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Mount Rouse Reserve Management Plan



Prepared for the Committee of Management for Mount Rouse Reserve

2016-2020





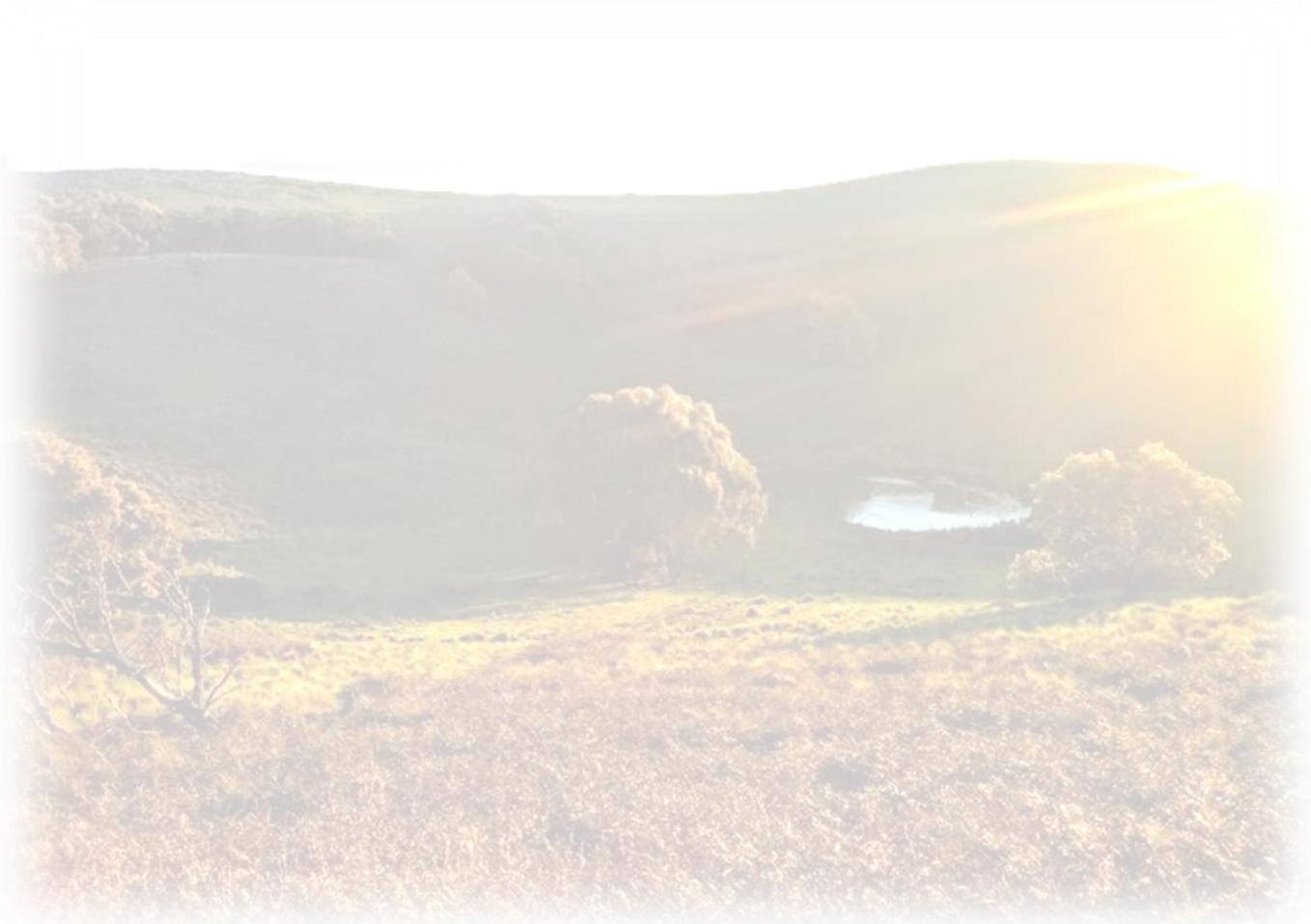
Disclaimer

This management plan has been drafted by RMIT University and Regional Advance to guide the future management of Mount Rouse Reserve by the Committee of Management (Southern Grampians Shire Council).

The plan articulates management priorities for the reserve that have been identified through desktop research, a basic site investigation and consultation with a number of the reserve's stakeholders.

While care has been taken in identifying management priorities and strategies for the reserve, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of this document may not be without limitation.

RMIT University and Regional Advance shall not be responsible in any way to any person in respect to the document, including errors or omissions contained, regardless of cause.





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1 Context

The Southern Grampians Shire Council in its capacity as the Committee of Management for Mount Rouse Reserve (the reserve) has commissioned this plan to guide the management of the reserve and its associated values. The plan spans five years from 2016 to 2021.

The plan sets broad strategies for addressing management priorities on the reserve and will be implemented by works plans to be developed by Southern Grampians Shire Council. These works plans will guide the scheduling and resourcing of specific works on the reserve.

Progress against this plan and the on-going relevance of its content should be assessed annually by the Shire and a full review of the management plan should be undertaken prior to December 31st 2021.

2 Reserve Overview

2.1 Reserve Description

Mount Rouse Reserve overlays an area of land surrounding the summit and crater of Mount Rouse, an extinct volcano adjacent to the township of Peshurst in the Southern Grampians Local Government Area. The reserve is 68.04 Hectares (168.13 Acres) in size and comprises three individual Crown Reserve Allotments originally gazetted as Public Park, Gravel Reserve and a Water Supply Reserve.

A parcel of land locally known as the Old Railway Quarry adjoins the south eastern boundary of the reserve and is owned under freehold title by Southern Grampians Shire Council. Whilst not located within the reserve boundaries, this parcel of land is regularly utilised by visitors to the reserve and has therefore been included within this management plan.

The reserve is accessible by a sealed public road with the entrance located on its southern boundary, approximately 3.5 kilometres (by road) from the centre of the township of Peshurst. The Mount Rouse Tourist Road extends through the reserve and terminates at a car park below the summit of the mount. Pedestrian access is also available via a walking track which connects the reserve's northern boundary with the adjacent township.

