



# Sustainable Living Strategy

2017 - 2027



# Foreword

Swan Hill Rural City Council's Sustainable Living Strategy sets out the direction and objectives over the next 10 years (2017-2027), complimented by four-yearly action plans to achieve the municipality's sustainability goals and aspirations.

The strategy focuses on Council promoting the role that the environment plays in increasing the local economy and quality of life.

By providing an overarching framework that brings together existing programs, it also incorporates new advances in environmental management and community driven sustainability solutions, while identifying new issues, gaps and priorities for the community.

Significant challenges that are faced by communities include:

- Substantial restructuring to the agricultural sector
- Impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on water allocations through sustainable diversion limits
- Ageing and declining population within small communities and the associated challenges that this places on the provision of services
- Affects of climatic changes, both short and long term, that influence the frequency, duration and intensity of climatic events such as drought, floods and storm events

In facing these challenges, Council is committed to leading by example and encouraging community participation in sustainability programs. This will include facilitating a partnership between Council and the community to develop and implement relevant and timely actions, resulting in the achievement of identified sustainability goals within state, regional and local planning contexts.

To achieve these sustainability goals a high importance will be placed on developing and maintaining valuable and lasting partnerships with all communities and key strategic stakeholders in order to achieve each key strategic objective through its identified actions.

The community will play an important role in the evaluation of actions achieved by providing important feedback through existing community planning groups and the development of Community Action Plans.

## Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

The Swan Hill Rural City Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays respects to their elders, past and present. The Council recognises that the traditional custodians of the land experience a close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their country.

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# Introduction

One of the important roles Council undertakes on behalf of the community is to plan for and encourage the development of sustainable communities, and to address the economic, social and environmental challenges they face.

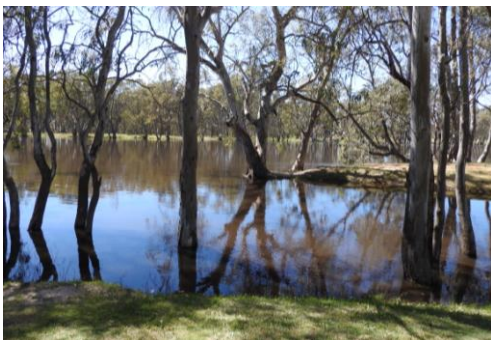
The previous Sustainable Living Strategy 2010-14 was developed in consultation with the community as part of Council's response to the challenges communities face in achieving their goal of sustainability.

A review of the previous strategy highlighted the need to incorporate advances in knowledge of current and impending impacts and challenges communities encounter that affect their ability to be sustainable. It also required more measureable actions that aligned with the Council Plan and other regional and State plans and strategies.

Our natural environment is significant and unique, and plays an important role in supporting the region's economic productivity, social wellbeing and is the setting for a range of recreational activities.

There are many challenges facing rural communities, such as climate change, both short and longer term fluctuations; agricultural sector restructuring in response to domestic and global market forces and financial market volatility; restructuring of water management regimes through sustainable diversion limits imposed by the Murray Darling Basin Authorities Basin Plan; demographic changes expressed through increasing ageing population and overall population decline in many of the outlying communities.

These challenges, while restricting community capacity to achieve sustainability, provide substantial new opportunities for innovation and capacity building.



# Purpose

To define and communicate Council's role in environmental stewardship, which ultimately underpins the municipality's prosperity, social richness and diversity.

# Scope

Limited to Council's operations as a local government organisation, the scope includes things Council has control over, can influence significantly or can advocate for.

# Actions and revisions

The strategy has a time frame of 10 years. Detailed actions are included in this plan and complementary actions will be written in relevant key strategic documents.

Detailed action plans have been developed through internal consultation within Council, with final action plans made publicly available for comment on Council's website and offices as part of the strategic development of the document.

The actions table within this strategy will be reviewed every four years to ensure they continue to meet the objectives of the long to medium term goals, as well as remaining consistent with the Council Plan.

