

BENALLA RURAL CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK



FOR LANDHOLDERS, LANDCARE GROUPS AND
FIRE PREVENTION AGENCIES

November 2014



www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Background

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The original document was prepared by Benalla Rural City Council in 2006 with significant input from the Benalla Rural City Roadside Vegetation Management Plan Steering Committee.

The development of this 2014 update of the current Roadside Management Plan and accompanying documents has been undertaken by the Benalla Rural City Council. The scope of this plan is the management of rural roadsides under the control of the Benalla Rural City Council, specifically excluding roads controlled by VicRoads.

Acknowledgements

This plan builds on work by members of the community, representatives of organisations and a number of consultants. The work by Carol Kunert (2006), Pat Connor (2006) and Natasha Baldyga (2013) is appreciated. This plan draws on initiatives from other Councils including the Rural City of Wangaratta, the City of Greater Shepparton and Shire of Campaspe. The joint project by local government and the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority developing protocols for Roadside Biodiversity Risk Management provided a solid foundation for work related to staff and contractors.

Benalla Rural City Council
PO Box 227
Benalla, VIC, 3671
Telephone (03) 57602600
Email: council@benalla.vic.gov.au
ABN: 42 379 380 529
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This publication is intended to be of assistance to all people involved in the management of roadsides, but the Benalla Rural City Council, its employees and consultants, do no guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or that it is wholly appropriate for the particular purposes of individuals, and therefore disclaim any liability for any error, loss or other consequences which may arise from reliance on any information in this publication.

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SUMMARY OF APPROVAL REQUIRED FOR ROADSIDE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	APPROVAL REQUIRED	POINT OF CONTACT
To remove, lop or destroy native vegetation	Permission and Works Within Road Reserve Permit required (even if the activity is exempt from a planning permit)	Council
	Permit to take Protected Flora from DELWP for species listed under FFG Act 1998 exempt and non exempt removal	DELWP Applications available from website
Revegetation	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required	Council
Collection of firewood	Permitted in identified locations. Works Within Road Reserve – Collection of Firewood Permit required.	Council
Movement of stock	Requires a Livestock Permit except when moving to an adjoining property by the most direct route. Conditions may still apply.	Council
Droving	Livestock Permit required	Council
Grazing	Livestock Permit required	Council
Ploughing or grading	Not permitted on roadsides	
Cropping	Not permitted on roadsides	

SUMMARY OF APPROVAL REQUIRED FOR ROADSIDE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	APPROVAL REQUIRED	POINT OF CONTACT
Mowing and Slashing	Works Within Road reserve permit not required for adjoining road reserve. Must consult with Council if slashing has not previously occurred or if native vegetation, including grasses and shrubs will be removed. May require Council Planning permit and DELWP permit, if activity will remove, lop or destroy native vegetation.	Council
Haymaking	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required	Council
Farm Storage on Roadsides	Not permitted on roadsides	
Fire prevention	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required. Burning only by CFA or Council.	Council
Spraying	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required	Council
Fencing	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required if working in road reserve	Council
Earthworks	Works Within Road Reserve Permit required	Council

Further information is available from:

Council: Phone: 03 5760 2600 or www.benalla.vic.gov.au

DELWP: Phone: 136 186 or www.delwp.vic.gov.au



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Roadside Vegetation Management Plan consists of three documents for different audiences:

Document 1 – The Roadside Vegetation Management Plan Documents how the Council will protect biodiversity assets in the performance of its duties and it also provides some background information.

Document 2 - The Community Roadside Management Handbook has been produced for use by the general community including land holders, Landcare groups and fire prevention agencies.

Document 3 –The Roadside Environmental Code of Practice Handbook is tailored to the needs of road construction and maintenance contractors and Council staff working in the field.

This Community Roadside Management Handbook seeks to encourage best practice which:

