

**Save the Wetlands.
Save the Boundary.
Save Barwon Heads.**

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15 August 2021

Bellarine Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Draft Statement of Planning Policy

The Save Barwon Heads Alliance Inc. (SBHA) very strongly supports the draft statement of planning policy, the vision and the strategic directions represent the right future for the Bellarine Peninsula. The key to this policy is the application of permanent settlement boundaries for the townships aligned to the City of Greater Geelong's Settlement Strategy and Structure Plans.

We strongly endorse the hierarchy of settlements in the framework plan. It is entirely appropriate that district townships provide the high order services for the region and that the quiet, relaxed, distinct character of villages are maintained and enhanced. To enable this, it is imperative that settlement boundaries are well-defined and enforced. The community has accepted limits to growth and now, so too must the developers. Permanent settlement boundaries are critical to this end.

SBHA was formed in 2007 to defend the wetlands and boundary of Barwon Heads from development. We are the voice of over 2000 residents and visitors of the Bellarine Peninsula. SBHA is a coming together of people connected by a sense of care and concern for our environment. We very strongly agree that protecting settlement boundaries is critical in protecting the landscapes that support existing residents and businesses and attract and the thousands of visitors to the Peninsula. More importantly it gives future generations the opportunity to make better decisions in support of biodiversity and the environment and a chance to respond to future risks related to climate change, fire and floods.

We commend acknowledgement of and the inclusion of Wadawurrung knowledge in planning and land management decisions and expect this will be implemented through making funding available to the Wadawurrung people to allow them to engage meaningfully in these matters. The Wadawurrung will need resources to help the broader community develop a better understanding of the Wadawurrung heritage, traditions, and knowledge. The community has so much to learn from a cultural that successfully survived for 30,000 times longer than our own modern society. There is a huge thirst to know and understand how they lived and managed the lands as well as how their society functioned, their practices, diet and language.

Implementation

A timely approval of the draft SPP, would see Government and our local member Lisa Neville on delivering their election promise to protect the Bellarine's significant landscapes, biodiversity and environmental areas from over development in this term. The community would be disappointed if the draft SPP were to be referred to an Advisory Committee. Panels put volunteer organisations, representing the majority community views at a distinct disadvantage given the resources of developers with their lawyers and experts. After three rounds of community consultation everyone has had an opportunity to be heard.

SBHA is excited to see this vision become reality and is keen to working closely with DELWP and Council achieve the objectives of the approved SPP.

Many visions documents fail in the implementation. So ensuring adequate resourcing is applied at all levels from planning to ground works will be necessary. We hope you will continue to see the community, including the Wadawurrung, as your partner and use the wisdom, skills, and labour in conjunction with adequate state, local government and RPE capital funding to plan, set targets and implement the vision. There should be an acknowledgement that more than words are needed and where possible commitments to specific actions of restoration and enhancement. We sincerely hope that the announcement of its final approval will be accompanied by a significant resourcing announcement as a fillip in realising the vision and recovering from covid. SBHA along with our Community Association partners stand ready to support the implementation of this vision.

Detailed responses:

Bellarine Vision

Strongly Agree

SBHA welcomes the vision and considers it broadly well-articulated and covers most aspects. We would like to see it strengthened with the words found in the draft version of the vision: *"Well defined settlement boundaries protect the prized coastal and rural hinterland landscapes of the declared area and the areas between the settlements are retained as green breaks used principally for agricultural and no-urban purposes."*

Environmental Risks and Resilience

Strongly Agree

We need to be adaptive to an uncertain future and these Strategies are a good beginning. Funding will need to be made available to RPE's and some of the Strategies should be binding upon them or it is unclear how the objectives will ever be achieved.

Landscape

Strongly Agree

The green breaks can be utilised for agricultural purposes but still provide significant habitat for the Bellarine's flora and fauna, but this needs to be built back and will require support and funding from State, Local governments and Responsible Public Entities or the objectives will never be achieved. Some of these Strategies should be binding on Responsible Public Entities and funds made available for their achievement.

Environment and Biodiversity

Strongly Agree

Much has been lost from the Bellarine by previous land management and clearing and our future resilience requires these lands and environmental values to be restored. These strategies can be strengthened to increase protection of the remnant vegetation and other environmental assets and to require restoration works to reconnect areas and improve waterway corridors when developments are approved. Vegetated Buffers should be defined and required for waterways, dams and existing nature reserves. Purchase of lands neighbouring settlements for restoration of indigenous vegetation and community use.

Cultural Heritage

Strongly Agree

We commend acknowledgement of and the inclusion of Wadawurrung knowledge in planning and land management decisions and expect this will be implemented through making funding available to the Wadawurrung people to allow them to engage meaningfully in these matters. The Wadawurrung will need resources to help the broader community develop a better understanding of the Wadawurrung heritage, traditions, and knowledge. The community has so much to learn from a cultural that successfully survived for 30,000 times longer than our own modern society. There is a huge thirst to know and understand how they lived and managed the lands as well as how their society functioned, their practices, diet and language.

Historic Heritage

Agree

Post-colonial historic heritage, while important, has already been identified in the planning scheme, protected, promoted and interpreted. It has attracted significant protection funding and support over the past 100 years. While still important, other objectives in this SPP, such as the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Environment & Biodiversity are higher priorities for funding and implementation.

Tourism, agricultural and Natural Resources

Strongly Agree

Nature sustains us and we need it to be healthy and resilient to support the regional economy as well as providing us a healthy place to live. The more we can buy locally grown and healthy nutrient dense food from healthy soils the more our region will thrive. The more restoration of native

vegetation the more resilient we will be to future weather events and our economy will also be more resilient.

Tourism is critical to the economy of the Bellarine Peninsula, but we cannot let it destroy the beauty of the area and the reason tourists are attracted here. Councils, RPE and tourism operators need to consider and implement sustainable transport options through green vehicle charging, or public transport options throughout the region.

Strategic Infrastructure

Strongly Agree

The described infrastructure will be required in the very near future and will require substantial public funding to deliver it. This entire policy will need an implementation plan with targets and a significant allocation of public funding to achieve the vision and objectives. Its implementation is an opportunity for a post covid recovery.

Settlements

Strongly Agree

The DAL's strength is in the designation of protected settlement boundaries and the hierarchy of settlements in the Framework Plan. This will protect the green spaces, the view lines and all the things that make the Bellarine special. It is essential that the additional greenfield residential and commercial development be focused in the activity centres, as that too protects the character of the smaller villages that make the Bellarine distinctive. The community 's views are clear on settlement boundaries through Structure Plans, Settlement Strategies and three rounds of DAL consultation!

SBHA appreciates the opportunity to engage in this process.

Kind Regards


Save Barwon Heads Alliance Inc.