



Environmental Enhancement Program Policy

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Review date:	May 2026
Responsible officer:	Manager, Planning & Environment
Policy owner	Coordinator, Environment & Sustainability

1. Purpose

To ensure the effective implementation of the rate rebate that is provided to eligible properties in the Environmental Enhancement Program (EEP). This program assists rural landowners undertake specified land management works that will improve the overall environmental condition of agricultural land within the municipality.

2. Scope

This policy outlines Council's implementation of the Environmental Enhancement Program and applies to rural landholders within the City of Melton.

The agency responsible for the enforcement of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, is Agriculture Victoria, within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

For advice about weed and pest animal control, including enforcement, residents should contact Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Environmental Weed(s)	Plants that are growing outside of their normal area and therefore lack their natural environmental controls but are not listed under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act (1994)</i> .
Noxious Weed(s)	Invasive plants that are listed under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>
Pest Animal(s)	Animals listed under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> pest schedules.
Remnant Native Vegetation	Patches of native trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs still left after broader areas of the landscape have been cleared.

Rural Land	The simplest definition is that rural land is all land that is not urban. Wide open land, farmland, natural areas, forests, national parks, mountains, rivers, lakes, urban fringe and rural residential areas all make up the rural landscape.
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4. Policy

The Environmental Enhancement Program has been designed to encourage rural landholders, to engage in an ongoing commitment to reducing land degradation across the municipality through provision of a financial incentive via a rate rebate.

The program targets the management of noxious and environmental weeds, pest animals and soil erosion. Sustainable land management, the retention of remnant vegetation and encouragement of actions to improve biodiversity such as the fencing of environmentally significant areas and protection of remnant native vegetation is also supported through the program.

Melton City Council acknowledges that high environmental and amenity standards are essential to ensure a high standard of living for all residents of the municipality as well as act as a means to attract new residents and businesses to this fast-growing region.

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3.1 Eligibility

Pursuant to Section 169 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council established a Rural Rate Rebate that applies to properties greater than 2 hectares within the following planning zones:

- Farming Zone (FZ)
- Green Wedge Zone (GWZ)
- Green Wedge Zone A (GWZA)
- Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)
- Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ)
- Special Use Zone 5 (SUZ5)
- Urban Floodway Zone (UFZ)
- Urban Growth Zone (UGZ)*

*Land within the Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) that has an approved Planning Permit for Subdivision becomes ineligible and the Rural Rate Rebate no longer applies.

3.2 Application of the Rate Rebate

All eligible landowners will have the Environmental Enhancement Program rebate applied to their first Annual Rates Notice.

The total amount of the rate rebate is calculated based on the zoning of the land, according to the following rating categories:

- Rural Living Zone – 25%
- Rural Zone – 50%
- Urban Growth Zone with no Precinct Structure Plan – 25%
- Urban Growth Zone with an approved Precinct Structure Plan – 25%

Landholders will retain their rate rebate by;

- Submitting a completed Proposed Works Form by **31 March** for approval by Council officers; and
- Successfully completing approved environmental improvement works as per the Proposed Works Form by **30 September**; and
- Providing consent to Council's staff to enter the property to assess compliance of works programs.

3.3 Non Compliance

Council's Land Management Officer(s) will assess and confirm the appropriateness of the Proposed Works Form, undertake property assessments and, following inspections, provide landholders with written advice as to whether they have satisfied the terms on which the rate rebate is granted and whether they are entitled to retain the rate rebate.

In the first week of February, Landowners will be notified in writing of the outcome of the assessment of works as per the approved Works Program Form.

Council will withdraw the Rate Rebate and issue a Supplementary Rates Notice where a landholder fails to;

- Submit a Proposed Works Form by **31 March** each year; or
- Carry out works in accordance with the approved Works Program Form and by 30 September ; or

Landholders who wish to appeal must do so in writing within 28 days of receipt of notice of failure. A panel consisting of Council staff will review appeals against non compliance with this policy.

Following the review, a recommendation from the panel will be presented to the General Manager, Planning and Development for approval.

Landowners will be notified of the outcome of the review no later than 30 April.

3.3 Work to be completed by landholders

The Environmental Enhancement Program requires landholders to undertake works to target land degradation problems especially the control of noxious and environmental weeds, pest animals and soil erosion.

Residents are encouraged to contact Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au for guidance on weed and pest animal control, including enforcement.

Council's Land Management Officers are available to answer questions relating to the EEP and to provide land management advice that is consistent with State Government legislation.

Staff may be contacted via:

- Phone: 9747 7200
- Email: eep@melton.vic.gov.au

Or other approved means.

