GOVERNANCE OF THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION

Community Views Report

July 2018

VICTORIA State Government

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Purpose of this report

This report outlines the community and stakeholder views on the governance of the Great Ocean Road region. The analysis has been structured around the eleven questions posed in the *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper* and from a place-based perspective at the locations where face to face engagement activities occurred.

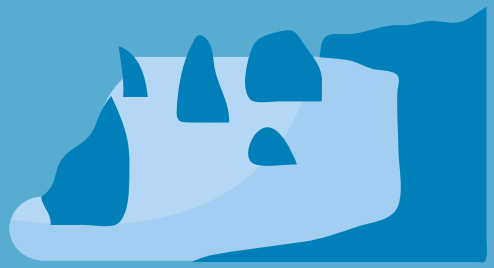
The Apostles at sunset.
Source: © surfcoastimages

573
written responses
received

2032
visitors to the website

21
briefings, listening posts
and **open house sessions**

>780
face-to-face
conversations with people



There is strong support for establishing a new single entity to manage the **Great Ocean Road**

Top 5
things people love about the Great Ocean Road region

1. **Nature and environment**
2. **Identity and feel of local towns**
3. **Culture, history and heritage**
4. **Location and accessibility**
5. **Recreation opportunities**

Introduction

Project description

The Great Ocean Road is one of the world's most scenic and iconic touring routes and one of Australia's most recognised tourism destinations.

The governance of the Great Ocean Road is complex and fragmented. At present, there are 30 responsible organisations with accountabilities covering strategy development and implementation, land-use planning and development, management and administration, infrastructure delivery, asset maintenance, emergency management, investment facilitation, destination promotion and brand stewardship. Responsibility for managing contiguous coastal foreshore, public open spaces and parklands along the Great Ocean Road is also fragmented with 11 different Corwn land managers. This current management model provides challenges in planning and delivering for the future in a co-ordinated manner.

The Victorian Government allocated $1.3 million in the 2017-18 State Budget to 'simplify the complex management arrangements' in a direct response to the issue being raised as a priority by local communities in regional assembly forums.

In September 2017, the Victorian Government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce (the Taskforce) to review the current governance arrangements and recommend reforms to:

- strengthen protection of the landscapes
- improve the visitor experience
- provide greater certainty in land-use planning.

The *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper* was released on 21 March 2018 to promote discussion and seek feedback on opportunities to improve the oversight and management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. These opportunities included the establishment of a new management model, the development of an overarching strategic framework plan, establishing a lead agency and improved funding arrangements.

The Issues Paper was available for public comment for six weeks and submissions closed on 30 April 2018. In support of this, a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement program was undertaken. Engagement activities were undertaken in a range of locations within the region as well as Melbourne and supported by online engagement via the Engage Victoria platform.

This document can be found at **www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/great-ocean-road-action-plan**

Project timeline

- May 2017
  $1.3 million State budget allocation
- Sep 2017
  Taskforce established
- Nov 2017-Feb 2018
  Critical Issues and Opportunities identification
- Dec 2017 – Apr 2018
  Investigations
- Mar 2018
  Release of *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper*
- Mar – Apr 2018
  Community consultation
- May 2018
  Analysis of community feedback
- Jun – Aug 2018
  Taskforce deliberations
- Aug 2018
  Co-Chairs Report to government

Engagement Overview

Stakeholder and community views were sought on the future management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road.

Approach

Given the large study area, and the number and diversity of users, local communities and visitors interested in the Great Ocean Road, the community consultation process was designed to capture a wide range of perspectives, and to provide a wide range of opportunities and formats for participation.

People were invited to have their say in person; via a written submission; or online via a survey, online mapping tool or submission form.

The *Governance of the Great Ocean Region Issues Paper* (the Issues Paper), the consultation process and opportunities to participate were promoted in a variety of ways, including on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website, the Engage Victoria website and DELWP's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). Material was also provided to the five councils, relevant peak bodies and local community groups within the study area to promote on their websites and in their newsletters to their own networks and communities.

The Issues Paper proposed a new management model and sought feedback on the following questions:

1. What do you love most about the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes?
2. What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you most like to see protected?
3. What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you most like to see changed?
4. Do you work for, own or operate a business, or are you a member of a community organisation, that benefits from visitors to the Great Ocean Road Region? If so, what are the key issues for the organisation/business?
5. Is there any critical issue or opportunity that we have missed (in chapter 3 of the Issues Paper)?
6. Do you have any suggested changes to the overarching policy, goals and principles (on pages 40 to 41)?
7. What elements would you like to see covered in a strategic framework plan for the Great Ocean Road Region?
8. What are your thoughts about establishing a new organisation to oversee the development, and coordinate implementation, of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region?
9. What current constraints need to be addressed in the future governance arrangements?
10. Are there any other management models/options we should consider?
11. What criteria should the Taskforce use to evaluate the management model options?

Community views were actively sought through face-to-face conversations, briefings, listening posts and open house sessions.

Public open-house sessions were geographically dispersed to capture the views of the distinct local communities along the Great Ocean Road, with sessions held in Torquay, Anglesea, Lorne, Wye River, Apollo Bay, Port Campbell, Warrnambool and Port Fairy. A session was also held in Melbourne to capture part-time residents and holiday home owners. A mandarin-speaking park ranger helped capture the views of tourists at the Twelve Apostles, and a mandarin version of the short-form survey was also available online.

>780

face to face conversations

573

written responses

2032

visitors to the website

Community consultation, Twelve Apostles

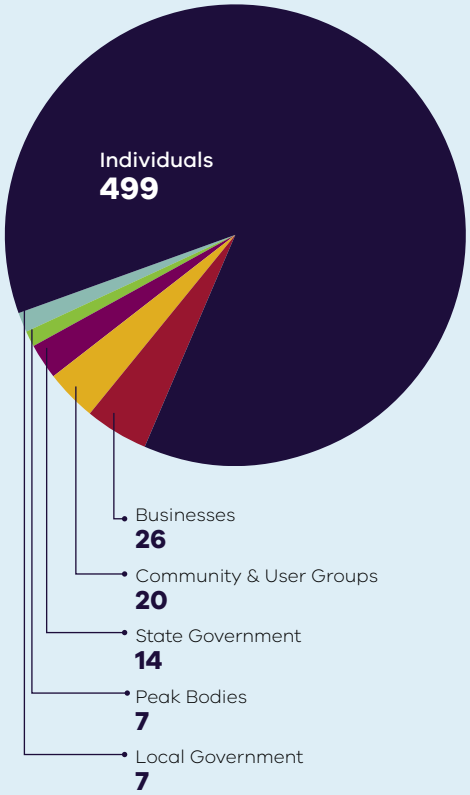
Who we heard from

Of the 573 written responses received, the majority were from individuals (499). The rest were from community/user groups, government organisations, councils, peak bodies and businesses. A list of organisations who participated in the community engagement process can be found at Appendix 1. Submissions and surveys are available on the DELWP website **(www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/great-ocean-road-action-plan)**

Survey respondents were asked about their connection to the Great Ocean Road region. Most commonly, survey participants lived in the Great Ocean Road region, with regular visitors and those with secondary residences making up a high proportion of other respondents. Note that not all of the survey participants responded to this question, and this question was not included on the survey to mandarin speaking visitors.