# Strategy development process

## Legislation

Development of this strategy has involved consideration of relevant legislation and planning documents, including the Local Government Act. Other key legislation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

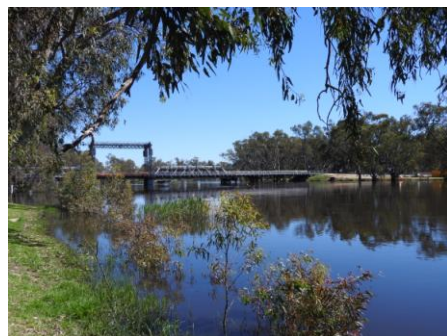
- The *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, which provides the national legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.
- The *Commonwealth Water Act 2007*, facilitates the management of the waters of the Murray Darling Basin.
- The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, which provides the key Victorian legislation for the conservation of threatened species and communities, and for the management of potentially threatening processes such as invasive species.
- The *Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act 1972*, which establishes the Trust for Nature and enables people to contribute to nature conservation by covenanting land or donating land or money.
- The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, which provides protection for all Aboriginal places, objects and human remains in Victoria.
- The *Victorian Environment Protection Act 1970*, which creates the Environmental Protection Authority to administer the protection of air, water and land quality and noise pollution.
- The *Victorian Building Act 1993*, which provides the regulation of building and building standards in Victoria. The National Construction Code outlines the energy efficiency requirements of buildings.
- The *Climate Change Act 2010* has stipulated a response to climate change with the Victorian Government creating the Victorian Climate Change Action Plan 2013. The plan outlines actions being taken to manage risks and build climate resilience across essential public infrastructure and services. The Plan also recognises that managing risks to Victoria's natural assets and natural resource-based industries is vital for the wellbeing of our communities and health of our economy.

# Strategic plans

A number of key planning documents have informed this Strategy. They include:

- The Murray Darling Authorities Basin Plan 2012, stipulates the management of the waters of the Murray Darling Basin and sets the sustainable diversion limits (SDL) for communities, agriculture and the environment.
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018.
- Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan (September 2013), which identifies key settlements in our municipality and surrounding areas where growth is to be directed, while avoiding sites of high natural hazards such as bushfire and flood, and protecting natural environment assets.
- The Council Plan, which clearly defines the vision for the four year term of the Council and the community
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Economic Development Strategy.
- Swan Hill Rural City Council 10-Year Major Project Plan, which outlines the key projects that Council will provide funding towards.
- Other relevant Council plans include the Health and Wellbeing Plan, Resilience Plan, Active Transport Strategy, Waste Management Strategy.
- Local community-based action plans, which have been developed for townships to articulate their needs and aspirations. These plans provide place-based guidance to Council on a range of issues important to the community.

In addition, strategic plans of relevant regional agencies such the Mallee Catchment Management Authority, North Central Catchment Management Authority, the Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery Group and Commonwealth and State government departments remain informative and instructive.



# Document evaluation

A review of the existing Sustainable Living Strategy conducted in 2015 identified the following strengths and areas for improvement..

Strengths:

- Strategic actions that were successfully implemented had a positive public benefit and contributed to savings within Council Budget.
- It encouraged community participation in sustainable initiatives.
- It raised awareness of more efficient and sustainable ways of living both within Council and within the community.
- It enabled Swan Hill Rural City Council to lead by example within the municipality.

Areas for improvement:

- There was too much reliance on other organisation contributions.
- Some strategic actions were not measurable.
- There was duplication of reporting requirements between the strategy and other Council plans and strategies.
- There was duplication of strategic actions within the Strategy itself.

# Community engagement

In 2008, Council received support to develop a sustainability strategy from the Victorian Government. This support enabled Council to conduct extensive research and community consultation to identify the key sustainable living issues within the region.

Presentations and workshops were conducted, targeting both rural and urban community groups and schools. Information sessions, forums, questionnaires and media releases were also used to raise awareness and engage communities. Sustainable living questions were included in the community planning consultation process, with over 350 participants in Swan Hill and Robinvale taking part.

Council initiated the community planning process in 2007 to help communities identify their own priorities.

The sustainability priorities identified through this consultation process included:

- Sustainable communities and buildings
- Sustainable energy and fuel use
- Develop partnerships with key stakeholders
- Biodiversity protection
- Water quality, conservation and security
- Waste management

# Strategy

## Vision

- Embrace the challenges of change and diminishing resources to create sustainable communities

## Aims

- Provide guidance for sustainable land use planning to protect and enhance the natural environment;
- Facilitate and partner with the community for the implementation of strategic actions that protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

## Objectives

- Biodiversity protection and enhancement
- Water security, conservation and quality
- Energy conservation and local renewable energy generation
- Resource recovery and waste reduction
- Building liveable and sustainable communities



# Objectives

## Objective 1: Biodiversity protection and enhancement

### Long term goal

Increase the quantity and quality of biodiversity along roadsides.

