPENDIX 2.

Agricultural Quality Class 1	Agricultural Quality Class 2	Agricultural Quality Class 3
• highly versatile. • inherently very productive. • flat/low land not subject to flooding. • soil maintained in good tilth. • can be regularly cultivated. • fertile. • well aerated. • deep - well drained. • good moisture holding capacity. • low susceptibility to erosion. • no significant rock/stone content. • growing season of 10-12 months.	• versatile. • inherently productive. • flat - may be subject to inundation. • soils can be maintained in good tilth. • regular cultivation provided care is taken. • generally fertile. • well aerated. • reasonably deep. • well drained. • good water holding capacity. • no significant rock/stone content. • low susceptibility to erosion. • growing season of 10-11 months. *NOTE: The difference between Class 1 is that land in Class 2 requires higher management inputs.*	• inherently productive or limited versatility. • loss of tilth under regular cultivation. • shallow soils. • capable of all grazing enterprises and more intensive uses where regular cultivation is not required. • requires high levels of fertiliser. • growing season of 9-10 months. *NOTE: Class 3a has similar characteristics but is dependant on slope.*
Agricultural Quality Class 4	**Agricultural Quality Class 5**	**Non agricultural land Class 6**
• limited versatility. • low inherent productivity. • steep land - difficult to manage. • quite productive provided high levels of management are maintained. • generally problem soils. • coarse sands of low fertility. • low water holding capacity. • erosion susceptibility. • shallow with moderate rock/stone content. *NOTE: Class 4a has similar characteristics but can withstand regular cultivation with high inputs.*	• marginal land. • steep slopes. • very poor soils. • significant rockiness. • thin skeletal soils. • suitable for limited grazing. • growing season of 8 months.	• unavailable for agriculture • public land and urban area • extractive industry • freehold forestry