

REGIONS, HERITAGE, AND PLANNING

REGIONS OF VICTORIA

Introduction

Since 1974 Victoria has been divided into twelve statistical divisions, the standard Australian Bureau of Statistics regions, which are combinations of local government areas forming coherent socio-economic zones. This involved the splitting of three local government areas: the Shires of Cranbourne, Healesville, and Pakenham are partly in the Melbourne Statistical Division and partly in the East Central Statistical Division. For certain statistics, the local government areas so split have been included wholly in statistical divisions as follows: Pakenham Shire – East Central Statistical Division; Cranbourne and Healesville Shires – Melbourne Statistical Division.

These statistical divisions correspond with the regions adopted by the Victorian Government in October 1981 except in the cases of the Metropolitan region and, because of consequential effects, the Central Highlands and Loddon-Campaspe regions. The Victorian Government's Metropolitan region comprises the Melbourne and East Central Statistical Divisions, and the Shires of Bacchus Marsh and Gisborne. Statistical divisions are subject to change as local government areas change and as socio-economic conditions change.

Physical characteristics of statistical divisions

Melbourne Statistical Division

As the Melbourne Statistical Division is largely occupied by the metropolitan area, it is of comparatively small agricultural significance. Nevertheless there is quite a range of soils, climates, and agricultural activities.

The basalt plains stretch eastwards from the western plains to the mountains and hills. The topography of the west is quite flat, and hilly to mountainous in the north and east. The Mornington Peninsula comprises the southern boundary.

The predominant soils are Podsollic derived from basalt, sedimentary rocks, and unconsolidated sediments, and Red-Brown Earths. Other soils are the Krasnozems (red loams) and the peaty soils (very acidic, black, and consisting mainly of organic matter over clay subsoils). Rainfall varies from 475 mm in the west to 1,250 mm in the east.

The western area has been well regarded for its oaten hay and barley production. The peripheral shires in most of the remainder of the Division support mainly small farms with dairying, orchards, poultry raising, flower growing, and stud farming of cattle, horses, goats, and sheep. Some of these areas are under wooded hills and mountains, although the land is much clearer to the south.

A continuing development has been the proliferation of subdivisions into small farms, many of which are owned by city residents. Many of these properties are kept for recreation; others for small commercial ventures. Recreation is in fact a substantial industry in this Division, as there are a number of golf courses and country clubs. Another trend has been the industrialisation of areas away from Melbourne, e.g. Dandenong and Hastings, which has resulted in additional inroads into the rural areas.

Barwon Statistical Division

Barwon is one of Victoria's smallest statistical divisions and lies west of the south-west corner of Port Phillip Bay. It comprises nine shires. In the south, the main topographical feature is the Otway

Ranges, a steep mountainous region with high rainfall, ideally suited to forestry. To the north is the flat volcanic plain which is used mainly for grazing as well as a little cropping. Intermediate between these extremes are the coastal plains which have a mixture of soil types and topography.

Most of the soils are Podsollic, being derived from basalt, unconsolidated sediments, and sedimentary rocks. Others are Red-Brown Earths. The average annual rainfall varies between 450 mm and 1,800 mm in various parts of the Division.

About 75 per cent of the Division is under primary production. The main agricultural industries are dairying, and beef and sheep raising, but there are also quite significant areas of cereal and oilseed crops as well as grass seed production, potatoes, beekeeping, pigs, and poultry. Forestry is also important in and around the Otway Ranges.

There has been a tendency during recent years for farmers to leave the dairying industry. Beef and wool production are the main activities on the volcanic plains, and prime lambs are raised in the southern areas of the Division.

South Western Statistical Division

The South Western Statistical Division covers a large portion of the south-west of Victoria, being bounded on the south by the sea and the west by the State boundary with South Australia. It is mainly located on volcanic and coastal plains, with some rising country in the south-east of the Division. Rainfall varies from about 500 mm in the extreme north to over 1,400 mm in the Otway Ranges in the south-east corner.

