Distinctive Areas and Landscapes – Bellarine Peninsula

Community Engagement Findings Report

FINAL, V4, 3 October 2019
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Capire staff and associates take great care while transcribing participant feedback but unfortunately cannot guarantee the accuracy of all notes. We are however confident that we capture the full range of ideas, concerns and views expressed during our consultation activities.

Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Approver</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mollie Rashleigh / Eleanor Howe</td>
<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>27 August 2019</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Emily Pritchard / Denise Francisco</td>
<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>23 September 2019</td>
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<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>30 September 2019</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>Denise Francisco</td>
<td>3 October 2019</td>
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Executive summary

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is working in collaboration with the City of Greater Geelong, the Borough of Queenscliffe, and the Wadawurrung People, to recommend declaration of the Bellarine Peninsula as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The Bellarine Peninsula is renowned for its attractive rural hinterland, boutique wineries and artisan producers. With coastal and historic towns, such as Queenscliff, and excellent beaches, it is one of Victoria’s most prized tourism and recreation destinations. Given its proximity to Geelong and Melbourne, and reputation as an attractive and relaxed lifestyle destination, areas of the Bellarine Peninsula have been under increasing development pressure.

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 Bellarine Peninsula DAL. The engagement started on 14 May 2019 and finished on 15 July 2019. The engagement process sought to reach a broad range of residents and stakeholders from across the Bellarine Peninsula, to communicate that DELWP was beginning the process for the Bellarine Peninsula DAL declaration. The engagement sought feedback from the community on what was most valued about the Bellarine Peninsula, and their vision for the future of the area. The process was designed and delivered by Capire Consulting Group (Capire) and supported by DELWP.

During the engagement, approximately 2,900 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 Bellarine Peninsula, 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 analysed into themes. The following Figure 1 illustrates the most frequently identified values, threats and means of protection.
Values

Vegetation: habitat areas for birds, nature reserves, wetlands, remnant bushland, indigenous vegetation, grasses, mature trees and woodlands

Beaches and oceans: coastal areas, dunes, marine environment and seascapes

Scenic views: looking out over the Heads and Point Nepean, uninterrupted vistas of Port Phillip Bay, Lake Connewarre, Swan Bay, You Yangs, the rural hills around Portarlington

The history of the area, Aboriginal history or European settlement history

The character, accessibility and community related aspects of townships and settlements

Important local industries: agriculture, aquaculture, tourism and their connection

Threats

Across the five themes, when participants were asked to identify the threats to what they value, they most frequently noted:

Overdevelopments: subdivisions, housing developments and the re-zoning of farmland and planning responses and controls

The creation of suburban housing estates and commercial developments impacting farm operations and agriculture

The height of some newer developments, overdevelopment contributing to pollution, interference with water, stormwater discharge, clearing of biodiversity, erosion of beaches and climate change

Lack of infrastructure that supports population growth: telecommunication towers, high tension power lines and pylons inhibiting the views
Protection

Across the five themes, when participants were asked how their values should be protected, they most frequently noted:

- Restricting development, greater planning, restraint on urban development, restricting housing to existing town boundaries.
- Improvements to planning mechanisms and controls and policy, placing restrictions on developments: limiting the height of residential development to two-storeys.
- Protecting habitat by turning parts of the Bellarine Peninsula into a reserve to act as a buffer zone.
- Education: more signage, informative materials, interpretive centres regarding aboriginal history; more support and funding for the Wadawurrung people to provide education.
- Restricting development, improving policy and provision of additional infrastructure.

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

Visioning

Participants were asked to envision what they want the Bellarine Peninsula lifestyle to be like in 2070. Overall, responses to the visioning question were reflective of the identified key areas of value. Participants commonly guided their responses using the words and phrases ‘maintain’, ‘keep’, ‘same as it is’, implying an eagerness for the future of the Bellarine Peninsula to be as it is today. Key themes are illustrated in Figure 2.
A recommendation regarding declaration of the Bellarine Peninsula as a Distinctive Area and Landscape is expected in the second half of 2019. Following 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 with submissions sought on the draft Statement of Planning Policy. The final Statement of Planning Policy is expected in mid-2020.
Figure 3: Engagement at St Leonards Reserve Hall
1 Introduction

1.1 Project background

The Bellarine Peninsula is renowned for its attractive rural hinterland, boutique wineries and artisan producers. With coastal and historic towns, such as Queenscliff, and excellent beaches, it is one of Victoria's most prized tourism and recreation destinations.

Given its proximity to Geelong and Melbourne, and reputation as an attractive and relaxed lifestyle destination, areas of the Bellarine Peninsula have been under increasing development pressure. To ensure the region’s long-term sustainability, and to better manage threats associated with climate change, we must effectively balance growth with the protection of significant natural and rural assets.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is working in collaboration with the City of Greater Geelong, the Borough of Queenscliffe and Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung, to recommend declaration of the Bellarine Peninsula as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Following any such declaration, a Statement of Planning Policy will be developed which will include a 50-year vision and strategies, including long-term settlement boundaries, to better protect the unique features of the Bellarine Peninsula for current and future generations.

An overview of the engagement program is outlined in Figure 4 and a map of the Bellarine Peninsula DAL study area is provided in Figure 5.
DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES – BELLARINE PENINSULA, V4, 3 OCTOBER 2019

Project commencement (April 2019) → Phase 1 Public Engagement Understanding the values the community want to protect (14 May – 15 July 2019) → Declaration of Bellarine Peninsula as a DAL (mid-late 2019)


Figure 4: Bellarine Peninsula DAL project timeline

Figure 5: Bellarine Peninsula DAL study area
1.2 Purpose of this report

This report provides a summary of the views of the community and stakeholders gathered in person and online between 14 May and 15 July 2019. The analysis has been structured around:

- a vision for the future of the Bellarine Peninsula
- what is valued, considered a threat and ideas to protect locally in relation to:
  - natural environments
  - landscapes and scenic views
  - culture and heritage
  - areas of economic prosperity
  - townships and settlements.
- threats to what is valued
- how values can be protected.
2 Engagement approach

2.1 Objectives

The engagement to support the development of the Bellarine Peninsula DAL aimed to achieve the following objectives.

- To inform stakeholders and the community about the program for declaring the Bellarine Peninsula a DAL, preparation of a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) and Framework Plan.
- To inform stakeholders and the community about the work has been undertaken to date.
- To inform stakeholders and 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 Victorian government is acting on its election commitment to protect the Bellarine Peninsula from inappropriate development.
- To inform stakeholders and the community that the Victorian Government is working collaboratively with the Borough of Queenscliffe and the City of Greater Geelong to deliver protection for the Bellarine Peninsula.
- To keep stakeholders and the community updated on project progress and opportunities for engagement, ensuring communications are consistent, accurate, and accessible.
- To provide the community with engagement opportunities that are easy to access, understand, and participate in.
- To obtain meaningful community and stakeholder input into the SPP process and long-term vision for the area.
- To support DELWP, the Borough of Queenscliffe, the City of Greater Geelong and the Wadawurrung to deliver 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 areas of the Bellarine Peninsula, future considerations for these areas.
2.2 Engagement activities

Engagement activities were undertaken between 14 May and 15 July 2019. These included open house sessions and an online survey and mapping tool.

