

## **PREFACE**

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has been involved in formal land capability assessment studies since the early 1970s. The Land Capability Section of the (then) Soil Conservation Authority established the framework for the conduct of formal land capability studies upon which this more recent work is based. This framework included rating tables for some thirty activities. Ratings for various activities were presented as thematic maps, or combined into ratings for various land uses, depending upon the needs and abilities of the client.

A recent survey of the awareness, needs and willingness of Victorian rural municipalities to use land resource information has indicated a general appreciation of the value of sound land resource information for the preparation or revision of long-term planning strategies. Subsequently, a submission seeking funds from the National Soil Conservation Program was prepared. It was proposed to undertake detailed land capability studies in municipalities with significant pressures for change in land use to more intensive uses, where there was significant existing or potential land degradation issues, or where better quality agricultural land was under threat of development for residential purposes.

The Shire of Broadford is the third municipality to be studied in the current series of investigations. The primary objective has been to provide the municipality with detailed land resource information, consisting of base data on the nature of the land and of assessments of the likely performance of the land under various activities. This information can underpin many land use and management decisions by the municipal authority, both now and in the future. In doing so, many of the problems and unexpected costs which would be incurred by the use of the land beyond its capabilities can be avoided.

## **SUMMARY**

It is well established that indiscriminate development of land for residential and small lot development may result in extensive land and water degradation, loss of good agricultural land and unnecessarily high development and maintenance costs. The majority of the Shire consists of Silurian and Devonian sediments with moderate to steep slopes. These areas are highly susceptible to all forms of water erosion particularly sheet and gully erosion and can contribute significantly to salting in the lower parts of the landscape. Development of these areas for rural residential purposes can result in environmental degradation due to complications with roading, building foundations and effluent disposal.

The area recognised as having higher agricultural value, the basalt plain, is close and to the west of the growing township of Broadford.

The Shire of Broadford is currently developing a rural strategy to address the issues of competing land use. Specific areas of concern include the loss of agricultural land, preservation of rural character and conservation areas, and the preparation of subdivision controls. Land capability information can be used by planners to assist in the preparation of planning strategies and to encourage the most appropriate land use and management practices so that land degradation is minimised, but productivity is

sustained. A land capability assessment is considered an important tool in the development of a rural strategy for the Shire of Broadford.

This report contains a map and description of the various land types within the Shire and an assessment of the capability of these land types to sustain a range of important land uses including agriculture, effluent disposal, secondary roads, earthen dams, and rural residential development.