Distinctive Areas and Landscapes

Surf Coast

Community engagement findings report

Report, Final, 28 August 2019

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Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.
## Quality Assurance

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Executive summary

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is working in collaboration with the Surf Coast Shire Council, the City of Greater Geelong and the Wadawurrung People, to recommend declaration of the Surf Coast as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The Surf Coast, an area celebrated for its recreation and tourism opportunities, beaches, and coastal biodiversity, is experiencing unique pressures due to urban development.

Following any such declaration, a Statement of Planning Policy will be developed to better protect the unique features of the Surf Coast area’s unique landscapes, environment, and lifestyle.

This report presents a summary of the key findings from the first phase of engagement for the Surf Coast DAL. The engagement started on 14 May 2019 and finished on 14 June 2019. The engagement process sought to reach a broad range of Surf Coast residents and stakeholders, to communicate that DELWP was beginning the process for the Surf Coast DAL declaration. The engagement sought feedback from the community on what was most valued about the Surf Coast, and their vision for the future of the area. The process was designed and delivered by Capire Consulting Group and supported by DELWP.

During the engagement, approximately 1,800 people were reached by the project either online or through participation in face-to-face engagement activities.

The participants were asked to consider what they valued most about the Surf Coast, the threats to these values, and how these values can be protected. Participants were asked to explore five key themes: natural environments, landscapes and scenic views, culture and heritage, townships and settlements and areas of economic prosperity. All online and face-to-face engagement feedback was consolidated, and comments were coded into themes. The following Figure 1 illustrates the most frequently identified values, threats and means of protection.
Values

- **BEACHES**
  - Referring to beaches, dunes, cliffs, and waves.

- **NATURAL LANDSCAPES**
  - Referring to quality, unique natural landmarks and locations.

- **TOWNSHIP CHARACTERISTICS**
  - Referring to the unique character of a town, its ‘village’ feel, preserving unique hamlets, and maintaining the unique qualities of existing settlements.

- **RECREATION**
  - Referring to surfing, fishing, water sports, walking (including dog-walking), cycling, horseback riding.

- **VIEWPOINTS**
  - Referring to viewpoints, views, scenery and lines of sight.

Threats

- **OVERDEVELOPMENT**
  - Referring to overdevelopment, and insensitive development such as development that destroys natural views and results in loss of natural environments and biodiversity.

- **INCREASED POPULATION**
  - Referring impacts of long-term increases to population and residential growth.

- **HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**
  - Referring to excessive or insensitive housing and residential developments, and its consequences.

- **POOR PLANNING RESPONSE AND CONTROLS**
  - Referring to governments being ‘pro-development’, weak planning response or controls, and land management.

- **TOURISM**
  - Referring to short-term visitation, seasonal population growth, and tourists.
Protection

**PLANNING MECHANISMS**
Referring to urban growth boundaries, zoning and overlays, or density, development heights, and building standards, material quality and design suitability.

**LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT**
Referring to limiting the amount of developments

**HABITAT PROTECTION**
Referring to preventing further habitat fragmentation, declaring more state or national parks, and better protecting heritage sites.

**EDUCATION**
Referring to 'awareness raising', 'educating people', using 'wayfinding and information signs'.

**POLICY**
Referring to implementing a policy response or incentive scheme such as "action on climate change", or "create a green wedge plan".

*Figure 1: Most frequently identified values, threats and means of protection*

Visioning

Participants were asked to envision what they want the Surf Coast lifestyle to be like in 2070. Overall, responses to the visioning question were reflective of the identified key areas of value. Key themes included:

- **Environment** - referring to improved environment due to technological advancements
- **Community** - referring to community involvement, particularly in environmental protection
- **Lifestyle and culture** - referring to activities, events and preservation of beachside, coastal way of life
- **Aesthetics** - referring to the look of the townships and natural landscapes
- **Economics prosperity** - referring to job opportunities, housing affordability and development and affordability for younger generations.
1 Introduction

1.1 Project background

The Great Ocean Road (GOR) is one of the world’s most scenic coastal touring routes and includes some of Australia’s most recognised and visited natural attractions. The Surf Coast is the iconic starting point of the Great Ocean Road experience and is important to both locals and visitors who come to experience the wonderful natural environment and assets in the region. It is celebrated for its recreation and tourism opportunities, beaches, and coastal biodiversity. However, the Surf Coast and Torquay-Jan Juc in particular, is experiencing unique pressures due to urban development. These pressures have been a key driver for the Victorian government to announce its intention to declare the Surf Coast a ‘Distinctive Area and Landscape’ (DAL).

The Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Act 2018 establishes a new benchmark to guard against inappropriate development in sensitive areas across Victoria and safeguards their unique natural and cultural attributes for future generations. It represents the first step in implementing the Victorian Government’s commitment in Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 to strengthen planning protection for our distinctive landscapes and valued non-urban areas. Declaration will allow greater protection of the area’s unique landscapes, environment, and lifestyle, and will include a review of Torquay’s settlement boundaries and building height controls.

