
MEANDER VALLEY SCENIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

MEANDER VALLEY COUNCIL



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INSPIRING PLACE PTY. LTD.
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, TOURISM RECREATION
AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
PO Box 550 ROSNY PARK TASMANIA
PH 03-6244-7641 FAX 03-6244-7641
EMAIL: hepper@trump.net.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Meander Valley is widely recognised for the quality and diversity of its landscapes and the cultural, natural and scenic values such landscapes hold. These values are important not only to the economy of the region but also for their role in defining the community and what it means to live there. The strong community activism and debate over approaches to the sustainable management of the resources in the Meander Valley in recent years indicates the strength of the community's attachment to these values.

The Meander Valley Council is constantly seeking to improve its capacity to sustainably manage its resources and has been investigating a number of planning and management mechanisms (e.g. Natural Resource Management Strategy, Vegetation Management Strategy, Sport and Recreation Strategy). Past consultation processes have identified stakeholder concern with the loss of visual values in the Meander Valley and in particular the limited controls available to Council to protect areas of significant visual value from a range of threats.

The major issues affecting the scenery of the municipality have been identified through the research and consultation processes as being:

- loss of native vegetation generally;
- the impact of increased plantation forestry;
- the loss or deterioration of key elements of the Meander Valley area cultural landscape; and
- the impacts of buildings, roads and other development.

There is no formulated or agreed Statewide framework for the identification or assessment of scenic value in Tasmania, nor any models that are known to exist within Australia that have successfully tackled the management of scenic values at the local Council level in rural areas. Council recognised that an agreed framework would give some degree of certainty to all parties to the process and would help ensure that sustainability objectives are being met in a fair and orderly way.

The current study has been undertaken for the Meander Valley Council under the direction of a Steering Committee comprising representatives from Meander Valley Council; the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment; Private Forests Tasmania; the Forest Practices Board; Tourism Tasmania; and conservation organisations. It is to be considered a pilot study for other local councils in the State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the Scenic Management Strategy is to provide Meander Valley Council, the community and stakeholders involved in land use decisions in the Meander Valley area with detailed assessment of visual values, visual character and priorities for landscape management to better inform decision-making.

In order to achieve this purpose, the current study aims to assess, describe and classify the scenic character of the Meander Valley, involve the community in identifying this character, and to develop and outline potential mechanisms for the Council and community to help protect and manage these scenic values.

The study presents the following aim for management of these scenic values:

To sustainably manage the rate and scale of landscape change in the Meander Valley to protect the integrity of the visual character that is important to the economy, community and sense of place within the Municipality.

The desired outcomes to achieve this aim are:

retention of the natural and cultural values of the Meander Valley which under-pin the character of the landscape;

protection of the 'core' values of the scenery including viewing opportunities, visual associations and scenic features, particularly those which distinguish Meander Valley from other places;

recognition of the economic, environmental and social values which depend on the landscape character e.g. tourism, art, education and recreation;

reduction in the level of conflict within the community over development and the impacts of land use change on the scenic values; and

adoption of a set of measures that will allow Council to respond in a fair and consistent manner to the differing needs within the community for improved management of scenic values.

APPROACH

The methodology used in the Study:

defines boundaries and describes the landscape character of 27 *visual units* (based on travel routes, topographical viewing boundaries and local visual character similarities) within the municipality;

categorises these 27 visual units into 12 unique *landscape character sub-types* according to broad similarities in viewing and character between units;

identifies key vistas and viewpoints demonstrative of the character of each of the case study areas' visual units and develops criteria for determining *prime viewpoints* and other significant viewpoints across the municipality;

demonstrates a method for identifying the social significance of landscape features via community involvement in case study workshops; and

develops an analysis matrix for mapping *rural visual management priority* for landscapes based on the attributes of scenic quality, visibility and prominence from selected primary viewpoints, and the capacity of the landscape to absorb changes based on physical characteristics of the landscape.

The more contentious visual management issues lie in the areas of private land where there are commercial development pressures and where landowners have concern about over-regulation affecting their day to day operations. The Steering Committee chose three case study areas based on the character sub-types of 'Westbury Plains', a broad area between Carrick and Deloraine; 'Mole Creek Road Corridor', between Chudleigh and Mole Creek; and 'Gibsons', which includes the land beneath the Great Western Tiers between Meander and Caveside. Detailed investigations and consultation were undertaken in these three areas, which cover one-third of all the identified visual units, and nearly half of the private land in the Meander Valley.

STUDY OUTCOMES

The main outcomes of the Study are:

a detailed description of the visual character of the municipality, including statements of desired visual character for all visual units providing baseline data for future visual management in the Meander Valley municipal area;

a method for determining key scenic features and attributes, and the sensitivity to change of different landscapes, including detailed frames of reference for determining Scenic Quality within each case study area;

detailed GIS mapping of Scenic Quality, slope and landscape prominence, and viewing sensitivity for each case study area;

a 'Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes' to identify priorities for management across the diverse landscape of the Meander Valley with potential for broader application in rural areas throughout Tasmania; and

an outline of a range of possible measures for protecting and managing the scenic values of Meander Valley including statutory measures, non-regulative measures and policy guidelines.

In summary, the study allowed analysis of the highly varied landscape of the Meander Valley at a level not previously undertaken for any other municipality in Tasmania.

POTENTIAL MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTING AND MANAGING THE SCENIC VALUES

Planning Scheme

A draft Schedule for the protection of scenic values within Meander Valley has been prepared for potential inclusion within the proposed new Meander Planning Scheme, due to be prepared for the Meander Valley Council after June 2001. It adopts the format of more recent performance based planning schemes where the planning permit is based upon identifying 'acceptable solutions' and 'performance criteria' for guiding the approval process.

The key features of the draft provision are:

the provision will only apply where there is a development application requiring a permit under the planning scheme (i.e. it focuses on assessing scenic values when addressing the potential impacts of development applications);

all land in the municipality is identified as being within one of the three Rural Visual Management Priority Categories;

Council must approve a use or development where it can be demonstrated that the acceptable solutions for the respective Rural Visual Management Priority Category will be met ;

Council may approve a use or development that does not comply with the requirements for an acceptable solution provided it could demonstrate compliance with the performance criteria for that acceptable solution;

Council must refuse a use or development that does not comply with an acceptable solution for which no performance criteria is given or for a use and development that cannot meet the acceptable solutions or performance criteria; and

the onus of responsibility is placed on the developer to demonstrate compliance with the acceptable solutions and performance criteria within the development application.

There are also other potential opportunities available to Council in a planning scheme (e.g. Part 5 Agreements) and other regulative controls (e.g. Forest Practices Code) which may support landscape protection and management.

Assessment Processes

The adoption of any planning scheme provisions would also require assessing the appropriation of new processes for assessing development applications. Such a process would need to ensure comprehensive and consistent application of the scenery management principles by integrating specialist expertise, existing mechanisms to assess visual management and the resources of Council.

It is proposed that development applications, which have implications for scenic values, be split into two groups: those relating to plantation establishment/harvesting or native vegetation clearance, and other more general development applications (houses, industrial sites etc.). Development applications related to plantation establishment/harvesting and/or native vegetation clearance would have the opportunity to be referred to the Forest Practices Board in cases of particularly contentious or complex issues.

Non - Regulative Measures

A range of non-regulative measures can be used to help achieve improved protection and management of scenic values within the Meander Valley. These measures include:

- informing landowners of the ways they can help to protect and manage scenic values on their land;

- investing in a rural land management liaison officer at Council level with expertise in a range of areas including scenery management;

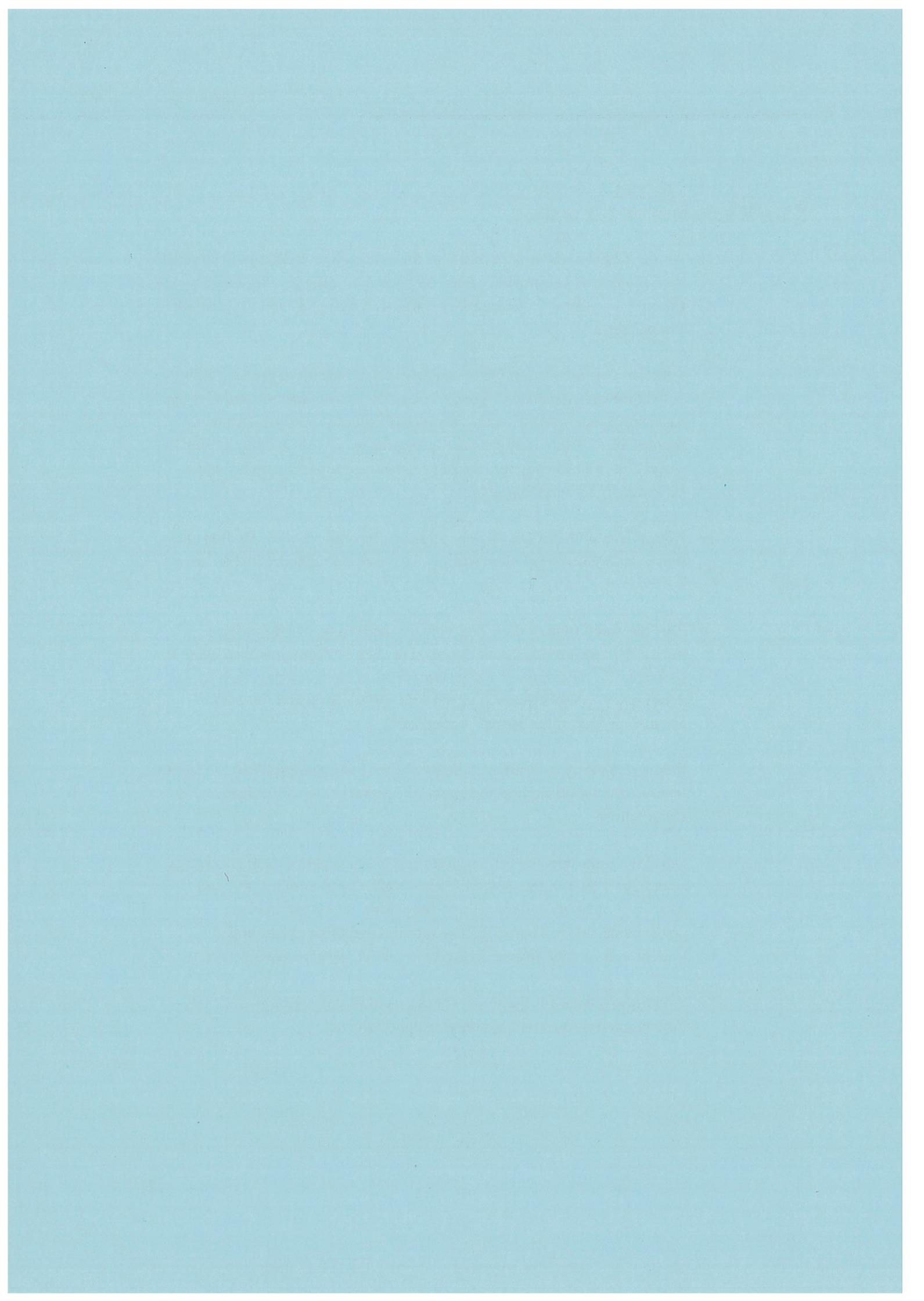
- developing voluntary agreements with landowners and investigating opportunities for incentives;

- encouraging negotiation between interests groups; and

- including visual management principles within existing management tools such as Whole Farm Plans, Catchment Plans and Rivercare.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assess the potential sources available for funding and assistance to complete the detailed visual character assessment and landscape priority mapping for the remaining nine (9) landscape character sub-types for the Meander valley Council area.
2. Integrate the outcomes of the Meander Valley Scenic Management Strategy with other strategic policies being pursued by the Council for achieving the sustainable management of the natural and cultural resources within the municipality. This would be most appropriately achieved within Council's 'Land Use and Development Strategy' developed to aid the review of the Meander Valley Planning Scheme.
3. Adopt the draft Schedule (3) as a statutory planning scheme schedule at a time and in a form consistent with the new planning scheme for Meander Valley.
4. Pilot the application of the scenic management strategy and guidelines during the lead-up time to the approval of the new planning scheme and in particular the description of the visual units, the methodology used to determine the rural visual management priority matrix and the criteria outlined in the draft Schedule (Appendix 3).
5. Investigate the opportunities for using the range of non-regulative measures identified within the report to support the protection and management of scenic values.
6. Develop means to make the outcomes and implications of the final strategy accessible to the community of Meander Valley by considering printed summary handouts, guidelines and flow charts for development applications, internet based information and involving community leaders/ community groups in discussion about scenery management.
7. Promote awareness of the scenic management strategy with other Local Councils and government agencies within Tasmania.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Meander Valley Council area¹ is roughly 3322 square kilometres in size and has a population of 17,300 (Map 1.1).

The municipality is noted for its broad diversity of landscapes and the abundance of natural features. (see *The Meander Valley Natural Resource Management Strategy*, Inspiring Place Pty Ltd, 2000, hereafter, the NRM Strategy). Examples of this diversity are:

- the extreme rainfall and temperature gradients across the municipality from west to east (wetter to drier) and from higher to lower altitude (cooler to warmer and wetter to drier);

- its complex geomorphology and resultant dramatic topography including:

 - representative examples of most of Tasmania's broad geological sub-divisions of surface rocks;

 - glaciated landscapes and landforms such as Cradle Mountain, at 1545 metres above sea level, perhaps Tasmania's most notable natural icon and the Central Plateau including the Walls of Jerusalem;

 - the upthrust escarpment of the Great Western Tier, a key symbol of the local community;

 - the karst landscapes centred on Mole Creek and Caveside; and

 - the many river valleys and broad flood plains of the lower altitudes of the municipality;

- the five major river systems which commence within its boundaries: i.e. the Forth and Mersey (arising from deep in the central highlands), and the Meander, Liffey and Rubicon Rivers;

¹ Hereafter the term Meander Valley is used to describe the whole Meander Valley Council Area.



Map 1.1 The Meander Valley Council Area
[Source Base Map: Land Information Branch, DPIWE]

the extent of fertile soils suitable for productive farming from cropping through to grazing and forestry activities;

the high degree of natural biodiversity resulting from the wide range of environmental variables (e.g. soil fertility, rainfall and altitude) including:

extensive areas of native vegetation which support diverse plant communities and over half of the State's native plant species, 33% of which are endemic to Tasmania, and

the rich diversity of fauna species including Tasmanian endemic species and a number of ancient relict invertebrate species;

a wide range of rural and cultural features and landscape patterns - many of historical importance dating back to the time of rural development and settlement of northern Tasmania.

These natural and cultural features are important not only to the economy of the region but also for their role in defining the community and what it means to live there. The strength of the community's attachment to these values is evidenced by the strong community activism and debate over approaches to the sustainable management of the resources of the Meander Valley, which has taken place in recent years.

The Meander Valley Council is constantly seeking to improve its capacity to sustainably manage its resources through a number of planning and management mechanisms with a vision of being "recognised as the best Council in Tasmania"².

During the course of the preparation of the NRM Strategy and earlier during the preparation of the Strategic Plan, stakeholders identified the loss of visual values among their concerns within the Meander Valley. They noted their particular concerns with the lack of effective controls within the Meander Valley Planning Scheme to protect areas of significant visual value from a range of threats. Issues were also raised regarding the impacts which controls might have on the income generating capacity of property owners.

In response to these concerns, the *Meander Valley Council Strategic Plan 1999* proposed that "landscape protection plans" be developed. The NRM Strategy was more explicit, saying that a consultancy should be established "to determine the extent to which areas in the community should be declared Scenic Protection Special Areas"³.

² Meander Valley Council Draft Strategic Plan July 1999. pg. 2.

³ Inspiring Place Pty Ltd. As previously cited. P. 72.

Within the community, the tourism industry has also raised their concerns that scenery was an important part of their product. In 1999 there were 187,400 adult visitors from interstate and overseas that stopped or passed through Deloraine representing about 35% of the total adult visitors to the State⁴. Sightseeing is one of the major activities undertaken by visitors and the strong topography, extensive areas of native vegetation inter-mingled with areas of productive farmland provide a stage for and a backdrop to a range of nature based tourism and recreational activities.

Within Tasmania, there are agreed legislative and policy frameworks such as the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997* and the *Vegetation Management Strategy Tasmania 1998* which define the conservation significance of various native plant communities and native plant and animal species.

The NRM Strategy included comprehensive mapping and conservation analysis of the native vegetation and fauna of the Council area at a community and species level. This mapping now forms a layer in the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) and provides a readily accessible means of evaluating the potential impacts of development on plant communities or plant and animal species of conservation significance. Where areas of known conservation significance are identified, performance criteria or other planning controls can be applied to guide development in such a way that values are protected whilst potentially enabling development to occur. Importantly, good mapping and agreed frameworks give some degree of certainty to all parties to the process that sustainability objectives are being met in a fair and orderly way.

Unfortunately, there is no agreed Statewide legislative or policy framework for the identification, assessment or protection of scenic values in Tasmania. There are however, guidelines and techniques, which give some direction as to how this might be done and which form the basis for the system of analysis proposed in the current study for Meander Valley.

⁴ Tasmanian Visitor Survey Results 1999, Tourism Tasmania

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to provide Meander Valley Council, the community and stakeholders involved in land use decisions in the Meander Valley area with detailed assessment of visual values, visual character and priorities for landscape management to better inform decision-making.

There are wide ranging views in the community about management of natural resources within the Meander Valley. However, Council has identified that the scenery of the Meander Valley is important to its residents and this study defines Council's role in managing these values in partnership with the community.

The principle aim for management of scenic values is:

To sustainably manage the rate and scale of landscape change in the Meander Valley to protect the integrity of the visual character that is important to the economy, community and sense of place within the Municipality.

The current study provides:

an assessment and description of the detailed visual character of the municipality, the issues affecting the management of its scenery values and review of the various approaches to landscape management (Chapter 2);

case studies covering around one-third of the municipality to demonstrate the application of visual assessment methods and approaches to managing visual character (Chapter 3);

identification of a range of potential mechanisms for protection and management of scenic values including non-regulative and regulative tools (Chapter 4); and

recommendations for Council to implement the study (Chapter 5).

Importantly, the current study has involved the community in identifying the landscape character of the Meander Valley, and developing and testing methods for visual assessment in three case study areas.

The desired outcomes for this Scenic Management Strategy are:

retention of the natural and cultural values of the Meander Valley which under-pin the character of the landscape;

protection of the 'core' values of the scenery including viewing opportunities, visual associations and scenic features, particularly those which distinguish Meander Valley from other places;

recognition of the economic, environmental and social values which depend on the landscape character e.g. tourism, art, education and recreation;

reduction in the level of conflict within the community over development and the impacts of land use change on the scenic values; and

adoption of a set of measures that will allow Council to respond in a fair and consistent manner to the differing needs within the community for improved management of scenic values.

The study was considered to be a pilot study for other local councils in the State.

1.3 APPROACH TAKEN

The current study is the result of seven stages of work as set out in Table 1.1 below.

Stage 1
Initial consultations with the Steering Committee and a review of existing documentation and visual analysis methods in use in Tasmania and elsewhere. Targeted consultation with a wide range of stakeholder groups to identify visual management concerns and interests.
Stage 2
Preliminary field investigations and detailed description of the visual character and the issues surrounding scenery management in the municipality including detailed analysis and description of identified visual units covering the whole Council area.
Stage 3
Selection of case study areas, in consultation with the Steering Committee, in which to develop and test a visual management matrix for the municipality. As part of the case study process, community workshops were held to discuss visual character and to identify viewing points within case study areas.
Stage 4
Completion of field investigations and visual assessment across the municipality.
Development of scenic quality frames of reference for each case study area based on community input and field research.
Conduct a pilot survey exploring the opinions of visitors about the scenic values within the Council area.
Stage 5
Identifying a range of tools for protection and management of scenic values in Meander Valley including draft provisions for the Meander Valley Planning Scheme.
Stage 6
Preparation of draft report and maps. Preparation of summary document for public comment and community discussion. Two community forums to review project outcomes and implications within the case study areas.
Stage 7
Revision of the draft report based on the Steering Committee and public comments. Completion of the final report.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In recognition of the differing views, the current study was undertaken for the Meander Valley Council under the direction of a Steering Committee comprising representatives from varied stakeholder groups, government and the community. The members of the Committee are:

✓ Jenny Dornauf	Elected Member MVC
· Kim Booth	Elected Member MVC
✓ John Pretty	Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment
✓ Richard Archer	Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
· Stuart Lennox	Tourism Tasmania
· John Hayward	Tasmanian Conservation Trust
David Elliot	Meander Valley Natural Resource Management Strategy
✓ Des King/David Bower	Private Forests Tasmania
· Tony Smibert	Local artist
Paul Ranson	General Manager MVC
Richard Jamieson	Town Planner MVC

1.5 ABBREVIATIONS

A number of abbreviations are used in the report as shown in Table 1.1.

Abbreviation	
AHC	Australian Heritage Commission
DPIWE	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
GIS	Geographic Information System
MCCG	Meander Catchment Co-ordinating Group
MVC	Meander Valley Council
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
PLUC	Public Land Use Commission
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service (a Division of the DPIWE)
RFA	Regional Forests Agreement
RPDC	Resource Planning and Development Commission
TALC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council
TFS	Fire Service Tasmania
TVS	Tasmanian Visitor Survey
VMS	Visual Management System (ref. Forestry Commission, 1990)
WHA	World Heritage Area

Table 1.1 List of Abbreviations Used in the Current Study

CHAPTER 2

ASSESSING AND DESCRIBING THE SCENIC VALUES OF MEANDER VALLEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The approach to assessment and management of scenic values described in this report is unique. As stated, there is no formulated or agreed Statewide framework for the identification or assessment of scenic value in Tasmania, nor any models that are known to exist within Australia that have successfully tackled the management of scenic values at the local Council level in rural areas. The processes that have been used in the past have often suffered from:

being too basic (e.g. zones within planning schemes);

being too limited in scope (e.g. do not consider social *and* aesthetic values);

being too difficult to integrate with other planning tools (e.g. guidelines without any statutory powers); and

a lack of political support for implementation.

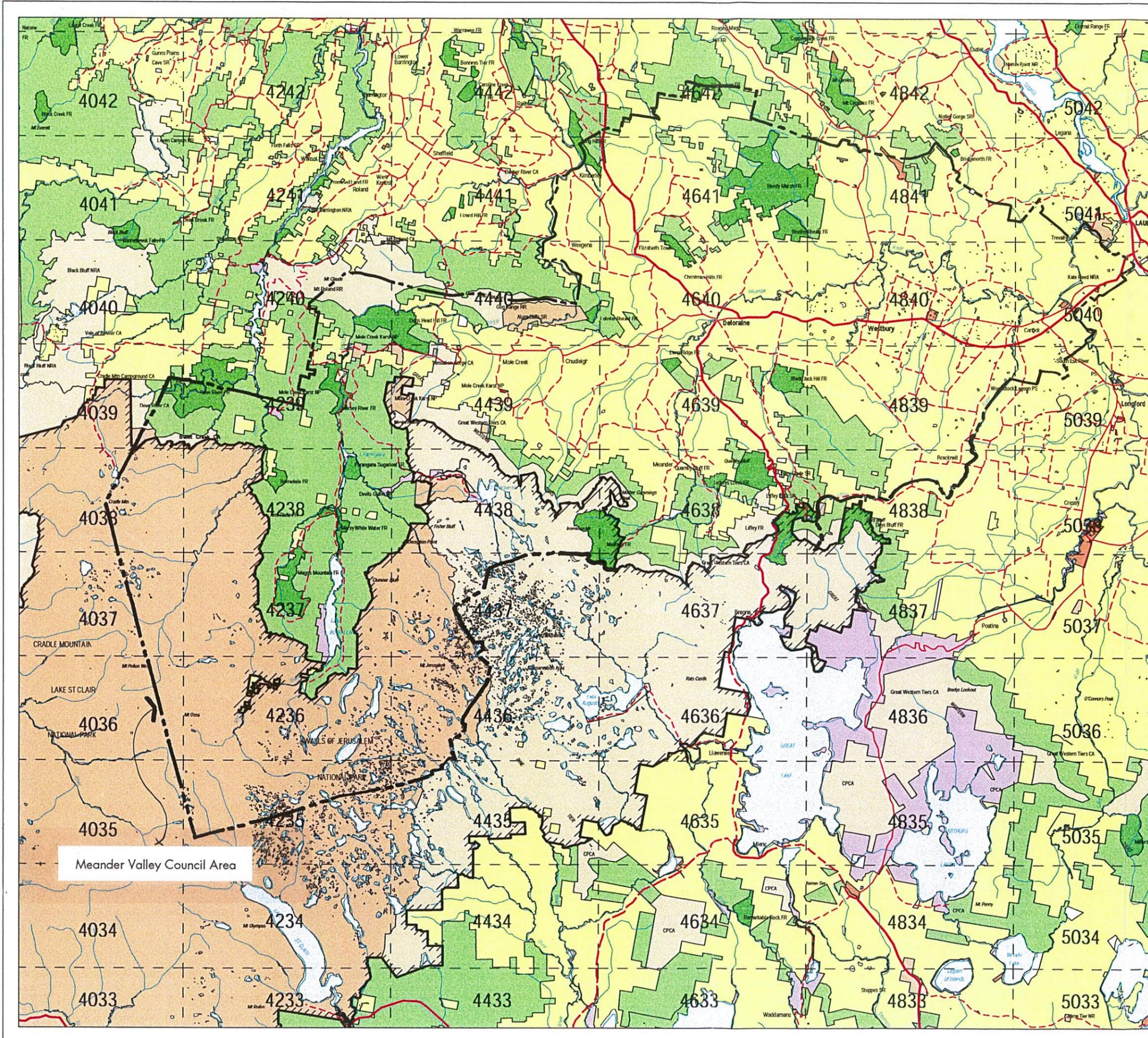
The assessment and description of scenic values is not a clear and simple process – people can look at the same scenery, observe different values and then develop strong opinions about the sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate change - what may be seen as a positive sign of progress by some people can be seen a threat by others. Formulating a process that aims to improve the objectivity in land use decision-making about scenic values brings into debate an array of issues about the economic, social and environmental values being sought by the community. Not surprisingly, some people remain skeptical about what can be achieved, some seek stronger regulation and powers to control developments and some see the protection of scenic values as a further constraint on their freedom as landowners or individuals and thus form a case for seeking compensation for such constraints. Nevertheless, in many cases, such as the protection of wild and highly scenic mountain landscapes, or the continuation of traditional agricultural use around villages, contention will not arise. However, in other situations less clear cut than the broadly agreed extremities demonstrated in these examples, consensus on the outcomes is unlikely to be achieved, and Council will need to respond to conflicts with the best interests of the wider community in mind.