Open houses

Eight, two-hour open house sessions provided participants with opportunity to read about the project with a series of information stations and to speak with members of the project team. Participants were invited to complete questions at activity stations that focused on what they value, see as a threat and ideas for protection as well as their future aspirations for the Bellarine Peninsula and a space to provide information about anything the project team have missed.

Open houses were held at the following times and locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portarlington Parks Hall</td>
<td>Saturday, 22 June 2019</td>
<td>11:00 AM – 01:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 Newcombe Street, Portarlington</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Leonards Reserve Hall</td>
<td>Monday, 24 June 2019</td>
<td>11:00 AM – 01:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cole Street, St Leonards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queenscliff Uniting Church Hall</td>
<td>Monday, 24 June 2019</td>
<td>05:00 PM – 07:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner of Hesse and Stokes St, Queenscliff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foyer, DELWP Melbourne Office</td>
<td>Tuesday, 25 June 2019</td>
<td>06:00 PM – 08:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Grove Community Hub</td>
<td>Thursday, 27 June 2019</td>
<td>06:00 PM – 08:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79 Hitchcock Avenue, Barwon Heads</td>
<td>Thursday, 27 June 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John Dory Drive, Ocean Grove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St James Hall (Drysdale)</td>
<td>Friday, 28 June 2019</td>
<td>06:00 PM – 08:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 Collins Street, Drysdale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold Community Hub</td>
<td>Saturday, 29 June 2019</td>
<td>10:00 AM – 12:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-39 Kensington Rd, Leopold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Online engagement

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 Bellarine Peninsula DAL.
Communication and promotion

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 and reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public announcement of program and launch of Engage Vic site</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch of online mapping and comment tool</td>
<td>15 May 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media release to publicise community engagement and upcoming open house sessions and online survey</td>
<td>15 May 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers and postcards distributed to Council, community members and stakeholder groups to publicise upcoming community engagement opportunities and Engage Victoria website</td>
<td>15 May – 29 June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch of survey</td>
<td>7 June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails sent to Engage Victoria subscribers and stakeholder groups</td>
<td>14 and 18 June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified advertisement in the Geelong Advertiser and Geelong Independent for Engage Vic website and open houses</td>
<td>21 June and 22 June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media promotion via DELWP</td>
<td>15 May – 15 July 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Engagement limitations

Outlined below are the limitations of the engagement process.

- There were high levels of participation in the engagement process from community members and stakeholders representing a range of different interests and locations. 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.

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

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

There were some instances where participants made comments in relation to specific locations and others made comments that related to the Bellarine Peninsula as a whole. Some participants attended a face to face engagement activity in a particular location but made comments in relation to other locations throughout the study area. It was not always clear if some comments related to a specific location or applied to more than one location.

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.
DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES – BELLARINE PENINSULA, V4, 3 OCTOBER 2019

[Image of a board with post-it notes in various colors, labeled "Tell Us What You Value".

WWW.CAPIRE.COM.AU
3 Participation

An overview of the overall levels of participation is outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 6: Overview of engagement participation

Eight open house sessions were held to engage with communities on the Bellarine Peninsula about the declaration of the area as a DAL. All engagement activities were replicated online. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of participants for each engagement activity. Figure 7 outlines engagement participation online (survey responses to the question ‘which Bellarine town do you most associate with?’) and face-to-face (by open house location).

Table 2: Summary of who we heard from during engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement activity</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community open houses</td>
<td>8 open house sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>207 people signed-in(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>292 comments mapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>2,700 visitors online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>175 online surveys completed by 160 contributors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>293 comments mapped online by 53 contributors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Face-to-face

A total of 207 people signed in at an open house event. The break-down of attendees at each event is outlined in Table 3: Number of attendees at each engagement event.

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\(^1\) Actual attendance exceeded sign-ins, as not all participants signed in at events.
Table 3: Number of attendees at each engagement event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portarlington, Saturday, 22 June 2019</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Leonards, Monday, 24 June 2019</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queenscliff, Monday, 24 June 2019</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, Tuesday, 25 June 2019</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon Heads, Thursday, 27 June 2019</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Grove, Thursday, 27 June 2019</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drysdale, Friday, 28 June 2019</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold, Saturday, 29 June 2019</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Engagement participation online (survey responses to the question ‘which Bellarine town do you most associate with?’) and face-to-face (by open house location)
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 Bellarine Peninsula (see Figure 8) and were welcomed to select more than one field.

Figure 8: Online participants’ connections to the Bellarine Peninsula (n=302)
4 Engagement findings

Participants provided feedback in relation to what they value on the Bellarine Peninsula, 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 (see Appendix B), 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
- Culture and heritage sites
- Townships and settlements
- Areas of economic prosperity.

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 sections 4.1 to 4.5 show the comments that were mentioned ten times or more under each key theme. The qualitative sections preceding the graphs provide an overview of participants comments, focusing on the themes that received the most feedback with quotes to illustrate sentiment. Through the analysis some comments were counted more than once as they sometimes covered more than one characteristic. For example, one unique response may have discussed two or more distinct ideas or suggestions. This explains why some of the graphs total more than the total number of unique responses.

Participant’s comments sometime refer to specific locations however many participants made comments that relate to the whole of the Bellarine Peninsula. Location-specific comments are also discussed in section 4.2 below.
The key messages emerging from the community engagement are:

- Vegetation, township character, views, beaches, history, agriculture/aquaculture are the most valued characteristics.
- Overdevelopment and the current planning controls and/or lack of controls are the most significant threats to the values identified.
- Participants viewed restricting development and planning mechanisms as the strongest means of protection for the Bellarine Peninsula. Protection of the natural habitat, education about cultural and heritage values and provision of additional infrastructure was also suggested.
- Locations identified as having important values, include the wetlands at Edwards Point, Buckley Park, The Moonah Woodlands, Point Richards Reserve, Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, Queenscliff Lighthouse, Queenscliff Fort, Swan Bay, Lake Connewarre, Barwon River, Thompson Creek, Lake Victoria, Murtnagurt Swamp, Clifton Springs, Buckley’s Cave, Murradoc Hill, and the views across Corio Bay.
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?’; ‘Do you think there are any threats to these natural environmental features?; and ‘How can we better protect these natural environmental features?’. Responses included:

- 745 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 169 mapped online pins.

**Values**

The characteristics that were most valued by participants were the vegetation, wildlife, beaches and oceans. (see Figure 9). When discussing vegetation participants mentioned habitat areas for birds, nature reserves, wetlands, remnant bushland, indigenous vegetation, grasses, mature trees and woodlands. Specific areas mentioned where vegetation was valued included: Moonah Woodlands, Buckley Park Foreshore Reserve, the green belt between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale and Edwards Point Reserve.