The DAL Surf Coast engagement was delivered in conjunction with engagement for the Great Ocean Road (GOR) Action Plan. Learnings from previous GOR engagement were used to inform the planning of the Surf Coast DAL engagement program. An overview of the engagement program is outlined in Figure 2.
1.2 Purpose of this report

This report provides a summary of the views of the community and stakeholder gathered in person and online between 14 May and 14 June 2019. The analysis has been structured around:

- a vision for the future of the Surf Coast
- what is valued locally in relation to:
  - natural environments
  - landscapes and scenic views
  - culture and heritage
  - areas of economic prosperity
  - townships and settlements.
- the threats to what’s valued
- and means of protection for what is valued.
2 Engagement approach

2.1 Objectives

The stated objectives for the Surf Coast DAL engagement were:

- to inform stakeholders and the community about the program for declaring the Surf Coast a DAL, preparation of a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) and Framework Plan
- to inform stakeholders and the community about what work has been undertaken to date
- to inform stakeholders and the community about future opportunities to be involved with the project and what will be considered through future engagement
- to inform stakeholders and the community that the government is acting on its election commitment to protect the Surf Coast from inappropriate development
- to inform stakeholders and the community that the Victorian Government is working collaboratively with the Surf Coast Shire Council to deliver protection for the Surf Coast
- to provide the community with engagement opportunities that are easy to access, understand, and take part in
- to obtain meaningful community and stakeholder input into a statement of significance for the declaration and long-term vision for the Statement of Planning Policy
- to facilitate DELWP, the Surf Coast Shire Council and the Wadawurrung in delivering streamlined communications to stakeholders and the community
- to identify significant local values, and understand the threats to what is valued
- to build community understanding of the role and function of Torquay, future considerations for the area, and inform the next steps for Spring Creek.

2.2 Engagement activities

Engagement activities were undertaken between 14 May and 14 June 2019. These included open house sessions in Bellbrae, Torquay and Melbourne; an online survey and an online mapping tool.
DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES
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Online engagement was hosted on the Victorian Government engagement platform engage.vic.gov.au with a specific page, survey and mapping tool dedicated to the Surf Coast DAL.

Engagement promotion was undertaken by DELWP. All promotional activities are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Promotional activities undertaken

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotion type</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public announcement of program and launch of Engage Vic site</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Launch of survey and email sent to Engage Vic subscribers and stakeholder groups</td>
<td>15 May 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media release to publicise open house sessions</td>
<td>15 May 2019</td>
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<td>Flyers and postcards distributed to Council and stakeholder groups to publicise open house sessions</td>
<td>May 2019</td>
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<td>Surf Coast Times Mayor’s Column - promotion of community open houses</td>
<td>23 May 2019</td>
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<td>Classified advertisement in the Geelong Advertiser</td>
<td>28 May 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classified advertisement in the Surf Coast Times</td>
<td>30 May 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social media promotion via DELWP, DELWP BSW and Surf Coast Council</td>
<td>May - early June 2019</td>
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2.3 Engagement limitations

- There were high levels of participation in the engagement process from community members and stakeholders representing a range of different interests and locations in the project. This provides a high level of confidence in the representativeness of issues covered, however this cannot be considered a statistically valid sample.

- Some information included in this report may be factually incorrect or unfeasible. The information has not been validated as it is purely a summary of participants' opinions, ideas and feedback.

- Some participants raised concerns that were outside the scope of the discussions. These points have been noted but may be out of scope for consideration.

- The report presents the key points of discussion and includes a broad range of feedback expressed by participants. It provides an overview of participant sentiment but does not report on the sentiment of individual participants.
DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES  
SURF COAST, FINAL, AUGUST 2019  

- Participants may have participated in engagement activities through more than one channel. Reporting refers to the number of responses or the number of comments received rather than the number of participants.

- In instances where a contributor made multiple submissions of similar statements via the online platform this has been noted in the report findings.

- In some instances, participants did not answer all questions, this meant that some questions received fewer responses than others.

- Participants attending the Torquay and Melbourne sessions also provided feedback to inform the GOR engagement, which was run concurrently with the Surf Coast DAL engagement.

- A number of submissions were received after the close of engagement. These submissions have not been included in this report, however they will be considered by DELWP.

Figure 3: Engagement at St Luke’s Anglican Hall, Torquay
3 Participation

An overview of the levels of participation is outlined in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Overview of engagement participation

Five open house sessions were held in Torquay, Bellbrae and Melbourne to engage with communities on the Surf Coast about the declaration of the area as a Distinctive Area and Landscape. All engagement activities were replicated online. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of participants for each engagement activity. Figure 5 outlines the number of online participants and open houses participants by location.

Table 2: Summary of who we heard from during engagement

<table>
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<th>Engagement activity</th>
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<td><strong>Online</strong></td>
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<td>– 1,659 visitors online</td>
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<td>– 66 people followed the project online</td>
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<td>– 178 online surveys completed by 161 contributors</td>
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<td>– 250 comments mapped online by 66 contributors</td>
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<td><strong>Community open houses</strong></td>
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<td>– 5 open house sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>– 168 people signed-in</td>
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<td>– 385 comments mapped</td>
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1 A total of 178 surveys were completed from 161 unique IP addresses. If a contributor made multiple submissions of similar statements from one IP address, this has been noted in the report findings.

2 A total of 250 comments were mapped online by 66 unique IP addresses. If a contributor made multiple submissions of similar statements from one IP address, this has been noted in the report findings.

3 Actual attendance exceeded sign-ins, as not all participants signed in at events.
3.1 Face-to-face

A total of 168 people signed in at an open house event. There were 118 people who registered their attendance in Torquay, 31 in Bellbrae, and 19 in Melbourne shown in (Figure 5 above). The break-down of attendees at each event is as follows:

- Bellbrae, 23 May, 4pm-8pm: 31 participants
- Torquay, 24 May 10am-12pm: 63 participants
- Torquay, 24 May 6pm-8pm: 13 participants
- Torquay, 25 May 10am-12pm: 42 participants.
- Melbourne, 28 May 5:30pm-7:30pm: 19 participants.

Not all participants provided information about the community that they associate with. Based on the number of people who provided information about postcodes (122 participants) most people associated with Torquay (79 participants), Jan Juc (10 participants) and Bellbrae (9 participants).
3.2 Online

Overall, there was a high level of engagement online through both the online survey, through visiting a dedicated Engage Vic web page, and through dropping pins onto an online map. Online participants were asked to indicate their connection to the Surf Coast (see Figure 6). Participants were welcomed to select more than one field.