2.1.1 Scope of Assessment

The scope of the project has been defined by resources available to the project and the costs involved in undertaking detailed field and research investigations. A large proportion of the Meander Valley Council area (around one-third) is already well protected for values which include scenic quality. The majority of this is in the South West Wilderness World Heritage Area (including the Central Plateau Protected Area, the Walls of Jerusalem National Park the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park). Accordingly the current study does not attempt to replicate existing scenery management/ visual impact assessment procedures in these locations. For this reason visual management priorities have not been assessed nor has an inventory of their scenic values been undertaken in such areas, except for where they contribute to the character of adjacent areas.

Similarly, management of forestry activities within State Forest for landscape management purposes are presently covered under the Forest Practices Code and are exempt from the regulation by Councils. However, non-forestry activities in State Forests remain under the aegis of Council's planning scheme and for this reason State Forests must be included in the inventory of scenic values and mapping of landscape management priorities.

More contentious visual management issues lie in the areas of private land (Map 2.1). Within these areas, three case study areas, covering one-third of all the identified visual units, and nearly half of the private land in the Meander Valley, are considered in significant detail. However, the processes and principles used within these case studies have been developed and formulated in the context of the scale and variety of the rural and natural landscapes of the entire Meander Valley and is likely to be replicable throughout the municipality.



- Hydro conservation area
- Commonwealth land
- Public Reserve
- Forest Reserve
- HEC land - Vested or Private
- National Park, Historic Site & Nature/State Reserve
- Municipal Reserve
- Non-allocated Crown land
- State Forest
- Water
- World Heritage Area
- Forest Reserve Annotation (100K)
- 25,000 DELM Map Sheet Index
- Coastline of Tasmania
- Primary Sealed Road
- Primary Unsealed Road
- Secondary Sealed Road
- Secondary Unsealed Road
- Tertiary Sealed Road
- Tertiary Unsealed Road
- Rivers and Lakes (500K)
- WHA boundary

NOTE: Any topographic data on this map has been supplied by DPIWE.

As at 1st December, 2001

Map 2.1 Land Tenure in the Meander Valley

(c) Copyright, Forestry Tasmania.

LOCATION MAP



Scale 1:375000

0 ||||| 5 Km

Prepared by: Gerald Coombe

Prepared For: Jerry De Grice

Date: December 21, 2001

Map Ident: plot011221_1

2.2 ISSUES AFFECTING THE SCENIC VALUES OF THE MEANDER VALLEY

Changes to the landscape of the Meander Valley have been occurring since before European settlement and will continue into the future. In many cases these changes have contributed to the landscape character that exists today. However, it is concern regarding the rate and scale of landscape change occurring recently that has provided the impetus for the current study.

The major issues affecting the scenery of the municipality have been identified through the research and consultation processes of the current study as being:

loss of native vegetation generally (Section 2.2.1);

the impact of increased plantation forestry (Section 2.2.2);

the loss or deterioration of key elements of the Meander Valley area cultural landscape (Section 2.2.3); and

the impacts of buildings, roads and other development (Section 2.2.4).

2.2.1 Loss of Native Vegetation

In 195 years since settlement of Tasmania by Europeans, over 30% of the municipality's vegetation has been cleared for agricultural and other purposes⁵. The bulk of this clearing has been on arable land, with more limited clearing on poorer soils and steeper sites. However, the trend towards an increasingly plantation-based forest industry has resulted in some native forests in previously marginal areas being replaced by plantation forests (see also Section 2.1.2). By the same token, a number of marginal areas previously cleared for pasture are now naturally regenerating through lack of use. Clearance of State Forest for forestry purposes continues in various parts of the Meander Valley, an activity which can temporarily scar the landscape.

Many parts of the municipality (see Appendix 1) have particular visual characteristics that are reliant for their scenic variety and quality on the remaining native vegetation in the landscape. This is the case where native vegetation contributes in a dominant way to the character of an area or where it contrasts with an otherwise cultured landscape (e.g. in the Deloraine area, as described in

⁵ Inspiring Place Pty Ltd. 2000 . As previously cited. Pg. 61

Appendix 1). Typically, native vegetation contributes to or defines an area's visual character where it:

features as naturally appearing forested hills, on hill slopes or as forested skylines;

is integrated into cultural landscapes as rounded dense clumps; or

occurs varied but generally continuous along roadsides.

Native vegetation provides visual links to the pre-European landscape and is therefore of cultural and historic importance to the Aboriginal community and to the wider Tasmanian community also. Indeed, the existence of native vegetation throughout the Meander Valley, in particular in cultural landscapes of the western and central regions, helps to create a uniqueness of scenery that sets it apart from the cultural landscapes of the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Europe.

Loss of native vegetation within the municipality, then, has the potential to adversely affect the unique scenery and to diminish the scenic quality of the municipality. Whilst guidance and controls over forestry activities to protect scenic values are set out in the *Forest Practices Code*⁶ and the accompanying *Manual for Forest Landscape Management*⁷, elsewhere in the State, and for other purposes, controls on removal of native vegetation where it impacts on scenic values are less strict and poorly defined.

2.2.2 Plantation Forestry

The establishment of hardwood and softwood plantation has occurred at varying scales within Meander Valley throughout the last century. More recently, however, the economic benefits, investment strategies and incentives available for plantation establishment as opposed to native forest regeneration have facilitated a growing emphasis in the forestry industry for plantation-based wood production, both on already cleared lower quality rural land as well as in the remaining areas of better quality native forest. This approach is further emphasised on public land (State Forest) by the Regional Forest Agreement policies, which effectively move the emphasis from native forest management and regeneration to more intensive plantation forestry⁸.

Since the 1970's substantial areas of plantation have been established within the municipal area both on cleared agricultural land and previously forested areas across all land tenures. Suitable growing conditions for plantation occur across more than

⁶ Forest Practices Board 2000. **Forest Practices Code 2000**. Forest Practices Board, Hobart, Tasmania.

⁷ Forestry Commission 1990. **A Manual for Forest Landscape Management** Forestry Commission, Tasmania.

⁸ There is some suggestion that the comprehensive-adequate-representative (CAR) reserve system required under the RFA has necessitated this shift to more intensive tree farming practices.

one-third of the municipality, covering cleared agricultural land and forest, largely in the western and central regions⁹. Accordingly, there is a continuing desire for further establishment of plantation in such areas by both Forestry Tasmania and private forest companies.

According to the *Forest Practices Code 2000*

"...the visual prominence of plantations arises from contrasting colour with surrounding vegetation and or agricultural clearings; rectilinear boundaries; consistent canopy texture, growth and height; and short rotation periods. In addition, plantations are often visible to the public from highways and populated areas."¹⁰

Potential conflicts with scenic values arise where plantations:

are established on previously cleared land and lead to the loss of important vistas from public viewpoints and roads and cause a loss in the traditional rural visual character;

are of a large scale and of similar age, as these create strong visual elements of continuous colour and texture, which become dominant in the landscape;

are poorly integrated with existing scenic features or replace features including exotic and native vegetation important to the visual diversity of the rural character of an area;

introduce harsh rectilinear edges or shapes and patterns which are inappropriate in the existing landscape; and/or

occur at elevated locations and/or on steep slopes where the visual impact of periodic harvesting is more prominent.

In general, plantations have a greater visual impact than conventional crops. This is due to their relatively extensive scale, long rotation periods relative to other crops (10 to 15 years) and height. These factors contribute to a semi-permanent appearance, and the blocking of views once trees reach greater than 3 metres thus potentially impacting on the openness of rural scenery. This may be compared to conventional annual crops, which are low (less than 2m), temporary in nature and contribute to seasonally changing rural character. Fruit orchards, which may be an exception to this principle, are generally more intensive and smaller scale than plantations, and as well are confined to less prominent lower slopes and sheltered locations.

⁹ MVC, 2000. **Areas Suitable for Plantation Forest in the Meander Valley Council Area**, Map Makers P/L.

¹⁰ Forest Practices Board 2000. p. 69

2.2.3 Cultural Landscape Management

Agricultural fields, historic homesteads, villages and exotic vegetation also contribute to the visual character and sense of place within the Meander Valley. Historic buildings and homesteads often occur isolated as individual buildings and therefore stand out as features in the landscape. Furthermore, historic hawthorn hedgerows, coniferous windbreaks and well-tended fields are common and readily identifiable features around Westbury and many other towns in older agricultural areas (see Appendix 1 and Section 3.2 for details). These features date from an earlier period of more intense, manual management of agricultural landscapes and are therefore reliant on continuation of maintenance practices (particularly traditional agricultural practices). Areas or vistas dominated by such features are therefore termed in this report 'cultural landscapes'.



Photo 2.2.1 Example of maintained and orderly cultural landscape features in Selbourne Road Westbury.

Highly scenic cultural landscapes have a strong functional appearance (e.g. productive, well-tended fields)¹¹, but as well contain individual scenic features such as historic houses surrounded by mature exotic trees. In general, the key characteristics of cultural landscapes are:

orderliness (maintained paddocks, fences, hedgerows, farm roads and farm buildings etc.);

productivity (presence of crop growth, green paddocks, livestock and rural management activities);

history (presence of old buildings and mature exotic trees); and

a degree of *openness* (with associated capacity for out-viewing, to see the sky and weather moving through).

One of the primary challenges for planning of such areas is to manage or guide the inevitable pressure for change in a way that ensures that the characteristic scenic attributes are maintained. With cultural landscapes, firstly there needs to develop community knowledge and insight into the value of such areas and further to establish an ethic of stewardship. This need for active management is derived from the notion that cultural features are most scenic when well managed to form a coherent pattern, for example hedgerows/ windbreaks where there is a consistency of growth and height with few gaps, as characterised by several such scenic features in the Meander Valley. In contrast, poorly managed rural lands, such as fields infested with weeds, or old and broken windbreaks, may detract from the overall visual values of cultural scenery.

The introduction of new settlers into traditional farming areas, whilst usually bringing a range of social benefits to the local community, can often introduce a suite of land management problems and conflict based on their unfamiliarity with rural management. This may include the introduction of urban buildings designs, weed invasion, fire control problems and erosion – all of which can have direct impact on the visual values.

Several examples of successful maintenance of landscape features are evident in the municipality and nearby. In Longford for example, a local farmer carries out regular maintenance and tending the historic hawthorn hedgerows on his property with the aim to provide attractive surroundings for farm-based historic accommodation cottages. Most of these hedgerows are in excess of 150 years old, dating from the very earliest European settlement of the area. These are greatly appreciated by overnight visitors and as well reduce the need to install new fences (if hedgerows were to be removed). Benefits occur also for the community as a whole through

¹¹ Naussaeur, J. I. *Caring for the Countryside: A guide to seeing and maintaining rural landscape quality*. USDA.

improved scenic amenity and preservation of features of historical and cultural interest.

As part of this current study, extensive field review and subsequent analysis of aerial photographs covering two time periods (i.e. 1984 and 1999) has given an initial but incomplete insight into the current condition of the municipality's windbreaks and hedgerows. Although not carried out in a structured or intensive manner, this analysis has shown both a deterioration in the quality, and decrease in coverage and extent of windbreaks and hedgerows. Clearly extensive areas of historic hedgerows and plantings still exist today, however the rate of change or loss to these is not known. A census of the extent and quality or condition of today's remaining areas would be valuable for determining management for this important and possibly diminishing aspect of cultural heritage.

However the protection of cultural landscapes is expected to become more difficult in the future with changing agricultural practices towards operating larger paddocks and pivot irrigation schemes.

Cultural features have also been identified in local landscape plans and reports, including landscape design work undertaken for the Bass Highway Westbury-Hagley bypass project and others which are outlined Section 2.3 below.

2.2.4 Buildings, Roads and Other Development

Extensive subdivision of rural land has occurred within the Council area for "rural residential" living since the mid 1970's. Sometimes this is integrated within productive farming operations. Further, substantial change in land use in the Prospect area continues today with further growth and expansion of urban Launceston and as well with the pressure for rural retreats close to the city fringe from alternative life-stylers, hobby farmers and retirees etc. Expansion of infrastructure has been concurrent with this housing growth including roads, electricity, and telecommunications (line based and mobile) and to a lesser degree sewer and water.

In areas of strong rural character, such as occur in the Meander Valley, new buildings, roads and other urban developments can impact on scenic values where they are poorly sited and designed and generally visually inconsistent with existing landscape character. Visual impact of these developments also arises from the loss of native vegetation and/or cultural features they may result in. However, construction of new roads may also provide improved opportunities for viewing the landscape and help to emphasise features within it. This latter effect is evident in

parts of the new Bass Highway, particularly the new overpass entry to Hagley, providing views to the north including St Marys church.

Developments that present a dramatic change to the nature of an area and are not functionally related to existing uses have particular impacts. Such changes include residential and rural-residential subdivision. The visual impact of subdivisions is most significant where they:

are prominent due to being sited in a location highly visible from nearby, well-traveled roads, or are on high elevations or steeply sloping land; and

require the removal of vegetation resulting in greater visual impact.

Together, the impacts of new development and infrastructure can affect scenic values, in particular through the loss of remnant vegetation, especially on hills. Similarly, agriculturally marginal bushland and topographically difficult sites are now being developed, usually with the removal of native vegetation. Ultimately these changes in the overall pattern and texture of the vegetation cover and an increasing dominance of buildings and other human created features results in diminishing quality of natural landscapes.

Similarly, rural and agronomical scenery does not easily accommodate modern larger-style industrial facility development. These facilities may appear at odds with their surroundings and inappropriate especially when located as isolated industrial estates within a rural setting. When approved, without careful siting or design considerations, they may result in permanent visual conflict and disruption to the rural character.

2.3 PREVIOUS APPROACHES TO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT IN THE MEANDER VALLEY COUNCIL AREA

This section provides a brief review of the scope of previous work relating to assessing scenic quality within the Council area and the limitations of these past investigations.

2.3.1 Visual Management System

In Tasmania, the most widely used method for assessing and protecting scenic values is the Visual Management System (VMS), developed by the Forestry Commission for assessing visual impacts and for identifying priorities for visual management in forest settings¹². The VMS determines the scenic value of each part of the landscape based on scenic quality, visibility and distance from public viewing areas and the relative sensitivity of viewpoints. From this, objectives giving the degree to which change should be visually evident are established. The VMS is accompanied by the parallel Visual Absorption Capability (VAC) procedure that describes factors that affect the capacity of the visual landscape to absorb proposed developments. Used together, these provide a means of assessing potential visual impact relative to the viewing importance of each area.

The VMS and VAC has been used by Forestry Tasmania for over 20 years and is based on visual management systems developed by the United States Forest Service which have been tested and applied to forestry worldwide over the past 30 years. Increasingly, the VMS, and to a lesser extent the VAC, are being used in Tasmania as the basis for assessment of other landscape settings and development types (e.g. tip sites, industrial parks, residential subdivision and tourism development) although the efficacy of translating objectives for visual management to these development types remains to be fully determined¹³. Nevertheless it has continued to provide a basis for assessment of visual effects of developments and to heighten the awareness of professionals across numerous disciplines to the importance of scenery and the potential to manage visual impacts in a systematic manner.

Within the Meander Valley Council area, the VMS has been extensively applied by Forestry Tasmania and the forestry industry to assist with the management of forestry operations, respectively on State Forests and on private land. In undertaking this work, Forest Planners rely on initial analysis and mapping (at 1:100,000 scale) of visual units and visual corridors as these apply to mainly forested public lands. However, this mapping is incomplete for the whole of the municipality, as it does not cover private lands and non-forest areas that the current study requires.

The VMS has described 12 landscape character types for the whole of the State. Landscape character types are broad classifications of "physiographic regions with common distinguishing visual characteristics"¹⁴ and are based on broad regional

¹² See: Forestry Commission 1990. **A Manual for Forest Landscape Management** Forestry Commission, Tasmania.

¹³ For further information, see the State of the Environment Unit 1996. **State of the Environment: Volume 1 Conditions and Trends**.

¹⁴ Forestry Commission as previously cited. Pg. 49

characterisations. An understanding of the character type enables the scenic quality of an area to be assessed using frames of reference detailed for each character type.

Three recognised short-comings of the VMS, are:

the regional nature of the landscape character types which the VMS defines are very broad areas and do not easily facilitate evaluation of the considerable variations in visual character which occur in smaller sub-areas, especially rural areas with local scenic variations and identity, within these broad landscape character types;

the VMS focuses on physical attributes to determine aesthetic values (i.e. it considers line, form, texture, scale, shape), in the absence of "social values", including: the religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational or social associations which people have for a place and in this case which affect their perception of its landscape quality; and

the VMS is directed towards forested landscape and its management and is more difficult to apply to non-forested agricultural landscapes such as found throughout the Meander Valley. This is due to the more open viewing and higher density of roads and community settlements in rural areas and the higher visitor numbers taking advantage of the easy access available - thus limiting the value of grading the relative sensitivity of roads.

2.3.2 Regional Forest Agreement

The Tasmania-Commonwealth Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process included investigations to identify which forested areas of the State have potential National Estate significance¹⁵. Four data sets were assessed in arriving at its recommendations including:

social values data-set which indicated that attachments and associations which were of significant strength, length and importance to the community¹⁶;

¹⁵ Public Land Use Commission (PLUC) 1997. **National Estate Report: Background Report Part H** Tasmanian Public Land Use Commission.

¹⁶ Context Pty. Ltd. 1996. **Tasmanian National Estate Social Values Project** report to the Tasmanian RFA Environment and Heritage Technical Committee.

key artistic and creative sources data-set which assessed the frequency of association by artists with a place, the number of media by which it was documented, public recognition of the artist or artwork and the strength of the artist's association with the place¹⁷;

forest planners data-set which recorded individual planners feelings and associations with a place; and

scenic quality mapping data set, which rated the scenic quality, based on the VMS frames of reference.

The RFA identified some 53 places across the State including several within the Meander Valley Council area (e.g. Alum Cliffs State Reserve, Devils Gullet State Reserve, Liffey Falls State Reserve, Meander Falls Forest Reserve and Wet Cave) as meeting an appropriate threshold of National Estate significance for aesthetic values. The process also identified 58 places as having social value including a number of sites within the Meander Valley Council area.

The thresholds for social value significance were the strength and length of community association with a place and the relative importance of the place to that group of people.

To meet the threshold for aesthetic value significance, a place also had to have important social values in addition to having been identified through the key artistic and creative source assessment and the forest planner's assessment. The scenic quality data set was then used as a corroborative layer of information and to aid in the identification of indicative area boundaries.

The RFA work has some importance to the current study in that it has identified, at least for forested areas, those landscapes which require the highest order of management to protect their recognised National Estate value. The RFA data sets also identified a range of places which had some local, regional and State significance for their social and/or aesthetic value.

For instance, the social value data sets were compiled through a community consultation process, which included a workshop at Deloraine. That workshop identified over 20 forest places, which were of local social value significance. The key artistic and creative source data set also identified a number of forest sites, which had some local significance for their aesthetic value.

¹⁷ Young, D. 1996. "Aesthetic Values Identification and Assessment - Stage 1 Artistic and Creative Sources" unpublished report to the Tasmanian Environment and Heritage Technical Committee

The RFA study is of value, therefore, to the current study but needs to be broadened in its scope to include non-forest areas and to be expanded to identify areas of local, regional and State significance as opposed to National Estate importance only.

2.3.3 Tamar Regional Master Planning Authority

Prior to 1991, planning for the eastern portion of the Meander Valley Council area (the ex-Westbury Council area) was managed by the Tamar Regional Master Planning Authority (TRMPA). During the period of its existence, the TRMPA was responsible for numerous studies of the region including the *Tamar Estuary River Management Plan*¹⁸, which is of relevance to the current study. That plan was part of a larger strategy to "preserve the very best of the Region's largely unspoiled environment" and was "derived from strong community feeling directed towards the scenic and amenity value of the Tamar River setting...".

Amongst the objectives of the plan were those, to "determine allowable levels of riverside activities within the regional land use policies", "specify the landscape characteristic determinants of the "Tamar Setting"" and to "establish recommended reserves [skyline] and sanctuaries [fauna]".

The Project Brief notes that the findings of the TRMPA plan were not encompassed in the current *Meander Valley Planning Scheme 1995*.

2.3.4 Scenery Protection Report – Tony Smibert

In July 1998 Council asked local artist Tony Smibert to undertake a pilot study aimed at identifying and classifying areas worthy of scenic protection in a case study area around Deloraine.

The report identified broad "landscape elements" contributing to the visual character of the case study area. Included in these elements were two landscape types: natural heritage, reflecting the environment prior to European settlement, and settled areas including towns and farms. Additionally, the study identified individual features such as stands of native forest, rocky cliffs, farm dams and smaller landscape elements such as individual trees and buildings, which were considered to contribute to the visual character when viewed from the case study tour loop. Importantly, Smibert demonstrated that a combination of features in the foreground, middleground and background contributed to the overall scenic character of an area,

¹⁸ Duffy, F., Urwin, N., Tait, H., Walsh, T. and Black, S. (Tamar Regional Master Planning Authority) 1975. "Tamar Estuary River Management Plan" Tamar Regional Master Planning Authority, Launceston. Pgs. 3 and 8.

and similarly, that some areas, those which are least seen *from selected viewpoints* along tour loops are less critical to the view. Further, the report discusses:

the difficulty in assessing and classifying aesthetic values;

the potential value of scenery to the community, and in particular, its strong importance to the tourist industry of the region; and

a methodology and terminology for addressing the assessment of aesthetic values within the case study area.

The report utilizes a particular touring loop within the visual case-study zone around Deloraine to identify features in the landscape that are highly significant to views and features at risk from activities likely to detract from the quality of these views, based on viewing from selected points along the loop.

2.3.5 Social Values Assessment

To overcome the weakness in evaluating the social value of scenery, various investigators have been developing, testing and applying a range of techniques to determine social value¹⁹. Locally, the Upper Mersey Valley was one such area where a social values assessment has been undertaken in conjunction with an aesthetic values assessment to determine areas of significance to the community which warranted careful planning consideration²⁰. This was principally undertaken to identify an alternative process for assessing national estate values in local areas.

In the urban setting, the Minister's Urban Skyline and Hillfaces Committee²¹ in 2000 recognised the full range of values, which affect perception of visual value including "social value". The Committee interpreted social value to include cultural associations, history of settlement, accessibility and familiarity. However, the Committee recognised that extensive public consultation is required if social values are to be adequately understood within the planning context. They noted, that whilst useful, social values assessments involved a high cost to evaluate and that this would typically be outside the ability of most Council's to fund.

¹⁹ See for instance, Johnston, C., Lewis, N., Mathews, S. and McCann, J. (1993). Central Highlands Community Workshops - Places of Importance from the Central Highlands Workshops - Vols 1 and 2. A report by Context Pty Ltd and Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd to the Australian Heritage Commission.

²⁰ Russell J, Cubit S, Johnson C, Hepper J (1998). Assessing Cultural Values in Natural Areas : The Upper Mersey Valley, Volume 1: Project Report, Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania.

²¹ Urban Skylines and Hillfaces Committee 1999. **Planning Guidelines for Urban Skylines and Hillfaces** Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.

2.3.6 Meander Valley Council Planning Scheme 1995

The existing *Meander Valley Council Planning Scheme 1995* allows the designation of land as Scenic Protection Areas. Within Scenic Protection Areas, use and development are at the discretion of the Council. This discretion enables Council to exclude development or to apply performance criteria to protect or manage important scenic values within these areas. At present only one area, Blackstone Heights, has such a designation. The current study seeks to expand this classification to appropriate areas throughout the municipality.

In 1999, the *Planning Scheme* was amended to allow Council to control the design of buildings, structures and works "to achieve minimal alteration of the rural landscape" (Clause 3.6.3 (2)) within the rural zone of the Meander Valley. This amendment gave Council discretion to require development to give attention to: the protection of skylines and visually prominent areas; visual bulk, form and scale; integrating with the form and colour of the existing landscape and the establishment of screening vegetation.

The shortcomings of this amendment are that it is highly generalised, and has not been made with reference to a full assessment of visual character, important visual features and views, or designation of priority for landscape management.

2.4 METHODOLOGY OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study demonstrates an adaptation and extension of existing landscape analysis methods of the Visual Management System and the Visual Absorption Capability described in the *Manual for Forest Landscape Management*²². The methodology:

defines boundaries and describes the landscape character of 27 *visual units* (based on travel routes, topographical viewing boundaries and local visual character similarities) within the municipality (Section 2.4.1);

categorises these 27 visual units into 12 unique *landscape character sub-types* according to broad similarities in viewing and character between units (generally this step clusters nearby and neighbouring visual units, although some individual visual units of distinct individual character remained as sub-types) (Section 2.4.1);

²² Forestry Commission, 1990 (op cit.)

identifies key vistas and viewpoints demonstrative of the character of each of the case study areas visual units and develops criteria for determining *prime viewpoints* and other significant viewpoints across the municipality (Section 2.4.2);

demonstrates a method for identifying the social significance of landscape features via community involvement in case study workshops (Section 2.4.4); and

develops an analysis matrix for mapping *rural visual management priority* for landscapes based on the attributes of scenic quality, visibility and prominence from selected primary viewpoints, and the capacity of the landscape to absorb changes based on physical characteristics of the landscape. (Section 2.4.5).

As part of the development of attributes for assessing visual management priority, frames of reference for determining Scenic Quality are produced for the case study character sub-types. These frames of reference and their application are demonstrated along with seen area mapping from prime viewpoints and the application of the Rural Visual Management Priority Matrix in Chapter 3.

This methodology has two primary outcomes:

a detailed description of the visual character of the municipality, including statements of desired visual character for all visual units providing baseline data for all future visual management in the Meander Valley municipal area; and

a method for determining scenic quality, the sensitivity to change of different landscape features, and priorities for management which is appropriate to the diverse landscape of the Meander Valley and applicable across each of the 12 landscape character sub-types.