As a distinctive volcanic formation with geological features that are unique internationally, Mount Rouse is dominated the surrounding landscape and has been identified as a significant landscape within the South West Landscape Assessment Study. The reserve has a rich Indigenous and cultural history, hosts important biodiversity and is the volcanic eruption point of ancient lava flows which extend more than 60 kilometres to the southern coastline at Port Fairy.

Mount Rouse Reserve is a place of important public amenity and is utilised by many locals and tourists who access the scenic lookout at the summit, picnic areas, volcanic crater, walking tracks and old railway quarry amongst other features. The reserve is also utilised for educational and research purposes and provides an important visitor experience for tour groups visiting Peshurst's Volcanoes Discovery Centre.

The reserve, as defined for the purposes of this management plan, has a number of commercial values including areas of

leasehold land utilised for television and telecommunications transmission infrastructure; a Country Fire Authority (CFA) fire spotting tower; and a gravel reserve. The gravel reserve has historically been quarried for road making materials.

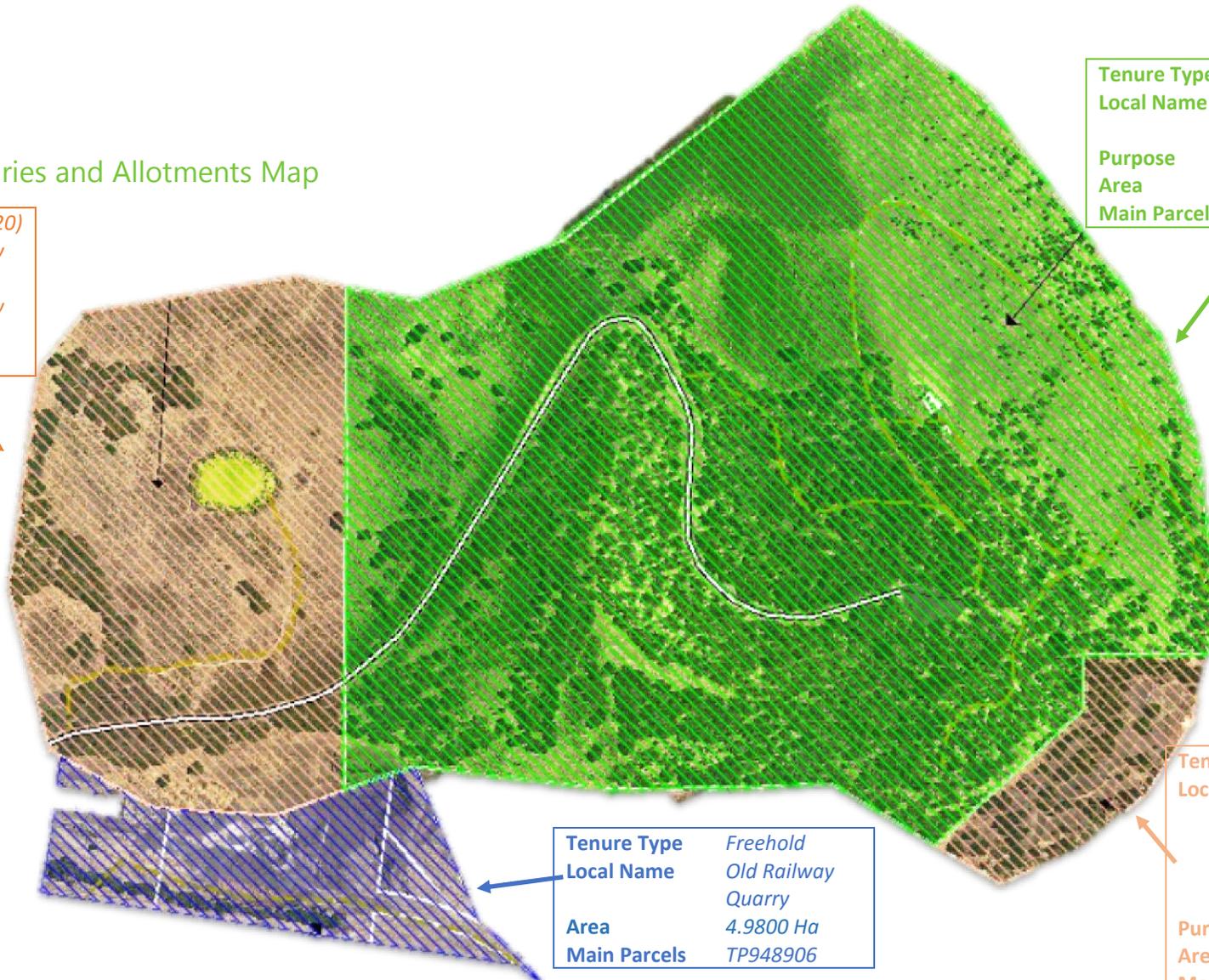
The reserve is surrounded by a number of adjacent properties which are used for purposes including agriculture and private quarrying. The Peshurst township urban water supply is also sited adjacent to the reserve.



2.2 Boundaries and Allotments Map

Tenure Type	<i>Reserve(RS520)</i>
Local Name	<i>Water Supply Reserve</i>
Purpose	<i>Water Supply</i>
Area	<i>14.3400 Ha</i>
Main Parcel	<i>P041370</i>

Tenure Type	<i>Reserve(RS521a)</i>
Local Name	<i>Mount Rouse Reserve</i>
Purpose	<i>Public Park</i>
Area	<i>51.0250 Ha</i>
Main Parcel	<i>P041369</i>

