



Mildura Planning Scheme Review

Round 3 Consultation – Draft Report for Exhibition

Project Bulletin #2 | July 2025

The draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review report is available for public comment from **18 July 2025 to 29 August 2025**. Council welcomes and encourages your feedback.

What is a Planning Scheme?

The Planning Scheme is a statutory document that guides land use and development across the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA). The scheme and its operations are regulated by the Planning & Environment Act 1987 (PE Act).

The Mildura Planning Scheme sets out the long-term vision for land use and development throughout the municipality from Murrayville to Yelta and everywhere in between. The scheme includes maps which depict zones and overlays and ordinance which are the objectives, policies, provisions and guidelines.

Under the PE Act, the planning scheme requires review every four years, aligning with the preparation of the Council Plan.

When the review is completed and the review report finalised it must be provided to the Minister for Planning.

A planning scheme amendment may be initiated to implement any recommended changes into the planning scheme. This process is overseen by the Department of Transport and Planning and the final decision on changes to the scheme rests with the Minister for Planning.

Project Background

With the assistance of a team of consultants led by Plan2Place Consulting, appointed in 2024 to assist with the review of the scheme, Council has successfully undertaken two extensive rounds of community consultation (May 2024 and August 2024).



Mildura Rural City Council

Input from community and other key groups across the municipality including Public Sector Agencies, Local Government Authorities, Planning Industry Professionals and Advisory Groups has been used to develop the draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review report.

What is in the draft report?

The Draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review Report includes:

- a review of key planning policy areas through the lens of social, economic and environmental change
- an assessment of whether planning reform is required, considering existing strategic policy, background material and context and
- recommendations about the potential scope of any proposed changes to the scheme.

Next Steps

Following the close of exhibition of the draft report, submissions will be considered and a response prepared.

When this final round of consultation is completed the report will be finalised and recommended for adoption by Council, before being provided to the Minister for Planning as required by the PE Act.

Draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review Report Summary

The following summary, captures the essence of the report, highlighting the strategic directions and recommendations for the future development of the Mildura Planning Scheme.

The draft **Mildura Planning Scheme Review Report (2025)**, prepared by Plan2Place Consulting in partnership with Wayfarer Consulting and Practical Ecology, provides a comprehensive analysis and set of recommendations for the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC).

Executive Summary

- **Project Purpose:** The planning scheme is reviewed every four years as required by the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
- **Health Check:** The review indicates that the scheme is robust but needs minor updates for the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Planning Policy Framework (PPF).
- **Top Priorities:** Focuses on planning matters including: housing, neighbourhood character, rural land use, renewable energy, salinity management, and integrated water management.
- **Recommendations:** Include administrative updates, policy-neutral changes, and strategic directions for future work.

Introduction

- **Context:** Mildura is a large municipality with diverse environmental characteristics and a significant horticultural and agricultural economy, ranging from grapes, almonds and citrus to broadacre farming and other commodities.
- **Methodology:** The review follows a six-stage process, including analysis, engagement, and reporting.

Key Drivers of Change

- **Population Growth:** Mildura's population is projected to reach 62,500 by 2036, necessitating diverse housing options.
- **Climate Change:** Hotter, drier conditions and flood risks require sustainable water management and climate resilience strategies.
- **Mildura Older Irrigated Area (MOIA):** Historical planning controls and agricultural preservation are critical to the long-term sustainability of the municipality.
- **Government Amendments:** Recent state-level policy changes impact local planning schemes. This includes the release of Plan Victoria and the State Government Housing Targets along with other key pieces of policy.

Previous Planning Scheme Review (2019)

- **Progress:** Several projects from the 2019 review have been completed, including masterplans, strategies, development plans and land use studies.
- **Outstanding Work:** Some adopted strategic projects require implementation including the Mildura East Growth Area Strategic Framework Plan, the CBD Plan 2020, the Mildura District Heritage Study 2024, the Irymple Structure Plan 2021-2036, along with other key pieces of adopted strategic work.

The 4-Yearly Strategic Work Plan includes completing strategic projects underway and preparation of a suite of Small Town Structure Plans for Ouyen, Merbein and Red Cliffs as recommended in the 2019 review.

Audit and Assessment

- **Municipal Planning Strategy:** Minor updates have been completed for population data changes and strategic directions.
- **Planning Policy Framework:** The scheme ordinance has been reviewed for compliance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes and some changes made.
- **Zones and Overlays:** Recommendations for updates to schedules and mapping.

Planning Scheme Performance

- **Permit Activity:** A consistent number of applications have been received since the 2019 review. Feedback indicates a need for clearer guidelines to reduce applications being withdrawn when a permit is not required, requests for further information from planners to applicants and refusals where applications are not supported and do not align with existing planning policy.
- **Service Performance:** Mildura compares favourably with other councils but needs improved resourcing in its planning teams from time to time with a focus on recruitment and retention of suitably qualified planning staff.

Community and Key Group Consultation

- **Planners' Feedback:** Need for clearer policies and better guidelines for applications.
- **Internal Staff:** Emphasis on drainage strategies, public open space, and integrated water management.
- **Councillors and Executive Team:** Focus on housing diversity, industrial land supply, and community engagement.
- **Community Engagement:** Key themes include housing, transport, and environmental management. More information is available in the Community Engagement reports and this is summarised in the Appendices to the draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review report.

Key Policy Areas

Several matters from various areas of Council, requiring consideration and progression were brought under the umbrella of the Planning Scheme Review. Recommendations on these matters are included in the final draft Key Policy Issues Report and a summary is also included in the draft Planning Scheme Review report.

These include:

- **Cumbungi Management:** Ongoing monitoring and control measures needed.
- **Salinity Management Overlay:** Updated mapping and guidelines required.
- **Public Open Space Contributions:** Strengthen strategy to align contributions with actual needs.
- **Gambling:** Review placement and number of electronic gaming machines.
- **Koorlong Landfill:** Consider applying a Buffer Area Overlay.
- **Environmental Significance Overlay:** Enhance coverage and effectiveness.
- **Water Sensitive Urban Design:** Update guidelines to reflect modern techniques and climate data.

Further Strategic Work

- **Priority Projects (2025-2029):** A comprehensive list of strategic work and recommendation for priority projects for the next four years is included in the draft Mildura Planning Scheme Review Report.
- Some of these projects include completing the Mildura industrial Land Use Strategy, preparing a Short Stay Budget Accommodation Policy (which includes consideration of Rural Workers), preparing an Open Space Contributions Strategy, along with an Integrated Water Management Plan and a Review of Development Contributions Plans to be completed prior to 2030.
- **Post-2029 Projects:** Not all projects will be able to be resourced in the next four years. Some work such as the Horticultural Sustainability Development Strategy and Review of Freight Gate Opportunities may need consideration for priority and currency in the next review of the scheme.

Appendices

- **Marked-Up Ordinance:** Policy-neutral and strategically justified changes are detailed in this section.
- **Comprehensive List of Further Strategic Work:** A detailed list of projects and priorities is provided.
- **State and Regional Amendments:** This appendix provides an overview of relevant planning scheme amendments including Local, (C) Group (GC) and Ministerial (V) Victorian Planning Provisions only and (VC) for VPP and multiple planning schemes, and a review of changes to Planning Practice Notes.

More information

More information about the project is available at:

- the project webpage on Council's website: yoursay.mildura.vic.gov.au/PSReview24 or
- by contacting the Strategic Planning Branch by phone on 03 5018 8100 or
- by email at: strategic.planning@mildura.vic.gov.au
- For guidance on how to make a submission, please refer to the information sheet Writing Your Submission.