Bellarine Peninsula
Distinctive Areas &
Landscapes

Landscape Assessment Review

Stage 1: Scoping Report

Final Document: May 2019
Acknowledgements

Victoria has an ancient and proud Aboriginal history. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land described in this report, and offer our respect to the past and present Elders, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Thank you to Jonathon Christie (B. Vis. Com. Des.) for his assistance with GIS mapping.

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Cover image: Point Lonsdale Lighthouse, author’s own.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Landscape Assessment Studies Review &amp; Critique</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Bellarine Peninsula Landscape Types and Areas</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Bellarine Peninsula Landscapes of Significance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Summary of Findings</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Planning Schemes (SLO) Audit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Greater Geelong Planning Scheme</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Queenscliffe Planning Scheme</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Summary of Findings</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planning Panels Findings</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Greater Bendigo Amendment C217</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Southern Grampians Amendment C36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Declaration Area Extents &amp; Townships</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Bellarine Peninsula Declaration Area</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Consideration of Townships</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Townships Methodology Recommendations</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Proposed Landscape Assessment Review Methodology</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Determining Landscape Significance</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Levels of Significance (Landscapes)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Defining Significant Views</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Views Significance Criteria</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Levels of Significance (Views)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Proposed DALs Landscape Assessment Study Review Methodology</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Full methodology attached)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Victorian Government has amended the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to recognise and protect Victoria’s distinctive areas and landscapes. The Macedon Ranges region was the first area recognised under the new Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (2018) Amendment.

An outcome of this legislation and state policy direction is the requirement to prepare Statements of Planning Policy (formerly known as Localised Planning Statements) for these identified areas.

Statements of Planning Policy are state policies for protecting and enhancing the valued attributes of distinctive areas that are vital to the functioning of Melbourne and regional Victoria. These areas have significant landscape, biodiversity, tourism, cultural and other assets, and because of these qualities and their proximity to Melbourne, they are experiencing increasing pressure for growth and change.

Together with the Macedon Ranges, Surf Coast, Bass Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula are identified as key distinctive areas. It is understood that any existing Localised Planning Statements for these areas will be updated and modernised into new Statements of Planning Policy.

This scoping study report relates to the Bellarine Peninsula distinctive area and landscape.

The future landscape assessment work (referred to as DALs LAS Review in this document) is a key input to the Statements of Planning Policy that are required for each distinctive area.

The DALs LAS Review will identify the most significant landscapes and views within the distinctive areas, and recommend additions and amendments to the local planning schemes for their protection and management. It will also recommend how the findings of the landscape assessment review work are best translated into the future Statements of Planning Policy for each region.

This Report

This report documents Stage 1 (Scoping) of the DALs Landscape Assessment Review and is intended as a platform from which to launch the DALs Landscape Assessment Review (Stage 2 onwards).

This report includes the following sections:

Executive Summary

Summarises the most important findings of the scoping exercise.

Landscape Assessment Studies Review & Critique

Provides a summary and critique of the methodology and findings of the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study (2006), which is of direct relevance to the Bellarine Peninsula, and outlines the key findings relevant to undertaking the future DALs Landscape Assessment Study Review.

Planning Schemes (SLO) Audit

Assesses the current local planning scheme provisions, with a focus on the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), and provides a summary of key findings in relation to their gaps and shortcomings, which has been corroborated by Council Officers.

Planning Panels Findings

Summarises key learnings from recent Planning Panel reports relating to landscape assessment studies, landscape significance and determining and justifying SLO boundaries.

Declaration Area Extents & Townships

The declaration area boundaries for the Bellarine Peninsula will remain the same, therefore this section focuses on the key tasks required for an appraisal of townships within the region.

Proposed DALs Landscape Assessment Review Methodology

Expands on current significance methodology in relation to landscapes, views, and levels of significance, and proposes a full methodology for the future DALs Landscape Assessment Study Review work.
Executive Summary

- The determination of landscape character is a more factual and objective part of landscape assessment work, and does not require a great deal of additional re-assessment.

- Mapping / GIS technology has progressed significantly however, and the landscape character work would benefit greatly from being re-mapped.

- Landscape significance methodology has evolved considerably since 2003, and 2006 (in fact, well beyond the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study).

- The determination of significance and the levels of significance of landscapes will require additional considerable work to re-confirm, and elevate the assessment and conclusions to best practice standard i.e. justifiable at a Panel Hearing.

- Neither the Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study (GORRLAS) nor the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study (CSLAS - of direct relevance to the Bellarine Peninsula) included a comprehensive assessment of significant views, or preceding that, the identification of significant viewing locations (with criteria that could be justified). This is a major shortfall of the work.

- It is acknowledged that many parts of the planning scheme, from state and local policy to detailed zoning provisions, assist in decision making when it comes to development within significant landscapes and as such, the SLO does not operate in isolation. As part of this scoping study however, only the SLOs and their schedules have been reviewed. A more comprehensive audit of all relevant sections of the local planning schemes is appropriate as part of the next stage of the work.

- Existing SLO schedules vary in their quality and quantity of information, and in the usefulness and applicability of their decision guidelines.

- Existing SLO schedules are inconsistent in their content and largely do not comply with VC148 or the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.

- A number of the schedules do not contain a comprehensive ‘statement of nature and key elements of landscape’ section, nor a significance level.

- Some of the schedules are too broad reaching, contain too many non-focussed objectives, and are not specific enough in their intentions or language.

- A considerable amount of work has been done in the area of SLO mapping and justifying SLO boundaries since the studies (and the November 2004 mapping project), and this may have implications for the location of existing SLOs.

- Recent Planning Panels findings have included that any assessment of landscape character and significance, and subsequent decisions on the application of overlays, should be undertaken irrespective of land tenure.

- In relation to determining suitable boundaries for the SLO, recent Panels have concluded that the overlay curtilage should be informed by features of landscape significance and visibility.

- Development within, and at the edges of, townships has the potential to significantly change the character of a wider landscape, and impact a landscape’s significance. Townships and settlements, and their outskirts, are also often under the most development pressure and facing change and potential threats to character.

- The consideration of townships as part of a landscape assessment study has not occurred since the GORRLAS and CSLAS in 2003 and 2005/6.

- It is recommended that townships be included in the future DALs Landscape Assessment Study Review brief, with an emphasis on the setting of the township within the broader landscape; its relationship to the natural landscape; and, its interface or edges with the adjacent landscape area.

- The ‘essence’ of the character of the townships should be considered and assessed, as they relate to the landscape, ‘township to landscape principles’ should be prepared to guide the future development of all settlements in the region.

- A full list of tasks for the consideration of townships as part of the DALs LAS Review is included on p. 32.

- Based on the findings of this scoping study, a proposed methodology for the DALs LAS Review (Stage 2 onwards) has been developed. The methodology incorporates the appraisal of townships.
The proposed methodology is appended to this report, and includes the following key stages, also coinciding with proposed meetings with a Reference Group for the study:

- Stage 1: Inception
- Stage 2: Landscape Character Review & Township Appraisal
- Stage 3: Identification of Community Values
- Stage 4: Landscape Significance Assessment
- Stage 5: Implementation Recommendations

Photo opposite: Barwon Heads foreshore, looking towards the bluff.
1. Landscape Assessment Studies
   Review & Critique

At a time when the region first began to experience substantial development pressure in varied forms, the State Government commissioned the *Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study* (2003). The study documented the landscape character of the region (inland to the Princes Highway), assigned a level of significance to the landscapes, and also outlined planning scheme additions and changes for their protection. The work was later ratified and incorporated into the *Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study* (2006), which covered all coastal areas in Victoria.

While the methodology for undertaking landscape assessment studies has evolved somewhat since these first ‘pilot projects’, and more is known about applying the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) and mapping SLO areas, the studies remain a key source of information regarding the most significant coastal landscapes, their level of significance, and how they can be protected and managed.

A review and critique of the 2005 landscape assessment study (which is of direct relevance to the Bellarine Peninsula) follows, together with a summary of findings, including an outline of the additional work required in the forthcoming landscape review work.
11 Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study

The CSL-I5 covered the entire Victorian coastline (exclusive of metropolitan Melbourne) and was commissioned by the State Government soon after the GORRL-I5, in 2005, with completion in 2006. The study area was divided into three regions:

- South West Victoria
- Bellarine Peninsula (relevant to the Bellarine Peninsula DAL)
- Gippsland Region

It was intended that the study would provide a comprehensive assessment of landscape character and significance, from border to border, and include a detailed implementation framework to assist local government, landholders and other agencies to manage future development impacts within the coastal landscape. The findings of the GORRL-I5 were corroborated through the process, and incorporated into the final study.

It was noted in the foreword to the CSL-I5 State Overview Report that the study:

“… along with the Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study 2004, provides the most comprehensive understanding of landscapes for any coastline in Australia, confirming the meaning and worth of these landscapes to the Victorian community.

The study delivers on the actions and objectives established within the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002 and the Coastal Management Act 1995 by providing an appropriate package of tools and information to manage and protect visually significant landscapes across the entire Victorian coastline.”

The CSL-I5 built on the methodology established in the GORRL-I5, particularly in relation to the determination of significance, introducing a more transparent assessment rating process and incorporating other ‘types’ of significance (termed ‘supporting evidence’) i.e. cultural heritage, environmental value, social value etc. into the appraisal.

Study area

One of the first issues that the CSL-I5 addressed was the determination of the study area, that is, what constitutes a ‘coastal landscape’ and how far inland should the study area boundary be set?

There are potential learnings from this ‘boundary setting’ process and its conclusions, for establishing the DALs declaration areas.

The CSL-I5 project brief identified indicative areas of 5 kilometres and 30 kilometres inland as ‘reference points’ for the project, but required the study area boundaries to be further defined and justified. It also stated that the work should:

- not extend seaward from the coastline;
- exclude the urban areas of settlements; and,
- exclude national and state parks, as these are subject to separate management arrangements.

It should be noted that detailed landscape management guidelines were not prepared for state and national parks, but they were assessed for their significance and attributed a significance level in the statewide context. This was considered important to inform a comparative level of significance from which to judge other landscapes.