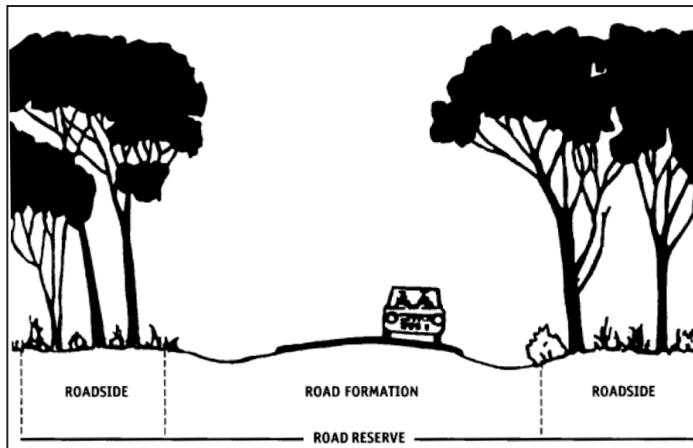
- Protects and enhances the environmental, amenity and cultural values of roadsides, while maintaining road safety in accordance with the Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan.
- Accommodates functional values of road safety, fire management and utility provision.
- Enhances awareness and knowledge of roadside issues.
- Promotes minimum disturbance techniques.
- Minimises pest plant and animal invasion spread.
- Minimises land degradation and enhances water quality.
- Adopts and applies the no net loss principle.

There are also maps which accompany the above documents.

Fact sheets are also available from the Council or on the Council website.

1.1 ROAD RESERVES

Road reserves were established to provide a safe and effective network for vehicle movement. The diagram below defines the various sections of the road reserve.



Roads form a pattern across the landscape and have a number of values:

- They are critical for the safe movement of people and goods;
- They can have important remnants of native vegetation and supports the refuge and movement of fauna species;
- They are corridors for infrastructure, including property access, power lines, storm water management and at times flood mitigation;
- They may act as important tools in fire management and suppression;
- They may be used as sources of fuel including firewood.

Road reserves can also be a source of weeds for adjacent landholders.

Roadsides also provide amenity for both the local community and tourists who visit the area, and may contain sites of cultural heritage significance.

These stands of remnant vegetation by nature of their narrow, linear character, are also susceptible to many threats: clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation, harbouring/supporting pest plants and animals, inappropriate firewood collection, fire prevention activities, agricultural activities and roadworks.

1.2 THE VALUE OF NATIVE VEGETATION ON ROADSIDES

Native vegetation that occurs on roadsides is valuable and important to protect because:

- It contains some of the last remnants of the indigenous vegetation that was originally widespread throughout the Benalla Rural City Council.
- It provides food and shelter for native wildlife.
- It is often easier to maintain than introduced vegetation.
- It reduces the impacts of erosion and salinity.
- It provides a seed source for revegetation.
- It can link otherwise isolated stands of native vegetation, often forming the most continuous strip of remnant vegetation within a landscape.
- It often contains endangered native plants and animals.
- Native grasses have lower fuel loads and fire risk than introduced species.

1.3 CONSERVATION VALUE OF ROADSIDE NATIVE VEGETATION

All roadsides in the Rural City have been assessed to determine the quality of native vegetation present and rated as outlined in the table below.

A conservation value of high, medium or low was generated through a vehicle-based assessment of the presence of indicating factors including:

- Roadside width;
- Fauna habitat (presence of trees, shrubs, grasses, leaf litter, fallen timber, rocks/crevices or wet marshy land);
- Regeneration;
- Wildlife corridor;
- Weed cover;
- Site disturbance; and
- Rare or threatened species presence.

A copy of the *Roadside Conservation Values Mapping* is available from the Council's Environment Team. These assessments and associated maps will be updated on an ongoing basis.

<p>High Conservation Value Fairly undisturbed native vegetation with most expected layers present and low levels of weed invasion Few introduced species (0 -20%) present</p>	
<p>Medium Conservation Value Moderately disturbed vegetation with one or more vegetation layers absent or modified. Moderate levels of weed invasion</p>	
<p>Low Conservation Value Highly disturbed native vegetation. High levels of weed invasion. Also includes scattered or clumps of trees and shrubs over an exotic (introduced) understorey.</p>	

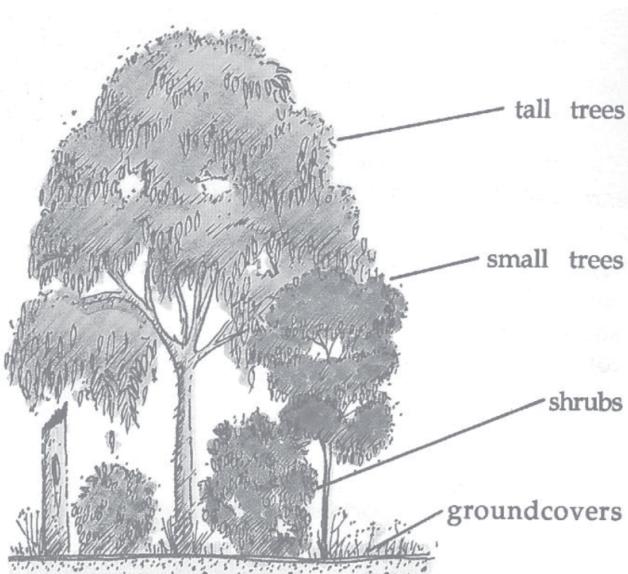
Table 1: Roadside Conservation Values

2.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In general, no work can take place on roadsides without prior written permission from the Council in the form of a Works Within Road Reserve Permit. Applications for permits are available from the Council website www.benalla.vic.gov.au or from the Customer Service Centre.

