

The Council Plan 2017 is the most important document of the Shire.
All other documents – including the 5 year Strategic Plan and the Annual Budget - are all subservient to the Council Plan.

This year's draft has been massively slimmed down from last year. There is much good stuff that has gone, material that was incorporated from the extensive community consultation that occurred over the years, especially the "Your Community, Your Future", meetings held in 17 townships every few years and the Climate Change township meetings.

It is bizarre that someone has gone back to a quite an old Council Plan and done a "cut and paste" holus bolus. For example, there has been no dairying on the Peninsula since 1985, reference to it was deleted from Council Plans some time back, and beef correctly inserted in its place. And yet on page 6 of the Draft, under *Our Prosperity*, in the 6th dot point *Dairy* makes a reappearance. This should be deleted and reference to beef, Chicken meat and eggs reinserted. What else is a "cut and paste" from out of date docs?

From page 18 of the draft Council Plan:

OUR PLACE

The Mornington Peninsula is one of Melbourne's greatest assets, characterised by unique townships, highly valuable green wedge land, areas of national and international conservation significance and featuring around 10% of Victoria's total coastline. The Mornington Peninsula is critical to the future liveability, sustainability and prosperity of the wider metropolitan region. As an area near to, but with a role distinct from, the growing metropolitan area, there are ever increasing pressures and demands placed on the Mornington Peninsula. Combined with the challenges of climate change, managing 'place' requires the careful balancing of the community's key values.

Community Outcomes

- ☐ *Protection and enhancement of the unique natural and built characteristics of the Mornington Peninsula*
- ☐ *Inclusive, functional and accessible places*
- ☐ *Strong resilience and adaptation to climate change*

Our Strategic Objectives

1. Through strategic planning we improve and protect the unique characteristics of the Mornington Peninsula

Strategies

- a. Maintain 70% of the Mornington Peninsula as green wedge*
- b. Develop and implement integrated land-use plans which provide for planning appropriate to the role and function of each area*
- c. Design and deliver well-planned townships with adequate capacity for housing, infrastructure, employment, business activity and recreational areas*
- d. Enhance the character of our townships and villages through the development and maintenance of public spaces, reflecting local character, conditions and community preference*

Major Initiatives including:

- *Review and adopt the Green Wedge Management Plan*
- *Initiate residential character investigation studies to ensure the unique characteristics of the Mornington Peninsula are protected*
- *Deliver and adopt the Activity Centres Strategy and Industrial Land Supply Study Reviews*

Agriculture and the Green Wedge used to be highlighted under the 3rd "Theme" of *Our Prosperity* (Economy) where they belong. The *Our Prosperity* section looks quite underdone without the key sector of agriculture. [There is the oblique phrase Support and develop our food economy that could relate to agriculture but one has the sense that in fact it more relates to cafes.]

The agricultural audit undertaken by the Shire's Economic Development Unit revealed agricultural output (including Inghams Somerville) of greater than \$1 billion pa. This is huge.

So, the Green Wedge

1. is not only critical for the Shire's economy due to the agricultural productivity, but
2. the rural land also provides world class landscapes for the tourism industry and locals alike to enjoy, and

3. is a major source of habitat and biodiversity - increasingly important with Climate Change.

However the draft Council Plan this year has removed virtually all references to agriculture. It's all very well to have motherhood statements like: **Maintain 70% of the Mornington Peninsula as green wedge**, but how?

And: **highly valuable green wedge land**, but to whom? Developers?

Active agriculture is crucial to maintain the land as Green Wedge, if we don't want it fragmented into little 2Ha lots. It's a fragile setting. For example there is only one large animal vet practice left on the Peninsula. There is only one Agricultural Show left on the Peninsula. The pressure from development and rural residential is huge, constantly nibbling away, reducing the critical mass of agriculture. Every 20 Ha sportsfield, every large hotel or convention centre, every Moonah Links proposal, is undermining agriculture on the Peninsula. With all that in mind and understood by successive Mornington Peninsula Shire Councils, they have ensured the following key phrase has been in all past Council Plans, for many years:

"To foster and encourage agriculture and promote the Peninsula's rural sector"

The Mornington Peninsula community through extensive consultation over the decades has indicated its support for the Green Wedge and agriculture and would strongly support the reinstatement of this key objective in Council's pre-eminent document.

Companion objectives also deleted from the draft are: "To develop and grow local businesses including agritourism and intensive agriculture" and "To support rural business through networking and industry development" – are both worthy objectives in Council's goal to **Maintain 70% of the Mornington Peninsula as green wedge**.

Moving to the topic of Infrastructure, it's all over the place in the draft, particularly Local Integrated Drainage Strategy in *Our Place* theme and others in *Our Wellbeing* theme, when arguably Infrastructure is a key enabler of *Our Prosperity*, but that's a minor quibble. But more substantially, given the importance of the *Local Integrated Drainage Strategy* to cope with the increase in the volume and velocity of water in our channels and waterways, there is no mention in the draft plan of the companion *Road Improvement Strategy* that was launched last year, to upgrade shire roads (sealing gravel shoulders, wire rope barriers, armourguard railing etc.) to cope with the increase in the volume of traffic without having to dumb down the speed limits. This maintains the functionality of the road network for the efficient and timely movement of goods and services, in the local economy and connecting to outside the Peninsula.

David Gibb