3.3.1 Control weeds and prevent seed set

The most serious weeds that occur in the City of Melton and those that landholders must control and not allow to set seed are;

Common Name	Botanical Name	Common Name	Botanical Name
Serrated Tussock*	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>	Artichoke Thistle*	<i>Cynara cardunculus</i>
Patterson's Curse*	<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	African Boxthorn*	<i>Lycium fercoissimum</i>
Prairie Ground Cherry*	<i>Physalis viscosa</i>	Chilean Needle Grass*	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>

*Denotes declared noxious weed species declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

Other weeds which are of secondary priority for control are:

Common Name	Botanical Name	Common Name	Botanical Name
Spiny Rush*	<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Hoary Cress*	<i>Cardaria draba</i>
Gorse*	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Bathurst Burr*	<i>Xanthium spinosum</i>
Sweet Briar*	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Blackberry*	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Horehound*	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	Galenia	<i>Galenia pubescens</i>
Prickly pear*	<i>Opuntia stricta</i>	African Thistle	<i>Berkheya rigida</i>
Spear Thistle*	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Wild Mignonette*	<i>Reseda luteola</i>

*Denotes declared noxious weed species, declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The fundamental management principles for noxious and environmental weed control are:

- Contain the spread of weeds by stopping flowering and seed set
- Reduce levels of infestation
- Prevent reinfestation

A weed management program must address the type and scale of the weed problem. This may include one or a combination of control methods including manual removal, herbicide application and cultivation. In all cases, initial weed removal actions will need to be followed up with a longer-term program to ensure the eradication of weeds and to prevent reinfestation.

The agency responsible for the enforcement of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, is Agriculture Victoria, within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

For advice about weed control and enforcement, residents should contact Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

3.3.2 Control pest animals and remove harbour

The European Rabbit is the major pest animal in the City of Melton. Rabbits feed on desirable pasture and native vegetation, often to the extent that soil is exposed to erosion, so that weeds gain a foothold and there is insufficient feed for stock or native animals.

The management principles for pest animals are:

- Destroy burrows
- Remove harbour
- Reduce numbers.

A rabbit control program could involve an integrated combination of methods including the baiting, fumigation, ripping of burrows, the destruction of harbour, and fencing.

For advice about pest animal management and enforcements, residents should contact Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

3.3.3 Control soil erosion

Soil erosion problems generally occur along drainage lines and slopes. The commonly encountered forms of soil erosion in the City of Melton include stream bank erosion, gully erosion, tunnel erosion, sheet erosion and landslips.

The management principles for the management of soil erosion are:

- Prevent existing erosion from expanding by stabilising soil
- Rehabilitate eroded sites with native vegetation
- Maintain vegetative cover on vulnerable sites to prevent future erosion.

Works which are appropriate to control soil erosion include a reduction in grazing pressure, fencing and revegetation, pasture improvement and bank stabilisation.

For advice about erosion control, contact Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

For advice on streamside management including bank stabilization, revegetation and weed control contact Melbourne Water on 9235 7100 or www.melbournewater.com.au.

3.3.4 Other key land management issues

Landowners and land managers

- Are required to adhere to all codes and guidelines in the control of weeds and pest animals.
- Seeking to undertake activities such as dumping of landfill and/or the removal of native vegetation, must contact Council seeking planning permission prior to commencing works. In addition, landholders may need to obtain permission from the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEE) if the planned activities trigger the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. For further advice visit www.environment.gov.au.

3.4 Summary

The process for a landholder to retain the rate rebate, is by following these steps:

1. Read the guidelines which sets out the terms on which the rebate has been granted.
2. Complete and return a proposed works form by **31 March** each year.
3. Undertake the approved work program and complete all environmental works by **30 September** each year.
4. The property will be inspected by Council staff to confirm that the proposed works were successfully completed. The landowner will be advised as to whether they are considered to have satisfied the terms upon which the rebate was granted, and will, if successful, retain the rebate.

5. Responsibility /Accountability

4.1	Coordinator Environment & Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, including failure review process
4.2	Senior Land Management Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for undertaking property assessments and liaison with landholders
4.3	Land Management Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for undertaking property assessments and liaison with landholders
4.4	Business Support Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for preparing letters, collating proposed works forms, landholder enquiries and overall program administration

6. References and links to legislation and other documents

Name	Location
<i>Local Government Act 1989</i>	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/
<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/

<i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/
<i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014</i>	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/
Advisory list of environmental weeds in Victoria	https://www.ari.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/125919/ARI-Technical-Report-287-Advisory-list-of-environmental-weeds-in-Victoria.pdf
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>	http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/
Agriculture Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/
Melbourne Water	https://www.melbournewater.com.au/
Australian Government Department of Climate, Change, Environment, Energy and Water	awe.gov.au/environment/epbc
City of Melton differential rating categories	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Regulations/Rates-and-payments/Differential-rating-categories
Melton City Council: Council & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Melton City Council: Environmental Enhancement Rate Rebate	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Environment-and-sustainability/Taking-care-of-the-land/Environmental-enhancement-rate-rebate