2.1 TREES ARE GOOD - BUSH IS BETTER

Native vegetation includes trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers. In some cases, not all of these types of plants are present. For example, native grasslands that contain no shrubs, or trees, are still very important as habitat. Dead trees, timber lying on the ground and hollow logs are very important habitat as well.



2.2 PROTECT NATIVE VEGETATION

Protection of native vegetation and fauna is a key goal of roadside management for the Council. It is also a legislative and planning requirement.

The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act, 1988* gives special protection to rare species. Roadsides within Victoria contain 25 per cent of all rare or threatened flora species and communities listed under the *FFG Act*. It is an offence to disturb or destroy species listed under the State *FFG Act* and *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, 1999*. Heavy financial penalties apply for breaches of the *EPBC Act*.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) should be consulted to provide management advice if a rare species is known to be on a site. For further information phone DELWP on 136 186 or visit

www.delwp.vic.gov.au

The best way to protect native vegetation is to avoid or minimise disturbance.

This includes minimising soil disturbance and damage to all native plants, including native grasses and groundcover plants, which are particularly easy to damage. Native vegetation reduces weed infestation. Weeds will invade a site following ground or soil disturbance. Weeds compete with native plants, increase maintenance costs and can lead to higher fire risk. Disturbance can also significantly increase the risk of soil erosion.

Always seek further advice from the Council if unsure as to whether native flora and fauna is present or if a permit or permission is required.

2.3 ACTIVITIES ON A ROADSIDE

Regulating activities on roadsides involves a suite of different pieces of legislation.

Most activities on roadsides by anyone other than the Council or VicRoads, requires consent from the coordinating road authority, under Section 63 of the *Road Management Act 2004*. Works may include:

- Any kind of activity conducted on or in vicinity of a road or proposed road in connection with the construction, maintenance or repair of the road.
- Activities related to the installation, maintenance, repair of any infrastructure in, on, under or over a road reserve.
- Planting or removal of trees or other vegetation.
- Fire management activities (except emergency fire management).
- Activities including erection of fences on property adjoining roads.

Benalla Rural City Council is the coordinating road authority for the majority of roads in the municipality. VicRoads manages freeways and arterial roads, while DELWP and Parks Victoria have control on roads in State reserves and parks.

Obtaining consent under the *Road Management Act 2004* is in addition to any other consent needed under planning and environmental legislation.

2.4 PROTECT NATIVE FAUNA AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Roadsides contain habitat for a range of native fauna. In particular, scattered large old remnant trees contain hollows that are vital habitat for many species including gliders, possums, birds and bats.

Other elements such as fallen timber, coarse woody debris, leaf litter and native under-storey form equally important habitat for other species including lizards, insects, and mammals.

The Council seeks to ensure landholders minimise or, where possible, avoid any impacts on native fauna and habitat for native fauna.

2.5 RARE, THREATENED OR SIGNIFICANT FLORA AND FAUNA

The municipality is the home to a number of rare and endangered species. These are protected under legislation: the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)*, and the Victorian Government *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG)*.

The Lima Stringybark *Eucalyptus alligatrix* subspecies *limaensis* is listed as **Endangered** under the *EPBC Act*. It is also listed as **Threatened** under the *FFG Act*.

The Lima Stringybark is endemic to only a small area near Swanpool, where fewer than 1500 plants occur in approximately 140 populations.

The Regent Honeyeater and the Grey Crowned Babbler are listed under the *FFG Act*.

As well as a Works on Road Reserves permit, you must obtain a Protected Flora Licence or Permit from a **DELWP office** if you want to collect protected native plants or if you are planning to do works or other activities on public land which might kill, injure or disturb protected native plants.



Grey Crowned Babbler (endangered)



Regent honeyeater (endangered)



Lima Stringybark (endangered)

The following threatened species were identified in the roadside desktop assessments.