More generally, this methodology allows analysis of the highly varied landscape of the Meander Valley at a level not previously undertaken for any other municipality in Tasmania.

2.4.1 Describing and Categorising the Landscape Character

Underlying the scenery of rural lands are key or dominant features. These features include areas of steeper topography, major rivers and associated streamside vegetation, extensive areas of varied textures of native vegetation and culturally significant exotic vegetation such as hedgerows and windbreaks, etc. As well as

these highly scenic and prominent features, the nature of the expanse of space between them is an essential aspect of visual character that creates the all-important structural matrix to the scenery. Together these features determine the overall character of the scenery.

The visual character across the Meander Valley is highly variable and covers an extremely wide range of environments and land-use patterns ranging from the cold and wet alpine regions of the Great Western Tiers to the relatively drier agricultural plains around Westbury. In the broadest sense, the changes in landscape character across the Meander Valley have been previously classified by the Forestry Commission in the *Manual for Forest Landscape Management* into four Landscape Character Types (Map 2.2), these being the:

North-West Hills and Plains;

High Mountains;

Central Plateau; and

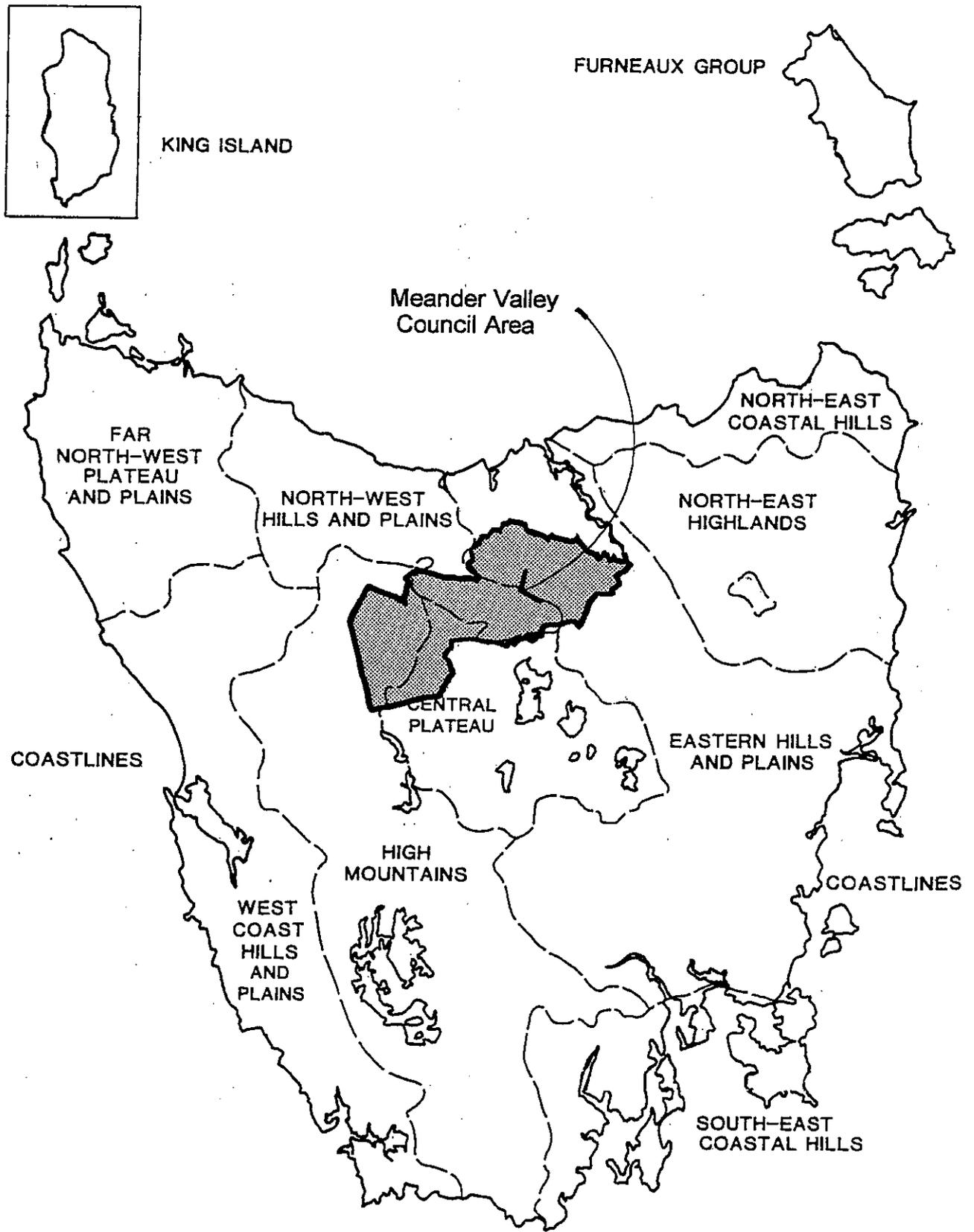
Eastern Hills and Plains.

These 'landscape character types' are defined as areas of land with "common distinguishing visual characteristics of landform, rock formations, water forms and vegetative patterns" (or as previously stated . "physiographic regions with common distinguishing visual characteristics")²³. These broad landscape character types provide a general basis for detailed analysis of landscape character undertaken in the current study.

However, for the purposes of detailed landscape management planning of the type required by a planning scheme, a finer level of understanding is generally required. Such smaller scale divisions are termed 'landscape character sub-types', and are themselves defined by groupings of local 'visual units'. Specifically, landscape character sub-types "exhibit characteristics common to the mother type, and yet [are] marked by distinctive likeness peculiar to each sub-type"²⁴. As identified in this study, sub-types recognise readily definable areas of similar viewing types, or common visual features or visual associations and, in general, conform to changes in environmental conditions or land use such as occur at dramatic geological, soil or climatic changes within character types. At a more detailed and descriptive level, visual units are defined locally by a variety of common environmental and cultural

²³ Forestry Commission, 1990. pp. 49,159

²⁴ Leonard, M. and Hammond, R. (1984) **Landscape Character Types of Victoria, with Frames of Reference for Scenic Quality Assessment**. Forests Commission of Victoria, Melbourne. Cited in Forestry Commission (1990) *op cit.* p. 159



Map 2.2 Landscape Character Type Boundaries in Tasmania (scale approx 1:2,000,000) Source: Forestry Commission, 1990. p. 160).

influences, viewing opportunities, important local features and character previously defined at a broader scale (i.e. character type boundaries).

As part of the current study, field investigations and map interpretation was carried out to define visual character differences and associated visual experiences from public use areas (frequently utilising significant viewpoints as described in Table 2.1). The purpose of this analysis was to identify visually distinctive local areas (visual units) which were then combined into landscape character sub-types.

Map 2.3 demonstrates the boundaries of the 27 visual units defined in this study and Map 2.4, the grouping of these units into 12 character sub-types.

This smaller scale of analysis, (within visual units and character sub-types) provides the basis for assessment and management of the landscape in the Meander Valley Council area: the visual units providing the framework for describing existing visual conditions and character sub-types as the basis for determining Scenic Quality and prescriptions for management. Thus it is possible to use the descriptions obtained and guidelines produced in the planning process to ensure that the existing visual diversity as defined for separated visual units is maintained across the municipality. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Appendix 1 contains descriptions of visual character for each visual unit. This provides background information for future scenery management throughout the municipality and covers:

- a summary description of the physical context of the visual unit and its boundaries;

- an outline of visual characteristics including features important to the character, viewing and viewing opportunities and existing features within the unit which are inconsistent with or detract from the desired visual character;

- views of particular interest or scenic examples of characteristic views experienced within the unit;

- existing deviations from visual character;

- a boundary description; and

- a summary character objective for the unit.

2.4.2 Identifying Viewing Types and Significant Viewpoints

An established pattern of public viewing of the scenery exists throughout the Meander Valley that is defined by the existing pattern of infrastructure, roads, settlements and land use. It is from this pattern of viewing opportunities that the landscape character is constructed and understood by the viewer.

The perception of landscape character within a unit is a combination of continuously changing views along public use routes or tour loops that may be punctuated by particular viewfields that demonstrate characteristic features or scenic examples of characteristic views within the unit. The identification and mapping of such viewpoints is important from a methodological perspective as it allows detailed analysis of the landscape from standard vistas (analysis which can be retraced to such vistas), but also because it is the development of viewpoints, or enhancement of selected viewing opportunities that allows a visitor (or local) better appreciation of the landscape.

Two levels of significant viewpoints have been defined for the broad purposes of describing landscape character and improving visitor experience in the Meander Valley. The viewpoints also provide the basis for GIS mapping of seen area (described below). In the first instance viewpoints were selected for the case study areas by local residents in workshops and then integrated with key views selected by the consultants and those currently used by visual management professionals. Table 2.1 sets out the criteria that were used to identify prime viewpoints that were then used for mapping of visual sensitivity for the visual management matrix (refer to Section 2.3.6) and the criteria for scenic character viewpoints.

Prime Viewpoints

Characteristics

Those locations which are:

- on major tour route (marked as level 1 or level 2 sensitivity); and/or
- provide a grand view including features in the fore-, middle- and background; and/or
- include in the view, features defined as high Scenic Quality; and/or
- recognised as primary viewpoints of importance to the local community

Examples

Such viewpoints include those which:

- have grand, sweeping views from level one roads; or
- are signposted and/or have constructed carparks; or
- are identified lookout points (e.g. above Meander Falls); or
- importantly, have major potential for increased tourist visitation (e.g. Alum Cliffs).

Functions

The function of identifying Prime Viewpoints is to demonstrate:

- priority views for protection; and
- locations which have potential for development, enhancement or promotion as a tourist scenic stop point (especially when located along country road tour loops).

Scenic Character Viewpoints

Characteristics

Include those locations with views which demonstrate the characteristics or character objective of a visual unit, and which contain features of moderate and high scenic quality.

Examples

Scenic Character Viewpoints include:

- targeted views along straight sections of roads or at bends/intersections or other locations where outviews become more evident;
- identified viewpoints used by forestry officers (particularly Forestry Tasmania) in the VMS (where coverage currently exists);
- views from within towns or other places where visitors and locals are known to stop; and
- points of dramatic changes in landscape character, e.g. crests of hills, exiting a valley etc.

Functions

The function of identifying Scenic Character Viewpoints is to aid interpretation of landscape character and identification of Scenic Quality and identify potential routes for 'scenic by-ways' by linking of several significant viewpoints

Table 2.1 Characterisation of viewpoints

2.4.3 Identifying Social Value

The current study demonstrates a means to assess the social significance of the landscape in the three case study areas. As already mentioned, the extent of empirical research on social values was limited in this study although a number of existing social data sets discussed in Section 2.3.5, were used to supplement this significantly. Community workshops were undertaken in key visual units of the three case study character sub-types, those being:

Gibsons (Nells visual unit);

Mole Creek–Alum (Mole Creek/Caveside visual unit); and

Westbury Plains (Westbury-Whitemore visual unit).

These workshops involved local people in the selection of scenic viewpoints and in visual description of the landscape. The workshop took the form of:

a presentation of the project and current findings;

review of the proposed boundary areas for the local visual units;

identification of key viewpoints onto maps;

ranking of the viewpoints by importance to those attending; and

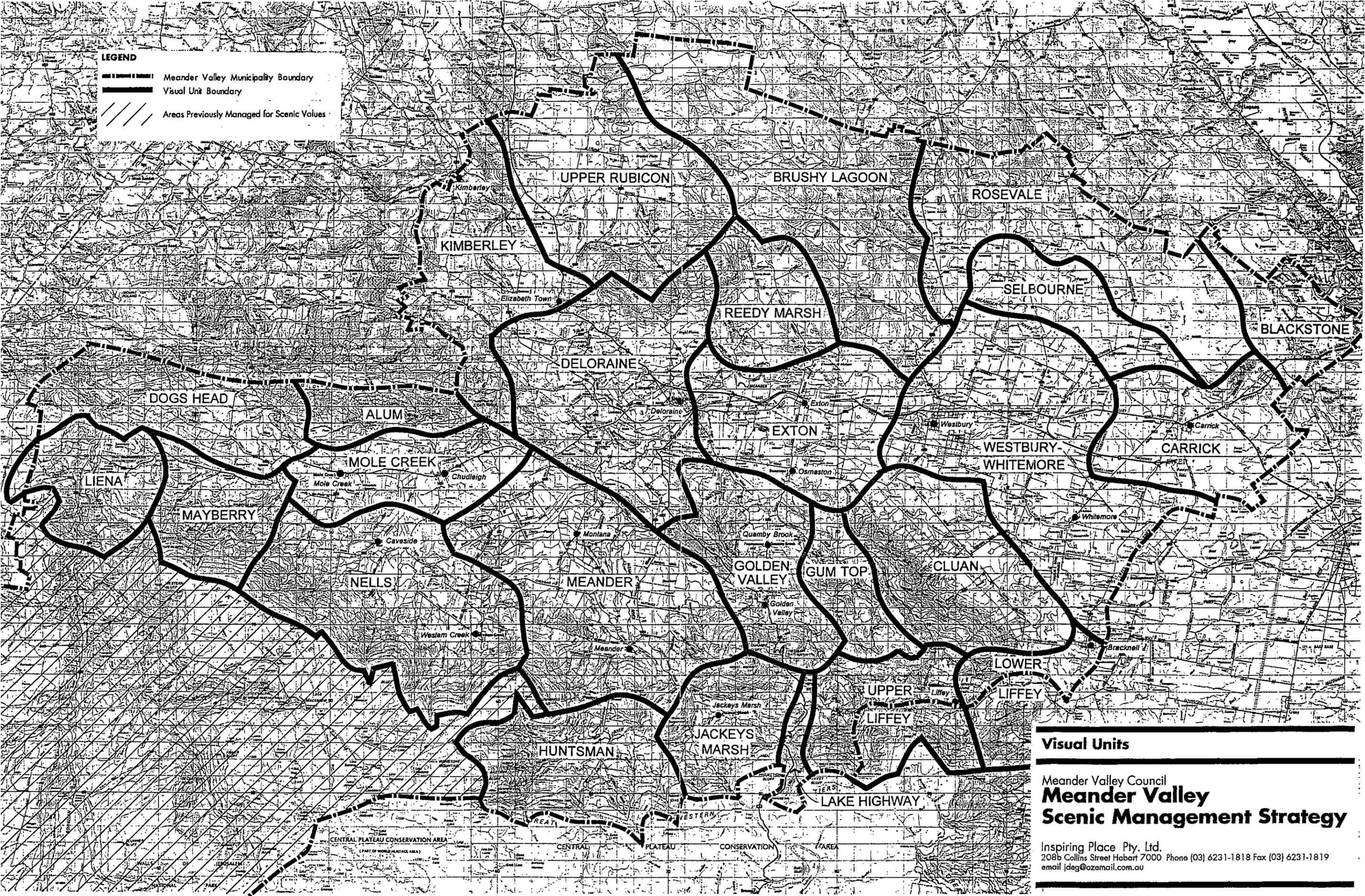
a bus trip to selected viewpoints to undertake a basic survey assessment of the landscape values, key features, significance, and positive and negative changes to the scenic values.

It was also important to determine the features considered by the local community as important to the landscape character of their area for integration into the development of the Scenic Quality frames of reference (see below). The workshops allowed both first hand description of visual character by participants as well as verification of the professionally defined visual unit boundaries and the significance of viewpoints in their local area (e.g. to see the correlation between the views selected by project team members, forest practices professionals, and those of the community).

A second social data set available is one developed as part of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for forested areas as described in Section 2.23. This was used to test the validity of the viewpoint selection process. The testing against RFA and community input revealed a strong correlation with the professionally selected viewpoints. In addition to which, viewpoints of local importance were revealed which were of concern to the community and which might not have been identified by a purely consultant based approach.

LEGEND

-  Meander Valley Municipality Boundary
-  Visual Unit Boundary
-  Areas Previously Managed for Scenic Values



Visual Units

Meander Valley Council
Meander Valley
Scenic Management Strategy

Inspiring Place Pty. Ltd.
208b Collins Street Hobart 7000 Phone (03) 6231-1818 Fax (03) 6231-1819
email jdeg@ozemail.com.au

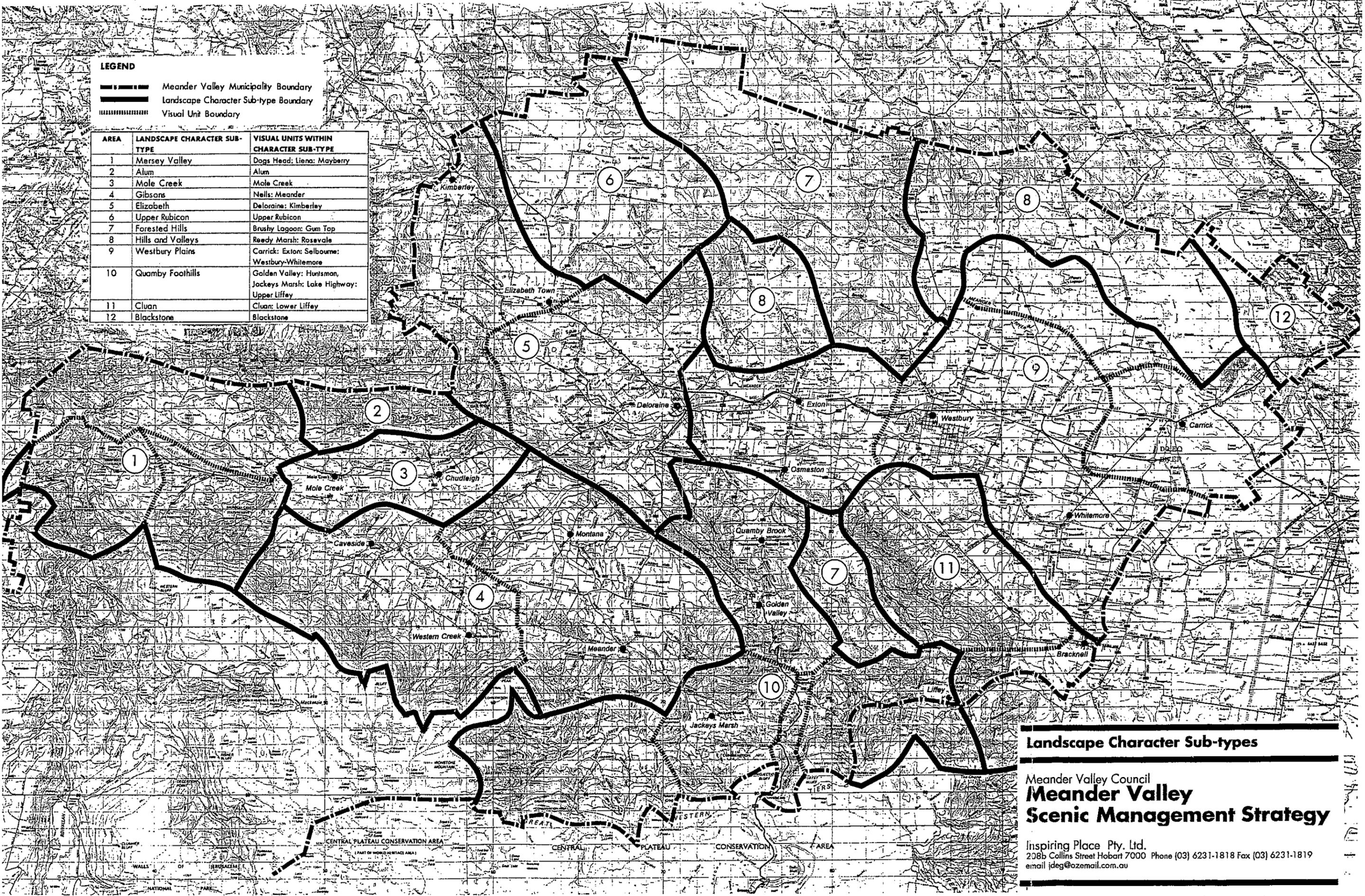
Date: June 2001

Map No: 2.3

LEGEND

-  Meander Valley Municipality Boundary
-  Landscape Character Sub-type Boundary
-  Visual Unit Boundary

AREA	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SUB-TYPE	VISUAL UNITS WITHIN CHARACTER SUB-TYPE
1	Mersey Valley	Dogs Head: Liena: Mayberry
2	Alum	Alum
3	Mole Creek	Mole Creek
4	Gibsons	Nells: Meander
5	Elizabeth	Deloraine: Kimberley
6	Upper Rubicon	Upper Rubicon
7	Forested Hills	Brushy Lagoon: Gum Top
8	Hills and Valleys	Reedy Marsh: Rosevale
9	Westbury Plains	Carrick: Exton: Selbourne: Westbury-Whitemore
10	Guamby Foothills	Golden Valley: Huntsman, Jackeys Marsh: Lake Highway: Upper Liffey
11	Cluan	Cluan: Lower Liffey
12	Blackstone	Blackstone

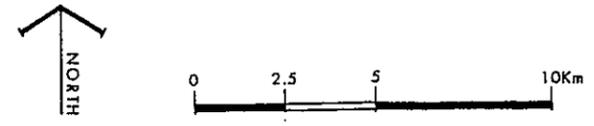


Landscape Character Sub-types

Meander Valley Council
Meander Valley
Scenic Management Strategy

Inspiring Place Pty. Ltd.
 208b Collins Street Hobart 7000 Phone (03) 6231-1818 Fax (03) 6231-1819
 email jdeg@ozemail.com.au

Date: June 2001 Map No: 2.4



2.4.4 Visual Assessment and Priority Mapping

An analysis process was developed for mapping the relative sensitivity to changes in land use or management of the various parts of the rural landscapes. This entailed selection of indicator attributes to identify the most noticeable and visible parts of the landscape (defined by seen area from selected viewpoints, and visual prominence determined from analysis of contours and viewing opportunities) and secondly, attributes to gauge susceptibility of all areas of the landscape to visual change (particularly by assessing slope and contribution to visual character via scenic quality). The attributes utilised in the analysis are detailed below. These are combined later into a single Rural Visual Management Priority map through the "Visual Management Matrix" developed specifically for use with the rural landscape values of the MVC area.

Scenic Quality Zones

In this study, Scenic Quality is determined in a similar manner to the VMS, although instead on utilising the broad Landscape Character types, the present analysis is based on smaller character sub-types. This allows comparisons of scenic values to surrounding areas according to their significance at the local scale. Thus the frames of reference used to determine Scenic Quality were developed according to features and variety within each of the sub-types.

At the basic level, land has been classified into 'high', 'moderate' and 'low' Scenic Quality was based on visual variety of the landform, waterform and vegetation pattern, present within each sub-type. Previously, 'frames of reference' used to determine Scenic Quality have been developed for forested and natural areas by the VMS. The combination of rural and natural landscapes in the Meander Valley has meant the Scenic Quality frames of reference must be extended to include rural attributes.

In forested or more natural parts, higher Scenic Quality is associated with:

greater relative topographical relief and ruggedness;

greater variety of landscape and diversity of vegetation;

greater naturalness and absence of man-made changes in the landscape; and

unusual natural landscape features such as rock outcrops, waterforms and vegetation communities.²⁵

In agricultural landscapes higher Scenic Quality is associated with greater vegetative diversity and mosaic pattern due to crops and openings; while in plantation landscapes, higher scenic quality exists where the plantation is integrated with native forest, and has greater vegetative pattern and edge diversity. Cultural *features* such as windbreaks and hedgerows are rated on vegetation quality, continuity, consistency and extent of coverage. These occur over specific local areas and are generally limited in expanse and not of significant scale.

In practice, scenic values were classified through extensive air photo analysis of the case-study areas to map the land into the three Scenic Quality categories, based on the Frames of Reference for Scenic Quality developed in each area.

Landscapes with outstanding, unusual and diverse character are given the *High Scenic Quality* rating.

Those with features and diversity commonly found in a character type are assigned *Moderate Scenic Quality*.

Finally, landscapes of little or no diversity or features, covering an extensive area, are classified as *Low Scenic Quality*.

Features that members of the local community thought were of high scenic value (e.g. in the Westbury community workshop the importance of hedgerows was identified, thus reinforcing already established standards of the VMS) were incorporated in the assessment criteria (frames of reference, see Chapter 3). A further review of local preferences was undertaken in a more structured manner through consultation with the community on the draft findings of the study. In this case, the community had the opportunity to review the frames of reference for scenic quality, and add or remove features to each category as they saw necessary.

Although the frames of reference have already been used in this study, they may still be further tested against local community preference and adjusted to accommodate changes in community preference. This is a task that is highly desirable for the future to gauge local cultural variations throughout the study area.

Viewing Sensitivity Zones

Viewing sensitivity zones are a gauge of the relative visibility of various parts of the landscape from public use areas and travel routes. The study areas have been rated as 'least', 'secondary' or 'primary' viewing zones.

²⁵ Forestry Commission (1990), p. 167.

Viewpoints and travel routes could have been classified in Public Sensitivity level ratings through the established Visual Management System (VMS) assessment process (Appendix 2 sets out the criteria used for public sensitivity by Forestry Tasmania). However this classification is less effective for rural areas²⁶ due to the high level of access throughout afforded by an extensive network of rural roads, the broad and generally flat terrain giving extensive viewing opportunities, and the open rural scenery with an absence of screening vegetation. As well, the high number of visitors and sightseers using rural roads loops and roads to tourism sites qualify most roads (under the VMS) as Public Sensitivity rating 1 and for a few, the high end of Public Sensitivity 2. This gives insufficient spread of value to be useful in the present analysis. A modified rating of seen-area and Public Sensitivity has therefore been devised.

Primary Viewing Zones were determined for viewing from a limited number of select Prime viewpoints and analysed by computer assessment. Viewing analysis was limited to a nominal viewing distance of 4km (which takes in the foreground and the near-middleground range as defined by the VMS), as well for selected viewing to distant feature areas, this is extended to 7km. The viewing direction was identified and the viewing angle generalised to 180°.

Least Viewed Zone was determined by direct assessment of contours to define land not visible from public roads and key viewing locations (towns, houses, walking tracks etc.). In particular, Level 1 Level 2 viewing routes (under the VMS) were highlighted and became a basis for this review.

