Frequently Asked Questions

What is the current status of the Bellarine Peninsula ‘Distinctive Area and Landscape’ project?

The second phase of community engagement has commenced to develop the vision and strategic policy directions that will inform a draft Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) for the Bellarine Peninsula. This phase of engagement will run from mid-April to late May. Following this current phase, a draft SPP will be developed and then be made available for public feedback involving a written submissions process later this year.

Will there be any further community consultation?

Yes. There will be further community and stakeholder engagement to capture community input into the long-term vision and direction for the declared areas. Phase one engagement has already been completed.

This current phase two community engagement and consultation aims to further inform the Statement of Planning Policy including the potential for protected settlement boundaries engagement and there will be more opportunities for community consultation as the project progresses.

A third phase of community consultation will then seek submissions on a draft Statement of Planning Policy.

For more information on the findings of phase one engagement as well as the full consultation program please visit https://engage.vic.gov.au/distinctive-areas-and-landscapes-program/bellarine-peninsula.

What are the objectives of declaring the Bellarine Peninsula a 'Distinctive Area and Landscape'?

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 contains objectives for the protection of Distinctive Areas and Landscapes which are:

- to recognise the importance of distinctive areas and landscapes to the people of Victoria and to protect and conserve their unique features and special characteristics;
- to enhance the conservation of the environment in declared areas including unique habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity;
- to enable the integration of policy development, implementation and decision-making through Statements of Planning Policy;
- to recognise the connection and stewardship of Traditional Owners.

What is the purpose of declaring an area?

Declaring the Bellarine Peninsula is a major step in setting out a long-term vision and strategy on how land is used, protected and developed. A map has also been produced of the proposed areas to be protected. The declaration aims to protect the environment, landscape and lifestyle of the Bellarine Peninsula.
What happens now that the area has been declared?
Now that the Bellarine Peninsula is declared a distinctive area and landscape, a Statement of Planning Policy must be prepared.

What is a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP)?
An SPP will provide the strongest level of planning protection and:

- Sets a 50-year vision which identifies the values and attributes to be protected and enhanced
- Sets out the long-term needs for the integration of decision making and planning for the declared area
- Includes a declared area framework plan that integrates environmental, social, cultural and economic factors for the benefit of the community and encourages sustainable development and identifies areas to be protected and conserved

The SPP may also specify protected settlement boundaries.

Once the SPP is approved it will be incorporated into the planning scheme and enforced through the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

What criteria must be met for an area to be declared as a distinctive area and landscape?
For an area to be declared a ‘distinctive area and landscape’ it must firstly contain a concentration of unique attributes of state and/or national significance that are under threat from significant or irreversible land use change. These might include environmental, landscape, geological, water, cultural heritage, natural resource, agricultural and strategic infrastructure features. These attributes are considered to have a positive social, environmental and economic impact on the lives of Victorians.

The degree to which these attributes are under significant threat (from urban development and/or land use change) that would affect the environmental, social or economic value of the area must also be assessed.


How was the declaration area decided?
The declaration area of the Bellarine Peninsula was informed by technical studies and the results of the Phase 1 public engagement. The declaration area for the Bellarine Peninsula is generally consistent with the existing Localised Planning Statement that forms part of Greater Geelong and Queenscliffe Planning Schemes. For further information refer to the background technical reports available at [https://engage.vic.gov.au/distinctive-areas-and-landscapes-program/bellarine-peninsula](https://engage.vic.gov.au/distinctive-areas-and-landscapes-program/bellarine-peninsula).

Why has the Bellarine Peninsula been declared?
The Bellarine Peninsula is renowned for excellent beaches, historic towns, coastal biodiversity, rural hinterland, boutique wineries and artisan producers, offering a wealth of recreation and tourism facilities. The area has been experiencing significant development pressure leading to threats to the areas valued landscapes and natural areas.
What area of the Bellarine Peninsula has been declared?
The Bellarine Peninsula declared area extends around the coastline, including 600 metres seaward of the low water mark, from Leopold to just before Breamlea. It also covers the nearby hinterland area to include Reedy Lake and Lake Connewarre immediate environs. To view a map of the declaration area, please visit https://engage.vic.gov.au/distinctive-areas-and-landscapes-program/bellarine-peninsula.

Why wasn’t Point Henry included in the declared area?
The Point Henry area in Moolap is part of a separate planning process under the strategic directions of the Moolap Coastal Strategic Framework Plan 2019 (the Moolap Plan). This was prepared by the Minister for Planning and inserted into the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme on 24/12/2019 under Amendment C407GGEE.

In determining the Bellarine Peninsula declared area boundary, consideration was given to the Moolap Plan providing long term protection of the area, including, Point Henry.

My property is in the declared area, what does this mean for me?
The declaration does not change the current planning scheme or your property rights. It defines the area for which a Statement of Planning Policy must be prepared.

The Statement will set out a long-term vision and strategies for the region and guides future land use and development decisions. Some changes to local planning controls may be required in order to implement the Statement. The Statement will be developed in collaboration with the Borough of Queenscliffe, City of Greater Geelong, Wadawarrung, with input from local communities and other key stakeholders.

What is the role of the City of Greater Geelong and the Borough of Queenscliffe in this project?
The Bellarine Peninsula Distinctive Area and Landscape project is being led by Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). DELWP is working in collaboration with the Borough of Queenscliffe, City of Greater Geelong, and Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung People to prepare the draft SPP, and with input from local communities and other key stakeholders.