### Intermediate outcome

Participate in the co-ordination and delivery of multi-agency and community efforts to monitor and control invasive species across the landscape by working with Landcare groups, landholders, Catchment Management Authorities and other State Government authorities.

### Evaluation question

To what degree has the quality and quantity of native vegetation critical for habitat improved along municipal roads, in particular those that support the Eastern Central Mallee Priority Corridor? (see Appendices 1 and 2)

### Key strategic tasks

- › Biodiversity linkage protection and enhancement to support the Biodiversity Priority Corridors as identified by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority.
- › Improve organisational capacity to protect and enhance biodiversity.

### Link to community priorities

Community consultation for original Sustainable Living Strategy identified biodiversity protection as a key priority.

### Council and regional strategic document links

- Council Plan 2017-21 (Draft)
- Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan
- Mallee Natural Resource Plan for Climate Change (Draft) 2016
- North Central Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation Plan 2015
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Resilience Action Strategy 2012-2015
- Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation (VEAC 2011)



# Objective 2: Water security, conservation and quality

## Long term goal

Exceed Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) minimum requirements for stormwater discharge quality and significantly increase the re-use of stormwater for domestic and green space use.

## Intermediate outcome

Meet EPA's minimum requirements for stormwater discharge.

## Evaluation question

Do we meet the EPA's minimum requirements for stormwater discharge and has the percentage of recycled stormwater increased for domestic and green space use?

## Link to community priorities

Community consultation for original Sustainable Living Strategy identified biodiversity protection and water quality, conservation and security as key priorities.

## Council and regional strategic document link

- Council Plan 2017-21 (Draft)
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Resilience Action Strategy 2012-2015
- Murray Darling Authorities Basin Plan 2012 (*Commonwealth Water Act 2007*)

## Key strategic tasks

- Manage stormwater and associated infrastructure effectively.
- Support the community to effectively adapt to changes in water management, quality and availability



# Objective 3: Energy conservation and local renewable energy generation

## Long term goal

The municipality will produce enough locally generated electricity through solar or other renewable energy sources to meet all its needs by 2050.

## Intermediate outcome

Facilitate the establishment of one or more solar farms and solar gardens with a minimum total combined electricity output of 600kW in the next four years.

## Evaluation question

How many kW hours are being generated locally from solar and other renewable sources and what is the net economic benefit of this production to the community?

## Link to community priorities

Community Plans of Swan Hill, Robinvale, Lake Boga, Manangatang, Ultima, Nyah and Nyah West express a desire for local renewable energy projects. Community consultation for the original Sustainable Living Strategy identified sustainable energy and fuel use as a key priority. Sustainability Victoria ran a community workshop in Swan Hill in 2015 and identified community owned renewable energy on the community's top three priorities.

### Key strategic tasks

- Facilitate renewable energy projects
- Decrease greenhouse emissions through energy efficiencies
- Facilitate community efforts to adapt to climate change
- Facilitate and achieve a sustainable built environment

### Council and regional strategic document links

- Council Plan 2017-21 (Draft)
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Resilience Action Strategy 2012-2015
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018



# Objective 4: Resource recovery and waste reduction

## Long term goal

Reduce the kerbside garbage amount collected as at 2013/14 levels of 571kg per household per year to 300kg per household per year by 2027.

## Intermediate outcome

Reduce the kerbside garbage amount collected as at 2013/14 levels of 571kg per household per year to 500kg per household per year by 2020.

## Evaluation question

Have we found innovative solutions for waste products that are currently either not recyclable or difficult to recycle? Have we found suitable cost effective mechanisms to divert organic waste from landfill sites and for its processing into other useable products such as compost and energy?

## Link to community priorities

Community consultation for original Sustainable Living Strategy identified waste management and resource recovery as key priorities.

## Council and regional strategic document links

- Council Plan 2017-21(Draft)
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Waste Management Strategy 2015-2020
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018

## Key strategic tasks

- Strategic resource recovery and waste management
- Rehabilitate and revegetate closed landfill sites



# Objective 5: Building liveable and sustainable communities

## Long term goal

Achieve self sustaining communities through increasing their liveability, including health and wellbeing, by enhancing their economic, social and environmental capacity.

