

**02.03**

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

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Proposed C139bawb

**02.03-1**

**Settlement and Housing**

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Settlement in Baw Baw is influenced by its proximity to Melbourne and its access to pristine natural areas, agriculture and lifestyle opportunities. As a peri-urban municipality, within 100 kilometres of Melbourne’s CBD, it offers attractive lifestyle choices in urban and rural settings. Due to its location Baw Baw has been experiencing some of the highest growth rates in Victoria and faces growth pressures.

It is estimated that the population of Baw Baw will grow from 52,020 in 2018 to 75,820 in 2036 at an average growth rate of 2.1 per cent (ViF 2019).

Population growth has centred on the two largest towns, Warragul and Drouin which are within five kilometres of one other. They are developing complementary roles with Warragul as a Regional Centre supported by Drouin with a secondary role. Both Warragul and Drouin benefit from train stations, open space areas, community facilities and a strong mix of uses within their boundaries or on their periphery. Precinct Structure Plans have been prepared for the growth areas of Warragul and Drouin linking integrated neighbourhoods with infrastructure provision. Considerable growth is being experienced in both centres which is predicted to continue to 2036.

Trafalgar, Longwarry, Yarragon and Neerim South are medium-sized townships with strong local service roles and capacity to accommodate moderate growth in the Shire.

The Shire is also characterised by numerous small towns and rural settlements with local service centres reflecting the intensive nature of surrounding primary industries. These small towns and rural settlements have limited capacity to accommodate growth. The cost of providing infrastructure and their environmental sensitivity, landscape values and heritage significance limit the growth capacity of some towns. Environmental constraints such as bushfire, steep topography and soil erosion further restrict intense growth in some small towns and rural settlements.

The Shire offers a variety of housing choices to cater for different needs of the growing population. It has sufficient land supply to meet growth projections up to at least 2036 without adjusting the existing boundaries of the townships.

The settlement hierarchy in Baw Baw is as follows:

**Main towns – High growth**

Warragul (15,760 people in 2016) is the main centre within the Shire and a Regional Centre within West Gippsland providing residential, commercial, health, education, cultural, industrial activities and agricultural research.

Drouin (12,380 people in 2016) is the second largest service centre providing residential, commercial and industrial development primarily for its residents and a localised catchment.

**Secondary towns – Moderate growth**

Trafalgar (3900 people in 2016) provides commercial, industrial, educational, recreational and residential services.

Yarragon (1650 people in 2016) is mostly residential with a strong tourist-oriented shopping destination, industrial and commercial land.

Longwarry (2000 people in 2016) is located among farm land east of the Bunyip River and fulfils a residential, commercial, retail and industrial role.

Neerim South provides for industrial, commercial, education, health, recreational, community and residential uses on the main road north from Warragul.

### Small towns and rural settlements – Limited growth

Willow Grove is a small service centre with potential as a dormitory town for nearby employment centres and a tourism and recreation destination due to its lakeside location. The town is seweraged but with a limited capacity.

Thorpdale is a small town nestled among the Strzelecki Ranges and provides a local service role to residents and the surrounding farming community on a key road to South Gippsland. Its location in a proclaimed water supply catchment limits further development unless reticulated sewerage is provided throughout the town.

Rawson is a small modern town set high in the Mountain Rivers region, close to the Thomson Dam and snowfields, state forest, national parks and farm land. Bushfire risk restricts future growth.

Darnum provides a ‘country town’ lifestyle with a variety of lot sizes for residents. Due to a lack of infrastructure, future growth will be limited to taking up land within the Township Zone rather than expanding beyond.

Nilma is a small town split by the Princes Freeway providing for residential development at a variety of densities, with some small business. It is not connected to sewerage.

Neerim is a small settlement providing rural lifestyle choice and community facilities. Its expansion is constrained by a lack of reticulated sewerage as much of it is located within a water supply catchment.

Neerim Junction is a small settlement providing for daily service needs. Its expansion is constrained by a lack of reticulated sewerage, given its location within a water supply catchment.

Jindivick is a settlement providing convenience retailing, community facilities and some tourism opportunities. The settlement is constrained by lack of reticulated sewerage.

Rokeby is a dormitory settlement with basic community facilities spread over two hills next to the Tarago River with expansion constrained by the lack of reticulated sewerage services.

Buln Buln is a small dormitory town surrounded by hills and high-quality agricultural land. It is not connected to sewerage.