The study area boundaries were expected to vary for different parts of the coast according to topography, landscape features and views.

In the early stages of the project, it was determined that the landscape assessment should cover:

“… all landscapes that are visible from the coast, and from which the coast is visible.”

In this context, ‘visible’ was taken to cover established patterns of public viewing, as it is from these locations that the landscape character of the coast is constructed and understood by the viewer, e.g. roads, townships, recreational and other public locations.

Inland extent of field survey

The initial field survey for the study involved the determination of an inland boundary that encompassed the all-important patterns of public viewing. The assessment of landscape character was conducted across all landscapes located between this inland boundary and the coastline. The boundary was therefore expressed throughout the study documentation as the ‘inland extent of field survey’. It encompassed an area that was referred to as the ‘coastal landscape’, from the perspective of public viewing patterns, and was used to guide the development of the coastal landscape management guidelines and provide a more focused area from which visual landscape significance could be assessed and mapped.

Desktop analysis of landscape character types allowed the delineation of character areas to be extended inland beyond the field survey boundary.

The table on the following page, taken from the CSL-I5 State Overview Report, describes the final study areas for each of the three regions.

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1 Planisphere, Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study State Overview Report, 2006, p. i

2 ibid. p. 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SW Victoria</th>
<th>Bellarine Peninsula</th>
<th>Gippsland Region</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of coastline</strong></td>
<td>South Australian state border to the western extent of the Great Ocean Road region at Warriambool</td>
<td>The entire Bellarine Peninsula is within the study area, with the western boundary defined by a change in character, the extent of the Geelong urban area, and the Great Ocean Road region study area boundary (west of Breamlea)</td>
<td>New South Wales state border in the east to the Bass Coast Shire municipal boundary in the west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inland extent of field survey / proposed local policy</strong></td>
<td>Approximately 6 km to 10 km inland from the coastline</td>
<td>Approximately 4 km to 10 km inland from the coastline</td>
<td>Approximately 20 km inland from the coastline, but also taking in the Gippsland Lakes that are considered to have a coastal relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inland extent of desktop / character area analysis</strong></td>
<td>Approximately 20 km inland from the coastline</td>
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The defined study areas for the coastal spaces study, source: CSLAS State Overview Report, p. 2
Methodology

The ‘formula’ that was developed as part of the GORRLAS was expanded as part of the coastal spaces work and termed the ‘study framework’, around which the whole methodology (and not just the recommendations) was based:

As well as the above framework, the methodology for the project was structured around meetings with a leading steering committee, and three reference groups (one for each region). Key stages in the methodology, and the production of related outputs, coincided with the reference group meetings.

Broader community engagement also formed an integral part of the study, and included information brochures and questionnaires, and a community photographic exercise, which involved the distribution of disposable cameras to key stakeholder groups in the regions, with a brief to photograph particular aspects of the landscape. While completely superseded now by mobile phone technology, the disposable camera exercise proved very useful at the time in engaging local residents and collecting a library of images for analysis and publishing.

Landscape character

The documentation of landscape character in the CSLAs followed much the same methodology as employed in the GORRLAS (i.e. desktop analysis, fieldwork and a professional assessment), and the coastal areas were divided into landscape ‘character types’ based on broad areas of common physical, environmental and cultural characteristics, including landform, waterform, vegetation and land use.

At a local level, each character type was divided into landscape ‘character areas’ (referred to in GORRLAS as ‘precincts’). These were separate geographical units within the same character type, across which local conditions, such as topography or vegetation, varied.

As described, the characterisation of the GOR Region (i.e. Surf Coast) was checked and ratified through this process; confirmed, and incorporated into the overall study.

A summary of the relevant landscape characterisation work for the Bellarine Peninsula and Bass Coast that occurred as part of CSLAs, follows, and is illustrated on the accompanying landscape character maps.
12 Bellarine Peninsula Landscape Character Types & Areas

Landscape Character Type 1: Bay Slopes & Flats

Landscape Character Area 1.1: Bay Slopes & Flats

This Character Area is low-sloping and occasionally gently undulating, with open expansive views east to Port Phillip Bay and Swan Bay. Open paddocks are dissected by exotic conifer windbreaks and native vegetation in roadside reserves which contain views in parts. At the coastal edge, the landform is very flat with low-energy beaches, salt lakes and some minor cliffs no more than five metres high at Indented Head. Swan Bay is a significant natural feature on the eastern edge of approximately half the Character Area, while to the north, coastal townships including St Leonards and Indented Head extend inland for some distance on the flats. Further inland there is a low density of built elements with homesteads and farm sheds often exposed in large paddocks.

Landscape Character Type 2: Localised Flatlands

Landscape Character Area 2.1: Lake Connewarre Flats

Much of this very flat Character Area is seasonally inundated or under large lakes including Lake Connewarre. The Character Area extends from Breamlea in the south (including the lower Thomsons Creek catchment) to Barwon Heads in the east, and Point Henry in Corio Bay where it is contained by large, high sand dunes at the southern edge, and flat, low-energy swamps and salt marshes in the north. There is an inland topographic boundary at Leopold and the northern edge of Lake Connewarre, as well as prominent topographic edges at the ocean coast dune.

Landscape Character Area 2.2: Lonsdale Lakes

A small, very flat and seasonally inundated landscape is found between Point Lonsdale and Ocean Grove in the Swan Bay catchment. The Character Area is dominated by waterbodies and wetlands, including Lake Victoria, and is mostly pastoral in the remainder. There is very little built development in this Character Area, although part of the settlement of Point Lonsdale occurs in the area. High, vegetated sand dunes at the coastal edge and prominent slopes inland are important topographic features that provide a backdrop to open views. A small part of the Character Area adjoins the low-energy edge of Swan Bay.

Landscape Character Type 3: Coastal Cliffs & Dunes

Landscape Character Area 3.1: Coastal Cliffs & Dunes

The wild seas and winds at the southern edge of the Bellarine Peninsula have given rise to a varied and often dramatic landscape of sandy beaches, high dunes, low cliffs and rocky headlands. Steep escarpments are frequently vegetated with local species and landmark landscape features such as Point Lonsdale and The Bluff at Barwon Heads punctuate long sandy beaches and dunes. The Character Area also includes some coastal dune landforms fronting low-energy bay beaches in Swan Bay and Port Phillip Bay (Swan Island, Sand Island and Edwards Point). Similar characteristics are likely to occur outside the study area towards Torquay and at Point Nepean and the Mornington Peninsula Back Beach. Part of the settlements of Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale are also in the Character Area. Historical built elements such as the lighthouses at Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff are a feature of the area.

Landscape Character Type 4: Bellarine Hill (Murradoc Hill)

Landscape Character Area 4.1: Bellarine Hill (Murradoc Hill)

This hilly to gently undulating Character Area covers much of the central and northern Bellarine Peninsula. As the major topographic feature of the peninsula, this Character Area forms a significant landscape backdrop to many towns and viewing locations, and offers expansive outlooks. While it is largely open and cleared, cultural vegetation patterns of windbreaks, vineyards and established exotic trees around homesteads are important landscape features.
Bellarine Peninsula Landscape Character Types & Areas, source: CSLAS State Overview Report, p. 32
**Landscape significance**

The methodology for determining landscape significance and significance levels was extrapolated and somewhat improved during the CSLAS. For the first time, ‘visual significance’ was defined:

“The landscape is significant for its visual qualities, including landform features, views, edges or contrasts, and for its predominantly natural or undeveloped character, in which development is absent or clearly subordinate to natural landscape characteristics.”

Also for the first time, visual significance was determined with reference to the ‘landscape components’ referred to in the definition i.e. landform features, views, edges or contrasts, and natural or undeveloped character. These components were rated as having moderate, high or exceptional visual qualities, as illustrated opposite.

For each level of visual significance (local, regional and state), a threshold was defined for each landscape component in the significance criterion. A place would be designated as being of state significance if any one of its landscape components rated ‘exceptional’. A place would be designated as being of regional significance if any one of its landscape components rated ‘high’. Every other part of the coast was considered to be of local significance, implying that the entire coastline had at least ‘moderate’ visual qualities.

The table on the following page, taken from the CSLAS State Overview Report, explains how the different ratings were applied to arrive at levels of significance.

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3 ibid., p. 47
Landscape significance continued

Supporting evidence

Also for the first time in the methodology for determining significance, the concept of ‘supportive evidence’ was introduced, although the consideration of supporting evidence did not contribute to determining levels of significance. The supporting evidence comprised other elements, as opposed to visual qualities, that supported, but did not determine in their own right, a landscape’s significance, for example:

**Exemplar landscape:** How representative is the landscape of a landscape character type?

**Scarce landscape:** How uncommon, rare or endangered is the landscape character type or area?

**Iconic landscape:** Is the landscape instantly recognisable as a place that represents the valued qualities of the Victorian coast? Example sources: artworks, tourism brochures, other publications, etc.

**Documented cultural/heritage value:** Does the landscape have documented cultural/heritage value? Example sources: local planning scheme Heritage Overlay, AAV register, Victorian Heritage Register, Register of the National Estate, National Trust Register, etc.

**Documented environmental value:** Does the landscape have documented environmental value? Example sources: local planning scheme Environmental Significance Overlay, Ramsar Convention, etc.

**Established social/community value:** Does the landscape have established social/community value?

**Visitor attraction:** How important is the landscape as a visitor destination?

The landscapes and levels of significance determined by the CSLA5 for the Bellarine Peninsula and Bass Coast are illustrated on the following pages of this report, and the landscapes of regional and state significance are described.

Determining levels of significance, source: CSLA5 State Overview Report, p. 53
Significant coastal landscapes of the Bellarine Peninsula, source: CSLAS State Overview Report, p. 71
13 Bellarine Peninsula Landscapes of Significance

State Significance: The Heads (at Point Lonsdale)

The Heads at Point Lonsdale is a dramatic and iconic landform at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, and is of state significance.

The Heads is a well-known landscape throughout Victoria and features on numerous early artworks. It is part of a Marine National Park that includes high sand dunes, limestone cliffs, and a vast intertidal rock platform that stretches across to Point Nepean. There are spectacular views from the foreshore and the lighthouse across to Point Nepean, at the other side of The Heads.