## Intermediate outcome

Utilise the Transition Town Toolkit and other resources to prepare and develop community plans for enhancing the liveability, health and wellbeing of communities and to identify specific threats to each community's sustainability.

## Evaluation question

How are our towns and communities becoming more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable when measured against agreed criteria within community plans and Council plans and strategies?

## Link to community priorities

Community consultation for original Sustainable Living Strategy identified sustainable communities and buildings as a key priority.

### Key strategic tasks

- Support community sustainability and improve organisational sustainability
- Provide and manage public spaces in such a way to promote safe use and healthy living

### Council and regional strategic document link

- Council Plan 2017-21 (Draft)
- Public Health Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Swan Hill Rural City Council Resilience Action Strategy 2012-2015
- Active Transport Strategy
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Swan Hill Heatwave response sub-plan
- Municipal Strategic Statement
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018



# Implementation

## Action plan for the next four years - 2017 to 2021.

### Objective 1: Biodiversity protection and enhancement

1.1 Key Strategic Task Biodiversity linkages protection and enhancement to support Biodiversity Priority Corridors			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Coordinated and strategic control of invasive species along road sides within and adjacent to Biodiversity Priority Corridors	Liaise with the Catchment Management Authorities, landholders and Landcare groups to undertake control activities of the European Rabbit, cactus species, African Boxthorn and other identified invasive species to protect the Central Murray Priority Corridor	NRM*	Ongoing
	Investigate funding availability to collect spatial data and undertake control of emerging pests and weeds such as Buffel Grass and Hudson Pear to protect the Central Murray Priority Corridor	NRM	Ongoing
	Review the Swan Hill Rural City Council Strategic Linkages Management Plan and implement actions indentified within the plan	NRM*	Second Year
	Develop a working relationship with North Central Catchment Management Authority to reactivate and support Landcare groups along the Lower Murray River Corridor	NRM*	Ongoing
	Establish regular monitoring program of native vegetation condition and weed and pest infestations along identified roadsides that make up the strategic linkages network	NRM*	Ongoing
	Upload rabbit control data to Rabbit Scan website for monitoring and community education purposes to encourage its use throughout the community	NRM*	Ongoing
	Advocate for the introduction of landscape monitoring and control of invasive species through networks developed with State Government Agencies, Landcare and landholders	NRM*	Ongoing
1.2 Key Strategic Task Improve organisational capacity to protect and enhance biodiversity			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Demonstrate leadership in protecting and enhancing the municipalities biodiversity for present and future generations	Support Council staff to understand management issues and actions for biodiversity protection through the preparation of brochures and keeping the Council website updated	NRM*	First Year
	Support Planning Officers to identify native vegetation in investigations into illegal vegetation clearance and prepare Revegetation Plans to rehabilitate sites	NRM*, Planning	Ongoing
	Regularly review and update plans and policies in relation to land, water and biodiversity. Prepare revegetation guidelines for native vegetation regeneration planning and implementation for roadsides	NRM* Engineering	First Year
*NRM – Natural Resource Management Department			

## Objective 2: Water Security, Conservation and Quality

2.1 Key Strategic Task			
Manage stormwater and its associated infrastructure effectively			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Protect public health, prevent the deterioration of water quality and reduce the incidence of water pollution and litter entering our waterways	Support the incorporation of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles within new developments when and where possible.	Engineering, Planning	Ongoing
	Demonstrate leadership by applying sustainable water management practices within Council operations when and where possible.	Engineering, All departments	Ongoing
	Regularly review and update relevant plans and policies in relation to sustainable water use and stormwater.	Engineering	First Year
	Investigate innovative water conservation, quality and harvesting techniques and opportunities to implement them.	Engineering, NRM*	Second Year
2.2 Key Strategic Task			
Support the community to effectively adapt to changes in water management, quality and availability			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Encourage the conservation of water throughout the community	Encourage and support individual and community activities that deliver best practice stormwater management and sustainable water use.	Engineering, NRM*	Ongoing
	Develop and maintain partnerships that enhance regional outcomes in relation to sustainable water use and stormwater	Engineering	Ongoing
	Support the community to adapt to the implementation of Sustainable Diversion Limits imposed by the Murray Darling Basin Plan	Engineering, NRM*	Ongoing
*NRM – Natural Resource Management Department			