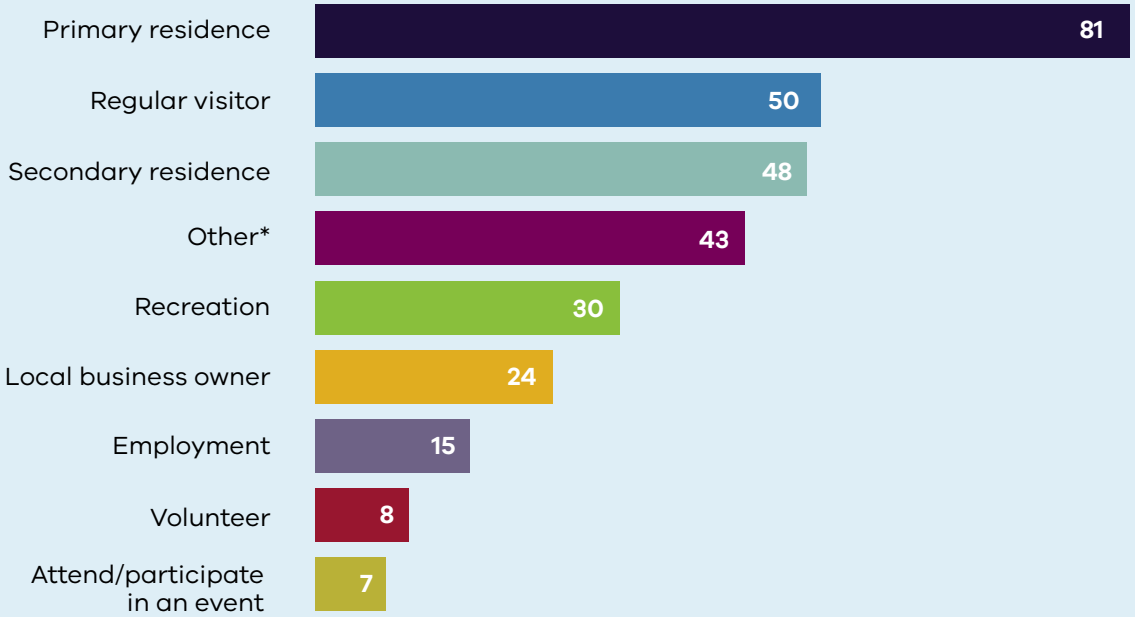
Written responses received

Total number of contributors = 573



What is your connection to the Great Ocean Road area?

Total number of people responded = 306



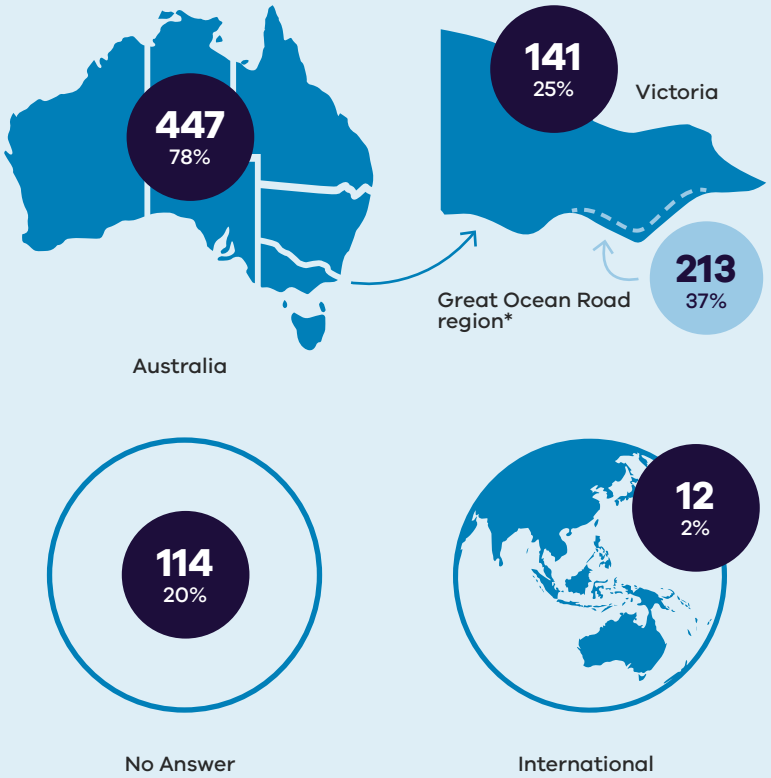
* Other included near neighbours, environmental groups, local government, employee of Parks Victoria or a coastal committee.

A significant number of respondents were from the Great Ocean Road area and from other parts of Australia outside of the Great Ocean Road area.

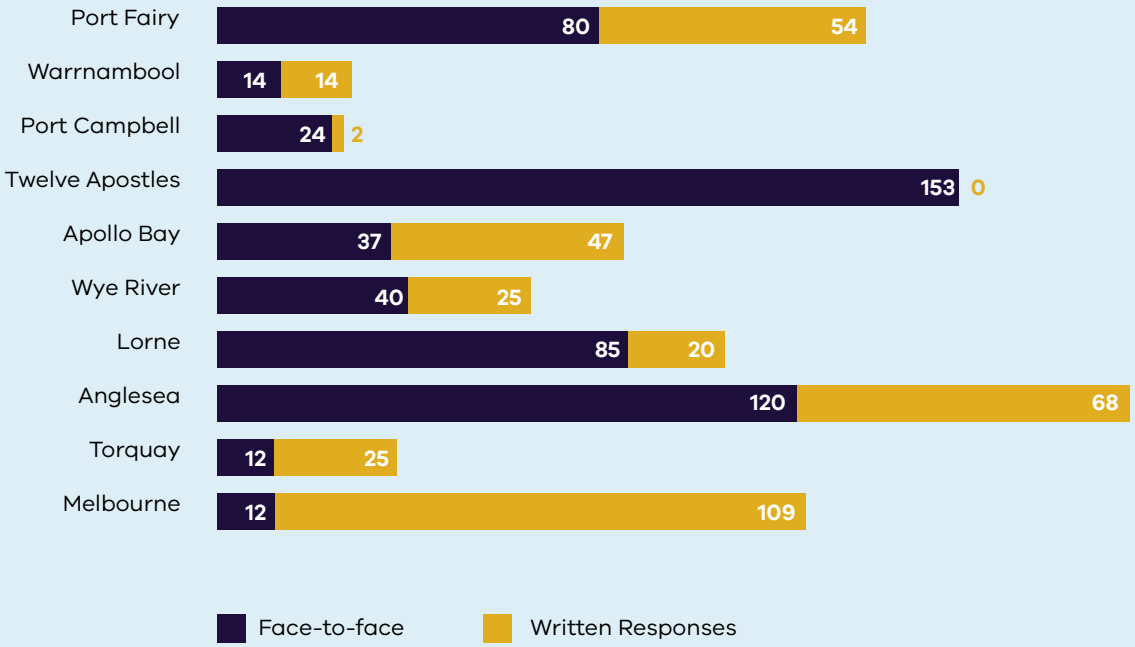
The response type (face to face/written) varied depending upon location. More face to face conversations were held in Port Fairy, Port Campbell, the Twelve Apostles, Wye River, Lorne and Anglesea, while written submissions were the predominant response type in Apollo Bay, Torquay and Melbourne.

