



MELTON CITY COUNCIL

Environmental Enhancement Program Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Enhancement Program, which was first introduced in 1994, aims to provide rural landholders within the City of Melton with a financial incentive to undertake specified works that will improve the environmental condition of their properties. This incentive is provided as a Rate Rebate.

The Environmental Enhancement Program has been designed to encourage rural landholders, in conjunction with the Melton City Council, to engage in an on-going commitment to reducing land degradation across the municipality. The program targets land degradation problems, specifically the management of noxious and environmental weeds, pest animals and soil erosion. The program also supports sustainable land management, the retention of remnant vegetation and encourages actions to improve biodiversity such as the fencing of environmentally significant areas and protection of native vegetation. The program seeks to discourage unsustainable land management practices such as unlawful landfill, inappropriate application of herbicide, overgrazing of pasture and the unlawful removal of native vegetation.

Melton City Council acknowledges that high environmental and amenity standards are essential to ensure a high standard of living for all residents of the municipality as well as act as a means to attract new residents and businesses to this fast growing region.

ELIGIBILITY

Pursuant to Section 169 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council has established a Rural Rate Rebate which applies to properties greater than 2 hectares within the following zones;

Green Wedge Zone	Green Wedge A Zone	Urban Growth Zone	Urban Floodway Zone
Rural Conservation Zone	Farming Zone	Special Use Zone 5	Mixed Use Zone

* Land that has an approved Planning Permit for Subdivision is ineligible and the Rural Rate Rebate does not apply.

HOW DOES THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM WORK?

Each year, Council will issue an Annual Rates Notice to eligible landholders with the rate rebate having already been granted.

Landholders will retain their rate rebate by;

- Submitting a completed Proposed Works Form by **31 March** each year; and
- Undertaking approved environmental improvement works in a timely and successful manner. All works are to be completed by **30 September** each year; and
- Allowing Council's Land Management Officer's to enter the property or organise a time for an inspection with Council's Environmental Services team to assess works programs.

Council will withdraw the Rate Rebate and issue a Supplementary Rates Notice where a landholder fails to;

- Submit a Proposed Works Form by **31 March** each year; or
- Carry out works in a timely, successful and/or specific manner as assessed by Council's Land Management Officer(s); or
- Control weeds and to reasonably prevent weeds from setting seed as assessed by Council's Land Management Officer(s); or
- Control pest animals as assessed by Council's Land Management Officer(s); or
- Prevent actions that may lead to an increased likelihood of erosion as assessed by Council's Land Management Officer(s).

Council's Land Management Officer(s) will assess and confirm the appropriateness of the Proposed Works Form, undertake property assessments and following inspections, provide landholders with written advice as to whether or not they have satisfied the terms on which the rate rebate is granted and whether or not they are entitled to retain the rate rebate.

A panel is in place to review appeals against non compliance with the Environmental Enhancement Program. Landholders who wish to appeal must do so in writing within 28 days of the date on the notice of failure.

WORKS TO BE COMPLETED BY LANDHOLDERS

The Environmental Enhancement Program requires landholders to undertake works to target land degradation problems especially the control of noxious and environmental weeds, pest animals and soil erosion.

Control Weeds and Prevent Seed Set

The most serious weeds that occur in the City of Melton and those that landholders must control and not allow to set seed are;

Serrated Tussock*	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>	Artichoke Thistle*	<i>Cynara cardunculus</i>
Patterson's Curse*	<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	African Boxthorn*	<i>Lycium ferocissimum</i>
Prairie Ground Cherry*	<i>Physalis viscosa</i>	Chilean Needle Grass*	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>

*Denotes declared noxious weed pursuant to the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

Other weeds which are of secondary priority for control include;

Spiny Rush*	<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Hoary Cress*	<i>Cardaria draba</i>
Gorse*	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Bathurst Burr*	<i>Xanthium spinosum</i>
Sweet Briar*	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Blackberry*	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Horehound*	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	Galenia	<i>Galenia pubescens</i>
Prickly pear*	<i>Opuntia stricta</i>	African Thistle	<i>Berkheya rigida</i>
Spear Thistle*	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Wild Mignonette*	<i>Reseda luteola</i>

*Denotes declared noxious weed pursuant to the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The management principles for noxious and environmental weed control are;

- Contain the spread of weeds by stopping flowering and seed set
- Reduce levels of infestation
- Prevent reinfestation

A weed management program needs to address the type and scale of the weed problem. This may include one or a combination of control methods including manual removal, herbicide application and cultivation. In all cases, initial weed removal actions will need to be followed up with a longer-term program to eradicate weeds and prevent reinfestation.

Pursuant to the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources via Agriculture Victoria, not Council, is responsible for the enforcement of noxious weed control throughout Victoria. For advice about weed control, contact the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources on 13 61 86 or <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au>

Control Pest Animals And Remove Harbour

The European Rabbit is the major pest animal in the City of Melton. Rabbits feed on desirable pasture and native vegetation, often to the extent that soil is exposed to erosion, so that weeds gain a foothold and there is insufficient feed for stock or native animals.

The management principles for pest animals are;

- Destroy burrows
- Remove harbour
- Reduce numbers

A rabbit control program should involve an integrated combination of methods including the laying of poisoned baits, fumigation, ripping of burrows, the destruction of harbour, fencing and possibly shooting.

For advice about pest animal management, contact the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources via Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au>

Control Soil Erosion

Soil erosion problems generally occur along drainage lines and slopes. The commonly encountered forms of soil erosion in the City of Melton include stream bank erosion, gully erosion, tunnel erosion, sheet erosion and landslips.

The management principles for the management of soil erosion are;

- Prevent existing erosion from expanding by stabilising soil
- Rehabilitate eroded sites with native vegetation
- Maintain vegetative cover on vulnerable sites to prevent future erosion.

Works which are appropriate to control soil erosion include a reduction in grazing pressure, fencing and revegetation, pasture improvement and bank stabilization.

For advice about erosion control, contact the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources via Agriculture Victoria on 13 61 86 or <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au>. For advice on streamside management including bank stabilization, revegetation and weed control contact Melbourne Water on 13 17 22 or www.melbournewater.com.au.

Other key land management issues

Land owners and managers are required to adhere to all relevant codes and guidelines in the control of weeds to ensure the safe application of herbicides. Landholders wishing to undertake activities such as dumping of landfill and/or the removal of native vegetation, must contact Council seeking planning permission prior to commencing works. In addition, landholders may need to obtain permission from the Federal Government's Department of the Environment if the planned activities trigger the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. For further advice visit www.environment.gov.au.

Summary

It is easy to retain your rate rebate, just follow the following steps:

1. Read these program guidelines which set out the terms on which the rebate has been granted.
2. Complete and return your proposed works form by **31 March** each year.
3. Undertake your approved work program and complete all environmental works by **30 September** each year.
4. Your property will be inspected to confirm that you have completed the work you proposed to do. You will be advised as to whether you are considered to have satisfied the terms upon which the rebate was granted and have therefore retained your rebate.
5. Please contact Council's Environmental Services team on 9747 7200 if you require assistance with the Environmental Enhancement Program.

The Environmental Enhancement Program Guidelines have been printed on 100% recycled Australian made paper.