![Bar chart showing the number of selections for different relationships: Primary residence (137), Recreation (44), Volunteer (40), Local business owner/operator (35), Regular visitor (28), Employment (19), Secondary residence (12), Tourist (5).]

*Figure 6: Online participants’ connections to the Surf Coast (n=320)*

![Image of a community engagement event at St Luke’s Anglican Hall, Torquay.]

*Figure 7: Engagement at St Luke’s Anglican Hall, Torquay*
4 Engagement findings

Participants provided feedback in relation to what they value on the Surf Coast, the threats to what is valued, and how those values can be protected. The feedback was collected through: written responses on coloured coded cards at open house events, via an online survey, and through pins dropped onto an online mapping tool. This section provides a summary of the findings related to five key themes:

- Natural environments
- Landscapes and scenic views
- Cultural and heritage sites
- Townships and settlements
- Areas of economic prosperity.

The themes were identified through earlier community consultation related to the Great Ocean Road. Participants were also given the opportunity to highlight ‘anything we’ve missed’ outside of the five themes.

Please note that this section indicates numbers to show how many comments mentioned a particular value or theme; the number of comments does not represent the number of participants. Some comments may have been reflected under more than one theme, and some participants may have made multiple comments through various engagement channels. The graphs in section 4.1 show the top eight most common responses under each key theme.

Participant’s comments often make reference to specific locations. Location-specific comments are discussed by theme, and also discussed in section 4.2 below.

The key messages emerging from the community engagement are:

- Beaches, views, natural landscapes and township character are the most valued characteristics.
- Over-development (both residential and tourism) and increased population are the most significant threats to the values identified.
- Participants viewed limiting development and planning mechanisms as the strongest means of protection for the Surf Coast. Investment into natural habitat was also suggested.
- Additional education of communities and visitors was also raised as a possible management tool, with lack of education highlighted as a particular threat to Aboriginal cultural heritage.
• Locations other than Torquay / Jan Juc were identified as having important values, including Lake Modewarre, Ironbark Basin, Spring Creek and the Great Otway National Park.

Four private landowners submitted that the land area west of Duffields Road does not display the legislative attributes required for declaration as a Distinctive Area and Landscape. Generally, the landowners supported a Distinctive Area and Landscape declaration that excluded the land within 1km west of Duffields Road that lies within the Torquay – Jan Juc settlement boundary.

Figure 8: Engagement at Bellbrae Community Hall

4.1 Natural environments

Feedback relating to the natural environment was collected through green coloured cards during the open houses, visual representation on an online map, and via online questions: ‘What natural environmental features do you value the most?'; ‘What do you believe are the threats to these natural environmental features?'; and ‘How can we better protect these natural environmental features?’. Responses included:

• 44 comments face-to-face
• 177 comments online
• 72 mapped online pins.
**Values**

The characteristics that were most valued by participants were beaches and natural landscapes (Figure 9).

When discussing beaches, participants often mentioned specific places such as Bells Beach, Jan Juc and Point Addis. They also often referred more generally to the surf, the rugged cliffs and unspoiled feel of the local beaches.

When discussing natural landscapes, participants said they valued the environment, or a particular location such as Spring Creek Valley, Ironbark Basin, and reserves such as Jan Juc reserve, bushland scrub, and the Barrabool Hills.

Participants that discussed wildlife and vegetation described areas that are unique and valuable as those that have remnant vegetation and that support wildlife. Some participants discussed species which are vulnerable, endangered or protected under State and Commonwealth legislation. The key locations that people referenced as important included Lake Modewarre, Spring Creek, Ironbark Basin, Great Otway National Park and the hinterland areas more generally. Some participants discussed the significance of remnant roadside vegetation.

Participants raised the recreational values of the natural environment, and the walking, surfing and swimming that it affords.

![Bar chart showing the number of comments for different natural environment values]

*Figure 9: Natural environment values comments by theme (n=433)*
“[I value] Well, all of it. the pristine water quality, the surfing, the big wide beaches and grassed area above it at Torquay that makes room for everyone, no matter what cultural background or creed… the key to peace on earth is just the beach, hanging out and having space for all.” - online participant

“The farming hinterland, bush reserves, heath, saltmarshes, dunes and beaches provide a rich habitat for wildlife, including birds, echidnas, insects, kangaroos, wallabies and possums. A pleasure for locals and tourists” - online participant

Figure 10: Beach photo. Source: Provided by an online survey participant

Threats

In discussing the threats to the natural environments that participants valued most, many mentioned overdevelopments as a cause for concern (Figure 11).

Participants indicated that increased population and the pressures of residential development and infrastructure, as well as increased tourism were creating increased pressure on the natural environment, surrounding farmlands, and wildlife habitats. Many participants noted that increased population and tourism caused increases in traffic. Traffic and traffic speed were often identified as a threat to wildlife, and occasionally noted as a threat to pedestrians and cyclists.

Some participants specifically raised climate change as a threat, and expressed concerns about extreme weather events, erosion, bushfire, and sea level rise as threatening the things that they value most about the Surf Coast’s natural environment.
"Overdevelopment and the results of it i.e. loss of flora and fauna through loss of habitat and natural ecosystems" - online participant

“climate change – i.e. extreme weather events resulting in flooding, sea surges and coastal erosion” - online participant

**Figure 11: Natural environment threats comments by theme (n=309)**

**Protection**

When discussing how to protect the natural environment in the Surf Coast many participants suggested that using planning mechanisms and limiting development to control impacts to the environment and sensitive habitats was needed (Figure 12). Participants also suggested that educating communities and increasing regulation and enforcement against impactful behaviours would protect what they valued.