Participants discussed wildlife as being unique and mentioned birds and animals such as the orange bellied parrots, wallabies, echidnas and the hooded plover as fauna they valued.

When discussing beaches and oceans, participants highlighted the coastal areas, dunes, marine environment and seascapes. Beaches in specific places that were mentioned often included: Swan Bay, Buckley Park and the rural beaches between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale as well as the Drysdale and Clifton Springs areas.

Several waterways and wetlands were mentioned as highly valued such as Lake Victoria, Lake Connewarre, Lonsdale Lakes, the Bluff and Barwon River Estuary and lakes, Edwards Point Reserve and the Ramsar wetlands. These areas were particularly valued for the habitats they provide for local and migratory birds.

Participants raised the recreational values of the natural environment such as the playgrounds and parks and walking trails, often mentioning the rail trail. Participants also highlighted the landscape views from some of the walks in the area, specifically the walking tracks around the Borough, You Yangs and the bay.

“Unique coastal woodland, environmentally sensitive Ramsar protected wetlands”

“We overlook Reedy Lake and Lake Connewarre, we are also close to Corio Bay all are beautiful and precious, bird life abounds in all these areas”

“The trees that are the anchor to the survival of the natural areas. as well as those that sustain the community of the towns.”

The serene views from and along the Bellarine Rail Trail between Jetty Road, Curlewis and the intersection of Curlewis Road and Hermsley Road, Curlewis. The views include rolling farmland and elevated views of The You Yangs across the bay.”
In discussing the threats to the natural environments that participants valued most, the greatest concern mentioned was overdevelopments (see Figure 10).

Overdevelopment was described as subdivisions, housing developments and the re-zoning of farmland. Developments that were mentioned include the sale of Shell-Grit Mine on Shell Road and “head waters”.

Overdevelopment was seen to threaten what people valued through increased urbanisation such as more roads and asphalt, and encroachment on natural areas and wildlife corridors for example, where this exists outside township boundaries. Overdevelopment was also seen to contribute to pests such as the incidence of domestic and feral dogs and cats.

Overdevelopment was seen to provide negative impacts such as pollution, interference with water, stormwater discharge, clearing of biodiversity, and erosion of beaches and climate change. Participants often mentioned littering and rubbish dumping as a threat to the natural environment including beaches and waterways.

Participants also felt that the natural environment values were threatened by planning controls and some of the planning decisions that had been made. Comments highlighted include: land banking by developers and the pressure from developers to rezone land for development, unprotected settlement boundaries, and an insufficient localised planning statement. Additionally, some proposed developments were seen to be an inappropriate use of land and seen as not being managed or protected as they should be.

“The erosion of boundaries by the Council of Greater Geelong under developer pressure.”

“Our natural environment is constantly threatened by the greed of developers and councils. Why does money always win over the natural environment? Look at the amount of subdivisions and houses now at Armstrong Creek, Torquay, Point Lonsdale, Portarlington, Drysdale and Ocean Grove. We need to value our green spaces.”

“The waterways feeding the wetlands and severely degraded and polluted. Over development of sensitive areas such as Barwon Heads and Point Lonsdale are not only destroying large patches of valuable environment, but these lands will be subject to flooding in climate change scenarios.”
Protection

To protect elements of the natural environment, participants mostly suggested restricting development, protecting habitat, developing policy and improving maintenance (see Figure 11). Common suggestions for restricting development included greater planning, restraint on urban development, limiting housing to existing town boundaries. There were many comments about restricting development near water bodies and the foreshore as this would limit water pollution and help to protect the environment.

To protect the natural environment, it was suggested that new developments could be encouraged to leave the natural trees of significance and native grasses as well as planting new native plants. It was also suggested that parts of the Bellarine Peninsula could be purchased and turned into a reserve that acted as a buffer zone, specific locations included wetlands, woodlands, Lake Victoria, Moonah Woodlands and Buckley Park foreshore reserve.

Participants commented that stronger policy would further protect the natural environment such as clearer definition for mature trees and wildlife, including wildlife corridors in any planning decisions and a recognition of climate change. It was thought that stronger policy could also help to educate the broader community about the landscape values of the Bellarine Peninsula.

“Ensuring no more encroachment of township development by setting planning policy that recognises urban settlements require greater densification.”

“The Swan Bay catchment needs to remain largely undeveloped to allow natural seasonal water movement into Swan Bay. Such water should not be transporting litter and other pollutants generated from urban areas into this Ramsar wetland and vitally important fish nursery.”

“Be more environmentally considerate before planning clearing for housing estates or any other activity.”

“Encourage a diversity of housing types and appropriate density where possible that does not impact as significantly on the environment.”
Figure 11: Natural environment protect comments by theme (n=696)
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?’; ‘Do you think there are any threats to these landscape and scenic views?; and ‘How can we better protect these landscape and scenic views?’. Responses included:

- 176 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 53 mapped online pins.

Values

Participants mostly commented on the scenic views they value, followed by the beach and ocean and natural landscapes (see Figure 12). Some of the frequently mentioned views included looking out over the Heads and Point Nepean, uninterrupted vistas of Port Phillip Bay, Lake Connewarre, Swan Bay, the You Yangs and the rural hills around Portarlington.

The ocean, beach and surrounds such as foreshore and native vegetation were frequently mentioned as values of the Bellarine Peninsula. Participants said they valued the sand dunes, coastlines along Swan Bay, the Ocean Grove-Point Lonsdale bluff and cliffs, and the Barwon Heads Estuary.

Comments about scenic views and landscapes also focused on the rural and farming aspects of the Bellarine Peninsula. Participants said they valued these areas including the open rural and natural hinterland, vineyards, rolling hills, trees and agriculture situated between townships.

"The views to the north and east on a clear day offer unobstructed views to the city, Mt Martha and beyond. A green wedge over the golf course to the bay and further to the south reveals a view down to the heads. It is just beautiful."

"The hinterland between the coast and the hills is an intrinsic element of the landscape value of the Bellarine. The view from the hills down to the bay is largely open or revegetated landscape, free of jarring elements such as telecommunications towers, industry and development."

"All of the natural landscapes and vistas, I enjoy seeing farmlands and orchards too."

"The look of rurality that you see across the Bellarine. The canola, the green paddocks, the cows. And obviously the coastline, the ocean, bay, dunes."
Threats

Participants overwhelmingly viewed overdevelopment and planning responses and controls as major threats to the elements they valued in the Bellarine Peninsula (see Figure 13). Comments focused on new development such as the size of the block often thought to be too small and inconsistent with the local area as well as the subdivision of farming land and the inclusion of small hobby farms. Comments also highlighted concern about the infrastructure that accompanies population growth such as telecommunication towers, high tension power lines and pylons inhibiting the views.

There were concerns about the planning responses and controls and participants conveyed the perception that the height of some of the newer developments was inappropriate. Participants were concerned about access to views whilst the landscape is changing from a more natural environment to houses, especially around the foreshores. Participants felt there was a lack of visionary and long-term planning regulations with many councils seen to be succumbing to pressure from developers.