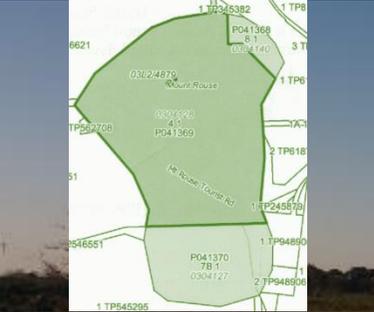
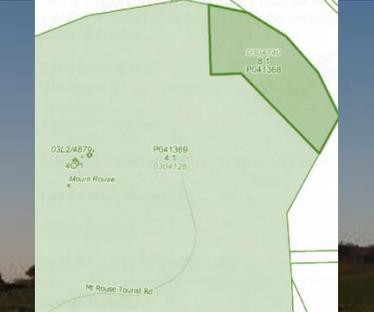
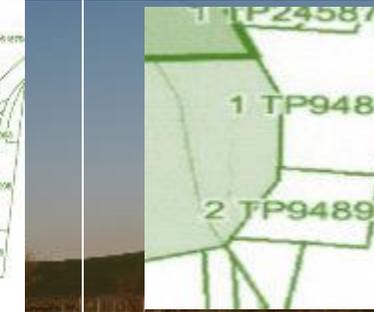


Tenure Type	<i>Freehold</i>
Local Name	<i>Old Railway Quarry</i>
Area	<i>4.9800 Ha</i>
Main Parcels	<i>TP948906</i>

Tenure Type	<i>Reserve(RS8811)</i>
Local Name	<i>Mount Rouse Public Purposes (Supply of Road Making Material)</i>
Purpose	<i>Gravel Reserve</i>
Area	<i>2.6710 Ha</i>
Main Parcel	<i>P041368</i>



2.3 Allotment Descriptions

Local Name	Mt Rouse Reserve (Rs521a)	Mt Rouse Public Purposes (Supply of Road Making Material) (Rs8811)	Water Supply Reserve (Rs520)	Old Railway Quarry
Purpose	Public Park	Gravel Reserve	Water Supply	Freehold
Area	51.0250 Ha	2.6710 Ha	14.3400 Ha	4.9800 Ha
Main Parcel	P041369	P041368	P041370	TP 948906 (Lot 1 and 2)
Location within the Mount Rouse Reserve				
Description	The Public Park is the largest allotment within the reserve and contains the majority of public use infrastructure. It includes picnic areas; a toilet block; summit lookout; walking track; a fire spotting tower; Mount Rouse Tourist Road and car parks; telecommunications and television infrastructure and extensive areas of revegetation.	The Gravel Reserve is located in the north-eastern corner of Mount Rouse Reserve and contains a quarry that has historically been used for the extraction of road making materials. The quarry is currently managed by Southern Grampians Shire Council and now has limited use. Road entry to this allotment is from north of the reserve.	The Water Supply allotment is located at the southern end of the reserve and includes the reserve's road entrance and the lower section of the Mount Rouse Tourist Road. This allotment contains a volcanic crater lake which is not currently used for commercial or community water extraction. A car park and some picnic facilities are located within this allotment. Some woody revegetation and expanses of bracken dominate this allotment.	The Old Railway Quarry is located adjacent to the boundaries of Mount Rouse Reserve, however is held under freehold title by Southern Grampians Shire Council. It contains internationally unique geological features and is utilised by tour groups from the Volcanoes Discovery Centre. The quarry has historically been used for the extraction of railway balast and was once accessible by rail. Vehicle access to the allotment is by an unsealed road adjacent to the road entrance at the southern end of the site.



3 Management of the Reserve

This section lists strategies for the future management of Mount Rouse Reserve. These strategies have been formulated following consultation with reserve stakeholders regarding management considerations and priorities for the reserve, along with basic site investigations and desktop research.

A priority level has been allocated against each strategy to provide an indicative timeframe for implementation.

A description of the four priority levels is provided below:

Priority Level	Identifying Symbol	Description of Priority Level	Suggested Timeframe for Implementation of the Strategy
Critical		Requires immediate implementation to ensure public safety, access and/or the preservation of values within the reserve.	Immediate (no longer than six months)
Highly Important		Requires implementation within the short to medium-term to ensure public safety, access and/or the preservation of values within the reserve.	Within 1 -3 years
Important		Requires implementation within the medium to long-term to ensure public safety, access and/or the preservation of values within the reserve.	Within 3-5 years
Desired		A desired strategy that has potential to enhance the features and useability of the reserve but that does not require implementation to ensure safety, access, or the preservation of values within the reserve.	Within 5 years



3.1 Landscape and Cultural Values

3.1.1 Biodiversity

Originally lightly wooded, the reserve's biodiversity has been subject to significant modification since European settlement of the district. The original vegetation has been lost through decades of clearing and grazing; the mount was later planted with Monterey Pines and Buffalo Grass. Since the 1960s, significant sections of the reserve have been subject to revegetation works, and the pine plantation removed.

The higher sections of the reserve and the majority of its eastern slopes currently support dense wooded native vegetation. The western and north western slopes are covered by tussock-grass and thick patches of bracken that extend to the south into the crater lake area. Regeneration of native species (trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses) has also occurred throughout the reserve.

Ecological Vegetation Class mapping of Victorian Volcanic Plains Bioregion indicates the area originally supported 'EVC 894 Scoria Cone Woodland'. This vegetation is described as: woodland to 10 m tall over a grassy to bracken-dominated understorey with a range of herbs. The overstorey in the reserve consists largely of Drooping She-oak, Blackwood, Silver Wattle and scattered Manna Gum. (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2015)

The reserve is inhabited by a diversity of native fauna and bird species with Echidna, Kangaroo, Wallaby, Possum, Tiger Snake and Peregrine Falcon amongst some of the species regularly sighted. Some koala sightings have also recently been reported. The Atlas of Living Australia and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas have only limited data on the flora and fauna of the reserve.