Where do you live?

Total number of people responded = 573



Response type by location



*Great Ocean Road region includes Mayne, Corangamite, Colac Otway and Surf Coast Shires, City of Warrnambool

Feedback

Key Themes

There is strong stakeholder and community support for a new approach to the management of the Great Ocean Road region.

A number of key messages emerged from the community engagement process:

Major change is required - doing nothing is not an option.

Nature and the environment are the most valued elements of the Great Ocean Road region.

Each community along the Great Ocean Road is unique and has its own distinct identity.

Management of traffic and tourism needs to change.

More emphasis is needed in the final report on environmental protection, road safety and climate change implications.

There is strong support for the establishment of a single entity to manage the Great Ocean Road and its environs.

A shared vision of the future for the region and a strategic framework plan is needed.

Further engagement on any new governance arrangements is desired.

Major change is required – doing nothing is not an option

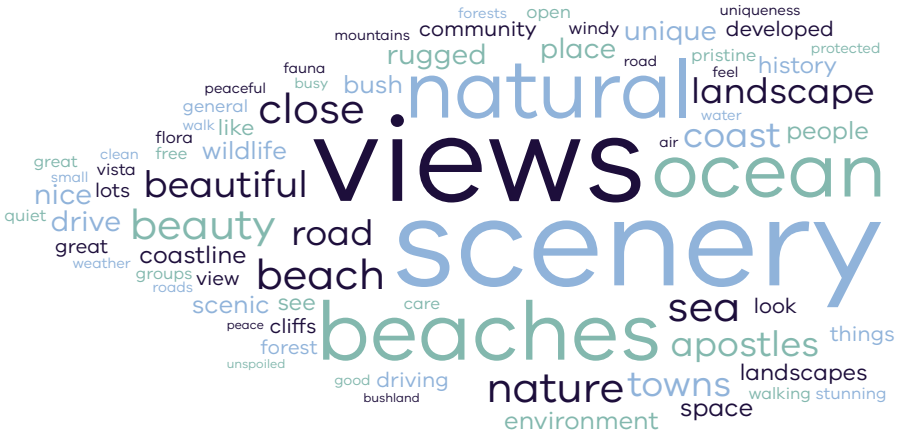
Most stakeholders and members of the community that spoke to us agreed that major change is required.

There is a high level of support for major changes to the existing management arrangements as they are perceived to lack co-ordination, are too complex to navigate and involve too many responsible agencies. The current system is perceived to be inefficient, bureaucratic and creating inequities between local government areas on the allocation of funding for critical infrastructure.

We were told that changes to management arrangements needs to happen as quickly as possible.

Responses to the question "What do you love most about the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes?"

Total number of people responded = 453



The more frequently a specific word is used in a response, the bigger and bolder it appears in the word cloud

Nature and the environment are the most valued elements of the Great Ocean Road region

"The landscape is iconic for Australia, and the balance between the native flora and fauna on one side and the rugged ocean scenery on the other is breathtaking natural environment"

Feedback overwhelmingly identified the nature experience and the environment as the elements most loved about the Great Ocean Road region. The vast, unspoiled landscapes and seascapes are highly prized, as are the flora and fauna. Coastal views were frequently described as magical, pristine and spectacular, and landmarks such as the Twelve Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge highlighted as unique. The contrast of experiences along the Great Ocean Road – dramatic coastal views, the rainforest and the farming areas – were highly valued. Consequently, the aspects of the Great Ocean Road region that people wanted to see protected were nature and the environment.

Each community along the Great Ocean Road is unique and has its own distinct identity

Many respondents highlighted the uniqueness of the towns along the Great Ocean Road, with each having its own identity and issues. The uniqueness, or feel or vibe, of each township was frequently described as a highlight. The sense of community in townships was highly appreciated, and there was a strong community ethos to care for the environment. Liveability for residents was another key theme. The history and heritage of the region is highly prized and frequently described as important to the identity of the Great Ocean Road and its surrounds.

Protection of townships from overdevelopment was a strong theme in feedback. Residential development was frequently mentioned as having a negative impact on township size.

"The sense of community in the townships dotted along the route must be preserved and protected."

"Issues are different at this end of the Great Ocean Road"

Overdevelopment and commercial development were frequently described as being detrimental to the natural environment and vistas. Prevention of ribbon development along the coast through the protection of areas between townships was highlighted as a key issue requiring action.

Management of traffic and tourism needs to change

Transport and traffic management were identified as the aspects people most wanted to change about the Great Ocean Road region.

Road condition, road use and road safety were frequently mentioned. Respondents identified the need for the widening of roads, additional pull-over lanes, speed limits, verges, traffic management, driver education, traffic lights, and shared-user paths for cycling and walking. The need to better manage congestion on peak days (with increased numbers of tourist buses and vehicles) was highlighted and improved public transport options such as more local buses and trains were suggested. The inability to take surfboards and bicycles on buses was also raised as a deterrent to increased public transport use.

The management of visitation, particularly congestion at key sites, and the need to limit visitor numbers to ensure an enjoyable experience, was also identified as a key issue requiring action. The provision of tourism infrastructure – including sheltered rest stops, viewing points and parking facilities – was identified as an urgent tourism need to provide a great visitor experience.

Another concern was the responsibility for provision of facilities for large numbers of visitors in the absence of a dedicated funding stream, with local communities receiving very little return from visitors. Local communities highlighted the need to provide and maintain public facilities such as rubbish bins and toilets to cater for visitors.

The carrying capacity of the Great Ocean Road, the towns along it, and the environment, was regularly identified as a key issue that needs investigation.

The opportunity to enhance the visitor experience through the interpretation of Aboriginal culture, history and heritage was mentioned by a number of people.

