

Recreational Boating Facilities Framework

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Executive Summary

Recreational boating is a significant activity on the central coast, especially on Port Phillip and Western Port Bays, which offer diverse boating opportunities. More than half of the registered boats in Victoria are based in this region. The region includes Melbourne, home to nearly 75% of the Victorian population. Boating is an important recreational activity for a growing number of Victorians, and delivers economic benefit to coastal communities through visitation and tourism.

Boating requires investment in supporting facilities. An estimated 98% of Victorian recreational boats are trailerable, placing considerable pressure on boat ramps. Demand is growing, particularly at peak periods, and has not been matched by maintenance and provision of facilities.

In 2007, the Central Coastal Board (CCB) prepared a five-year Boating Coastal Action Plan (BCAP) for the region. In reviewing the BCAP in 2013, stakeholders said it was a useful planning tool in translating the Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCS), but had not resulted in better boating facilities.

The CCB's role includes providing advice to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. The Minister has requested that in 2014, the CCB prepare a Regional Coastal Action Plan (RCAP) and that the previous BCAP be updated and integrated into it. This Recreational Boating Facilities Framework consolidates the information on the current state and preferred future of recreational boating facilities, to be integrated into the forthcoming RCAP.

Preparation of the Recreational Boating Facilities Framework has drawn from:

- the Boating CAP 2007 which has been extensively reviewed
- input from an interagency steering committee
- stakeholder workshops in five locations around the bays and various individual meetings
- an extensive update of the Boating Service Levels Index (BSLI)
- an update on boating trends and demand.

The key issues that have been identified to deliver effective planning for boating facilities are:

- recreational boating policy to clarify ownership and responsibility within State government
- funding to address identified priorities for development and maintenance of facilities
- better planning and solutions for peak demand periods
- better data to assist strategic planning and provide reliable long-term forecasts.

The BSLI for 2013 showed 22% of facilities were rated as poor, 56% as average and only 22% were good, despite government and private investment in maintaining existing boating facilities, and developing new ones over the last five years. This is a small improvement from the 2007 figures, as is explained in more detail in Appendix 5.

As in the Boating CAP, a network of boating facilities and the Boating Hierarchy are the key concepts used in translating the Victorian Coastal Strategy in the region and developing a planning framework for regional boating.

Whilst the Boating Hierarchy may guide investment priorities, these priorities must be considered in the context of future growth corridors, particularly for the metropolitan region, and recognition of the value of the marine environment and the need for shared access to the coast.

The upcoming Regional CAP provides an opportunity for the CCB to recommend better outcomes for recreational boating and achieve the vision of:

'a highly valued, efficient and sustainable network of boating facilities providing safe access to the coast'.

Introduction

The Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCS) sets the policy direction and provides a framework for planning and management of the coastal environment, including planning for boating facilities (the 2002 VCS introduced the boating hierarchy). The CCB applied this framework to the central region in preparing the Boating CAP in 2007.

The Boating CAP describes the criteria to enable development of a hierarchy of boating facilities and associated levels of service. This translates to a strategic context and guidance for the location and scale of each boating facility within the regional network of facilities, and helps to establish direction and priorities for future public and private investment to support recreational boating.

The Boating CAP has been reviewed as required under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*. The review report (2013) includes comments from lead agencies on the status of actions in the CAP and comments from stakeholders on its general effectiveness.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change has requested that in 2014, the CCB prepare a Regional Coastal Action Plan (RCAP) for the central region. Rather than revising the Boating CAP the CCB has prepared this Recreational Boating Facilities Framework (RBFF) to assist the transition from a specialised Boating CAP to an integrated Regional CAP.