Secondary Viewing Zone encompasses the area viewed throughout the study area, from major roads, rural roads, road loops and "settlements" used by tourists and residents and rated as Level 1 to high Level 2 (under the VMS). These occur at high density and therefore relatively close proximity to give extensive viewing opportunities. Due to the high popularity of the area to tourist, the residential density and the absence of roadside screening, the majority of the landscape in the study area is visible at this 'secondary' level. Once the Least Viewed and the Primary Viewing zones are determined, the remaining land reverts by default into the Secondary Viewing zone.

In practice, Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping was used to classify the viewing sensitivity zones. The various key viewpoint seen-areas are added together to give the total seen-area "A". Then from the estimated original digitised unseen-areas, subtract total seen-area "A". This step effects the unseen areas only and gives the corrected Least seen area "C". Finally, the total of the combined total of the

²⁶ Nonetheless an application of the VMS rating system for public roads is demonstrated in this section in both the selection of prime viewpoints and the determination of least seen zones.

Primary and Least seen-areas is subtracted from the study area and this remaining section is the Secondary seen-area "B". These steps are outlined in Table 2.2 below.

1. Least seen areas determined manually from 1:25,000 Tasmaps and digitised by LandFile	"c"
2. Generate individual seen-areas for each key viewpoint.	"a"
3. Combine all seen-areas to form total Primary Seen-area "A"	$a + a + a + \dots = A$
4. Subtract total seen-area from the digitised Unseen-areas to determine corrected Least seen-area "C" (i.e. unseen-area). <i>(Note this effects the Unseen areas only)</i>	$c - A = C$
5. Combine A and C to give the total primary seen plus the unseen areas "Z".	$A + C = Z$
6. Subtract "Z" from the total study area to determine the Secondary seen-area "B".	Total study area - Z = B

Table 2.2 Rules for GIS mapping analysis of Seen-area for current study

Prominent Landforms and Skylines

This zone identifies specific prominent features or parts of the landscape targeted in viewing from primary and secondary roads and settlements. Key skyline zones were also selected and mapped. Generally these were located along narrow ridgelines or on steep slopes at sharp edges of change of grade. These were considered to have visual emphasis in the landscape and importance to the scenery and thus would warrant management restrictions that ensured strong retention of visual character.

Slope Exposure

With increasingly steeper slopes there is higher exposure of the land surface to viewing or higher "visual magnitude". The same size of change occurring on the land will have increased exposure and thus prominence with increasing slopes. Through field observation of visual exposure, review of plantation establishment guidelines, and review of computer generated slope analysis, the break-off slope of 25% was chosen between lower and higher landscape exposure.

The attributes above were rated, mapped and captured into digital form for further analysis and combination.

2.4.5 The Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes

The Matrix describes levels of visual management priority to be afforded to different areas. This matrix is utilised to guide the computerised compilation using Council's GIS software, to define final mapped areas which combine the various levels of the above attributes (see Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes).

This matrix was developed to give, for the various combinations of ratings for the attributes, a spread of management priorities or relative constraints, which should apply across a full range of management or land use types. GIS technology is used to analyse various combinations of the attributes to generate a total of three possible "management priority" mapping zones, each with corresponding levels of protection/retention of landscape character.

The zones and levels are:

High priority - Retention of landscape character;

Moderate priority - Partial Retention of landscape character;

Low priority - Limited Retention of landscape character.

It should be noted that the zones are equivalent in principle to the VMS's Landscape Management Zones - Inevitable Alteration, Apparent Alteration and Dominant Alteration, respectively. These refer to the maximum allowable prominence or contrast that changes should make within the existing landscape character of the scenery at any point.

VISUAL MANAGEMENT MATRIX for Rural Landscapes

	Viewing Sensitivity Zones			Key Visual Impact Potential Factors		
	Primary (from key viewpoints out to 7km)	Secondary	Least Seen	Prominent Landform Feature OR Skyline	Steep Slopes >25%	Low Slopes <25%
Scenic Quality	High	Grey	Grey	Red	Blue	Blue
	Moderate	Grey	Grey	Red	Red	Red
	Low	Grey	Grey	Blue	Blue	Blue

Rural Visual Management Priority

High

Moderate

Low

Other Landscapes

Table 2.2 The Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes

CHAPTER 3

MANAGING SCENIC VALUES IN MEANDER VALLEY – THREE CASE STUDIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology outlined in Section 2.3 was tested by application to three case study areas in the Meander Valley. The steering committee chose three case studies based on the character sub-types of: Westbury Plains, Gibsons and Mole Creek Road Corridor.

This chapter details the description, classification and management for these case study areas. The chapter:

provides a summary of attributes contributing to sub-type characteristics by integrating the descriptions of visual unit characteristics in the categories of physical and environmental context (landform, vegetation, waterform), land use pattern, significant features, and significant views and viewing types;

describes 'frames of reference' used to classify and map Scenic Quality across each case study area;

identifies prime views in each sub-type and maps seen area out to 4 kilometres from these points;

outlines specific issues and concerns relevant to management decision-making in each sub-type; and

demonstrates the application of the Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes (s2.3.5), to determine Rural Visual Management Priority for each case study area.

In addition, a series of photos to accompany these case studies and demonstrate particular issues is available.

3.2 CASE STUDY 1 : WESTBURY PLAINS CHARACTER SUB-TYPE

VMS character type: *Eastern Hills and Plains*

Constituted by visual units: *Carrick, Selbourne, Westbury-Whitemore and Exton*



Figure 3.1 Westbury Plains Character Sub-type

3.2.1 Sub-type characteristics

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

A low rainfall region characterised by exotic dry grasslands and grassy woodlands, largely cleared for agriculture. Extensive river drainages occur within the sub-type including the Meander River and Quamby Brook. The landform is predominantly flat plains interrupted occasionally by zones of low, rolling hills and independent sugarloaves.

LAND USE

The sub-type is predominantly agricultural interspersed with occasional areas of native vegetation (frequently as regrowth from historic rough clearing which was not maintained as clearings), and villages.

The sugarloaves, hillocks and similar undulations are frequently fully covered in native vegetation or partially, with extensive stands of native vegetation. The flats are agriculturally intense, used for cropping and pasture, with generally no or very little native vegetation remaining. Several areas of more intense cropping occur, particularly around Westbury where a dense patchwork of fields is evident.

Residential areas are generally central in flat lands surrounded by agricultural plains. Several towns and small villages with associated residential development occur in the sub-type, including Deloraine (which falls on the sub-type boundary to the west), Exton, Westbury, Whitmore, Bracknell and Carrick. Agricultural settlements are scattered at low density throughout the sub-type.

VIEWING TYPES AND SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

The sub-type is viewed primarily from the Bass Highway, and within and surrounding the townships – particularly Westbury. Extensive open views are characteristic of the sub-type and facilitate a number of prime views and outlooks. These include:

1. Long sweeping uninterrupted views across flat open agricultural plains to the distant Great Western Tiers, Cluan Tiers and Quamby Bluff to the south and Ben Lomond/Mt. Barrow to the east (from eastern parts of the sub-type). (Closer foothills to the Great Western Tiers are largely absorbed into the dominant backdrop.)

2. Views to agricultural plains both to the north and south of the Bass highway providing more intimate views including worked fields, homesteads, livestock, windbreaks and hedgerows.

Targeted views of particular landscape elements located outside the unit including Drys Bluff and Quamby Bluff are also important. These views are frequently provided along back-roads and by-ways, often associated with, or framed by, foreground features such as exotic windbreaks, hedgerows or arboretums. Internal framed by native vegetation are more common and characteristic of the *Carrick* visual unit.

FEATURES

1. *Historical plantings*: Remnants of older agricultural settlements including mature exotic trees poplar, pines and cyprus planted in windbreaks or as individual feature trees around homesteads. Windbreaks, hedgerows, features plantings and gardens associated with historic homesteads are themselves important features within the landscape of this sub-type (See Photo 3.2.1).



Photo 3.2.1 Historical planting features of the Westbury Plains Sub-type.

2. *Cultural landscapes*: Significant cultural landscape features occur in the sub-type including well-tended fields, hawthorn hedgerows, exotic feature plantings, windbreaks and villages. The landscape across the plains is characterised by highly regular, medium to small scale paddocks. The visual impact of this patchwork pattern is heightened when cropped providing seasonally diverse visual affects and/or where articulated by hawthorn hedgerows and windbreaks (see Photo 3.2.2).

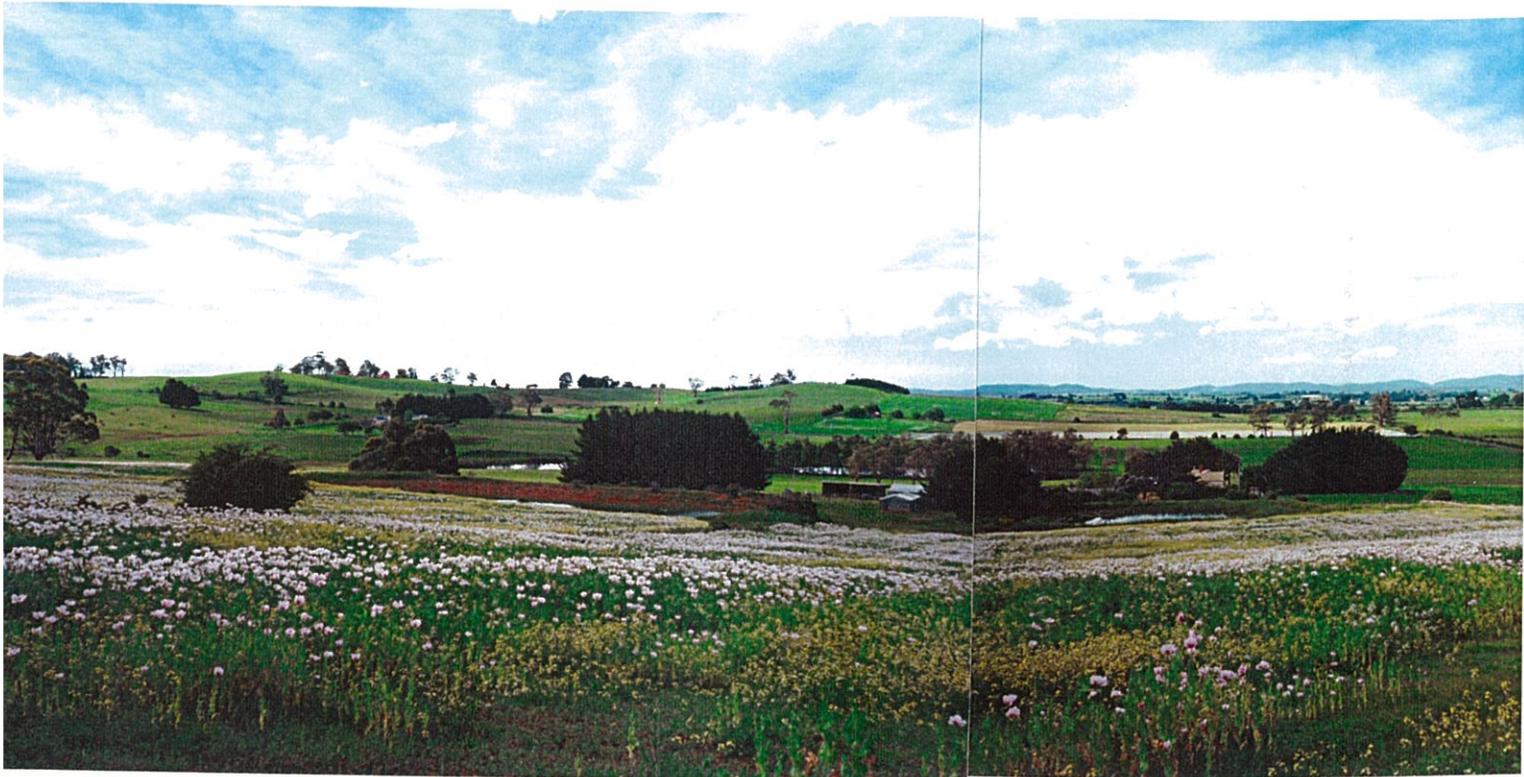


Photo 3.2.2 Cultural landscape features of the Westbury Plains Sub-type.

3. *Native vegetation*: Where they occur, stands of native vegetation provide important and unique indigenous features and an element of 'naturalness' in an otherwise 'imported landscape'. It is most important where providing rare examples of dry bushland character on hillsides or significant sized stands such as around Whitmore Road in the *Carrick* visual unit (see Photo 3.2.4).

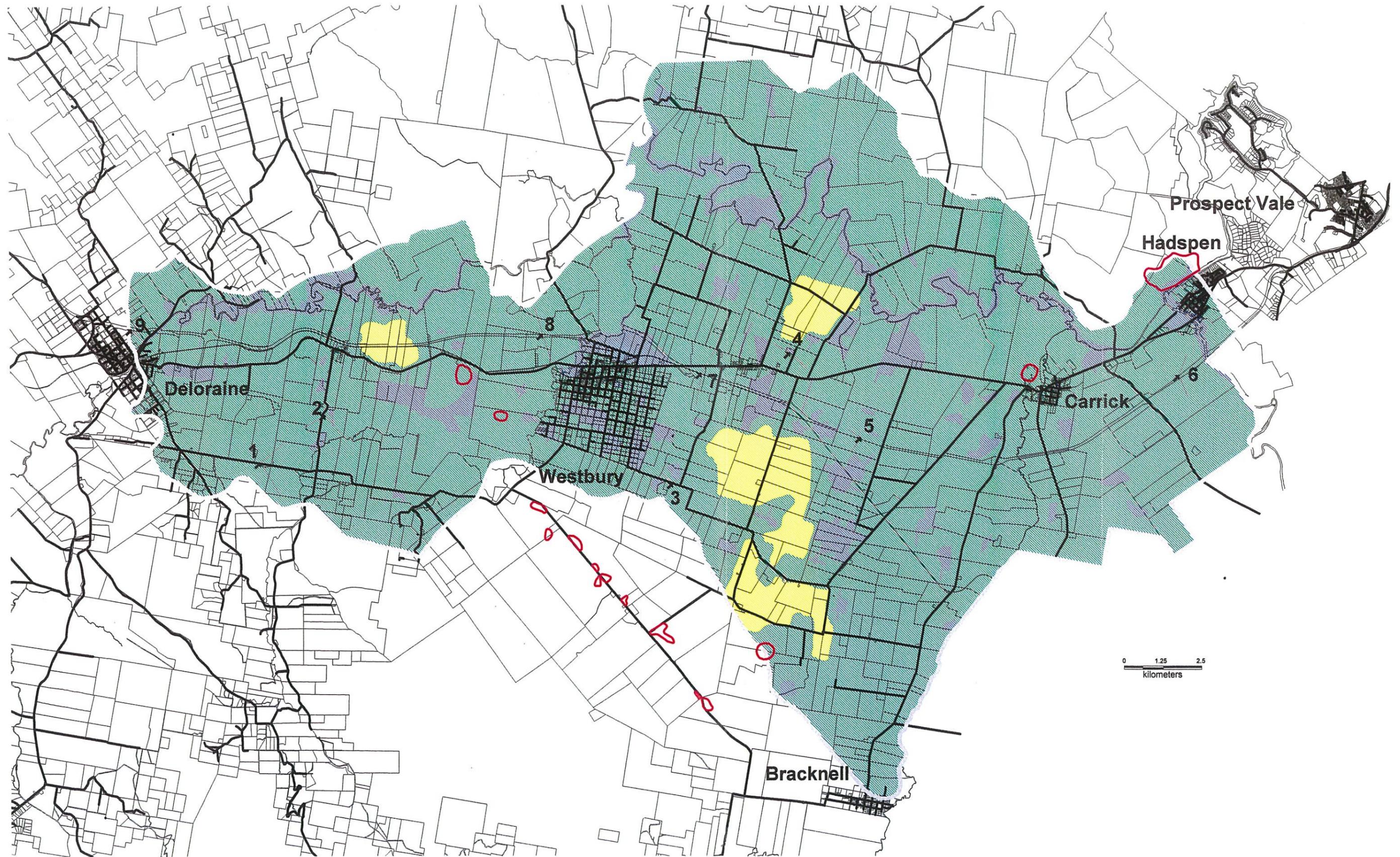
4. *Borrowed landscapes*: The Great Western Tiers, Cluan Tiers and other more distant landscape elements are integral to the characteristics of and views experienced within, the Westbury Plains sub-type. In particular, the Great Western Tiers provide a dramatic and scenic backdrop throughout the unit with one or both of Drys Bluff and Quamby Bluff visible through nearly all of the sub-type. The openness identified above therefore has greater importance by facilitating viewing of these landscape elements.



Photo 3.2.3 'Borrowed landscapes': distant views to Quamby Bluff from Westbury

3.2.2 Frames of reference for Scenic Quality

Table 3.1 sets out the frame of reference for defining the Scenic Quality based on landform, waterform, vegetation and cultural features within the Westbury Plains sub-type. This schedule is based on their visual variety, uniqueness and strength of contribution to character. The location of features of high, moderate and low Scenic Quality within the sub-type is shown on Map 3.1.



- SCENIC QUALITY**
- High
 - Moderate
 - Low
 - Prominent Skyline

0 1.25 2.5
kilometers

Boundary of Study Area

Westbury

	High Scenic Quality	Moderate Scenic Quality	Low Scenic Quality
Landform	None	Low, small sugarloaves, generally cleared but some with partially retained native forest/ woodland, particularly where these rise out of flat plains.	Broad flat agricultural land
Waterform	Major rivers and streams with strong flows throughout the year including riparian zone and slopes (Quamby Brook, Meander River) and groups of farm dams.	Individual farm dams, medium sized streams.	
Cultural	<p>Distinctive small scale fields defined by intact, well managed hedgerows.</p> <p>Large, mature windbreaks, that are continuous and well maintained, with consistent and regular appearance.</p> <p>Consistent/ continuous and well-maintained hawthorn hedgerows on edges of roads or paddocks.</p> <p>Individual mature exotic feature plantings, (with vigorous growth) in grazing landscape.</p> <p>Parkland groupings of generally exotic mature trees and associated historic estate buildings, including historic plantings of mature exotic arboretums.</p>	<p>Moderate to large scale fields defined by hedgerows and/ or cropping patterns.</p> <p>Indistinctly defined hedgerows, which are incomplete/ non-continuous and/ or overgrown hedgerows.</p> <p>Windbreaks of moderate length with some gaps.</p> <p>Windbreaks of Eucalypt or mixed species.</p>	<p>Extensive areas of rough or unimproved pasture.</p>

Table 3.1 Frames of Reference for Westbury Plains Character Sub-type

3.2.3 Significant view points and seen area mapping

Within the Westbury Plains sub-type nine prime viewpoints, and 16 scenic character viewpoints have been identified. The prime viewpoints are located:

south of Deloraine near 'Quamby View' on Osmaston Road looking east across agricultural plains (viewpoint 1).

along Exton road in the vicinity of 'Brooklyn' looking south to Quamby Bluff and east across open plains (viewpoint 2);

at the crest of Black Hills Road, immediately above Hoggs Lane, looking between north-west and east (viewpoint 3);

from St Mary's Church, Hagley, looking south (viewpoint 4);

at the entrance to the *Westbury* visual unit, just west of Heazlewoods Lane on the Bass Highway, where the first sweeping views to the Great Western Tiers become available (viewpoint 5);

on the Bass Highway east of Carrick at a rise in the road near the intersection with Illawarra Road (viewpoint 6);

on the new overpass entry to Westbury looking south (viewpoint 7);

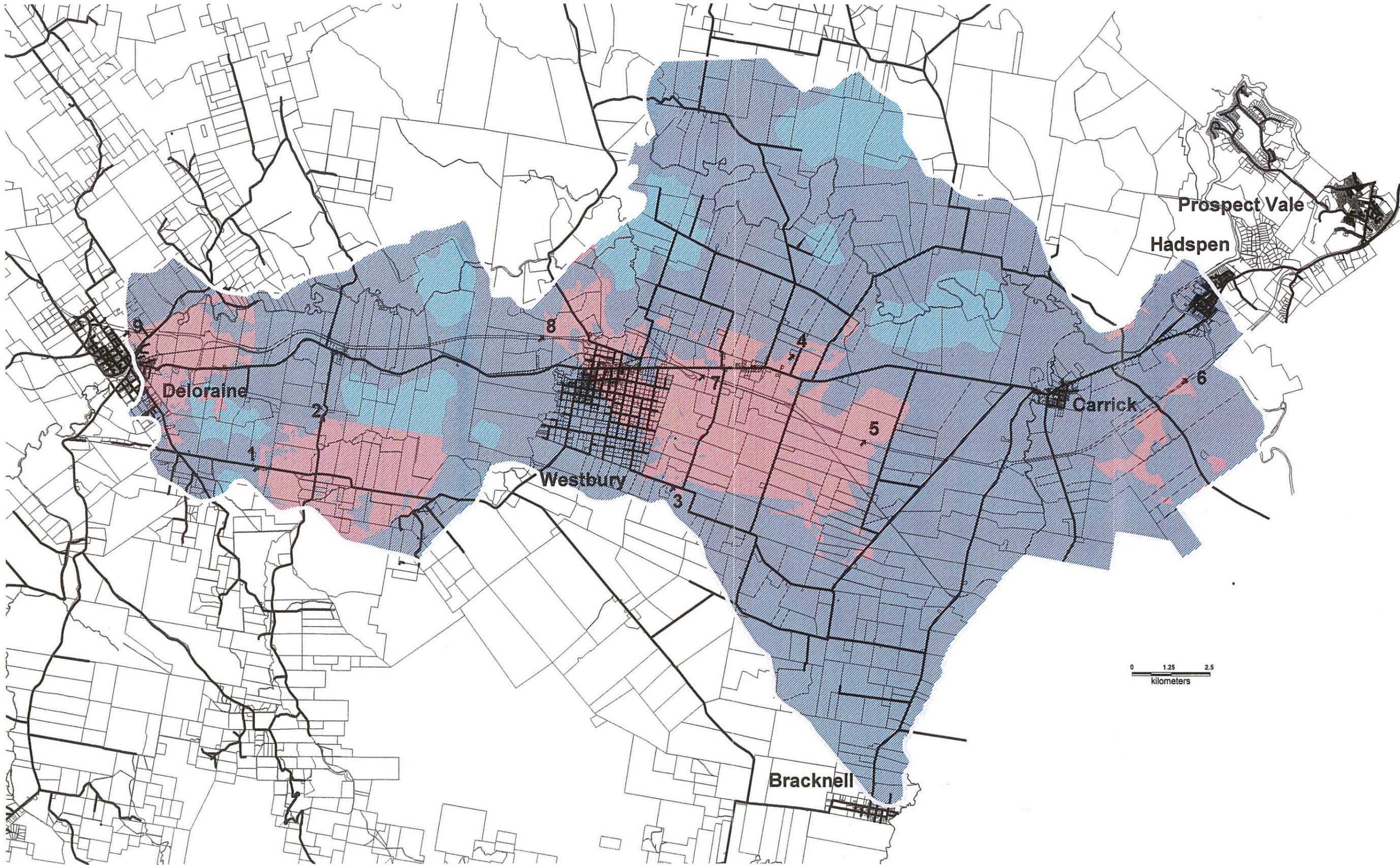
north of Westbury on the new Westbury bypass on the edge of a ridge giving views primarily to the east (viewpoint 8); and

on the Bass Highway, at the crest of the hill above Deloraine, looking east (viewpoint 9).

The location of these viewpoints and seen area from a 180° arc out to 4 kilometres is shown on map 3.2. The seen area shown on these maps was used to determine viewing sensitivity zones to aid the determination of visual management priority using the Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes (see following section). Prime viewpoints were also used to undertake character description.

3.2.4 Visual Management Priority

The combination of Scenic Quality, viewing sensitivity and visual impact potential factors within each sub-type determines the visual management priority, according to the Matrix described above (Section 2.4.5). The visual management priority outcomes are shown on Map 3.3.



VIEWING SENSITIVITY ZONES

- Primary
- Secondary
- Least Seen

0 1.25 2.5
kilometers

Boundary of Study Area

Westbury



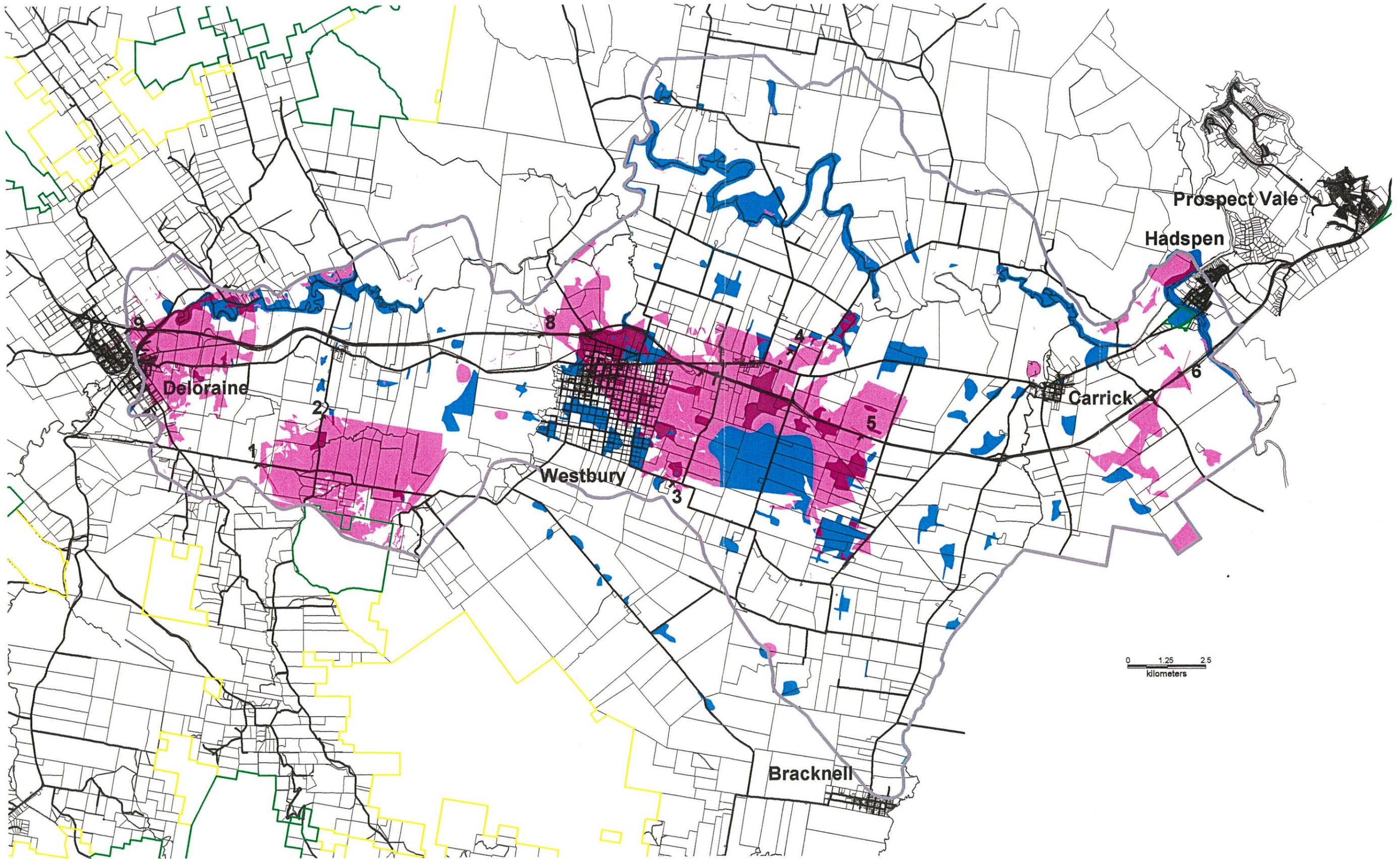
SLOPE

- Steep (greater than 25 degrees)
- Shallow (less than 25 degrees)

0 1.25 2.5
kilometers

Boundary of Study Area

Westbury



RURAL VISUAL MANAGEMENT PRIORITY

- High (Retention of Landscape Character)
- Moderate (Partial Retention of Landscape Character)
- Low (Limited Retention - Modification of L/S Character)

- Conservation
- State Forest & P.T.R.