More emphasis is needed in the final report on environmental protection, road safety and climate change implications

Feedback confirmed that, in general, most of the key issues had been captured in the Issues Paper. However, the community felt that there was an overemphasis on the economic development of the region and insufficient emphasis on the protection of the environment.

Issues identified as having been missed included the need to recognise the distinctive characteristics of each community along the Great Ocean Road, and the consideration of the emergency management implications of high visitation days, which usually occurs during the highest fire risk period. Feedback also requested more emphasis be placed on road safety and the implications of climate change.

Respondents generally supported the proposed policy, goals and principles with some refinements suggested.

There is strong support for the establishment of a single entity to manage the Great Ocean Road and its environs

There was strong support for the establishment of a single entity that has the legislative power and ongoing funding mechanisms to plan and/or manage the Great Ocean Road region (including support from most public entities). However, this support was often qualified with the need for a corresponding reduction in the total number of entities currently managing the Great Ocean Road region to avoid adding another layer of bureaucracy and complexity, or risking duplication.

Respondents felt that a single entity would provide leadership, a single point of accountability, a reduction in red tape, and a coordinated planning and delivery approach for the implementation of the strategic framework plan and maintenance works along the Great Ocean Road region (shifting away from the current piecemeal approach).

"...bringing a collaborative and deliberative approach to solving some of the very challenging issues facing the protection and improvement of the Great Ocean Road and environments would be an excellent step forward."

A strong theme emerging from feedback was that public land should be managed centrally. A single entity was seen by respondents as a way to provide guidance on appropriate development, streamline planning processes and provide certainty for all involved.

Respondents said that any new entity must have appropriate dedicated ongoing funding to support its functions.

A shared vision of the future for the region and a strategic framework plan is needed

There was widespread support for the development of an agreed vision for the region, as well as a statutory strategic framework plan that provides direction for land-use, landscape management and visitor facilities and amenities. Respondents suggested that the strategic framework plan should balance environmental protection and tourism levels through the control of visitor numbers, provide guidance for development, and include an infrastructure plan for future investment, renewal and maintenance.

Many respondents felt that futureproofing and planning for visitation of the wider region should be a consideration.

Development of a robust funding model is essential

Most respondents stressed the need for the development of a robust funding model to support the future of the region. Respondents felt that any new organisation should have funding to support the operations and the planning and delivery of key projects, including roads, tourist infrastructure and environmental care and protection.

A key suggestion included the ongoing provision of both state and federal recurrent funding to maintain and upgrade the Great Ocean Road, given its importance to the state and national economy.

A number of respondents raised the introduction of user-pay models at key tourist sites as an opportunity to shift the burden from rate payers as well as to proactively protect the unique environmental landscapes that draw visitors to the region. Many visitors (Victorian, interstate and international) expressed surprise that they were not expected to pay to visit or use such sites.

"Funding Model (should be) introduced to extract fees from tourism bus operators, hire vehicles, commercial vehicles and day-trippers."

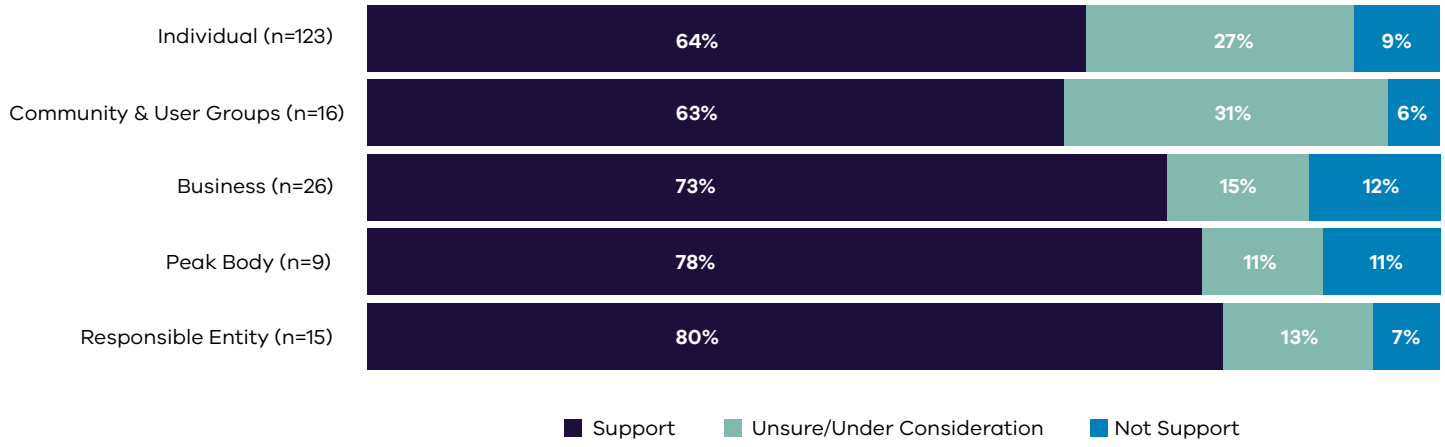
Respondents were clear that any funding generated in the region should stay in the region, with the revenue administered by the new entity.

Further engagement on any new governance arrangements is desired

A number of people and organisations requested further consultation on future governance arrangements.

There is strong support for establishing a new authority

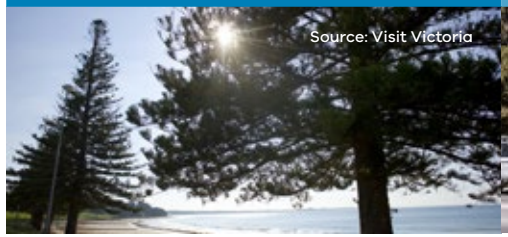
Total number of responses = 189



Feedback by location

There are many shared views between the communities along the Great Ocean Road about current and future management arrangements. People at all locations expressed concerns about tourism capacity and congestion along the road, at key sites and within towns. There were differences in the emphasis and priority issues expressed by people at different locations along the Great Ocean Road. Residential growth was a key issue in Torquay and Anglesea, while out of centre development was a priority for Apollo Bay residents. Rubbish and waste management was a concern for people in Torquay, Anglesea and Port Campbell.

Torquay


Source: Visit Victoria

Current state views

- Torquay is close to breaking point due to the high rate of residential growth and an increased number of tourists.
- Commercial tourism operators and buses are causing damage to the road. Road safety, high accident rates and road kill are major issues.
- Littering and waste management are key concerns. Education for visitors is necessary.
- Helicopters are very intrusive.

