

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the preceding analysis are that the pressures being exerted on the Macedon Range and its surrounds are intensifying with the increasing demand for recreational outlets and attractive residential areas within reasonable proximity to major centres of population. Planning in the area will have to be directed towards regulating these demands, in order to maintain the continuing value and utility of its natural resources to the community as a whole and to the local communities.

The outstanding landscape features of the Policy Area, its popularity as a recreational outlet, its importance as a source of water, and its value as a scientific and educational resource are all to some extent threatened by problems resulting from urban expansion, due in part to the area's proximity to Melbourne and the growing demand for the types of residential environments which it can provide. Increasing residential development in the area has also greatly increased the risk from bushfires, and compounded the problems of local fire prevention authorities.

Careful and imaginative planning and management will be necessary to regulate the development of urban and rural residential areas within the Policy Area, and to ensure that adequate alternatives for urban expansion are made available. These alternatives would include satellite cities at Sunbury and Melton, which are linked by major road and rail arteries to Melbourne, and could provide alternative employment centres. However, in some respects the development of these centres will place additional pressures on the Policy Area, particularly as regards demand for recreational outlets, and the provision of water for Sunbury from catchments within the Policy Area. Demands for rural/urban and rural/forest residential sites may also increase, and it is essential that, if the value of the area for other purposes is to be protected, these pressures should be resisted as far as possible.

There is a need to retain a buffer zone of predominantly rural land-uses between any concentrated urban development at Sunbury and the major recreational and scenic attractions, water catchments and forest resources of the Macedon Range. This can best be achieved by the encouragement of legitimate farming concerns in the intervening areas, by the prevention of small rural subdivisions, controls on allowable residential density, regulation of landuses, including building works, and the introduction of a rural scale of municipal rates to reduce the economic pressures on farmers in the area. The retention of a rural buffer zone will not only preserve the existing attractive character of the agricultural and pastoral areas surrounding the Macedon Range, but will also create a perceptual gradient between the built-up areas and the essentially natural areas used for outdoor recreation.

If the function of the area for recreation is to be continued successfully, a high standard of design and construction of all forms of recreational facilities must be achieved and maintained. In addition, there is a need for a comprehensive recreation plan for the area as a whole, allowing for the development of new sites and provision of facilities to relieve pressure on those areas where use is concentrated at present. This plan should also make provision for the establishment of a network of walking and riding trails through rural and forest areas, to cater for the interests of walking and horse-riding.

The importance of the area for water conservation means that forms and levels of land use within the catchments must be regulated to avoid pollution of streams and problems of soil erosion and siltation of storages. Planning of these areas needs to recognise the functional interaction of all parts of the hydrological cycle, and the way that changes in one part of a catchment may cause compensating readjustments or have detrimental effects in another area. In particular, urban expansion within catchment areas is undesirable due to the increased likelihood of pollution, and the possible effects of a major change of land-surface on the flow-regulation properties of the catchment.

Finally, planning of the area should make provision for the selection of certain areas deemed of significance for recreation or nature conservation to be acquired by the State. Public acquisition could ensure the preservation of areas of valuable natural vegetation at present on private land; the maintenance of landscape values in important scenic areas; and the protection of areas under threat from pressures of inappropriate subdivision or development.