

Submission to Bellarine Peninsula Statement and Planning Policy

Distinctive Areas and Landscapes

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Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission in response to the Draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy (SPP).

Since I became a resident of the Wallington, at the western side of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, I have taken an active interest in the DAL process, making a detailed submission to the consultation processes. I have attended meetings of the Ocean Grove Business Association, and other local community groups. I am an active member of the Geelong Field Naturalist's Club and frequently attend the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.

I actively participated in the process leading to the City of Greater Geelong's Settlement Strategy and made a detailed submission to the Amendment C395 to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme and the independent Panel Hearing.

Overall Response

Generally, I strongly support the draft SPP, and particularly the intention to implement permanent protected settlement boundaries in their current positions around the towns, shown by Council's Settlement Strategy and township Structure Plans.

I am greatly pleased that our local member, Lisa Neville, and the government which she represents have adhered to their promise that the significant environment of the Bellarine Peninsula and its attractive rural vistas are to be protected from further expansion of creeping urban growth. I strongly believe that the health and welfare of both existing residents and their succeeding generations have a vital need for these more open areas which assist the attraction of numerous visitors from far and wide who contribute substantially to our economic welfare. The vistas which attract these visitors and benefit the residents are worthy of protection and enhancement for all the reasons described in the SPP and the accompanying Background Papers.

Response to the Draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement and Planning Policy

1. I support the vision for the next fifty years as expounded in the draft SPP.

2. I support the objectives of each of the policy domains and notes responding to previous stages of community consultations and the further technical studies completed for DELWP.
I believe the objectives and their strategies should provide a strong basis for decisions in the future which will determine the use and development of land in the permanent green break areas and within the townships themselves.
The increased level of importance allocated to the protection of the Peninsula's landscape assets by its declaration as a Distinctive Area Landscape pursuant to the Planning and Environment Act is complemented and confirmed by Claire Scott's excellent landscape assessment. There is strong evidence in many studies of the impact of natural environments on human health, confirmed by the submission to DELWP from the Bellarine Health Community Advisory Committee, which advocates the need to protect our existing green breaks.

3. I have submitted previous support for Ocean Grove's existing settlement boundaries to be retained (as shown in COGG's Settlement Strategy and Ocean Grove Structure Plan). The evidence provided in the draft SPP and accompanying Background Paper would appear to offer strong affirmation that existing settlement boundaries be retained in their current position. Recent press releases by the Oakdene developers suggesting that restricting the boundaries to their current location will lead to a housing crisis appear false in light of the detailed deliberations of Council in preparation of the Settlement Strategy. This concept was extensively presented to the Amendment C395 Panel hearing and was rejected, thus providing no basis for expansion of urban sprawl onto areas of environmental value and high quality landscape. It is my understanding that, at present, there is adequate land zoned residential within the township boundaries to meet demand for over 10 years.

There are distinct areas adjacent to Ocean Grove which will no doubt continue to be the subject of agitation for further green field development by their owners or by developers.

(i) North and west of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

Any further development to the north or the west of the Nature Reserve would carry high risk of environmental and drainage impacts, both within the reserve and over a wider area, including the Ramsar Site of the Barwon Estuary. These adverse effects were presented to the Amendment C395 Panel Hearing, where, in my own submission, I referred to the disruption of an important migratory distribution network to the west of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve and to the deleterious effects of disturbance to the drainage in that area. This evidence was complemented by expert evidence by Dr Guy Dutson and Mr Barry Lingham, presented as part of the submission from a local

landowner, Ms Wendy Duncan. Their evidence also addressed similar impact from disruption of wildlife corridors to the north of the Reserve

I fully support the evidence provided by Geelong Field Naturalists (of which I am a member) and Friends of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve which clearly demonstrate the potential deleterious environmental and storm water impacts which would be caused by development of this area.

As the most important and highly trafficked entrance to Ocean Grove, the excellent rural views of the countryside together with the Oakdene Winery would surely mitigate against any consideration of development on the area to the west of Grubb Road.

