

2020/2021 Advocacy Priorities

Shire Profile:

The Shire of Nillumbik is located less than 25 kilometres north-east of Melbourne, and has the Yarra River as its southern boundary. It extends 29 kilometres to Kinglake National Park in the north. The Shire stretches approximately 20 kilometres from the Plenty River and Yan Yean Road in the west to Christmas Hills and the Yarra escarpment in the east. The Shire covers an area of 431 square kilometres and has an estimated population of 64,280 who live in close-knit communities which range from typical urban settings to remote and tranquil bush properties.

Recommendations:

Environment

Invasive weed and pest control

The Shire's unique environment is under significant threat from development in surrounding areas, emerging pest species and animal threats. Along with protecting the area's environment assets, control programs are required to protect agricultural industries. In particular, deer has become a significant pest in peri-urban areas, threatening the environment, agriculture and road user safety.

Urgent action is required to stem emerging threats from further encroaching into urban and heavily populated areas of Melbourne, where control will be even more complex and costly.

We are seeking the *State Government* for on-going funding to continue the Rivers to Rangers program and continued support for Landcare initiatives including the employment of Landcare officers.

Regional Waste processing facility

Domestic solutions are urgently required to process recycling in Australia. Nillumbik Shire Council operates a Recycling and Resource Recovery Centre and is undertaking a review of the services offered and how it can meet the needs of the Northern Region of Melbourne.

We are seeking that the State Government build regional waste processing facility to help close the market gap in waste processing.

Improved VicRoads maintenance

The recent introduction of roadside barriers by VicRoads has introduced new challenges around fire mitigation and maintenance. The barriers now mean many areas are no longer accessible to carry out the appropriate works with ride on machinery. Council seeks policies that recognise the importance of this conflict and seek increased service levels from VicRoads to reflect community expectations.

We are seeking the *State Government* to change in VicRoads' scope and service levels with increased funding.

Potentially Contaminated Land

The State lacks easily obtainable and reliable information relating to former gold mine sites and associated impacts of mining including tailings and potential soil contamination.

Furthermore Councils across the State, have very little accurate information on where historic gold mining activities have previously occurred, making it very difficult to identify areas of potential contamination or hazards such as mine shafts.

Additionally there is no legal requirement for a vendor to disclose to a prospective purchaser if land is either included in an old mining lease area or known to be contaminated, or potentially contaminated on a Land Information Certificate. This means that a purchaser can be unaware that their property is potentially contaminated.

Councils have some local knowledge of former mining practices, however this information is not always accurate or even known. When former mining activity is known or suspected, a property owner may not become aware of this information until they apply for a development approval. To obtain this approval, the purchaser would likely need to pay for their own environmental site assessment and any remediation works.

Currently there is no way that a prospective purchaser can investigate with any confidence whether their potential land is part of a mining lease area of a contaminated site without expending significant time and/or cost which is often unrealistic in today's property market.

We are seeking the *State Government* to formally identify all existing and former mining leases and introduce a mechanism for this information to be disclosed by vendors as part of their Section 32 documentation.

Dumping of soil/fill in rural areas

Significant levels of dumping of soil and fill are occurring in peri-urban councils, which is having an adverse impact on the quality of rural land and further, raises the risk of contamination. The State Government's Victoria Planning Provisions are inadequate in facilitating councils to effectively prevent the inappropriate dumping of soil and fill.

Nillumbik Shire is a prime target for continued concern in this space, given our north-western proximity to Whittlesea and the huge amount of work taking place in and around

Donnybrook, Wallan, and Mernda, our location makes the trucking of material and disposing quickly and cheaply, with companies taking advantage of major arterial road connections to our Shire. Without proper control such dumping will result in irreversible damage and/or time consuming and costly rectification exercises, which affect green wedge values and places food production, waterways and ecosystems at risk.

We are seeking the *State Government* to request Minister of Planning to take immediate action to alter the Victorian Planning Provisions to address this important issue and to introduce a particular provision which allows councils to better consider and approve with conditions and where appropriate prevent inappropriate dumping of large volumes of soil and fill.