## Objective 3: Energy Conservation and Local Renewable Energy Generation

3.1 Key Strategic Task Facilitate renewable energy projects			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Facilitate the investigation of community owned solar farm	Successfully complete the Victorian Government funded Virtual Renewable Power Station Project with joint partners Moira Shire Council.	NRM*	First Year
	Investigate funding opportunities for further research into the viability of a community owned solar farm within the municipality and conduct a market scan to gauge industry interest in underwriting the implementation of a community owned solar garden.	NRM* EDU**	Second Year
Support appropriate industry investment into distributed renewable energy projects	Promote the municipality as an attractive area for investment in renewable energy facilities.	EDU**, Planning	Ongoing
3.2 Key Strategic Task Decrease greenhouse emissions through energy efficiencies			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Lead by example in achieving energy efficiencies	Participate in opportunities that improve climate variability and change, management capacity and energy efficiency outcomes.	NRM*, Building Maintenance and Property	Ongoing
	Regularly review and update relevant plans and policies in relation to climate variability and change, and energy efficiency.	NRM*, Building Maintenance and Property	Ongoing
	Develop an appropriate mechanism to measure greenhouse gas emissions	NRM*	Second Year
3.3 Key Strategic Task Facilitate community efforts to adapt to climate change			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Work with stakeholders to develop a coordinated and proactive approach to climate variability adaptation and mitigation	Develop and maintain stakeholder relationships that increase external funding and resource opportunities for climate adaptation and mitigation activities.	NRM* EDU**	Second Year
	Develop and maintain partnerships that enhance regional outcomes in relation to climate variability and energy efficiency.	NRM*	Ongoing
3.4 Key Strategic Task Encourage and facilitate a sustainable built environment			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Encourage and facilitate the construction of energy efficient buildings	Continually improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings and their impact on the environment.	Building Maintenance	Ongoing
	Promote the design and construction of buildings that exceed the minimum mandatory energy efficiency and sustainability standards.	NRM*, Building (planning)	First Year
*NRM – Natural Resource Management Department **EDU – Economic Development Unit			



## Objective 4: Resource Recovery and Waste Reduction

4.1 Key Strategic Task			
Strategic resource recovery and waste management			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Improve the effectiveness of the resource recovery, recycling and reuse program	Implement Council's Waste Management Strategy	Engineering	Ongoing
	Support Regulatory Services department in the management of illegal dumping of waste within road reserves.	Engineering, NRM*	Ongoing
	Support Waste Management department to implement waste recovery actions and programs, and research new strategies for future reduction of waste entering landfill, including difficult to recycle waste such as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polystyrene foam</li> <li>• Agricultural irrigation poly</li> <li>• Agricultural waste products (grain, fertiliser and stock feed bags)</li> <li>• Domestic and commercial organic waste such as food, lawn clippings, and other sources of organic material</li> </ul>	Engineering, NRM*	First Year
4.2 Key Strategic Task			
Rehabilitate and revegetate closed landfill sites			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Successfully rehabilitate closed landfill sites to enhance biodiversity	Support Waste Management department to rehabilitate closed landfill sites within the municipality through revegetation using native species endemic to the area that are shallow rooted, such as grasses and small shrubs.	NRM* Engineering	Ongoing
*NRM – Natural Resource Management			

## Objective 5: Building Liveable and Sustainable Communities

5.1 Key Strategic Task			
Support community and organisational sustainability			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Engage and empower the community in environmental sustainability.	Support the preparation of existing community plans using Transition Towns Tool Kit and other relevant resources to assist communities to adapt to change and achieve a low carbon economy.	EDU**, NRM*	First Year
	Develop and maintain partnerships that enhance regional outcomes in environmental sustainability.	NRM*, EDU**	Ongoing
Display leadership in environmental and sustainability decision making, enabling Council to model the behaviour it expects and encourages from the community.	Ensure that Council's environmental and sustainability achievements are reported and communicated internally and externally.	NRM*	As required
	Develop a cross departmental approach to sustainability and assist staff in the development of policy, programs and Council reports.	NRM*	As required
	Regularly review and update relevant plans and policies in relation to environmental sustainability.	NRM*	Ongoing
5.2 Key Strategic Task			
Provide and manage public spaces in such a way to promote safe use and healthy living			
Goals	Actions	Who	When
Facilitate the safety of the public who use parks and open spaces	Where appropriate incorporate design principles and construction methods that increase public safety in their use of public spaces	Engineering, Planning, Engineering Works	Ongoing
	Implement relevant SHRCC asset management plans		
Provide opportunities for diverse cultural and recreational activities within public spaces	Support Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the associated Active Transport Strategy.	All departments	Ongoing
	Support advocacy for the inclusion of Healthy by Design principles and Safer by Design principles within the Swan Hill Planning Scheme.	Planning	Second Year
	Be guided by the Infrastructure Design Manual and other relevant council strategies and master plans that relate to reserves, playgrounds and parks in designing public spaces and associated infrastructure.	Planning, Engineering	Ongoing
*NRM – Natural Resource Management Department			
**EDU – Economic Development Unit			