“Cell towers and major road developing that increase the infrastructure impact on the landscape.”

“Over development by excessive building heights and density in urban areas. Un-controlled rural development, such as rural subdivision into lifestyle blocks.”

“Inappropriate development such as three-storey, massed structures that obliterate the views now shared by all.”

“The landscape has changed dramatically over the past 20 years with more housing...everyone trying to catch their little glimpse of the view.”

“Current building legislation is not being adhered to. New buildings are springing up all the time which are blocking these views from whole sections of neighbourhoods and reducing the natural light of surrounding properties.”
Protection

To protect the landscapes and scenic views they value, participants suggested restricting development and ensuring planning mechanisms and controls (see Figure 14).

Comments focused on limiting the height of residential development to two-storeys to ensure the views can be shared. Participants also suggested that smaller homes and medium density development should be encouraged, and new developments should not be built to the property boundary. It was also proposed that planning schemes should be implemented that reflect the individual character of each township.

Participants suggested preventing subdivision of productive agricultural land and zoning land as rural to ensure it cannot be developed. This would help to protect some of the valued landscapes and views. Participants also suggested better protection for vegetation through regulation and policy and through maintaining and building infrastructure such as barriers and walking paths. It was also suggested that landowners could be supported to revegetate and look after the landscape.

There was concern that previous planning decisions had been changed with examples of previous long-term strategies by the council being reviewed every few years, meaning an area that was previously preserved and protected has now been developed.

"Restrict development to township zones and restrict development above two-storeys."

"Have permanent zones for conservation that will not be changed in the future."

"A clear vision for what the future looks like accompanied by clever planning laws that are not able to be manipulated/bought in the future for the benefit of a few."

"With strong legislation on land use, green wedges, building height limits, as well as documented controls that provide clear guidance on signage and infrastructure placement."
4.3 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?’, ‘Do you think there are any threats to these cultural and heritage sites?; and ‘How can we better protect these cultural and heritage sites?’. Responses included:

- 117 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 25 mapped online pins.

Values

The cultural and heritage values most frequently identified by participants related to history (see Figure 15). Many participants commented generally about the history of the area, whilst some referred more specifically to Aboriginal history or European settlement history.

Participants who commented on European history frequently made mention of European architecture, maritime history, remnants of war bunkers and memorial sites, or forts such as the Fort in Queenscliff. Others specified historic events, well known settlers, and settlement events. Many participants told stories of their own family histories related to the area.

General comments were made by many participants about the Aboriginal history of the area. Some participants noted specific sites of significance, Some participants commented that the Aboriginal history of the area was not known well enough.

Participants commented frequently on township characteristics. Where participants noted buildings of heritage value, they most often noted buildings in Queenscliff, Portarlington and...
Point Lonsdale. Participants commonly mentioned that they valued the small town, village feel and connection of townships to the coast or rural landscapes. The maritime nature and coastal quality of the town was commonly mentioned, with participants specifying the lighthouses and piers as key features.

A number of participants mentioned that the natural environment was an important aspect of culture, including connection to rural landscapes, parklands, and vegetation including significant trees and grasslands.

“I don’t believe we as a general public have wide access to Aboriginal cultural knowledge relevant to the Bellarine. Yes, there are a couple of indigenous heritage promoting organisations, but our indigenous heritage is viewed as separate to our communities – it’s not integrated into general heritage.”

“Queenstown in general! Its heritage buildings, the fort, the pier and harbour. The middens along the coast! Heritage buildings in Drysdale and surrounds. The Mill in Portarlington! The Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. Ocean Grove Park. The old farm buildings all over the peninsula.”

“All the historic war points and the existing huts from old camp.”

“Oakdene Vineyard heritage buildings, vines and rural landscape is an iconic heritage and cultural site. The whole site should be protected as a tourist destination, heritage protection and support to local agriculture.”

![Graph showing cultural and heritage values comments by theme (n=130)](image)

**Figure 15: Cultural and heritage values comments by theme (n=130)**

**Threats**

Where participants identified the threats to cultural and heritage values, participants most commonly cited overdevelopment (see Figure 16).

Many participants specified that housing development, and housing estates were the primary threat. Some participants worried that developers would destroy heritage buildings, that only the facades would be protected, or that new buildings would not be compatible with heritage buildings. Participants identified the Drysdale Bypass as an area that had been impacted by overdevelopment. Some participants also noted that development had impacted on protected trees and reserve land.
Many participants also believed that planning responses or controls were threatening to cultural and heritage values. Some participants felt that there was pressure by developers to allow greater development, and the City of Greater Geelong was criticised for being pro-development and granting permits to developers. Participants also felt that developers applied pressure to relax heritage planning overlays, and that there was a lack of policy and protection for indigenous sites.

Participants frequently cited that there was a lack of education about cultural and heritage sites, including sites of Aboriginal significance, and settlement history. Some participants felt that sites of significance were not yet known and may be unknowingly impacted by development and human activity.

Other human activities frequently cited as threats to cultural and heritage sites included impactful recreational activities and tourism on the natural environment and historically significant sites. Participants noted the proposed cycling path through Buckley Park, or the dune system would impact on parklands and sensitive environments. Problems with rubbish was also noted. Participants who identified tourism as a threat mentioned human impacts as well as development pressures, particularly on farmland or coastal areas.

“Development is the biggest threat, we have seen this locally where protected Moonah trees were bulldozed, and Aboriginal fish traps were destroyed at Campbell Point House with few consequences for those responsible. Disgraceful.”

“The main threats are ignorance of their significance and the paucity or weakness of heritage and cultural overlays. Much greater community-wide awareness is needed of what we stand to lose unless not only the specific sites but also their wider settings are protected by legislation and clear from policy and management.”.

“Pressure from developers to subdivide blocks in the town – developer greed does not benefit the communities left with the over development and degradation of the townscape.”

Figure 16: Cultural and heritage threats comments by theme (n=243)
Protection

Participants most frequently commented that education was the means to protecting cultural and heritage sites, suggesting more signage, informative materials and interpretive centres about Aboriginal history are needed. They also suggested more support and funding for the Wadawurrung people to participate in providing education. Participants also noted the need for signage and education about historic settlement sites. Many participants noted the value of storytelling in supporting the protection of historic sites.

Many participants suggested restricting development as a means of protection. They specifically noted the need for restrictions and better planning controls near heritage buildings and historic sites, and around sensitive natural environments. Others suggested the need for more secure settlement boundaries.

Participants suggested policies and initiatives to promote Aboriginal culture, heritage protection for buildings, settlement site and war relics. Many participants suggested a need for increased funding to support the development of protective policies. Participants were divided on whether policies and initiatives should be developed at a community level, or through local, state or national government. Many participants also suggested improved partnerships with local community members and organisations who have knowledge of local indigenous and settler histories as well as the local environment.