0 1.25 2.5
kilometers

— Boundary of Study Area

Westbury

3.2.5 Landscape management policies for *Westbury Plains*

RETAINING OPENNESS AND VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the agricultural landscapes of the Meander Valley open views from roads continually arise as important opportunities for viewing scenic landscapes, both locally (in foreground and middleground) and in distant landscapes. Occasionally, the consistency of these views is part of the overall characteristic of a unit, such as is the case around Westbury. However, even here features such as exotic hedgerows and windbreaks occasionally block outviews and improve the overall viewing experience by screening these views for a short distance, or helping to target and promote other views. Developments which provide some modest screening of views may therefore still be consistent with the visual character, so long as visual variety is improved and the general 'openness' of the character sub-type is not lost. Nevertheless, developments which block views from Prime Viewpoints or other locations where outviewing is promoted (described above as scenic character viewpoints) are particularly detrimental to the viewing experience.

PATTERNING AND SCALE

The patterns and scale of agricultural features described above are an important and repeating factor in parts of the Westbury Plains character sub-type, particularly the *Westbury-Whitemore* and *Selbourne* visual units. Smaller scale fields are facilitated by high quality soils used for cropping and pasture. These patterns have developed over more than a century of traditional agricultural practices although are beginning to be threatened by modern agricultural practices, including boom irrigators which allow larger fields to be cropped. Regardless of visual management priority (see section 3.2.4) attempts should be made to maintain this pattern. For example, the establishment of plantation within the sub-type should be carefully considered, with the development of small scale woodlots set back from major roads and within existing paddocks (for example, bounded by mature windbreaks on at least one side), preferred to large scale planting. The removal of hedgerows and windbreaks should generally be discouraged, except as a public safety requirement in which cases their re-instatement should be a priority.

FARMING PRACTICES AND LAND STEWARDSHIP

As discussed above, (s2.2.3), the careful management of rural lands to give an orderly and functional appearance helps to improve scenic values. In particular, beneficial management includes:

controlling gorse and replacing gorse hedges with hawthorn;

regularly trimming and tending hedgerows, particularly on roadsides, to promote outviews as well as improve the manicured appearance of the sub-type (see a 'best-practice' example in Photo 3.2.4); and

looking for opportunities to reinstate/extend windbreaks, especially in association with the new highway, although in such cases windbreaks should not be continuous for excessive lengths of viewing (i.e. could be perpendicular, or of moderate length). Eucalypt windbreaks tend to be less scenically attractive and inconsistent with heritage landscape.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

The Westbury and Hagley townships have particular rural historic village character which is compromised where infrastructure such as powerlines are poorly sited in important vistas. An effort to install powerlines underground or set back from roads (where possible) in the vicinity of the Westbury and Hagley villages would significantly reduce this visual impact. Photo 3.2.5 demonstrates such a vista.



Photo 3.2.4: Best practice examples of hedgerow and windbreak maintenance along Selbourne Road, Westbury.



Photo 3.2.5: Vista to from Black Lane, Westbury, looking south east to Drys Bluff with no powerlines in the view.

3.3 CASE STUDY 2 : GIBSONS CHARACTER SUB-TYPE

VMS Character Type: *North West Hills and Plains*

Constituted by visual units: *Nells, and Meander*

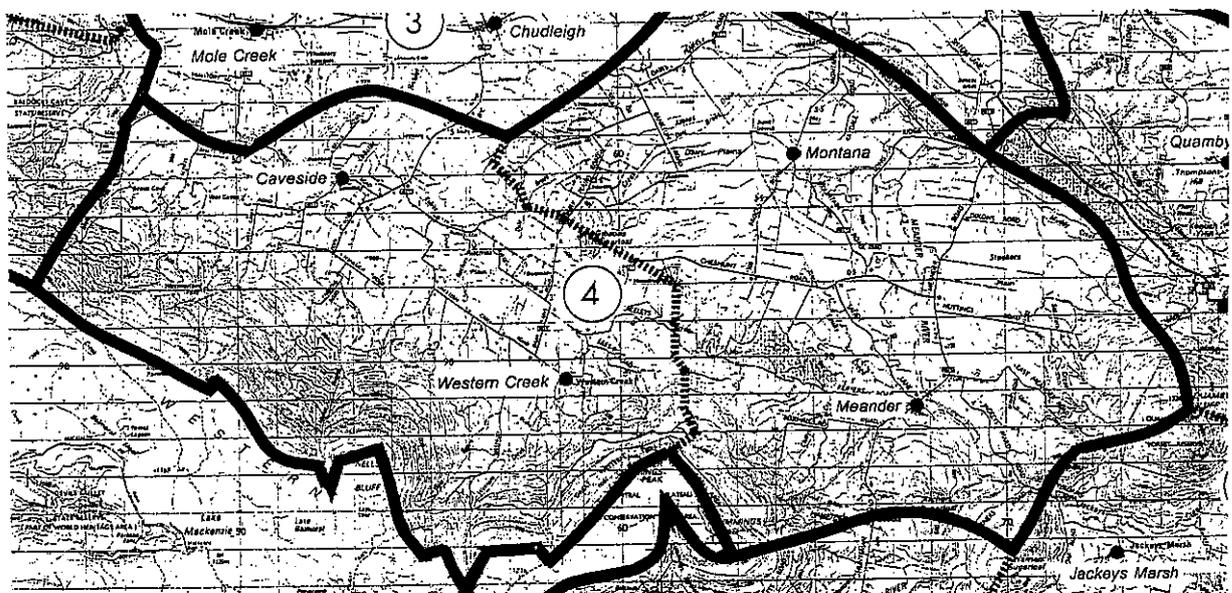


Figure 3.2 Gibsons Character Sub-type

3.3.1 Sub-type characteristics

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The sub-type is characterised by relatively flat, slightly rolling agricultural plains in its central sections with numerous natural streams and extensive constructed drainage channels throughout the flattest areas. Along the southern edge of the sub-type seemingly rising directly out of the plains are the Great Western Tiers, comprising of steep, dissected, forested slopes with extensive bluffs and continuous cliff-lines above. While to the east, a number of significant landscape features, namely Quamby Bluff, Archers Sugarloaf, and Warners Sugarloaf provide a visual and topographic boundary slightly removed from the Tiers escarpment.

Independent hills and sugarloaves rise out of the flat plains and provide particularly prominent features within most views, often associated with intact stands of native forest.

LAND USE

Open agricultural land dominates the sub-type with largely continuous and uninterrupted pasture in extensive paddocks, particularly between Meander and Montana. Here throughout the pasture, only scattered individual eucalypts and very occasional stands of native woodlands are to be found. To the west of the sub-type, the grazing lands are more rolling and less expansive with the openness frequently interrupted by native vegetation and plantation forests. Stands of native forest exist primarily on the hills, slopes, rocky ground and poorer soil.

The slopes of the southern dominant backdrop (Great Western Tiers to Quamby Bluff) are largely protected in the World Heritage Area and consist of generally large scale and consistent native forest. This consistency is broken at lower slopes by clearing and occasional plantation. These variations to the natural cover rise to generally less than one-third of the apparent height of the Tiers. Above, native forest cover is continuous and has a naturally appearing character. Archers Sugarloaf and Warners Sugarloaf share these characteristics but do not have the same protected land tenure.

VIEWING TYPES AND SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

The sub-type is accessed by Caveside Road via the townships of Mole Creek and Chudleigh, through Dairy Plains Road from Montana, or from Lake Highway/Meander Road to Meander. Primarily, viewing is by locals, although there is potential for further promotion of a scenic loop between Mole Creek and Deloraine including Caveside Road, Pool Road and Western Creek Road, whereby tourists acquire more intimate view of the Tiers. Furthermore, many of the features within the sub-type form part of important views from other sub-types, and more populated and trafficked areas.

In particular the significant views obtained within the sub-type are:

1. Sharp, dominating escarpment of Great Western Tiers particularly Nells Bluff and Mother Cummings Peak, viewed across flat agricultural plains, and frequently targeted along roads.
2. Closer views of sugarloaves and hills with native vegetation and pasture, particularly Gibsons Sugarloaf.

3. Distant views are available to Mt Roland, Quamby Bluff and the Gog Range.

FEATURES

Topography: The cliff-lines and scree slopes, incised drainage lines and distinct shelving of the Great Western Tiers visually dominate the landscape features of the sub-type. In the *Nells* visual unit (to the west of the sub-type) Mt Parmeener and Nells Bluff, rise directly out of the plains and visually contrast with the cleared land below. Similarly, the craggy peaks and densely vegetated slopes of Mother Cummings Peak (see photo 3.3.1) complemented by Archers Sugarloaf, Warners Sugarloaf and Quamby Bluff, provide features of particular scenic interest in the *Meander* visual unit. The strength and density of native vegetation of these features, a consequence of higher rainfall associated with the Tiers, provides strong colour and textural contrast to pasture below. Gibsons Sugarloaf is also of scenic interest, rising out of the flat plains (see photo 3.3.2).

Macrotopography: The underlying limestone geology in the western part of the sub-type provides numerous small scale rock outcrops, dips and sink holes of unique visual interest.

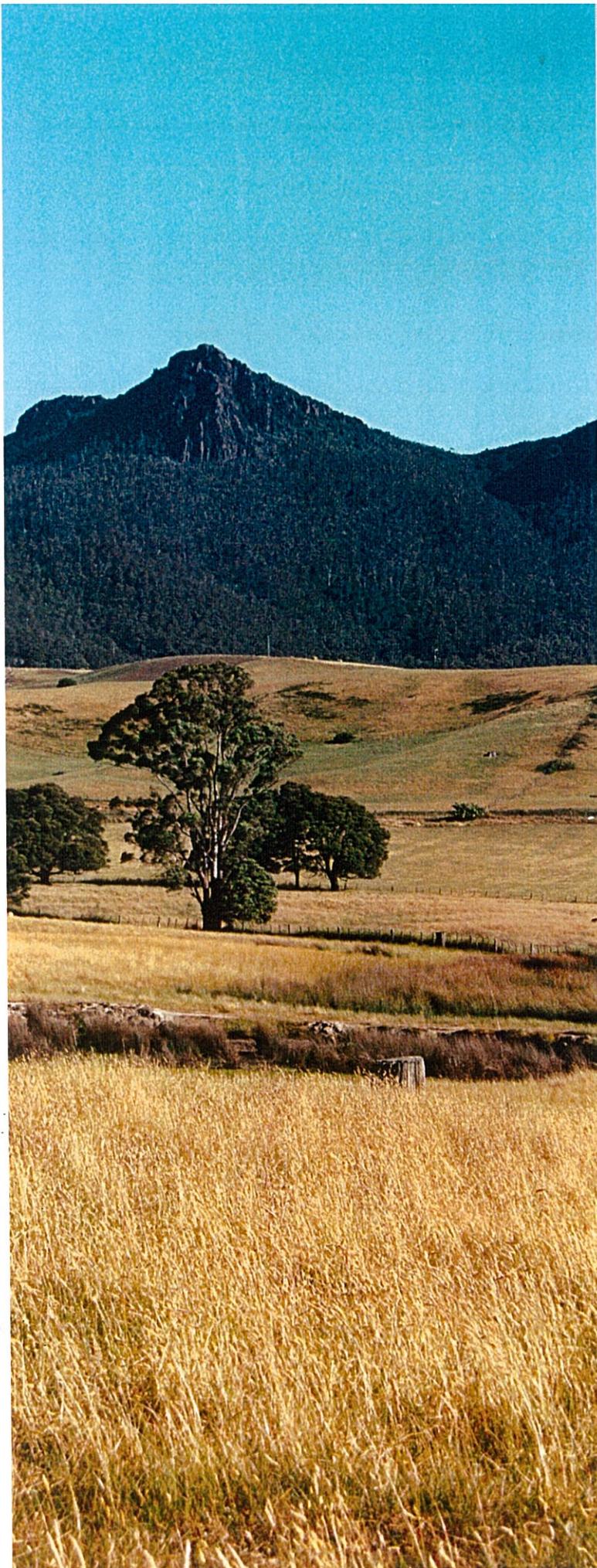


Photo 3.3.1 Cliff escarpment and dense forest of Mother Cummings Peak contrasting with open pasture below



Photo 3.3.2 Gibsons Sugarloaf providing a prominent feature rising out of flat plains.

Cultural vegetation patterns: Mature feature trees, particularly blackwoods, pines and cyprus provide positive elements in the landscape where they occur as individual open-grown and healthy trees in pasture, around homesteads or in continuous windbreaks. Some regularly sited mature exotic windbreaks of short to medium length occur within large paddocks, providing a modicum of contrast in the landscape (see photo 3.3.3). Hawthorn hedgerows are characteristic along some older rural lanes but are only occasional and generally poorly maintained.



Photo 3.3.3 Short exotic windrows providing contrast in open pasture around Montana. Views to the Gog Range in the distance.

3.3.2 Frames of reference for Scenic Quality

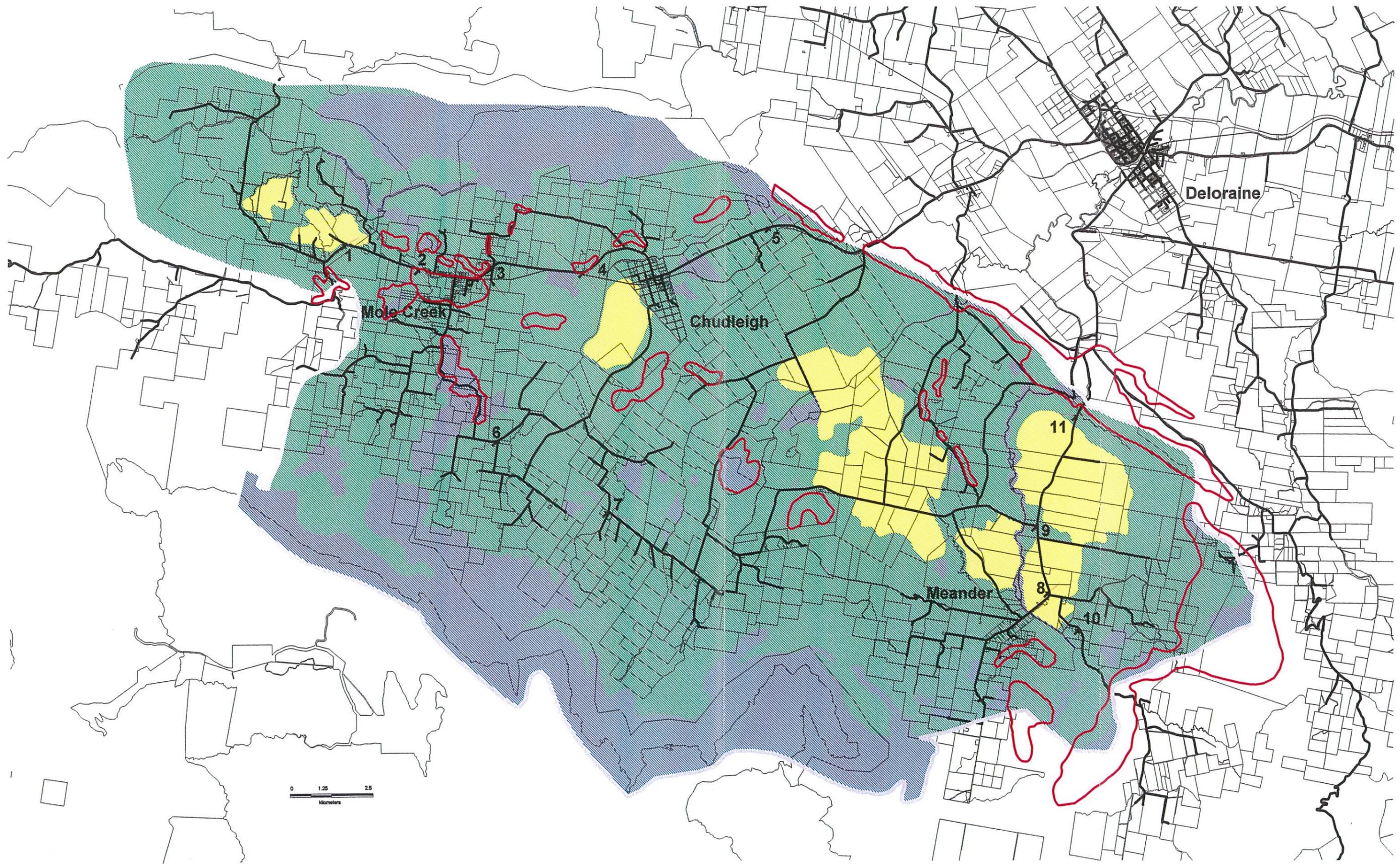
Table 3.2 sets out the frame of reference listing a range of criteria in the categories of landform, waterform, and vegetation and cultural features based on their visual variety, uniqueness and strength of contribution to character etc. Features of high, moderate and low scenic quality have been listed based on the project methodology (Section 2.3), these area also plotted on Map 3.4.

Landform	High Scenic Quality	Moderate Scenic Quality	Low Scenic Quality
	<p>Dominant escarpment of Great Western Tiers, cliff lines and scree slopes.</p> <p>Steep vegetated slope of Great Western Tiers and associated distinct 'shelves'.</p> <p>Strong incised drainage lines and valleys descending from top of Tiers escarpment.</p> <p>Independent sugarloaves rising from flat surrounding plains.</p> <p>Rock (limestone) outcropping patterns and minor cliffs at road edge.</p>	<p>Lower slopes and foothills of Great Western Tiers.</p>	<p>Open flat plains and paddocks with little definition of edges.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Fine textured lines of canopy defining shelves on mid-slopes of Great Western Tiers and texture/ colour provided by intact native forest..</p> <p>Intact Eucalypt woodlands with native grassy understorey on limestone hillsides</p> <p>Single mature open-grown blackwoods seen in open paddocks.</p> <p>Dense stands of native forest of moderate scale with rounded edges, especially on hillsides.</p> <p>Individual mature exotic trees with vigorous growth in grazing landscape</p>		<p>Poor condition single or groups of exotic tree plantings.</p> <p>Strongly thinned or disturbed native forest areas with individual trees and exposed ground surface.</p>

Table 3.2 Frames of Reference for Nells Visual Unit

	High Scenic Quality	Moderate Scenic Quality	Low Scenic Quality
Waterform	Large incised streams with waterfalls and rapids.	Individual moderate sized farm dams Fast flowing medium to small sized streams in paddocks.	Straight-line stream channels or drains pastures.
Cultural	Healthy, regular and continuous lines of poplars, pines or other windbreaks. Intensively managed and cropped small paddocks.	Agro-forestry plantation in chequerboard pattern, discontinuous at road edge and enclosing medium sized paddocks. Naturally shaped plantation of varied ages interlocking in a mosaic with native forest stands. Small scale "naturally shaped" plantations rising to less than one-third of the visible height of Tiers, partially screened by native forest to give reduced scale. Hawthorn hedgerows that are apparent but non-continuous and/or overgrown. Moderate to large scale fields defined by hedgerows and/or cropped. Windbreaks of moderate length or with minor gaps. Recently planted, immature and low windbreaks. Windbreaks of Eucalypt or mixed species.	Extensive areas of rough pasture, or unimproved pasture with indistinct boundaries. Broken, discontinuous and poorly maintained windbreaks. Young, Eucalypt windbreaks. Indistinct and broken hedgerows. <i>Vast plains or moderate to large scale pasture.</i> Extensive lengths of roadside plantation of single age. Medium scale plantations with straight-line boundaries on hill slopes.
Structures	Historic buildings/heritage houses and associated mature windbreaks/ exotic plantings.		

Table 3.2 (cont.) Frames of Reference for Nells Visual Unit



SCENIC QUALITY

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Prominent Skyline

Boundary of Study Area

Gibson

3.3.3 Significant Viewpoints and Seen Area Mapping

Within the Gibsons sub-type six prime views have been identified. These are located at:

the Western End of Pool Road in Caveside where it meets Caveside Road, looking south (viewpoint 6.);

Western Creek Road at Cubit Creek viewing from Nells Bluff to the west and the lower slopes of Mother Cummings Peak to the east, including targeted views along Western Creek Road to Mother Cummings Peak itself (viewpoint 7.);

the picnic area/road reserve at the entrance to the Meander township where Meander Road meets Jackies Marsh Road, looking north-east/east/south-east, including Quamby Bluff (viewpoint 8.);

the junction of Meander Road and Cheshunt Road, viewing primarily between Warners Sugarloaf and, in the far-distance, Nells Bluff (viewpoint 9.);

along Jackies Marsh Road some 400m from Meander Road looking north-west toward Mt Roland and the Gog Range (viewpoint 10.);

the entry to the sub-type along Meander Road beneath Cubits Sugarloaf, looking across Stockers Plains to the south-west (viewpoint 11.);

These prime viewpoints are demonstrated on Map 3.5 together with the seen area from a 180° arc, extending out to 4 kilometers from viewpoints 8, 10 and 11, and out to 7 kilometres for viewpoints 6, 7 and 9. The seen area shown on these maps was used to determine viewing sensitivity zones to aid the determination of visual management priority using the Visual Management Matrix for Rural Landscapes (see following section). Prime viewpoints were also used to undertake character description and identify key features detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised above.

3.3.4 Visual Management Priority

The combination of Scenic Quality, viewing sensitivity and visual impact potential factors within each sub-type determines the visual management priority, according to the Matrix described above. The visual management priority outcomes for the Gibsons character sub-type are shown on Map 3.6

3.3.5 Landscape management policies for *Gibsons*

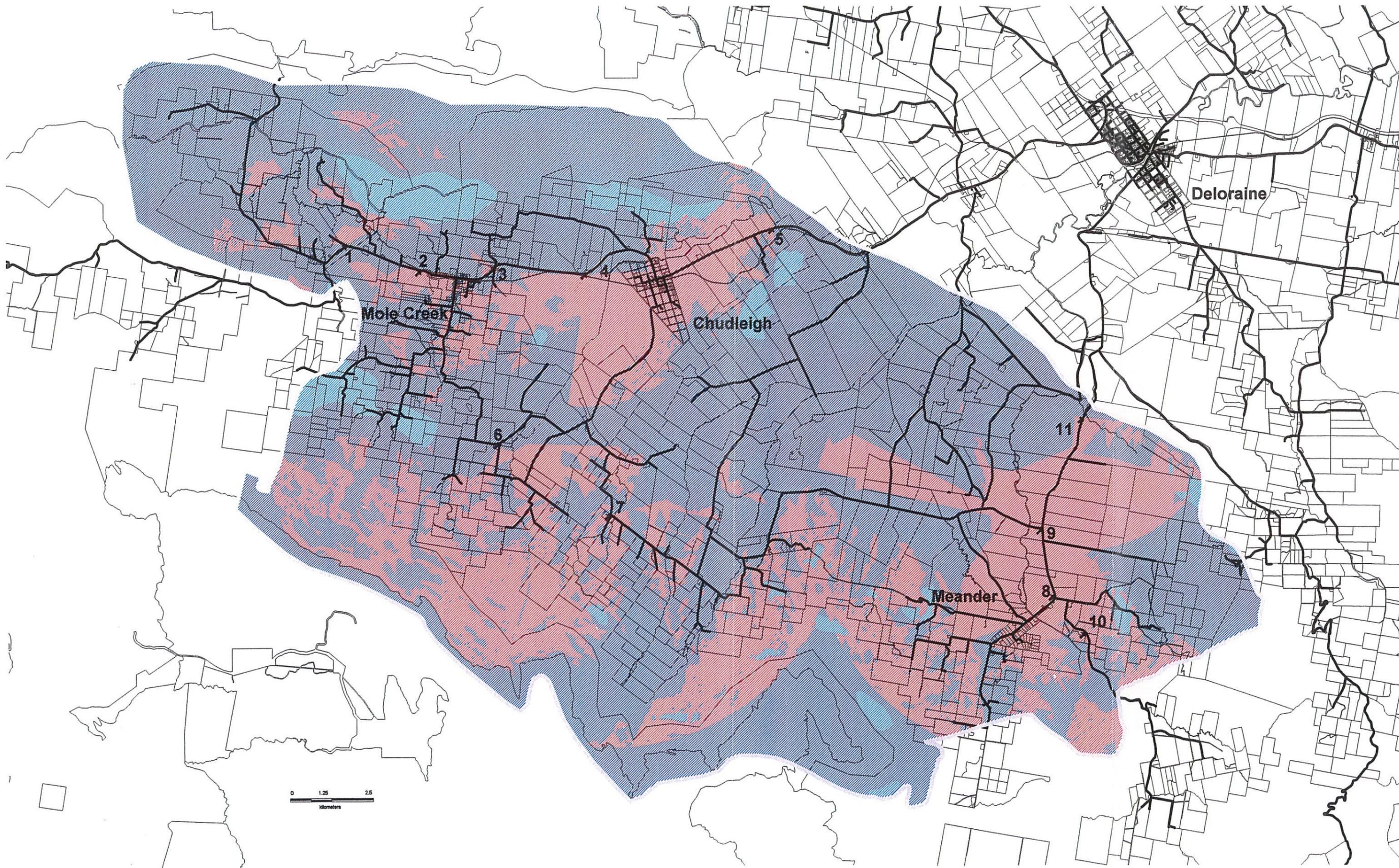
Management of the Western Tiers in Response to Viewing Characteristic

Agricultural clearings and plantation forests currently form an undulating boundary to the native forest above. These achieve a varied and interesting transition to the largely cleared agricultural landscapes of the valley and plains below. Development pressure is likely to occur in the future for more widespread expansion of plantation across neighbouring native forest on the lower slopes. This needs to be managed to avoid reduction of the present varied pattern and undulating upper boundary. If allowed to go too far it would begin to intrude into the varied character and dominate the scene. As a general theme, the lower slopes should be managed as a visual transition zone with a diverse appearance of clearings and forest, where clearings should not extend higher than a nominal 25% of the effective visual height.