Few rivers flow through the area, and those that do show a considerable variation in the content of dissolved salts. Lakes in the basalt areas vary from fresh water to brine. Underground water is widely available at fairly shallow levels with salt content varying from 1,000 to 7,000 parts per million.

Many of the soils have developed from lava flows with acid grey loams and sandy loams coming from the older flows. Some of the more recent lava has not weathered greatly and the soils from it are skeletal with stony rises. The dominant soil types are derived from basalt and unconsolidated sediments. Sub-dominants are derived from sedimentary rocks and the miscellaneous soil group. Soils in the red gum areas have a sandy topsoil with clay below.

A large portion of the Division is farmed; the remainder is covered by natural forest or planted commercial forests. Substantial areas of the farmed land are under improved pasture.

The Western District, within this Division, is a traditional woolgrowing area. Sheep numbers declined during the 1970s but are now recovering. Dairying is popular along the southern section and prime lambs and beef cattle are also raised. Numbers of the latter have begun to decline.

The main crops are oats, wheat, and barley. Oilseed crops such as sunflowers, linseed, rape, and lupins have gained popularity during recent years.

Central Highlands Statistical Division

The Central Highlands is an important statistical division, with Ballarat near its eastern boundary and Ararat near the west. The Division is a mixture of extinct volcanic cores, basaltic plains, and uplifted sedimentary strata of Ordovician age. Elevation ranges from about 200 metres to 500 metres above sea level. The Great Dividing Range passes a few kilometres north of Ballarat, and the Pyrenees Range enters the north-west corner of the Division. The western section stretches into plains, and finishes near the Grampians.

Three soil types predominate in the region: deep friable red volcanic soils, mainly in the east; grey duplex soils on the basalt plains; and shallow hard-setting duplex soils on the Ordovician sedimentary rocks. Annual rainfall varies from 425 mm to 1,050 mm. The main streams which rise in the area are the Wimmera, Avoca, Loddon, and Campaspe Rivers, flowing north, and the Mt Emu, Fiery, Hopkins, Leigh, Woody Yallock, Moorabool, and Werribbee Rivers flowing south.

About 75 per cent of the Division is farmed, the remainder being Crown land and forest. Most of the Crown land and forest is in the Daylesford-Trentham, Smythesdale, Enfield, and Mt Cole areas.

The main agricultural produce comprises wool, prime lambs, potatoes, beef, cereals, and oilseeds, with some dairying and small seeds production. The plains produce very heavy crops of oats and good crops of wheat.

Improved pastures have increased the carrying capacity of the plains and have improved soil fertility, which in turn assists crop production.

Wimmera Statistical Division

The Wimmera is one of Victoria's largest statistical divisions. It stretches broadly from the South Australian border in the west to Stawell in the south-east and Hopetoun in the north-east. It is

primarily a large plain, sloping gently to the north, but has the distinctive Grampians on its south-east border.

The dominant soils groups are Grey and Brown soils of heavy texture (alkaline clay loams and clays over clay subsoils — friable calcareous self-mulching grey soils) and Podsollic soils derived from unconsolidated sediments. The sub-dominant groups are Red-Brown Earths, Mallee soils, Podsollic soils derived from sedimentary rocks, and the Miscellaneous Soil Group. Rainfall ranges from 350 mm to 880 mm a year.

Most of the area, except the uncleared desert country in the north-west and south-west of the Division, is farmed.

Cereal growing is the dominant agricultural industry, with heavy crops of wheat being produced in good seasons. Barley is grown primarily on the Rosebery Ridge between Beulah and Hopetoun, while oats and rye, which are grown in the lighter soils, are also produced. Some sunflowers have also been grown in recent years.

Grazing, which encompasses both the running of some excellent medium to strong Merino sheep flocks in the south and of fat lambs in the north, is also important. A number of beekeepers also use the flowering eucalypts to advantage.