Common Name	Scientific Name	VROT	EPBC	FFG
Deane's Wattle	<i>Acacia deanii</i>	r		
Western Silver Wattle	<i>Acacia decora</i>	v		
Bent-leaf Wattle	<i>Acacia flexifolia</i>	r		
White Cypress Pine	<i>Callitris glauca</i>			
Umbrella Grass	<i>Digitaria divaricatissima</i>	v		
Bottle Washers	<i>Enneapogon nigricans</i>			
Lima Stringybark	<i>Eucalyptus alligatrix</i> ssp. <i>limaensis</i>	e	EN	
Mugga Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus sideroxylon</i> ss	r		
Narrow-leaf Goodenia	<i>Goodenia macbarronii</i>	v	V	L
Western Golden Tip	<i>Goodia medicaginea</i>	r		
Flat-leaf Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea platyphylla</i>	r		
Small Leaf Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea foliolosa</i>	r		
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	e		L
Grey-crowned Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus temporalis</i>	e		L
Regent Honeyeater	<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>	e	EN	L
Bush Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	e		L
Squirrel Glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	e		L
Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan)	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	v		L

Key to abbreviations in table

VROT*	Victorian Rare or Threatened
X	extinct in Victoria
e	endangered in Victoria
v	vulnerable in Victoria
k	insufficiently known in Victoria
r	rare in Victoria
FFG L	species is Listed under Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
EPBC	Listed under Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
EN	Endangered: facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.

VROT*: Plants that are on the threatened species advisory lists, maintained by DELWP. These are not the same as the Threatened List established under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Gurantee Act 1988 (FFG)*. Further information is available at www.delwp.vic.gov.au

2.6 REMOVING NATIVE VEGETATION ON ROADSIDES

There are a number of requirements for managing vegetation on roadsides. In general, a permit to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead vegetation, is required under Clause 52.16 or 52.17 of the Victoria Planning Provisions. There are some exemptions which are noted when relevant in the following sections.

Permission from the Council and a Works Within Road Reserve Permit is required even if the activity is exempt from a planning permit.

The principle of no net loss will be applied in all permit applications. This involves avoiding vegetation clearance whenever possible and minimising and offsetting any vegetation clearance when permits are granted.

2.7 SIGNAGE OF SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

Roadside vegetation signage can be used to highlight significant vegetation and prevent unnecessary damage. Before commencing any works in a signed area, contact the Council for advice on appropriate management.

2.8 PROTECT WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS

A Works Within Road Reserve permit is required for any drainage works to be undertaken within the road reserve. A Works on Waterways Permit may also be required by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority¹.

Activities must demonstrate that they:

- Do not affect levels and flood flows to permanent or seasonal wetlands
- Avoid planting trees in wetlands if the wetland community type is unknown (e.g. no trees in grassy wetland)
- Design roadside drainage systems to ensure the road formation is protected and the water level of the wetland is not altered
- Take measures to prevent erosion, siltation and sedimentation of wetlands from drainage from roads and rail embankments.

1 See www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

2.9 PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE

Indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage provides a sense of community identity. Victoria's heritage includes archaeological sites, buildings and structures, created landscapes and community values and beliefs.

All registered and unregistered Victorian Aboriginal archaeological sites are protected by the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*. All Victorian historical sites are protected by the *State Heritage Act 1995*. These Acts prohibit the wilful destruction or disturbance of any cultural heritage site, place or object, whether on private or public land. Heritage Victoria and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria administer these Acts.

As activities on roadsides have the potential to impact on heritage sites (either known or unknown), it is important to identify heritage issues to enable impacts to be avoided, minimised or mitigated.

Along with checking the registers of known cultural and heritage sites and areas of cultural heritage sensitivity, the Aboriginal heritage planning tool should be used to clarify if a cultural heritage management plan is required. The tool is available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website www.aav.nrms.net.au

3.0 GUIDELINE SUMMARY FOR ROADSIDE ACTIVITIES

3.1 FIREWOOD COLLECTION AND TIMBER REMOVAL

- Applications for Firewood Collection are available under *Community Law 2009*, from the Council offices and the Council website www.benalla.vic.gov.au Firewood collection is only available in Spring and Autumn, and should not be collected during the fire restriction period as declared by the CFA.
- Limited firewood collection is available on some roadsides. Only fallen timber can be collected.
- **No firewood** may be collected in areas of high conservation, areas within the Vegetation Protection Overlays or Lima Stringybark areas, except where outlined in the Municipal Fire Management Plan.
- Firewood collection may be allowed in “no firewood” collection areas after severe storm damage for short periods of time. These areas will be clearly designated and advertised to the community during these times.
- Domestic firewood collection is allowed without a permit from designated firewood collection areas during a firewood collection season from State forests. Conditions and limits apply. This information is available on the DELWP website www.delwp.vic.gov.au

3.2 FIRE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, the Council has a responsibility to “take all practicable steps to prevent the occurrence of fires on, and minimise the danger of the spread of fires on, any road under its care and management.”