Activities including grazing, quarrying, infrastructure development and access tracks have significantly modified the ecology of the reserve and as a result many weed and pest animal species have established and persist.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Limited information is available on vegetation and fauna species occurring on the reserve.	Conduct flora and fauna surveys on the reserve and register information on appropriate databases.	
Issues associated with the management of existing vegetation on the reserve include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overgrown vegetation to the north of the picnic area inhibiting the view to the Grampians and affecting tourism values Overgrowth of vegetation on the walking track presenting a snake risk and limiting access Bracken growth along the Mount Rouse Tourist Road restricts the view of the crater lake 	Conduct annual assessments of the need for management of existing vegetation throughout the reserve and address within works plans as appropriate.	
	Trim or remove taller vegetation to the north of the picnic area below the summit to re-instate the view of the Grampians and monitor the need for on-going maintenance.	
	Trim vegetation overgrowing walking tracks and establish a plan for on-going maintenance.	
	Investigate control of bracken growth or alternative viewing arrangements at the rim of the crater along the Mount Rouse Tourist Road	
Limited hollow habitats are available on the reserve due to the relatively young age of wooded vegetation.	Following the completion of flora and fauna surveys assess the need for the installation of nesting boxes.	
Past revegetation attempts have had varied success on the northern face of the reserve.	Conduct an assessment of the need for further revegetation works throughout the reserve and prepare and implement an associated revegetation plan.	
Weed and pest animal pressures exist throughout the reserve. Prevalent weeds requiring management include but are not limited to: Morning Glory, Horehound, Pine Wildings, Buffalo Grass.	Determine the prevalence of weed and pest animal species on the reserve through flora and fauna surveys and develop and implement weed and pest management strategies as appropriate.	
Nesting sites of Peregrine Falcon may be affected by visitor proximity.	Identify Peregrine Falcon nesting sites on the reserve and establish protective measures to prevent impact on or destruction of these sites.	



3.1.2 Indigenous Significance and History

Mt Rouse or Kolorer was a key landmark for the Djab wurring people and the mount marked their traditional language boundary (Clark, 1995) that included Mount William Range, Gariwerd to the Pyrenees range in the east, and the headwaters of the Hopkins River flowing south. Within the Djab wurring people the Kolorer gundidj clan occupied the land around the mount and took their name from Kolorer which meant lava and lava stone used to rub ochre (Dawson, 1881). Tunrap Warneen, chief of the Kolorer tribe was a renowned healer and linguist, fluent in many Indigenous dialects.

In 1839 John Cox became the first squatter to take up land around the Penshurst area. Thereafter two pioneer families farmed on and around the mount. John and Daniel Twomey leased the Kolor run in 1852 (including parts of Mount Rouse) and later bought the freehold. David Hutton leased the Purdeet run then purchased the leasehold (later renamed Cheviot Hills, after the region in southern Scotland) in 1851.

The Western District of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate operated from 1839 until 1849 and the central station, located at Mount Rouse, commenced in 1842. The Protectorate failed after ten years and from about 1852 the township of Penshurst began to develop centred on the remaining government buildings. The Mount Rouse Protectorate Station is an under-researched subject relating to early Indigenous settler relationships. (Victorian Heritage Database, Accessed 7th May, 2015)

At the time that this management plan was prepared, Mount Rouse was included in an approved Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAP) Area under the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. However, applications from Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (received 23/04/2007) and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (received 25/07/2011 and further application received 15/08/2014) were under consideration by the Aboriginal Heritage Council. Each of these applications encompass the Mount Rouse Reserve.

Eastern Maar has also lodged a threshold statement seeking negotiation with the State of Victoria under the *Traditional Owners Settlement Act 2010* with the area of claim encompassing the reserve. They have also recently completed a Country Plan which outlines their interest in managing country.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Involvement of indigenous people in the future management of the reserve.	Monitor the status of RAP applications and the lodgement of Eastern Maar's Threshold Statement; consult with Registered Aboriginal Parties as appropriate regarding the future management of the reserve.	
Mount Rouse Reserve falls within an area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity as recognised by the <i>Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> .	Ensure that the future management of the reserve acknowledges and respects the Cultural Heritage Sensitivity of the area and complies with the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> .	
The Indigenous history of the reserve and surrounding country is not well promoted on the reserve.	Erect interpretive signage on the reserve that promotes the Indigenous history of Mount Rouse to users.	



3.1.3 Geological Significance

The summit of Mount Rouse rises 367 meters above sea level and 120 meters above the surrounding lava plains. It includes at least eight eruption points and is recorded as the largest eruption source in the Newer Volcanics Province (NVP); with flows triple the size of other volcanoes as measured by area covered and volume erupted (Boyce J.A., 2014).

Mount Rouse is a formation of accumulated red and brown scoria and is interbedded with thin layers of basaltic lava flows. A deep crater located at the southern end of the reserve contains a small lake formation and sits in close proximity to another small and shallow, basalt rimmed crater. The lava flows from Mount Rouse extend more than 60 kilometres to the southern coastline at Port Fairy. Basalt located within the scoria cone of Mount Rouse has been dated to approximately 1.8 Million years while lava flow from Mount Rouse located at Port Fairy has been dated at approximately 0.3 to 0.45 million years. (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, 2015)

Julie Boyce, Research Associate in Volcanology and Geochemistry with the Monash Volcanology Research Group studied Mt Rouse as a part of the wider Newer Volcanics Province and provided the following observations:

“Mount Rouse is the largest volcano in the Newer Volcanics Province and is so far unique worldwide due to its tri-magmatic character (it erupted three chemically different parcels of magma one after the other and then two re-erupted at the same time). Several other similar volcanoes have been found in other volcanic fields and in the NVP featuring two magma batches, but Mt Rouse is the first discovered to be produced from three. In addition, it is the only known location in the world featuring a volcanic surge deposit that also contains Pele’s Hairs and Tears. These are very fragile and would normally be broken up in a surge deposit, which is a turbulent mixture of ash and gases. This deposit is also unusual because the Pele’s Hairs and Tears are from one of the parcels of magma while the remainder of the deposit is from a second. This 2 metre deposit is only found in the Old Railway Quarry directly beneath the lava flow, which is itself important as it preserves the underside of a ca 300,000 year old pahoehoe lava flow”. (Boyce, 2015)

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Pele’s Hairs and Tears formations occur in the old railway quarry within an exposed lava flow. They are fragile structures that have been identified as internationally unique and require protection and preservation.	Establish a protective structure around the Pele’s Hairs and Tears formations and exposed lava flow found in the Old Railway Quarry. The structure’s design should balance the need to protect the formations while allowing viewing access.	
The reserve comprises interesting and internationally unique geological features that offer scope for attracting increased recreational and education based tourism.	Work with the Volcanoes Discovery Centre to identify and document the important geological features on the reserve and create and install interpretive signage that creates a dynamic visitor experience and promotes the geological significance of Mount Rouse.	





