

To the Panel,

The Statement of Planning Policy is most commendable. It is paramount to bring the people with you on this journey. To do that, we the public, need to appreciate and have a real understanding of the Bellarine Peninsula. I am hoping these few thoughts may help to develop that appreciation and understanding.

The Environment

I have been a visitor to the Bellarine for the past 65 plus years. The change has been dramatic, native vegetation has dwindled and visitations and development has escalated dramatically. Enhancement of the foreshores, construction of walking tracks and playgrounds have been wonderful and really embraced by many walkers, children and admired by others.

While development is inevitable, unfortunately there has been a willingness to compromise the native vegetation to maximise house blocks. This has left isolated pockets of vegetation with little regard to wildlife corridors.

Suggestions

1. Include strips of vegetation rather than pockets. Do not rely on the roadside vegetation as a corridor. These invariably disappear, roads are widened in time and the vegetation goes.
2. Give people a reason to appreciate the vegetation by providing information boards identifying the diversity of the species existing along that corridor.
3. Provide walks, not only along the actual coast, but within the strips of native vegetation.
4. Provide information boards, regarding native fauna and birdlife. Information adds to people's appreciation of where they live or visit.

The Ancient History

The Bellarine inhabitants and visitors, I think, have little appreciation of the First People and while Catchment Management Authorities certainly recognise these first land inhabitants, their culture and environmental practices need to be advertised so the general public can empathise with their story.

Interaction between William Buckley and the two tribes in the greater area is fascinating, not to mention how the local tribal people were persuaded to sell?? large tracts of their land to John Batman. The native who spent many years on the tip of Edwards Pont would be an interesting story.

Information boards could add to the story of inhabitation before white settlement and William Buckley's story gives us a rare insight into the cultural practices and living conditions pre 1830's.

The Geology

When I visit a region I am fascinated by the geology in the area and the Bellarine is amazing. The topography of this region and the fertile soils have been significantly impacted by a volcano.

The springs at Clifton Springs were an amazing attraction in the early nineteenth century. Why are they there?

Information about these features is scarce.

For the general population to appreciate and respect an area they must know about it. They need to be educated. Wherever they go there needs to be information on:-

1. The geology
2. The first inhabitants
3. The history of white settlement
4. Land use, now and times past
5. What development has meant to the change in flora, fauna, and birdlife.
6. The marine environment and the amazing sea life populations in the adjacent waters
7. The history of the nine main settlements, the demographics and their statistics.

While the Bellarine Peninsula has been declared a 'distinctive area and landscape' we need to be educated to understand, why. Information boards, self-guided tours and diverse range of pamphlets and websites can add another dimension to a region's appeal and appreciation. Having sympathy towards this region will help to preserve it for future generations.

A Threat

Maybe related to climate change, maybe related to the deepening of the rip at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, the many areas of coastal erosion needs urgent attention. The rate at which protective barriers are being built is not keeping pace with the destruction.

Your task is enormous, thanks for the opportunity to add a few thoughts.

Kind regards