Shared responsibility for our Green Wedge including public land management and bushfire mitigation

To manage our green wedge it is vital for the community to have a voice, while there will be different views, common objectives exist and it is important that Council continue to respect and understand those differences, listen to everyone and facilitate conversations in an attempt to resolve them or, at very least, have a shared understanding.

A key action of our Green Wedge Management Plan is to establish an ongoing Green Wedge Conversations program to provide local communities with a forum to discuss resilience, leadership, knowledge-transfer and cooperation between people involved in land management, agriculture, nature conservation, public land management and bushfire mitigation and management.

We are seeking the *State Government* to provide funding and a forum to support this program with linkages to similar programs in other Green Wedge areas.

Planning applications to rebuild after a fire

Currently the planning scheme requires a planning permit to rebuild after a bushfire unless the loss was a result of the 2009 fires. Throughout community consultation on the Green Wedge Management Plan and the Bushfire Mitigation Strategy, rural residents raised concerns in having the ability to rebuild their home if it has been lost to fire or other disasters.

Council supports the premise that people should be able to rebuild, but the design and siting of replacement building needs to reduce future risks to the occupants, not repeat them.

While Council will continue to facilitate and expedite the process of such planning applications, the exemptions provided by Clauses 52.13 and 52.14 of the planning scheme should be extended to properties that are affected by future bushfires to enable communities to rebuild and recover as quickly as possible.

We are seeking the *State Government* to request the Minister of Planning amend Clauses 52.13 and 52.14 of the planning scheme to apply to future bushfires as well as those of 2009.

Local agriculture planning controls

Local agriculture is valuable to the functioning of the green wedge, which is a mosaic of farming, nature conversation, townships and rural living. This value should be protected for its contribution not only to the overall agricultural objective for green wedges but also metropolitan objectives for tourism, landscape and cultural heritage.

Hobby, small scale agricultural production and the keeping of animals are important activities and are supported by local farmers markets and activities that encourage 'food-exchanges'.

The land available for soil-based agricultural needs to be protected for the future so farming is able to take place without unnecessary interference. The possibility of related activities such as tourism and the emergence of non-soil based sustainable agriculture also need to be considered.

We are seeking the *State Government* to alter planning and other controls to:

- Allow landholders a right to farm in the Rural Conversation Zone on pre-existing cleared agricultural land with decision guidelines to avoid damage to surrounding properties or environment.
- Support supplementary rural business activities, such as farm gate sales, farm stays and other low environmental amenity impact enterprises.
- Support small-scale and productive hobby farming.

Protection of threatened species and vegetation communities

Strategically planned and cost effective programs are required to promote and support environmental care and stewardship in our green wedge. The programs will help our ecosystem continue to function at a landscape scale, protect indigenous plants and animals, water flows and groundwater, mitigate and adapt to challenges such as bushfire, salinity, erosion, flooding and climate change, improve local land productivity, adopt practices that continue reduce Council's own environmental footprint and conserve cultural heritage values.

We are seeking \$400,000 from the *State Government* as on-going funding to continue the Conservation futures, threatened species program and provide access to data, recognitions and resources for protection of threatened species and vegetation communities and the control of threats.

Public Open Space

Upgrades to Kangaroo Ground Heritage Tower and War Memorial

The Kangaroo Ground War Memorial and Heritage Tower is one of Nillumbik Shire's leading community assets. The tower offers outstanding views all the way to Melbourne's skyline while the memorial celebrates and honours the area's legacy of involvement in the two World Wars, including that of its traditional owners.

However, the site, which is of great cultural and heritage significance is in need of important works. Among the work required are improvements to the entrance and exit points for visitor vehicles to improve amenity and ensure safety. In addition, implementing a masterplan which is currently being developed.

We are seeking \$100,000 from *State or Federal Government* to fund the work required to scope the master plan and detailed design.