3.1.4 Hydrology

A significant upper ground water aquifer of 100 meters to 350 meters in thickness lies beneath the Mount Rouse Reserve and surrounding landscape. The South West Victorian Groundwater Atlas shows that it is one of the thickest aquifers of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria and describes the following:

“The Newer Volcanics stretch from Ballarat to Portland. They were formed in the last 4 million years by over 400 volcanoes, fissures and vents producing scoria and fractured basalt.

These unconfined volcanic aquifers occur at the ground surface which means they can receive rainfall directly. They are mostly porous near the volcanic cones and are more likely to occur as confining layers of clay across the plains. These aquifers are thickest near Ballarat, Colac, Portland and south of Hamilton.” (Southern Rural Water, 2011)

3.1.5 Landscape Significance

Mount Rouse Reserve forms a significant aesthetic feature within the South West Victorian landscape. From the summit, 360 degree views can be seen of the surrounding volcanic plains with a radius extending from the Grampians National Park to the southern coastline. Mount Rouse is also a significant point of reference in the landscape for many settlements and communities that lie within its surrounds

The draft Department of Planning and Community Development’s South West Victorian Landscape Assessment Study identifies Mount Rouse as a Significant Landscape within the New Volcanic Region Investigation Area.

The Southern Grampians Planning Scheme also designates a Significant Landscape Overlay over the ‘Mount Rouse and Crater Reserve’ and states that the reserve is: *“of historical, social and aesthetic significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and township of Penshurst”*. The Landscape character objective to be achieved is *“to protect the appearance and presentation of the Mount Rouse Crater Reserve”*. (Southern Grampians Shire Council, 2006)

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Rainfall infiltration in the reserve and run-off from the reserve is likely to enter groundwater aquifers.	Implement environmentally responsible and low impact management practices that minimise disturbance to and impact upon on the quality of surface water.	

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
<p>Mount Rouse has been identified as a significant landscape within the New Volcanics for the following values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aesthetics – landscape features, edge or contrasts, composition and overall aesthetic significance Other Cultural Landscape Values – Historic significance, environmental/scientific significance, social significance and other significance <p>The landscape values of Mount Rouse have been assessed as having significance at the following levels: state or higher; regional and local.</p>	<p>Consider the landscape significance of Mount Rouse in the future management of the reserve and ensure that future management prevents adverse impact upon the significant landscape values associated with the reserve.</p> <p>Promote the landscape significance of Mount Rouse on the reserve through the erection of interpretive signage.</p>	 



3.1.6 Adjacent Land Uses

Mount Rouse Reserve is surrounded by a number of freehold properties which are utilised for various purposes including:

- Agricultural production which is predominantly livestock grazing
- Peshurst’s urban water supply treatment facility operated by Wannon Water
- Three private quarrying areas located in close proximity to the north, south east and southern boundary of the reserve. The private quarry located on the south east of the reserve (the old railway quarry, now owned by Southern Grampians Shire Council) has historically encroached within the boundary of the reserve.
- The Kolor Homestead Complex which is listed on the Victorian Heritage Database as “*historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria and the Southern Grampians Shire*” (*Heritage Council of Victoria, 2015*)
- The northern boundary of the reserve connects to a walking track which links with the residential areas of Peshurst.

Some of the diverse land uses visible in the surrounding landscape from the reserve include:

- The township of Peshurst and associated facilities
- Primary production including, grazing, cropping and forestry
- Yatmerone Nature Conservation Reserve
- Wind farms
- Public conservation and recreation lands.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Kangaroo and wallaby numbers on the reserve are perceived to be high by neighbouring landholders.	Assess the kangaroo and wallaby population size and sustainability on the reserve through flora and fauna surveys.	
Landholders report kangaroo damaged boundary fences and encroachment on grazing land.	If required implement management practices to regulate kangaroo and wallaby population size.	
	In conjunction with DELWP, determine appropriate management strategies with neighbouring landholders to minimise the impact of wildlife encroachment onto their properties from the reserve.	
Encroachment of bracken from the reserve is perceived to be placing pressure on the boundary fence and into the adjoin property.	Assess the extent of bracken encroachment onto neighbouring properties and determine appropriate management strategies with neighbouring landholders.	





3.2 Community and Amenity Values

3.2.1 Public Amenity

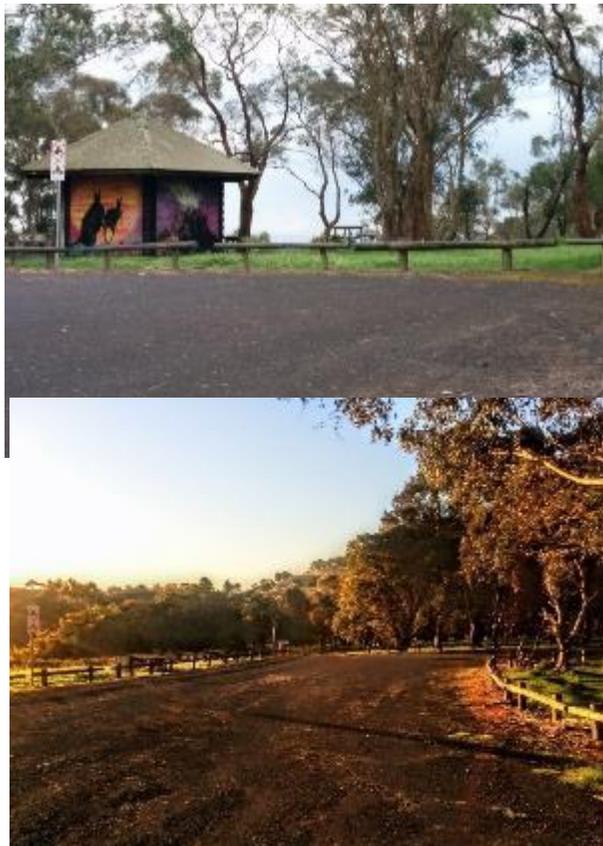
Mount Rouse Reserve offers a place of important public amenity for both local residents and tourist who visit. Features of amenity requiring management include:

- A scenic lookout located at the summit of Mount Rouse offering 360 degree views of the surrounding landscape. This site is used by tourists and local residents. Commercial infrastructure is also located at the summit including fire spotting and telecommunications towers and service buildings.
- A picnic area is located east of the summit and provides facilities for recreational users to have a BBQ or picnic. There are picturesque views to the Grampians and the landscape to the north which attract visitors and local community groups.
- An area of native vegetation south of the picnic areas includes an unstructured walking and vehicle track often used by visitors to the reserve.
- Three asphalt car parking areas are located within the reserve:
 - At the base of the steps to the scenic lookout
 - Adjacent to picnic area, and
 - At the southern end of the reserve adjacent to the crater lake.
- The crater lake at the southern end of the reserve is accessed from the southern car park. An informal walking track leads from the car park toward the crater.
- A walking track extends from the foot of Mount Rouse at the northern boundary to the steps at the summit. A track also extends from the picnic area and links into the track connecting the northern boundary and the summit.
- The Mount Rouse Tourist road is an asphalted section of road that provides vehicle access to the car park areas within the reserve.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
The existing toilet facilities located below the summit are aged, in poor condition and do not promote a positive visitor experience.	Upgrade toilet facilities to a more accessible, cleaner, safer and hygienic alternative.	
A brass sundial/directional plaque was formerly located at the summit lookout but was later stolen. Many of the reserve's stakeholders identify the replacement of the sundial as an important priority.	Reinstall a sundial/directional plaque at the summit lookout that provides directional bearings and points out significant features and eruption points within the surrounding landscape.	
The summit lookout provides 360 degree views and is an important vantage point for photography and star gazing.	Install a concrete pad at the summit lookout to provide a telescope and camera tripod mount.	
The picnic areas located below the summit and at the crater lake car park have aged infrastructure, limited seating and are not access friendly. The shelter in the picnic area below the summit has a mural which many stakeholders suggested needs repainting, and is often subjected to litter and illegal camping.	Investigate upgrades to each of the picnic areas within the reserve, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated and increased seating • Access friendly surfaces • Updated community art • New bins and no littering signs • Interpretive signage • No camping signs at the site and reserve entrance 	
Existing walking tracks within the reserve require on-going maintenance and are impacted by vegetation overgrowth, loose surfaces and weeds.	Regularly inspect walking tracks and maintain to a standard that minimises safety risks and maximises access.	



3.2.1 Public Amenity (Continued)



Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Reserve stakeholders identified the extension of a low impact walking/mountain biking track throughout the reserve as a potential enhancement that could be made. Suggestions included linking new tracks with the existing walking track and extending a circuit to encompass the crater lake, old railway quarry and base of the mount.	Undertake a feasibility assessment for the construction of extended low impact walking and mountain bike trails throughout the reserve. These trails may encompass the crater lake, old railway quarry and base of the mount and should connect with existing walking tracks on the reserve.	
The existing Mount Rouse Tourist Road presents some safety hazards in its current state. The lack of a marked centre line may present a road accident hazard and the absence of vehicle safety bollards on the upper most section of the road at the summit car park present a safety hazard.	Upgrade the Mount Rouse Tourist Road by marking with a centre white line and the installation of safety bollards on the upper sections.	
Develop a small car park on the mid-section of the Mount Rouse Tourist Road near the right hand bend on the road above the crater lake. This section of the road offers attractive sunset views to Mount Napier to the west and views back to the crater.	Undertake a feasibility assessment of the construction of a small car parking and viewing area on the mid-section of the Mount Rouse Tourist Road.	
Involving the local community in the management of Mount Rouse.	Re-establish a Friends of the Reserve Group.	
Public use infrastructure and assets on the reserve require on-going monitoring and maintenance.	Regularly assess the condition of all public use infrastructure and assets and maintain as appropriate.	



3.2.2 Tourism and Recreational Uses

Mount Rouse Reserve is distinct from many other local reserves in that it can be accessed by relatively large visitor groups at any one point in time. It has multiple car parking areas and visitor facilities distributed throughout the reserve.

Specific visitor numbers to the reserve are unknown and the collection of localised data would assist with future management. In the absence of more specific data, the 2013 tourism statistics for the Southern Grampians Local Government Area indicate that 263,000 people visit the region annually (Tourism Research Australia, 2013.) Many tourists to the region are likely to enter or leave via the Penshurst-Warrnambool Road given it is a primary route for vehicle travel between the tourist destinations of the Great Ocean Road and the Grampians National Park. This route passes the access road to Mount Rouse which offers scope to divert significant tourist numbers to the reserve.

The 360 degree views from the summit and volcanic features of the mount have an important tourism value. The Volcanoes Discovery Centre (VDC) located in the adjacent community of Penshurst regularly takes groups of visitors onto the reserve and Old Railway Quarry to provide tourism and educational experiences.

The limited amount of signage positioned throughout the reserve currently offers a relatively static visitor experience. Opportunities exist to create a more dynamic visitor experience through enhanced public space design and the use of digital technology such as closed loop CCTV videos points, app-enabled interpretive signage and augmented reality for information provision.

The reserve also holds a high level of significance for the local community. As well as being an aesthetic asset it is used frequently for a range of local purposes including:

- Exercise and recreational activity
- BBQs/picnics
- Football/netball club/community groups/ railway society activities
- Nature observation and birds watching
- Scenic viewing.