Specific road reserves have been used as Fuel Reduced Corridors for many years. Fire prevention measures outlined in the Municipal Fire Management Plan, including periodic fuel reduction and the making of firebreaks can only occur with approval from the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO) and require written consent from the Council for works being undertaken on roadsides.

Guidelines for the CFA *General*

- CFA must get approval from the Council for all activities on roadsides.
- Liaise with the Council regarding the location of wildlife corridors and high and medium conservation significance roadside sites as well as the number of people and properties which benefit.
- All CFA activities must be in accordance with the Municipal Fire Management Plan.
- When reviewing the location of firebreaks preference should be given to placement on low conservation value roadsides or cleared private land. Fire breaks in high conservation areas are to be avoided.
- The CFA should train volunteers to ensure that fire prevention activities cause minimal damage to native vegetation and fauna.
- Schedule burning to protect and enhance native vegetation, including appreciation of optimal growing and reproductive systems.
- Sites of significant flora and fauna species should be protected by appropriate actions prior to fire prevention works being undertaken.
- To avoid the spread of weeds, water points should be regularly inspected for weeds and appropriate control undertaken.
- Burning is the preferred fuel reduction method for native grasses.
- On medium and high conservation value roadsides fuel reduction burning should preferably mimic natural fire frequency, intensity and season. For woodland areas a minimum rotational period of fifteen years is recommended.
- Avoid burning areas of regenerating native plants where possible.

Guidelines for Landowners

- Only works in accordance with the Municipal Fire Management Plan are permitted on road reserves. Any fire prevention works on roadsides, including burning, require written consent from the Council and approval from the MFPO. Council and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) are the **only** bodies authorised to conduct burning on roadsides.
- No ploughed or graded firebreaks are to be constructed by landowners on roadsides.
- Landowners are required to undertake fire prevention works, including firebreaks, within their own property boundary.

3.3 PEST ANIMALS

Pest animals have many detrimental impacts on the natural environment, including:

- Limiting remnant vegetation regeneration by eating seedlings
- Contributing to land degradation by burrowing and scratching soils
- Reducing biodiversity by killing native animals, or out competing them for available food sources
- Spreading weeds

The major pest animal species in the municipality are hares, rabbits, foxes and feral cats.

Under the *Catchment and Land Protection 1994 (CaLP) Act* councils have more responsibilities for established pest animals on roadsides. The Council will establish priorities for the management of pest animals in accordance with the requirements of the *CaLP Act* and as resources allow. The Roadside Weeds and Pest Animal Plan is available from the Council's website.

Guidelines

- Written approval is required from DELWP for removal of native vegetation associated with vermin control.
- Works to control pest animals must be undertaken in a manner that causes the least disturbance to indigenous vegetation. Ripping of warrens on roadsides should not be used unless all other options for control have been exhausted.
- Pest animal control should be carried out in conjunction with weed control.
- Where possible, undertake rabbit control in conjunction with adjacent landowners and community led projects to maximize effectiveness. Community led projects will be supported by the Council where possible.
- Written consent from the Council is required for pest animal control work undertaken on roadsides.

3.4 PEST PLANTS (WEEDS)

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (*CaLP Act 1994*) provides a legislative framework and defines general duties of landholders in relation to management of noxious weeds and pest animals.

Noxious weeds are plants that are legally declared to cause environmental or economic harm or have the potential to cause such harm. They can also present risks to human health. Noxious weeds are classified as State prohibited (SP), Regionally Prohibited (P), Regionally Controlled (C) or Restricted (R) weeds.

Weeds of National Significance

Under the National Weed Strategy, 32 introduced plants have been identified as Weeds of National Significance (WONS). These weeds are regarded as the worst weeds in Australia because of their invasiveness, potential for spread and economic and environmental impacts.

Environmental weeds

An Environmental Weed is a plant that colonises natural vegetation and threatens conservation values. It can be an exotic or native plant that is not indigenous to the area. The presence of these weeds harms the natural environment.

