



Submission by the Breamlea Association regarding the draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy

Introduction

The Breamlea Association is a member of the Combined Bellarine Community Associations (CBCA) as we are in the Bellarine Ward of the City of Greater Geelong. Breamlea shares common interests and values with the coastal towns and villages of the Bellarine and is part of the Bellarine Southern Coast landscape area.

Breamlea brings our experience of the recent Surf Coast DAL to the CBCA and we strongly support the key proposals in the draft SPP and commend DELWP for sensitively addressing individual and collective community association issues. We are aware that the Bellarine associations have been actively involved in this DAL since its declaration and are committed to participating in this process.

The Breamlea Association is keen to comment on the draft Bellarine SPP with particular emphasis on the following:

We strongly agree:

- with the decision to not have an advisory panel for this SPP draft review process. Our experience with the Surf Coast SPP was that the panel process, although very well conducted, was lengthy and ultimately caused an imbalance between local community views and more powerful business interests.
- that the further supply of rural-living areas lots (typically up to 10 acres) be restricted. Our experience during the discussion stage of the Surf Coast DAL was that many farmers in Freshwater Creek were very concerned about any increase in small allotments being allowed as they saw this as impacting on valuable and productive agricultural land.
- that green breaks are an important part of the Bellarine's character an attraction to locals and visitors and are a highly valued natural backdrop but we also wish to emphasise that being in nature is essential to human health and wellbeing.
- that the proposed Ocean Grove protected settlement boundary will safeguard the adjoining landscape values of the state-significant Bellarine Southern Coast. This is also significant breeding territory for the nationally-listed threatened species, the Hooded Plover.

- with the recommendation to implement protected settlement boundaries for all districts and villages in the declared area and those settlements which abut the declared area such as Armstrong Creek. We note that this resolution will be informed by further strategic planning work by relevant agencies and therefore urge all involved to work towards achieving this Strategy.

Further comments on the draft SPP:

We recommend the language within the draft SPP be strengthened. Ambiguous words undermine the intent in the narrative about protecting and enriching the Bellarine.

Whilst we note that in Table 2 the hierarchy designations of settlements in the declared area (excluding rural-living nodes) reflects the City of Greater Geelong and Queenscliffe planning schemes, it would seem advantageous for DELWP to use consistent language across all the SPPs in Victoria. For instance, the designation 'Hamlet' is used in both the Macedon Ranges and Surf Coast SPPs, whereas 'Rural-living Nodes' is used in the Bellarine SPP. These 'Hamlets' would seem to share similarities with Wallington and the other smaller localities on the Bellarine.

We are concerned with how Strategy 1.1 on bushfire risk-based planning is expressed. With accelerating global warming it is time to broaden our commitment to not only prioritising the protection of human life but giving equal protection to our precious flora and fauna. Human life depends on a healthy, thriving environment.

In respect to 1.7 on implementing best-practice integrated water management practices, our Breamlea experience is that vast amounts of storm water from new Torquay housing estates are now flowing into the Karaaf Saline Wetlands and the Breamlea Flora and Fauna Reserve, threatening saltmarsh plants and creatures. We would therefore like to add that any mitigating strategies such as holding basins must be adequate to the task and appropriately maintained to prevent any runoff and consequent inundation of neighbouring waterways.

Regarding Strategy 3.4, the consequence of increasing encroachment on available habitat for both flora and fauna across Victoria, is that many species are being squeezed into smaller, often unviable natural areas. It is therefore essential that work be undertaken to identify and preserve current wildlife corridors and to provide links to disparate habitat.

In the Settlement Domain all district towns and villages have statements regarding infill development. These infills must not compromise the neighbourhood character, green spaces and culture heritage sites and should not put undue pressure on the significant geographical features, including natural landforms.

In response to Strategy 7.5, we are particularly concerned that the impact on the village of Barwon Heads from the Barwon Heads Road needs to be addressed. It is already unable to cope with the amount of traffic it experiences so any long term vision must find another solution to the problem.

In order to achieve Strategy 8.3 – *‘Ensure development is designed to respect the identity, heritage and coastal character of settlements’*, it should be mentioned that if the current building trend to huge residential structures continues, with no room for softness of vegetation, this strategy will not be achieved. The Strategy should also make reference to minimising the impact on existing environmental features of the site. Major change to building regulations and overlays therefore needs to be undertaken.

As stated in the Tourism section of the draft SPP, the declared area supports a nature-based destination that draws visitors from around Victoria, Australia and the world and that the strategies outlined support a diverse, sustainable and responsible visitor economy. However, we caution that an ever-increasing influx of visitors, including from new developments abutting the Bellarine, is putting the very character and existence of coastal villages and towns at stake. Once these pressures become excessive, it will be too late to remedy the problem of our coast being ‘loved to death’.

Conclusion

The Breamlea Association acknowledges and supports the CBCA submission as well as the contents of all the other Individual Association submissions.

We thank DELWP for the excellent work that has been undertaken and for this opportunity to make a submission to the Draft Bellarine Distinctive Area and Landscape Statement of Planning Policy.


On behalf of the Breamlea Association

19th August, 2021