

FACTSHEET

MAPPING OUR NATIVE GRASSLANDS



Why is Council doing work to map native grassland?

Hobsons Bay includes areas of Plains Grassland (native grassland). This provides habitat to an impressive range of flora and fauna, including many rare and threatened species.

It is important that these areas are managed to ensure that their biodiversity values and any habitat links are protected and enhanced into the future.

The 'mapping our native grasslands' project aims to provide up to date information on the location and value of remaining native grassland areas within Hobsons Bay with a particular focus on industrial land.

Protecting and enhancing native grasslands within industrial areas is a key objective identified in Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2017–22 and Draft Industrial Land Management Strategy 2023–38.

The project will provide an evidence base on which Council can begin preparing planning controls that will help manage native grasslands into the future.

What is native grassland?

Some of the industrial areas in Hobsons Bay include native grassland areas that belong to the Plains Grassland Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC). This is a critically endangered ecological community listed under the

Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. There is currently less than 1 per cent of these grassland environments remaining in Victoria. These grasslands provide habitat for many threatened species, including the Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*), Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*) and Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens*).

Why is it important to protect Hobsons Bay's grasslands?

Hobsons Bay is home to 13 plants and 26 animals threatened within Victoria and protected under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act). Victorian Government approval is required for applications which seek to remove listed native grassland species under the FFG Act.

Why do we need updated mapping?

Council currently relies on outdated Victorian Government mapping of native grassland areas from 2005. This project will provide a more accurate understanding of the location and condition of native grasslands to help inform the ongoing management of grasslands and future planning controls for these areas.

How is my land relevant to the project?

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victorian Government) has conducted modelling (based on 2005 data) to outline locations of Plains Grassland in Victoria, including Hobsons Bay. This mapping shows your land has the right conditions (soil, climate etc.) for the Plains Grassland and related significant species to be located on it. Further investigation is required to determine the condition and prevalence of important species and the condition of the overall environment.

Council officers have compared the 2005 modelling to recent aerial photography to identify remaining vacant sites that may include native grassland. From this review, 35 sites have been identified as having potential grassland. These are located in industrial areas in the western part of Altona, generally around Kororoit Creek Road and the Laverton railway line.

Council is focusing only on properties included in the 2005 maps that have not been developed and therefore may contain remaining native grassland.





Industrial areas where native grassland may be present

Map 1. Study area and sites for assessment

What planning controls are proposed?

This project is intended to inform an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) that could be introduced into the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme.

An ESO is a planning tool that identifies areas of environmental importance. An ESO triggers a planning permit for development applications, land use change, vegetation removal and subdivision.

An ESO does not automatically prohibit the removal of vegetation. Instead, it triggers a planning permit process to determine the environmental impact of any vegetation removal before approval is granted.

Why is Council investigating local Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) planning controls when significant native grasslands are already protected by federal and state legislation?

While federal and state legislation are essential for protecting native grasslands at a broader level,

protecting native grasslands with local planning scheme controls, such as an ESO, can offer additional benefits by providing transparency through mapping exact locations of native grasslands and more detailed guidance to landowners, developers and Council officers on how to manage native grasslands.

What is involved in mapping native grassland areas?

Council has engaged an independent environmental consultant to inspect areas where native grassland has previously been identified (refer Map 1). The consultant will identify the location, condition and habitat value of these native grasslands that are predominantly located within industrial areas of Hobsons Bay.

How does Council propose to inspect grasslands within private property?

Council is writing to landowners requesting permission to access their property to enable the environmental consultant to inspect the value and condition of native grasslands.

With a landowner's consent, the inspections can be done through on-site inspections or through aerial photography using drone footage. Without a landowner's consent a consultant will conduct a roadside/perimeter inspection.

Council will work with landowners to ensure any risks or health and safety requirements associated with an inspection are addressed. Council will coordinate these requirements with the landowner, consultant or drone operator.

NEXT STEPS

The findings from site inspections may be used to inform planning controls to identify and manage remaining grassland areas. A future planning scheme amendment would be required to implement the controls into the Hobsons Bay planning scheme and would be subject to consultation.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

You can find out more about the project by visiting www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Grasslands
More information is available in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

If you have questions, please contact us below:

Strategic planning team: ☎ 1300 179 944 ✉ strategicplanning@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au