Weed control should include the following principles:

- Work from areas without weeds towards areas which are heavily infested and from High to Low Conservation value roadsides.
- Priority is to be given to woody environmental weeds in High and Medium Conservation Value roadsides.
- Control existing small, isolated new invasions before targeting heavily infested areas.
- Quickly control any new weed species that has the potential to become a major problem.

Council responsibilities

Changes made to the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* in 2013 place the responsibility on local councils for the ongoing management of regionally prohibited and regionally controlled weeds on council managed roadways. The Council will treat weeds and pests in accordance with the Roadside Weed and Rabbit Control Plan which has been approved by DELWP.

The Council will actively work in partnership with landholders and Landcare groups, and recognises the value of the work undertaken by individuals and groups.

To ensure that legal responsibilities are met, to reduce duplication and unnecessary cost, and to minimise risks for the people undertaking work in roadsides, the Council must be notified when there is weed control work to be undertaken on Council managed roadsides. A *Work on Road Reserve Permit* will be required, but the fee will be waived.

Alternatively, contact the Council to report a weed infestation on a road reserve.

The Council also has a key responsibility in avoiding contributing to the spread of weeds. During road construction and maintenance works, weeds can be easily spread within a site and between different sites. Detailed information on road maintenance and construction is included in the companion document *Roadside Environmental Code of Practice Handbook Road Construction and Maintenance Contractors and Workers*.

Further information

To assist landholders identify weeds a weed fact sheet has been developed with information on weeds and their weed category. This can be obtained from the Customer Service Centre or on the Council's website www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Further information including control options is available through the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority website.

Weeds of the Goulburn Broken A Field Guide to Terrestrial and Aquatic Weeds at www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

3.5 COLLECTING SEED

Native seed collection is an important way of ensuring only local provenances are planted back in our region, but must be carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner. If you are interested in collecting native seed, permission is available from the Council, and a permit is required through DELWP. When collecting seed for commercial purposes, a royalty will also need to be paid. Further information is available for local seed collection on the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank website² and guides to sustainable seed collection are available on the Florabank website³.

2 See <http://www.dookie.unimelb.edu.au/seedbank/>

3 See <http://www.florabank.org.au/>

3.6 FENCING

- A Council Works Within Road Reserve Permit is required for fencing works being undertaken within the road reserve (*Road Management Act 2004*).
- A permit is not required if fencing works are being undertaken solely on the adjoining property and no native vegetation is being removed.
- An exemption from a Planning Permit for removal of vegetation for fencing works does apply under Section 52.17 of the Benalla Planning Scheme.

No Permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation to the minimum extent necessary if any of the following apply:

To enable the:

- Construction of a fence on a boundary between properties in different ownership; or
- Operation or maintenance of an existing fence.

The combined maximum width of clearing permitted either side of the fence under this exemption is 4 metres.

- This exemption **does not** apply to areas within a Vegetation Protection Overlay under the Benalla Planning Scheme.
- It should be noted that the **combined maximum** width of clearing permitted for a fence under this exemption is 4 metres in total.
- While a Planning Permit may not be required **permission is required** from the Council for any native vegetation removal occurring on the road reserve. This consent may be subject to environmental assessment and conditions if necessary.
- If vegetation removal is required, it is preferred that removal takes place on private property, rather than the road reserve.
- Landholders must ensure the fence is located on the correct line of the property title.
- In emergency circumstances such as traffic accidents, trees or limbs falling and fire, landholders and agencies do not require permission to conduct works to the minimum extent necessary to ensure the threat to life or property is removed.

3.7 LANDHOLDER, FARMING AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

3.7.1 Stock movement, Drowsing and Grazing

Movement of livestock on municipal roads generally requires a permit. The exception is where stock are moving to an adjoining property by the most direct route. However this must still comply with a number of conditions.

Drowsing requires a livestock drowsing permit from the Council. Conditions may be applied or drowsing directed away from vegetation with rare or endangered species, or where there is a risk of weed spread.

Grazing of road reserves requires a grazing permit from the Council. Grazing will only be permitted on low conservation value roadsides unless the Municipal Fire Management Plan or weed control plans allow for grazing on medium conservation value roadsides.

Movement of stock must also comply with *Community Local Law 60 (3-6)* covering signage, supervision and safety.

3.7.2 Cropping

Cropping of the roadside involves activities relating to “planting to sow” and includes both planting and harvesting of crops within the road reserve.

