

## Geelong Environment Council Inc

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### Geelong Environment Council submission to the Draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy. June 2021.

Geelong Environment Council (GEC) is pleased to make a submission to the final draft of the Bellarine DAL. The progress from the Geelong Settlement Strategy to comments on the previous DAL, and the two submissions for a community vision for the Bellarine, with the first draft, and now final draft is a comprehensive, interesting and important process for the future of the Bellarine. We commend the declaration of a Bellarine Distinctive Area and Landscape Planning Policy with a 50 year vision.

#### Introduction-

GEC agrees with the comments about the importance of Victoria's peri-urban areas'

1. the sustainable approach to management
2. control of run-away development which has the potential to destroy extensive values.

#### Table 1 Attributes - Agreed

#### Implementation of the Statement of Planning Policy.

GEC as a community group will, together with other stakeholders, support government departments, responsible public entities and Geelong and Queenscliffe Councils, to achieve the long-term vision for the declared area.

**GEC urges that reviews if set up at 10 yearly intervals must not be able to undermine the "Vision" as recognized in the DAL.**

Strong development pressures will be applied at every opportunity and must not be permitted to undermine what has been protected for all Victorians.

**It is recommended that an implementation Plan must be mandated as part of the Statement of Planning Policy. This must ensure that both councils have a limited time frame to update their required Planning and other council documents.**

**Councils must agree not to allow developments outside the proposed boundaries after the finalization of the SPP takes place.**

With no time frame for requirement to implement actions the SPP could result in Councils non-adherence to the requirements of the SPP and unsatisfactory developments proceeding.

**Wording in the draft SPP Requirement for use of the word 'Must' in the report.**

Concern is expressed at the wide use of the non-mandating word 'should' or 'could' which will give councils the opportunity to ignore the recommendations and proceed with unsuitable development or tourist infrastructure.

United Nations Planning Principles should be integrated in the SPP.

**Wadawurrung** Statement of significance recognizes the traditional owners and is respected and supported.

GEC will endeavor to include the Wadawurrung community in any activity in which is possible, such as revegetation, protection of threatened and other species.

**Recognition of the importance of the role of the First Nation people in the history of this land is important.**

**'Our Vision'**

**The Vision Statement as presented is supported. It must be binding on all RPEs**

The current Vision must be upheld and agreed upon at each 10 Yearly Review.

**Framework Plan**

**The application of Permanent Settlement boundaries on all Bellarine towns and villages in their current locations is supported. The protection and non-development of the surrounding Green zones must be mandatory. It is not acceptable for tourism or other facilities to be developed within the Green Areas,**

**The designation of a Green Break and protection from development of the land on the west side of Grubb Road is supported.**

**Following issues are requested to be addressed by the Statement of Planning Policy and the two Councils.**

**Bellarine Wetlands Nature Conservation Reserve (proposed)**

Queenscliffe Environment Forum and Geelong Environment Council proposed that VEAC be requested to investigate the creation of a 'Bellarine Wetlands Nature Conservation Reserve' The proposal is to establish a park in which management of the 19 lakes and wetlands of the Bellarine (including Point Henry and Cheetham wetlands) would be integrated and managed by Parks Victoria. The example used in the proposal is the integrated Yellingbo Reserve which included a number of locations in one park reserve.

**While not supported by the then Minister both QEF and GEC will reissue the proposal aiming for Government support. We believe the wetlands and lakes on the Bellarine constitute a region of**

**international importance for local and migratory birdlife and should be recognized and managed as such.**

## **UNESCO**

**A long-term vision and proposal for a world Heritage listing for the three headlands, Queenscliff, Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean has been discussed. The maritime history, defense constructions and facilities, the lighthouses and Queenscliffe Fort together with the early history of settlement of Victoria, altogether make this a fascinating area. Add the biological vegetation values of Point Nepean and the assets of the Bellarine Peninsula with Marine National Park in Swan and Port Phillip Bay, make the area unique in this country and worthy of world-wide recognition.**

### **Adequate parkland in each town and village**

When viewing the plans of each individual town or village the public open space within the town boundaries is a very small percentage of the total developed areas. Queenscliffe has large public parks and is an exception, but the other towns and villages are very short of public parks.