Future management views

- Consider a Minister for the Coast.
- Any new authority must have power and funding - consider entry / parking fees and developer contributions.
- Community should be represented on both the current taskforce and any new authority.
- Advertising should target desired visitor types - those who will stay overnight and support the local economy, rather than day trippers.
- Tourism numbers and urban growth needs to be capped to maintain amenity for residents and tourists.
- Remove Torquay's status as a growth node.
- Bells Beach should have special protection, and be managed by a local committee.

Anglesea

Current state views

- Large visitor numbers lead to increases in the cost of maintaining Council infrastructure such as toilets and bins, with no visitor contribution.
- Management of fire risks within the area is a key issue.
- A cap on visitor numbers is needed.
- Greater economic benefit needed from the increase in tourism. Tourist buses need to stay longer in Anglesea, to ensure tourists spend more.
- The natural environment is highly valued.
- Rubbish from tourists and ships appears to gather on the Anglesea beach.

Future management views

- Residents understand that visitor numbers will continue to increase and the need for a more effective governance structure.
- Concern about the role of the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC), particularly in relation to the management of the caravan park in Anglesea.
- A better understanding is needed of the agencies involved. More transparency needed around the allocation and distribution of funds.
- Consider user pays options for visitors.

Lorne

Source: Visit Victoria

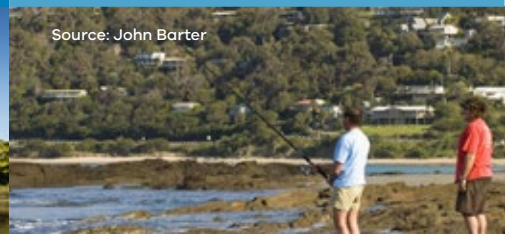
Current state views

- Ratepayers pay increased costs of infrastructure, toilets and bins due to high numbers of tourists. As numbers grow, these costs will increase.
- High tourist numbers negatively affects the experience of tourists and residents.
- Traffic calming measures in some towns are affecting traffic flow in towns further along the road.
- Lack of space to pass cyclists on the GOR and Dean's Marsh Road.
- Unlicensed bus operators are a problem as less revenue can be recovered.

Future management views

- Consider renamimg a section of the Great Ocean Road to 'Anzac Highway'.
- Consider options such as the Geelong Regional Commission, the Fisherman's Bend model and an amalgamated Council.
- Greater focus on the hinterland and feeder roads.
- More public transport will be needed to improve connectivity and accessibility.
- Consider user pays options.
- Any revenue that is raised along the GOR must remain with the new Authority.
- Strong support for one agency .

Wye River


Source: John Barter

Current state views

- Basic services and infrastructure are lacking – road safety, rubbish and weed management.
- Impact of climate change - more bush fires and landslides; rebuilding of the road may be needed.
- Airbnb creates more transient populations which affects community connection.
- A lack of information on Aboriginal history and culture. Signage should include Aboriginal names.
- Safety of tourists who cannot swim is an increasing burden on surf lifesaving clubs.
- Good beach access for mobility impaired people required.

Future management views

- Consider a user pays system – National Park levy.
- Cap tourist numbers.
- Retain town boundaries and character.
- Involve the community in decision-making.
- Stretched capacity of emergency services due to number of tourists visiting during high fire danger periods.
- Reliable communications network and infrastructure needed.
- Traditional Owner involvement necessary.
- Any new authority should be bipartisan and beyond the election cycle.

Apollo Bay

Source: Colac Otway Shire

Current state views

- The GOR is at saturation point now, with negative impacts for tourists and residents.
- The GOR area is also home to residents; it is not just a tourism playground.
- The experience at the Twelve Apostles is disappointing – expectations are not being met.
- Frustration that locals subsidise tourist infrastructure.
- Impacts on road safety due to high tourism numbers.
- Coastal areas decreasing due to erosion. This affects the safety and quality of roads.
- Natural heritage – flora and fauna – is vulnerable to destruction.

Future management views

- Action is required immediately to manage tourism on the GOR.
- Funding to manage the GOR should be a priority - consider 'user pays' models.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is a potential management model.
- Decrease the number of agencies involved - ideally, one body would coordinate the management.
- Consider consolidating the number of municipalities.
- Future management needs equal local consideration.
- A capacity analysis of the GOR is needed as a priority.

Port Campbell

Source: Corangamite Shire

Current state views

- Rubbish on the beach from tourists and ships is an issue - enforcement and education are required.
- A lot of bureaucracy in the management of the foreshore and it is difficult to get change.
- Influx of tourists impacts local residents in peak periods eg. in relation to parking.
- Urban growth boundaries are required to sustainably manage growth.
- Improved habitat protection practices are needed -weed infestation in native vegetation is an issue.
- A lack of cultural interpretation – visitors don't know what they're seeing.
- Road safety and emergency management is a priority.
- Local communities don't know where their input goes and if it influences management.

Future management views

- Port Campbell should remain a small seaside town with no linear development between towns.
- Focus on high yield, low volume tourism model.
- Consider a user pays model at the Twelve Apostles, which is the main drawcard.
- A speed limit of 50km/h or lower for the GOR, widen lanes and consider alternative ways/directions to reach the Twelve Apostles.
- One GOR authority desired which should be above politics and beyond the political cycle.

Warrnambool

Source: City of Warrnambool

Current state views

- The heritage of the area (European and Aboriginal) needs to be protected.
- Residents treasure the current state of the town – low density housing, surrounding agricultural landscapes.
- The GOR is an important access road and provides connection for communities along the coast.
- Transport, particularly public transport, is important.
- Need to recognise the importance and contribution of the agricultural landscape to the visitor experience.

Future management views

- Better connections are required between coastal assets, particularly those towards the western end. More investment in public transport is needed.
- Signage should be in multiple languages, not only Mandarin - freedom campers typically come from France, Germany and Belgium.
- Freedom camping should be better supported and encouraged, as these visitors stay in the region for longer periods of time and spend money at local businesses.
- The GOR should be appreciated for its beauty and natural value, not just as an asset to bring money to the region.

Port Fairy

Source: Visit Victoria

Current state views

- Roads are in poor condition, and the GOR area does not have the infrastructure it needs.
- The tourism industry is dependent on the environment to survive - there needs to be a focus on protecting and enhancing the environment.
- Unreasonable that no fee is charged to visit the Twelve Apostles - visitors must pay to enter Wilsons Promontory.
- There needs to be a focus on environmentally sustainable tourism management within the region.

Future management views

- A new body should be transparent, non-political and non-commercial.
- There is support for an overarching authority. Some concerns as to whether it would have enough power to be effective.
- There should be a user pays system at the twelve Apostles. Many other sites around Australia require visitors to pay a fee.

Feedback by question

Key values

Q.1

What do you love most about the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes?