# Appendix 1: Literature Review

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## Appendix 1: Biodiversity corridors

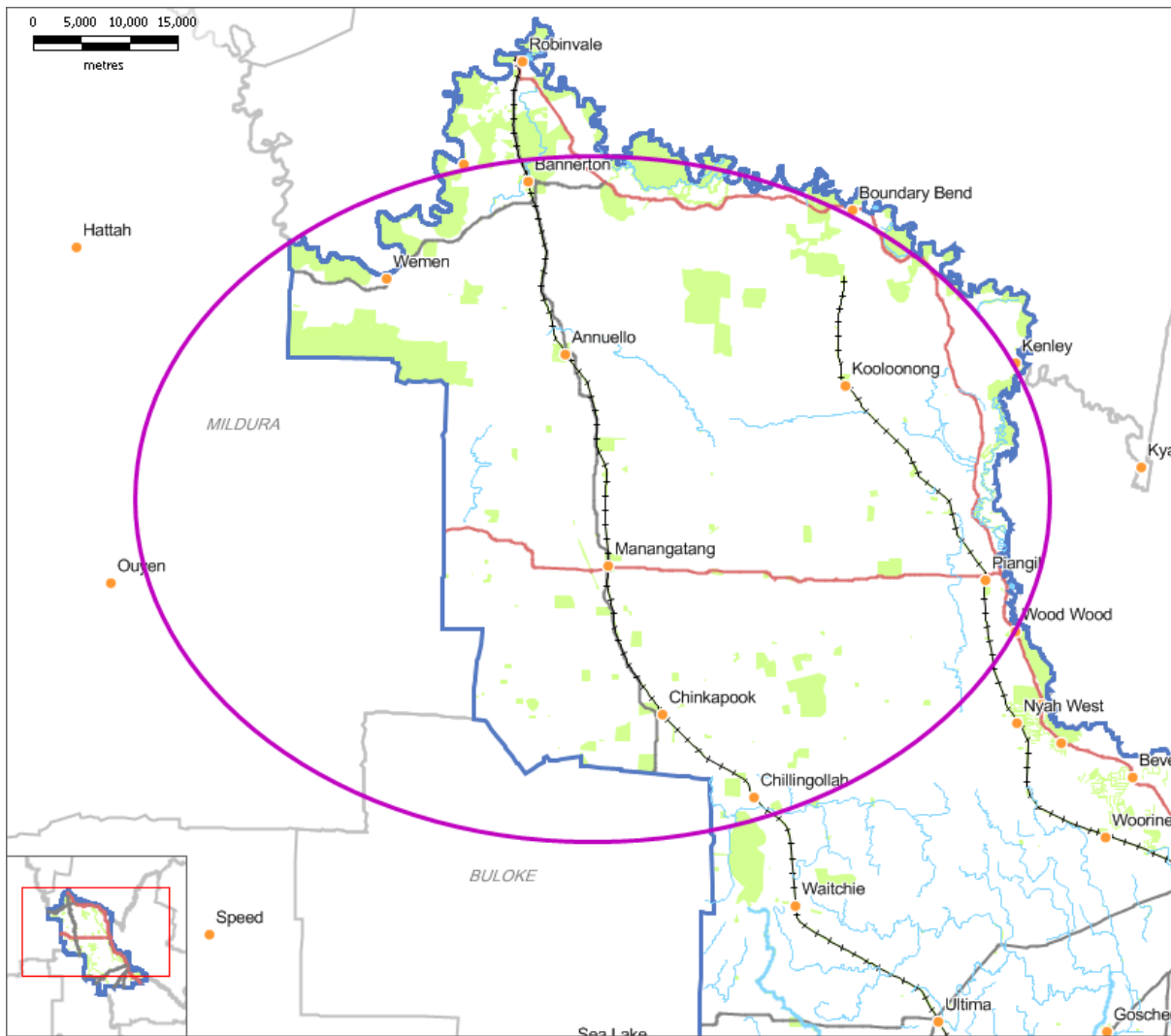


Figure 3. Biodiversity corridor – Eastern Central Mallee as identified within the consultation draft Mallee Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change February 2016

