

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Land varies considerably in its basic characteristics and its response to the demands made upon it. Such demands include the production of food, fibre, water, and development for residential purposes.

Planners need to match the requirement of land use with the capability of the land to sustain that use, otherwise degradation will occur and productivity will decline. Alternatively, when a less-than-ideal land use must proceed, then the appropriate level of management must be implemented to minimise future degradation. Prior knowledge of soil and land limitations can prevent unnecessary and costly mistakes. Information obtained through land capability assessments can provide the necessary data to assist local government with planning decisions and the preparation of planning strategies for the future.

This report provides information for broad-scale planning within the Shire of Newham & Woodend, based on an assessment of the physical characteristics of the land. It does not provide recommendations for land use and no allowance has been made for social or economic considerations which may influence planning proposals. It is primarily an examination of potential consequences and levels of management required for a range of land uses. It should be noted that the Department of Conservation and Environment may have specific requirements for land use in certain water supply catchments (see Section 5.6).

## 1.2 Location of the study area

The Shire of Newham & Woodend is situated approximately 60km north west of Melbourne on the northern side of the Great Dividing Range (Figure 1.1).

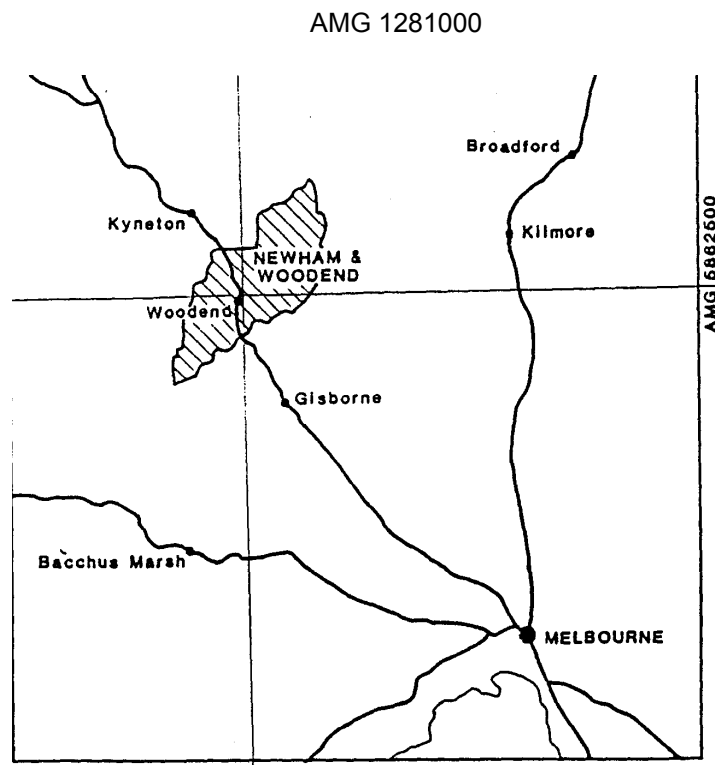


Figure 1.1 Locality map

## 1.3 Reasons for the Study

The Shire of Newham & Woodend is predominantly rural and, although small (257 sq. kms) when compared to other Shires, has a wide range of land uses, including a high demand for residential blocks of land. The relatively low cost of land, the close proximity to Melbourne and the rural environment make the area attractive for residential development.

Since 1982, there has been a 60% increase in the residential population. This has placed undue pressure on the land, the limited domestic water supply and the ability of the Shire to provide essential services. Some of the better agricultural land in the Shire has already been released for residential and small lot development and the demand to release additional land for this purpose is increasing.

To avoid inappropriate development the Shire of Newham & Woodend requested that the Department

of Conservation and Environment undertake a land capability assessment to assist them in preparing a planning strategy. While other studies have been undertaken in the area (Allen 1985, Land Conservation Council 1978, Lorimer and Schoknecht 1987, Town and Country Planning Board 1975) none have had sufficient detail for the preparation of planning strategies for future land use.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

The broad objective of this study is to provide land resource information that will facilitate the sound and rational planning of land use within the Shire of Newham & Woodend.

##### **Specific objectives**

1. Acquire the necessary land and soils data at a scale appropriate for the Shire's needs.
2. Assess the capability of the land for:
  - a) on site effluent disposal by soil absorption,
  - b) building foundations,
  - c) earthen dams,
  - d) susceptibility to erosion,
  - e) agriculture. and identify the major limiting feature(s) of the landscape for each land use.
3. Provide (limited) support to the DCE Region and Shire of Newham & Woodend to incorporate the information into the relevant sections of the planning strategy.