Participants who suggested limiting development also indicated that clearer boundaries for where development can and cannot occur is needed, though some were opposed to development altogether. Participants also expressed a need to manage development to protect the Surf Coast from climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and tourism impacts.

Many participants commented about a need to protect habitat, suggesting protection could occur through policy implementation, investment into habitat protection, and limiting development and access to significant habitats. Participants mentioned several habitat locations including: Spring Creek, Point Addis, Bells Beach, Anglesea and Lake Modewarre.
“Limit the town boundaries so that we can cope with the population growth. Keep our beaches, waterways and open space as they are and don’t allow over population” – online participant

“Lake Modewarre is a critical site for birdlife in our area including shorebirds (many threatened), duck refuge, tern breeding and must be protected from encroachment from development and usage that degrades the site”– online participant

“We should be doing all we can to not only protect but improve these habitats for future generations as they will become valuable assets for future generations. They will improve tourism and provide secure job opportunities”– online participant

Figure 12: Natural environment protection comments by theme (n=362)

4.2 Landscapes and scenic views

Feedback relating to landscapes and scenic views was collected through yellow coloured cards during open houses, visual representation via an online map, and via online questions: ‘What landscape and scenic views do you value the most?’, ‘What do you believe are the threats to these landscape and scenic views?’, and ‘How can we better protect these landscape and scenic views?’. Responses included:

- 57 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 54 mapped online pins.
**Values**

By far the most valued scenic view or landscape referred to was, beaches (Figure 13). Participants described beaches, cliffs, coastlines and ocean swell as being important to them. Not all comments specified location, but of those that did, the most valued beaches indicated were Jan Juc and Point Addis, followed by Bells Beach and Point Danger.

Aside from the beaches, participants said that they valued viewpoints that reveal the landscapes such as rolling hills, the ocean and cliff lines. Spring Creek, Point Addis and Iron Bark were most frequently mentioned. People also commented that they value vegetation, wilderness and river or estuary areas for their landscape and scenic values.

![Bar chart showing the number of comments for different values](chart.png)

**Figure 13: Landscape and scenic values comments by theme (n=321)**

“I value] Point Addis cliffs, and Jan Juc cliffs - iconic! The fact that you can’t see the built environment from below.” - online participant
Figure 14: Lorne Queenscliff Coastal Reserve photo. Source: Provided by an online survey participant.

Threats

Participants also defined overdevelopment as the greatest threat to their most valued landscapes and scenic views (Figure 15). Participants were most concerned about residential or tourism developments being built on the landscapes of value, or tall structures obscuring good views.

Some participants discussed other threats including increased tourists and residential numbers, climate change and pollution.

Figure 15: Landscapes and scenic views threat comments by theme (n=266)
“High density development in the Spring Creek Valley which will turn a scenic green view into a sea of houses. Allowing any “eco-tourism” within the Bells and Pt Addis area, this should be left totally undeveloped. Construction of high-rise buildings which can be seen from the shoreline along the coast.” - online participant

**Protection**

Participants highlighted that the best ways to protect landscapes and scenic views is through using planning mechanisms and limiting development (Figure 16).

Some respondents described planning mechanisms such as building heights, town boundary restrictions, and use of zones to protect landscape and scenic values is needed to protect what is valued. Many also suggested that system reform of the planning system is required so that planning decision-making is more transparent and efficient.

Participants also suggested better protection for vegetation through regulation and policy and through maintaining and building infrastructure such as barriers and walking paths.

![Figure 16: Landscapes and scenic views protection comments by theme (n=301)](image)

“Effective town planning processes that are transparent and effectively managed - without being usurped by political whims and/or prejudices.” - online participant

“Better town planning. No Development in the Bells Beach Surf reserve. Limits on town boundaries and housing.” - online participant

22
Cultural and heritage sites

Feedback relating to cultural and heritage sites was collected through orange coloured cards during open houses, visual representation on an online map, and via online questions: ‘Which cultural and heritage sites do you value the most?’; ‘What do you believe are the threats to these cultural and heritage sites?’; and ‘How can we better protect these cultural and heritage sites?’. Responses included:

- 30 comments face-to-face
- 100 comments online
- 20 mapped online pins.

Values

The cultural and heritage value mentioned most related to Aboriginal cultural heritage (Figure 17).

Participants also mentioned clifftops, beaches and natural landscapes, including Bells Beach, Point Addis and Point Impossible as well as other locations along the Great Ocean Road.

Participants identified sites of significance to Aboriginal cultural heritage as sites with middens (at Bells Beach), scar trees, fossils found along cliff lines, the Koori Cultural Heritage walk at Point Addis and Lake Modewarre, which is historically significant as a meeting place of the Wadawarrung people.

Many participants commented that they do not know enough about local and aboriginal history to suitably respond.

![Figure 17: Cultural and heritage values comments by theme (n=218)]
"Lake Modewarre and it’s southern wetlands are very important to the Wadawurrung people who, as most indigenous groups, would have used waterways for food collection and as a meeting place." – online participant

Threats

Similar to the threats described for natural environment and landscape values, participants cited overdevelopment as a threat to cultural and heritage values.

"I think community needs to know more about which sites have cultural and heritage significance."– online participant

"Lack of education about their importance. High visitor numbers."– online participant

Participants also suggested increased population and tourism was a threat to significant sites and beaches. They also noted that the increase in residents and visitors were impactful on the relaxed lifestyle of Surf Coast. Participants mentioned that a lack of education about significant sites is a threat, either because people are unaware of the value, or do not know how to respect sensitive sites such as areas with middens or fossils. They also suggested insufficient planning controls and climate change are threatening places of cultural or heritage value.