Noojee is a small town set around the Latrobe River at the foothills of Mt Toorongo, and fulfils a service and community role as well as supporting the timber industry. Its forested environment, bushfire risk and lack of reticulated sewerage provides challenges for increased development.

Erica is a small town set high in the foothills of the Baw Baw Ranges. The lack of sewerage infrastructure and bushfire risk restricts future growth areas.

Tanjil Bren is an isolated sub-alpine town set in forest on the side of Mt Baw Baw. The lack of sewerage infrastructure and bushfire risk restricts future growth.

Walhalla is one of the State’s most important heritage assets and tourism attractions due to its gold mining history and complex landscape that is subject to multiple hazards, including bushfire. It is not connected to sewerage.

The **strategic directions** for ‘Settlement’ planning in Baw Baw are to:

- Develop Warragul and Drouin as sustainable high-growth settlements.
- Accommodate a medium level of growth in Trafalgar, Yarragon and Longwarry, consistent with their more limited infrastructure.
- Provide only moderate growth in Neerim South due to the environmentally sensitive setting.
- Develop the smaller communities, particularly those outside the Princes Freeway corridor, as follows:
  - Modest to limited growth for Willow Grove and Thorpdale curtailed by reticulated sewer capacity or availability.

- Limited to restricted growth in Erica, Rawson and Noojee to support tourism uses while recognising the risk of bushfire.
- Low or no growth for smaller settlements Tanjil Bren and Walhalla which are the subject to environmental and servicing constraints and bushfire risks.
- Limited growth for the other small towns and rural settlements which are subject to servicing constraints, environmental constraints and bushfire risk.
- Direct growth to townships that have reticulated infrastructure, such as water, sewerage and stormwater drainage.
- Discourage rezoning of land for urban uses outside of township boundaries as shown in respective framework plans.
- Retain high visual quality of rural landscapes, including preservation of view corridors and vantage points within the urban area.
- Respect the existing rural village character of smaller towns while providing for infill development.
- Limit further dispersed housing on agricultural land by defining preferred locations for rural lifestyle living within and surrounding existing settlements.

### 02.03-2 Environmental and landscape values

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The native biodiversity assets of Baw Baw include threatened flora and fauna, habitats and vegetation communities protected by Commonwealth and State legislation. Several assets are located within the relatively pristine, vegetated mountain areas of the Shire. There are also considerable biodiversity habitats and values within landscapes that have been extensively cleared for agriculture and urban development. Key biodiversity values requiring protection and maintenance include:

- Flora and fauna within mountainous vegetated areas including the Baw Baw Frog, Leadbeaters Possum, Sooty Owl, Tall Astelia, Cool Temperate Rainforest, Sub-alpine Wet Heathland.
- Fauna that reside in cleared and developed areas including Giant Gippsland Earthworm, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Growling Grass Frog, Dwarf Galaxias, and Australian Grayling.
- The Strzelecki Gum that has been extensively cleared for agriculture and urban development, with 90 per cent of the remaining flora now comprised of scattered trees on freehold land.

The **strategic directions** for 'Environmental and landscape values' in Baw Baw are to:

- Protect the Shire's natural attributes including its tall Ash forests, alpine herb fields, reserves and parks and its native animal species.
- Protect the attractive rural landscape of Baw Baw of forested mountains, cleared hills and river flats.

### 02.03-3 Natural resource management

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Most of the Shire is in the headwaters of the Latrobe River system, forming part of the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Authority area. A smaller area on the western edge of the Shire lies in the Westernport Bay catchment area that is covered by the Port Phillip and Westernport Bay Regional Catchment Strategy. A small area in the south of Baw Baw is located within the Tarwin Catchment.

Most rural land in Baw Baw is highly suitable for both intensive horticultural and broadacre pasture based farming due to its fertile soils, high rainfall, temperate climate, varied topography and proximity to markets.

The majority of the Shire's agricultural land can therefore support a wide range of agricultural enterprises to a high production level. Areas of particularly high quality land are located around Ellinbank, Yarragon, Trafalgar, Neerim South, Noojee, Thorpdale, and Allambee.

The current rural lot pattern in the Shire has resulted from the subdivision of Crown Allotments in the late 1800s and more recent post war subdivisions. A more intensive lot pattern is evident in the area around Warragul (16 hectares) while a more expansive lot pattern is evident elsewhere with minimum lot areas of 50 and 60 hectares.