Participants commented that valued sites required better maintenance, specifically identifying lighthouses, jetties, and Fort Queenscliff. Other participants suggested better maintenance and care of the natural environment and coastline.

“Offer protection through education and laws. Create information signs and heritage walks to tell the story of our indigenous and heritage history.”

“Legislate to protect before it is covered in houses’

“Need to greatly strengthen heritage so developers, their lawyers and town planners cannot destroy our history at planning tribunals.”

“Strong planning controls and giving the community a greater say in how their township can continue to be sustainable into the future.”
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**Figure 17: Cultural and heritage protect comments by theme (n=257)**

### 4.4 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?’, ‘Do you think there are any threats to these township characteristics?’, and ‘How can we better protect these township characteristics?’. Responses included:

- 197 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 32 mapped online pins.

**Values**

Participants mostly valued the character, accessibility and community related aspects of the Bellarine’s townships and settlements (see Figure 18).

When talking about character, participants commented on the green vegetation and woodlands, great architecture and heritage buildings, historic and maritime feel. Participants highly valued the small, distinct towns with a rural, coastal, village feel which are buffered by farmland. They valued the open spaces, the low scale openness of the towns with wide footpaths and verandas whilst still allowing shared views of the surrounding vistas. Settlement boundaries were also mentioned as necessary for maintaining the distinct nature of each town.

Other values related to accessibility included walkability, lack of traffic congestion, and ease of getting around. Housing was valued for accessibility and affordability. Participants commented...
that they value development that is low rise with larger blocks for homes with space around the houses. Participants valued being able to walk safely and the privacy afforded where they live, as well at the human scale, shops, services and facilities that are close to home.

The community related aspects of townships that were highly valued including the prevalence of parklands, places to gather, open spaces located at the beach, and local businesses. Participants frequently highlighted that they valued the economic viability of local businesses and absence of large commercial businesses. Each township was viewed as having unique attractions, where the quaintness, ambiance and sense of place was seen as important.

Many responses indicated that they felt it was important to be able to connect to likeminded people. They loved the community spirit, cohesiveness and sense of neighbourhood. They felt this fostered a strong community basis and sense of pride.

“The village feel of the Portarlington shopping strip. The lack of high-rise buildings and the adjoining public spaces and views of the bay.”

“The character and identity of Barwon Heads as a coastal village.”

“Maintaining the old-world charm in townships such as Portarlington and Queenscliff.”

“The civility, the helpfulness, the familiarity of small towns on the Bellarine.”

“Facilities such as parks, library, health centre, schools, the bus services.”

Figure 18: Townships and settlements value comments by theme (n=221)

Threats

Overdevelopment, planning responses and controls, as well as an increasing population and visitor numbers were viewed as the greatest threats to township and settlement values (see Figure 19).

Participants viewed the creation of suburban housing estates and commercial developments as the biggest threats to the Bellarine Peninsula. When discussing overdevelopment, participants
were concerned about sub-divisions encroaching on rural land. Comments highlighted that overdevelopment is negatively impacting the local area by creating an increase in traffic and signalling. There was also concern that the increase in development is not being married with the necessary infrastructure to support it.

Many commented that many developments are inappropriate, and not in keeping with the village and coastal character of towns. There was concern that more modern style architecture is threatening the classic and historical buildings. Participants highlighted that uncontrolled, multistorey extensions to buildings are being allowed with many of these deemed too big for the local area. This concern was coupled with larger shopping malls, fast food and grocery stores moving into the Bellarine Peninsula.

When discussing planning responses participants felt that there were no clear planning controls and a lack of coherence and integration in townships. Participants often viewed the current planning controls as not being adhered to and cited a lack of approaches to protect the valued township character. Equally there are land use conflicts emerging and heights for some buildings were viewed as not complimentary to neighbouring properties. Open town boundaries and subdivisions are contributing to small blocks with large houses and no nearby green open spaces.

Participants were also concerned about the natural environmental and articulated that reduced greening and habitat for wildlife will be further impacted by overdevelopment.

“There is no infrastructure such as kindergarten's, adequate schools, roads, childcare etc.”

“A lack of integration of new developments plus over development - state planning doesn't acknowledge coastal character.”

“Building of multi-storey apartments and new housing that are inappropriate for the area.”

“So many of the original houses, the characterised beach house architecture, had important trees and vegetation for local wild life have been knocked down, and been replaced by multi storey apartments that literally build right to the fence line and have no grass, let alone trees.”
Protection

Participants highlighted improvements to planning mechanisms and controls and policy as well as restrictions placed on development in the Bellarine Peninsula as ways to protect their townships and settlements (See Figure 20).

Comments focused on maintaining zones, such as rural buffer zones and rural living zones to ensure that growth is contained to specific areas. There were also comments on limiting the height of new development and defining what ‘coastal’ architecture means for Bellarine Peninsula to ensure development fits in with the look and feel of the local area. Some suggestions included clarity of town boundaries, strengthening the distinctive character of each township and a stricter enforcement of the allocation of green space per residential block.

Participants also commented on maintenance of heritage buildings to ensure they are preserved and celebrated. Some comments were made about establishing heritage site status with overlay to further ensure local character is retained. Comments on maintenance also focused on the natural environment with participants suggesting changes could be made to protect habitat for wildlife.

There were comments on the provision of additional infrastructure to support the population as well as comments about infrastructure. This included roads and footpaths, and recreation spaces such as playgrounds for young children, reserves and sports precincts.
4.5 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:

- 118 comments face-to-face
- 175 comments online
- 13 mapped online pins.

Values

Agriculture and aquaculture industries along with the tourism industry were discussed as important local industries for this area. There were identified as important for employment, local food production and supporting other local small businesses (particularly those that rely on
tourism). Participants also drew the link between agriculture and tourism and that agriculture is seen as driving much of the tourism in the area.

Participants discussed the high value land conditions for agriculture in the area including good soil conditions. The ‘right to farm’ was also valued by some participants, which refers to farmers having flexibility over how they operate on their own land.

Nature-based tourism, agri-tourism and the markets and festivals were commonly identified tourism related values. The need to balance the provision of tourism and protecting the environment was identified by several participants.

Local provision of retail was also identified as an economic prosperity related value. The locally owned and smaller scale retailers were valued as well as the general mix of retail.

“We have prime agricultural land on the peninsula, yet it is gradually being covered in houses. Houses can’t feed us.”

“We have a huge potential with our tourism. The Bellarine has many species of birds and wildlife which could be an attraction, if we preserved our nature reserves including the mud flats and the rocky, coastal beach.”

“There has been a significant increase in tourism on the Bellarine. The Melbourne to Portarlington Ferry has been a great success bringing day-trippers to the various festivals. The food and wine scene have grown, and the Bellarine is now a destination for this.”

“Agriculture is one of the iconic pillars of the Bellarine.”