Under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Borough of Queenscliffe and the City of Greater Geelong are identified as Responsible Public Entities. This means that that the Minister for Planning must seek their endorsement of the Statement of Planning Policy before it is approved. These councils must also help implement the policy and have regards to it in making decisions.

What will happen to the existing Bellarine Peninsula Localised Planning Statement?
The existing Localised Planning Statement (LPS) will inform the development of the Statement of Planning Policy. However, once approved, the Bellarine Peninsula LPS will be transitioned to the Statement of Planning Policy.

How does the City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy (Amendment C395) relate to the Bellarine Peninsula Distinctive Area and Landscape project?
The process to resolve Amendment C395 – City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme is separate to the process for preparing the Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy. The Settlement Strategy sets the directions for future growth in the city and will be considered in development of the Statement of Planning Policy.
What is the difference between a settlement boundary and a protected settlement boundary?

A settlement boundary, in relation to a plan of an area, means the boundary marking the limit of urban development in that area, as shown in a structure plan for example.

A protected settlement boundary is a settlement boundary in a Distinctive Area and Landscape declared area that is protected under a Statement of Planning Policy. It is a long-term boundary for township related uses, defining the future extent of a township. Once approved a protected area settlement boundary can only be amended via an approved planning scheme amendment being ratified by both Houses of Parliament.

What is the process for determining protected settlement boundaries?

DELWP is collaborating with the Borough of Queenscliffe and the City of Greater Geelong to determine appropriate protected settlement boundaries. Current township structure plans that have been through public exhibition and independent review will be used as basis to inform protected settlement boundaries, along with the results of public engagement and any relevant recommendations from technical assessments currently being prepared. There will be an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft settlement boundaries later this year.

How will height controls be determined? Where will height controls be implemented?

Current height controls are being reviewed as part of this process. Height controls will be considered in relation to township character, the relationship between townships and their broader landscape setting.

Does the declaration impact existing planning permits?

No, Councils will continue to assess and determine applications for planning permits based on the existing planning scheme provisions. Once the Statement of Planning Policy is approved and gazetted, new applications will be considered having regard to the Statement of Planning Policy.

How does the Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) benefit the community?

The SPP will set out clear policy objectives that responsible public entities must have regard to when making decisions and carrying out programs within the declared area. This will provide the highest level of planning protection through state legislation.

The SPP will ensure that the significant landscapes, environmental and cultural values of declared areas will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations. The SPP will achieve this through co-ordinated decision making for all land use and development.

What other areas are being declared?

In August 2018, the Macedon Ranges became the first area to be declared a distinctive area and landscape under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

In September 2019, the Surf Coast was also declared a distinctive area and landscape under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

In October 2019, the Bass Coast was also declared a distinctive area and landscape under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

How does the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes relate to the new Marine and Coastal Policy, and Strategy?

The Marine and Coastal Policy outlines the state-wide “marine and coastal environment” policies to guide the planning, management and decision-making requirements under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018. The “marine and coastal environment” is defined under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 as the outer limits of Victorian coastal waters and 5 kilometres inland from the high-water mark of the sea (to a depth of 200 metres). The Marine and Coastal Strategy is an action plan to implement the Marine and Coastal Policy, it must be developed within 12 months of making the Marine and Coastal Policy.

An area declared as a Distinctive Area and Landscape under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, may include areas considered “marine and coastal environments” as defined in the Marine and Coastal Act 2018. In these instances, the Marine and Coastal Policy, any relevant Strategy and any other relevant regional, local or site-based plan developed under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018, as well as the Statement of Planning Policy for the declared area, must be considered as relevant by decision makers.

What community engagement has happened so far?

A first phase of community engagement was held between 14 May and 15 June 2019. This consisted of eight community open house sessions as well as an online survey and mapping activity. This was an important input for the declaration assessment and will help inform the initial policy development for the Statement of Planning Policy. 207 people participated in community open house sessions, 196 submissions were received and 2,700 people visited our website throughout phase one community engagement.

The engagement sought community feedback on:

- What is most valued about the Bellarine Peninsula?
- What threats there are to these values?
- Ways we could protect what is valued?
- The vision for the future of the Bellarine Peninsula?

To read more about the findings of phase one engagement, visit engage.vic.gov.au/distinctive-areas-and-landscapes-program/bellarine-peninsula
# Glossary of terms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declared Area</td>
<td>The Declared Area is an area to which an order under section 46AO of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 applies. Declaring an area indicates that it contains a concentration of distinctive attributes and is under threat. A Statement of Planning Policy will be developed for the declared area to protect and conserve its distinctive attributes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Declared Area Framework Plan</td>
<td>A declared area framework plan provides a spatial framework for decision-making in relation to the future use and development of land. It integrates environmental, social, cultural and economic factors, encourage sustainable development and identifies areas for protection and conservation. It may also specify protected settlement boundaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low water mark</td>
<td>The level reached by seawater at low tide.</td>
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<td>Protected settlement boundary</td>
<td>A protected settlement boundary is a settlement boundary in a declared area that is protected under a Statement of Planning Policy. It is a long-term boundary designed to contain urban growth. Once approved, they can only be amended via ratification by both Houses of Parliament.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible Public Entity</td>
<td>For the Bellarine Peninsula declared area, this includes the City of Greater Geelong, the Borough of Queenscliffe, Parks Victoria, VicRoads, Barwon Water, Department of Transport, VicTrack, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority,</td>
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