

**SUBMISSION TO THE BELLARINE PENINSULA DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT**

**DRAFT STATEMENT OF PLANNING POLICY**

**Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Bellarine Peninsula draft Statement of Planning Policy. I made a submission during the previous Phase 2 engagement for the project and am pleased to see many of the concerns I raised have been addressed in the draft Statement of Planning Policy. I support protected settlement boundaries for the peninsula townships and the protection of the significant landscape values, environmental values and green breaks between townships.

The continuous outward greenfield urban growth that has occurred on the Bellarine Peninsula in the last 10 years has severely impacted township character, particularly in towns such as Ocean Grove. I strongly support the introduction of protected settlement boundaries to prevent further encroachment on the green breaks, rural areas, environmental assets and significant landscapes in the declared area. Speculators and developers continue to challenge the current policies and strategic plans in place for growth in Ocean Grove. The proposed Framework Plan for the Bellarine Peninsula must bring this debate to an end and provide certainty for the community and the development industry.

**Support for the Draft Statement of Planning Policy (SPP)**

I wish to state my support for the draft Statement of Planning Policy as exhibited and commend the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning for the strategic work undertaken to underpin the outcomes; in particular in the declared area Framework Plan.

I support the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes legislation which elevates the protection of significant landscapes and environmental values in the planning policy framework.

**Settlement Boundaries – Ocean Grove**

My submission is focused on the aspects of the draft Statement of Planning Policy related to Ocean Grove. I support the concept of protected settlement boundaries around Ocean Grove as depicted, and endorse those contained with the Framework Plan, in particular the northern settlement boundary which was the focus of my previous submission. The northern settlement boundary accords with the City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy and the findings of the panel appointed to hear C395 which implemented the strategy. C395 was adopted by Council and approved by the Minister for Planning with the directions to “investigate” additional areas for greenfield growth removed from policy in the planning scheme.

As the settlement boundary for Ocean Grove has been through a number of independent reviews and extensive consultation, I believe that the State Government is fully justified in introducing protected settlement boundaries as shown in the Framework Plan without further review or community consultation necessary.

I do wish to make a comment about the eastern settlement boundary for Ocean Grove. I note that there are two small variations to the settlement boundary on the western edge of Ocean Grove that do not accord with the current adopted Ocean Grove Structure Plan. Although the reasons for these changes have been explained, in principle I do not support removing land from the settlement boundary which has previously been included within it, and has current development rights. However, this is a philosophical position and is not based on a detailed evaluation of either site. Therefore, this should not be interpreted as a criticism of the methodology applied to the draft Framework Plan.

### Residential Change Areas

I generally support the proposed directions for residential areas as depicted in the draft SPP.

The identified Substantial Change Areas, particularly around the Ocean Grove town centre, are considered appropriate. However, of great importance will be ensuring that new development is complementary to the existing coastal character including the retention of native vegetation and mature canopy trees.

The identified minimal change areas, e.g. the retention of the low density residential areas on the northern boundary of the Ocean Grove township abutting Thacker Street, are considered appropriate and provide a transition to the rural areas to the north of the township. No further development north of the Yellow Gums Estate or the Woodlands Estate can be justified on environmental and landscape terms.

### Implementation

In my view, the Statement of Planning Policy needs to be finalized and endorsed prior the declaration expiring in October 2021. To that end, any new processes which would make that unachievable should be rejected. I consider that an Advisory Committee is not required due to: the significant consultation undertaken to date, the number of reviews already undertaken for the City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy and C395, and the current Localised Planning Statement already in existence for the Bellarine Peninsula. It is considered that all parties have more than enough evidence, and had more than enough opportunities for independent review, to proceed to implement a finalized SPP.

I have serious concerns that the implementation of the SPP will take many years if the implementation is delegated to the City of Greater Geelong. That is no reflection of my opinion of their competency but rather that it will lead to years of delay and further lengthy community consultation and review processes. Therefore, I recommend that the SPP be implemented by the Minister for Planning as Planning Authority through a streamlined 20(4) process.

### **SUMMARY**

- **Support the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes project.**
- **Support the proposed protected settlement boundaries around townships and the proposed Framework Plan.**

- Support the protection of the green breaks between townships on the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Support the protection of the significant landscapes, environmental assets and rural land on the Bellarine Peninsula from urban encroachment.
- Support the protection of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve from urban encroachment.
- Support the preservation of the low density residential land around Ocean Grove township as a transition between residential development and rural land in the green break. i.e. designated as “minimal change” areas.
- Support the housing change areas proposed for Ocean Grove, if complementary to the existing coastal character.
- Support a streamlined implementation process.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]