![Figure 18: Cultural and heritage threats comments by theme (n=166)](image-url)
"I think community needs to know more about which sites have cultural and heritage significance." - online participant

"Lack of education about their importance. High visitor numbers." - online participant

**Protection**

The most frequently suggested solution to better protect places of cultural value was education (Figure 19). Participants suggested greater public education about Aboriginal cultural heritage, and other cultural values, such as the Bells Beach surfing culture would help to protect these sites.

Many participants who discussed Aboriginal cultural heritage suggested that local Indigenous leaders could work with schools and tour operators to provide education. Other participants suggested that such values could be protected through partnership with Traditional Owner groups. They felt that partnerships could help to de-politicise protection of cultural and heritage sites and encourage local community stewardship and ownership of these areas.

Some participants suggested that stricter planning controls and regulation could help to protect sites of cultural and heritage value. For example, participants who valued surfing, recreational aspects and beaches suggested that planning could protect the coastline from development and protect valued coastal activities. Others suggested that fines and controlling access could help to protect sites of cultural or heritage value.

![Figure 19: Cultural and heritage protection comments by theme (n=203)](image-url)
“Supporting learning and knowledge of Aboriginal history in the area”- open house participant

“Recognition of the value of tourism, and put in place planning schemes (height restrictions, minimum space restrictions, limit on any further expansion of boundaries) that protect this unique and beautiful place”- online participant

4.3 Townships and settlements

Feedback relating to the townships and settlements was collected through blue coloured cards during open houses, visual representation on an online map, and via online questions ‘What township characteristics do you value the most?’, ‘What do you believe are the threats to these township characteristics?’, and ‘How can we better protect these township characteristics?’. Responses included:

- 87 comments face-to-face
- 230 comments online
- 7 mapped online pins.

Values

Participants indicated that what they valued most about local townships and settlements in the Surf Coast was the small ‘look’ and ‘feel’, which they described as ‘beachy’, ‘coastal’, ‘rural’ and ‘connected to bushland’ (Figure 20).

Participants identified physical characteristics which support the look and feel as being low-rise development which is subordinate to the natural landscape, settlement boundaries which restrict townships from sprawling, pedestrian links to the beach and public spaces, large residential lot sizes, and neighbourhood character which is unique to each township. Participants described the importance of maintaining the settlement’s relationship with the natural environment that surrounds it, both coastal and bushland.

Participants also described the community value of Surf Coast settlements, suggesting a connection to place is greater than just that of built form. They valued the relaxed, family friendly, ‘laid-back’ and ‘small-town’ feeling. Many participants valued the quiet of the area and having ease of movement including access to car parking at beaches, parks and shops and being able to experience a country lifestyle whilst maintaining access to larger services in Geelong.
**Figure 20: Townships and settlement values comments by theme (n=302)**

"[I value]" sensitive development - visually and environmentally." - open house participant

"[I value]" the relaxed coastal feel. The older homes that are small and hidden by coastal vegetation on their allotments contribute greatly to this atmosphere. The vast night sky over the sea and town is very valuable and easily lost." – online participant

**Threats**

Similar to the themes indicated above, participants most often cited overdevelopment as the threat to valued townships and settlement features, however participants had varied views about the impacts of overdevelopment (Figure 21).

Participants expressed concerns that overdevelopment would impact the environment and create a loss of connection to wildlife and natural landscapes. Similarly, some expressed concerns that large scale property developments would be permitted in greenfield areas. Others were concerned for the loss of neighbourhood character within existing townships by lot sub-division, buildings which do not respect the landscape, poor quality design, loss of older style homes to accommodate townhouses and units. Others viewed overdevelopment as impacting services and infrastructure, such as parking and roads.
**Figure 21: Townships and settlement threat comments by theme (n=257)**

“**Undue pressure on the natural beauty and biodiversity of the area through excessive urban development and commercialization**” - online participant

**Protection**

Participants viewed planning mechanisms, closely followed by limiting development to be the strongest means of protection for the Surf Coast (Figure 22). The considerations which participants suggested that planning mechanisms should respond to included restricting the bulk and height of buildings; the number of dwellings on a lot; mandating minimum lot sizes; encouraging design outcomes which reflect the coastal location; protecting open vistas and connections to the ocean; consideration of the cumulative impact of planning decisions; protecting heritage buildings; regulating front setbacks; requiring planting of native vegetation; requiring environmentally sustainable design; fixed township boundaries; and certainty in planning controls so that planning decisions aren’t made at VCAT rather than through Council.
4.4 Areas of economic prosperity

Responses relating to areas of economic prosperity were collected through red coloured cards during open houses, visual representation on an online map, and via an online survey through the questions ‘What areas of economic prosperity do you value the most?’; ‘What do you believe are the threats to these areas of economic prosperity?’; and ‘How can we better protect these areas of economic prosperity?’. Responses included:
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• 53 comments face-to-face
• 175 comments online
• 13 mapped online pins.

Values
Participants identified tourism as the area of economic prosperity that they valued most (58 comments) closely followed by farms and farmland (55 comments) (Figure 24). Participants noted that these industries were co-operative, with the farming sector providing a farmgate experience to tourists.

With regards to tourism, many participants did not specify the type of tourism they valued, whilst others specified surfing, overseas daytrips, ecotourism and retail tourism as preferences. Participants also noted the economic value of the recreation and retail sectors, specifically appreciating the local and boutique products of the area. Participants often identified small business with community values.

Some participants commented that they supported growth in tourism and residential development, business and improved services. Many participants who commented in support of development suggested that growth should be sustainable.

![Graph showing number of comments by value](image)

**Figure 24: Areas of economic prosperity values comments by theme (n=235)**

“The (farming) land along the Surf Coast highway leading into town automatically sets the scene for what the town had, open space and relaxed atmosphere.” - online participant

“Within the Hinterland region of the Surf Coast, small- and large-scale farming is highly valued.” – online participant
Threats

Participants again commonly identified overdevelopment as a threat to areas of economic prosperity (Figure 25). They expressed concerns about impacts on the landscape, scenic views, and environmental quality, as well as a loss of the area’s unique character, and the loss of unique shops to homogenous retail. Participants also noted the threat of rising farmland costs due to urban sprawl and a rise in hobby farming.