GEC recommends that the final Statement of Planning Policy includes a requirement for each town and village to ensure that the residents have areas for public vegetated parks to enjoy and relax. Even if small a vegetated park improves the urban environment. Coastal frontages and beach access should not be considered a replacement park.

### **Tree Cover for climate amelioration in each town (Burnley College and Melbourne University information)**

This has not been an issue in the DAL process but in the very near future as temperatures rise heat stress will become an issue affecting both community health and comfort. GEC requests that a section be included in the final planning policy that Queenscliffe and Geelong Council aim for and work towards an increase in canopy cover in all the Bellarine towns to at least 25% by 2035. The desirable canopy cover by 2050 is 40%.

The benefits for both health and wellbeing are proven. 10% cooler temperature is estimated to provide an extra 10 years of life. A reduced mental stress level is expected in residents in a leafy suburb or town.

Greater vegetation cover will reduce stormwater runoff problems.

Current canopy cover in the Bellarine towns ranges between Point Lonsdale at just above 10% and Barwon Heads at about 24% cover. Queenscliff town canopy cover is unknown. The decision to plan and commence to provide extensive tree cover in each town with large canopy trees is important.

### **Green Breaks between Towns**

**GEC supports the green breaks being considered as an important component of the SPP with no availability for proposed developments,**

We do not support nature based or other tourism developments being established in the Green Breaks.

### **Vegetation Corridors and a bush walking trail.**

Very little original Bellarine vegetation remains, with patches on roadsides, unused roads, small areas of public land only being areas retaining patches local EVCs.

A program to identify vegetated unused roads, patches of vegetation, back roads with little traffic and any areas to enable a walking and cycling track to be identified. There would be no environmental damage and a safe track. The already developed and popular Rail Trail is the only opportunity for either a short or long walk in the rural Bellarine area.

### **Water Supply for an integrated Bellarine.**

GEC is exceedingly concerned at the 20,000gl of treated wastewater discharged to the ocean each year from Black Rock by Barwon Water. It is treated to one level beneath potable standard. The Barwon Water plant is capable to recycle wastewater to potable standard. This water could be stored in an aquifer or catchment and mixed in a freshwater storage to increase available water in Geelong.

**Barwon Water must be required by government to retain and reuse the wasted (already treated) water currently released into Bass Strait at Black Rock. It must be treated to potable standard to replace water currently being drawn from the Barwon and Moorabool rivers for Geelong and Ballarat.**

GEC believes that the provision of adequate water for the growing population in the Geelong region cannot continue to be taken from the Barwon and Moorabool Rivers, already the two most stressed rivers in Victoria.

**Water experts are stating that the future water supply for the greater Geelong region, including The Bellarine, will require a mixture of recycled, desalinated, and re-use of stormwater.**

### **Sea-level Rise, Coastal Inundation and Erosion. (Our Coast - COGG and BoQ publication)**

Some locations around the coast will be affected by the impacts of sea-level rise. Low level areas will be affected by sea level rise, and erosion will take place where geology and land use contribute to a sensitive coastline

The above report details the total Bellarine coastline and indicates the areas which will be inundated at various levels of sea rise. The Planning Statement must require both councils to consider the above report in any proposed development which may be affected.

Appropriate buffer zones that will provide protection from future sea level rise should be included in all planning considerations.

Where sea level rise is anticipated an adjacent zone should be established, for example where salt marsh exists and is likely to be inundated an adjacent area to provide future similar habitat should be identified and retained

It is important for all opportunities for remedial works to mitigate against inundation or erosion are investigated and avoidance of any future structures on the coast.

### **Bellarine Priority Zone Plan. (Trust for Nature)**

This report identifies the Bellarine as an important Priority Zone containing Grasslands and Grassy woodlands, waterways and wetlands and coastal and saltmarsh systems.

It is important for the flora and fauna and amenity values of all areas to be recognized and protected.

Very little remains of original vegetation with examples of threatened flora and fauna species.

Protection and rehabilitation wherever possible must be a priority.