Diamond Creek Trail extension

Four regional trails traverse the Shire, providing valuable transport connections to townships and a unique and well-used recreation opportunity for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians. This project is to extend the Diamond Creek trail from Diamond Creek to Hurstbridge, connecting the Shire's Artisan Hills to the Melbourne CBD via the Yarra Main Trail – a regional priority across northern Melbourne. The trail would provide a significant contribution to the lifestyle, health and social wellbeing of the broader community by providing connection to the natural environment and improved, off-road local connections between townships and safer access for families and children to local schools and community facilities.

We are seeking for additional funding to complete the portion of the trail from Wattle Glen to Hurstbridge.

Shared trails infill in existing network

Nillumbik's trail and bike path network suffers from a significant lack of connectivity, with numerous paths requiring infill sections. Connecting these pathways and trail is a key community priority and will provide increased usage (including tourists), safer passage, decrease vehicle dependency, improved community connectivity and health and wellbeing outcomes.

We are seeking the *State Government* for funding to complete work on shared trails including Diamond Creek Trail.

Community Services

Internet access and mobile phone black spots

Council has unreliable mobile phone reception and internet connection in parts of the Shire. This issue is particularly relevant in Nillumbik Shire with a significant part of its area being highly bushfire-prone. Emergency management plans - that of Council's and other state-based agencies have communicating important information via smartphone as a central element. Ensuring reliable mobile phone reception is therefore critical to these emergency plans and importantly, to community confidence.

Furthermore improved internet access and mobile phone reception supports the ability to create application based services such as ride sharing, on-call transport, education participation and effectively operate home-based businesses. All of which will enhance community lifestyle and economic benefits.

We are seeking the *Federal Government* to:

- Engage and work with the relevant telecommunications carrier to identify and ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place to remove black spots.
- Support NBN Co. to fast track roll out.

Eltham childcare cooperative expansion

Council's strategy is to align with the State Government's policy direction for integrated children's hubs to provide support to families with young children in the early years.

Our long term vision for the Eltham Childcare Cooperative Centre is to further extend the building to incorporate an additional 33-place kindergarten, maternal and child health programs and a multipurpose space that would provide for community playgroups/ specialised early years' programs.

Council developed concept plans in 2015 and while funding to support such projects is available through the Victorian State Government's Children's Major Capital Program on an annual basis.

We are seeking \$2 million from the *State Government* to fund the expansion/colocation.

Metro Access Funding

Metro Access funding will be ceasing at the end of the year. This funding provides vital support to people with a disability who are not eligible for NDIS. The support ensures that resources available to avoid them slipping through the cracks.

We are seeking commitment from the *State Government* to continue funding of this vital service.

Social Infrastructure

Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre expansion

For more than 40 years, the Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre has provided our community with stadium courts for basketball, squash, table tennis and badminton. Since its opening, additional courts and a health club have been added. The facility attracts more than over 450,000 visits annually and is home to the Diamond Valley Basketball association's 6000-plus members and elite level South East Australia Basketball League Teams.

The Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre redevelopment would deliver a contemporary, fully accessible fit-for-purpose regional indoor sports stadium servicing Nillumbik, Banyule and Whittlesea local government areas. It would cater for the sports of basketball, netball, squash, badminton and table tennis from grassroots to elite, and a 24/7 fitness facility and community rooms.

With the support of the State Government Council are progressing with the first stages of the Master Plan of the center.

We are seeking further commitment from the *State and Federal Government to complete the vision set out in the master plan* for fully accessible fit-for-purpose regional indoor sports stadium servicing Nillumbik, Banyule and Whittlesea local government areas. It would cater for the sports of basketball, netball, squash, badminton and table tennis from grassroots to elite, and a 24/7 fitness facility and community rooms.

Approximately \$35,000,000 million.

Diamond Creek Community Hub

Diamond Creek is the fastest growing area within the Shire and is the second largest activity centre, with an increasingly ageing local demographic. Diamond Creek and the broader community have limited small and/or ageing community meeting spaces and no permanent home for the library. After extensive community engagement on local community service provisions and the continued growth of Diamond Creek's library programs, Council is looking to establish a new purpose-built facility including community lounge and meeting space, theatre / performance function space, dedicated youth space, adult learning and registered training facilities and library to meet community needs. A permanent home for Diamond Creek Library would enable it to offer a wider range of programs to continue to increase its visitation, services provision and community activation.

