



Guidelines for Planning Applications in Rural Areas

Helping landholders respond to council planning processes
that require a farm plan

Rural land and planning zones

Land in rural Victoria can be zoned as any of the following: Farming Zone (FZ), Green Wedge Zone (GRZ), Rural Activity Zone (RAZ), Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ) or Rural Living Zone (RLZ).

A permit may be required in these zones for a farm dwelling or a change in agricultural enterprise (e.g. a feedlot). Any development within these zones should not adversely affect the land or surrounding area. Some councils may request a Farm Plan to assist with these permit applications.

To find out about your property, refer to the back page for further information, contacts and websites.

What do I need to prepare?

This may vary depending upon the location, size or scale of your proposed development and the likely impact or change to the surrounding land. Within certain zones, the detail required to demonstrate sound management may be quite rigorous, in others less so. This in turn will establish whether you will need to prepare a partial or a complete farm plan to support your application.

What is a Farm Plan?

There are a variety of terms used to describe farm planning processes. They may be called a Farm Plan, a Land Management Plan or a Whole Farm Plan. These plans help landholders make decisions about managing their property now and in the future.

Many agencies including the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) encourage landholders to complete or update their Farm Plans irrespective of a development proposal. The benefits of planning for the farm business, productivity and for land stewardship are significant.

The Farm Plan should begin with the identification of **existing conditions** in some detail, which may include:

- topography;
- natural features e.g. watercourses, vegetation;
- built features e.g. fences, buildings, dams, location of services, access roads;
- soil type(s) and conditions (including erosion); and,
- uses of different areas of land.

A Farm Plan should also identify **proposed future conditions** and the potential impact this may have both on and off-site. This may include:

- intended use of specific areas of land;
- description and location of proposed buildings and other improvements e.g. sheds, dams, fences; and,
- description of intended farming practices.



What works best?

DPI, along with a number of councils; reviewed various applications for developments on agricultural land. Results of this review found that applications that included a Farm Plan and undertook the following processes were completed sooner, resulted in better plans and were less burdensome on the landholder and council staff. These processes included:

- **early discussions** about why an application may or may not be approved by council or other authorities;
- a **pre-application meeting** held prior to the application being submitted (held with council, relevant agencies and the applicant);
- **clear guidelines** about which authorities to talk to about the various aspects of the application and when; and,
- a **checklist of what to include in an application and Farm Plan** provided at the start of the process, ensures the applicant is clear about expectations from the beginning.

Key questions to ask your council planner

To improve the application process, it is recommended that applicants consult their local council planners at the beginning. This should save a lot of time and identify any limitations or constraints from the onset. The following are some of the questions you may ask:

- Can we have a pre-application meeting?
- What information should I bring along to this pre-application meeting?
- Is Council likely to request a Farm Plan for this application?
- If so, what detail will need to be included in the Farm Plan for this type of application / zone. Do you have a checklist?
- What authorities should I speak to before I lodge my application (and about which aspects of the application)?
- Does the council have a preference about who prepares the Farm Plan (i.e. owner of land, consultant)?
- Generally how long does it take to process an application?

How do I prepare my Farm Plan?

You have a few options for how you might go about preparing your Farm Plan. These options are outlined opposite.

Options A, B & C are provided as a **guide only** and each applicant should determine their own needs and appropriate course of action and discuss with their council.

In making your decision, you will first need to ask yourself:

- How much time do I have to develop a Farm Plan?
- How much money am I prepared to spend on developing a Farm Plan?
- What would I like to learn from developing a Farm Plan (i.e. I'd like to learn about the environmental features of my property)?
- Would I be happy with a consultant completing a Farm Plan on my behalf or would I want to be more involved?

During the review it was found that applications without a Farm Plan took longer, the process often stalled or did not proceed.

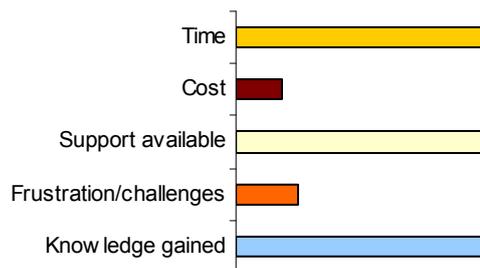


“We conducted a Review to look at ways of reducing regulatory burden and making planning easier for landholders and councils”.

What do I do with my Farm Plan?