Northern Mallee Statistical Division

This large Division extends along the Murray Valley from the Kerang area to Mildura and on to the South Australian border. It is essentially a vast plain, sloping to the north-west from about 100 metres above sea level in the south to 35 metres at Lake Cullulleraine. Low superficial land forms of ridges and dunes are also present.

The dominant soil group is the Solonized Brown soils (Mallee soils) — alkaline brown sandy soils over more clayey, highly calcareous soils. Several sub-dominant groups occur. These are Grey and Brown soils of heavy texture, Red-Brown Earths, and Alluvial soils. This Division is relatively dry, with rainfall ranging from 240 mm to 370 mm a year.

Most of the Division has been cleared for agriculture except for two major tracts of country along the South Australian border — the Sunset Country, south-west of Mildura, and the Big Desert which extends south into the Wimmera Statistical Division.

The main broadacre farming is cereal growing, usually associated with wool and prime lambs. Wheat is the principal crop, followed in order by barley and oats. Irrigated land around Kerang and Swan Hill is used for mixed farming. Cattle (dairy and beef) and prime lambs are the major enterprises but there is an increased interest in cropping.

Horticulture is concentrated around Mildura, Robinvale, and Swan Hill. A high proportion of Victoria's grapes (for drying, table use, and wine), and citrus fruits are grown in this Division. Stone fruits (including avocados), edible tree nuts, and vegetables are also grown.

Loddon-Campaspe Statistical Division

The Loddon-Campaspe Statistical Division stretches from the Central Highlands in the south to the Murray River. The hilly and woody country of the south gives way to flat, treeless plains. Red-Brown Earths (slightly acid brown loams over alkaline clay subsoils containing calcium carbonate) are the dominant soils. Sub-dominant groups are Grey and Brown soils of heavy texture (both friable and dense grey soils), Podsollic soils derived from sedimentary rocks, and Alluvial soils. Rainfall ranges from about 350 mm to 650 mm a year.

Sheep and cattle grazing predominate in the south of the Division, while sheep-cereal properties are the main form of farming in the central and western areas. Dairying predominates in the irrigation areas in the north of the Division. Intensive piggeries and poultry farms are also important.

Goulburn Statistical Division

The Goulburn Statistical Division, which occupies an area on the east side of central Victoria, encompasses a wide range of topography and agricultural activities. From the mountainous part of the Great Dividing Range in the south, it stretches to the Murray River as a wide plain, much of which is known as the Goulburn Valley. In the north-west corner, the principal landscape features are treeless plains, old watercourses, riverside woodland, and swamps. The Goulburn, Loddon, and Campaspe Rivers drain the area to the north.

The main soils are Red-Brown Earths and Podsollic soils derived from sedimentary rocks (grey loams, silty loams, and fine sandy loams with a more or less bleached surface over clay subsoils). A sub-dominant group of alluvial soils occurs. Rainfall varies from 430 mm to 1,400 mm a year.

Most of the area, apart from the wooded hills, is farmed. Farming activities range from dairying (in

the river valleys and highly productive irrigated country) to cereal growing; orchards, especially in the Shepparton and Cobram districts; and grazing of beef cattle and sheep. Irrigated crops of wheat or oilseeds (principally sunflowers) are becoming important. Vegetables are also grown.

During recent years there has been a decline in dairying, especially in the dry country, and, in the early 1970s an increase in cattle raising. However, cattle numbers have declined with the fall in prices for beef and the effects of drought.

In irrigated areas the threat of salinity has hastened the adoption of improved irrigation management techniques including laser levelling, and sub-surface pumping to lower water tables, and the provision of additional water for irrigation.

North Eastern Statistical Division

The North Eastern Statistical Division is characterised by mountainous country and some highly productive river valleys. There is also some arable country in the north-west corner of the Division.

Two dominant soil groups occur — Podsollic soils derived from sedimentary rocks and a miscellaneous group comprised of Podsollic, Peaty, and Skeletal soils, and red loams of the Mountainous regions. Rainfall varies from 500 mm to 1,900 mm a year.