## Appendix 2: Strategic linkages

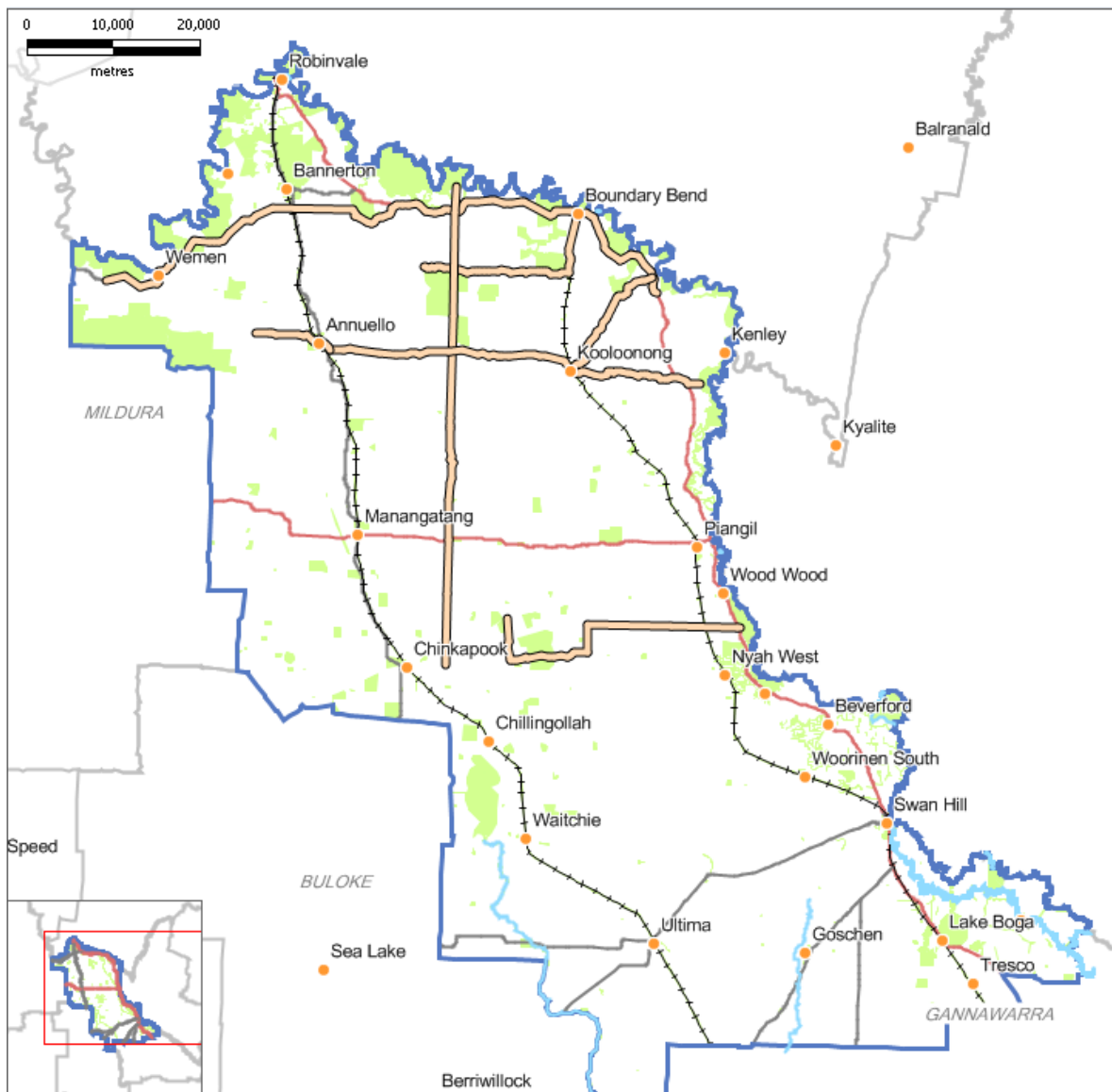


Figure 4: Strategic linkages that support the Eastern Central Mallee Corridor