Figure 21: Economic prosperity value comments by theme (n=105)

** Threats**

The dominant threats discussed under economic prosperity were overdevelopment and planning responses and controls (as illustrated in Figure 22). Residential development was considered a key threat to agriculture due to rezoning, subdivision and residential encroachment which can impact farm operations. Overdevelopment was commonly discussed
as a threat to tourism particularly through loss of the natural environment, which the tourism industry relies heavily on.

Comments relating to planning responses and controls highlighted concerns about lack of government’s strategic direction and vision for the area. This was particularly related to growth and land use. Moving settlement boundaries were raised as a threat along with lack of controls to stop inappropriate developments. On the flip side some participants commented on the strict planning controls as a threat to investing in the area, developing new businesses, and restricting farming operations.

Other less dominant threats discussed included lack of infrastructure to support industry development such as transport infrastructure, public amenities, high speed internet, and access to water. With regards to retail and support for local business, commercialisation via big chain stores was identified as a key threat by some participants.

“Subdivision into smaller land parcels – lifestyle properties on smaller land holdings resulting in rural residential living which is often followed by further subdivision over time into pockets of urban residential.”

“Inappropriate development is a major threat to the productive agricultural land including horticulture.”

“The subdivision of rural properties is allowed all too readily.”

“The threat is that over time the value of the land due to proximity to other urban centres will increase, in particular when parcelled up into small lots for high density housing by developers, to the point where those sectors can’t exist here.”

“Figure 22: Economic prosperity threat comments by theme (n=227)”

Protection

There was quite a bit of diversity in ideas shared about how to protect the economic prosperity values of the Bellarine Peninsula. Many of the ideas related to restricting development, improving policy, and provision of additional infrastructure.
With regards to restricting development, comments mainly referred to residential development and encroachment on agriculture land. Protection ideas included: stronger planning controls that preserve important agriculture land, concentrating development to major townships through strong planning controls that strengthen township boundaries, and strengthening planning controls to minimise impacts of development on the environment. Suggestions included sustainable and regenerative farming practices.

Participants also discussed the need for longer-term policy and strategy planning, particularly around housing growth and development. Policies that raise awareness and promote the importance of support for local businesses and support to incentivise growth in the local agricultural industries were also suggested.

"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."

"There needs to be set boundaries around townships, there should be size limits set on subdivision of land in the farming zone and no more areas given up for rural living."

"Keep a balance and don’t lose the agriculture if it provides local produce, tourism, local pride and character."

Figure 23: Areas of economic prosperity protect comments by theme (n=268)
4.6 Vision for the Bellarine Peninsula

We asked participants to define their future aspirations for the Bellarine Peninsula. A total of 118 participants responded to the question ‘What do you want the Bellarine Peninsula lifestyle to be like in 2070? Consider what you love most about this place, what it looks and feels like’. Responses included:

- 52 face-to-face vision statements
- 66 online vision statements

The following key themes emerged through the responses:

- beaches and coastal areas
- farming and rural qualities
- controlled development
- township character
- untouched environments, environmental protection or restoration
- and transport.

Participants commonly guided their responses using the words and phrases ‘maintain’, ‘keep’, ‘same as it is’, implying an eagerness for the future of the Bellarine Peninsula to be as it is today.

Beaches, coastal and marine areas

Many participants commented that the future Bellarine Peninsula will continue to have access to the Peninsula’s coast and beaches. Some participants imagined that they would have improved access via walking trails and bike paths, while others commented on the threat of privatisation and the importance of maintaining equal access to all community members.

Participants often commented generally about how they valued township connections to the coast, whilst others commented on views, recreational boating and fishing, walking and cycling along the coast, and using the beaches. Some participants commented on the historical nature of the towns as port towns or fishing villages and hoped that this history would be preserved and promoted. Other participants imagined that the coast would support future economic growth in aquaculture and tourism.

“I don’t want only the rich to be able to go to the beach.”

“I want the Bellarine to preserve the natural environment especially our green spaces and shoreline.”

Farming and rural qualities

Participants often imagined the future Bellarine Peninsula as a place with productive farmlands, where small towns were connected to and divided by rural landscapes. Some participants who identified themselves as farmers expressed their will to continue farming in the future. Many
other participants commented on continued food production and supply to Melbourne and Geelong. Other participants imagined that food production and farming would be more widely promoted as part of the Bellarine identity, and that the visitor experience would include farm gate food tourism, wineries and cellar doors.

“...farmers should be allowed to develop and diversify their produce and provide their products at the farm gate with encouragement to attract tourists to this fantastic area”

“Rural breaks between towns occupied by well managed rural businesses…”

Controlled development

Participants frequently imagined a future where development controls and town boundaries had protected the Bellarine from becoming ‘suburbia’. They remarked that the towns should remain distinct and separated by rural landscapes. While some participants commented on stricter height and density controls, others accepted that height and density might be acceptable in some areas as a means to preventing sprawl. Some participants felt that they would continue to commute to Geelong or Melbourne for employment and services. Other participants saw value in sustainable development that would support the tourist economy, improve local community and health services, as well as education, employment opportunities and affordable housing.

“A pristine natural environment including coast, wetlands and farms that are protected from development and don't become suburbia.”

“Continue to protect our beautiful coastline to be enjoyed by both tourists and locals.”

Township character

Many participants commented on the feeling of their towns as being “quiet” and “relaxed”, and a place to escape from the city, imagining that their townships would remain small, and distinctive from a city feeling. They frequently noted the importance of the towns maintaining their connection to the coast and rural areas. Participants also commented that they imagined a future where the history of their townships was preserved or promoted, noting the Aboriginal history of the area, European architecture, and the working history of ports.

Participants also commented on the cultural values of their townships, as places to enjoy or partake in music, arts and creative endeavours, and unique small businesses. Many participants spoke of these township characters in connection with their sense of community.

“… I acknowledge the need for modern amenities, but I also like the slightly daggy feel of some of the 'unrestored' parts of the Bellarine.”

“I would like it to be a special area that city people can value for its sheer difference from the urban character, and for its diversity in landscape and town character.”
Untouched environments, environmental protection or restoration

Many participants commented on the environmental preservation or restoration of coastal areas, as being important to the future of the Bellarine Peninsula. They imagined a place where people would continue to enjoy and connect to the natural environment, including coastline, wetlands, lakes. Many participants imagined a future where the coast was ‘pristine’, and that increased protection in reserve land or parks had allowed the recovery of indigenous flora and fauna.

Some participants also commented on the threat of climate change and made mention of the community working together to protect the environment, including more sustainable building practices and energy sources, electric vehicles, reduced car dependence and more sustainable transport options.

“We need to retain the Bellarine natural beauty open space and have a group of people who care and love the Bellarine looking after this area.”

“My vision for 2070 is that we have globally gotten on top of global warming and fixed and cooled the planet - so that the Bellarine nature and coastline can recover.”

4.7 Location-specific findings

Mapping activities were available at open houses as an engagement tool (physical maps with colour coded numbered dots that correspond with the colour coded cards, and annotations), and online pins. A screenshot of dots mapped and online pins for each discussion theme is shown in Figures 20-24.
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Figure 24: Participant mapping related to Natural Environments

Figure 25: Participant mapping related to Landscapes and Scenic Views
Figure 26: Participant mapping related to Culture and Heritage Sites

Figure 27: Participant mapping related to Townships and Settlements
A summary of references made to particular locations is provided in Table 4.