We are seeking *State and Federal Government* support to fund the initial planning and design work and subsequent development.

Extension of reticulated sewer network

Council is seeking for the Victorian Government and retail water business Yarra Valley Water to bring forward the investigation of reticulated sewer provision to the townships of Research, St Andrews, Panton Hill and parts of Yarrambat, Diamond Creek, Hurstbridge, Plenty and Wattle Glen. Action to address the lack of a reticulated sewer network in these locations has been given a planning horizon for around 2030/2032, as specified in Yarra Valley Water's Price Plan 6.

We are seeking commitment from the *State Government* to bring forward planned works within the Shire.

Employment precincts

We are seeking \$250,000 from *State Government* to undertake master planning and detailed scoping to facilitate employment growth in Eltham, Diamond Creek and Research industrial / commercial precincts

Commitment to provide ongoing funding not annual

Regional/Municipality Art Gallery

Nillumbik has a longstanding history with the arts with many esteemed early Australian impressionists having painted within the shire. The strength of Nillumbik's arts heritage, however, was borne of the mid-20th century avant-garde arising from the arts communes of Montsalvat, Dunmoochin and Potters Cottage. As such, the Nillumbik Shire Art Collection reflects the rich artistic heritage and local culture of Nillumbik, and represents leading contemporary Australian artists of international renown.

Nillumbik's long-term vision is for a regional/municipality art gallery that captures and promotes the shire's rich artist heritage. A public gallery of regional significance would enable loan programs with esteemed national institutions to augment the curation of the collection. The gallery space would incorporate studio, workshop and theatre spaces to enable dynamic project spaces, education programs with outreach to schools and school holiday programs, and other public programs. It would also attract peak industry forums and the performing arts and add to Nillumbik's creative arts industry.

Council will explore public/private partnership opportunities as well as investigate other council owned facilities/sites.

We are seeking funding of approximately \$49M from the *State and Federal* Government to build a Regional Art Gallery.

Artists in residency Laughing Waters

The Laughing Waters locale holds cultural and environmental significance to the Shire of Nillumbik, and is renowned for its rich colonial and indigenous history. The Laughing Waters properties of Birrarung and River Bend (both owned by the State Government of Victoria) have served as a unique artist residency (managed by Nillumbik Shire Council) for more than a decade. Not only are the properties integral to the artistic and architectural heritage of Nillumbik, both have contributed greatly to the wider creative sector across Melbourne and the country more widely.

Both properties are in urgent need of structural repair. Upon investment of capital works, the properties will be serviceable again with the prospect of commencing a fresh artist residency program.

We are seeking funding of \$200,000 from the Federal Government to undertake appropriate remediation works

Diamond Creek outdoor pool/leisure facility

The Diamond Creek Outdoor Pool and Leisure Facility is a well-loved but aged community facility that requires investment to ensure its can meet community needs, safety requirements and improved economic and environmental sustainability objectives, now and into the future.

We are seeking State and Federal Government funding of \$200,000 to fund the work required to complete the master plan and detailed design ahead of subsequent development.

Public Transport Improvements

Local Area Bus Review

The objective to increase the frequency and hours of operation of public transport services, look for opportunities to make bus routes more efficient and better co-ordinate bus and rail timetables.

We are seeking commitment from the *State Government* to undertake a Local Area Bus Review across the Northern Metropolitan Partnership Region.

Diamond Creek Road upgrade and grade separation of Diamond Creek Road/Greensborough Bypass intersection.

Diamond Creek Road is a key route between Yan Yean Road and Greensborough Bypass. The road is over capacity and traffic volume on the road likely to increase, particularly with the completion of North East Link Project (NELP). NELP is likely to increase traffic during construction and operations which will further burden the local municipal road network. This will result in a high level of unplanned work and unbudgeted investment and aggrieve and inconvenience the local Greensborough and Plenty communities, and those passing through these areas.