Traditional agricultural industries include cropping, especially around Rutherglen, Yarrowonga, and north of Benalla. Prime lamb production is usually associated with cropping. Beef cattle and to a lesser extent dairy cattle are in the higher rainfall areas and the river valleys. Wine grape production takes place around Rutherglen and the King River Valley. Most of Victoria's tobacco is grown in the north-east, mainly in the Ovens Valley near Myrtleford. Lesser crops include apples, stone fruits, edible tree nuts, and hops.

There have been in recent years increases in the area of vines and lucerne, and in the area irrigated. The area sown to lupins has stabilised after several years of increases. Dairying and hops have decreased recently due mainly to falling profitability.

East Gippsland Statistical Division

East Gippsland covers a large area of south-eastern Victoria with the Great Dividing Range in the north, the New South Wales border on the north-east, and Bass Strait on the south. The Division can be divided into five main areas: (1) The coastal plain from south of Sale to Lakes Entrance, including the Gippsland Lakes. Here there are mainly sandy to sandy loam soils over clay or gravel. Sheep and cattle are the main industries in this area; (2) The foothills, undulating country which carries mainly sheep and cattle; (3) The highlands, carrying sheep and cattle on undulating to steep country; (4) The river valleys beginning in the west at the sources of the La Trobe and McAlister Rivers, and running east along the Tambo, Snowy, Cann, and other rivers; and (5) The productive irrigation (dairying) district around Sale and Maffra.

Soils are mainly Podsollic, derived from sedimentary rocks, and the Miscellaneous Soil Group. The sub-dominant group comprises Podsollics derived from unconsolidated sediments. This Division has quite a wide range of annual rainfall varying from 520 mm west of Bairnsdale to 1,150 mm in the mountains.

Apart from major areas of development in the plains in the western part of the Division which includes the irrigated area around Sale and Maffra, and the Omeo and Gelantipy districts, most agriculture is confined to the river valleys.

Beef cattle, sheep, fine wool production, and dairying are the most important livestock industries in the area. There is little broadacre cultivation. Vegetables are grown on the river flats at Lindenow and Orbost. The main crop, beans, is harvested green and sent to Melbourne to be frozen. Other crops include sweetcorn, capsicums, and gherkins.

Central Gippsland Division

Central Gippsland is bounded on the south by Bass Strait, on the north by the mountains, on the west by an irregular line running north from near Wonthaggi, and on the east by a diagonal line passing just east of Sale. The main part of the area consists essentially of two mountain systems — the foothills of the Great Dividing Range and the Strzeleckis — separated by an east-west trough known as the Great Valley of Victoria. The remainder consists of low-lying hills and coastal plains.

The average rainfall ranges from 900 mm to 1,150 mm over most of the area, falling to about 700 mm at Yarram and 760 mm in the vicinity of Western Port Bay. The Division has a large number of soil types ranging from sands to clays and loams, with some Acid Swamp soils and Calcareous sand dunes. The dominant group is the Podsollics, derived from sedimentary rocks and unconsolidated sediments. Krasnozems also occur.

A substantial portion of rural establishments in the Division are under pasture. The main improved pasture species are perennial ryegrass, cocksfoot, white clover, and subterranean clover.

The main agricultural and pastoral industries are dairying, beef raising, fat lamb production, and intensive horticultural and vegetable production (including potatoes). Other industries include forestry, coal mining, and sand mining. There are several milk processing factories and an important paper mill in the Division.

East Central Statistical Division

The East Central Statistical Division forms a very narrow corridor between what is virtually Melbourne's metropolitan area and Central Gippsland. The East Central Statistical Division stretches from Bass Strait to the Upper Yarra area of the Great Dividing Range.

The soils are mainly Podsollic, derived from sedimentary rocks and unconsolidated sediments (sandy loams over clay subsoils and deep sands). Other groups include peaty soils and Krasnozems (red loams). Rainfall is fairly uniform at about 900 mm to 1,000 mm a year. Some of the Division is still under forest, scrub, and Crown land. There is a relatively small orchard industry around Pakenham, some berry growing and nut tree plantations in the hills, and dairying in some of the valleys. There are a number of small farms engaged in potato growing and flower production, and some cattle and horse stud properties.

