

Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) – Council Briefing Attachment 1 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Councillors

What the Municipal Planning Strategy?

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) is a concise expression of the overarching strategic policy directions of a municipality. It provides for the planning scheme's policy foundation, based on the municipality's location and regional context, history, assets, strengths, key attributes and influences. The MPS supports, but does not form part of, the Planning Policy Framework (PPF). The PPF and MPS work together to form the strategic basis of a planning scheme.

Amendment VC148, gazetted in July 2018, introduced new structure to the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) within all Victorian Planning Schemes, including Nillumbik. This included introduction of a new PPF and the introduction of the MPS (to replace the Municipal Strategic Statement). Amendment VC148 did not translate the current Local Planning Policy (LPP) or Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) into the new framework.

The Minister undertook a policy neutral amendment of the Nillumbik Planning Scheme to translate the current LPP and the MSS into the new format through Amendment C135 in mid-2021. Consequently, the MPS currently in the Scheme, has the same content as the existing MSS and given a full scale review has not been undertaken since its introduction into the Scheme some 20 years ago, needs to be updated to reflect a modern vision for Nillumbik. For Council, preparation of an updated MPS represents the best opportunity to capture the community's views and to set the vision for the Nillumbik Planning Scheme and future strategic work to inform local planning policy.

What must the MPS address and how must it be formatted?

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) must succinctly explain the context for a municipality and provide the overarching strategies for the major land use and development matters that affect it. It does not include detailed policy which belongs in Clauses 10 to 19 (Planning Policy Framework) of the planning scheme.

The content of the MPS should be easily read, expressed in a logical sequence and grouped by related land use and development themes. The preferred approach is to follow the Planning Policy Framework (PPF) themes. This reinforces the strategic linkages between the PPF and the MPS, helps navigation and improves the ease of use of the planning scheme. PPF policy topics are addressed in the MPS based on the priorities of the municipality.

Information that is likely to become out of date before the next review cycle (about 4 years) is advised by State Government to not be included in the MPS.

To ensure the MPS focuses on priorities and provides a clear and direct message about a council's planning aspirations, the Ministerial Direction The Form and Content of Planning Schemes specifies a word limit for the MPS. The allowable word limit for the MPS is 5000 words (excluding plans). The current draft of the MPS is sitting as just under this word limit at 4945 words.

The draft MPS is structured to meet the drafting requirements of DELWP including *A Practitioners Guide to Victorian Planning Schemes*, *Planning Practice Note 04*; and *Ministerial Direction: The Form and Content of Planning Schemes*.

What sections make up the MPS?

Consistent with the requirements (above), there are four sections that make up the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS). These include:

- Context (Clause 02.01)
- Vision (Clause 02.02)
- Strategy Directions (Clause 02.03)
- Strategic Framework Plans (Clause 02.04)

Clause 2.01 Context:

The context is a concise half to one page description of the municipality in its regional setting providing a very brief description of the geographic, economic, environmental and demographic qualities of the municipality. These should represent both the opportunities and challenges that establish the key land use and development issues to be addressed in the municipal vision and strategic directions.

The context should set the scene for what issues are important to the municipality and need to be addressed by the planning scheme. There is no need to provide extensive detail or state how the issue will be addressed in the context statement because this is the role of the strategic directions.

Clause 2.02 Vision:

The vision is an overarching statement of intent that describes the type of municipality a council seeks to create. It should be concise, typically half to one page, and can comprise one consolidated statement or a set of statements.

Importantly - the vision must focus on land use and development issues capable of being influenced by the planning scheme. If the vision is derived from a vision statement sourced outside the planning scheme (such as from a council plan that addresses broader issues), that wider vision statement will need to be distilled into a vision for the MPS that focuses on land use and development.

The vision together with the strategic directions and strategic framework plans provide an opportunity to set out the local directions of the planning scheme, consistent with state policy in Clauses 10 to 19.

Clause 2.03 Strategic Directions:

The strategic directions outline how a municipality will implement its vision and manage key issues relevant to the municipality. Strategic directions are the high-level policy intentions for the municipality that provide the basis for matters that are implemented through more detailed policy in Clauses 10 to 19 (Planning Policy Framework) or a planning scheme control (e.g. a zone or overlay).

The strategic directions must be supported by background strategic work that has already been undertaken by a council. If the work to support the strategic directions has not been undertaken, then that matter may be identified as further strategic work in Clause 74.02 (Further Strategic Work) or elsewhere in a council work or business plan, not in the MPS. The strategic directions need to be evidence-based so that they can be reasonably implemented through the planning scheme.

The strategic directions should articulate what is most important to the municipality from a land use and development perspective and provide an understanding of why those issues are important. In particular, they may set out:

- How state and regional policy will be implemented at the municipal level;
- Articulate how identified issues will be addressed and how the vision will be implemented;
- Contain direction on matters such as opportunities for growth, a township or activity centre hierarchy, areas of environmental significance or any other topic that is relevant to land use and development within the municipality;
- Provide the policy basis for the application of controls and the local policies in Clauses 10 to 19.

Strategic directions should be grouped by theme and identified by sub-headings. The themes should follow those of the Planning Policy Framework (PPF) for consistency and navigability. The strategic directions for each theme may be supplemented with a brief context (generally 1 or 2 paragraphs) to help explain the basis of the strategic directions. While this contextual information is written in the narrative form, strategic directions must be in bullet point form, so they are clearly identified. Each strategic direction should only express one idea.

Clause 2.04 Strategic Framework Plans:

The strategic framework plans are a spatial representation of the key strategic directions for the municipality. The vision, strategic directions and strategic framework plans together provide the 'big picture' response to the opportunities and challenges facing a municipality. The strategic framework plans:

- Should show spatially how the municipality is expected to change as a result of the implementation of the planning scheme;
- Compliments the policy in the MPS and where relevant, PPF;
- They cannot replace policy text. For example, a strategic direction must be in the text of the MPS and not solely on a framework plan;
- They should have a clear link with the strategic directions in the MPS and can be annotated to express the strategic directions on the plans;
- May show matters such as directions for growth and development, housing frameworks, industrial land supply, productive agricultural land, strategic redevelopment sites, significant infrastructure, areas of environmental significance or areas where environmental risk must be managed or any other matter that the MPS identifies;
- Should illustrate more than just existing conditions.

What is Clause 74.02 – Further Strategic Work and why has it been included within the MPS review?

The Further Strategic Work section of the planning scheme (Clause 74.02) is a concise list of work a council intends to undertake before the next planning scheme review (occurring on a 4 yearly cycle), which is subsequently then set out in a schedule to this clause. The work must have a land use and development focus and must relate to matters that can be implemented through a planning scheme. The identification of further strategic work is useful for a council to

set strategic priorities and obtain funding for a project. However, as these strategic intentions are not fully formed and have not had the benefit of strategic work to underpin them, there is a risk that they can be used as speculative policy and lead to decisions being made that are not based on adopted policy. Importantly to note, the identification of further strategic work is not a requirement of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and does not form part of the MPS or Planning Policy Framework (PPF). Also a responsible authority is not required to take this clause into account when making a decision.

Although not part of the MPS, Clause 74.02 Further Strategic Work is included in this package of information with proposed changes. The reason for this is that some of the issues raised through consultation and in other Council strategies e.g. the adopted Green Wedge Management Plan 2019, require further strategic work in order for their consideration in changing/adding content to the Planning Scheme. If the work to support the strategic directions has not been undertaken, then that matter may be identified as further strategic work in Clause 74.02 or elsewhere in a council work or business plan; not in the MPS.