

COMBINED BELLARINE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Communities working together to achieve the best future for the Bellarine

The Combined Bellarine Community Associations (CBCA) comprises representatives of nine Bellarine community associations: Barwon Heads, Breamlea, Drysdale Clifton Springs and Curlewis (DCSCA), Indented Head, Ocean Grove, Point Lonsdale, Portarlington, Queenscliff and St Leonards, and spans the two LGAs of City of Greater Geelong and the Borough of Queenscliff. The CBCA meets regularly to discuss matters of shared interest and benefit.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to submit a response to this important draft.

Submission: Bellarine Distinctive Areas & Landscapes - Draft Statement of Planning Policy

Introduction

- The CBCA acknowledges DELWP's recognition of the many issues raised by the CBCA in responding to the Phase 2 Discussion Document.
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- We also thank DELWP for engaging with our communities to answer questions and provide background contexts.

All our member Associations have specific contributions to make in their submissions and we note that there is commonality around many issues, but also some issues that are mainly pertinent to their geographical location, infrastructure concerns and other factors such as historical and heritage aspects.

The CBCA acknowledges and supports the excellent submissions made by our member associations who have raised issues specific to their communities.

There are several matters shared among the Associations, outlined in the pages following.

There is a broad consensus of support within our Associations for the Statement of Planning Policy.

However, we believe the following areas in the SPP need to be strengthened:

First Nations Peoples and Nature

We welcome the involvement of DELWP in their close engagement with the Wadawurrung community and developing the Wadawurrung Statement of Significance to make explicit the First Nations substantial historical connections and custodianship of the Bellarine.

In particular we recognize how First Nations people respect and engage with Nature, its flora and fauna and their places and interactions in country as being pivotal to the survival of all humans.

Providing the Wadawurrung agree, we ask for the Statement of Planning Policy to be strengthened.

We suggest:

- the voice and participation of the Wadawurrung people is recognised across **all** policy domains, through the addition of Strategies underpinning Objective One - Landscapes, Objective Two - Heritage and Objective Five - Sustainable Development and Settlements
- inclusion of clear definitions, expectations and accountabilities aimed at ensuring developers and RPEs engage Wadawurrung participation in decision making.

The SPP, as it currently stands, has a more limited view of Nature than the Wadawurrung and the CBCA.

- The SPP sees Nature in terms of visual attributes such as vistas and ridge lines. A more comprehensive perspective of Nature in the SPP is needed where 'being in Nature' and experiencing its sounds, textures and smells is identified and made relevant in the SPP. The benefits of being in Nature to our social, emotional and physical wellbeing are supported by considerable national and international scientific evidence.
- Therefore a broader recognition of Nature, and not just Environment with its dominant physical appearances, needs to permeate the SPP, so that the citizens of the Bellarine and the many visitors to it, know that planning and other fundamental decisions and actions will enrich the Bellarine community as a resource for living and thriving.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The CBCA welcomes DEWLP's identification of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and that these goals are reflected in policy initiatives. The CBCA is pleased to see 10 of the UNSDGs are made explicit in shaping the published vision, objectives and strategies of the SPP, given that they evolved from years of research among individual UN agencies, and guide the direction of human activity and survival in the 21st Century.

However the SPP would be strengthened considerably, as would a number of the Objectives, if there was more explicit 'sign posting' of how these 10 USDGs should influence the practices and policies of the RPEs as they develop their actions and priorities to meet the binding Objectives.

The following are of particular importance to the CBCA Associations:

- The need to sharpen objectives and strategies
- The need to develop an Implementation Plan
- the proposed imposition of protected settlement boundaries around all Bellarine Peninsula towns in their current location, and the unique character of our towns
- the elevated status provided to protection of the designated Green Breaks between towns
- the recognition of the importance of ensuring the unique character of each of our towns is maintained & enhanced.
- Greater attention to heritage issues

1. Sharpening the Objectives and Strategies, and the language of the SPP

The CBCA makes the following recommendations to strengthen and facilitate the implementation of the SPP:

- The current identified Objectives should be called Goals, be simple and should focus on the primary outcomes. They must be binding on all RPEs.
- The current Strategies are a mix of Objectives and Strategies. The Objectives should be extracted from the Strategies as succinct statements.
- The Objectives should be Smart – that is, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound, and importantly must also be binding on the RPEs.