Of the 564 respondents to this question, nature and the environment were overwhelmingly identified by respondents as the most loved aspects of the Great Ocean Road region. The vast, unspoiled landscapes and seascapes, the flora and fauna, coastal views and landmarks such as the Twelve Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge were often described as unique. The distinct identity and feel of local towns, and the sense of community was highly prized, as was the history and heritage of the region, its accessibility from Melbourne and opportunities for recreational pursuits.

> *'Big nature is the Great Ocean Road region's unique selling proposition and competitive advantage. The landscape and natural environs are the primary reason to visit.'*
>
> *– Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism*

Nature and Environment[1]

357 mentions

Unspoiled pristine landscapes; coastal views, spectacular landmarks such as the Twelve Apostles; contrast of experiences – coast, forest, farm; native flora and fauna.

Local identity

31 mentions

A sense of community, unique feel of local towns.

Culture

15 mentions

History and heritage of the area.

Access

14 mentions

Location and accessibility of the area, proximity to Melbourne.

Recreation

11 mentions

Opportunities for recreational pursuits, including beach and bush walking, bike riding, kayaking, surfing and diving.

1. Nature includes all the natural environment, including landscape, beaches, rivers, weather and flora and fauna.

Q.2 What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you most like to see protected?

There were 454 respondents to this question. With nature and the environment being the most loved aspects of the Great Ocean Road region, unsurprisingly the aspects that people wanted to see protected were also nature and the environment. The protection of local towns from over-development and the maintenance of the unique identity of local towns was also a strong theme emerging through consultation. The protection of areas between townships and the prevention of ribbon development along the coast were highlighted as key issues requiring action.

'The Great Ocean Road boasts some of Australia's top beaches and waves. It is important that any future organisation tasked with overseeing planning and management along the Great Ocean has as its primary objective the protection and enhancement of the coastal and marine environment.'

– Surfrider Foundation Surf Coast

'Indigenous heritage should be highlighted and preserved.'

– Wye River, Separation Creek and Kennett River Renewal Association

Nature

294
mentions

The unspoiled vistas, natural tranquillity, flora and fauna.

Planning & development

26
mentions

Protect local towns from over-development and commercial development; keep large areas undeveloped.

Local identity

25
mentions

The unique atmosphere, sense of community and liveability.

Environmental protection

21
mentions

Environmentally sustainable development, rehabilitation and land care.

Access

9
mentions

Access to key landmark locations.

Aboriginal culture

7
mentions

Aboriginal heritage and history, and places of significance.

Q.3 What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you most like to see changed?

In total 463 people responded to this question. The provision of infrastructure to support visitors and local communities was what respondents thought most needed to change about the Great Ocean Road region. "Roads, rates and rubbish" were often quoted by respondents – this included the need to improve road infrastructure (including inland routes), rates used to provide and maintain visitor facilities with very little return to local communities, and the presence of rubbish in the environment through lack of rubbish bins or inadequate maintenance. The need to better manage visitation and the impact upon local attractions, the environment and communities was a strong theme emerging from feedback.

8 respondent(s) identified the opportunity for better interpretation of Aboriginal culture, history and heritage to increase local knowledge and enhance the visitor experience. Twenty six respondents thought nothing needed to change about the Great Ocean Road region.

'The current visitor experience is underwhelming. The landscape is spectacular, but support infrastructure, product and experience is almost non-existent"

– Corangamite Shire Council

Transport

90 mentions

Improving public transport, road infrastructure (including inland routes), walking and cycling paths

Tourism

63 mentions

Controlling visitation, more signage and tourist numbers management

Infrastructure

62 mentions

More shelters, bins and shops

Parking & toilets

33 mentions

More public toilets and parking

Nothing to change

26 mentions

Planning & development

21 mentions

More strategic urban planning to meet current and future needs

Aboriginal culture

8 mentions

Helping locals and visitors to understand, learn about and respect Aboriginal culture and land

Wye River.
Source: © surfcoastimages

Issues

Q.4 Do you work for, or own a business, or are you a member of a community organisation, that benefits from visitors to the Great Ocean Road region? If yes, what are the key issues you experience?

Forty-five people responded to this question. Of these, the key issues they identified as being important for their business or organisation, were:

- Ensuring a positive tourist experience at key destinations
- Extending the tourist stay within the Great Ocean Road region
- Current quality and condition of nature-based tourism
- Road safety including understanding of road rules and communication of important information in a range of languages
- The volume of visitors feels unmanaged with impacts to natural environment and public amenities

Q.5 Is there any critical issue or opportunity that we have missed (in chapter three)?

A small number of respondents identified the following issues as having been missed or not having enough emphasis:

Tourism

Require further emphasis on tourism and its infrastructure needs; uneven distribution across the year; the volume of visitors, and the geographic spread of visitor destinations; capacity of the road, key destinations and the environment to cope with visitation levels.

Transport

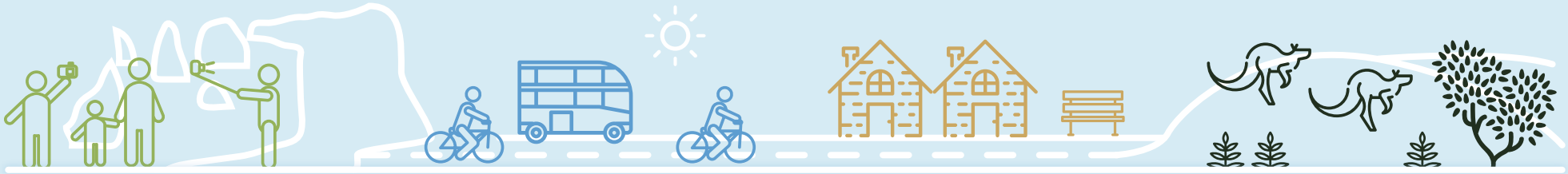
Road safety; options for safe non-car transport including safe pedestrian routes, public transport and cycling connections.

Governance

Funding support for communities and government to work together on committees.

Environmental protection

Protection and conservation of wildlife; biodiversity threats not being addressed; implications of climate change.



16 mentions

14 mentions

14 mentions

10 mentions

Other issues raised included the need to better emphasise the distinctive characteristics of each community along the Great Ocean Road, and to consider the emergency management implications of high visitation days, which usually occurs during the highest fire risk period.

'We should consider what capacity the road and the landmarks actually have, whilst still being an enjoyable place to visit.'

Strategic planning

Q.6 Do you have any suggested changes to the overarching policy, goals and principles?

The majority of respondents to this question (71 out of 132) believed nothing needed to change about the overarching policy, goals and principles, though many would like to see an increased emphasis on environmental protection.

The remaining respondents suggested the following changes:

Environmental protection:
Ensure coordinated management to ensure environmentally sustainable development, rehabilitation, land care and climate change consideration.

Funding:
Need for transparent funding arrangements to support delivery of critical infrastructure and long-term planning.