For the Sub-type the Western Tiers is easily the most prominent landscape element of the region and forms the southern boundary. The Tiers are a key feature from the distant populated northern parts of the Mole Creek/ Chudleigh 'valley' through to close-up from roads running along the edge of the plains immediately below. For distant points, the upper flanks of the Tiers become the primary feature while agricultural clearings at lower levels are not strongly apparent. This is due the perspective angle, which emphasises the Tiers as an abrupt face with towering slopes and cliff lines above. The scale of the lower slopes is therefore diminished.

On moving closer towards the base of the Tiers from points such as Caveside and Western Creek, the lower slopes become more prominent due to the more vertical viewing perspective. This accentuates the immediate foreground and increases the relative scale of foreground in the scene. Agricultural clearings and plantation development along the lower slopes appear as a generally acceptable variation to the native forest and form a moderate proportion of the Tiers. Present clearings are generally found on ridges with forest retained in neighbouring gullies and these tend to give an acceptable visual effect.

However two exceptions to this exist, one each at the ends of Scotts and Wet Cave Roads (see photo 3.3.4). These are large scale alterations to the native forest and extend from ridgetops across gullies and appear as prominent and dominant deviations. In future, to reduce their apparent scale any clearings in the native forest should be limited to far smaller areas than these larger zones and retain expansive areas of forest along the internal gullies.

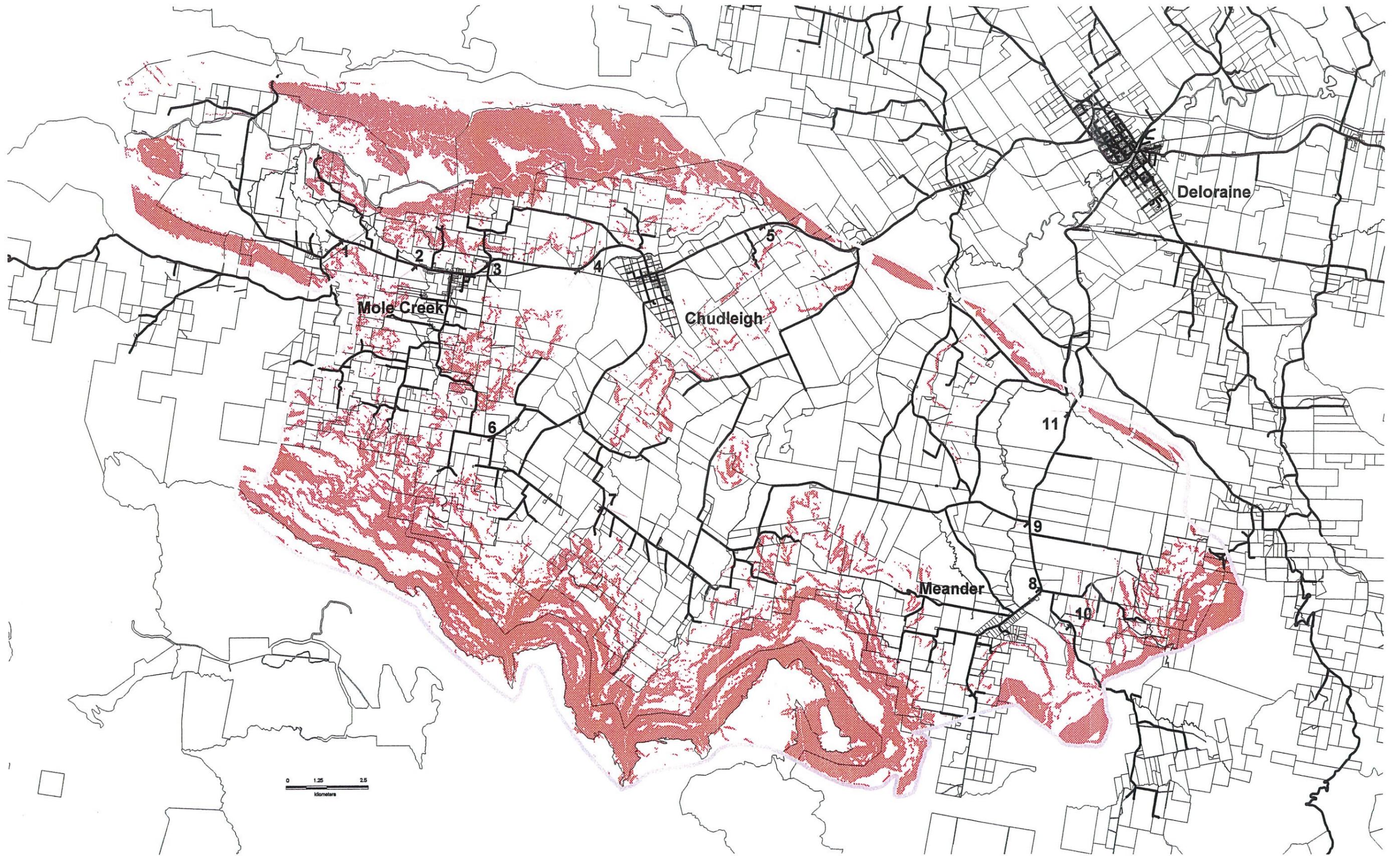


VIEWING SENSITIVITY ZONES

- Primary
- Secondary
- Least Seen

Boundary of Study Area

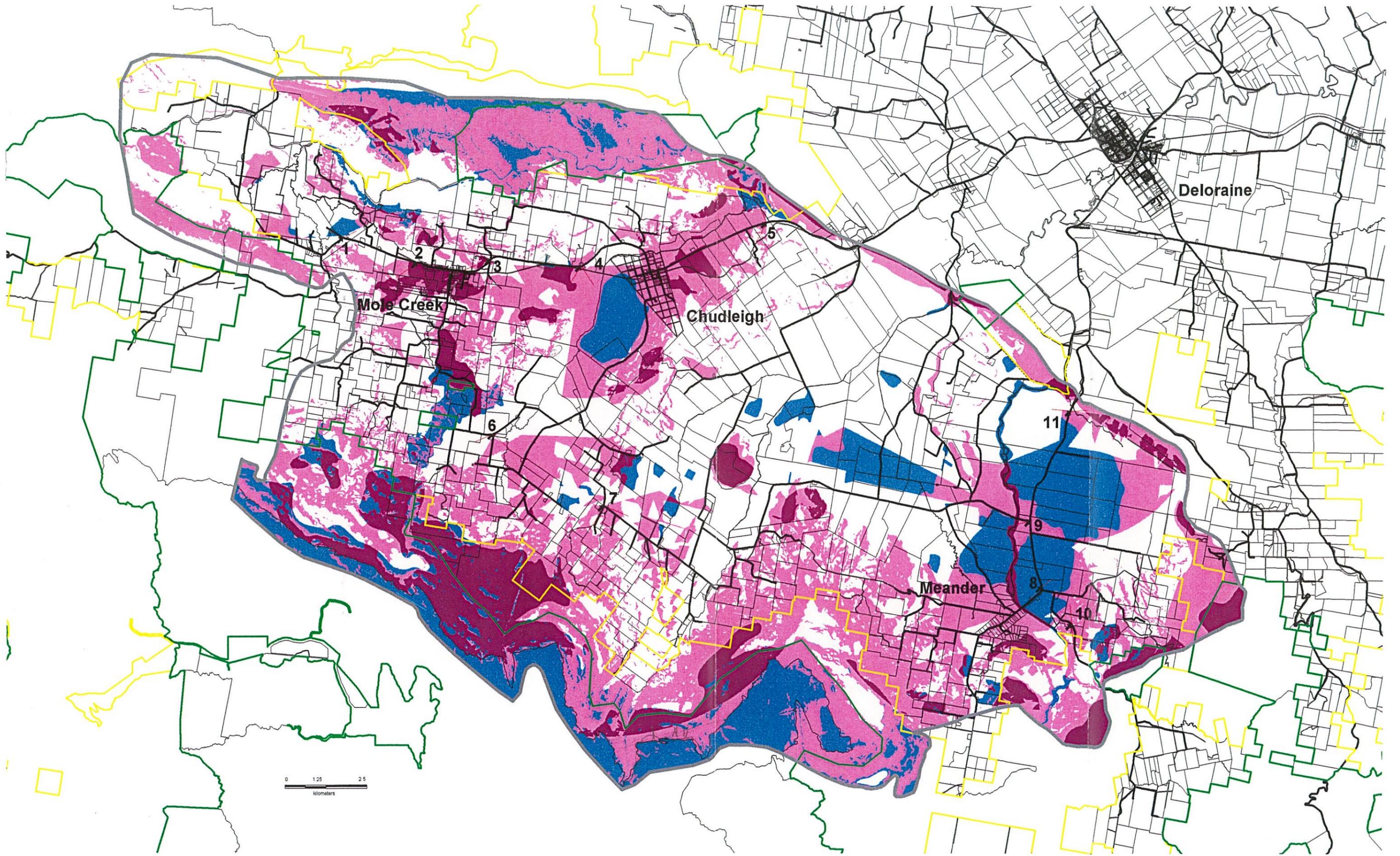
Gibson



SLOPE
Steep (greater than 25 degrees)
Shallow (less than 25 degrees)

Boundary of Study Area

Gibson



RURAL VISUAL MANAGEMENT PRIORITY

- High (Retention of Landscape Character)
- Moderate (Partial Retention of Landscape Character)
- Low (Limited Retention-Modification of L/S Character)

- Conservation
- State Forest & P.T.R.

Boundary of Study Area

Gibson



Photo 3.3.4: Plantation/clearing rising above acceptable height of Tiers



Photo 3.3.5: Well integrated plantation at the base of the Great Western Tiers.

Another important factor is how high the clearing edge extends up the slope (refer to photos 3.3.4 and 3.3.5). At the present time some minor parts extend up to near one third of the height of the Tiers. From closer viewpoints, these changes are strong and due to their scale dominant over the native forest character of neighbouring slopes. Such higher level clearing are however anomalies and further clearing higher up would appear as visually excessive.

Plantations on steep country

Plantations on steeper terrain will be more visually prominent and have a greater potential to be dominant in the landscape. For this reason plantations on the steep hillsides at the base of the Great Western Tiers need to be more strongly constrained by landscape considerations. In general plantations shapes of boundaries and scale are critical aspects and plantations should be designed to relate to the surrounding topography. Photo 3.3.5 demonstrates successful integration of plantation into the lower slopes. Note also that other prescriptions outlined in section 4.3.3 should also apply.

Outviewing

A key issue in the Gibsons character sub-type is the availability of outviews, particularly to Quamby Bluff and the Great Western Tiers. Accordingly, the careful consideration of developments which affect these views is imperative.

An example is given below in the *Meander* visual unit where Landcare work has produced a native tree windbreak along the edge of the road, blocking views to Quamby Bluff from a road important to both tourists and locals (photo 3.3.6). In this case, where the views across the plains to Quamby Bluff are consistent for several kilometres the loss of a view for 200m is not detrimental to the viewing experience as a whole, and in fact helps to promote views which occur later. Careful siting of future roadside planting should be considered, however, to ensure that views are maintained and the variety of landscape character at roadsides is not compromised by uninteresting and uniform developments.

3.4 CASE STUDY 3 : MOLE CREEK CHARACTER SUB TYPE

VMS Character Type: *North West Hills and Plains*

Constituted by visual unit: *Mole Creek - Chudleigh*

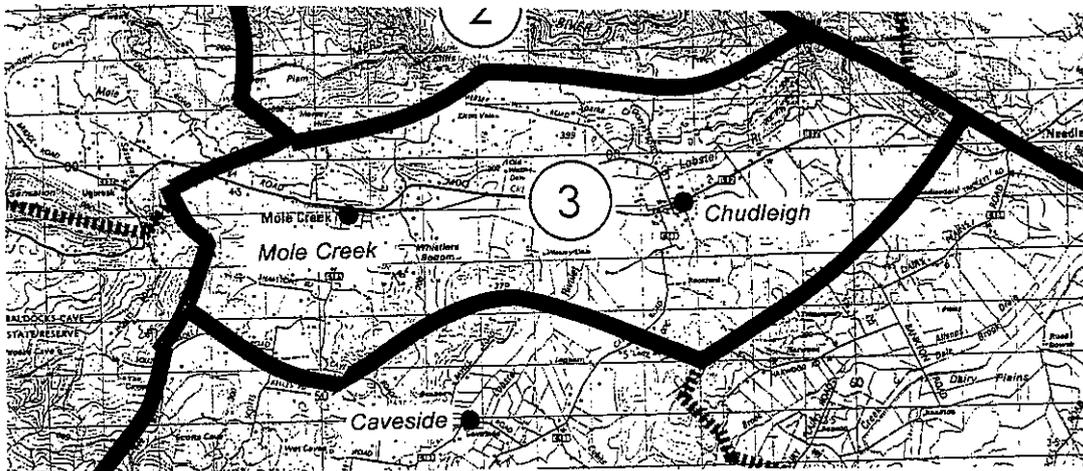


Figure 3.3 Mole Creek Character Sub-type

3.4.1 Sub-type characteristics

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The sub-type consists of just one visual unit and follows a vague 'valley' or road corridor amongst low rolling hills and occasional flat plains to the south, and is bounded to north by low hills that serve to visually separate the unit from the *Alum* visual unit. A circle of partly cleared low hills to the south separate the sub-type from the flat agricultural plains at the foot of the Tiers beyond. The dominant underlying geology is limestone which contributes to a number of unique macro-topographic features. High rainfall ensures seasonally lush appearance and relatively dense forest in the sub-type.

LAND USE

Moderate sized plains/flats surrounded by partially cleared low hills. Grazing is a primary activity. Two townships are found within unit to the northern boundary along the primary road, while some scattered agricultural settlements also occur. Tourist related developments including hotels, cafés and bed and breakfasts are common throughout the sub-type, with primary concentrations in Mole Creek and Mersey Hill Road. Despite suitable environmental factors very few plantations are evident in the sub-type, possibly due to the higher land prices.

FEATURES

Topographic: Extensive quartzite and limestone outcrops on densely forested slopes including the Gog Range and Magog are unique and scenic features (both within and viewed from the sub-type). These are complemented by smaller scale limestone outcrops on open forest hill slopes often viewed near the roadside. Undulations of the karst landscape at a macro-scale are also interesting visually.



Photo 3.4.1 Quartzite outcrops on densely forested hills viewed from Mole Creek Road.

Pastoral scenery: good quality, open pasture in the foreground of the view from Mole Creek township to the Great Western Tiers is an example of features with important contribution to the scenery. Pastoral plains are generally clear and open and a strong landscape feature, particularly in wetter seasons where colour and texture contrast with native vegetation.

Native vegetation: Native vegetation is commonly strong and lush, associated with the higher rainfall experienced in the western parts of the municipality. This provides features of consistent and distinct texture and colour which are particularly important when contrasted with exotic vegetation and pasture. Skyline native forests are generally consistent and intact providing prominent scenic value and serving to frame views and hint of the more wild and natural areas beyond the *Mole Creek Road Corridor*, particularly the Alum Cliffs and Gog Range.

Exotic plantings: Exotic and historic tree plantings and gardens provide positive landscape features around historic houses and in Mole Creek township where mature exotics are common. Hawthorn hedgerows (extensive but often overgrown) are prominent in some areas, particularly around Chudleigh and along Mole Creek Road near the wildlife park. Photograph 3.4.2 below demonstrates scenic exotic features.



Photo 3.4.2 Exotic feature plantings at 'Bentley' near Chudleigh

Distant views: The Great Western Tiers are dominant as borrowed distant views of a neighbouring landscape character sub-type from throughout the *Mole Creek-Chudleigh* visual unit, particularly from Mole Creek Road itself.

SIGNIFICANT VIEWS / VIEWING

The unit lies along the Mole Creek Road between Gardiners Ridge and Mole Creek. This section of road is part of the popular Mole Creek tourist route, and is of State significance in terms of viewing opportunities, visual experience and user numbers. These views are characterised by three view types:

1. distant views across agricultural plains to the Great Western Tiers;
2. immediate view from Mole Creek Road and Mole Creek tourist node (looking south) to fine pasture and partly vegetated hills in the foreground; and
3. equally important, but less viewed experience (due to lower viewing numbers) occurs along Mersey Hill Road where rare intimate views to the quartzite features of the Alum Cliffs/Gog Range and elevated views across agricultural plains to Great Western Tiers are available. These are particularly important views given the intention to improve the walking track to the Alum Cliff viewpoint.

Particularly important viewpoints on the Mole Creek Road occur at the entry to the unit at Gardiners Ridge; at the bend in the road at Trowunna Wildlife Park; and from within Mole Creek township. Perhaps the best example of the generic character is given looking south from the western end of Mole Creek. The Chudleigh township and northern section of the Caveside Road provide secondary viewing opportunities within the sub-type.

3.4.2 Frames of reference for Scenic Quality

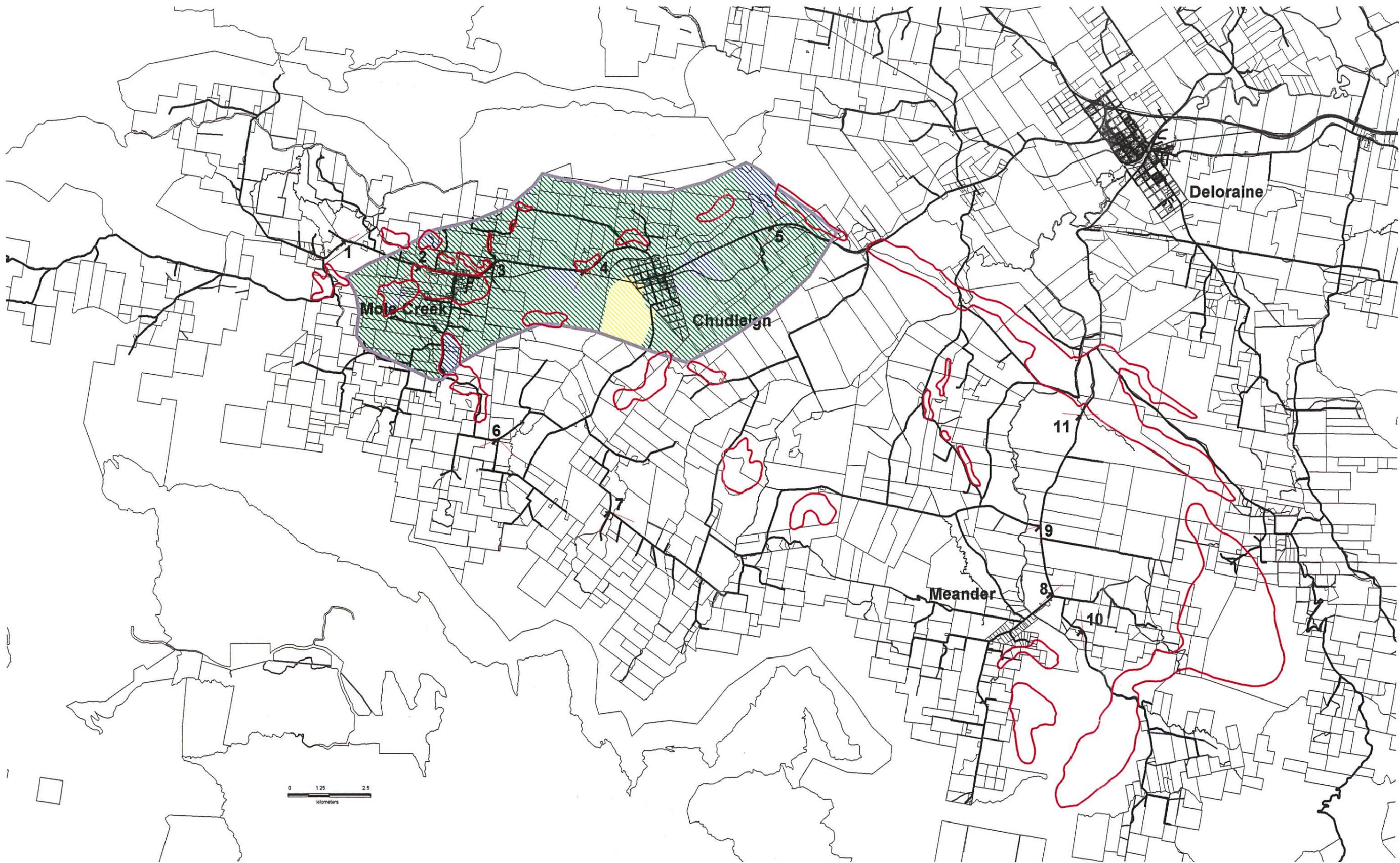
Table 3.2 sets out the frame of reference listing a range of criteria in the categories of landform, waterform, and vegetation and cultural based on their visual variety, uniqueness and strength of contribution to character etc. Features of high, moderate and low scenic quality have been listed, based on the project methodology (Section 2.3). These features are mapped for the Mole Creek character sub-type on Map 3.7.

	High Scenic Quality	Moderate Scenic Quality	Low Scenic Quality
Landform	<p>Rounded steep hills with visually prominent rock outcroppings and/or with undisturbed dense forest.</p> <p>Distinct river gorge, with steep, rocky, forested banks.</p> <p>Karst features; rolling and dipping detailed topography, outcrops and sink holes. (Especially when seen at the immediate roadside).</p>	<p>Rounded, low, shallow sloping hills and ridges, sometimes extensive.</p>	<p>Open flat plains and paddocks with little definition of edges.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Dense stands of mature forest of moderate scale with rounded edges, especially on hillsides.</p> <p>Individual mature exotic trees with vigorous growth in grazing landscape.</p>	<p>Small, scattered and exposed stands of mature to over-mature native forests throughout agricultural paddocks.</p>	<p>Strongly thinned native forest areas with scattered and poor standard individual trees and exposed ground surface.</p> <p>Native stags (dead) and dying trees in agricultural land.</p>
Waterform	<p>Large incised streams/rivulets with waterfalls and rapids.</p>	<p>Individual moderated sized farm dams. Fast flowing medium to small sized streams in paddocks often without associated vegetation).</p>	<p>Straight stream channels in drained pastures</p>

Table 3.3 Frames of Reference for the Chudleigh and Mole Creek Visual Unit

Cultural	High Scenic Quality	Moderate Scenic Quality	Low Scenic Quality
	<p>Maturing plantations of moderate to small scale with rounded edges that interlink with retained native forest zones of similar scale.</p> <p>Well maintained, regular-formed and continuous hedgerows or windbreaks, which provide targeted views to distant features in the landscape.</p> <p>Historic buildings and associated mature windbreaks/exotic plantings.</p>	<p>Hedgerows that are indistinct but apparent and incomplete or non-continuous. Overgrown and poorly maintained hawthorn hedgerows.</p> <p>Moderate to large scale fields defined by hedgerows and/or cropped.</p> <p>Windbreaks of moderate length with minor gaps but with consistent, even appearance. Recently planted, immature and/or low windbreaks. Windbreaks of Eucalypt or mixed species.</p>	<p>Extensive areas of pasture, poorly managed or unimproved with indistinct boundaries</p> <p>Broken, coarse and poorly maintained windbreaks.</p>

Table 3.3 (cont.) Frames of Reference for the Chudleigh and Mole Creek Visual Unit



SCENIC QUALITY

-  High
-  Moderate
-  Low
-  Prominent Skyline

 Boundary of Study Area

Mole Creek

3.4.3 Significant Viewpoints and Seen Area Mapping

Five prime view points have been described for the Mole Creek character sub-type, located:

at the signed tourist stop point at the entrance to the unit just west of Gardiners Ridge, with a wide arc of viewing from Magog around to Nells Bluff;

outside Trowunna Wildlife Park on Mole Creek Road, with viewing to the distant Western Tiers features of Mother Cummings Peak and west to Mt Parmeener;

targeted views to Western Bluff and other peaks in the distance from Mole Creek Road, near the intersection with Mersey Hill Road;

at the western end of the Mole Creek township looking between south and south east; and

from Liena Road as it bends south-east toward Ugbrook, looking north west to north east.

Seen area from the Prime Viewpoints is shown on Map 3.8.

3.4.4 Visual Management Priority

The combination of Scenic Quality, viewing sensitivity and visual impact potential factors within each sub-type determines the visual management priority, according to the Matrix described above. The visual management priority outcomes are shown on Map 3.3.

