

Environmental Enhancement Program Guidelines



Melton City Council recognises the ecological, agricultural and amenity values of the Victorian Volcanic Plains and adjoining environments within our municipality, and aims to protect these values in balance with the needs of our community.

Land degradation impacts the natural environment, agriculture, and the amenity of our landscape. To reduce land degradation and improve sustainable land management, Melton City Council introduced the Environmental Enhancement Policy (EEP) in 1994. Eligible landholders receive a financial incentive to participate in the EEP through a Rate Rebate.

How the Environmental Enhancement Program Works

Each financial year Council issues an Annual Rates Notice to all rate payers. The Environmental Enhancement Rate Rebate is automatically applied to eligible properties, and is listed on the Rates Notice. Landowners must participate successfully in the EEP in order to retain the Rebate, otherwise it may be withdrawn.

- Council sends eligible landholders a copy of these EEP Guidelines and a Proposed Works Form in February prior to the commencement of the Rates financial year. The Proposed Works Form must be completed and returned to Council by 31 March. Landholders can contact Council's Environmental Enhancement Program Officers for advice about their property and for assistance in filling out the Proposed Works Form.

Council's Land Management Officers inspect the property to confirm the appropriateness of the Proposed Works, and if suitable, approve the Form. Landholders will be informed of the outcome.

Landholders have until 30 September to undertake the works. In order to satisfy the requirements of the EEP, work must be effective and measured by your success in:

- preventing weeds from setting seeds and eradicating infestations,
- preventing pest animals from spreading and reducing their population, and
- preventing erosion from spreading and rehabilitating eroded sites.

Council's Land Management Officers will inspect the property again to confirm that approved works have been completed successfully, and landholders will be informed of the outcome.

Council's Land Management Officers can be contacted throughout the year to discuss land management issues or to seek advice about methods for undertaking works.

If landholders do not return the proposed works form, or an acceptable commitment to works can't be negotiated, or works are not completed successfully, the Rate Rebate may be withdrawn. Landholders will be notified of this decision in writing, and the value of the Rebate will be added to the 4th Quarter instalment Rates Notice of the financial year.

Landholders who have the rebate withdrawn may request a review of the decision in writing within 28 days of the date on the letter notifying them of the withdrawal. This request should detail any reasons for non-compliance, and will be considered by a review panel convened by Council. For advice about this process, contact Council's Senior Land Management Officer.



Boxthorn



Serrated Tussock



Artichoke Thistle

Eligible Works

Management of Weeds

The principles of weed management include containing the spread of weeds by stopping plants from producing seeds, reducing the infestation extent by killing plants, and preventing reinfestation through sustainable land management practices. Weeds of the highest concern in Melton include Serrated Tussock, Artichoke Thistle and African Boxthorn. Also of concern are Patterson's Curse, Prairie Ground Cherry, Chilean Needle Grass, Gorse, Blackberry, Sweet Briar, Prickly Pear, Bathurst Burr, Horehound, Spiny Rush, Spear Thistle and Galenia. See <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds>

Management of Pest Animals

Of the pest animals found locally, the European Rabbit and the Red Fox pose a serious threat to environmental and agricultural values. Principles for managing pest animals include removing harbour (shelter), destroying warrens, burrows or dens, and directly reducing the population size of pest animals. An integrated approach to management is usually necessary, combining a number of methods rather than relying on just one. See <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/pest-animals>

Management to prevent and control soil erosion

Principles for preventing and managing soil erosion include maintaining sufficient vegetation cover to protect soil from the action of wind and water, rehabilitating sites where soil has become exposed, and stabilising sites where erosion has already begun. In order to achieve this, Council encourages activities such as sustainable pasture and crop management, revegetation, and protecting remnant native vegetation and waterways by fencing to exclude rabbits or manage stock access. See <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/land-health>

What Not To Do

Inappropriate and potentially unlawful land management activities include importing landfill, removing rocks, destroying native vegetation, overgrazing pasture, and "off-label" application of herbicide. Seek advice from Council prior to undertaking any of these activities.

Role of Victorian Government

Agriculture Victoria (in the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions – DJPR) is responsible for enforcing the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act) – which regulates pest plant and animal control and land degradation issues throughout Victoria. For more information, contact Agriculture Victoria on **136 186** or visit <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au>

The Process in Summary

Retaining your Rate Rebate is a straightforward process:

1. Read these EEP 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 agreed environmental works by **30 September** each year.
4. Make sure your property is ready to be inspected by **1 October** onwards each year to confirm that you have completed the agreed works.
5. After the inspection of works, you will be advised in writing as to whether you are considered to have successfully completed the agreed works, and therefore retained your rebate.
6. Please contact Council's Environment & Sustainability team on **9747 7200** or via email EEP@melton.vic.gov.au if you require advice about successfully participating in the EEP on your land.



Prairie Ground Cherry



Patterson's Curse



Chilean Needle Grass