**Table 4: Summary of location specific comments from participants in order of frequency mentioned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Grove</td>
<td>Ocean Grove was referenced in 164 comments. Participants discussed values mostly related to the Natural Environment such as Buckley Park, the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve and its vegetation, biodiversity, wildlife, walking track, rural landscapes and seascapes, coastal, sand dunes and cliffs, mature trees and woodlands, wetlands and connectivity. The threats to these values mentioned are over development, the negative impacts of human activities, climate change and erosion. Values can be protected through higher investment for care, protection and management, limiting development and enforcing town boundaries, and expanding and ensuring greater protection of natural areas.</td>
<td>“Developers want to develop it into housing. It becomes a cleared paddock and not habitat for Ocean Grove natural reserve species.” – Open house participant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Keep town boundaries as they are and create a wild life corridor.” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Comments/Location Mentioned</td>
<td>Values/Concerns</td>
</tr>
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| Portarlington     | 140                          | The village feel of the Portarlington shopping strip. The lack of high-rise buildings. The adjoining public spaces and views of the bay.  
Barwon Heads       | 102                          | The Barwon heads bridge beach river area and town centre.  
St Leonards        | 82                           | The encroaching housing. I go birding at Curlewis and have seen raptors of all kinds, robins, in fact numerous species of birds all being pushed back or |

Values mentioned were the green open spaces, indigenous, heritage and historical elements. The views of the You Yangs and the surrounding bays from the hills and walks nearby were often mentioned. Nature reserves specifically mentioned were Edwards Point, Liddle Reserve, Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve.

These values were seen as under threat from overdevelopment, erosion, weeds, dogs, cats and foxes, polluted stormwater, drainage and runoff, lack of planning controls and vision.

Values can be protected by greater nature preservation and environmental protection, education about indigenous culture and history, consultation with the community, restricting development, sustainable regulations, height restrictions, removal of unwanted weeds and animals, better management of drainage and road side vegetation.

Barwon Heads was referenced in 102 comments. Specific locations mentioned included Lake Connewarre, Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, 13th Beach, Barwon River, The Bluff (Mount Colile). Also mentioned was the Breamlea Flora and Fauna Reserve, Lake Victoria, Lake Murtnaghurt, Swan Bay, Buckley Park, Barwon River Estuary and Lakes. Participants valued the beautiful beaches and coastline along with the views, the coastal village environment with local shops surrounded by farmland, and maritime and indigenous connections. These values were seen to be threatened by overdevelopment and lack of planning mechanisms as well as overcrowding, too much traffic and the negative impacts of some recreational pursuits such as over fishing, cycling, duck shooting and dogs off leash.

Barwon Heads is a seaside coastal town. Maintaining Barwon Heads as a seaside coastal town.

appropriate planning controls. Limiting heights. Proper definition of 'coastal village'.
quaint township character, vegetation, and views were also mentioned. Other locations referenced included South Red Bluff, Swan Bay, Edwards Point. Overdevelopment was seen as the major threat with numerous negative impacts. Erosion, pollution and pests were also mentioned. frightened away due to huge developments. Where I once encountered wildlife (just a few years ago) I see nothing.” – Online participant
“The Quaint Village of St Leonards (it is similar in feel to Barwon Heads in the 1960s and 70s)” – Open house participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point Lonsdale</th>
<th>Point Lonsdale was referenced in 80 comments with values spanning vegetation, Aboriginal heritage, beaches and dunes, and the village feel of the town. Specific locations mentioned include: Pt Lonsdale Lighthouse, Lake Victoria, Bunny Woods, Moonah Woodland, Buckley Park, Pt Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve and Swan Bay. The main threats mentioned were over development and lack of appropriate planning response with some mention of pests and weeds and the negative impact of people, dogs and bikes on trails. Better habitat protections, management, planning and research as well as limiting development were seen as important. “Aboriginal culturally significant sites from Pt Lonsdale to Ocean Grove along the dune system - 70 sites found in 100 meters” – Open house participant “The indigenous history of the region, its connection to water, land, sky and place is an important cultural heritage that is currently undervalued or entirely absent.” – Online participant “Buckley Park is an important uninterrupted stretch of coastal moonah woodland. It needs to remain protected and well managed.” – Online participant</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drysdale</td>
<td>Drysdale was referenced in 71 comments. Most valued were the natural landscapes, farms and farmland, the amazing views from the hills, the local Aboriginal heritage, lakes and waterholes, and the country town feel. Specific locations mentioned include: the Bellarine Rail Trail, Tuckerberry Hill Blueberry Farm, Curlewis, Bellarine Hills, Mount Bellarine, Murradoc Hill, Corio Bay, Basin Reserve, McLeods waterholes and Lake Iorne. The biggest threat mentioned was overdevelopment and further expansion of township boundaries. Other threats include weeds, dogs and cats, and pollutants. Limiting development, better education about Indigenous culture, protections for habitat, provision of additional infrastructure were all mentioned as needed. “If there is uncontrolled development many of these landscapes will be lost and the developing values of many businesses and small farming will be lost.” – Online participant “Educate about Indigenous history” – Open house participant “Restricting town growth” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queenscliff</td>
<td>Queenscliff was referenced in 58 comments. Specific locations mentioned include the lighthouse, Queenscliff Natural Features Reserve, Shortland Bluff, and Fort Queenscliff. The township character, diverse history and Aboriginal heritage were highly valued as well as the coastal environment and scenic views. These values are threatened by lack of education about heritage values, overdevelopment and lack of heritage and coastal protection. Tourism was also mentioned. Education, limiting development, maintenance, planning mechanisms, policy and regulations were mentioned to protect what was valued. The Aboriginal cultural heritage of the Wathaurung people is very important on the Bellarine Peninsula. Queenscliff and Buckley’s cave, the lighthouses and the Fort are all important sites of the maritime and military history of the area. – Open house participant “Total preservation of Queenscliff as a heritage town. Maintain town boundaries.” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Connewarre</td>
<td>Lake Connewarre Wildlife Reserve was referenced in 57 comments. The natural environment was highly valued including the wetlands, vegetation and associated wildlife. Threats mentioned include overdevelopment and the negative effects on the environment such as pollutants. Better maintenance, planning controls and regulation were mentioned to protect these values. “Preservation, protection and revegetation” – Open house participant “Revegetation, and limiting recreational uses to low impact activities - ban duck shooting” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indented Head</td>
<td>Indented Head was referenced in 40 comments. Locations specifically mentioned include the foreshore, the red gums, Halfmoon Bay, Batman Park, the paddle wheel, and the Annamarle Drive area. Farmland, history and heritage are valued. Overdevelopment and extended camping on the foreshore are seen as threats that needs to be addressed. “Limit the development of new estates and shorten the camping season on the foreshore which makes large areas of open space unavailable for residents.” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards Point Reserve</td>
<td>The Edwards Point Reserve was referenced in 28 comments and was highly valued for the natural environment including the wetlands, wildlife, flora and fauna, woodlands, Ramsar protected site, and adjacent Swan Bay. The main threats mentioned include overdevelopment and the negative impacts of the limits of infrastructure and visitation. Suggestions for protecting the values relating to Edwards Point Reserve are to limit development of the perimeter and manage visitor impact. “Damage to reserve due to increased visitation with no regulatory framework to protect e.g. Beach nesting birds, native fauna habitat and coastal bushland” – Open house participant “Enacting laws that protect these areas and enable the enforcement of rules to deter/sanction unacceptable activity” – Open house participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buckley Park was mentioned specifically in 23 comments. Participants discussed the value of Buckley Park itself, the Foreshore Reserve, the ancient Moonah Woodlands located within a private property, and more generally the coastal dunes and vegetation between Point Lonsdale and Ocean Grove. The threats to Buckley Park are development inland from the dunes, movement through the area such as pedestrian, cycling and other motorised vehicles. Protection suggested included investigation of the significance of the area e.g. such a potential National Park, restricting access including cycling and don’t allow development.