Statistical districts

For statistical purposes, certain areas comprising local government areas or parts thereof have been designated statistical districts. In Victoria, these are the Albury-Wodonga, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Morwell, and Shepparton-Mooroopna Statistical Districts. Maps showing these districts can be found in the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Estimated Resident Population in Local Government Areas, Victoria, Preliminary* (3203.2) (annual). For additional information on statistical districts refer to page 128 of this *Year Book*.

PLANNING IN VICTORIA

Ministry for Planning and Environment

The Ministry for Planning and Environment was created on 1 September 1983, following amalgamation of the Department of Planning and some sections of the Ministry for Conservation and the Department of Crown Lands and Survey. In March 1985 the Ministry assumed responsibility for Building Control (previously with the Local Government Department). At the same time the Minister was given responsibility for Aboriginal affairs. On 1 July 1985 the Planning Branch of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) was amalgamated with the Ministry, which then assumed responsibility for metropolitan Melbourne.

The Ministry's major objectives were to ensure the balanced use and development of land and the efficient and equitable allocation of resources in Victoria; to safeguard, monitor, and improve the quality of the environment; and to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the State.

Structure of the Ministry

The central Ministry consists of an Executive and seven divisions responsible to the permanent head — the Secretary for Planning and Environment.

Regional Planning Division

This Division is responsible for all statutory and strategic land-use planning matters previously undertaken by the Ministry and the Planning Branch of the MMBW. It operates on a decentralised basis, with five metropolitan and six country regional offices, and a central co-ordinating group.

Specialist Services Division

The Specialist Services Division is responsible for high level policy analysis, research, and forecasting; legislation and the Planning Act Review; sectoral monitoring; provision of drafting/cartographic and urban design services to the Ministry, councils, and other clients; and for building control regulations.

Heritage and Environment Division

This Division combines work previously undertaken by the Ministry's Heritage Unit and the former Environment Division. It includes such programmes as the Historic Buildings Fund, Victoria National Estate Committee, Area Conservation Studies, Coastal Planning, Environment Effects, the State Conservation Strategy, and the State of the Environment report.

Property Analysis and Project Management Division

The Ministry is now involved with many implementation projects — such as Southbank, the Yarra River beautification and boulevard landscaping — in association with other government agencies and community employment programmes. Responsibility for the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme also means close involvement with zoned reservations for roads and open space. These property-related activities are combined in this new Division.

Community Information and Education Division

This new Division has been established to improve communications between the Ministry and the community. A public access centre and shopfront has been set up on the ground floor of the Olderfleet Buildings in Collins Street, Melbourne, to deal with planning inquiries, plan inspection, certificate issuing, and sale of publications. The Division is also responsible for publicity, promotions and publications, a library resource centre, and a new Education Branch.

Computer Systems Division

This new Division provides computerised support systems for the Management Services Division, and planning information for all the Ministry's professional activities.

Management Services Division

This Division is responsible for the Ministry's internal administration including finance, personnel, records and office services, and Planning Appeals Board support staff.

Statutory authorities

A number of statutory authorities are responsible to the Minister for Planning and Environment. The work of these bodies is co-ordinated with the work of the central Ministry, and in some cases Ministry staff provide support services.

Environment Protection Authority

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was established under the *Environment Protection Act 1970*. It is responsible for protecting and improving the environment of Victoria through the management of wastes, control of noise, and prevention of pollution. The Authority develops State environment protection policies to provide objectives and guidelines for environment management and to form the framework for the control of waste discharges to the environment. The Authority is also responsible for the control, licensing, and monitoring of waste discharges, investigation of pollution complaints, and research into pollution and environmental management.

Historic Buildings Council

The Historic Buildings Council was established under the *Historic Buildings Act 1981*. It took over the functions of the Government Buildings Advisory Council in 1983.