This landscape is part of an ever-changing scene, with frequent shipping movements and surging tidal changes – an experience that attracts numerous visitors from across the region and further afield. Point Lonsdale itself is a well-defined coastal village, nestled in vegetation between the high-energy ocean currents at The Heads, and the natural wetlands that inhibit development to the west. A number of buildings in the township are also of heritage value, most notably the Point Lonsdale lighthouse.

Regional Significance: Swan Bay and Surrounds

Swan Bay, its islands and the surrounding landscape, is of regional landscape significance for its many scenic vistas and as a tranquil backdrop to the historic township of Queenscliff.

The extensive shallow bay is fringed by salt marsh and the unique Queenscliff skyline and forms a contrast with the rolling hills of the Bellarine Peninsula. The escarpment to the west of Portarlington-Queenscliff Road, which is included in the landscape unit, forms an important backdrop to Swan Bay and its surrounds. There are scenic views into Swan Bay from many points around Port Phillip Bay including from Queenscliff, Murrarrie Hill, the Mornington Peninsula, and from the popular Sorrento ferry as it crosses The Heads.

Swan Bay’s landscape qualities are enhanced by its international significance as a wetland habitat for birds, recognised through the Ramsar Convention. In addition, the bay’s mud flats, saltmarsh, seagrass communities and sand dunes form the most extensive remnants of communities that were once much more widespread in Port Phillip Bay and are listed on the Register of the National Estate.
Regional Significance: Thirteenth Beach Coast

The Thirteenth Beach coast comprises a sweeping landscape of wide sandy beaches and vast ocean views, interspersed with landmark features of high dunes and rocky cliffs. Visually, the landscape is of regional significance, and is highly valued by the local community.

This is a wild and natural landscape with escarpments and dunes that are covered with indigenous vegetation, including moonah and acacia. Landforms typically have extensive beaches backed by sand dunes up to 30 metres high, the relics of which can extend up to 500m inland. There are notable views to the ocean and back inland, and there are excellent view points to enjoy these from, most notably the spectacular scenic drive along the dune escarpment.

The Bluff at Barwon Heads is a rocky headland that marks the eastern extremity of this landscape. It has shore platforms and caves and is a popular walking spot, attracting visitors from across the region and further afield. The settlement of Breamlea is at the western end of the landscape and nestles sensitively into dense vegetation on the dune system. Parts of the area are protected for their fauna, flora, and geological significance.

Regional Significance: Barwon River Estuary

The Barwon River estuary is an expansive and natural water feature that provides a scenic setting for the popular and well-known Barwon Heads township. Visually, this landscape is of regional significance.

The estuary is integral to the setting for Barwon Heads with tidal movements adding an ever-changing and dynamic element to the scene. It provides a scenic backdrop to the coastal dune system with its largely natural vegetation systems still intact including moonah woodlands and estuarine mangroves. The timber Barwon Heads Bridge is integral to this setting and is listed on the Register of the National Estate due to its length and importance as an historic tourist route.

The significance of the landscape is enhanced because of its associations with features that have much wider recognition. The township and estuary are identified with the popular TV series Seachange that gives the scene an iconic quality and attracts visitors from around the State. In addition, Lake Connewarre wetlands system has international recognition for its bird life through the Ramsar Convention.

Regional Significance: Lake Connewarre Escarpment

The Connewarre Escarpment is a prominent feature on the Bellarine Peninsula of local significance visually. It defines the scenic edge for Rendy Lake, Lake Connewarre, and the Barwon River and provides an attractive rural entrance to the township of Ocean Grove.

The absence of intrusive development makes this entrance particularly noteworthy and the native vegetation and its contrast with the rural landscape further enhances the experience.

The escarpment’s significance is complemented by the surrounding landscape’s environmental values. The lake and wetlands are listed on the Register of the National Estate, and are internationally recognised through the Ramsar Convention as an important flight path for migratory waterfowl.

Regional Significance: Coast between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale

This is a high energy Bass Strait landscape with a sense of naturalness and openness that is rare so close to Melbourne. Visually, the landscape is of regional significance.

The coast between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale is characterised by wide sandy surf beaches with extensive ocean views, and is backed by a natural and intact dune system. Lake Victoria to the rear of the dunes is a wetland landscape with a high community and environmental value. The ocean views are expansive and spectacular, and include views across to the Mornington Peninsula and a continuous movement of cargo and ships maneuvering through The Heads. Indigenous vegetation is still prevalent in this area, particularly on the sand dune system, and around Lake Victoria.

The foreshore reserve at Buckley Park is also significant for its Aboriginal heritage values, with many sites recorded in the park itself and throughout the coastal landscape. Also important are the associations with William Buckley who lived with the local Wada wurrung clan in 1803. There are many shipwrecks of significance in the area that attract visitors, along with the opportunity to pursue a range of recreational activities, including a popular coastal walk along the beach from Ocean Grove to Point Lonsdale.
Regional Significance: Lake Victoria and Yarram Creek

The landscape of Lake Victoria to Yarram Creek is regionally significant. It includes a visually important escarpment and landscape edge that also forms a rural backdrop to the settlements of Ocean Grove, Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff. It also includes lakes that form part of an important wetland coastal environment, and the attractive enclosed valley of the Yarram Creek. The significant landscape extends from the western township edge of Ocean Grove, across Lake Victoria, incorporating a shallow ridge to the north and the Bellarine Railway (including rail trail), Yarram Creek Valley, and includes the slopes of the hill north of Suma Park visible to the coast. The area connects in the north-east to the Swan Bay significance area.

The landscape is visually important for a number of highly scenic views. Views are available from both the entrances to Point Lonsdale along Shell Road and the Bellarine Highway, as well as from topographically higher areas to the west and south. There are views of picturesque rural landscapes along the Bellarine Peninsula tourist railway line and Bellarine Rail trail. Significant views inland may be observed from Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff inland to a gently rising ridge running north-east from Ocean Grove to Swan Bay, including the heritage homestead ‘Suma Park’. The Buckley Park Foreshore Reserve covers the immediate coastal strip between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale and provides an important backdrop of intact coastal dunes when viewed from the north.

The Lonsdale Lakes Wildlife Reserve (Lake Victoria, Freshwater Lake, Salt Lakes 2 and 3) and the ephemeral wetlands adjacent to the southern shores of Lake Victoria are identified as environmentally significant and having values that complement the Ramsar site’s (Lake Connewarre and Martynghurt Lagoon) ecological character. Lake Victoria, the largest water body in the significance area, is a scenic, shallow, sub-coastal lagoon that is separated from Bass Strait by a narrow strip of coastal dunes. Indigenous vegetation is prevalent in this area, particularly on the sand dune system and around Lake Victoria, where remnant vegetation has been retained.

Regional Significance: Swan Bay and Surrounds

Swan Bay, its islands and the surrounding landscape, is of regional landscape significance for its many scenic vistas and as a tranquil backdrop to the historic township of Queenscliff.

The extensive shallow bay is fringed by salt marsh and the unique Queenscliff skyline and forms a contrast with the rolling hills of the Bellarine Peninsula. The escarpment to the west of Portarlington-Queenscliff Road, which is included in the landscape unit, forms an important backdrop to Swan Bay and its surrounds. There are scenic views into Swan Bay from many points around Port Phillip Bay including from Queenscliff, Murradoc Hill, the Mornington Peninsula, and from the popular Sorrento ferry as it crosses The Heads.

Swan Bay’s landscape qualities are enhanced by its international significance as a wetland habitat for birds, recognised through the Ramsar Convention. In addition, the bay’s mudflats, saltmarshes, seagrass communities and sand dunes form the most extensive remnants of communities that were once much more widespread in Port Phillip Bay and are listed on the Register of the National Estate.

Regional Significance: Murradoc Hill

Murradoc Hill is the highest point on the Bellarine Peninsula and is of local significance as a scenic and undeveloped backdrop to coastal townships and Port Phillip Bay.

This is a cleared and distinctive landscape which is largely undeveloped and unspoilt. It is characterised by planted windbreaks, vineyards, and olive groves; the hilly topography providing a contrast to the flatter Bellarine landscapes to the east and west. There are commanding and potentially regionally significant views to Port Phillip Bay and the Nepean Peninsula, and to local townships such as Queenscliff and Portarlington from the apex of the hill. Conversely, Murradoc Hill is the most prominent feature of views to the Bellarine Peninsula from around the bay and from as far away as Melbourne.

Regional Significance: Clifton Springs to Portarlington Coast

The coastal hinterland area between Clifton Springs and Portarlington is characterized by a steep escarpment that is highly visible from across Corio Bay. The landscape provides an important break between the settlements of Clifton Springs and Portarlington and is of regional significance.

Extensive views across Corio and Port Phillip Bays are available from the escarpment, which is dominated by a patchwork of viticultural and pastoral land uses. The escarpment gradually slopes down towards the Bay and meets with the steep, low cliffs at the coastal edge.

The Spray Farm estate on Portarlington Road is located within the landscape and is a prominent tourist site that also has access to extensive views across Corio and Port Phillip Bays. Spray Farm is listed by the National Trust and is also on the Register of the National Estate due to its importance as an historical pastoral property with buildings of architectural significance.
Landscape significance continued

The methodology used in the GORRLA5 utilised four criteria i.e. landscape features, landscape edges, scarcity and visitation, to determine significance, and a ‘sliding scale’ from low to high. The CSLA5 progressed this somewhat, applying only visual criteria to the landscapes i.e. landform features, views, edges or contrasts and natural or undeveloped character. Views were rated for the first time, and scarcity and visitation were relegated to supporting evidence.

A further leap forward in significance methodology was made with the South West Victoria Landscape Assessment Study in 2013, and has been made with landscape assessment work since. While the origins of significance determination are in the GORRLA5 and CSLA5 projects of 2003 and 2006, the current significance assessment approach is considerably more rigorous, thorough and transparent. It is discussed in detail in the following sections of this report, and is a key area that will require re-addressing in future DALs landscape assessment review work.