Participant’s comments were divided on whether the planning system is a threat to the economic prosperity of the region with some participants desiring more flexibility in where accommodation is permitted, greater ability to develop land and businesses, and certainty in planning outcomes and their effects. Conversely, some participants suggested that development opportunities are too liberal and impact on economic opportunities by detracting from the natural features of the area. Others expressed that there is poor strategic planning foresight overall.

![Figure 25: Areas of economic prosperity threat comments by theme (n=165)](image)

“Agriculture threatened by loss of agricultural land or expensive rates making agriculture unprofitable. Small business threatened by shopping centre developments and big businesses. Local communities thrive with local businesses.” - online participant
Protection

Most participants indicated that limiting development would best protect the region’s areas of economic prosperity (Figure 26). Participants described appropriate development, prioritising agriculture over residential development, fixed settlement boundaries, and enforced legislation. Participants also described planning mechanisms such as restricting commercial uses along the foreshore and waterways, and protection of agricultural land.

![Mode of protection bar chart](chart.png)

**Figure 26: Areas of economic prosperity protection comments by theme (n=142)**

Protect farm zones from development which is not related to farming. Prevent large scale tourism outlets that retail local produce in farming zones. Prevent the clustering of tourist activities and produce outlets - particularly if not related to farming or onsite artisan production. Prevent satellite developments which are not related to farming or food production in rural or farming zones. - online participant

### 4.5 Vision for the Surf Coast

We asked participants to define their future aspirations for the Surf Coast. A total of 112 of participants responded to the question ‘What do you want the Surf Coast lifestyle to be like in 2070? Consider what you love most about this place, what it looks and feels like’. Responses included:

- 30 face-to-face vision statements
- 82 online vision statements
The following word cloud (Figure 27) has been created from participant responses. The more frequently a specific word was used, the bigger and bolder the word appears.

![Word Cloud](image)

*Figure 27: Surf Coast 2070 visioning word cloud*

The following key themes emerged through the responses:

- environment
- community
- lifestyle and culture
- aesthetics
- and economic prosperity.

**Environment**

Many participants addressed the natural environment (flora, fauna, and marine environments) in their vision of the future, noting that the natural environment is what is most attractive about the Surf Coast. Participants often envisioned that the future Surf Coast would maintain its current environmental value, whilst others imagined enhanced environmental sustainability to come with technological advancements in transport and renewable energy. Some participants addressed the concerns of climate change and hoped that the impacts would be minimal. Participants also envisioned increased sustainability, through smaller housing choices, enhanced “off-grid” energy sources, and increased localised food production.
“Still with wildlife abounding in the forests, beaches, parks, farms and the community being connected to, and taking some responsibility” – online participant

A clean, pristine and caring community that values its environment, has an amazing coastline, national parks, a great arts community” – online participant

Community

Many participants envisioned a future Surf Coast where the community continues to be highly involved in local events, volunteerism and nature conservation. They also envisioned improved cooperation between active community groups and governance in reference to nature conservation, planning and developments.

Participants often wrote of long family histories on the coast and were hopeful that future generations would continue to live in the region. They envisioned a continued small-town feel. Some participants were welcoming to population and visitation growth, while others expressed concerns and were discouraged by overdevelopment of housing and tourism.

“We will welcome lots of new people. It’s lovely to see Torquay thriving today, we love all the new people coming here from Melbourne – it feels exciting.” – open house participant

“A community that still has the small coastal town feel. A seaside haven and escape.” – online participant

Lifestyle and culture

Participants envisioned a relaxed, beachside lifestyle that was “clean” and “healthy”. Many participants envisioned increased time spent outdoors in nature, and included activities such as walking and dog walking, surfing, horseback riding, cycling. Participants often imagined off-road coastal trails that could be enjoyed away from cars and to connect nearby communities.

Many participants envisioned an ongoing creative arts culture and attending festivals and community events. Others imagined improved shops, and restaurants as part of a thriving and lively community.

“...a vibrant culture with unique shops and restaurants catering for clean healthy living, local shops and galleries and markets selling the things creative locals make.” – online participant

“I want to surf the same break into my 80s!” – online participant

Aesthetics

Participants envisioned the look of the natural landscape to be much as it is today, with views of the coast, beaches, bushlands and surrounding farmlands.
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Participants often envisioned town development to be low-rise, low-density and sensitive to the natural landscape. Participants also imagined the protection of a greenbelt or farmlands around Torquay to prevent suburban sprawl. Some imagined low density, and large lot sizes, whilst others supported intensified development and township lot division. Many participants envisioned an improved Spring Creek landscape, referring to the current state of the land as an “eyesore”. Some participants imagined redevelopment of the area as a natural landscape, whilst others supported sensitive development.

“Would love to see Spring Creek land development be available for larger block sizes in done right e.g. re plantation of natives and other coastal guidelines...” – open house participant

“I would like to think that the beaches and surrounding natural environment would look exactly the same as it does today.” – online participant

Economic prosperity

While some participants envisioned a halt to growing economic interests in the area, many participants envisioned the future Surf Coast to be thriving and vibrant. Many participants imagined a future with job opportunities and housing affordability to support younger people to live in the area. This was often noted by participants whose families had long lived in the region.

Participants imagined economic opportunities that would be sensitive to and protective of the landscape, describing sustainable, low-impact and smaller scale housing development and growth in eco-tourism.

