



# REGIONAL CONTEXT

To understand the function of the Huon Valley municipal area at a regional level, it is important to understand the evolution of land use, particularly in an urban sense. Since European settlement, cities in proximity to the coast have dominated the settlement patterns across Australia. As Australia was colonised post industrial-revolution, rural development spread out from the cities as support for the urban population. As Australian cities have grown, agriculture has been pushed outwards, with increasing suburban areas surrounding urban centres utilising rural land in order to meet the housing needs of the population.

This pattern of urbanisation is evident with the evolution of Hobart and surrounding districts. As the first European township within Tasmania, Hobart developed as the major urban centre of Tasmania and later Southern Tasmania. With population growth over the past 100 years and associated development many surrounding rural areas have been urbanised, with the rural resources required to fuel this growth being sourced from more remote localities. It is in this context that the Huon Valley played an important role in supplying timber and agricultural produce to the growing population of Hobart.

Today, the State of Tasmania can be divided into three distinct regions: Southern, Northern & North-Western. Each of these regions has their urban centre, although given the size of Tasmanian there is inter-reliance between these regions.

### **Huon Valley & the Southern Tasmanian Region**

The Huon Valley municipal area along with the Kingborough municipal area wholly comprises the southern region of the Greater Hobart area.

The municipal area of Hobart forms not only the geographical but economic centre for Greater Hobart. The Central Business District within the City of Hobart provides for major business and commercial activities for the region and the State as the capital city. Inner city suburban areas are also provided for within the Hobart municipal area.

Spreading out from Hobart City, to the north and east are the Glenorchy and Clarence municipalities. Both of these municipalities contain large tracts of residential land that form part of the Greater Hobart suburban area. Both of these municipalities also have major regional commercial and business districts that operate as a secondary tier to the Hobart Central Business District. On a more distinct level, Glenorchy provides land for many industrial activities that are an important part of the Hobart regional economy. Clarence on the other hand has expanded considerably to the east of the Derwent River, and is characterised by higher levels of low density residential and rural living, However it also includes the irrigated agricultural lands of the Coal River Valley .

To the south of the City of Hobart is the Kingborough municipal area. In more recent years the Kingborough municipal area has seen unprecedented residential growth around the Kingston/Blackmans Bay areas. These two suburbs and surrounding fringe areas (including Huntingfield, Bonnets Hill & Taroona) form part of the suburban area of Greater Hobart, with outlying towns extending south down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel providing alternative residential living that supports the Greater Hobart area.

The central area of Kingston has also experienced a growth period. With the increasing population in the municipal area the Kingston Central Area has grown into a sub-regional centre providing for larger scale commercial and business functions for an expanding population catchment. The size of this centre in both area and economic terms acts as a tertiary tier below the commercial and business centres of Glenorchy & Clarence.

Traditionally, the Huon Valley has provided agricultural land used for the production of food to support the populations of the Southern Tasmanian region as well as for timber based industries. Today, these industries continue, although experiencing down turns in prosperity. Agricultural activity has diversified away from its near monoculture of fruit into niche markets, such as viticulture and aquaculture.

On a regional level, maintenance of rural lands for agricultural production is seen as critically important. The availability of agricultural land to the east and north of Hobart has been constrained over the past 50 years by suburban sprawl and increasing levels of low-density residential and rural living. In addition the natural conditions and climatic regime in the Huon Valley offer opportunities for agricultural activities for non-traditional farming enterprises that suffer from the less ideal climatic conditions in the other major agricultural areas in Southern Tasmania (with the exception of the irrigated Coal River Valley district). These natural and climatic advantages will become increasingly more important with climate change.

The Huon Valley plays an integral role in the development of the tourism industry throughout Southern Tasmania. Its important agricultural history (The Huon Valley gave Tasmania its name 'The Apple Isle') has been a major component in the marketing of the area as an historical destination for tourists, but its increasing appeal as a gateway to the south-west as well a food and wine district has also provided considerable attraction for tourism dollars.