CSLA5 Recommendations

No additional recommendations were made for the Great Ocean Road Region municipalities (i.e. Surf Coast), beyond those that formed part of the original GORRLA5. The landscapes of significance and their levels of significance were confirmed, but ‘statements of significance’ of the kind prepared for the other three regions of the CSLA5 were not drafted, nor were objectives or decision guidelines that could be incorporated into SLO schedules.

14 Summary of Findings

In re-visiting the CSLA5, the following key findings relating to the future landscape assessment review have emerged:

- The determination of landscape character is a more factual and objective part of landscape assessment work, and does not require a great deal of additional reassessment.
- Mapping / GIS technology has progressed significantly however, and the landscape character work would benefit greatly from being re-mapped, including the placement of the character types and areas over various GIS layers, such as geology, landform, vegetation, water bodies etc. This may result in some minor boundary changes only.
- Landscape significance methodology has evolved considerably since 2006 (in fact, well beyond the CSLA5).
- The determination of significance and the levels of significance of landscapes will require additional considerable work to re-confirm, and elevate the assessment and conclusions to best practice standard i.e. justifiable at a Panel Hearing.
- Draft SLO schedules (or clear and concise schedule contents) were not prepared as part of the CSLA5, therefore planning scheme provisions are inconsistent and lacking in some instances (as discussed in the next section of this report).
- A considerable amount of work has been done in the area of SLO mapping and justifying SLO boundaries since the studies (and the November 2004 mapping project), and this may have implications for the location of existing SLOs.
- The issue of townships in the landscape was only briefly discussed in the CSLA5 and has not been considered in landscape assessments in any detail since.
- The CSLA5 did not include a comprehensive assessment of significant views, or preceding that, the identification of significant viewing locations (with criteria that could be justified). This is a major shortfall of the work.
2 Planning Schemes (SLO) Audit

Many of the recommendations from the CSL-AS were implemented through the local planning schemes; and planning permit applications for development on the Bellarine Peninsula are currently triggered by, and subject to, the provisions of the relevant planning scheme.

The most notable recommendation from the landscape assessment study was the application of the SLO to landscapes of regional or state significance, the purpose of which is outlined in the head clause at Clause 42.03 of the Victoria Planning Provisions, and includes:

• To identify significant landscapes.
• To conserve and enhance the character of significant landscapes.

Under the SLO head clause, a permit is required for buildings or works. This does not apply if a schedule to the overlay includes a specific buildings or works exemption. Agricultural activities e.g. ploughing, fencing etc. are also exempt, unless specifically included in a schedule. A permit is also required for vegetation removal (with exemptions), and to construct a fence if specified in a schedule.

Also through a schedule to the SLO, a ‘statement of nature and key elements of landscape’ (or statement of significance) must be provided, together with objectives (up to five) and decision guidelines. The SLO areas can be further tailored through buildings and works and/or vegetation exemptions, and VC148 has introduced the opportunity for application requirements to be included in an SLO schedule.

Within the Bellarine Peninsula, the SLO applies to the coastal (and other) landscapes listed below. Some of these SLO areas were pre-existing, and others were recommended or amended as a result of the landscape assessment study. Where the level of significance is referred to in the relevant SLO schedule, it is noted in brackets. Key observations regarding the particular overlay schedule are dot-pointed.

2.1 Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

Within the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme, 10 SLOs apply to the Bellarine Peninsula, as follows:

SLO6 Wallington Road, Ocean Grove
• A very small and specific overlay covering 10 Rural Living zoned properties at the western entrance to Ocean Grove.
• Permit required for buildings and works and vegetation removal. Comprehensive decision guidelines are provided in the schedule.

SLO7 Ocean Grove Hillside Area
• Applies to residential zones areas within the township. Focused on the protection of native vegetation and encouraging recessive buildings and works.

SLO8 Barwon Heads Semi-bush Significant Landscape Area
• Applies to a strip of Low Density Residential zoned properties in Stephens Parade, which was part of the original 1920s Golf Links subdivision.
• The visual dominance of vegetation is the focus of the overlay, and the schedule is clear and comprehensive.

SLO9 Barwon River Environs Barwon Heads
• Applies to residential zoned areas within the township, which have a frontage to the Barwon River.

SLO10 Lake Connewarre Escarpment
• Focused on the protection of the landscape qualities of the largest area of remnant vegetation on the Bellarine Peninsula, and includes a level of significance (regional) in the statement of nature and key elements of landscape.
• Comprehensive objectives from the CSL-AS, though more than allowed under VC148.
• Buildings and works exemptions included for residential and/or agricultural buildings under a certain height and floor area.
• A permit is required to remove vegetation 5m+ in height (with exemptions).
• All encompassing decision guidelines with CSL-AS as a reference document.

SLO11 Lake Victoria and Yarram Creek
• Comprehensive and lengthy ‘statement of significance’ including significance level. Viewing locations are also named and views described.
• Very similar (if not the same) objectives, permit requirements and decision guidelines as SLO10.
• Could be more place-based and less ‘general’.
• CSL-AS reference document.

SLO12 Swan Bay and Surrounds
• Specific and comprehensive statement and nature of key elements of landscape.
• Remainder of schedule as per SLO10 and SLO11.
SLO13 Murradoc Hill
- Again a specific and comprehensive statement and nature of key elements of landscape.
- Remainder of schedule as per SLO10, SLO11 and SLO12, with the exception of the decision guidelines, which introduce guidance regarding development on hill tops and hill faces.

SLO14 Clifton Springs to Portarlington Coast
- As per SLO11 – SLO13, but with a tailored ‘statement of significance’ and a slight variation in decision guidelines.

SLO15 Ocean Grove Significant Tree Residential Area
- Applies to residential zoned areas within the township, with the focus on the contribution of native trees to residential character.

The following amendments should be noted for future reference:
- Amendment C177 (2011) SLO10, SLO11, SLO12, SLO13 & SLO14 (Implementation of CSL-45)
- Amendment C300 (2014) SLO8 & SLO9
- Amendment C349 (2018) SLO7 & SLO15

2.2 Queenscliffe Planning Scheme

SLO1 Swan Bay Landscape Area
- Very short statement of nature and key elements of landscape, which does not detail the level of significance nor the ‘landscape values’ or particular ‘scenic vantage points’ referred to in the objectives.
- Five objectives, but no link to statement of nature and key elements of landscape.
- A permit is required to construct a fence, and to remove native vegetation (overlap with Clause 52.17) and cypress trees.
- A permit is required for buildings and works, except in the Queenscliff Harbour SUZ.
- The following statements are misplaced in the permit requirement section of the schedule:
  - All applications must be accompanied by landscape plans showing the effects of the proposed use or development on significant landscapes and view lines.
  - Buildings and works shall not be sited or carried out which interfere with significant landscapes and view lines.
- Decision guidelines are comprehensive but refer to ‘visual sequences’ and ‘scenic vantage points’ that are not defined or explained elsewhere in the schedule.
- CSL-45 (2006) is included as a reference document.

SLO2 Point Lonsdale Lookout & Queenscliff Lighthouse / Ocean View Car Park
- Covers a relatively small area of public zoned, foreshore land, already occupied by specific uses.
- Again, a very short statement of nature and key elements of landscape, with little or no link to the very detailed and numerous objectives.
- The exemption of timber post and wire fencing up to 1.5m seems at odd with the character of the overlay area i.e. it is not agricultural land.
- The same misplaced statements as per SLO1 occur in this overlay schedule.

SLO3 Narrows
- Relates to an avenue of cypress trees that provides an entrance to the Borough, and triggers a permit for vegetation removal.
- Again includes misplaced statements in the permit requirements section of the schedule i.e.
  - All applications must be accompanied by landscape plans showing the effects of the proposed use or development on significant landscapes and view lines.
  - Buildings and works shall not be sited or carried out which interfere with significant landscapes and view lines.
  - All new buildings on the southern side of the Bellarine Highway must be set back 15 metres from the Bellarine Highway frontage.

In relation to the above SLOs, the following amendments should be noted for future reference:
- Amendment C27 (2017) SLO1, SLO2 & SLO3
2.3 Summary of Findings

While the above SLOs and their associated schedules provide an important permit trigger in many instances, and objectives and decision guidelines against which development can be assessed, an initial review, and discussions with local council officers, has found that the following may impact upon their effectiveness of use by the Responsible Authorities:

- Draft SLOs were not a required output of the landscape assessment studies and the schedules were therefore written in isolation, and not by the consultants who had undertaken the landscape assessment work.

- The SLO schedules are inconsistent in their content and largely do not comply with VC148 or the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.

- The SLO schedules vary in their quality and quantity of information, and in the usefulness and applicability of their decision guidelines.

- Some of the schedules do not contain a comprehensive 'statement of nature and key elements of landscape' section, or a level of significance, even though it is known.

- Some of the schedules contain too many non-focused objectives, and are not specific enough in their intentions or language.

- If the intention of an SLO is to protect significant views or viewsheds, the viewing locations should be correctly chosen and justified, and specifically noted in the schedule; and the views described.

- In some cases, not enough guidance is provided for the assessment of built form.

It should be noted of course that other parts of the planning scheme, from state and local policy to detailed zoning provisions, can also assist in decision making when it comes to development within the DALs regions, including the following key clauses of the VPP:

- 11.03-4S Coastal settlement
- 11.03-5S Distinctive areas and landscapes
- 12.01-2S Native vegetation management
- 12.02-1S Protection of coastal areas
- 12.05-2S Landscapes

In conclusion, the SLO provisions in the planning schemes, against which all development proposals in areas of landscape significance are assessed, require a thorough review and re-write. This should be undertaken in tandem with the drafting of any additional LPP provisions.
3. Planning Panels Findings

Two recent Panel reports contain useful observations and information regarding the application of the SLO to significant landscapes and the most appropriate methods for determining SLO boundaries. These findings provide insights into what will be supported at Panel, and the level of justification required for a successful planning scheme amendment process.

3.1 Greater Bendigo Amendment C217

What was proposed?