Participation:
Ensure collaborative processes, community representation in decision-making bodies.

Tourism:
Manage tourism and environmental impacts; ensure benefits for local economy.

Governance:
Clarity over governance responsibilities, broader governance principles.

Planning:
Establishment planning and development that meets current and future needs.

Q.7 What elements would you like to see covered in a strategic framework plan for the Great Ocean Road region?

Surveys, submissions and discussions with the community indicated that there was strong support for the development of a strategic framework plan for the Great Ocean Road region.

Tourism

- best practice for tourism experience, including technological innovations
- plan for the whole journey and an integrated visitor experience
- adequate resourcing and supporting infrastructure
- balance environmental protection and tourism levels, control numbers of visitors
- housing affordability

'Planning to ensure affordable housing to accommodate the workforce required to service the increased tourism economy.'
– Great Ocean Road Coast Committee

Transport

- increased inland transport routes, road maintenance, speed limits, road network renewal, better road safety
- public transport options, cycling/ walking connections

'First, there is a crucial need to include and prioritise road safety in any future strategic planning and reorganisation of governance.'
– Amy Gillett Foundation

Governance

- clear governance structure
- review of existing plans and strategies before launching something new
- whole of region approach and funding with a central contact

'I feel the management of the Great Ocean Road will benefit most from a single Point of Contact, 'One Stop Shop' (in a manner of speaking) that provides consistent, holistic management and coordination of the Great Ocean Road.'

Planning

- growth boundaries for townships to prevent sprawl
- environmental protection and climate change mitigation through planning mechanisms
- heritage protection to control development

'Corangamite Shire considers that local government should continue to have a key role in relation to statutory planning, and be able to maintain genuine input in relation to statutory land use planning.'
– Corangamite Shire

Funding

- consistent and ongoing funding for the road
- infrastructure and surrounding land care
- develop a funding model for the future

'Develop a funding model that takes the best elements of successful models for similar high visitation regions around the world. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.'
– Lorne Business and Tourism Association

New management model

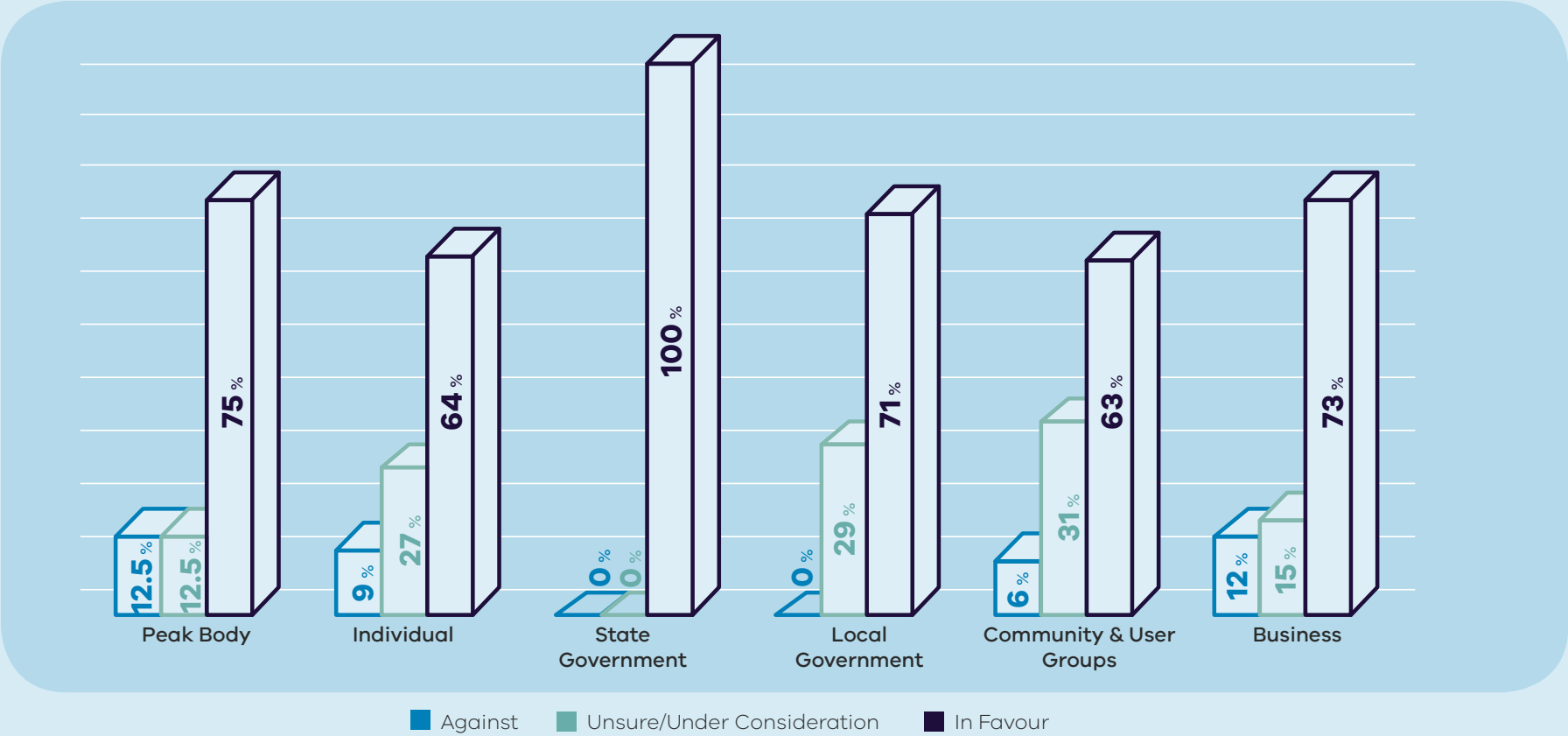
Q.8 What are your thoughts about establishing a new organisation to oversee the development, and coordinate implementation, of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road?

The majority of respondents supported the idea of establishing a new organisation to oversee development, with 57 of 90 survey respondents and 20 of 30 submitters stating so. Respondents thought this would reduce red tape and create opportunity to increase public participation and to plan for the future effectively. Many respondents also sought a reduction in the total number of responsible entities, to ensure another layer of bureaucracy was not added.

25 of 90 of survey respondents and 6 of 30 submitters took the idea under consideration, requesting further information before they could decide.

Only 2 submitters and 8 survey respondents did not support the establishment of a new organisation, citing concerns about creating more bureaucracy.

Participant sentiment by stakeholder group towards establishing a new organisation – written responses:



YES

Rationale

Will reduce red tape by reducing the duplication of functions or layers of governance that currently exist.

Will increase public participation.

Enable funding and stronger planning for the future.

Must have the legislative functions and authority to carry out its remit to cover all aspects of the Great Ocean Road region, including infrastructure, tourism, economies and environment.