Diamond Creek Road needs to be upgraded, in conjunction with the removal of the roundabout at Civic Drive. This intersection is also the site of a significant number of crashes, and intersection upgrades will significantly improve safety. Grade separating the intersection, would significantly improve traffic flow on Diamond Creek Road, reduce congestion on local arterials and provide better access to the future North East Link.

What we are seeking is commitment from the State Government for widening of the eastbound carriageway of Greensborough Bypass from Plenty River Drive to Civic Drive, widening both carriageways of Diamond Creek Road from Civic Drive to Yan Yean Road, replacing the existing roundabout intersecting Diamond Creek Road and Civic Drive with grade separation for Diamond Creek Road to Greensborough Bypass traffic. Project will improve safety and provide better access to major arterials following Yan Yean Road duplication and North East Link impacts. Project to include a landmark feature as the entrance to Nillumbik.

Completion of Aqueduct Trail between Greensborough and Yarra Glen

Completion of the Aqueduct Trail would provide a viable route for bicycle users and pedestrians to cross the shire, encouraging active communities. It would also service as an attraction for trail riders to come to Nillumbik to use the trail.

What we are seeking is \$500,000 from the *State Government* for commitment to the plan the construction of the Aqueduct Trail between Greensborough and Yarra Glen.

Redevelopment of Eltham Rail Station and removal of the level crossing (Diamond Street Eltham)

The current station at Eltham requires a rebuild to cater to the increased patronage, improve access and amenity.

We are seeking support from the *State Government* to plan and deliver the full redevelopment of Eltham railway station precinct. This includes increased carparking capacity, improved bus interchange, Disability Discrimination Act compliant railway station access, removal of Diamond Street level crossing and better integration of retail development along Main Road.

Hurstbridge Train Line Upgrade

Stage 2 of the Hurstbridge Line Upgrade proposes significant upgrades to the line in the municipalities of Banyule and Nillumbik. In Nillumbik, it is proposed to duplicate the line between Diamond Creek and Wattle Glen railway stations. Planning for the project is now underway and officers from Nillumbik Shire and Banyule City Councils have had discussions with the relevant State Government Authority, the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA), regarding the scope of the works, urban design and planning approval for the project.

These discussions have revealed some significant shortcomings with the project for both councils. For Nillumbik, these shortcomings particularly comprise four limitations in the scope of the works, including three that have significant safety implications for the Diamond Creek community.

We are seeking commitment from State Governments for improvements to the Hurstbridge Line Upgrade Project Stage 2, particularly to:

- Provide safe pedestrian crossing points of the duplicated line near schools;

- Enable removal of the Main Hurstbridge Road, Diamond Creek level crossing at a future stage;
- Deliver upgrades to Diamond Creek station that are required to support the project; and
- Consider low cost, high impact additions to significantly enhance community outcomes, such as a shared trail along the rail corridor between Greensborough and Eltham.

Redeveloped Diamond Creek railway station and level crossing removal (Main Hurstbridge Rd, Diamond Creek)

The current station at Diamond Creek requires a rebuild to improve access and amenity, increase patronage to the station and to significantly improve connectivity across the activity centre, including for pedestrians and vehicles.

We are separately advocating for improvements to the Hurstbridge Line Upgrade Stage 2.

We are seeking the *State Government* to commit to the redevelopment of Diamond Creek railway station precinct, ideally as part of the Hurstbridge Line duplication project. This includes Disability Discrimination Act compliant railway station access to both Platforms 1 and 2, a new pedestrian crossing across the railway track adjacent to Diamond Valley College, removal of Main Hurstbridge Road level crossing and better integration of adjacent retail development.

Bicycle Cages at Diamond Creek, Wattle Glen and Hurstbridge railway stations

This installation of bicycle cages at train stations would encourage people to ride to the station, decreasing the demand on parking, and also providing positive health benefits to the community.

What we are seeking State Government to install bike cages at Diamond Creek, Wattle Glen and Hurstbridge railway stations.