Amendment C217 proposed to include two new schedules to the Significant Landscape Overlay in the Bendigo Planning Scheme:

- SLO3 Big Hill Significant Landscape Area
- SLO4 Mandurang Valley Significant Landscape Area

SLO3 was proposed to cover an area of privately owned, Farming zoned land, including (part of) the long crested ridgeline, southern slopes and foreground of Big Hill, extending all the way to the Calder Highway and Calder Alternate Highway.

SLO4 was proposed to cover a number of parcels of land zoned Rural Living or Low Density Residential in the Mandurang Valley to the south east of Bendigo. These groups of privately owned lots were located generally at the interface with/or directly adjacent to the Box-Ironbark forest landscape of the Greater Bendigo National Park and the Bendigo Regional Park.

Key findings

The Panel Report for Amendment C217 was handed down on 1 April 2016. The Panel recommended deferral of the proposed amendment, pending further work. In particular, it was noted that the areas proposed to be covered by the SLO should be “more carefully and logically defined so that land is not unnecessarily included.” Specifically, it was stated that the review should:

| a) | “include significant landscape areas zoned Rural Conservation Zone and Public Conservation and Resource Zone...” |
| b) | “... use landscape features to determine the overlay curtilage...” |
| c) | “... include the ridgeline and escarpment at Big Hill and substantially reduce the application to the remainder of the site at Ravenswood Ram...” |
| d) | “... provide a logical boundary around the Box Ironbark forest and interface properties.” |

These four key findings are discussed in more detail below.

Application of the SLO to public land & all zones

It is now widely accepted that the application of the SLO should consider public land, in the interests of consistency and good management. In agreeing with this viewpoint, the Panel drew attention to Planning Practice Note 2, Public Land Zones, which states:

“...In deciding whether to apply an overlay to land, the public land zones should be treated in the same manner as other zones...”

Preceding this Panel Report, a number of others have referenced the appropriateness of applying the SLO to public land. It is also the author’s opinion that any assessment of landscape character and significance, and subsequent decisions on the application of overlays, should be undertaken irrespective of land tenure. This is important for completeness, and to inform a full comparative assessment and designation of significance across a region or study area.

It is also important to ensure appropriate landscape protection and management, as evidenced in some state managed parks that have been impacted negatively by the installation of infrastructure such as powerlines, or by timber plantations.

While National and Regional Parks are often subject to additional legislation (e.g. National Parks Act and Crown Land Reserves Act) and separate management plans, they still experience varying degrees of development pressure, namely for tourism and other infrastructure.

Using landscape features to determine overlay boundaries

In relation to determining suitable boundaries for the SLO, the Panel concluded that the overlay curtilage should be informed by features of landscape significance and visibility.

The Panel disagreed with the approach taken by Council in this case i.e. the use of roads, cadastral boundaries and zoning to determine the proposed curtilage of the SLO areas. It stated instead, that landscape features should drive this decision:

“Given that a landscape unit is determined by geographic or natural features rather than constructed features or mapping logistics, it seems reasonable... that natural features be used as the basis of determining logical boundaries for a Significant Landscape Overlay.”

This is also the author’s opinion and is reinforced by other Panel findings on SLO locations. The Greater Geelong C177, East
Gippsland C68 and South Gippsland C45 all reference the importance of relating overlay boundaries to views of significant landscapes, topography and landscape ‘visibility’ from public areas.

In relation to visibility, the Panel concluded that “for a landscape to be deemed suitable for the application of the (SLO), that it first must be determined as a significant landscape, and that secondly, it must predominantly be able to be seen.”

Further, the Panel agreed with the interpretation of the term ‘visible’ as outlined in the report for South Gippsland C45, where it was taken to mean “established patterns of public viewing from roads, townships and recreational locations across the study area.”

Aesthetic or visual values are certainly the basis for determining the significance of landscapes in landscape assessment studies. The author does however agree with Council’s position put to the Panel Hearing that if a landscape is not easily viewed, it is not considered less significant as a result.

**Extent of SLO boundaries**

In relation to the proposed SLO3 to the Big Hill area, the Panel found merit in the argument presented (by the owners of part of the proposed SLO area) that the landscape assessment did not adequately justify the application of the overlay. This was particularly in relation to the ‘foreground’ of Big Hill, between the escarpment itself and the Calder Highway/Calder Alternate Highway, which was found to be of questionable landscape significance and not highly visible, due to undulating topography and roadside vegetation.

In relation to the broader proposed overlay area, it was also concluded that the proposed curtilage had been determined in a non-preferred manner by cadastral boundaries, and excluded areas of Rural Conservation zoned land.

In relation to the proposed SLO4 to the Mandurang Valley area, the Panel found that there were inconsistencies in its application. In particular, some areas were excluded as they are subject to overlay controls (e.g. HO and ESO), but others were included despite these overlays being in place.

It was also concluded by Panel Members that the most visually prominent component of this landscape is the Box-Ironbark forest itself, including the National and Regional Parks, and the forest interface areas where remnant vegetation has been protected. This indicates that the extent of vegetation coverage, together with the designation of the area as a Regional or National Park (i.e. the public land) should inform the SLO boundaries.

**3.2 Southern Grampians Amendment C36**

What was proposed?

Amendment C36 to the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme proposed to alter and make permanent an interim SLO map and schedule (SLO6) that applied to Harmans Valley, near Hamilton. The geologically and visually significant landscape is a lava flow that resulted from the eruption of nearby Mt Napier.

Panel findings

The Panel Report was handed down on 16 April 2018 and recommended that the amendment be adopted as exhibited, subject to some minor mapping changes. The Panel found that the Harmans Valley lava flow is of state significance that warrants permanent planning scheme protection and management. The two key issues that were debated during the Panel hearing and are of most relevance to this study are:

a) the extent of the SLO boundaries and whether a 50m buffer was an appropriate setting distance; and,

b) whether the contents of the SLO schedule were too onerous and should be removed or relaxed.

These issues are discussed further below.

**Extent of SLO boundaries & 50m buffer**

Following consideration of evidence and some 75 submissions, the Panel found that the interim SLO6 was applied over too broad a distance, including farmland that was unconnected to the lava flow and not significant. The boundaries were based on cadastral land parcels, and not on the extent of the significant landscape feature itself.

The Council in fact addressed this mapping issue before the Panel hearing and proposed that the SLO cover only the lava flow area, plus a 50m buffer. Council utilised the following methodology/principles in determining the boundaries of the proposed permanent SLO6:

- Visual observations, mapping and aerial photography.
- The nature of the landscape feature itself, and its physical characteristics.
- Contours (used to define the valley floor).
- A setting (or appropriate buffer) of “50m from the landscape feature(s), and its interface with the landscape beyond…”

The rationale for the 50m buffer area, was to “provide a margin of error to account for mapping tolerances and that it would assist in protecting the landscape setting within which the lava flow sits.”

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid. p. 44
In addition, Council advised that Crown land was not included in the SLO6 on the advice of DELWP. However, the exclusion of public land from and SLO area is not consistent with current best practice, or the findings of other recent Panel hearings including Amendment C217.

In relation to the 50m buffer, the Panel found that the ‘setting’ of the lava flow is important and is needed so that the landscape can be interpreted and seen clearly. It also concluded that the buffer did indeed account for a margin of error, “but more importantly contributes to protecting the visual setting, allowing not just the lava flow to be seen as a whole but also protecting the valley walls that frame the flow…” 11

Moreover:

“While the Panel agrees that the choice of 50 metres for the buffer is somewhat arbitrary, it is satisfied that this distance is a reasonable response to the characteristics of the valley and will adequately reveal the lava flow in its topographic setting… On balance, the Panel supports the SLO6 applying to a 50 metre buffer around the lava flow.” 11

Contents of SLO schedule

A point of debate during the Panel hearing was whether the SLO6 adequately controlled ‘earthworks’. In its report, the Panel re-stated the SLO head clause (42.03):

A permit is required to:

- Construct a building or carry out works. This does not apply:
  - If a schedule to this overlay specifically states that a permit is not required.

- To the conduct of agricultural activities including ploughing and fencing (but not the construction of dams) unless a specific requirement for that activity is specified in a schedule to this overlay.

And also the definition of ‘works’ as defined in the Act:

“… any change to the natural or existing condition or topography of land including the removal, destruction or lopping of trees and the removal of vegetation or topsoil.” 15

And concluded that all ‘works’ other than those explicitly exempted in the schedule require a permit. The Panel also counselled Council against including an additional (double-up) clause in the proposed SLO6 for clarification regarding earthworks, stating that:

- “The head clause establishes that a permit is required for buildings and works, and only enables the schedule to require permits for a specified ‘agricultural activity’.

- Local content in the schedule should not duplicate provisions in the head clause.” 14

Regarding fencing, which does not require a permit unless stated in the schedule, the Panel concluded that:

- “The requirement to obtain a permit for the removal or destruction of dry stone walls is appropriate.

- New fences should require a permit, including post and wire fences where they would damage the lava flow or associated geological features or structures.” 15

A further recommendation of Panel was that:

- “Southern Grampians Shire and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning consider the joint production of a permit application guide or kit for the area within the Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 6. The purposes of the guide or kit might include a ‘plain English’ explanation of the key provisions and an outline of the type of information that should accompany different types of permit applications.” 17

And regarding access tracks, which need to be explicitly excluded from requiring a permit in the schedule, as they are considered ‘works’, Panel found that:

- “New access tracks should require a permit where they change the topography or damage or require modification to the lava flow or associated geological features or structures.” 16

10 Ibid. p. 15-16
11 Ibid. p. 18
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid. p. 24
14 Ibid. p. 25
15 Ibid. p. 27
16 Ibid. p. 28
17 Ibid. p. 30
4 Declaration Area Extents & Townships

4.1 Bellarine Peninsula Declaration Area

As noted previously, the declaration area for the Bellarine Peninsula distinctive area and landscape will remain as it is for the current Localised Planning Statement. Under the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (2018) Amendment, the LPS will be updated and modernised into a new Statement of Planning Policy for the region. A landscape assessment review will form an integral part of that process.

The existing LPS was prepared in September 2015, and includes an overview of the area; including its significance; policy objectives and strategies; and a framework plan.

