

20/08/2021

The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Re Draft Bellarine Peninsular Statement of Planning Policy

Dear sirs

Whilst I am in generally agreement with the stated vision and main proposals in the draft Policy, I think the Statement of Planning Policy needs to provide greater protection for a wider part of the Bellarine Peninsular.

#### Aboriginal and cultural heritage

In the account his peripatetic life with the Wadawurrung people, the diaries of William Buckley show the importance of the whole peninsular landscapes (and beyond into the Western District) which were fundamental to the identity of the Wadawurrung people. These landscapes are changing at an alarming rate with frenzied development and land speculation to the detriment of the lands of the original inhabitants of the Bellarine and their descendants. Preserving the landscape and the ecosystems that supported these people for millennia must be fundamental to the Proposed Bellarine Peninsular Framework Plan. As it stands, the Plan does not sufficiently effectively protect enough of the remaining natural landscapes.

#### Landscape significance, environment and biodiversity.

I think that the designated wetlands areas should be expanded to include the areas surrounding Lake Victoria and to increase the area of protection for Swan Bay, Lake Connewarre, their margins, and the catchments of these important wetlands. The draining of wetlands to create The Point on the boundary of Queenscliff is particularly concerning to me and to conservationists generally. I disagree with the proposal to allow Ocean Grove, Drysdale/Clifton Springs and Leopold to extend further into productive agricultural land and forever degrade the rural landscape is to be deeply regretted. The Draft Bellarine Peninsular Statement of Planning Policy does not go nearly far enough to protect the landscape and the agricultural resources. Nor does it go far enough in protecting the most important areas of biodiversity- the wetlands and the catchment of the wetlands, the boundaries of which must be extended.

#### Historic heritage

The situation surrounding Portarlington, Indented Heads, St Leonards and Barwon Heads is of equal concern as for protecting Queenscliff/Pt Lonsdale. The character of these townships is changing rapidly as urban creep extends their boundaries and rural land is lost. Each of them has a core of buildings with historical interest that should be preserved if these places are to retain the charm that made them holiday destinations many decades ago as well as today- but will they retain this character into the future? I think not. The larger these townships are allowed to become through extended

boundaries and the greater the intensity of development, the more their character will be submerged and lost.

#### Natural Resources and productive land of significance

The conversion of Oakdene vineyard into a housing estate is a prime example of destruction of productive agricultural land, and this is happening at scale across the Bellarine Peninsular- death by a thousand (and more) development permits. Limits must be placed on the growth of Ocean Grove, Leopold, Drysdale/Clifton Springs as well as every township on the Peninsular. The Bellarine will no longer be a tourist attraction if it becomes a Greater Geelong co-urbanisation.

#### Strategic infrastructure and built form significance.

The new shopping and commercial developments surrounding Ocean Grove, Leopold and Drysdale have no character, let alone a distinctive character that in anyway reflects the seaside/ rural character of the original townships on the peninsular. There has been singular lack of imagination or creativity used to build in ways that are in harmony with the area. Perhaps it is an impossible dream that town planners could set out design rules that apply to new developments that ensures a character emerges that is in sympathy with the location, something distinctively beachy and rural perhaps? The new Ferry terminal at Queenscliff is the latest example of plonking an inappropriate, insensitive built form into a historic township. The Peninsular is becoming clogged with traffic, and increased ferry traffic (which already can extend a kilometre into Hesse St at busy times) is a major problem. It is not possible for a pedestrian to safely cross the main Bellarine highway into Queenscliff in the busy school holiday periods after the ferry disgorges more cars into the already busy local traffic. This creates a similar problem all the way through Pt Lonsdale, Ocean Grove, Barwon Heads to Torquay. I do not know what the solution is, but the townships are drowning in cars on roads designed a century ago.

In summary, I am in agreement with the Draft Bellarine Peninsular Statement of Planning Policy, but I think that it needs to be expanded in its ambition and further strengthened to achieve its goals.

Yours faithfully,