“A more community focused sustainable town, with plenty of green areas and living, supporting local businesses and farmers, creating new environmentally focussed economic ideas / businesses, that also educate the residents and tourists, to live a more sustained way, to support and look after the future of the surf coast.” – online participant

“I would like to see young people to be able to afford living in the area.” – open house participant

4.6 Location-specific findings

Mapping activities were available at open houses (physical maps with colour coded numbered dots that correspond with the colour coded cards, and annotations), and online. The online and face to face mapping data has been combined and illustrated by theme in Figures 28-32.
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Figure 28: Dot points mapped by participants online and face-to-face, natural environments

Figure 29: Dot points mapped by participants online and face-to-face, landscapes and scenic views

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Figure 30: Dot points mapped by participants online and face-to-face, cultural and heritage sites

Figure 31: Dot points mapped by participants online and face-to-face, townships and settlements
Figure 32: Dot points mapped by participants online and face-to-face, areas of economic prosperity

Table 3 provides a summary of the location specific comments made via the open house mapping activity and online mapping tool.

Table 3: Locations mentioned by participants in order of frequency mentioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring Creek</td>
<td>Spring Creek was the location raised in 95 comments⁴. Many participants expressed appreciation for the natural environment and landscape values this place provides such as green views, access to bushlands and wildlife, habitat corridors and as a distinct landscape. Many participants viewed this as under threat from overdevelopment and suggested that it is protected through planning mechanisms and also habitat protection activities.</td>
<td>“We love the Spring Creek area that abuts our farmland and would like to see it preserved so that native wildlife can still have a vegetation bridge to trans migrate along this natural water course thus insuring the biodiversity in the Surf Coast area.”- online participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ A total of 27 online map points were made regarding the protection of Spring Creek. Of these, 14 points were made by four participants.
## DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bells Beach</strong></td>
<td>Bells Beach was raised in 85 comments. Participants who discussed the value of Bells rugged cliff lines, surf culture, fossils and Aboriginal heritage values. Participants tended to say that protection of Bells could be through development controls, policy and education.</td>
<td>“[value] Bells Beach rugged coastline.” - online participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Jan Juc** | Jan Juc was specifically mentioned in 72 comments. Generally, people stated that they valued Jan Juc for the coast, the ocean and the natural value. The key threats to this area were overdevelopment, infrastructure constraints; and participants suggested planning controls to enforce town boundaries, limiting development and protecting habitat could help protect Jan Juc. | “Jan Juc coastline and all the rest of the coast as it’s accessible to everyone” - online participant  
“[value] The townships of Torquay and Jan Juc need boundaries set by legislation. We need certainty of how to plan for the future.” - online participant |
| **Torquay (township, hinterland and foreshore)** | Participants who discussed Torquay distinguished different areas: the foreshore, the township and hinterland areas. In total, 78 comments mentioned Torquay. Participants who valued this did so for the local community spirit. Though, some said that the "quaint feel" of Torquay has changed recently due to increased development and visitation. The threats to Torquay were primarily related to overdevelopment and increased visitors. Suggestions to protect Torquay included planning mechanisms to control development, encouraging local food and agribusiness, and protecting the natural habitat in and surrounding the town. | “[to protect Torquay from overdevelopment] …have building restrictions that maintains character of the area. Don’t allow too many apartment buildings and high-rise developments to create a mini Gold Coast. Keep it low key and as natural as possible.” - online participant |
| **Lake Modewarre** | Many participants (60 comments) mentioned Lake Modewarre for it’s environmental, cultural and landscape values. Participants discussed the wildlife, vegetation and significance to Aboriginal cultural heritage. Participants commented that Lake Modewarre is under threat from overdevelopment and soil disturbance. The suggestions for protecting this area included planning protections, and | “If Lake Modewarre is not protected from development, we believe that it will only be a matter of time before we see buildings, lights, noise and people intruding and polluting the environment here... We would like to see this area protected for our grandchildren and future generations to visit and...” |
### 4.7 Extended responses

Some resident groups and private landowners submitted extended responses as part of the consultation process. These responses raised a range of concerns which are summarised below.

Two resident groups, the Greater Torquay Alliance and the 3228 Residents Association Incorporated, submitted extended responses. The responses highlighted what they value, what might pose a threat to these valued aspects of the area, and how these might be protected. These generally related to the five values themes: natural environments, landscapes and scenic views, cultural and heritage sites, township and settlements, and areas of economic prosperity.

- **Natural environments** - Biodiversity was raised as the primary valued aspect. This was raised in relation to all beaches, but also specifically in relation to the following locations: Taylor Park, Jan Juc Creek, Deep Creek, Spring Creek valley, and Karaaf Wetlands. In addition, comments regarding biodiversity values also highlighted the need for protection of significant and/or threatened species of the area.

- **Landscapes and scenic views** - Valued aspects were identified as beaches, particularly Bell’s Beach, as well as green vistas (or non-urban breaks between townships). Green vistas of value were identified more specifically as those between Torquay North and Mount Duneed, Torquay/Jan Juc and Bellbrae, and Thompson Creek Valley. Non-

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5 A total of 27 online map points was made by 10 participants regarding the protection of Lake Modewarre, with 15 comments made by two participants.
urban breaks between townships were said to help maintain or enhance community identity, sense of place, habitat, wildlife corridors, as well as offering a visual barrier to residential development. Threats to these landscapes were identified as climate change (and associated sea level rise and increased risk of natural disaster), bushfire, coastal erosion, and overdevelopment. In addition, weeds were identified as a specific threat to beaches. Respondents submitted that weeds not only posed a threat to the scenic views, but also to biodiversity, landscape significance, and recreational amenity.