The Council makes recommendations to the Minister on buildings of historic or architectural importance that should be added to the Register of Historic Buildings, or on designated buildings that should be removed. It also reports to the Minister on matters relating to the Historic Buildings Act and on other heritage planning matters.

Planning Appeals Board

The Planning Appeals Board is an independent board established by the Victorian Parliament in 1981 to hear and determine appeals formerly heard by the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal, the Environment Protection Appeals Board, the Drainage Tribunal, the Local Government Arbitrator, and the Port Phillip Authority.

Victoria Conservation Trust

The Victoria Conservation Trust was established under the *Victoria Conservation Trust Act 1972* for public, scientific, and educational purposes to encourage and assist in the preservation of areas that are ecologically significant, of natural interest or beauty, or of historical interest; the preservation of wildlife and native plants; and the preservation and creation of areas for scientific study relating to any of the matters referred to above.

The Trust provides a means by which people who are concerned about the preservation of Victoria's natural resources can bequeath or give properties or funds to the community for conservation purposes. Land donated to the Trust can be handed over for management, where appropriate, to other organisations. In addition land owners may covenant with the Trust to ensure the preservation of land of conservation value.

Land Conservation Council

The Land Conservation Council carries out investigations and makes recommendations to the Minister on the balanced use of public land in the State. It also makes recommendations on areas to be proclaimed as water supply catchments and on land-use policies in these areas. Public land includes unalienated Crown land, reserved forest, land vested in the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, and land vested in other State authorities (with some minor exceptions), but does not include land within a city, town, or borough, or land owned by the Commonwealth Government.

Since its establishment the Land Conservation Council has examined the use of public land on ninety-two per cent of the total area of the State, and has published final recommendations covering sixteen of the seventeen areas into which the State has been divided. In addition, five special investigations of public land have been completed at the direction of the Victorian Government, including a review of land-use in the Alpine areas. Community needs and demands change with time and consequently the Council reviews areas about every ten years.

Regional planning authorities

Victoria has a system of regional planning authorities established to deal with matters affecting whole regions as well as the individual municipalities within them. The powers and responsibilities of these bodies vary considerably.

Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation

The Corporation was established under the *Albury-Wodonga Agreement Act 1973*. It is responsible for undertaking, in conjunction with the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation and the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation, the development of a growth complex at Albury-Wodonga. The Corporation is responsible to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, but may act as a responsible authority under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Geelong Regional Commission

The Commission was established under the *Geelong Regional Commission Act 1977* and is responsible to both the Minister for Planning and Environment and the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources. Its functions are to plan and manage development within the Geelong area; to protect areas of natural beauty which are of special significance to the region; and to provide services and facilities for the people in the Geelong area. The Commission is also responsible for ensuring that the community is involved in the planning of future developments within the region.

Latrobe Regional Commission

The Latrobe Regional Commission was established under the *Latrobe Regional Commission Act 1983*. It is basically responsible to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources but is also responsible to the Minister for Planning and Environment for the preparation of a regional strategy plan.

Loddon-Campaspe Regional Planning Authority

The Authority was established under the *Town and Country Planning Act 1961*. Twenty-four municipalities are represented on the Authority. One of its main functions has been to prepare a regional strategy plan. The Authority administers an interim development order over the Bendigo-Whipstick area — an area of regional conservation significance. Ministry staff assist in servicing the Authority.

Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority

The Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority was established under the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority Act 1976* to implement Statements of Planning Policy for the Yarra and Dandenong Ranges and prepare and review a Regional Strategy Plan.

The Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority Regional Strategy Plan was approved by the Victorian Government in 1982 and councils in the region are required to prepare planning schemes to implement it.

The Authority is required to involve the public in planning matters and to review permit applications on matters of regional significance.

Western Port Committee

The Western Port Committee was established under the *Town and Country Planning (Western Port) Act 1981* to advise the Minister on planning matters within the Western Port region, which

covers the Shires of Flinders, Hastings, Mornington, and Phillip Island and parts of the Shires of Cranbourne and Bass, plus French Island. The Committee is staffed by the Ministry's Cranbourne office.