(ii) East of Banks Road

The reasons set out in the draft SPP and accompanying Background Paper clearly identify the likely impact on the significant landscape (and its important and sensitive environmental qualities) comprising the green break between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale. Banks Road has always been considered, and should remain, the eastern boundary of Ocean Grove; any encroachment on to this green break could not be justified. Indeed, there are strong environmental indicators that some of the area would not be suitable for sustainable development.

As previously submitted, I strongly believe that planning for the Bellarine Peninsula should be managed in an integrated and consistent manner as an overall entity and with long-term considerations. This is successfully achieved by the proposed Framework Plan.

Particularly, I strongly support the proposals to impose protected settlement boundaries around all Bellarine Peninsula towns and to conserve and enhance State and regionally significant landscapes and environmental areas.

I believe that the Green Break areas represent an extraordinary opportunity for the future as we respond to changing local, national and global conditions.

Agriculture:

Much of the land in the Green Breaks has been held in "Land Banks" in expectation of future development. As a result, country that was erstwhile prime agricultural land has become over-farmed and greatly depleted. Our first instinct in such situations is to 'add something to the soil', but it is now widely understood how damaging this has been (c.f. the research of Elaine Inghams [USA] and Christine Jones [Australia]) as chemical treatments are inherently damaging to the soil microbiota.

There is a new wave of Regenerative Farming sweeping Australia and the world, demonstrating how powerful these soil bacteria and fungi can be in enhancing production at minimal cost while greatly increasing sustainable sequestration of carbon deep in the soil, below the top 20cm where sequestered carbon tends to be fugitive.

4.

Such farm management is greatly benefitted by the shade and shelter provided by trees, which enhance both animal and crop production. In addition, trees and shrubs develop an ecosystem in which integrated pest management thrives, allowing natural predators to control pest insects without cost. It is interesting to note that the Bellarine Landcare Group has recently received a large grant to promote Regenerative Agriculture on the Bellarine.

There is concern that south-eastern Australia is going to be disproportionately effected by temperature rises caused by global warming. However, additional trees in the Green Breaks will assist in human health and survival under such circumstances. Research has shown that the temperature differential between areas shaded by trees and open urban situations is in the proximity of 5 degrees Centigrade, and our perception of temperature (physiological equivalent temperature) can be reduced as much as seven to 15 degrees.

In cities around the world, trees are increasingly used to help control temperatures and to mitigate the effects of urban heat islands, and coupled with their associated beneficial effects on mental health, on the environment, on rural aesthetics and carbon sequestration, would be a valuable addition to the Green Breaks.

In previous submissions I have drawn attention to the importance of interconnection and diversity in ecosystems and the catastrophic effects of Trophic Cascade, where alterations in numbers of one species can have such far-reaching impacts on others. With careful planning, the Green Breaks could be enormously beneficial, in many ways, to the Bellarine Peninsula and its residents.

Drainage:

Increased development on the Bellarine Peninsula has already greatly increased urban run-off. This is becoming an environmental problem in itself as changing water levels in places like Freshwater Lake and Lake Victoria disturb the feeding resources for wading birds. The Bellarine Peninsula is rich in Ramsar sites, an outstanding opportunity to attract visitors for eco-tourism. Alteration of drainage regimes can have dramatic and far-reaching effects; excessive freshwater in the shallow marine environment can be deleterious to Sea Grass meadows, one of our more potent resources for carbon capture, and by affecting the sea grass, affect fisheries as far afield as Kangaroo Island (c.f. King George Whiting).

The immediate future

As a presenter of a submission to the Amendment C395 panel hearing, I observed many of the submissions presented by developers. I have little doubt that they will make further strong and comprehensive submissions to DELWP seeking to expand township boundaries to assist them in further expansion of development.

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I am therefore pleased that submissions have not been referred to an Advisory Committee for independent assessment. I have submitted previously how seriously disadvantaged private citizens and community groups become when arrayed against the virtually unlimited legal and expert resources of developers.

I believe that the comprehensive planning arguments in both the draft SPP and accompanying Background Paper present an overwhelmingly cogent argument that supports the draft SPP and I urge the Minister to proceed to the next steps to enable the final SPP to be approved and implemented.