Among other things, the Bellarine Peninsula is described as being significant for its landscape characteristics:

“...Swan Bay and the Lake Connewarre Complex are identified as wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar convention. In addition, The Heads at Point Lonsdale are identified as being of State significance by the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study and form part of the broader Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park.

Significant indigenous vegetation is found throughout the Bellarine Peninsula including roadside vegetation many of which are subject to overlay controls. The Ocean Grove Nature Reserve is listed by the National Trust as a significant example of remnant flora of the Bellarine Peninsula.”

The LPS emphasises the retention of farming as a key land use, together with the protection of rural breaks between settlements. The protection of the following landscape features are also integral to the LPS and its framework plan:

- “Strong linear vegetation features including exotic windbreaks and significant indigenous roadside vegetation.
- Open and expansive views throughout.
- Large and significant water features including the Barwon River, Lake Connewarre Complex, Lake Victoria and Swan Bay.
- Sparse built elements and settlements, particularly in the western areas of the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Typically rugged surf coast with sweeping beaches, headlands and dunes with extensive and largely intact indigenous dune vegetation.
- Lookouts, walking trails, heavily used recreational locations and coastal settlements, often with expansive outlooks.
- Steep, low cliffs and minor escarpment at the coastal and lake edges.”

A topographic map has also been prepared for the Bellarine Peninsula and is included on the following page.

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18 Bellarine Peninsula Localised Planning Statement, September 2015, p. 17
19 ibid., p. 17
Topography: Bellarine Peninsula

Distinctive Areas & Landscapes - Landscape Assessment Review (Stage 1)
4.2 Consideration of Townships

The consideration of townships as part of a landscape assessment study has not occurred since the CSLA in 2005. Thereafter, townships, and/or urban zoned areas, have been excluded from project briefs, and the emphasis has been on the ‘natural landscape’ only. It has been accepted that the detailed planning of building height and form, boundaries/extents, land use, traffic and transport etc. in relation to townships should be undertaken as part of a structure planning and/or urban design framework process. However, the project brief for Stage 1 (Scoping) of the DALs LAS Review includes the requirement to:

- Consider whether an expanded methodology may include the assessment of the relationship between townships and the natural landscape, including the point of intersection at the edge of townships.

It is agreed that the development within, and at the edges of, townships has the potential to significantly change the character of a wider landscape, and impact a landscape’s significance. Townships and settlements, and their outskirts, are also often under the most development pressure and facing change and potential threats to character. There is obviously some convergence required therefore, between the structure planning of townships, the assessment of the landscapes within which they sit, and the relationship of the built form of the townships to those natural landscapes.
Townships on the Bellarine Peninsula were also assessed in relation to their landscape settings as part of CSLA5, and are described below. The current Localised Planning Statement also includes the more recent and broad-reaching descriptions.

**St Leonards & Indented Head**

Traditional sea-side style settlements at St Leonards and Indented Head are popular destinations as lifestyle residential and ‘holiday home’ townships. A coastal boulevard and coastal open space with feature exotic planting provides a buffer between St Leonards and Port Phillip Bay. Several dwellings on the coastal edge of each settlement have been redeveloped or rebuilt and are frequently two stories, and designed to take advantage of views. Very flat topography affords views to and from the first row of houses. Further inland, residential development on flat land is less exposed to the coast. Significant linear sprawl along the coast is occurring between the townships, although it is contained by the existing reserve at Salt Lake.

**Portarlington**

The bulk of the settlement of Portarlington is developed on steep to rolling topography above Port Phillip Bay in the north of the ‘Bellarine Hill’ character area, and extending west along Geelong-Portarlington Road… Topographic features are an important element of the township, with low cliff escarpments adjoining the Bay, and an undeveloped scenic rural skyline providing a backdrop to the town above the northward facing slopes adjoining Geelong-Portarlington Road.

The eastern edge of Portarlington spills into the flat coastal plains of the ‘Bay Slopes and Flats’ character area, and is growing substantially with new residential and low density residential estates. Urban expansion of Portarlington and Indented Heads has seen significant linear sprawl along the coastal edge between the two settlements. A separate residential area developed on flats of near the Portarlington boat ramp is contained between the coast and a significant flora reserve inland (Point Richards Flora Reserve).

**Barwon Heads**

Barwon Heads township is set on mostly flat topography on the western edge of the Barwon River estuary. Houses are exposed to the estuary and river for much of the township length and some owners have private ownership to the edge. Some buildings are highly visible from recreational locations and residences across the estuary in Ocean Grove. Newer development has expanded the township into flat rural land to the north and west, mostly lacking vegetation although some coniferous wind breaks have been retained.

To the south and west of the town, the settlement extends into the varied topography of the 'Coastal Cliffs and Dunes' Character Area. The coastal edge includes prominent and scenic landforms such as The Bluff, which is an important landmark and feature viewed from the southern coastal edge of the Peninsula and 13th Beach. One strip of large contemporary houses remote from town is being developed in cleared coastal vegetation on the lower slopes of relict dunes, partially visible from 13th Beach Road.
Ocean Grove

The township of Ocean Grove is centred on a significant rise surrounded by two flats abutting the coast. Dwellings are a dominant feature on the rise, positioned to take advantage of views to the ocean. Ocean Grove is recognised as a major centre on the Peninsula and is a major growth node on. Future residential development is focused to the north of the settlement east and west along the Grubb Road corridor. These greenfield sites are contained within an urban growth boundary articulated in the MSS.

While the more prominent slopes of Ocean Grove are contained in the adjacent character area, the eastern and western extremities of the township extend into the flat land of the ‘Lake Connewarre Flats’ character area. In the east, much of the settlement it sits on or below the hind slopes of the coastal dunes and beneath a topographic escarpment, while in the west, it borders the Barwon River estuary, a significant and highly visible landscape viewed from Barwon Heads and by recreational users of the waterway.

… the town extends into the coastal dunes and slopes of the ‘Coastal Cliffs and Dunes’ character area. In the east, a large coastal reserve covers much of the dunal areas, buffering development which sits behind and below the dunes, as well as on higher slopes overlooking the coast. However, west of Hodgson Street in Ocean Grove is the only stretch in this area in which buildings set atop coastal landforms dominate views from the beach.

Thirteenth Beach Estate

Developed on mostly flat topography between Barwon Heads Road and Murtnaghurt Lagoon west of Barwon Heads is a relatively low density residential estate with a 36 hole golf course. This estate and its golf course also have an interface with the ‘Ocean Beach and Cliffs’ character area to the south. Vegetation on the golf course softens views to dwellings, however contemporary styles and materials, narrow curvilinear road pavements, swale drains and bollard lighting create a distinct suburban element into the mostly undeveloped surrounding landscape. The surrounding wetlands create an important landscape separation between this Estate and Barwon Heads township.

Point Lonsdale

Point Lonsdale is built largely in rolling topography and select dunes of the ‘Coastal Cliffs and Dunes’ character area, but also the flatter hinterland of the adjacent landscape. Much of the settlement is set in dense vegetation beneath and behind high coastal dunes. Dwellings are separated from the coast by a road and an almost continuous coastal flora reserve. The coast and Point Nepean are largely visible from the town except along the bay frontage where the settlement is exposed to the coast by lower topography and a lack of vegetation. Point Lonsdale and the lighthouse are culturally important and highly visible landscape elements in the local area and there are several viewing locations and lookouts in coastal reserves providing uninterrupted views of The Rip and Point Nepean.

(In the flatter hinterland of the ‘Lonsdale Lakes’ character area) … the town extends into rural flats and reclaimed wetlands to the north and west. These areas are more suburban in character, and are generally less established with vegetation than the older areas closer to the coast. These parts of the settlement are largely hidden from coastal viewpoints owing to the flat topography on which they are built, although development is extending into valued lakes and flats that are exposed to views from Shell Road and the Bellarine Highway.

Breamlea

Breamlea is a small settlement entirely contained on the steep and heavily vegetated rear slopes of coastal dunes, and overlooking a flat lake nature reserve. Despite recent extensions to dwellings, development is not visible from the beach owing to the size of the dunes, and retained vegetation.
Queenscliff

The historic settlement of Queenscliff is set on a low, hilly and narrow peninsula. There is a significant landscape character divide between the high cliff / sandy ocean edge, and the low energy / mud flat Swan Bay edge. Almost the entire peninsula is urban in character, with established exotic vegetation in formal streetscape plantings (notably, Norfolk Island Pines) and the lighthouse as important landscape features. A large man made harbour dominates the waterfront in one section. The southern Port Phillip Bay edge of the town maintains a wild coastal character with dwelling heights below that of the coastal dunes.

Leopold

Leopold is located at the westernmost edge of the ‘Bellarine Hill’ character area, developed on the slopes and minor escarpment overlooking the flat plains of the adjacent Character Area (Photo 1) and extending south from Geelong Portarlington Road toward Lake Connewarre. The settlement is exposed on the low western escarpment to views the Bellarine Highway and Geelong Portarlington Road, however a the town has hard edges and an undeveloped rural land provides a ‘gateway’ experience upon approach to Leopold. South of the settlement is designated as a growth area on the Peninsula, with development likely to extend across largely undeveloped rural land to the edge of Lake Connewarre.

Drysdale / Clifton Springs

These almost contiguous settlements form the largest urban area on the Bellarine Peninsula. A medium-sized urban centre located close to Portarlington Road is surrounded by substantial suburban areas, mostly contained in the rolling rural hinterland and softened by landscaping. An undeveloped recreation reserve buffers the urban area from the Bay coast in part, although some development has occurred atop the low cliff escarpment at Clifton Springs and is visibly exposed to the coast. The suburbs back on to rural areas with many edges to settlements loosely defined by substantial areas of rural living hobby farms. To the west of the settlement, relatively large area has been earmarked as a greenfield site for future residential expansion.

Wallington

Wallington is located centrally within the ‘Bellarine Hill’ character area along the Bellarine Highway. The settlement has been designed to cater for bulk of Rural Living requirements on the Peninsula. An unclear and scattered rural character is afforded by large lots, a built form (including big-box retail) and numerous mixed vegetation features such as mixed native roadside planting and exotic shelterbelts.