Major current projects

Restructure of the planning system

A major Ministry priority is the simplification and rationalisation of planning legislation and procedures. A complete overhaul of the Town and Country Planning Act began in 1983. The main aim of the planning act review is to streamline and simplify the planning process and to broaden the scope of planning legislation. It is proposed to integrate development controls from other legislation into the new planning system, including new procedures arising from the review of the Environment Effects Act.

As part of the review of the metropolitan planning system, a working group of local and Victorian Government representatives is exploring the possibility of strengthening local government by grouping metropolitan councils on a regional basis.

Metropolitan programmes

Land-use strategy for Central Melbourne. In 1984 the Ministry prepared a land-use and development strategy to guide the physical development of Central Melbourne during the next decade. The strategy — *Central Melbourne: Framework for the Future* — was developed with the co-operation of a number of other government departments.

It examined five key sites where economic activity will be stimulated, all of which include extensive holdings of government-owned land. These are: La Trobe Central, the area around the Museum Station, the State Library, Museum of Victoria, Queen Victoria Medical Centre, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology; Flagstaff, around the Flagstaff Station and the Mint; Southbank, on the south side of the Yarra opposite the Central Business District; Station Pier, on Port Phillip Bay; and Jolimont railyards.

As part of the strategy, major environmental programmes have begun. Most significant of these are the changes to the Yarra River banks between Princes Bridge and Queens Bridge, and a new pedestrian path and river bank landscaping on the north bank.

Western Suburbs Action Program. The Victorian Government established the Western Suburbs Action Program in 1982 in the municipalities of Altona, Footscray, Sunshine, Werribee, Williamstown, and parts of Keilor and Essendon (St Albans and frontages to the Maribyrnong River).

The programme is being run by the Ministry for Planning and Environment with support provided from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, the Environment Protection Authority, the Western Region Commission, and the municipal councils.

Following public consultations (stage 1) and investigations of planning issues (stage 2), projects worth more than \$17m have been approved, started, or completed. These environment improvement projects focus on parklands, roadsides, and the main waterways (Maribyrnong River and Kororoit Creek).

The programme is continuing in all nine municipalities in the Melbourne Western Region — Altona, Bacchus Marsh, Essendon, Footscray, Keilor, Melton, Sunshine, Werribee, and Williamstown.

Eastern Suburbs Action Program. The Eastern Suburbs Action Program was launched by the Victorian Government in November 1984 in the municipalities of Croydon, Dandenong, Knox, Nunawading, Ringwood, and Springvale. All of these municipalities have experienced a major period of rapid growth and substantial physical changes over the last two decades.

The three stage process involves identification of major planning and land-use problems, investigations of key issues, and development of action plans.

Metropolitan strategy. In September 1983 the Victorian Government approved Part 1 of Amendment 150 to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme. The amendment seeks to contain urban growth and to make optimum use of existing resources and of the substantial private and public investment in the metropolitan area. In introducing the amendment the Victorian Government recognised the role of central Melbourne as a major activity centre of the metropolitan area and the need to make it more exciting, interesting, and attractive. It also recognised that the majority of the population lives in the suburbs and that an increasing proportion of the population also works in the suburbs. Consequently, the need to organise suburban growth and improve the suburban environment is a key factor of the strategy.

District centres. Part 1 of Amendment 150 to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme introduced a series of objectives and a strategic framework for the planning of Melbourne. An essential part of this framework was the designation of fourteen district centres: Box Hill, Camberwell Junction, Cheltenham/Southland, Dandenong, Footscray, Frankston, Glen Waverley, Greensborough, Moonee Ponds, Oakleigh, Prahran, Preston, Ringwood, and Sunshine.

These are to be community centres second only to the central business district, providing a range of facilities and services to people living in surrounding regions. Government offices, shops, personal and business services, libraries, and other municipal facilities will be encouraged.