The Strategies should continue to provide clear and unambiguous guidelines about plans and approaches for the RPEs to undertake in their implementation of the Goals and Objectives.

We believe these Strategies must be addressed by the RPEs as they work towards achieving the binding Goals and Objectives.

2. Development of an Implementation Plan, and strengthening the language of the SPP

- A plan for timely implementation is essential. The SPP lacks a schedule/timeline for implementation, and identification of which entities are responsible for implementation. A clearly identified process of accountability will strengthen the SPP.

We support those Associations which have pointed to DELWP's *Draft Marine and Coastal Strategy* as a better document re implementation.

- The CBCA argues strongly for strengthening the language within the draft. While we understand that the language applied to Strategies is designed to enable flexibility in implementation, the use of ambiguous words and those which enable interpretation undermine the SPP's intent in protecting and enriching the Bellarine.
- Virtually all urban areas on the Bellarine are under pressure from developers. Effective implementation and stronger language are both crucial to managing this pressure.

3. Protected settlement boundaries and Sustaining and Enhancing the Unique Character of our Towns

- We strongly support the retention of existing settlement boundaries, as a means of preventing urban sprawl.
- In the Settlement Domain most Bellarine towns and villages have statements regarding infill development. While acknowledging that infill is a necessary consequence of protected settlement boundaries, it is essential that infill must not compromise the distinctive character of settlements

- The CBCA strongly supports those Bellarine Associations that have noted the impact of large residential constructs which, if allowed to continue, will threaten Strategy 8.3 relating to respect for the identity, heritage and coastal character of settlements.
- The timely development of the implementation process is essential to identify areas within settlements suitable for future growth, and assist in the protection of distinctive character.
- The CBCA notes that the City of Greater Geelong, in the development of its recent Settlement Strategy Amendment C395, has rejected the concept of the Bellarine as a significant growth area for housing, and that it is able to accommodate growth in other areas within the City.

4. Protecting designated Green Breaks between towns

- The Green Breaks are an important and distinctive part of the Bellarine's character providing a highly valued natural backdrop.
- Protecting settlement boundaries will safeguard the adjoining landscape values with clear benefits for Bellarine residents, wildlife, and visitors.
- This includes restricting the supply of rural-living blocks which impact on valuable and productive agricultural land, and also provides an opportunity for land banking
- Effective protection of Green Breaks will in turn protect and retain wildlife corridors on the Bellarine

5. Heritage

The CBCA supports the heritage values of the Bellarine, noting that Heritage values are the reasons why a place is important. Significance is the sum of these values. Heritage is what remains and what is kept.

- Each township and their surrounds possess their own rich history, heritage and heritage values that need to be recognised, respected, conserved and protected under the SPP.
- Heritage places include (as per the Burra Charter) a 'site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, groups of buildings or other works' (p.2).
 - A heritage place may include components, contents (fixtures, fittings and objects), spaces and views.
 - Heritage places can have both natural and cultural features of value that can include remnant bushland, native animal species, geological formations, or bodies of water. Some places will also have 'intangible' aspects that are integral to their heritage significance, and include traditions, events, rituals and practices that are associated with the place.

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- It includes Wadawurrang cultural heritage and can include many types of places – land, water, natural features, middens, buildings and structures - associated with Aboriginal history, culture and peoples.

The Next Steps

The CBCA supports the City of Greater Geelong’s recommendation for DELWP to provide a written response to the matters raised in submissions by way of a public report.

The CBCA would be pleased to work with DELWP to use the current content in the SPP to build a clearer and stronger statement to enable directions to assist RPEs in achieving the succinct Goals and specific Objectives.

In conclusion, the CBCA commends DELWP for its excellent work in the development of the draft.

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