Cropping of the roadside may impact on the environmental value of roadsides by removing native vegetation and introducing aggressive weed species.

Cropping is not permitted on roadsides.

3.7.3 Ploughing or grading

Ploughing or grading for firebreaks or any other purpose is not permitted within the road reserve.

3.7.4 Maintenance of Driveways

Maintenance of driveways is allowed providing the works are restricted to the existing driveway and do not impact on traffic.

3.7.5 Slashing

Slashing on roadsides has been undertaken by some landholders as a regular activity, but there are legal requirements and risk issues that need to be addressed.

Slashing or mowing of an adjoining nature strip are exempted under the *Road Management Act 2004* from requiring a Works Within Road Reserve permit providing they do not impact on traffic or native vegetation.

Where slashing has not previously occurred on a regular basis, the Council must be consulted to ensure native vegetation, including groundcovers, will not be impacted upon.

Slashing of native vegetation, including grasses and shrubs, requires written consent from the Council and a permit and consultation with DELWP, except when undertaken by authorised Council staff or contractors to improve traffic safety i.e. at traffic intersections to improve line of sight.

- Ideally slashing of native grasses should not occur between October and January to allow native seed set, and blades on slashers should be set at no lower than 150 mm above the ground. Review the time of slashing annually according to the requirements of the season.
- Slashing programs should be designed to begin with clean machinery when working in areas of high conservation value and work towards the more degraded sites. Ensure that all slashers and machinery are cleaned before moving from weed infested to clean areas.
- Landholders should consider the need to prevent the spread of weeds, such as Chilean Needle Grass when slashing. Avoid slashing when weeds are seeding.
- Adopt the mosaic principle for slashing where possible.

3.7.6 Haymaking

Property owners, or other parties, may request access to the road reserve for the purpose of cutting and bailing, or collecting, grass/hay to be used as stock feed. The use of the road reserve is particularly sought after in times of drought.

- This activity is only be allowed in areas of low conservation significant or in areas dominated by pasture grass.
- Consent is required from the Council for cutting, bailing and/or collecting of cut grass for hay.
- The property owner/occupier must obtain all other relevant planning and environmental approvals from the Council and DELWP.
- An approved traffic management plan will be required to be implemented for the safety of all road users.

Storage of baled hay is not permitted within the road reserve.

3.7.7 Farm Storage

Storage of farm equipment, hay, refuse, fencing materials or chemicals is prohibited on roadside reserves.

Dumping of waste on roadsides (farming and non-farming) is prohibited.

3.7.8 Revegetation

There have been very active programs of revegetation and protecting remnant vegetation in the municipality. For example, the Regent Honeyeater Project has lead to over 1400 hectares of restoration of habitat. The project emphasises the need for a mixed range of species with good understorey and flowering shrubs to increase vegetation and animal health. This work has supported the increase in numbers and range of regent honey eaters, grey crown babblers and squirrel gliders, as well as other species.

Priorities for managing native vegetation at a State and regional level are:

1. *Retain and Protect Existing Remnants*
2. *Enhance Existing Remnants*
3. *Connect Existing Remnants by Biolinks (Wildlife Corridors)*.

Projects should reflect this strategic landscape approach, including:

- enhancing existing remnants by weed and pest animal control and adding habitat components, such as logs.
- supplementary plantings of shrubs and understorey and buffer plantings around existing remnants.
- establishing biolinks in appropriate locations.

As roads are primarily for safe transit, revegetation works must not compromise road safety. Most activities associated with revegetation on roadsides would be considered as works under the *Road Management Act 2004* and thus require a Works Within Road Reserve permit from the Council. The fee will be waivered for revegetation projects which align with these guidelines.

Landcare groups, community groups and businesses are encouraged to become involved in protecting and enhancing remnant vegetation on roadsides.

The development and expansion of corridors linking native vegetation on roadsides to remnant vegetation in private ownership and other vegetation on private land is encouraged. Protecting and enhancing native vegetation by planting on private land will be supported by the Council where possible.