### **Drysdale Park on the current tip site**

The Drysdale Tip is scheduled to close in approximately eight years. The Tip committee consisting of COGG staff and individual residents has determined that the decommissioned site will be developed into a large indigenous vegetated parkland. This is an excellent solution as the Bellarine is extremely short of areas of original vegetation or large parks. The Ocean Grove Nature Reserve being to only large area of original vegetation (donated and obtained by committed public members)

### **Ramsar Listing.**

**GEC has a report prepared by Ecology Australia recording the biodiversity values of Lake Victoria, Freshwater Lagoon, Lakers Cutting and Sand Island for future Ramsar listing. Further investigations should be implemented with a requirement in the Statement of Planning Policy. Ramsar listing would provide protection, management, and a recognition of significant values of these wetlands.**

### **Landscapes Significance, Character and intrinsic values.**

The diverse and attractive landscapes are recognized as having significant values for both the residents and the many visitors. The economic health of the total area depends on a diverse range of attractions including the natural areas and towns with a diverse range of tourist attractions. The landscapes provide a background.

GEC disagrees with the statement that there should be degrees of landscape protection. It is submitted that all recognized landscapes must be protected at the same level or there will be a risk that only the best landscape areas remain.

The protection of heritage and historic plantations should be protected , apart from long standing wind breaks of exotic species such as cypress and pine trees. When replacement is required it should be with indigenous species

Replacements of old windbreaks or creation of new plantations should be required to use native species. The natural vegetation of the Bellarine has been drastically reduced with only small areas remaining. Every opportunity to increase indigenous vegetation plantings has the advantage increasing habitat for birdlife and other wildlife species and adding to the visual beauty of the area.

Government support and encouragement for farmers to provide an area of native vegetation within their property would not only add to the ecological and landscape values but has been proved to increase agricultural production.i

We believe that the Swan Bay landscape has State Significance rather than regionally significant. In Queenscliff this area of significance should include the undeveloped former High School Site to provide protection from development. Zoning should be changed to PCRZ.

The Swan Bay escarpment and Murradoc Hill provide wide and beautiful view scapes. Protection must be mandatory.

The landscape at the entrance to the town including the open and green site with Swan Bay in the background is significant and provides an iconic entrance to the scenic and other attractions around the coast.

Lake Connewarre and the Barwon River landscape is considered of State significance. It has international ecological significance and deserves the highest protection.

Drainage from housing developments at the edges of Leopold present an environmental hazard to Lake Connewarre. A requirement for stormwater runoff from urban development to be treated prior to release into the Bellarine Lakes is important and should be included in new developments

### **Landscape and Environmental Values. Farmland and Buckley Park dune system between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale**

**Lake Victoria, the coastal dunes of Buckley Park and the farmland with ephemeral wetlands between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale is listed as 'Landscape character'**

**GEC requests that this area is listed and protected as 'regionally significant'.**

The landscape of open farming land with cattle, dunes in the background and without intruding buildings or development is a unique viewscape on the Bellarine and must be protected.

It is seen by all driving or cycling between Ocean Grove and Queenscliffe. Pressures for development within the landscape area include a bike path, environment center and school camp facilities. COGG has allocated \$160,000 to the project with a project officer.

**GEC is opposed to any recreational or community development south of Shell Road.**

### **Landscape Objectives and Strategies**

Objective 2 is agreed. Strategies 21-27 are supported.

### **Environment and Biodiversity**

The environment of the Bellarine is important on a Victorian scale. It is recognized and described in the publication Bellarine Priority Zone Plan prepared by Trust for Nature using the CAP (Conservation Action Planning) process. This was developed by the Nature Conservancy. The recommendations for flora and fauna protection should be noted and used as a planning basis for ecological protection and enhancement of the Bellarine.

**Objective 3 is supported**

### **Strategies**

Remove words '**where relevant**' in Strategies.

Support 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 - **add support communities and council to assist in ecological restoration and enhancement, 3.4**

3.5 is inadequate, use 'disallow' rather than 'discourage'. Discourage is too weak and useless if a council or landowner is determined to proceed with an inappropriate action.

3.6 require councils to re-use and treat stormwater for agricultural use or watering public parklands.

3.7 and 3.68 Support, Councils and landowners must actively work to reduce weeds and pest animals. Working plans must be produced and available for public viewing and community assistance where possible.