Throughout this strategy the role of the Huon Valley in development of the Southern Tasmania region has been inherently acknowledged.

## Huon Valley & Kingborough

Consideration of the relationship between Huon Valley Council and Kingborough Council is an important component in developing a successful strategic direction for Huon Valley. These two municipalities not only have an important physical connection along the eastern municipal boundary, but Huon Valley relies upon the Kingborough municipal area for its connection to the Greater Hobart area. Economic development within the Huon Valley is also influenced by economic development within Kingborough and for this reason it is important to examine the influence that the strategies contained within the current Kingborough Planning Scheme may have on land use and development throughout the Huon Valley.

### ***The Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000***

A new Planning Scheme for Kingborough came into effect in 2003. The structure and controls under the Planning Scheme are important to consider in relation to the future direction for the Huon Valley as prohibitions and controls on development in Kingborough has the potential to displace development pressure into or away from the Huon Valley

The Kingborough Planning Scheme is very much a performance based scheme utilising only six zones with seven use classes. Therefore to control appropriate uses within areas, the Planning Scheme relies heavily upon desired future character statements for distinct areas. This approach is significantly different to the Common Key Elements Template (Planning Directive No.1) that will be utilised for the new Huon Valley Planning Scheme.

Kingborough Council has now started a planning scheme review (recent completion of Stage One). In this process it is likely that the Kingborough Planning Scheme over the next five years will see change in its structure that will bring it closer to the Planning Scheme Template structure. Although, it is noted that the use of minimal zone types with minimal use classes is unlikely to see any significant change through the Planning Scheme Review Process.

An outline of the key considerations arising from the Kingborough Planning Scheme is provided as follows:

### **Planning Scheme Area**

The Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000 applies to the whole of the municipal area of Kingborough and adjoins the municipal area to the east and north. The zoning applied to land adjoining the municipal area is either *Environmental Management* or *Primary Industries*. The desired outcomes of these zones will be considered and where appropriate, included within the purpose statements of the similar zones that will be used in the Huon Valley Planning Scheme.

### **Settlement Strategies**

There are a number of strategic directions articulated in the Kingborough Planning Scheme that need to be considered in the preparation of the Huon Valley strategy. Firstly, it has been recognised that there needs to be a better integration of land use planning and transport strategies in order to sustain and diversify the local economy, and to reduce the reliance on private transport for travel to work journeys. Of particular concern are the traffic levels on the Southern Outlet. In background papers to the Kingborough Planning Scheme a hierarchy of commercial and retail centres is described which in effect establishes Kingston as the District Centre serving a wide catchment, including the Huon Valley. The recent redevelopment of parts of the commercial area and establishment of a Big W Retail outlet, is testament to the role Kingston will increasingly play in the region as an employment centre.

Secondly, the Scheme's approach is to consolidate the greater proportion of residential development into existing settlements and established residential areas. There is a clear separation of rural and residential land, and the Scheme seeks to prohibit subdivision for residential purposes within the Primary Industries Zone and allow only infill residential use of existing lots. Such changes need to be consistent with existing settlement patterns and agricultural capacity and ensure environmental and other values will not be compromised. The Kingborough Planning Scheme also includes an Isolated Settlements Schedule that acts as an overlay to allow a minimum lot size of 1500 square metres to complete existing patterns of residential settlement well progressed prior to the Scheme coming into effect.

In the absence of rural residential zones or opportunities for small lot rural living, the Kingborough Planning Scheme has the potential to generate demand for land associated with rural residential or rural living within the Huon Valley. This additional pressure may result in further fragmentation of rural land across the Huon Valley, and is seen as a key consideration in the development of an appropriate land use strategy.

### **Wetlands and Waterways**

The Kingborough Planning Scheme has been prepared in accordance with the State Policy on Water Quality Management and as a result contains a Waterway, Wetlands and Coastal Area Schedule. All development within 10 metres of a waterway or within the coastal area (limited to coastal features) is discretionary. Moreover an Environmental Management Zone has been applied across waterways within the municipal area. This has been done to ensure better control of use and development in light of the minimal zones and use classes. Similar controls on riparian areas could be achieved just as effectively within the Huon Valley Planning Scheme through development controls within a wetlands and waterways schedule without the need for differentiating the zone over riparian areas.