The programme of planning and physical improvements at district centres is continuing in consultation with councils and government agencies.

The Ministry has contributed funds for improvements in these centres in conjunction with local councils. Many of these improvements have been directed at making the centres more attractive to people, with new planting and paving schemes.

Rural programmes

Because of the general trend towards rural depopulation and small town decline, many areas in country Victoria are facing problems or issues which go beyond local boundaries and need to be dealt with at regional or State level. As well as working on the strategic framework for rural Victoria the Ministry is assisting a number of local and regional authorities prepare strategies for guiding future development and improving co-ordination of local government services. Priority is being given to the Loddon-Campaspe Regional Strategy Plan, the Ballarat Area Strategy Plan, a revision of the Statement of Planning Policy affecting the La Trobe Valley and an environmental strategy for the area, and a review of planning strategies in the Gippsland Lakes.

Heritage and environment programmes

State of the Environment report. The report is the first step towards a comprehensive approach to environmental quality monitoring and reporting. It outlines a framework for future State of the Environment reports, makes suggestions on appropriate indicators of environmental quality, and indicates considerations for future monitoring programmes. The report contains useful reference information on the Victorian environment. The draft State of the Environment report has been circulated to interested agencies for comment and is planned for publication in 1986. Future reports will be annual statements of environmental quality and trends in environmental conditions in Victoria.

Goldfields programme. This programme aims to improve Victorians' understanding of their Goldfields heritage through the Historic Towns Program for Maldon, Bendigo, Ballarat, and Talbot/Clunes; the Bicentennial Goldfields Restoration Fund; the Bicentennial Talbot and Clunes Project; the work of the Historic Buildings Council; continuing heritage planning at the local level; and surveys in the Shires of Bet Bet, Kyneton, and Waranga. These projects will be related to the Victorian Tourism Commission's Goldfields Tourism Strategy and the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands' site management and interpretation programme.

Coastal programme. The Ministry has responsibility for strategic planning and policy formulation for all of Victoria's coastline, and responsibility for preparing plans and controlling development in Port Phillip Bay.

Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes are priority areas for strategic policy development with statements being prepared by late 1986. An interim statement of policy for the whole coastline is also being prepared.

Aboriginal affairs

Aboriginal affairs was transferred to the Ministry for Planning and Environment in March 1985. Emphasis is being placed on establishing working contacts with Aboriginal community co-operatives. It is intended to redefine the respective roles of the Commonwealth and State agencies in the Aboriginal affairs field.

National Estate Grants Program

The Victoria National Estate Committee receives and assesses applications for funds made available through the Commonwealth National Estate Grants Programme.

Grants are made available to projects which assist the conservation of places in, or nominated for, the Register of the National Estate. In 1984-85 this included thirty-six projects with grants totalling \$450,000. Projects included surveys of gold mining towns and Aboriginal rock art, repair and restoration of historic buildings and bridges, documentation of historic gardens, and protection of

threatened species. The Committee is administered through the Ministry's Heritage Branch.

Victoria Archaeological Survey

The Victoria Archaeological Survey was created by the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act. It is responsible for investigation, protection, and management of archaeological resources in Victoria. Under the Act it is an offence to deface, damage, buy, or sell Aboriginal relics.

Activities of the Survey involve investigations to identify, catalogue, preserve, and protect sites of importance associated with Aboriginal history and culture, early European settlement, and coastal shipping.

The Survey maintains a register of all known archaeological sites in Victoria and has developed a State wide warden and inspector scheme for regular inspection of registered sites and identification of new ones.

Victoria is being progressively surveyed so that important sites can be identified and management plans formulated. (See *Victorian Year Book*, 1985 pages 1-33.)

Historic shipwrecks

The Maritime Archaeological Unit co-ordinates the surveillance of sites declared 'Historic Shipwrecks' to ensure that protection is effective. It administers the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981* (Victoria) for Victorian waters and is the delegated authority administering the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (Commonwealth) for offshore waters.