Farm Plans help landholders make decisions about managing their property including planning for the farm business, productivity and land stewardship. Once your application is approved, your Farm Plan will need to be implemented.

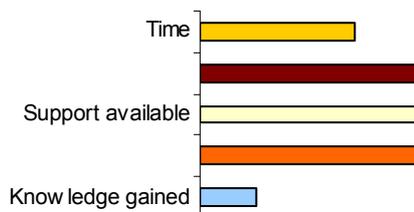
Option A - Farm planning course



Choosing this option, a landholder would complete a Farm Plan by attending a course with a preferred provider (~ 30 hours)

WFP COURSE CONTACTS

- DPI www.dpi.vic.gov.au Whole Farm Planning
- Contact your local TAFE
- Landcare Online www.landcareonline.com > Whole Farm Planning



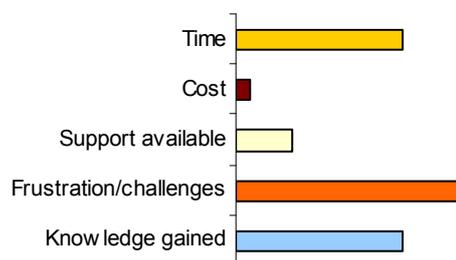
Choosing this option, a landholder would organise for a Farm Plan to be prepared by a farm planning service provider.

FARM PLANNING CONTACTS

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
www.daff.gov.au (list of registered farm consultants)

- Check the telephone directory or the web locality search

Option C - Self assessment



Choosing this option, a landholder would complete a Farm Plan themselves, using self-assessment guidelines.

SELF ASSESSMENT

- Check for programs e.g. Environmental Best Management Practice (EBMP) enquire with DPI
- Ask your council for any guiding documents

Note: the findings from the Review have been presented in the above graphs to reflect the comparative differences

Further Information and References

Useful websites you can check information about your property.

- Department of Planning & Community Development — 9208 3333 or 1300 366 356, DPCD leads and supports the development of livable communities, that are well planned and well designed, your property details can be found at: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/index.html>
- Land Channel is also very useful to find out about zones and possible overlays for your property. Web search 'Land Channel' or go to: www.land.vic.gov.au > interactive maps > either type in your property address or use the map of Victoria and select near your area and then zoom down to property outlines. Using the 'arrow' top toolbar, this will allow you to highlight the property and then go to top left hand side 'Get Reports', choose 'Basic Property Report' and this will show: Parcel details, Utilities, Planning zone summary - zones and overlays.

Record the information relevant to your property or print off this report. There is also a basic locality map highlighting your property. This will be a fast track approach for a pre-planning meeting with your Council, knowing the zone and any overlay/s this will guide what may or may not be permitted and issues to consider for any development proposal.

- Ask your Council for a checklist or look on the DPI website for a generic checklist: www.dpi.vic.gov.au and find document: 'Checklists for Planning Applications in Rural Areas'.
- DPI has produced a summary of issues to consider when purchasing a rural property and an overview of some of the main areas of law and legal compliance obligations associated with living in rural areas. Visit the web page at: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/new-landholders. This site has information which will also be useful for existing landholders.
- DPI has also produced a set of nine booklets covering legislative obligations for the following areas: Animal Welfare, Animal Husbandry, Biodiversity, Chemical Use, Noxious Weeds & Pest Animals, Occupational Health & Safety, Soil, Water, and Waste. These booklets can be found on the website or enquire at the DPI Information Centre: 136 186

General Contacts

Local Council: talk to your local Council Planning Officer about who else you may need to approach.

Department of Primary Industries:

www.dpi.vic.gov.au — 136 186, DPI is responsible for agriculture, fisheries, earth resources, energy, and forestry in Victoria.

Department of Sustainability and Environment:

www.dse.vic.gov.au — 136 186, DSE leads the Victorian Government's efforts to sustainably manage water resources and catchments, climate change, bushfires, parks and other public land, forests, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.

Environmental Protection Authority Victoria:

www.epa.vic.gov.au — 9695 2722, EPA's purpose is to protect, care for and improve our environment; responsible for matters affecting air, soil and water quality.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

www.daff.gov.au (list of registered Farm Consultants)

Other authorities you may need to contact for your circumstances:

Local Water Authority, Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Country Fire Authority (CFA).



For more information call DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on: 136 186, TTY: 1800 122 969, or email customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au

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