

3 June 2024

Dear

**Property Address:
Environmental Audit Overlay**

I am writing to inform you about the recent implementation of the Environmental Audit Overlay on the address above. I want to acknowledge this has been a stressful situation for many individuals and families. We are working to expedite a positive solution on this matter with you.

This follows gazettal of the Wonthaggi North East Precinct Structure Plan on 18 January 2024 by the Victorian Government under recommendation from the Victorian Planning Authority. In 2023, the Victorian Planning Authority finalised the Wonthaggi North East Precinct Structure Plan Amendment C152 as part of its Fast-track Response to COVID-19 recovery program.

This letter outlines the background, and the steps Bass Coast Shire Council is taking, to address the impacts of this overlay.

Wonthaggi North East Precinct Structure Plan

The Wonthaggi North East Precinct Structure Plan aims to guide the town's growth from 8,000 to 20,000 residents, including the construction of approximately 5,000 new homes over the next 30 years across 444 hectares. This Structure Plan covers undeveloped farmland in the northeast as well as small pockets of already developed land.

Application of the Environmental Audit Overlay

As part of the amendment C152 the Victorian Planning Authority recommended including land within the Precinct under the Environmental Audit Overlay so that Preliminary Risk Screen Assessments and/or Environmental Audits could be completed before building works occur. These risk assessments typically occur prior to subdivision of the land. In this case, the amendment includes a number of properties previously subdivided. Our records show your property is included within the Overlay.

Implications of the Environmental Audit Overlay

There are implications for these already subdivided residential properties. If building works are proposed for a sensitive use (such as building a dwelling), then a Preliminary Risk Screen Assessment is required as a minimum before any building works are permitted. Additionally, where the Environmental Audit Overlay has been applied to an existing dwelling, any ancillary buildings and works (any activities requiring footings or foundations) that disturb the soil will also trigger a Preliminary Risk Screen Assessment.

Next Steps

Bass Coast Shire Council, the Victorian Planning Authority and the Environment Protection Authority are working together to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

An initial review by the Environment Protection Authority on 22 May 2024 found insufficient information to remove any properties from the Environmental Audit Overlay. The Environment Protection Authority recommended properties undergo Preliminary Risk Screen Assessments so that, where appropriate, they be considered for removal from the Overlay. This is a technical process with assessments completed by professional consultants, guided by Council and the Environment Protection Authority.

Preliminary Risk Screen Assessments conducted by Environment Protection Authority appointed Environmental Auditors, evaluate the historical use of the land – primarily farming in this case – and determine if an environmental audit is needed based on potential contamination risks. If the risk is deemed low or nil, then no further investigation is required, and the Overlay may be removed. If the assessment is rated medium or high, then an Environmental Audit may be required to remove the property from the Overlay.

Bass Coast Shire Council's engagement of Environmental Auditors

Bass Coast Shire Council has engaged Prensa Environmental Auditors to conduct site investigations over the next six weeks and complete Preliminary Risk Screen Assessments on all previously subdivided properties within the Overlay. Prensa has already started its

initial research and its representatives are scheduled to be present on site between **11 and 24 June 2024**. Council will fund these assessments in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority.

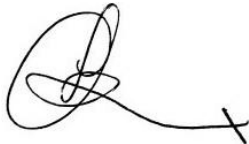
This assessment is completed with extensive historical research and a visual assessment. No soil testing will be conducted at this stage. To ensure Prensa acquires sufficient information to undertake successful investigations, consultants may need to access the outdoor area of your property and to take photographs. Prensa will make contact and introduce themselves before seeking entry onto your property if required.

Following these investigations, a Preliminary Risk Screen Assessment report will be prepared for registration by the Environment Protection Authority and further steps undertaken to initiate removal of the Overlay from appropriate properties. Council is confident the completion of the Preliminary Risk Screen Assessments will provide the Victorian Government with the necessary information to resolve this issue.

If you have any queries, or you have building works underway or scheduled to begin, I encourage you to contact Council's planning team at 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or via email at planningapplications@basscoast.vic.gov.au.

A dedicated website page is regularly updated with frequently asked questions and other information you may find useful: www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/building-planning/wonthaggi-north-east-growth-area/environmental-audit-overlay.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Greg Box', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Box
Chief Executive Officer