### **Aboriginal Cultural Heritage - Supported**

#### **History and Heritage**

Declare the whole Queenscliff township a Heritage town with a Heritage Overlay in the Planning Scheme.

It is agreed that “demolition and insensitive development provide the main threats. A firm commitment to protect heritage and historic values is required.

Objective 5 is supported.

Strategies – 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 are supported.

#### **Tourism, Agriculture and Natural resources.**

P44 and 45 are supported.

All Aquaculture developments must be environmentally sustainable (with no effect on flora and fauna levels, access to beach areas not lost and with no environmental damage allowed.

#### **Natural Resources**

##### **Alternative Energy Sources**

Windfarms must be barred from development in coastal or landscape areas.

A ‘Solar Garden’ or a Community Solar Park could be developed by a combination of Geelong Council and Borough of Queenscliffe, with community investment providing the finance. Many citizens would be pleased for the opportunity to invest in solar power production.

Marine, wave and tidal sources of energy production would be available in the marine environment. Councils should form an alliance to advance energy production in our region.

Education for farmers to use their soil for carbon sequestration is suggested.

##### **Extractive Resources**

Extractive resources map presents a much too large area of possibility. We urge this be reduced in area. Adequate buffer zones must be designated and restorative actions undertaken after use of an area.

Drysdale Tip, see earlier para on the future use of this site when the tip is closed

Objective 6a is supported

Strategies are supported

Objective 6b is supported.

Strategies 6b 1-5 are supported with the following additions -

6b1 add **educate the rural community** and add for carbon retention in the soil.

6b3 emphasize that the integrity of the rural environment must not be compromised by developments.

6b7 Must ensure restoration of extractive energy sites.

### **Strategic Infrastructure - Water Security**

GEC supports the capture and reuse of stormwater and treatment of wastewater. Methods to store and reuse the treated water to replace the overuse of river or aquifer water. Extraction from aquifers is opposed. water.

### **Community Infrastructure is supported**

#### **Settlements - general comments.**

##### **Settlement Boundaries.**

**GEC strongly supports the retention of each of the existing town boundaries and is pleased that the overdevelopment of the Bellarine has been recognized, and growth will now be consolidated within the existing boundaries.**

GEC urges that there be no means by which developers can obtain a permit for any land outside the current boundaries prior to ratification of the SPP.

Balancing the declared areas settlement and landscape characters must be a priority of each council.

Consideration of buffer zones or protection for areas impacted by climate change, sea level rise or inundation must be considered for each town and coast areas likely to be affected.

Tree planting for each settlement to provide adequate canopy cover for a hotter climate is essential and must be commenced immediately. More street trees and a requirement for each dwelling to plant at least one tree is supported. All the Bellarine towns have a low level of canopy cover with Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove the best having from 20 to 25% cover. All the **others are very low with Indented Heads and Point Lonsdale being the lowest round about 10%.**

#### **Drysdale- Clifton Springs-Curlewis**

##### **Support the retention of the existing town boundary**

The entrance to Drysdale along Murradoc Road is unsightly and ugly and appears poorly planned.

Retail and wholesale areas must be managed to be attractive in the town scape.

Future growth will need to be managed to ensure adequate vegetation can be integrated into the plan.

GEC supports further growth using infill. Objections are expressed at the proposed group of rural residences being rezoned for a housing development.

Existing vegetation must be protected and areas identified for extensive plantings to increase the overall total of green cover.

#### **Leopold**



Together with Drysdale and Ocean Grove Leopold is one of the major towns on the peninsular providing a wide range of facilities.

GEC supports the current boundary. With the Ash Road land rezoned There will be adequate areas for growth.

GEC urges that the protection of Lake Connewarre from urban drainage and other activities is important.

**Remnant vegetation within the town must be protected with increased plantings in public and private spaces. Leopold has 15% canopy cover which is not sufficient for a cooling effect**

### **Ocean Grove**

**GEC strongly supports the western area of Grubb Road (Oakdene) remaining undeveloped and outside the town boundary.**

GEC submits that there is adequate land for growth in greenfield and infill ,currently there is 10% canopy cover within the existing town boundary.

