

## **Submission to Budget 2015-16 requesting \$20,000 to be allocated for progressing a Macedon Ranges Roadside Management Strategy**

### **Submitters:**

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We wish to make a verbal presentation in support of our submission at Gisborne on Wednesday 3 June.

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We submit that a Roadside Management Strategy be prepared for later adoption by the MRSC as a matter of urgency. We argue that the best of our remaining unspoilt roadsides are among the last vestiges of pre-European settlement and should be a foundation of environmental strategies.

Rural roadsides are not being “protected and sustained” as per Draft Budget Report 2015/16 3.2 Goal - *our environment and landscape is protected and sustained*” (Attachment 1). In fact they are being continuously degraded because no effective controls against destruction are in place.

To achieve effective protection three broad priorities need to be balanced. These are:

1. Biodiversity protection
2. Fire management
3. Road safety.

We submit that a roadside management strategy is essential for these priorities to be achieved.

The key tool required is mapping. We need data. Once it is known where the significant habitat communities are, added to firebreaks presumably known via the Municipal Fire Management Plan, and where road safety is a key issue, all parties can be trained and guided in their management of the particular roadsides they interact with.

To produce and adopt a MRSC Roadside Management Strategy, building on the foundation of the existing Draft Roadside Management Plan, data collection needs to be carried out, maps created, and specific and detailed principles, guidelines and action plans written. We suggest that \$20,000 be allocated for producing the strategy.

Without this strategic document the roadsides are being relentlessly destroyed.

Every day somewhere in the Shire, contractors, Shire staff, landowners and residents, all of whom have been deprived of the information and guidance they need to be good custodians, are degrading and destroying significant sections of our roadsides. Examples are provided in Attachment 2 *Rural Roadsides in the Macedon Ranges – Death by a Thousand Cuts*.

We submit that “*best practice environmental advice...*” (as per your Draft Budget Report, Attachment 1) is not being provided: for example nowhere on the MRSC website is there information for new residents or landholders on their roadside responsibilities. The *Roadside*

*Conservation Poster* (Attachment 3) is a concise example of the sort of community information that could be provided.

There are roadsides in this Shire that are sensational. These natural places regenerate themselves without cost or effort if we leave them in peace. We need a robust Roadside Management Strategy to enable us all to protect and maintain the network of biodiverse and beautiful roadsides which are a prized and priceless aspect of our Shire.

## **Conclusion**

We are asking for \$20,000 to be found in this year's Budget for the necessary resourcing to map and craft a robust and effective Roadside Management Strategy in a timely way. We've waited over 15 years already since the first Draft Roadside Management Plan was written. It is time that the technologies and skills of 2015 are brought to bear so that this crucial piece of MRSC strategic documentation is produced and implemented. We have committed Environment Officers who need this strategic instrument in place to be able to perform their essential work in protecting our precious environment. This requires extra resourcing for it to be done with momentum and speed.

## ATTACHMENT 1

**From Draft Budget Report 2015/16 for public display and comment until 29 May 2015, page 15.** We highlight in yellow the Council's key phrases, and in red our suggested addition.

### **3.2 Goal – Our environment and landscape is protected and sustained.**

#### **Description of Services –**

1. We develop policies, strategies and plans to achieve sustainable environmental outcomes.
2. We manage Council's conservation reserves and roadside vegetation, including management of weed control programs and implementing Environmental Management Plans.
3. We work with the community, 26 Landcare and "Friends of" groups by providing financial and in kind support, delivering public forums, events and a monthly Environment newsletter.

#### **Description of Priority Initiatives –**

To protect the natural diversity and uniqueness of the landscape and wildlife we will present an Environmental Management Plan for Hanging Rock and we will commence landscape assessments of proposed residential and commercial developments.

To ensure responsible management of our natural environment we will commence implementation of the Reserve Environmental Management Plans' signage strategy.

To plan for, and adapt to climate change we will present a new Natural Environment Strategy and we will commence the staged street light conversion to modern energy efficient lamps, to improve environmental sustainability. We will also become members of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance.

To continue to increase the focus on our environment we will allocate extra funding towards **mapping and preparing a Roadsides Management Strategy to inform roadside weed control and preservation of significant roadside environments**, bushland reserve management, street tree maintenance and drainage. We will also invest \$10,000 in the rehabilitation of Black Hill Reserve following the devastating bushfires.

#### **Statement of how we achieve our Goal –**

We provide best practice environmental advice and advocacy. These services should ensure that we effectively protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape.

#### **Indicator and Measure of our service performance –**

The Victorian Government does not have an indicator and measure of environment planning and policy.

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**ATTACHMENT 2** Aird handout to Councillors on 1 April 2015: Rural Roadsides in the Macedon Ranges – Death by a Thousand Cuts. PDF file

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**ATTACHMENT 3** Roadsides Conservation Poster. PDF file. This has been provided to us by the North Central Catchment Management Authority who used it in a past project.