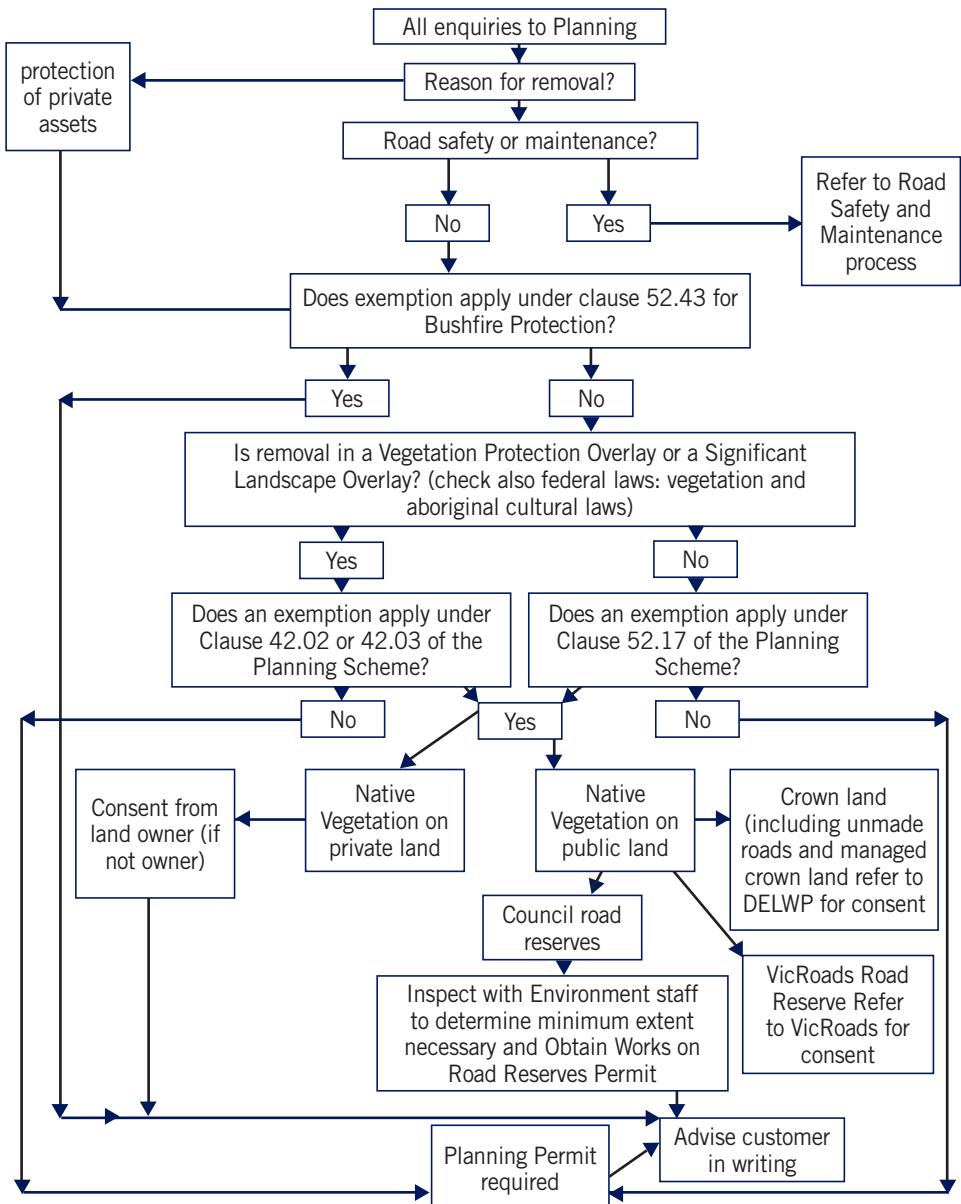
When undertaking revegetation programs ensure the following:

- Plantings reflect the vegetation community found, or likely to have occurred, at the site.
- Where possible, propagate or purchase plants from locally collected seed and include overstorey, understorey and key ground cover layers.
- Obtain permission from the Council (for local roads) or VicRoads (for freeways and arterial roads) before planting. The Council will give guidelines on planting requirements such as road safety, fire prevention needs and service provider requirements.
- Ensure follow up maintenance to control weeds and protection of trees.
- Species that are known environmental weeds are not to be planted.
- When sowing grasses, use indigenous grasses or indigenous ground covers rather than introduced species.
- Refer to the Revegetation Guide for the Goulburn Broken Catchment for suitable species or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning or other suitably qualified experts for greater detail⁴

4

Goulburn Broken Catchment Revegetation Guide at
<http://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/revegetation/1/Index5.html>

Removal of Native Vegetation Assessment process



4.0 REFERENCES

Benalla Rural City Council, *Community Local Law 2009*.

Benalla Rural City Council, *Roadside Weed and Rabbit Control Plan 2012*

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