It is important that development does not encroach onto the eastern side of Banks Road.

### **Flooding from Sea level rise**

Sea level rise has the potential to flood low level land on the eastern side of the Barwon River. The Riverview caravan park, the Ocean Grove golf club and surrounding streets and houses will flood under the 0.2m SLR scenario (2040)

### **Barwon Heads**

Barwon Heads is situated in a very attractive and scenic location with important local indigenous vegetation and natural assets. Barwon Heads has nearly 25% vegetation cover. Further plantings in the town will provide good protection from heat stress.

Lake Murtnagurt is an important Ramsar wetland, Ramsar which must be protected from urban water run-off from the adjacent golf estate.

Flooding from sea-level rise may occur into the low level land.

### **Indented Head**

Future development must align with the village's coastal character by retaining local indigenous vegetation and replacement plantings. Retention of the traditional seaside character is supported. Setting new housing into vegetated and low-key environment is desirable.

Further revegetation of a local small creek and protection of ancient red-gums (one a canoe tree) and surrounding original vegetation is urged,

Inundation is a possible hazard near Andersons Reserve where boat ramps and camp sites will become inundated at 0.2m. 86 dwellings will be inundated at 0.8 sea level rise.

### **Portarlington**

The northern Bellarine coast and Portarlington town are important coastal assets. GEC supports the existing boundaries being mandated with future growth being infill.

The heritage and coastal character must be protected. Portarlington has significant parklands adjacent to the coast which must not be developed, Opposition has been expressed to a planning proposal for a large scale unit and retail establishment on the north side of Newcombe Street. This has the potential to spoil views across the bay from the main tourist street and compromise the parkland atmosphere of the town.

The history of early settlement in Portarlington must continue to be a part of the township character and heritage.

Portarlington has a low-lying soft rock foreshore to its east which will be vulnerable to inundation as is the coastline both east and west of the town. There will be a large number of houses at risk.

Point Richards with its local vegetation and wetlands is ecologically important and must be protected.

### **Point Lonsdale**

#### **Lonsdale Lakes Inundation**

Lakers Cutting and Lonsdale Lakes (the Point) will be at risk with 0.2m rise for 48 properties, rising to over 600 at a higher rise.

**GEC supports infill development to be sympathetic to the existing built form. Street plantings and indigenous vegetation protection is supported. Unfortunately a number of extremely modern and large residents are replacing many smaller properties changing the ambience of the streetscapes.**

#### **Queenscliff**

We are concerned and do not support Strategy 8.9 regarding residential development along Hesse Street. Any intensive development in this heritage area has the potential to reduce the streetscape and heritage values of what is an interesting range of historic buildings. The Designated Activity area in Hesse Street is a major concern with the potential for two large developments to take place.

We urge the SPP to mandate the planning scheme to declare the whole of Queenscliff is a Heritage town.

We urge the SPP to mandate the Minimal Change Residential area extend to the whole of the Queenscliff town.

Murray Road on the edge of Lakers Cutting is adjacent to significant salt marsh on one side and vegetated swales in the front of housing. The retention of the salt marsh environment on both sides of the road is important.

Queenscliff has adequate space with parklands and wide verges on the roadsides to be a leader in the proposed increase in canopy cover in the Bellarine town.

Queenscliff Heritage Provisions must be strengthened to ensure that existing values are retained and not diluted by inappropriate development.

Subdivision of existing blocks must have a minimum size requirement.

The vegetated break between Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale must be retained. The coastal vegetation is an important asset. Subdivision on the Narrows area must not be further permitted.

**Rural Living style areas.**

**Areas such as Wallington, Marcus Hill, Burnt Point, Eastern end of Swan Bay Road must not be permitted to subdivide into urban style development.**

**Protection of Suma Hill from any visual intrusion is important.**

**Freehold farmland between Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale with Buckley Park along the dune system, and including Lake Victoria is an excellent landscape which is under threat for some recreational development. The farmland has grazing cattle and the pasture has ephemeral wetlands after rain. This is a prime example of how a recreation development in a Green Break could have a disastrous effect on an area.**

**Green Breaks must be treated as unavailable in the DAL SPP .**