3.3.5 Landscape management policies for *Mole Creek*

Alum Cliff Viewpoint

Specific management may be required to retain the rural landscape viewed from the walking track to this point and the Mersey Hill Road access from Mole Creek . The road route and the track is expected to be a key future visitor feature within this growing tourist area close to Mole Creek, which already has a number of visitor accommodation houses. The walking track has been identified in the Great Western

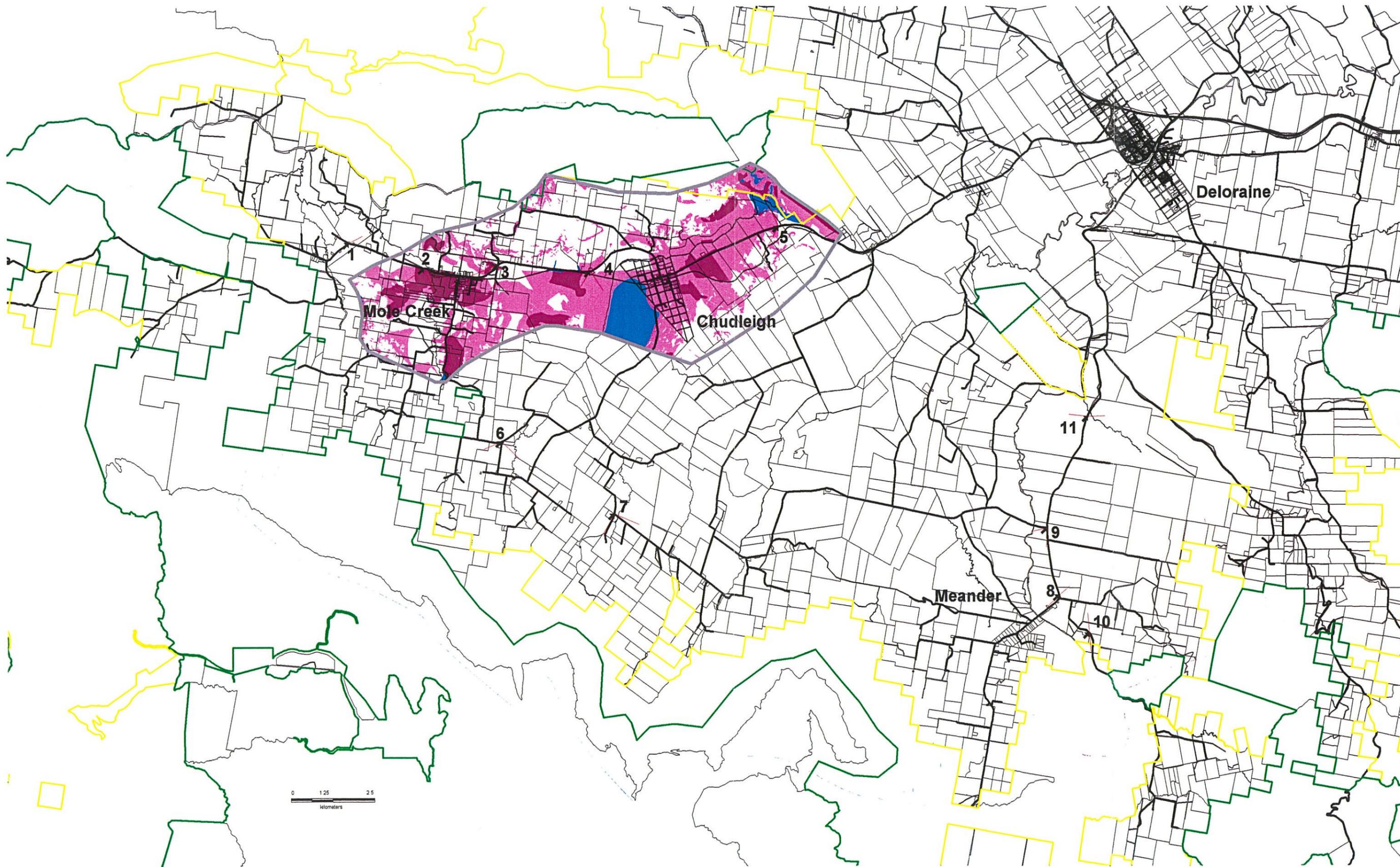
Tiers section of the statewide NHT and RFA funded Nature Based Tourism Program, as a key project for development and promotion.

RETENTION OF NATIVE FOREST CLUMPS

In rural areas where native forest remains as a small percentage of total landscape, a high priority is needed to be given to retention of remaining forest clumps. These remnant forests often appear as features in prominent foregrounds and on steep hill slopes or skylines on least productive terrain in rocky, exposed and least fertile areas. Such isolated forests provide strong emphasis within rural scenery and generally are an essential elements contributing visual character and variety in the scenery. Generally such stands are unmanaged and aging. They are often open to grazing underneath, with resulting lost of natural forest regeneration. Long-term loss of these trees will lead to reduction in the visual variety at the local level and on a regional basis, to extension of the already widespread openness and visually simplified agricultural scenery.

HILLTOPS

The majority of the isolated hill and slopes of hills rising from plains areas throughout the Sub-type presently retain native forest cover. This is a central and repeated theme in the regional visual character of the Meander Valley Council area. Such native forest areas should be retained or managed to appear substantially intact. Clearings and plantations associated with these native forest hills, should remain visually subordinate to the scenery in key views from public use areas.



RURAL VISUAL MANAGEMENT PRIORITY

- High (Retention of Landscape Character)
- Moderate (Partial Retention of Landscape Character)
- Low (Limited Retention-Modification of L/S Character)

- Conservation
- State Forest & P.T.R.

Boundary of Study Area

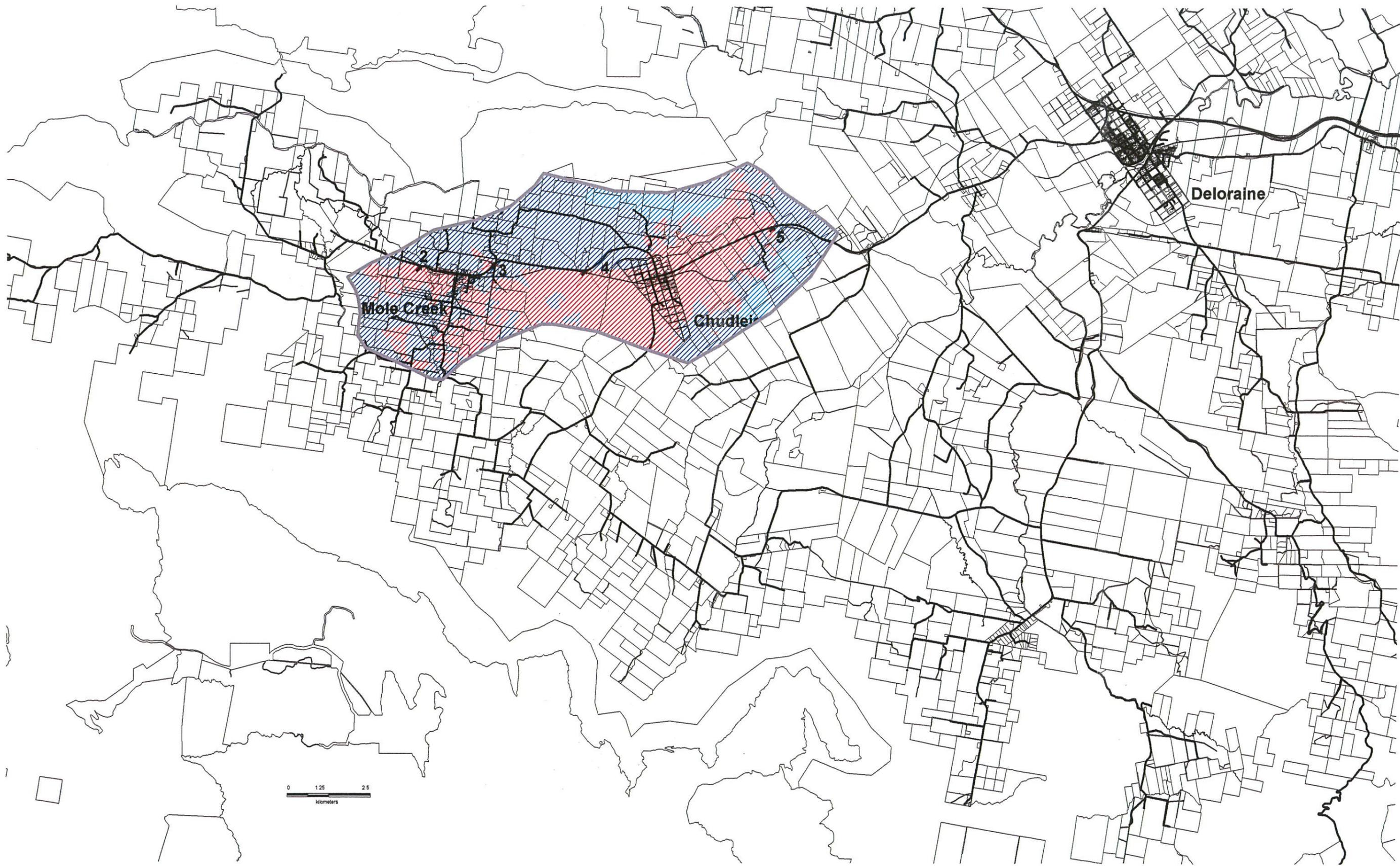
Mole Creek



SLOPE
▨ Steep (greater than 25 degrees)
□ Shallow (less than 25 degrees)

— Boundary of Study Area

Mole Creek



VIEWING SENSITIVITY ZONES

-  Primary
-  Secondary
-  Least Seen

 Boundary of Study Area

Mole Creek

CHAPTER 4

MECHANISMS TO PROTECT AND MANAGE SCENIC VALUES

This Chapter identifies a range of possible measures for protecting and managing the scenic values of Meander Valley.

Section 4.1 refers to the statutory measures that could be adopted within Council's planning scheme or other regulative powers administered by other land managing agencies.

Section 4.2 describes a number of non-regulative measures that could be embraced to support the protection and management of scenic values.

Section 4.3 outlines some policy guidelines for the Council to consider when dealing with proposals that may alter landscape values, including prominent scenic features within Meander Valley such as the Great Western Tiers.

4.1 REGULATIVE MEASURES

4.1.1 Existing Planning Scheme Provisions

Section 20 (1) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (LUPAA) allows planning schemes to make "any provision which relates to the use, development, protection or conservation of any land". The use of land use zones within planning schemes can determine the type of land use and incorporate measures to address the potential impacts of those developments. For instance planning schemes can require a permit for land clearing or the siting of buildings. Some planning schemes may require an environmental impact assessment and/or visual impact assessment to be undertaken by the developer where special landscape values have been identified.

Where a planning scheme sets aside private land for a public purpose, or where Council fails to grant a permit for the land on the ground that the land is or will be needed for a public purpose (which may include scenic values) compensation may be payable under LUPAA (Part 5, s66). The planning guidelines in Section 4.2 suggest other various mechanisms for gaining the agreement of landowners by way of voluntary agreements, incentives and negotiations between interest groups. Acquisition is seen as a last resort in recognition that funds were limited and general community concern about acquisition processes.

A number of planning schemes within the State have attempted to address the protection of scenic values within rural areas. The draft *Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000* has attempted to address this need within a performance-based approach. This planning scheme includes the following measures:

a reference to scenic values within its planning scheme objectives (e.g. within the cultural heritage objectives is “the protection of significant viewsheds and landscapes of cultural significance to the local community and visitors alike”);

a desired future character statement is identified for the Primary Industries Zone that refers to “visually attractive natural and semi-natural areas with often significant landscape values” and an accompanying strategy that states “controls will be applied to ensure development is sited to reduce visual impact and disturbance of natural areas” but do not appear to specify what such controls for scenic management will be;

in the Environmental Protection Zone there is reference to the:

protection and management of scenic landscapes within the intent of the Zone,

a desired future character statement stating “landscape and scenic features of beaches, coastal and inland hills and mountains, estuaries, lagoons, headlands and coastal vegetation are conserved”,

the strategy for achieving the above desired future character statement is that “significant landscapes are protected in the scheme in accordance with the document DPIWE (1999)” and the performance criteria are provided for building appearance including external appearance, maximum height and setbacks;

an Environmental Management Schedule sets out standards to allow for the sustainable use and development of land and resources in all zones and provides performance criteria for:

slopes,

fauna disturbance/destruction,

landscape protection; and

reference is made to retention of vegetation, roof and bulk design, colour schemes, location and avoidance of linear development within the landscape protection criteria of the Environmental Management Schedule but these criteria appear to only apply within the Environment Protection Zone.

The existing *Meander Valley Council Planning Scheme 1995* allows for the designation of land as Scenic Protection Areas within which use and development are at the discretion of Council. Discretion is also currently available to Council over the design and siting of buildings in the rural zone, with respect to potential impact on the rural landscape. This discretion enables Council to exclude development or to apply performance criteria to protect or manage important scenic values within these areas. At present only one area, Blackstone Heights, has designation as a scenic protection area.

4.1.2 Proposed Planning Scheme Provisions

A draft Schedule for the protection of scenic values within Meander Valley has been prepared for potential inclusion within the proposed new Meander Planning Scheme, due to be prepared for the Meander Valley Council after June 2001. It adopts the format of more recent performance based planning schemes where the planning permit is based upon identifying 'acceptable solutions' and 'performance criteria' for guiding the approval process.

The draft provisions are outlined in Appendix 3 titled Draft Schedule for the Management of Scenic Values in Rural Landscapes. It provides:

- a statement of the intent of the Schedule;
- an outline of how the Schedule is applied within the scheme;
- definitions of key words used in the Schedule;
- an outline of the process used in determining the Rural Visual Management Priority Categories for Meander Valley; and
- the planning requirements for the Rural Visual Management Priority Categories of:
 - High Priority
 - Moderate Priority
 - Low Priority.

The key features of the draft provision are:

- the Schedule follows the outcomes of the methodology adopted within this report as outlined in Chapter 2;
- the Schedule adopts a scale of regulation relating to the Rural Visual Management Priority of the land;

Council must approve a use or development where it can be demonstrated that the acceptable solutions for the respective Rural Visual Management Priority Category will be met ;

Council may approve a use or development that does not comply with the requirements for an acceptable solution provided it could demonstrate compliance with the performance criteria for that acceptable solution;

Council must refuse a use or development that does not comply with an acceptable solution for which no performance criteria is given or for a use and development that cannot meet the acceptable solutions or performance criteria; and

the onus of responsibility is placed on the developer to demonstrate compliance with the acceptable solutions and performance criteria within the development application.

It should be recognised that the draft planning scheme provisions if adopted, will only come into being when there is a development application requiring a permit under the planning scheme. Accordingly developments which may be exempt from the planning scheme (as listed in the Schedule) or those that do not require a permit will not be subject to the scenic management planning controls. A number of landowners expressed concern at the community forums that the application of the proposed planning controls would ultimately affect the decisions about what crops could be planted. This is clearly not possible unless Council required all landowners to seek a permit for crops to be planted – no known planning scheme has tried to do this and nor is it likely to be attempted given the implications for administering the scheme and impacts on the farming community.

The difficulty with creating a planning scheme control is that mapping of spatial features such as landscape values can create problems with accuracy of the maps. In recent years, the proposals for model planning schemes have moved away from adopting overlays for special area controls and have attempted to adopt performance based controls where planning judgment is required. In discussion with the Planning Division of DIPWE, it was suggested that the mapping of the rural visual management categories could be used as a reference document to the scheme. The map would act as Council's assessment of rural visual management priority based on the matrix and methodology described in the planning scheme. However this would mean that developers may challenge the map, which, since it is not a statutory document, they are not bound to accept.

The opportunity could also be provided for the applicant to undertake their own visual management priority assessment using the methodology of this report. This would allow applicants to present more detailed documentation that may support or alter the visual management priority assessment for a particular use or development within the Meander Valley.

Accordingly a provision has been made within the draft Schedule for the applicant use a suitably qualified landscape architect or similar professional to undertake an assessment or Rural Management Priority by:

- a) determining the scenic quality of the site;
- b) determining the viewing sensitivity rating;
- c) assessing the key visual impact potential factors (slope and prominence); and
- d) providing a report to the Council on the identification and assessment results and their implications for visual management priority classification, according to the Rural Visual Management Matrix. (This report would be presented at the time of lodging the development application.)

In the short term, the Council will consider extending the landscape analysis to allow the Rural Visual Management Priority Matrix to be completed for the whole of the Meander Valley (this study has prepared the matrix for 3 case study areas representing about a third of the Council area).

In the long term the Council may consider the opportunity for recording the visual management priority onto their land database. This would allow all land units to be rated with management planning information such as vegetation status, soil classification, erosion potential, flood potential and also the visual management priority. The Council would be able to seek this information for any development application and then deal with the appropriate provisions under the planning scheme. For instance if the subject land was listed as High Priority land the applicant would then need to meet the acceptable solutions or performance criteria listed in the scheme. This approach avoids the problems of having precise overlays and/or maps to show the boundaries of the listed priorities, which would inevitably create questions of accuracy and administrative problems. Landowners would also be able to check the priority listings prior to consideration of development applications and consider the appropriate response to the listed values. They would be able to undertake their own visual management priority assessment using the methodology of this report.

It is recommended that the Council consider adopting the draft Schedule as part of the proposed new planning scheme for Meander Valley. The reasons for this are:

the performance based format of the Schedule is more appropriate to the new scheme and may be difficult to add as an amendment to the current Meander Valley planning scheme format;

it would be logical to 'pilot trial' the proposed provisions during the lead-up time required to draft the new scheme so as to identify any problems before it becomes a legally binding document (Council could use it as a reference guide to assessing applications until adopted within the scheme);

it would provide time to put into practice the range of non-regulative measures;

it would allow time for Council to complete the Visual Management Priority Mapping for the entire municipality; and

it allows for the controls to be reviewed and integrated with the other planning controls envisaged as a result of the Natural Resource Management Strategy investigations.

4.1.3 Assessment Process

The adoption of this proposed approach to planning scheme provisions would also require the appropriation of new processes for assessing development applications. Such a process would need to ensure comprehensive and consistent application of the scenery management principles outlined in this report by integrating specialist expertise, existing mechanisms to assess visual management and the resources of Council.

The identification and assessment of landscape values often requires professional skills and experience with visual management systems. The Council is unlikely to have qualified staff to undertake this role and may choose to seek such advice within the development assessment process. Such advice may come from the Forest Practices Board, in cases which involve plantation establishment/harvesting and/or native vegetation clearance, or from the visual management industry/landscape architects in other more general cases. It is proposed that development applications which have implications for scenic values be split into two groups: those relating to plantation establishment/harvesting or native vegetation clearance, and other more general development applications (houses, industrial sites etc.). Development applications related to plantation establishment/harvesting and/or native vegetation clearance would have the opportunity to be referred to the Forest Practices Board in cases of particularly contentious or complex issues. In order for such referral to be made, it is essential that common assessment criteria and processes are adopted by Council, the Forest Practices Board, and other experts undertaking analysis. The visual character objectives and rural visual management priority matrix outlined in this report and potentially integrated into Council's planning scheme provide the basis for such a common system. This proposed integrated system of approvals is demonstrated in Figure 4.1.

Council may need to consider funds for securing professional advice. For instance, an additional cost could be required from applicants to help fund the Forest Practices Officer undertake assessment of plantation development applications and Timber Harvesting Plans.

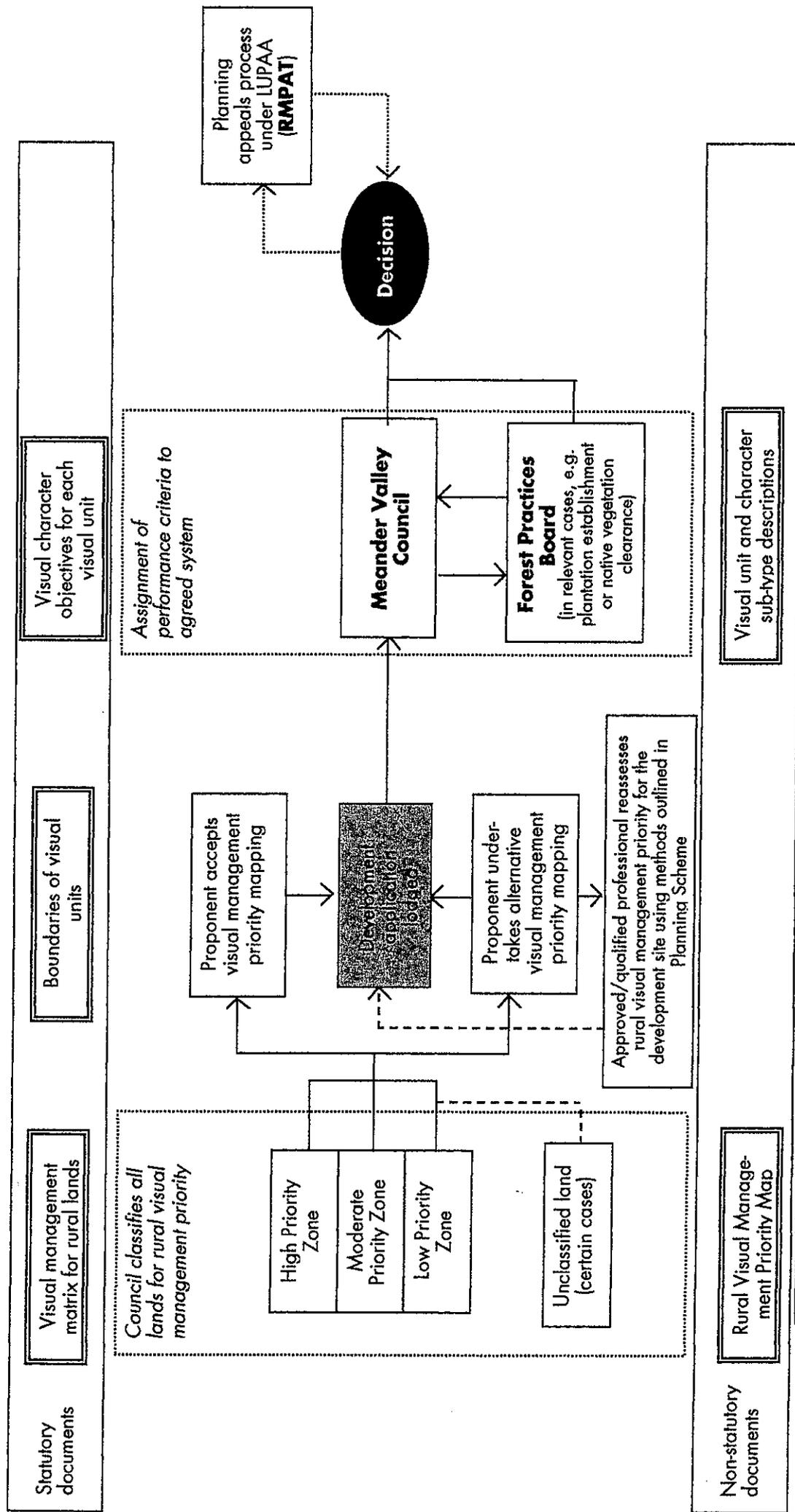


Figure 4.1 Proposed New Assessment Process

4.1.4 Other Planning Scheme Controls

The new planning scheme for Meander Valley may also provide the opportunity to include planning measures that would complement the achievement of landscape protection and management. These provisions may include:

using zones that embrace environmental management outcomes as part of the objectives, acceptable solutions and performance criteria;

using Part 5 Agreements of *Land Use Planning Approvals Act 1993* to achieve arrangements that will protect and manage landscape values in relation to approval of development (e.g. approval of land clearing may provide the opportunity for a Part 5 Agreement to secure vegetation protection of areas with high conservation value);

making use of the 5% open space contribution under the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993* to secure open spaces reserves with landscape values;

requiring environmental impact assessments to be undertaken for developments that would include visual impacts on the landscape character objectives for the visual units; and

adopting performance criteria in all zones that will help to minimise the visual impacts of development (e.g. design, siting, height, setbacks, external material colours, signs).

4.1.5 Other Regulative Controls

There are a number of other regulative controls, which do not necessarily focus on scenic values but may provide some opportunities for supporting landscape protection and management within the Meander Valley.

Among the most important and relevant of these is the Forest Practices System, some of the potential integration with this study has been described in section 4.1.3 above.

Forest Practices Code

Land management on State Forests and proposals for timber harvesting plans on freehold land are subject to the conditions of the *Forest Practices Code 2000*, administered by the Forest Practices Board. The assessment of suitable land

management practices under the *Code* involves the application of the Visual Management System.

The *Forest Practices Code (2000)* describes the mechanisms under which sustainable management of natural and cultural values (deemed to include landscape values) might occur and includes reference to a number of State and Federal Acts, agreements and policies. Beyond these powers, sustainable management is to be achieved through the 'duty of care' of the landowner which is defined as the fundamental contribution of the landowner to the conservation of natural and cultural values deemed to be significant under the forest practices system. In addition to these required contributions, the landowner's duty of care includes:

all measures necessary to protect soil and water values as detailed in the *Forest Practices Code (2000)*; and

the reservation of other significant natural and cultural values (these typically include landscape values) up to a level of 5% of the existing and proposed forest on the property for areas totally excluded from operations (except where partial harvesting can occur, where the level will be up to 10%) (pg. 52).

The *Forest Practices Code (2000)* then goes on to say that "conservation of values beyond the duty of care [i.e. beyond 5% of the total land area] is deemed to be for the community benefit and should be achieved on a voluntary basis or through compensation mechanisms where available" (pg. 52).

For the purposes of forest practices (as defined in the *Forest Practices Act 1985*) in State Forests or on land declared as a private timber reserve, the *Forest Practices Code* will continue to provide the regulatory measures for the protection of scenic values. Nonetheless, the current study has relevance to the conservation of scenic values under the *Forest Practices Code* by updating the location of key viewing locations, reviewing scenic quality and presenting landscape priority and landscape management objectives derived at a more local scale. Forestry Tasmania is currently reviewing the viewpoints used for visual values assessment in State Forests. It is recommended that this review consider the findings and suggested viewpoints of the current study and be repeated every five years in response to changing tourism and travel patterns (e.g. tourism development, route guides, walking track promotion, new recreational destinations etc.).

It is also recommended that regulation of forestry activities for landscape values be made consistent regardless of land tenure, the proposed liaison between Council and the *Forest Practices Board* outlined in the approvals processes above (and in figure 4.1) is a first step in this direction. Consideration should be given to an increase in funding for landscape planning section of the *Forest Practices Unit* to reflect growing

role in assessing plans for private forestry operations, and the potential increase in requests for expert advice from Councils within Tasmania.