Will support a coordinated approach for the preparation and delivery of the strategic framework plan shifting away from the current 'piecemeal approach'.

Will support a coordinated planning and delivery approach for maintenance works along the Great Ocean Road region.

'We support the creation of a stand-alone agency. It is logical that it be established through its own legislation, with its own powers, responsibilities, funding and staff.'

'It makes good sense that there once again be a single governance body.'

'... is of the view that a new Authority, created under statute, should be established to develop and coordinate the implementation of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road region ... A lead Minister should also be confirmed that the Authority is accountable to.'

UNDER CONSIDERATION

Rationale

Further consultation is required before any governance arrangements are made.

Greater clarity on the remit is needed, and if this would result in a loss of decision- making powers for local towns and communities, with influence weighted in favor of a Melbourne-based entity.

There was concern about adding another layer of governance.

The evidence base and need for a new organisation has not been clearly established.

'... would expect to have further opportunity to consider and provide comment on this aspect once a clearer proposal emerges, and before any final decision by the State Government.'

'Whilst ... supports in principle the proposition of a single management authority for the Great Ocean Road, ... is concerned to ensure there is further consultation on the preferred governance arrangements which are finally recommended by the Taskforce before the recommendations are adopted by Government.'

NO

Rationale

Another new body with associated bureaucracy and costs is not needed.

Alternative options - co-ordinating committe/ lead agency - which have responsibility and resources, should be considered.

'...we do not believe that a case has been made to add further bureaucracy and costs. The key needs are for coordinated planning and investment prioritisation; this can best be achieved by the establishment of a strong coordinating committee with very senior representation from the key land managers and stakeholder bodies'

'... the five main governance bodies in our region be reformed into two ... a coastal shire (and) an in land shire...'

Q.9 What current constraints need to be addressed in the future governance arrangements?

73 respondents identified the following constraints as needing to be addressed in any future governance arrangements:

Governance

- complex stakeholder landscape
- confusing boundaries of management, excessive red tape

Too many Government agencies, no plan, no management, and no money.'

Participation

- need for improved community and stakeholder participation in and influence on decision-making

'More feedback on input provided so it does not feel like a blackhole of sucking in feedback - formal community feedback forum.'

Financial management and funding

- funding to ensure appropriate management of the Great Ocean Road and a high-quality experience
- making sure local communities do not have to pay for tourism infrastructure

'Need user pays system. Parks and Council are not getting rates to deal with maintenance of environment and increased need for recreation infrastructure and maintenance due to incoming tourists.'

– Peterborough Residents Group

Tourism

- ever-increasing numbers of tourists
- concerns about having already reached capacity

'That travel pattern (of the predominant eastbound flowing traffic) represents an immutable issue that compresses what the GOR is able to deliver to those users on any given day...the constraint I am alluding to here is the physical constraining capacity of the Great Ocean Road to cater for this travel flow.'

Environmental protection

- balancing environmental protection with trying to accommodate increasing tourism and urban growth

'Council supports stronger emphasis on the demonstration of environmental leadership as an outcome from the new management model.'

– Surf Coast Shire

Authority

- lack of clarity about who has the power to make decisions
- the influence of politics on the Great Ocean Road

'Criteria for Minister to Call-In Projects. Currently this is at the whim of either State or local government with no set criteria leaving a potential investor and the community uninformed.'

– Australian Coastal Society

Q.10 Are there any other management models /options we should consider?

Twenty three survey respondents suggested alternative models to consider:

Are there any other management models/options we should consider? – Key Response Themes

Agency and stakeholder collaboration/committee

8 respondents

'Melbourne Water's ongoing Healthy Waterways Renewal Catchment Collaborations are the best model yet to use as a starting point ..'

Community driven decision-making

5 respondents

'A model that fully empowers communities to determine what is important to them and what those communities want for their future is imperative.'

New body or authority

4 respondents

'We should have a body which controls the whole coastal area and keeps the funding received into the area in the area.'

New national park

3 respondents

'The national parks in the Canadian Rockies appear very well run - user pays system, extremely clean, lots of respect to local and indigenous history, care of wildlife.'

New local government area

3 respondents

'A coastal shire running from Anglesea to Port Campbell.'

New State Government Department

1 respondents

'A ministerial department created with absolute authority and responsibility for the Great Ocean Road similar to the alpine National Parks with the Great Alpine Way.

Q.11 What key criteria should the Taskforce use to evaluate the management model options?

The majority of respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

Of the 59 survey respondents and 6 submitters who did answer this question, the key criteria they identified as necessary to evaluate the management model options were:

Environmental protection:
The ability to ensure environmental protection and respond to climate change.

Participation:
Accommodates genuine participation for stakeholders, community and experts.

Ease of governance:
Reduces the number of authorities involved, and ensures low or no red tape.

Planning:
Provides considered and strategic planning for development and tourism levels that reflect local needs, available resources and capacity.

Authority:
Has the authority to effectively and efficiently implement plans and get things done.

Apollo Bay

Appendix 1

Organisations who have participated in the issues identification and community engagement processes

- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
- Aireys Inlet and District Association (AIDA)
- Amy Gillett Foundation
- Anglesea, Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna (ANGAIR)
- Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce
- Australian Coastal Society
- Barwon Water
- Basalt to Bay Landcare Network
- Business and Tourism Anglesea
- Barwon Regional Partnership
- Borough of Queenscliffe
- City of Greater Geelong
- Colac Otway Shire
- Committee for Lorne
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
- Corangamite Shire
- Country Fire Authority
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Eastern Maar
- Emergency Management Victoria
- EPA Victoria
- G21 Geelong Region Alliance
- Geelong Environment Council
- Geelong Field Naturalists Club
- Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
- Great Ocean Road Coast Committee
- Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism
- Great South Coast Regional Partnership
- Heritage Victoria
- Heytesbury District Landcare Network
- Life Saving Victoria
- Lorne Business & Tourism Association
- Moyne Shire
- Otway Coast Committee
- Otway Wildlife Group & Seatrees Wildlife Shelter
- Parks Victoria
- Peterborough Residents Group
- Powercor
- Property Council of Australia
- Regional Development Australia – BSW
- Regional Development Victoria
- Southern Rural Water
- Surf Coast Shire
- Surfrider Foundation - Surf Coast Branch
- Transport for Victoria
- Trust for Nature (Vic)
- Twelve Apostles Tourism and Business Association
- VicRoads
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Victorian Coastal Council
- Victoria Tourism Industry Council
- Visit Victoria
- Wannon Water
- Warrnambool City Council
- Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung)
- Western Coastal Board
- Wye River and Separation Creek Progress Association Inc. (WRSCPA)
- Wye River, Separation Creek and Kennett River Renewal Association (WSKRA)
- 3228 Residents Association Inc

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