While dwellings in rural areas have been integral to the development of Baw Baw as a farming area, there have been increasing pressures for subdivision and residential development for rural lifestyle rather than for farming purposes. These increasing pressures have the potential to impact on agricultural land use particularly broadacre farming such as dairying and its contribution to the economy. The increasing number of dwellings in rural areas is also altering the rural landscape of Baw Baw.

Baw Baw contains strategically important natural resources that require protection for future exploration and extraction purposes.

The Gippsland brown coal resource is an asset of national and State importance, suitable for the generation of electricity, alternative fuels and other products. The Gippsland coalfields extend into Baw Baw. The Gippsland Coalfields Policy Area map, as shown in Clause 14.03-1R identifies the coal resource areas within the Shire.

The Shire's timber resources are substantial and mainly comprise forest on public land.

The sand deposits in Trafalgar are another major resource of State significance and economic value. The Trafalgar Sands area has potential for development as a major sand supply region to the Melbourne Metropolitan Area and to Gippsland in the medium to long term.

The **strategic directions** for 'Natural Resource Management' planning in Baw Baw are to:

- Maintain the integrity of the land resource and its protection from unplanned urban and residential encroachment.
- Protect and develop the Shire's resources relating to dairying, horticulture, grazing, timber production, tourism and high quality water.
- Support the coal, sand and timber industries subject to protecting the rural environment and landscape.
- Protect agricultural uses by minimising land use conflicts between agricultural and sensitive uses.
- Restrict dwellings and small lots that would result in the loss of productive agricultural land or that prejudice agricultural production.
- Encourage the consolidation and restructuring of existing fragmented agricultural landholdings.
- Support the ecologically sustainable management of timber resources.

### 02.03-4

#### **Built form and heritage**

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*The Baw Baw Shire Heritage Study Stage 2 (2011)* highlighted the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the Shire. It identifies the historic use, development and occupation of the land since first contact between Indigenous people and the first European explorers and settlers.

All townships in Baw Baw have a sense of place and 'character' influenced by a variety of factors including heritage assets, topography, 'farmland' setting, vegetation and garden suburban settings.

- **Warragul** is characterised by a collection of heritage buildings, trees and structures and garden suburb development, with hilly topography and a farmland setting.

## BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME

- **Drouin** Its urban character can be attributed to views to surrounding farmland and mountain ranges, garden suburb development in the older parts of the town, a collection of buildings, trees and structures of heritage significance and flowering gum lined boulevards.
- **Trafalgar** has a character attributed to its setting at the base of the Strzelecki Ranges amongst farmland, affording views to adjacent hills and distant ranges. It has a flat topography and a garden suburb residential settings in the older parts of town. It includes a range of buildings of heritage significance particularly along the main streets.
- **Yarragon** is located among farmland, with the floodplain of the Moe River to the north and the Strzelecki Ranges to the south. Most buildings date from the 20th century and while detached housing in established gardens is the predominant streetscape, buildings with heritage significance add character to the town.
- **Longwarry** has a character influenced by a mix of housing styles and ages centred on the railway and main roads. Street trees and wide road reserves with views to farmland, distant hills and ranges emphasise its country town atmosphere.
- **Neerim South** is located atop a ridgeline to the east of the Tarago Reservoir and Bunyip State Forest. Views to the Reservoir, surrounding bush and countryside are key to its identity. Heritage buildings and established plantings add to its urban character.
- **Willow Grove** comprises a wide, open main street with houses set well back, contrasting with the lesser setbacks of the commercial strip. The town enjoys views to mountains, surrounding farmland and Blue Rock Lake.
- **Thorpdale** comprises a historic town centre precinct with picturesque commercial buildings along a main street, local reserves and parks and a compact urban area offering a country town lifestyle with views to surrounding hills and farms.
- **Rawson** is a compact town based on a late 20th century subdivision layout, with homogenous housing styles and streetscape treatments, set amongst picturesque mountain and bushland scenery. Its low key commercial centre is recognised as a heritage precinct.
- **Darnum** township is set on relatively high ground surrounded by countryside affording views to surrounding ranges, farmland and mountains. The Princes Freeway splits the town in two. It comprises wide streets with a variety of housing that have deep setbacks. Town approaches are enhanced by roadside vegetation.
- **Nilma** is characterised by areas of older interwar and post war detached housing set on large blocks with established gardens, contrasting with newer areas of modern housing on large low-density parcels. The town enjoys views to surrounding countryside and Warragul township. It has wide road reserves and a mix of gravel and sealed roads.
- **Neerim** is defined by well vegetated low density residential development with wide nature strips. It is surrounded by farmland and views to West Gippsland, Bunyip State Forest and the Baw Baw Ranges.
- **Neerim Junction** has a character defined by main-street buildings with heritage significance, low density residential development on large parcels contrasting with commercial buildings set close to the street frontage, set amongst the greenery of roadside vegetation and planting and views to the surrounding forest and farmland.
- **Jindivick** is a settlement spread along a ridgeline with expansive views to surrounding farmland, forests and distant panoramas. It is characterised by low density development set amid established gardens, several buildings and structures of heritage significance and wide road reserves and established trees.
- **Rokeby** is defined by a layout oriented around the 1890s rail line to Noojee. Its centre is characterised by a park, community facilities as well as some buildings of heritage significance. With winding roads and bushland vistas, the town also enjoys views to the surrounding hills and farmland.



## BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME

- **Buln Buln** has a character defined by views to nearby farmland on surrounding and higher hills, trees and buildings with heritage significance and mostly low density residential development of detached houses on large lots in garden settings.
- **Noojee** is surrounded by a forested and mountainous landscape. Comprising a range of heritage buildings and relics, it is arranged in a linear fashion around a 1890s rail line and includes walking tracks in tranquil settings.
- **Erica** is set in cleared farmland, bounded by forest in the middle distance and views to the mountains and ranges nearby. This setting and its small pre-World War 2 heritage town centre with detached housing on large lots with established gardens define the town's character.
- **Tanjil Bren** has a character defined by detached housing at low density surrounded by forest. It provides visual links to the past timber and gold history in and near the town.
- **Walhalla** is one of the State's most important heritage assets and tourism attractions due to its gold mining history and complex landscape.

The **strategic directions** for 'Built form and heritage' planning in Baw Baw are to:

- Protect heritage places as the municipality experiences growth and development.
- Protect and enhance the individual character of each township.
- Encourage preservation of view corridors and vantage points within urban areas and from the Princes Highway.

### 02.03-5 Economic development

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The *Baw Baw Economic Development Strategy - (2018)* identified that the local economy is driven by industries related to dairy and other agriculture, with the sector providing local employment, manufacturing, food processing, farm gate tourism and agricultural service industries. Agricultural production is a significant contributor to the economy of the Shire and the region, particularly in relation to the dairy and beef cattle industries. Other industries driving the local economy include timber, education, health, transport, tourism, service industries and commerce.

Tourism is another key driver of economic growth and prosperity with most tourism related to the natural environment and agriculture. Key attractions include natural assets such as the Baw Baw National Park and Mountain Rivers region, heritage towns such as Walhalla, Yarragon and surrounds and recreation facilities such as skiing, cycling, walking and horse riding trails.

The **strategic directions** for 'Economic Development' are to:

- Facilitate a strong economy and employment base by building on Baw Baw's natural strengths.
- Use Baw Baw's proximity to Melbourne and its transport infrastructure to promote it as a key processing and distribution hub for the metropolitan and Gippsland regions.
- Promote the natural resources of Baw Baw as being central to the region's industrial sector.
- Attract investments into agri-business that supports farming and primary production.
- Facilitate diversification of the economy into new and innovative sectors.
- Promote the region as a tourist destination comprising high quality scenic landscapes and diverse attractions.
- Protect high quality agricultural land and its productive capacity.

### 02.03-6 Transport and infrastructure

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Baw Baw is served by a quality transport system which includes the Princes Freeway and the Gippsland rail line. Pressure on the transport system from increased residential, commercial and industrial development will mainly be experienced along the Princes Highway and railway corridor, although Council has limited input into public transport and major roads.

## BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME

Development contributions plans have been prepared to fairly and equitably fund provision of infrastructure and services within the identified growth areas of Warragul and Drouin. A Shire-wide Development Contribution Plan applies for all new dwellings and urban subdivision to assist in open space and community infrastructure provision.

Infrastructure provision should be coordinated and integrated to meet the requirements of proposed development and may be staged in accordance with development needs.

The **strategic directions** for ‘Transport and Infrastructure’ are to:

- Build on the Shire’s location as the major transport corridor between Melbourne and the State’s energy centre in the Latrobe Valley.
- Encourage a consistent approach to the design and construction of infrastructure.
- Encourage improved infrastructure and services to support economic growth.
- Ensure that new subdivision and development is provided with a satisfactory level and standard of infrastructure.
- Design public open spaces, including parks, squares and trails to reflect the rural identity of the Shire.
- Discourage development that does not demonstrate appropriate on-site waste water disposal.