

6 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT MATTERS (INCLUDING MAGISTRATES' COURT PROSECUTIONS)

FILE REFERENCE INT1883021

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RECOMMENDATION

That the list of enforcement matters currently before VCAT and the Magistrates' Court (and the County Court) be noted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following list of enforcement matters currently before VCAT and the Magistrates' Court is submitted for Councillors information.

Where breaches of the Planning Scheme are detected that cannot be satisfactorily resolved Council undertakes enforcement action at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

These matters can take several forms and the following are the usual steps in the enforcement process.

Where breaches are sufficiently serious, criminal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court will be commenced, and if so, the successful criminal proceedings will usually be followed by VCAT proceedings (criminal proceedings taking precedence over "civil" proceedings)

Current Enforcement cases

The following list indicates such enforcement activities that are currently before VCAT or the Magistrates' Court.

Property Address	Nature of Contravention	Status
1 Walker Street, Koo Wee Rup (OH:SM:18409)	Land that was developed without a permit, in contravention of planning scheme - Heritage Overlay (43.01)	Magistrates' Court proceeding, listed for contested hearing on 21 February 2019 , alleging that the owner has constructed an extension of the dwelling, developed the land and lopped a tree, without a permit.
Unit 1/4A Whitstable Street, Lang Lang (OH:AB:18412) (OH:JALF:18401)	Land that was developed without a permit in contravention of planning scheme – Heritage Overlay (43.01) AND without a building permit	Magistrates' Court proceeding. In September 2018 , the owner pleaded guilty to undertaking work without relevant planning and building permits. The Court adjourned the case to 21 February 2019 , on the basis that the owner can take steps in the meantime to obtain relevant permissions. His progress in this regard will likely be a significant factor in sentencing.

<p>65 Moody Street, Koo Wee Rup (OH:JALF:18395)</p>	<p>Failed to comply with planning permit, namely failing to comply with engineering requirements prior to subdivision.</p>	<p>Magistrates' Court proceeding, alleging that the owner commenced work without approval from responsible authority (CEMP, Transport Management Plan and haulage strategy).</p> <p>On 4 October 2018, the matter was heard (with no attendance by the accused company). Charges were proven, and the company was convicted and fined \$5000.</p>
<p>765 Gembrook Rd, Pakenham Upper (OH:LK:16299)</p>	<p>Native vegetation removal, and earthworks creating driveway and hardstand, in breach of Rural Conservation Zone – Schedule 2, Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 1, and Clause 52.17</p>	<p>Magistrates' Court proceeding, alleging that the owner has conducted earthworks that require a permit, and cleared native vegetation, both without a permit.</p> <p>The case is listed for next mention on 15 November 2018, having been previously adjourned to allow for the High Court application to be determined (see below)</p>
<p>715 Gembrook Rd, Pakenham Upper (OH:AB:14130)</p>	<p>Construction of retaining wall without building permit.</p>	<p>FOR INFORMATION ONLY – ongoing <i>planning enforcement</i> matters relating to property</p> <p>MAGISTRATES COURT CASE relating to unpermitted building work (retaining wall) –</p> <p>On 21 December 2017, the Magistrates Court delivered judgement in this matter, finding the charges proven. The owner was fined \$1500, without conviction, and ordered the owner to pay in excess of \$15,000 costs.</p> <p>The owner has appealed the Magistrates Court decision to the County Court. The County Court appeal has been listed for contested hearing on 10-12 April 2019.</p> <p>In April 2018, the owner filed an application in the High Court of Australia in respect of this hearing. On 12 September 2018, the High Court dismissed this application as being without proper basis.</p>
<p>555 Back Creek Rd, Gembrook OH:JALF:18416</p>	<p>Land developed contrary to Rural Conservation Zone, Environmental</p>	<p>VCAT enforcement order application, listed for Practice Hearing on 23 November 2018, and contested hearing on 18 April 2019.</p>

(cf EH:LK:16272)	Significance Overlay and Native Vegetation particular provisions, by the creation of a dam, destruction of native vegetation and the construction of a building, without a permit	
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Conclusion

The list of current enforcement activities is presented for information.

Glossary of terms

Practice day hearing

This is the first stage of the VCAT process, and is held shortly after the application is lodged. It is used to assess the future path of the case, and determine if the case can be settled, or will need to proceed to a full hearing.

Mention hearing

A mention hearing is a brief hearing, where the Court or VCAT lists the matter for brief hearing. If the case can be dealt with swiftly, it will be dealt with at a Mention hearing. For more lengthy matters (such as contested hearings) the case will be further adjourned. In the Magistrates' Court, the Court may hear a "guilty plea" during a mention hearing.

Administrative Mention

Administrative Mention is a hearing held without the parties in attendance and requires written correspondence from both parties to update the Member on the process of the matter.

Adjournment

A court or Tribunal will adjourn a case when the matter is deferred until another date. This can occur for a number of reasons, and is at the discretion of the Magistrate or VCAT member.

Land Management Plan

These plans are used to describe actions that will remediate the land, and commonly describe rehabilitation following unlawful vegetation removal. This plan will then become mandatory, by being incorporated into an Enforcement Order or a Section 173 agreement. The contents of the Plan will be decided by Council's Environment Team, or Vegetation Management officer.

Contested hearing / Full hearing

A contested (or "full" hearing) means the matter is disputed by the accused/respondent, and Council and the respondent will fully present and test each other's evidence and/or submissions. A contested (of "full") hearing is effectively a "trial".

Consent Orders

Consent Orders are an agreement between Council and the Respondents to, in most cases, create an Enforcement Order with conditions that are agreed to by both Parties. This is done where a Respondent has accepted there has been a breach of the Act and wants to comply with Council's proposed Enforcement Order. This saves on time and money by avoiding a hearing or lengthy VCAT processes.