The condition and appropriateness of visitor facilities within the reserve requires assessment as some infrastructure and assets are ageing and poorly maintained.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Improved understanding of visitor numbers is required.	Install a traffic counter at the entrance to the reserve to develop an understanding of visitor numbers.	
Mount Rouse Reserve offers scope to attract high visitor numbers given its proximity to the tourist route between the Great Ocean Road and the Grampians National Park. There is also scope to create a more dynamic and informative visitor experience.	Place promotional material for the reserve in public locations in Penshurst and other tourist locations in the surrounding area.	
	Install interpretive signage throughout the reserve which highlights the internationally important geological features, Indigenous history, landscape and wildlife significance of the reserve.	
	Investigate how a more dynamic visitor experience can be created on the reserve through the use of technology such as video points that live stream the view from the summit to nearby tourist venues and app integrated interpretive signage.	
The volcanic history associated with the reserve provides an important tourism and educational value. The Volcanoes Discovery Centre located in Penshurst frequently brings groups of visitors onto the reserve and the educational experiences that they provide are closely linked with and reliant upon the reserve.	Work with the Volcanoes Discovery Centre to design a dynamic and interactive visitor experience that promotes the internationally unique geological features on the reserve.	
Signage pointing to the reserve from the Penshurst Warrnambool Road and the presentation of the reserve entrance could be improved to attract more visitors.	Investigate the installation of illustrated signage on the Warrnambool Penshurst Road that better promotes the views and geological features on the reserve	
	Improve the presentation of the reserve entrance by restoring the entrance signage and gateway	



3.2.3 Access

Whilst the reserve enables a good level of vehicle access and sufficient car parking to cater for relatively large numbers of visitors, it provides limited access for those with low mobility, the physically disabled, wheelchairs and prams.

Specifically access to picnic areas, seating and scenic lookouts is limited, with few constructed pathways, poorly placed traffic and pedestrian bollards and inappropriately placed or non-existent seating.

Specific areas within the reserve requiring improvements to enhance access are: the steps and handrail leading to the summit; the picnic area below the summit and at the crater lake car park; the gateway at the base of the walking track and each of the car park areas within the reserve.



Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
The steps and handrail leading to the lookout at the summit of the reserve are in poor condition and present a safety hazard.	Upgrade or replace the steps leading to the summit lookout. The design of the steps should consider the placement of a hand rail at an accessible height, appropriately sized steps and provisions for increased accessibility such as seating mid-way to the summit.	
The pedestrian gates to the walking track at the base of the mountain are narrow and a bollard placed centrally in the gateway is restrictive to pram and wheelchair access. A vehicle access gate located adjacently remains locked and similarly restricts access.	Develop options to improve access through the pedestrian gate at the base of the walking track while controlling inappropriate powered vehicles.	
Access to the picnic areas below the summit and at the crater lake car park is restrictive for individuals with low mobility and the disabled. Walking surfaces are rough and not access friendly. Seating is also limited.	Reconfigure traffic bollards between the car park and picnic area below the summit to enable improved access to the BBQ and shelter area.	
	Install an accessible pathway to enable individuals with low mobility and the disabled to safely move from vehicles to the shelter and available seating.	
	Install additional seating in the picnic area below the summit and make accessible to those with low mobility and the disabled.	
Loose gravel occurs on the surface of all car park areas and may present a hazard for those with low mobility.	Assess the condition of gravel in all car park areas and determine management practices to address risks.	
The accessibility of carparks, picnic areas and toilet facilities throughout the reserve requires assessment.	Conduct a comprehensive assessment of accessibility on the reserve and develop a plan for increasing accessibility as appropriate.	
*Note: Management strategies to increase access in the old railway quarry are addressed in section 2.3		



3.3 The Old Railway Quarry

The Old Railway Quarry is an area of freehold land owned by Southern Grampians Shire Council covering nearly 5 hectares. It is not located within the boundaries of Mount Rouse Reserve, however adjoins the south eastern boundary. The quarry is frequented by many visitors to the reserve.

It is the location of an internationally unique geological formation known as Pele's Hairs and Tears and volcanic lava flows that have been exposed from quarrying activities. The quarry is often utilised by the Penshurst based Volcanoes Discovery Centre and other community users to provide educational and tourism experiences to groups of visitors. Universities and Museum Victoria also use the quarry for research and education purposes.

Historically, a railway line extended to the quarry and extracted ballast which was loaded for use in railway construction and upkeep. This parcel of land connects with a railway reserve that extends through the township of Penshurst and beyond.

Vehicle access to the quarry is available through an unsealed road located adjacent to the road entrance to the reserve and unmarked tracks extend to a ridge above the quarry which connects with the reserve.

The surfaces within the quarry are rough and undulating and provisions for vehicle access and car parking are limited. The site is subject to illegal dumping of rubbish and is utilised for recreational activities such as a mountain and dirt bike riding.

This parcel of land has been incorporated within the management plan as it is owned by the Southern Grampians Shire Council and is perceived by many users to be part of the reserve.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
The Old Railway Quarry has not been specifically designed to support public access and requires assessment of the appropriateness of its access and visitor infrastructure.	Conduct an assessment of the suitability of the site for public access and determine strategies to improve useability and safety for visitors.	
The Old Railway Quarry has internationally significant geological features that require preservation. Specifically, Pele's Hairs and Tears exist within the site and should be preserved and protected.	Work with the Volcanoes Discovery Centre to locate significant geological features within the Old Railway Quarry and strategies that preserve and protect these features.	
The geological features within the Old Railway Quarry offer significant scope to enhance the experience of visitors to the reserve and to attract tourists. There is also scope to create a dynamic visitor experience that links with the Penshurst based Volcanoes Discovery Centre.	Work with the Volcanoes Discovery Centre to identify opportunities for creating a dynamic visitor experience within the Old Railway Quarry.	
The surfaces of the Old Railway Quarry are undulating and restrict access for those with low mobility.	Include the Old Railway Quarry within an assessment of accessibility within the reserve and within the development of any associated access plans.	
Safe vehicle access within the old railway quarry is not currently available.	Assess the suitability of current vehicle access tracks and parking areas and develop strategies to improve these if appropriate.	
The illegal dumping of litter occurs within the old railway quarry	Erect signage to caution against the dumping of rubbish and remove existing rubbish.	
Maintain the safety bollard below the exposed lava flow.	Replace the section of missing chain and maintain the safety bollard.	