Private Timber Reserves Process

The Private Timber Reserve (PTR) process currently allows two opportunities for Council to comment on PTR proposals. The first is at the time of review by Private Forests Tasmania of a PTR submission. Here Council may make a submission on visual management values and issues under the category of "community values" as described in the Act. This is considered by the Forest Practices Board which is responsible for approval of PTRs. If the PTR gains approval, the next stage is through the appeals process at the Forest Practices Tribunal. As the Act stands currently, following approval of the PTR any concerns and issues identified during the review stage cannot be attached as conditions for subsequent forest operations. At both of these opportunities, the mapped inventory of "Rural Visual Management Priority" from the present study will provide a clear indication of the relative visual importance of the proposed PTR area within the overall landscape. This gives a strategic level evaluation and has the advantage over the past where the specific area only was considered without an appreciation of its importance to a regional landscape. A final opportunity for input from Council occurs when a Forest Practices Plan (FPP) is prepared and the "special values" are considered by Forest Practices Board specialists. Here again the visual priority for the PTR (or any private property block) can be reviewed by the specialist as an indication of municipal values. Visual prescriptions in the final FPP based on Rural Visual Management Priority will have a stronger foundation than in the past which should ensure their implementation more successfully. The Council may also respond, where appropriate, on visual management prescriptions required to be included in the forestry operation, however it should be noted that once the PTR has been declared and through all the processes above, it is effectively outside the responsibility of Council.

State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land

Under section 20(b) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* all planning schemes must be prepared in accordance with such State Policies. The *State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 1999* for example aims to protect the viability of agricultural lands and further the sustainable development objectives of the Resource Management and Planning System of the State. Given the integral contribution that agricultural landscapes have to the visual character of the Meander Valley this Policy might have a particular regulatory role to play in maintaining high quality and productive (and therefore scenic) rural landscapes. For example, the policy aims to prevent broad scale conversion of land for non-agricultural purposes

such as residential subdivision which may contribute to the visual values of parts of the Meander Valley.

Under the *Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 1999* farm-forestry is defined as an agricultural use and therefore not a use to be actively discouraged by this *Policy*. However, this does not make farm-forestry, or plantation forestry an 'as of right' activity on agricultural land. "just because a policy defines agricultural uses as including intensive tree farming and plantation forestry does not mean that such uses must (or must not) be allowed within certain zones"²⁷. Rather, the *Policy* protects prime agricultural land *from* inappropriate uses, not *for* any particular use. It is this interpretation that has been adopted in the current study and is reflected in the planning provisions outlined in the draft planning schedule provided in Appendix 3.

Various Acts and Policies

There are a number of national policies, which may affect Commonwealth Government decisions, and also where Local Government may be supportive partners. Examples include:

National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity 1996 which recognises land clearing as a threatening process and considers effective measures to retain and manage native vegetation;

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to which the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* and the Register of the National Estate will operate in parallel;

National Local Government Biodiversity Strategy 1998 which recognises that local governments are actively involved in biodiversity conservation using a variety of mechanisms and are a key partner in achieving bio-conservation provided adequate support and resourcing is in place;

National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development which establishes principles for ecologically sustainable management of the nation's natural resources;

World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983 to which the proposed World Heritage Nomination, if accepted, will create obligations imposed on the Commonwealth under the Convention; and

²⁷ Letter dated 06.11.01 from Shaun McElwaine, Barrister and Solicitor to Meander Valley Council.

Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 which sets out requirements for the identification, assessment criteria and protection of heritage values expresses in terms of historic, aesthetic, scientific, and social values.

Within Tasmania, a number of legislative frameworks are in place, which aim to protect natural and cultural resource values of importance to the community. Those legislative and policies that may be concurrent with the aims of protecting landscape values include:

the resource management and planning system of Tasmania and specific objectives of the planning process contained within the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* with their emphasis on sustainable development (e.g. use of Part 5 Agreements to notify future owners of management obligations);

the *Tasmanian Threatened Specie Protection Act 1995* which identifies species of flora and fauna which are extinct, endangered or vulnerable in Tasmania and which aims to protect them across all land tenures (e.g. may protect habitat values linked to landscape management);

the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* which provides a variety of management tools for management of the environment and control of pollution, including an integrated process for assessment and granting of permit applications (e.g. controlling the potential environmental impacts of development that may include impacts that affect landscape values);

the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1970* which sets out the conservation purposes of reserve land controlled under the provisions of the Act and provides for the conservation and protection of the State's flora and fauna by regulations within these reserves (e.g. this applies to a significant portion of Meander Valley's public land but also allows for options for private nature reserves and sanctuaries which may indirectly support landscape management);

the *Tasmanian Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995* which sets out requirements for the identification, assessment, protection and conservation of places having historic cultural heritage in relation to archaeological, architectural, cultural, historic, scientific, social and technical value (e.g. protection of social and aesthetic values which may be identified with heritage places);

the *State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997* which focuses on the achievement of water quality objectives for all water bodies and which is intended to lead to water management plans under the *Water Act 1999* will be required to be prepared for individual catchments which will provide increased control of threatening processes including land clearing (e.g. management measures that protect environmental flows and may indirectly help protect scenic values); and

the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997* which aims to establish a comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system in the State which includes rare, threatened or inadequately reserved forest communities on private and public lands (e.g. setting aside of reserves that may also have landscape values).

4.2 NON-REGULATIVE MEASURES

A range of non-regulative measures can be used to help achieve improved protection and management of scenic values within the Meander Valley. These measures include:

rural community education about the importance of scenic values and ways in which landowners can help to protect and manage these values (section 4.2.1);

voluntary agreements and incentives (section 4.2.2);

negotiation between interests groups (section 4.2.3);

inclusion of visual management principles within existing management tools such as Whole Farm Plans, Catchment Plans and Rivercare (section 4.2.4); and

acquisition of land (section 4.2.5).

4.2.1 Community Education

A large proportion of issues which affect scenic values do not come through the formal planning process covered by the planning scheme. Council therefore has a role to play to ensure the day to day activities of landowners are consistent with the visual management objectives for the municipality. Council could create a stronger awareness of the need to protect and manage landscape values within Meander Valley by providing information that would assist landowners in making

development and management decisions. This information may cover such aspects as:

the benefits of protecting and managing landscape values (e.g. economic, environmental and social benefits to the individual and community);

practical ways of protecting and managing landscape values (e.g. siting of buildings/ works, design considerations, setbacks, height, colour, materials, management of hawthorn hedges etc);

existing Programs that may help with funding, advice and management;

how Council may help in the development planning, lodging and assessment stages; and

where to get more advice and technical information.

This role of liaison with landowners may require the establishment of a rural land management officer within Council, a position which may be shared with neighbouring Councils. This position could work under the Meander Valley Natural Resource Management Committee and would have the brief to provide expertise and advice related to best practice management of rural land, including scenic values. It would be imperative that the officer work closely with landowners on a day to day basis in order to build trust and rapport and to ensure that landowners know that such support is available.

Such information could also be provided by planners prior to the official lodgment of a development application.

4.2.2 Voluntary Agreements and Incentives

The Planning Guidelines for Urban Skylines and Hillfaces (DIPWE 2000) refers to voluntary agreements as a possible means of protecting the visual values of skylines and hill faces. These agreements may also be appropriate for protecting other landscape features where there is interest and mutual benefit from the landowner.

Private nature reserves and sanctuaries can be established on a voluntary basis on private land under Section 15 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*, along with conservation covenants. Agreements under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* can also be used to protect conservation values and to conserve a comprehensive range of habitats on private land – this may be relevant where the habitat or conservation value is associated with landscape features of scenic interest. For

instance, voluntary agreement was a key element to protecting the White Gum habitat for the Forty Spotted Pardalote on the skyline at North Bruny Island. Similar reserves may be established by land owners to protect special scenic values.

LUPAA also allows for agreements to be made under a Part 5 of the Act and this may allow for opportunities to achieve landscape protection and management outcomes. The agreements can be registered on the land title so as to make future landowners aware of the issues and management obligations that may apply to the land.

In some cases the voluntary agreements are linked with incentives such as supply of fencing materials, management planning advice or compensation.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary property registration scheme that aims to assist, encourage and recognise the potential for landholders to provide for native animals and plants on their property. The conservation of habitat may also provide scope to protect or manage landscape values associated with that habitat. Under the Regional Forest Agreement, compensation may be available for private land with priority vegetation communities or species where a Management Agreement of Covenant has been established.

The Bushcare Program aims to protect remnant vegetation as an effort to reverse the long-term decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation within Australia. Long term management agreements known as conservation covenants or voluntary management agreements are used as a mechanism and these may provide opportunities for protecting or managing landscape values associated with the management of the native vegetation.

At a national and international level, there is a concern that so-called 'carbon credits' and tax concessions are an incentive for plantation development in areas where there is little or no likelihood of their achieving a profitable return and importantly to this study into areas where plantation establishment requires removal of native vegetation (although this study does not have the scope to assess the extent to which this actually occurs). There may be scope for consideration to be given to tax concessions and/or 'carbon credits' for the retention of native forests including those retained for their landscape values.

At a Statewide level, there may be scope for Land Tax concessions for areas, which are reserved on private land for the public good. Where such concessions are given, they should be subject to certain management constraints e.g. the retention of areas in a weed free condition. At a Council level, there may be scope for some rate concessions where agreement for protection of the landscape values has been reached. Such mechanisms have been applied successfully in England where the

scenic value to the wider community of rural lands has been recognised as being greater than the value that farmers get for maintaining the land in a scenic state.

4.2.3 Negotiation between Interest Groups

Negotiation through the development lodging and assessment stage can also help with landscape protection and management. Negotiation between various interest groups may achieve an agreed outcome supported by the interested parties. The mediation step that is built into the planning appeals process is one available mechanism but is often too late in the development process to achieve successful results. The facilitation of negotiated outcomes by the Council early in the planning process may be more beneficial to all interested parties, although there can be no guarantee that consensus may be reached.

Negotiated outcomes may also be possible with the preparation of the new planning scheme where the opportunity exists to consider the options for development with regard to the potential benefits of landscape protection and management to the wider community (e.g. clustering of developments, subdivision guidelines).

4.2.4 Adaptation of Existing Management Tools

There are existing programs which offer scope for incorporating some landscape protection and management practices. These include, but are not limited to:

RFA Private Reserve Program, which identified priority forest, blocks for conservation;

Threatened Species Recovery Plans;

Roadside Vegetation Management System currently being developed in the Bush Conservation in Road Corridors Project - Greening Australia;

Rivercare Plans and Strategies;

Weed and Disease Management Strategies; and

Whole Farm Planning.

For instance the preparation of Whole Farm Plans may provide an opportunity for including landscape protection and management as part of the syllabus. The preparation of the Whole Farm Plan with consideration to the visual management system for rural landscapes could lead to an incentive within the performance criteria applied within the planning scheme.

4.2.5 Acquisition

Some Local Councils in Tasmania have acquired land as a means of protecting skylines and hill faces e.g. Hobart City Council have acquired land over many years to help protect the naturalness of the hill face and skyline areas. However limited resources and political support for acquisition have seen the purchase of land as being a measure of last resort when other mechanisms do not exist.

The Brisbane City Council and Hobart City Council have established Bushland Funds to help acquire or lease land that has landscape significance as native bushland. The Bushland Funds are normally funded from general rates, separate rates applying to a defined area (in the same way a sewer rate may be applied by a Council) or from cash-in-lieu funds received under the 5% contribution made by developers of subdivisions.

The scale of significant landscapes found within Meander Valley suggest that acquisition of land would be beyond the Council unless significant funding was available from State or Commonwealth Government sources. Currently this funding assistance does not exist, nor is it expected to be available in the near future.

The use of negotiation, Part 5 Agreements, voluntary management agreements and conservation covenants would therefore appear to be more achievable within Meander Valley than acquisition of land.

4.3 POLICY GUIDELINES

These policy guidelines have been prepared to assist Council in assessing applications for:

- industry within the rural setting;
- management of Prime Viewing Locations;
- forestry operations; and
- placement of infrastructure within the landscape.

Guidelines are also prepared for the protection and management of specific regional features, including:

- protection of the scenic values of Great Western Tiers; and
- management of the historic hawthorn hedgerows and windbreaks.

4.3.1 Industry in the Rural Setting

The Meander Valley municipality typically has a rural and agronomical visual or landscape character. Existing style and spacing of individual or groups of buildings seen throughout the broad landscape reinforce this. Such buildings are generally small and clustered together and are distinctly rural in character. They appear related functionally to farming activities and the rural setting and are often visually related in scale and style and sometimes age or era of construction. Public viewing is particularly sensitive to these aspects, and the function of visible buildings in rural settings is often the centre of discussion to the visitor as well as local people.

As an example, the presence of modern, large-scale industrial buildings will generally be visually out of character with rural scenery. This would be the case if such buildings did not appear to be functionally related to rural management, or as with modern large farm sheds, are not located close to existing farmhouses or farm buildings. The protection of rural character would therefore require that such buildings should be located out of sight from major highways, as well as scenic roads used by tourists and recreation traffic.

Visually, the best locations for industrial buildings are normally at the outskirts of existing villages and/or as an extension of existing industrial estates where they do not disrupt important existing views. However, some examples are available of factory buildings, functionally associated with the agricultural industry, being visually successful in the rural setting. The Pivot fertiliser factory and Roberts buildings beside the Bass Highway south of Carrick are positive examples because they are well integrated into their surroundings due to a range of aspects. Such agricultural factory buildings will normally be visually acceptable when seen from popular roads if set back at least 500m from the road edge. Also ideally they should be placed in rolling to hilly terrain and be below the skyline at the base of a slope or hill. Retained forest or paddock trees intervening within views from public roads, with supplementary plantings of existing species where necessary, will ensure integration of buildings into an agricultural setting. Tree plantings for screening, however, will not generally be effective if applied in largely open, cleared agricultural lands and may appear as an imposed visual element unrelated to the character of the scene. Buildings should be painted with local colour and tones to ensure integration within the scene.

4.3.2 Management of Prime View Locations

Key viewpoints exist within each character sub-type with many providing distant outviews to surrounding hills and mountains. These points generally warrant maintenance of outviewing opportunities by setback constraints for most forms of development. This aspect needs to be tailored to the site by analysis to identify

acceptable setbacks based on topography and slopes away from the viewpoint or roadside. The objective in all cases is to retain the majority of viewing at least to scenery beyond.

As a general principle, viewing from prime viewpoints or scenic character viewpoints should not be blocked by developments and planting, especially out to a distance of 3 to 4 kilometres (i.e. within the foreground and near middleground).

Also, numerous loop road routes throughout the rural Meander Council are popular with locals and visitors, and or have great potential for promotion of use. These provide almost continuous viewing opportunities to the distant landscape due to the openness and absence of forests at roadside. However as the land is often flattish to barely undulating, development changes within the roadside zone (out to a nominal 500m and sometimes beyond) can have major effects on viewing both at the immediate roadside and out to distant parts of the scene. In this zone therefore the key principle is to ensure that the visual values and viewing opportunities for each section of road are first identified. Proposals for change can then be considered so that the effects on amenity values to viewers are predicted and planned. Generally change should be limited as far as possible but the introduction of enclosure or enframement by part planting an extended length of a road corridor by trees can be acceptable and even positive where this is well designed.

The view shown on the following page in the *Nells* visual unit (photo 4.1) demonstrates how a good setback from the road provides viewing opportunity to Mother Cummings Peak and the consistent line of the canopy is broken by retained native trees and clumps. This is contrasted with the roadside further along where little setback or continuous plantation has been resulted in both restrictions to viewing of scenic landscapes beyond and locally mundane foreground scenery.



Photo 4.1 Plantation set back and retained native forest maintains outviews to Mother Cummings Peak and provides some visual diversity.



Photo 4.2 'Chequerboard' woodlots in moderate sized paddocks which are interesting and discontinuous at the road edge.

4.3.3 Forestry Operations

Property Boundaries and Forest Harvesting and Establishment

Property boundaries determined at an earlier era and for a singular purpose, generally follow surveyed straight lines and rectilinear shapes. These exhibit little response to terrain variations and land capability. Visually disruptive boundaries can often be seen, especially on sloping terrain, when either clearing or planting occurs within these boundaries. For aesthetically successful results, it is best to avoid using property boundaries alone as planting edges. Retention of forest clumps or planting to variable boundaries, which are responsive to topographical aspects or natural pattern, will give most effective visual effects. Also planning should be comprehensive and seriously consider joint agreements between neighbours to allow forest management edges (i.e. coupes) to cross private property boundaries. This however should not be taken as an opportunity to greatly increase the size of forest operations, as the viewed scale must still remain in balance with the scale and configuration of the landscape and degree of prominence and closeness to viewing.

An exception here is small-scale plantations or woodlots where these are located on agricultural flats (see photo 4.2 above). These may sometimes borrow shapes and scale from established patterning defined by paddocks and or windbreaks. They can provide a positive element in the scenery and can help reinforce the culturally derived pattern.

Notwithstanding this, these areas should present a discontinuous or varied boundary at the road edge and allow viewing where possible, especially to scenic features nearby or beyond.

The chequerboard woodlots shown in Photo 6 (Chapter 3) are an interesting example of roadside plantation in flat terrain at Western Creek.

Forestry/Plantations and Contour Planting

Plantations can introduce a strong and enduring, artificial appearance into the rural and forest scenery. Once planted, say in an open field or on a slope seen from a distance, the planting layout will be apparent usually for the life-span of the plantation. A key aspect causing this is the artificially structured appearance introduced by straight planting rows. This is as important in shallow undulating landscape through to the more hilly regions. Contour planting is highly effective in alleviating this effect and helps integrate plantations within the topography after 3 to 4 years of growth through until the final harvest. Contour planting should become a standard practice for all future plantations²⁸.

Plantation design should aim to maintain visual diversity in the landscape through:

- manipulation of edge treatments to create flowing boundaries;

- retention of native forests, clusters of remnant vegetation, specimen trees ('scene perfecting elements'), amenity plantings or orchards;

- retention of paddocks and open areas, particularly in the foreground;

- retention of native vegetation in streamside reserves or rehabilitation of streamside reserves where they have been cleared (all classes) using locally native species; and

- rehabilitation of critical visual areas, which have been previously, cleared using locally native species.

4.3.4 Infrastructure

Roads and powerlines are an ever present and necessary part of all rural and agricultural landscapes. These are linear elements that contrast with the random flow of the rural countryside and must always be sited and designed in such a way as to minimise impact on existing visual character.

Powerlines

In rural villages, the historic and scenic character is often diminished by the visibility and clutter of powerlines that inhibit views to houses and as well views to scenery

²⁸ While the submission from Forestry Tasmania to the current study indicated that contour planting may render thinning of trees more difficult – and thus potentially undermine saw-log quality – this study takes the view that good land management practice should constrain production goals, not the other way around.

beyond in surrounding countryside. While in the countryside itself, the most visually pleasing rural roads are often those where powerlines are not present at the road edge, but setback sufficiently to be a subordinate part of the scene. Powerlines also are best located away from obvious or known scenic vistas or feature views available from rural towns and roads.

For best visual results, powerlines should be routed along the toe of slopes or ridges or edges of existing native forest stands. Where forest clearing is unavoidable, clearing lines and easements should never align back to viewpoints and roadside vista points. An obvious but important point is that powerlines should not be located on prominent parts of the scenery including hilltops and ridges etc.

The view from the Bass Highway to Hagley (Chapter 3, Photo 2, above) demonstrates a vista where power poles are absent from the roadside and to provide clearer, undisturbed viewing.

Roads

The landscape of the Meander Valley is characterised by numerous low but prominent forested hills rising out of the flat to rolling agricultural lands. Such hills are often the target of new access roads for construction and maintenance of new facilities such as telecommunications towers, or even houses sited to take advantage of panoramic views. Roads have permanent effects on rural scenery qualities and therefore need design and siting specifically tailored to contain contrasts with their surroundings and thus minimise visual effects.

Roads through flatter parts of the landscape will generally have limited visual effects, except at new junctions with existing highways and roads. Recent examples of new roading activities, which appear prominently within the region, have invariably been located in visually sensitive locations on hillsides and ridgelines. Often or not these roads have exposed, high contrasting light-coloured sub-soils. In many cases such locations are prone to viewing by the public and may have been avoided in the first instance if viewing issues had been considered during the planning stage and alternatives were considered. However, where construction is to occur in prominent situations, detailed design and analysis is essential to develop guidelines to reduce the scale and exposure of changes brought about by construction.

Although the process of visual analysis and the prediction of impacts is complex and design solutions will vary for individual situations and viewing conditions, some generic guidelines can be stated. The principal points are to:

avoid locations that are steep and or lack sufficient screening or density of vegetation or forest;

avoid alignment of roads that target back to known viewpoints, cross forested skylines at right-angles to principle viewing directions;

limit clearing widths to a minimum (especially on ridge and skyline areas);

avoid steep slopes to help limit extended lengths of exposed cut batters and fills; and

plan rehabilitation requirements and treatments ahead of construction (e.g. including the use of dark coloured sprayed emulsions to reduce colour contrasts).

4.3.5 Specific Regional Features

The Great Western Tiers

The Great Western Tiers stretching from Western Bluff through to Projection Bluff represents a regional physiographic feature of immeasurable cultural, natural and scenic quality. This region is clearly of significance to the entire country due to its unique character and immense scale and is the characteristic icon of for Municipality, and one that is seen from all areas either from a distance or at close quarters. The Tiers exhibit or display diurnal and seasonal changes of lighting and weather. To the artist and photographer, they presents an ever-changing subject of study which is equally obvious and valued by local residents as well as visiting tourists.

An essential characteristic of the Tiers is the varied pattern and apparent naturalness of the vegetation cover from the regrowth forest at the lower levels up to the low canopy of rainforest at the cliff line and scree slopes above. Existing clearings and plantations on the Tiers rise from the base and remain within the lower quarter of the height. Some areas rise above to one third of the slope, but fortunately these are infrequent although prominent at both the local scale and in distant viewing. The latter are "visual anomalies" that present good examples to show the visual effects on the overall character as described above.

Though review of these "visual anomalies" in the landscape of the Tiers and consideration of the established "proportional rule" from visual management theory, a recommendation can be made regarding the extent to which development which contrasts strongly with the forest cover on the Tiers is appropriate. As a general guideline, it is recommended that visually exposed clearing for grazing and

plantation establishment should be restricted to the lower quarter of the height of the Tiers (as measured between the toe of slope to the top of the escarpment at an point). This quarter height standard would provide a nominal but satisfactory safeguard to ensure the maintenance of the natural forested character and the regional scenic values of the Tiers, especially when seen from middleground and background distances. Note that at closer points along popular roads near the base of the Tiers, the one quarter height appears increased in scale and proportion (due to the more vertical close viewing angle) as compared to distant viewing of the same changes. Notwithstanding the issue of proportion as above, shaping and scale of vegetation clearings and changes must also relate to natural vegetation and topographical patterns. This is an essential design principle to ensure that changes contrasting with the native forests will integrate successfully into the Tiers landscape.

Historic hedgerows and windrows

Historic hedgerows and windrows are an essential cultural artifact of many regional areas throughout the Meander Valley including Westbury, Hagley, Carrick, Chudleigh etc. Hedgerows and windrows are critical to the scenic character of these areas and help preserve and display both the historic character and settlement pattern. It is remarkable today that so much still remains intact and provides such a distinctive character for Tasmania, one that is possibly unique in Australia. They are clearly attractive and interesting to both locals and tourists alike.

This point may be well understood by the majority of landowners - some of whom have built their accommodation businesses around this history character. Nevertheless for some private landowners the importance of such vegetation is either difficult to appreciate or too costly to maintain. This is apparent in some areas where lack of maintenance has lead to gradual loss of consistency and quality of growth - both of which are important factors in their scenic quality.

Another aspect of potential conflict with long term preservation of exotic plantings is the potential conflict of the modern development of large scale farm properties, machinery and changing farming techniques. To gain a basic insight into the scale and scope of management issues for exotic plantings, an inventory of their current extent and quality is needed along with review of conflicts and opportunities for management. This would need to be followed discussions with landowners dissemination of vital information about their importance and techniques for management into the future.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of key recommendations have been identified for implementing of the Scenic Management Strategy.

Recommendation 1

Assess the potential sources available for funding and assistance to complete the detailed visual character assessment and landscape priority mapping for the remaining nine (9) landscape character sub-types for the Meander valley Council area.

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council to discuss funding options with the Forest Practice Board, Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment and Tourism Tasmania

TIMING

Complete negotiations by end of September 2001.

Recommendation 2

Integrate the outcomes of the Meander Valley Scenic Management Strategy with other strategic policies being pursued by the Council for achieving the sustainable management of the natural and cultural resources within the municipality. This would be most appropriately achieved within Council's 'Land Use and Development Strategy' being developed to aid the review of the Meander Valley Planning Scheme.

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council

TIMING

Complete co-ordination of strategic policies by March 2002.

Recommendation 3

Adopt the draft Schedule (Appendix 3) as a statutory planning scheme schedule at a time and in a form consistent with the new planning scheme for Meander Valley.

RESPONSIBILITY

Council to adopt the draft planning scheme schedule. Planning consultant commissioned by Council to prepare the revised planning scheme to be charged with integrating the draft schedule into the new scheme.

TIMING

Complete by June 2002

Recommendation 4

Pilot the application of the scenic management strategy and guidelines during the lead-up time to the approval of the new planning scheme and in particular the description of the visual units, the methodology used to determine the rural visual management priority matrix and the criteria outlined in the draft Schedule (Appendix 3).

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council

TIMING

Complete by June 2002

Recommendation 5

Investigate the opportunities for using the range of non-regulative measures identified within the report to support the protection and management of scenic values.

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council with assistance from the relevant State Government agencies.

TIMING

Complete by June 2002

Recommendation 6

Develop means to make the outcomes and implications of the final strategy accessible to the community of Meander Valley by considering printed summary handouts, video-tape library of scenic values, guidelines and flow charts for development applications, internet based information and involving community leaders/ community groups in discussion about scenery management.

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council.

TIMING

Present information to the community upon completion of the final report (September 2001) and again upon completion of visual character assessment and priority mapping for the remainder of the municipality (June 2002). This process could also be part of Council's efforts to present the implications of the new planning scheme to the community to be undertaken in 2002.

Recommendation 7

Promote awareness of the scenic management strategy with other Local Councils and government agencies within Tasmania.

RESPONSIBILITY

Meander Valley Council.

TIMING

Timing will be dependent upon completion of Recommendations 1-6.