- **Cultural and heritage values** - Respondents focused on the Aboriginal heritage, archaeological significance and surfing heritage of the area. Respondents submitted that Aboriginal heritage was an important component of their cultural landscape and identified a need for a study into the identification and preservation of culturally significant sites, and for the education of locals and tourists alike. In evidencing this, respondents made note of the presence of middens, artefact and burial sites, and scar trees in the area. In terms of archaeological significance, they made note of past significant findings in the area and similarly identified the preservation of such areas as a tourism opportunity. Lastly, the surfing heritage of the area was perceived to be a valued cultural aspect of the area, as well as an important component of township character.

- **Township characteristics** - Respondents noted low-rise development, “town” feel, “beach lifestyle”, and surfing culture. Respondents emphasised the need for new development to match the present township characteristics and the maintenance of “sense of place” in order to preserve these characteristics.

- **Areas of economic prosperity** - Respondents valued tourism and managed local retail. The decline of the surf industry, along with over-commercialisation of the town centre were perceived to be threats to the economic viability of the area. There was also recognition that the recent growth in population and tourism, while having economic benefits, places pressure on infrastructure and the natural environment.

The resident groups expressed that the key threats to the area were identified as overdevelopment/urban sprawl, climate change, and coastal erosion. Respondents felt that declaration as a DAL would help to protect the valued aspects of the area. In addition, the following actions were identified as important for the protection of the area’s valued aspects: permanent town boundaries, height restrictions, retaining rural open spaces, declaring a climate emergency, further community engagement, and an impact study on the cultural, social and economic impacts of growth on the Surf Coast.

Four additional extended responses were received from private landowners, either directly or via consultants on behalf of the landowners. All of the land parcels that these submissions refer to is contained within the area locally known as Spring Creek. Specifically, all lots lie within the 1km area west of Duffields Road, are zoned as Urban Growth Zone - Schedule 1 (UGZ1) and are covered by the proposed Spring Creek Precinct Structure Plan. These respondents submitted that the land area west of Duffields Road, or even the whole of Torquay-Jan Juc, does not display the legislative attributes required for declaration as a DAL. They assert that it either did not have the value required, or if it did, that they weren’t
sufficiently significant values, and that, regardless, it is not under “threat” as the legislation contemplates.

The landowners submitted that previous strategic planning process – such as Amendment C37, Amendment C95 and Amendment C114 – have identified this area for development and designated it as an area of future urban growth area, and that this process would have considered any significant environmental or other values in its assessment. Regarding threats, some respondents asserted that there are sufficient planning controls already available which can avoid any the land use conflict which might constitute a threat under section 46AP of the Act. In addition, some suggested that development which is in accordance with existing policy does not constitute a “threat” to the area. Generally, the landowners supported a DAL declaration that excluded the land inside the Torquay-Jan Juc settlement boundary, or at least the land within 1km west of Duffields Road that lies within this boundary.
5 Next steps

A recommendation regarding declaration of the Surf Coast as a Distinctive Area and Landscape is expected to be completed in the second half of 2019. Following any such declaration, a second phase of engagement will be undertaken to test potential policy directions and help to inform the development of the Statement of Planning Policy. A third phase of engagement will then be undertaken to inform the draft Statement of Planning Policy through a public submissions process. The final Statement of Planning Policy is expected in mid-2020.
6 Engagement evaluation

A total of 36 participants completed an online engagement evaluation survey after attending an open house event. Engagement evaluation is important in ensuring participants have a chance to provide feedback on the engagement content and format and inform future engagements.

We asked participants to answer the following questions using a five-point Likert scale:

- Quality of information - “How well did we present the required information?”
- Use of time - “How well did we use our time?”
- Participation - “How well did we do on making sure everyone was involved?”
- Facilitation - “How well did we describe activities and keep the event focused?”
- Organisation - “How well was the event set up, managed and run?”

Overall participants were mostly satisfied with event participation (weighted average 3.56), and the quality of information presented (weighted average 3.39). Participants were least satisfied with the event facilitation (weighted average 3.22) (Figure 33).

![Engagement evaluation survey results](image)

*Figure 33: Engagement evaluation results*
Engagement promotion

We asked participants “how did you hear about the event”? Most participants were informed by email, word of mouth and social media (Figure 34). Some participants commented that events could have been promoted further in advance.

![Chart showing method of communication with percentages for social media, email, word of mouth, print media, and other]

**Figure 34: How participants were informed about the events**

Session attendance

We asked participants, “Which session did you attend?” Most survey participants attended sessions in Torquay on Friday, 24 May, which was the event which attracted the greatest numbers of attendants (Figure 35).

![Chart showing session location, date, and time with percentages for Bellbrae: Thursday 23 May, 6:00pm - 8:00pm, Torquay: Friday 24 May 2019, 10:00am - 12:00pm, Torquay: Friday 24 May 2019, 06:00pm - 08:00pm, Torquay: Saturday 25 May 2019, 10:00am - 12:00pm, and Melbourne: Tuesday 28 May, 5:30pm - 7:30pm]

**Figure 35: Engagement evaluation survey participants session attendance by location**
Further comments

We also asked participants, “Is there anything else you’d like to add?”. A total of 27 survey participants chose to add further comments.

- Many participants valued the opportunity to participate.
- Several participants commented that they feared that developer’s views would be more considered than community views.
- Some participants were confused by the layout and design of the session and some would have preferred a more traditional format with a formal presentation.

Though many event participants expressed that they enjoyed the workshop activities, event facilitation was the area that was least satisfactory to participants. This could be on account of an expectation of a more traditional ‘town hall’ format with presentation. Clearly communicating the format and style of participation in advance of events may help to improve this result.

“I would have liked to see someone at the commencement time speak to the group and explain how the process worked. However, those that were there were very supportive” – Torquay open house participant

“It was a good opportunity to be able to participate and with a number of times to have this opportunity.” – Torquay open house participant