View across the bay towards Queenscliff
4.3 Townships Methodology
Recommendations

It is proposed that the following tasks be integrated into the future DALs LAS Review in relation to townships:

- Re-visit and review GORRLAS and CSLAS township descriptions / observations.
- Update the township descriptions, with an emphasis on the setting of the township within the broader landscape; its relationship to the natural landscape; and, its interface or edges with the broader landscape area.
- Also consider and document the visibility of the townships from different points in the landscape (on or immediately adjacent to key viewing corridors/roads), at a distance.
- Assess the level of change that has occurred in the townships since 2005 i.e. low, medium or high degrees of change (and define each level).
- Compare the 2005 township descriptions and current observations (including the level of change), with the relevant township framework plan in the local planning scheme.
- Highlight consistencies and/or inconsistencies between the above elements and draw conclusions/make recommendations.
- Consider and describe the ‘essence’ of the character of the townships as they relate to the landscape, and make recommendations in the form of ‘township to landscape principles’ to guide the future development of all settlements in the region.
- Review existing structure plans, urban design frameworks and character studies for their insights into the above assessments.
- Test the conclusions and principles with the Reference Group(s) established for the future DALs LAS Review.
- Support the above analysis work with mapping and photographs as appropriate.
5. Proposed Landscape Assessment Review Methodology

As described, the methodology for the assessment of landscape significance and the determination of levels of significance has evolved considerably since the GORRLAS (2003) and CSLAS (2006). For instance, the determination of significant viewing locations and the assessment of significant views and vistas has been added to landscape assessment methodology. Before outlining the proposed methodology for the DALs LAS Review (Stage 2 onwards) at the conclusion of this report, current best practice significance methodology, for both landscapes and views, is outlined and explained below.

5.1 Determining Landscape Significance

Five cultural landscape values are included in the definition of landscape significance and an assessment of these values should be used to determine the significance of the landscapes throughout any study area.

1. Visual values

The visual or aesthetic values of landscape relate to an appreciation of their scenic beauty, and should include the consideration of all human senses and responses. An indicator of visual or aesthetic value may also include depiction of the landscape in poetry or artwork, such as painting or photography.

In order to determine the overall visual value of landscapes, three landscape components should be assessed:

- **Landscape features**
  A landscape feature is a topographic element or prominent landmark such as a headland, mountain range or volcanic cone that is visually dramatic and provides the landscape with its ‘wow factor’. The prevalence or concentration of a particular landscape attribute or vegetation type e.g. weathered granitic boulders, a stand of River Red Gums, a proliferation of dry stone walls etc. may also be classified as a landscape feature.

  In order to assess landscape features within a landscape, the following criterion has been developed, which informs the determination and level of significance:

  **The landscape is distinctive or inspirational for its landscape feature or features that attract the viewer and may provoke an emotional response.**

- **Edges or contrasts**
  Edges or contrasts include the point of intersection between two landscape elements e.g. the coastline (the point at which water meets land); the edge of a forest or a lake; the boundary between vegetation types or different landscape types; the intersection between a mountain range and a plain; an incised valley etc. The existence of edges or contrasts in the landscape provides visual diversity, a quality associated with scenic value.

  In order to assess edges and features within a landscape, the following criterion has been developed:

  **The landscape is aesthetically compelling for its edges or contrasts that provide visual variety and interest for the viewer.**

- **Composition**
  The composition of a landscape is its make-up or configuration, including arrangements or patterns of colour, textures, features etc. and the form, scale and unity of these and other elements.

  In order to assess composition, the following criterion has been developed:

  **The landscape has outstanding compositional qualities, the combination of which achieve a unified whole, and provide the setting or subject of notable views.**

While consideration of all cultural landscape values is important, visual values are weighted most highly, and are the basis for determining the significance of landscapes in a study such as the LAS Review.

This is because the end-point of a landscape assessment study is the protection and management of a significant landscape – it is about the visual impact of development on a significant landscape, and what is appropriate to be seen based on the landscape’s visual qualities. In short, the purpose of a landscape assessment study is to manage the visual impact of development on a visually significant landscape.

Also, in most landscape assessment studies including this one, primary research into historic, environmental, scientific, social or other values is not undertaken, therefore the designation of a landscape as significant on these bases alone should not be attempted.

Primary fieldwork and the exercising of professional judgment are undertaken in relation to visual values only. It has been well-established in previous landscape assessments that for a landscape to be classified as significant, it must have aesthetic or visual value.

With this in mind, it is also important to note that while the determination of visual significance is the primary consideration in landscape assessments, landscape significance is not only visual. The special qualities of a landscape may also be linked to many other responses including memories, personal experiences, knowledge and associations — it is a challenging and often contentious exercise as the human emotional response to aesthetic beauty is a subjective matter, rather than a precise science.
2. Cultural heritage values

Cultural heritage value encompasses the history of the landscape both pre and post contact, and often underpins other landscape values. It may be that the landscape is associated with an important historical event, figure or theme, and visual evidence may or may not be evident.

For the purposes of the DALs LAS Review, no primary research into cultural heritage values will be undertaken. Rather, it will be determined from existing documentation or secondary sources such as the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register, the Victorian Heritage Register, the National Heritage List, the application of the Heritage Overlay in the planning scheme, and other material such as historic photos, maps etc.

3. Environmental & scientific values

Environmental and/or scientific value relates to the biological conditions or natural attributes of the landscape, including flora and fauna habitats, archaeological, geological attributes etc.

Secondary sources used to determine environmental and/or scientific value include the Ramsar Convention, the use of the Environmental Significance Overlay in the planning scheme, and the existence of National, State or regional parks.

4. Social Values

Social value relates to a landscape being associated with a community of cultural group, and may traverse cultural heritage value. A landscape may have social value as an important local landmark, or because it relates to the identity of a community, or it may have spiritual meaning to a particular group. Determination of social value also includes consideration of the landscape as a tourism destination.

Secondary sources used to determine social value include Tourism Victoria and Tourism Australia information, and various other publications.

5. Other values

The final category encompasses any other value that is relevant to the significance of the landscape and may include economic value, for example.

5.2 Levels of Significance (Landscapes)

In order to determine a level of significance for each landscape, the following rating considerations should be applied to the aforementioned landscape components (landscape features, edges or contrasts and composition):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How representative or illustrative is the landscape (and its features, edges or contrasts, and composition)? Is it the 'best' of its type? Is it exemplary within the local, regional or state context?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iconic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the landscape (and its features, edges or contrasts, and composition) instantly recognizable? Is it symbolic for its visual qualities? Has the landscape been represented in art, photography, literature etc.? Is it iconic within the local, regional or state context?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scarce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How uncommon, rare or endangered is the landscape (and its features, edges or contrasts, and composition)? Is it scarce within the local, regional or state context?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Levels of significance should be attributed to each landscape component, and an overall significance level in relation to visual value can then be determined. The significance levels are:

- Moderate = local significance
- High = regional significance
- Exceptional = state significance or higher

The final determination of the visual significance level does not rely on the number of 'moderate' or 'high' ratings. Rather, for example, if a landscape is rated 'high' in one or more of the landscape components, that level is the overall significance rating attributed to the visual values of that landscape. (Just as the usual standard for listing a place on a heritage register, for instance, is that the place meets one or more of the set criteria.)

Other landscape values

Levels of significance should be attributed to other landscape values i.e. cultural heritage, environmental and scientific, social and other values, based on the stated level of the significance in the secondary source, or based on the source itself e.g. a landscape that forms part of the Victorian Heritage Register logically has cultural heritage values of state significance.

For the purposes of the DALs LAS Review, which will prioritise visual values, a landscape cannot be classified as significant for its cultural heritage, environmental, scientific, social or other values alone.

In order for a landscape to be classified as significant, it must have visual value.
5.3 Defining Significant Views

Views occur over distance and through view planes, and generally comprise a foreground, middle ground and background. The qualities and components of these view planes help to define what is significant about a view, and changes within them may alter the qualities and characteristics of a view. Views are sensitive to changes within the landscape and a viewer's experience of a view is also affected by weather variations that contribute to the changing moods of landscapes and skylances.

Viewing distance is important in determining how change is perceived within a landscape. However, defining view planes in terms of distances is difficult, as they are also experienced differently, according to the character of the viewed landscape i.e. the foreground of a view may terminate at a particular landform, as opposed to being defined by a distance in metres. Generally speaking however, the following view plane distances should be applied to the LAS Review and reflected in any viewshed mapping. These distances are based on those that were defined (with reference to other sources) in the South West Victoria Landscape Assessment Study.

Immediate foreground

This zone takes in the immediate environment of the viewer, and extends to approximately 800 metres.

Foreground

This zone begins at the viewer (and includes the immediate foreground), and extends to approximately 1.6km of the observer. Generally, the detail of the landscape is more pronounced within this view plane.

Middle ground

The middle ground of a view occurs within 1.6km to 6km, and alterations within this zone are less distinctive.

Background

This view plane extends from 6km to infinity. Shape may remain evident beyond 16km, but beyond that distance alterations in the landscape become obscure.

Viewshed maps associated with a landscape assessment study are usually prepared using Mapinfo Engage software. The maps depict the actual extents of a 360 degree view as experienced from a particular viewing location. In some instances, the view may appear to be infinite, while others may terminate at a large landscape feature on the horizon. Viewsheds are determined purely on topographical data. They do not take into account any built form or vegetation that may obscure the view.

Viewing locations

There are many locations within the Great Ocean Road Region from which spectacular views are available. Viewing locations have various levels of accessibility, promotion and visitation. For the purposes of LAS Review, viewing locations should be chosen because they feature a view of a regionally or state significant landscape, and they meet a minimum of three of the following selection considerations:

- The viewing location is a designated lookout point, with or without interpretive information.
- The viewing location is easily accessible, preferably by vehicle.
- The viewing location is well known (locally, regionally and/or at a state level).

The views available from locations that satisfy the above selection considerations should be assessed against the following view significance criteria, in order to determine and justify their level of significance.