3.4 Commercial Values

3.4.1 Commercial Leases

Commercial lease arrangements exist between the Southern Grampians Shire Council and a number of lessees for the use of land in the Mount Rouse Public Park Reserve at the summit. Lease arrangements exist with the following:

- Win Television Vic Pty Ltd (DELWP ref 2016112)
- Telstra Corporation Ltd (DELWP ref 2020498)
- Vertel Telecoms Pty Ltd (DELWP ref 2018388)
- An order giving approval to Southern Grampians Shire to grant a lease to NBN Co Ltd has also been granted with NBN infrastructure to be erected at the summit in early 2016.

A CFA fire spotting tower is also located at the summit and is attended by fire spotters who are employed by the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

The Gravel Reserve allotment is managed by the Southern Grampians Shire Council who historically quarried the site for road making materials. The quarry is now used on a very limited basis.

Revenue to Southern Grampians Shire Council is derived from the commercial leases. The use of this revenue to support the maintenance and enhancement of the reserve and associated assets is not apparent and may warrant further consideration.



Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
A number of leases for commercial infrastructure associated with television and telecommunications have been granted and are current at the summit of Mount Rouse.	Monitor and maintain leases in accordance with lease arrangements and with the values and intended uses of the reserve.	
A CFA fire spotting tower is located at the summit of Mount Rouse.	Maintain on-going arrangements in relation to the CFA fire spotting tower and regularly liaise with the CFA to monitor the appropriateness of arrangements	
Revenue derived from leases on the reserve requires review and consideration should be given as to supporting the costs of on-going management of the reserve.	Develop a clear understanding of the lease revenue derived from the commercial leases on the reserve and ensure that appropriate levels of investment are returned to the on-going management and maintenance of the reserve.	
A gated and unsealed service vehicle access track extends from above the picnic area to the commercial infrastructure at the summit of the mount.	Ensure that the service vehicle access track leading to infrastructure at the summit is maintained and that access is managed appropriately.	
Mount Rouse is often used as a filming point and has been used as a vantage point for commercial filming in the past. The <i>Filming Approval Act 2014</i> now requires that approval be granted by local government for filming of public spaces for commercial purposes.	Erect signage on the reserve to indicate the need to seek permission from Southern Grampians Shire Council to undertake commercial filming on the reserve.	



3.5 Management and Legislative Requirements

3.5.1 Legislative Requirements

The management of the reserve requires compliance with State and Federal legislation. Examples of relevant Acts include:

- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*
- *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*
- *Emergency Management Act 1986*
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Filming Approval Act 2014*
- *Heritage Act 1995*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Telecommunications Act 1997*
- *Traditional Owners Settlement Act 2010*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Water Act 1989*

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
Legislation should be considered and complied with in all aspects of the reserve's future management.	Regularly review legislation that is relevant within the context of the reserve's management.	
	Ensure that management activities undertaken on the reserve comply with all relevant legislation	

3.5.2 Boundaries and Zoning

The boundaries of the reserve adjoin multiple freehold titles and comprise multiple sections of fencing. A visual assessment should be conducted of the boundaries to ensure that no encroachment is occurring from adjacent land uses and to identify boundary fencing that requires repair. An area of fencing located above the commercial quarry on the north east of the reserve has been identified as requiring repair and presents a significant fall and safety hazard.

The Old Railway Quarry located adjacent to but outside the south east boundary of the reserve is utilised frequently by reserve visitors and perceived by many stakeholders to be a part of the reserve.

Management Consideration	Suggested Strategy	Priority
The Old Railway Quarry is not included within the boundaries of Mount Rouse reserve however is utilised by many visitors to the reserve.	Investigate the most appropriate land tenure arrangements and zoning for this parcel of land.	
The condition of boundary fencing on the reserve requires assessment. A section of fencing between the reserve and a neighbouring quarry at the north east of the reserve is in disrepair and presents a significant safety hazard.	Undertake works to re-instate safe boundary fencing in the north east section of the reserve that adjoins the neighbouring quarry.	
	Assess the condition of all boundary fencing on the reserve and undertake works to restore and maintain safe and effective fencing.	



3.5.3 Fire Management

There is limited information regarding fire management on the reserve. Advice from the CFA suggests that no specific fire operations plan exists for the reserve itself, however that it would be considered within the CFA Mount Rouse Group's response plan.

Extensive stands of vegetation exist on the reserve and the undulating nature of the reserve means that many areas of the reserve would offer limited access to fire fighting vehicles.

The reserve is closed on days of total fire ban.

Management Consideration	Strategy	Priority
It is unclear as to whether a Fire Management or Fire Response Plan exists for the reserve.	Investigate whether a Fire Management or Fire Response plan exists for Mount Rouse Reserve and develop if necessary.	

3.5.4 Conflicting Uses

Reserve stakeholders have identified some conflicting uses of the reserve that relate both to the reserve itself and the adjacent landscape. These include:

- Quarries on and adjacent to the reserve conflicting with the geological, aesthetic, wildlife and tourism values of the reserve.
- Commercial telecommunications and television infrastructure located on the summit impacts upon the aesthetic and landscape values of the reserve.
- The internationally unique Pele's Hairs and Tears formations in the Old Railway Quarry require preservation and protection whilst also offering scope to attract tourism.

Management Consideration	Strategy	Priority
Quarries on and adjacent to the reserve conflict with the geological, aesthetic, wildlife and tourism values of the reserve.	Limit any further quarrying activities in the reserve and minimise the aesthetic impact of adjacent quarrying through maintaining stands of wooded vegetation that limit the view of these activities.	
Commercial telecommunications and television infrastructure located on the summit impacts upon the aesthetic and landscape values of the reserve.	Limit the further installation of commercial infrastructure on the reserve that impacts heavily upon the aesthetic and landscape values of the reserve.	
The internationally unique Pele's hairs and tears formations in the old railway quarry require preservation and protection whilst also offering scope to attract tourism.	Work with the Volcanoes Discovery Centre to determine strategies that will protect and preserve the Pele's Hairs and Tears formations while enabling a unique visitor experience.	