## Coastal Zone

The Kingborough Planning Scheme defines a 'coastal area' as:

*'comprises all land below High Water Mark to the maximum extent of the planning scheme area, any actively mobile land, dune, beach, sea cliff, wave cut platforms and hard rock areas, wetlands, marshes, lagoons and swamps along and immediately inland of the coast'*

While there is a seaward boundary depicted on the planning scheme map as a 'thick black line' the landward extent of the coastal zone requires an assessment under the above definition. It is noted that the Common Key Elements Template will require the coastal zone to be defined and for the Huon Valley it is considered preferable that the landward boundary of the coastal zone be shown on the planning scheme map. This will be determined after due consideration is given to the proposed provisions of the Draft State coastal Policy and the defined 'coastal area' within the Kingborough Planning Scheme.

The seaward extent of the coastal zone should be consistent with the Kingborough Planning Scheme 2003 at approximately 500 metres from high water mark.

## Environmental Management Zone

With Huon Valley sharing a significant boundary with the Kingborough municipal area, the zoning of abutting land is a significant determinant of how land with similar characteristics should be treated. To this extent the Environmental Management Zone within the Kingborough Planning Scheme seeks to achieve the following desired future character:

- ▶ To protect the physical resources of the areas coastal landforms, estuaries, the intertidal zone, lagoons and wetlands, and mobile landforms;
- ▶ Retain the biological resources of coastal and hinterland vegetation communities, native forests, grass lands, wildlife habitats and ecological processes;
- ▶ Recognise the cultural associations with the land by Aboriginal people, and the history of European settlement; and
- ▶ Protect and conserve the areas landscape values and scenic features.

It is also important to note that due to the restrictions on subdivision within the primary industries zone, the Environmental Management Zone (which has less restrictive subdivision requirements) has become a pseudo rural residential zone. This, less than desirable outcome, has been recognised by both the Kingborough Council and the Resource Planning & Development Commission.

## Resource Development Zone

Similarly for the Environmental Management Zone, there are significant areas of the Huon Valley municipal area that will share a boundary with land zoned Resource Development under the Kingborough Planning Scheme. The key desired outcomes for this land are:

- ▶ Protect good quality agricultural land from inappropriate activities which reduce the potential for a range of commercially viable agricultural activities;
- ▶ To maintain access to viable mineral and quarry resources;
- ▶ Ensure clean air and water is maintained; and
- ▶ That landscape values associated with natural and semi-natural areas are protected from inappropriate development.

### The Huon Valley Regional Role

With Huonville located only 39 kms and 30 minutes drive by major highway from the Hobart CBD it is inevitable that much of the recent development has been fuelled by people attracted by the rural lifestyle, its scenic beauty, affordable housing and relatively cheap land. Decisions have probably also been influenced by the good range of facilities available within the Huon Valley's major settlements, and its proximity to the adjacent Kingston regional shopping facilities.

Many of these new residents bring new skills and capital to the area and this has fuelled a number of new business enterprises particularly in the retailing, tourism and agricultural sectors. However, this growth needs to be managed in such a way as to be within Council's capacity to provide or fund infrastructure, does not sterilise or make more difficult access to the natural or physical resources of the area, and is environmentally sustainable.

To this end, the Council recognises that the Huon Valley plays an important role in the regional economy in terms of;

- ▶ Its agricultural base and ancillary rural industries, particularly catering to niche markets including apple production, berries and stone fruits, seafood and aquaculture;
- ▶ The landscape values and natural attractions upon which a strong tourism industry has been fostered;
- ▶ Ensuring proper utilisation is made of existing investments various levels of government have made in the provision of infrastructure, community services and the built environment;
- ▶ Its attractiveness and the lifestyle benefits for existing and new residents.