5.4 Views Significance Criteria

Composition: structure

In relation to compositional structure, views should be assessed against the following criterion in order to determine a level of significance:

The view has outstanding compositional qualities, whether a classic vista, or a sweeping panorama. The view is balanced, both horizontally and vertically; a picture postcard view. The focal point of the view may be centred, and elements in the foreground, middle ground and background, equally weighted. The view may be framed by landscape elements to the viewer’s left and right.

Composition: qualities

In relation to compositional qualities, views should be assessed against the following criterion:

The view is compelling or inspiring for its aesthetic qualities, including a landscape feature (that may be the focal point of the view), or a collection of landscape features; edges or contrasts; and other compositional elements such as colour and texture.
Other cultural values

Consideration of other cultural values, that may contribute or support the overall significance of a view, should also be undertaken.

Social values

The following criterion should be used to determine social value:

*The view is widely promoted, well known and popular with tourists. It is a view of note that is available from a publicly accessible location.*

Cultural heritage, environmental/scientific, & other values

Other cultural values should be taken into account where relevant:

*The view or viewing location is important for its other cultural values, including heritage, environmental, scientific or other values.*

5.5 Levels of Significance (Views)

In order to determine a level of significance for each view component and value, and ultimately each view, the following rating considerations should be applied:

**Exemplary**

*How representative or illustrative is this view? Is it the ‘best’ of its type? Is it exemplary within the local, regional or state context?*

**Iconic**

*Is the view instantly recognizable? Is it symbolic for its visual qualities? Has it been represented in art, photography or literature etc.? Is it iconic within the local, regional or state context?*

**Scarce**

*How uncommon or rare is the view? Is the view a ‘one off’ that is not available nearby or elsewhere in the study area? Is it scarce within the local, regional or state context?*

Levels of significance will be attributed to each view component and value, and an overall significance level for the view determined. The significance levels are the same as those attributed to landscapes:

- Moderate = local significance
- High = regional significance
- Exceptional = state significance or higher

As with the determination of landscape significance, if a view rates ‘high’ (for example) in one or more of the view components, that level is the overall significance rating attributed to the view.

Levels of significance will be attributed to the other cultural values of the view, based on the stated level of significance in the secondary source, or based on the source itself.

Again, as with landscape significance, a view can not be classified as significant for its cultural heritage, environmental, scientific, social or other values alone. In order for a view to be deemed significant, it must substantially meet the visual composition (structure and qualities) criteria.

5.6 Proposed Landscape Assessment Study Review methodology

Based on the discussion and findings outlined in the previous chapters of this report, together with over 15 years experience in the landscape assessment field, a proposed methodology for the Bellarine Peninsula DALs LAS Review (Stage 2 onwards) has been developed. The methodology also incorporates the appraisal of townships.

The proposed methodology is appended to this report, and incorporates the following key stages, also coinciding with proposed meetings with the Reference Group(s) that will presumably be established for the project:

**Stage 1: Inception**

**Stage 2: Landscape Character Review & Township Appraisal**

**Stage 3: Identification of Community Values**

**Stage 4: Landscape Significance Assessment**

**Stage 5: Implementation Recommendations**

Discussions with DELWP will need to confirm the Reference Group membership and structure.

Refer attached document for detailed methodology.
Proposed DALs Landscape Assessment Study Review Methodology

Stage 1: Inception

**Tasks**

- Re-confirm study area(s).
- Confirm timelines / project program.
- Confirm consultation and engagement strategy.

*Provide a full explanation of methodology to the project partner groups (e.g. Reference Group members), including the definitions and descriptions of landscape character and significance, including landscape values, landscape components and associated criteria (both for significant views and landscapes).*

- Clarify other aspects of the methodology as required.
- Present the above information to the Reference Group(s), comprising Council Officers and other key stakeholders.

**Consultation / meetings**

- Reference Group (meeting 1)

**Outputs**

- Project timeframe with meeting dates
- Final consultation and engagement strategy

**Timing**

- Month 1

Stage 2: Landscape Character Review & Townships Appraisal

**Tasks**

- Undertake fieldwork to re-confirm Landscape Character Types based on broad areas of common physical, environmental and cultural characteristics.

*Both landscape Character Types and Character Areas are identified through survey and study of key landscape character elements including landform, waterform, vegetation, land use and built form. One of the benefits of undertaking this work before consulting with the community on landscape values, is that it ensures the consultant, project manager and project partners understand fully the character of the landscape and are familiar with all locations and characteristics potentially referred to by community members.*

- Also re-confirm Landscape Character Areas, which are separate geographical units within the same Character Type.

- Utilise site survey work to identify various forms of development (both positive and negative) occurring in the landscapes, and consider management responses (at a preliminary level at this stage), including the most appropriate VPP tools / planning scheme provisions / potential new zone provisions.

- Re-map and describe (with words and images) the Character Types and Character Areas of the three DALs regions. Utilising GIS technology, map the Character Types and Areas over various illustrative layers, including landform/topography, vegetation, geology etc.

- Re-visit and review GORRLAs and CSLAs township descriptions / observations.

- Update the township descriptions, with an emphasis on the setting of the township within the broader landscape; its relationship to the natural landscape; and, its interface or edges with the broader landscape area.

*Also consider and document the visibility of the townships from different points in the*
Assess the level of change that has occurred in the townships since 2003 i.e. low, medium or high degrees of change (and define each level).

Compare the 2003 township descriptions and current observations (including the level of change), with the relevant township framework plan in the local planning scheme.

Highlight consistencies and/or inconsistencies between the above elements and draw conclusions / make recommendations.

Consider and describe the ‘essence’ of the character of the townships as they relate to the landscape, and make recommendations in the form of ‘township to landscape principles’ to guide the future development of all settlements in the regions.

Review existing structure plans, urban design frameworks and character studies for their insights into the above assessments.

Present the above information to the Reference Group(s).

Consider Taskforce and Reference Group feedback and amend landscape character material as appropriate.

Consultation / meetings

Reference Group (meeting 2)

Outputs

Landscape character report(s) (draft and final)

Timing

Months 2 & 3

Stage 3. Identification of Community Values

Tasks

Detailed discussions have not been held with DELWP Officers regarding the requirements or extent of any wider community engagement. If it were to occur, this is the most logical juncture.

Identify the aesthetic, historic, environmental, scientific, and social or other values that the community associates with DALs regions landscapes.

Undertake community, agency and stakeholder consultation to understand the number of different ways that residents and visitors to the area appreciate and value the landscapes.

Many and varied methods have been used in the past, and advice can be provided to DELWP regarding these. Most recently, use of Pozi Maps through Groundtruth, by the Macedon Ranges Shire Council proved extremely successful - https://www.groundtruth.com.au/pozi-gis-web-map

Consider Reference Group and wider community feedback and use this as a starting point for Stage 4 of the project – the assessment of significance.

Consultation / meetings

Reference Group (meeting 3)

Other consultation events TBC

Outputs

Community values report(s)

Other consultation outputs TBC

Timing

Months 4 & 5

Stage 4. Landscape Significance Assessment

Tasks

The significance assessment of the landscapes within the DALs regions requires substantial work to elevate it to best practice standard; the standard required for justification of future
There are two parts to the significance assessment—

1. the determination and assessment of significant landscapes; and,

2. the determination of viewing locations and the assessment of significant views.

While a similar methodology is employed, definitions and criteria to determine, justify and rate significance, vary.

1. Landscapes

Utilising information gathered in previous stages of the project (e.g. site surveys and community consultation), determine landscape areas of potential/unconfirmed significance.

Undertake a thorough assessment of visual values for those landscapes using best practice methodology i.e. assess each landscape against the landscape components criteria, and apply rating considerations to determine overall levels of visual significance. (This methodology was developed, and the 'components' and 'criteria' defined by the author over the course of numerous landscape assessments. It has recently been confirmed as current best practice.)

Undertake an assessment of other cultural values through a desktop review of secondary sources (existing information, as opposed to new research) covering each of the value categories (i.e. historic, environmental and scientific, social and other values). Secondary sources may include heritage citations, tourism information, consideration of artworks, poetry etc. Levels of significance are attributed to other cultural values based on the stated level of significance in the secondary source.

Confirm and justify the most significant landscapes (with a local, regional or state significance rating) and prepare a statement of significance for each landscape. These statements will form the basis of future planning controls, such as the SLO (updated or new) and/or new zone provisions.

Undertake a ‘significance survey’ to determine and/or confirm the geographic extents of the significant landscapes (and planning scheme provision boundaries).

2. Views

Utilising established selection considerations and information gathered in previous stages of the project, determine viewing locations and views of potential/unconfirmed significance.

Undertake a thorough assessment of visual values for those views using best practice methodology i.e. assess each view against the view components and values criteria, and apply rating considerations to determine a level of significance for each view.

Undertake an assessment of other cultural values that may contribute to the overall significance of each view.

Illustrate the extents of each significant view using viewshed mapping and photography.

Present the above information to the Reference Group(s).

Consider Reference Group(s) feedback and amend landscape significance material as appropriate.

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<tr>
<th>Consultation / meetings</th>
<th>Reference Group (meeting 4)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Landscape significance report (draft and final)</td>
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<td>Timing</td>
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### Stage 6: Implementation Recommendations

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<th>Tasks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Re-visit and expand on the SLO / planning scheme provisions audit to confirm where the gaps exist in the protection and management of landscape character and significance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare a full set of planning scheme implementation measures, all justifiable at any future Panel hearing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider and set out how the above implementation recommendations are best translated into the future Statements of Planning Policy for each region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare amended and/or new planning scheme provisions, clauses, policy content, overlay schedules and maps as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present the above information to the Reference Group(s).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider Reference Group feedback and amend implementation recommendations as appropriate.</td>
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<td>Finesse and finalise all outputs and combine into a full suite of final documents.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Consultation / meetings</th>
<th>Reference Group (meeting 5)</th>
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<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Implementation recommendations report (draft and final)</th>
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<td>Final, full suite of documents</td>
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<th>Timing</th>
<th>Months 8 &amp; 9</th>
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<td>Full suite of final documents to follow.</td>
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