“The broader area of farms, wetlands and coastal dune system of Buckley Park as a green wedge and a significant site for biodiversity” - Open house participant

### 4.8 Extended responses

Some resident groups, individual community members, private landowners and a utilities corporation submitted extended responses as part of the consultation process. These responses raised a range of concerns which are summarised in this section.

Four community groups from across the Bellarine Peninsula submitted extended responses. In addition, several individuals submitted extended responses. The community groups and individual responses focused on similar themes. Primarily they supported the proposed declaration and highlighted what they valued about the region or their local area. Common themes emerged from these submissions, these are:

- **Maintaining existing township boundaries.** This theme arose in most of the resident submissions. It was often related to a desire for the retention of non-urban breaks between townships to act as a visual pause, to protect environmental assets (such as wetlands), and as a method of protecting agricultural land.

- **Maintaining and protecting character, heritage and style of townships.** This often related to the ‘coastal village’ feel of Bellarine Peninsula towns. Suggestions for protection included height limits (often two storeys), strict town boundaries, and maintaining existing planning controls. Many submissions supported the retention and strengthening of existing heritage protections, with some suggested that protection should cover both the interior and exterior of buildings. One submission said that heritage character definition statements should be included as part of the Distinctive Area and Landscape statement. Another submission highlighted the headlands of Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve, Queenscliff Lighthouse Reserve, and Point Nepean be further protected by being declared a National Park.

- **Protection of sensitive environmental attributes.** Submissions often focused on wetland sites and native vegetation, such as the existing stands of Bellarine Yellow Gums. Some submissions suggested that major wetland sites be amalgamated into one
larger protected area. Many highlighted the important role that wetlands play in the mitigation of the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise and associated inundation. One submitter expressed concern about changes in the water flow as a result of the developments at the Oaks Estate, Oakdene Estate and Kingston Downs Estate.

- **A desire for a ‘whole of region’ approach.** This appeared to stem from a concern that the Act would assess the region ‘feature-by-feature’ and perhaps only protect the identified features. Many submissions stressed the need for protection of the whole region under a Distinctive Area and Landscape designation.

- **Protecting agricultural land.** Some submissions highlighted concern about the retention of existing agricultural land, regardless of whether it was underutilised, for the sake of future food production. There was also concern about development having an adverse effect on the quality of the water available for farming, particularly for watering stock.

Overall, these submissions generally supported Bellarine Peninsula being designated as a Distinctive Area and Landscape. However, there were concerns over the legitimacy and strength of the protections that this would bring under the Act. Some submissions cited the Macedon Ranges Distinctive Area and Landscape designation as the cause for their concern, stating that this has not resulted in adequate protections for the landscape. Others stated they did not want to see the existing local planning controls ‘watered down’ and expressed a desire for cohesive planning.

**Particular issues**

- Four submissions raised issues specific to the development of particular pieces of land located in the Bellarine Peninsula. All recognised that parts of the Bellarine Peninsula possess a unique landscape character and have natural assets that should be protected under a Distinctive Area and Landscape.

- One submission highlighted that the regions (Bellarine Peninsula and wider) population is forecast to almost double by the year 2065 creating an increase in the demand for water. The need to plan and be ready for all possible water supply and demand scenarios was identified.

- One submission emphasised that any declaration of a Distinctive Area and Landscape for the Bellarine Peninsula needs to recognise and protect the area’s working farm businesses which manage the rural landscape as well as making a significant contribution to Melbourne’s food bowl. The submission was concerned with and cited the need for a ‘Right to Farm’ to be established to protect farm businesses. A desire was also expressed for the Distinctive Area and Landscape work to be compatible with the extensive planning work previously carried out for the area. It was noted that farming landscapes are constantly changing including cropping, fencing, building stock containment yards and tree plantations and that it is important that this be recognised as normal farming practice.
5 Next steps

A recommendation regarding declaration of the Bellarine Peninsula as a Distinctive Area and Landscape is expected in the second half of 2019. Following any such the 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 49 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?"

The Likert scale ranged from ‘Poor’, with a value of 1, to ‘Excellent’ with a value of 5. Overall participants were mostly satisfied with the event organisation (weighted average 3.86, from the scale of 1 to 5), and participation (weighted average 3.80). Participants were least satisfied with the event facilitation (weighted average 3.59) (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Engagement evaluation results, with values for Likert scale (Poor = 1, Fair = 2, Satisfactory = 3, Good = 4, Excellent = 5)
Engagement promotion

We asked participants “how did you hear about the event”? Most participants were informed by email, print media and word of mouth (Figure 30). Some participants commented that events could have been more widely promoted to attract a greater turnout.

![Figure 30: How participants were informed about the events](chart)

Session attendance

We asked participants, “Which session did you attend?”. The three most popular sessions attended by the survey participants included those held in Portarlington, Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove. The sessions in Portarlington, Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove were the events which attracted the greatest numbers of attendees who completed an evaluation (Figure 30).
Further comments

We also asked participants, “Is there anything else you’d like to add?”. A total of 30 survey participants chose to add further comments.

- Some participants were confused by the design and layout of the activities at the session, indicating it took them time to understand how to participate.

- A few participants expressed concern about the engagement process, however stated they were hopeful that the project team was open to suggestions and ideas.

- A few participants indicated they did not have enough information about the project, suggesting that the session should start with a more formal presentation to have access to more information about the project.

“There was insufficient briefing on what we were meant to do. However, once we figured it out, it was an excellent exercise” – St Leonards open house participant

“I hope the comments will help inform planning for this area” – Ocean Grove open house participant

“It was a well thought through event that was time effective and enjoyable to participate in. Allowing people to have their say without having to go around a room etc meant points could be put forward openly and honestly without judgement.” – Portarlington open house participant