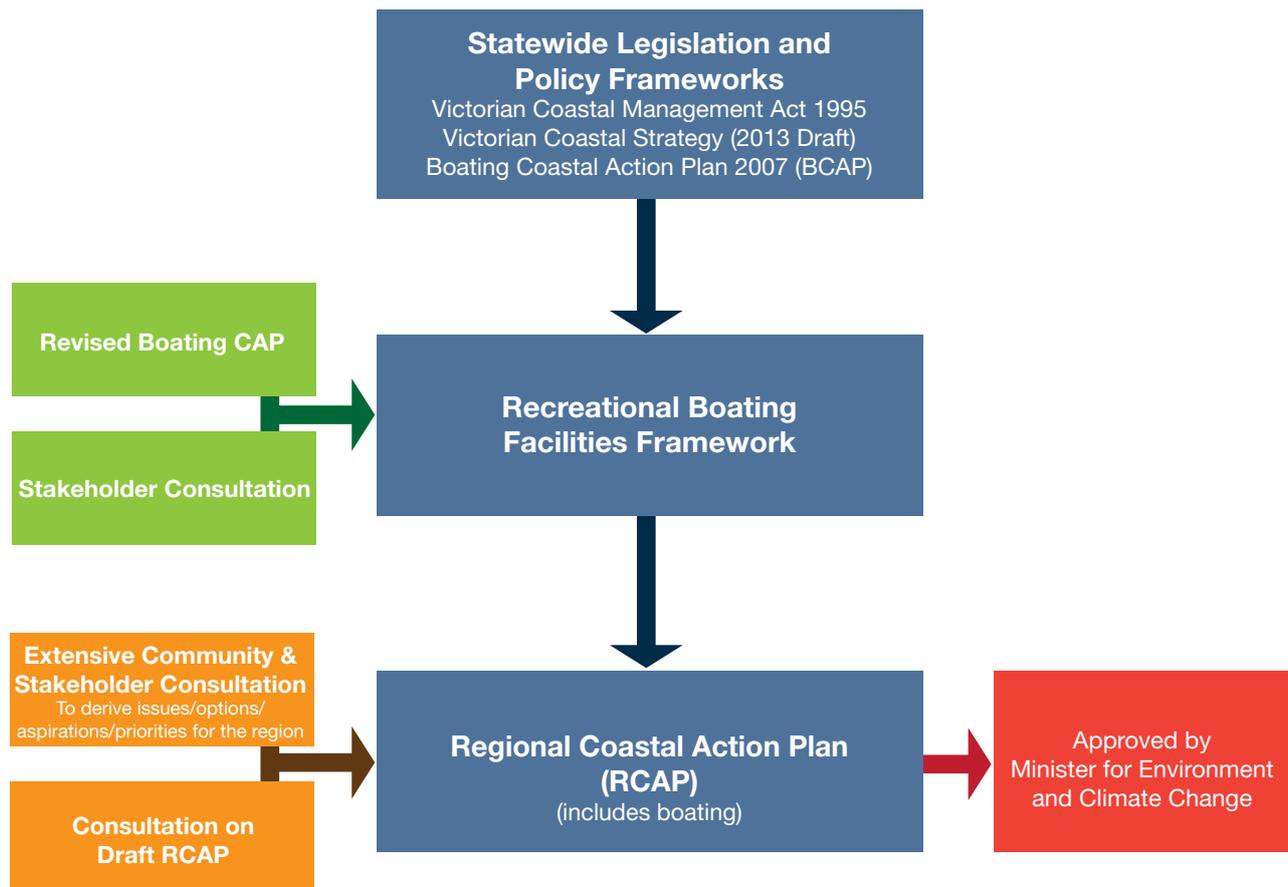


Figure 1 Process and context for the Recreational Boating Facilities Framework

The Boating CAP (2007) will remain current until the Regional CAP is developed and approved by the Minister. The process of preparing the RBFF has provided the opportunity to:

- Consult with stakeholders and relevant government agencies (assisted by a project steering committee, see Appendix 1) to better understand some of the key issues that challenge effective planning for boating facilities
- Provide a 2013 update of the information on boating facilities in the central region (Part 3 Boating Area Precincts) and the Boating Service Levels Index (BSLI) Report
- Update the planning context that includes research on boating trends and demand (Appendix 2), the broader legislative and policy influences (Appendix 3) and a brief outline of the roles and responsibilities of key agencies in planning and managing boating facilities (Appendix 4)
- Translate the VCS at the regional level and propose a planning framework for improving recreational boating facilities in the central region (Part 2 of the RBFF). This framework will be considered for integration into the Regional CAP
- Identify a 2030 future for boating facilities based on the direction from the Draft VCS. Note, *Plan Melbourne* has recently been released that aims to shape Melbourne until 2050. The timing of the Regional CAP provides a better opportunity to align with this plan.

In essence the RBFF functions as a 'resources and uses' report that leads into the Regional CAP planning study. The main users of the report will be government namely, the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI), the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Parks Victoria and local government.

The CCB will prepare the Regional CAP in partnership with the VCC, other Regional Coastal Boards and DEPI.

The Draft Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCS) 2013 has indicated what the boating section of the Regional Coastal Action Plans (CAPs) will need to consider:

- Matching boating demand with strategically and safely located facilities
- Balancing boater and other users' needs both on land and in the water
- Providing access to the water for a range of boating users in accordance with the Recreational Boating Facility Hierarchy 2030 (Map 2)
- Minimising the impact of boating use and facilities on the environment

The VCS also provides planning direction in adapting to a changing climate and increased coastal hazards. It introduces three planning benchmarks that recognise sea level rise will occur over time. Planning for boating should consider the life of the asset against these benchmarks.



Part 1

The Recreational Boating Facilities Framework



Part 1 The Recreational Boating Facilities Framework

1.1 The study area

The central coastal region comprises the 13 local government areas with coastal frontage to Port Phillip and Western Port, extending from the western boundary of the City of Greater Geelong (near Breamlea) to the eastern boundary of Bass Coast Shire (near Inverloch). Given the importance of boating in the lower reaches of the region's rivers, these areas are also included. Specific area definitions are provided on relevant maps for each boating area planning precinct (see Part 3).

1.2 The assessment of boating facilities

Boating is largely a coastal dependent activity. For the purposes of this report it is defined as:

'an on-water activity that involves a range of powered and non-powered recreational craft for the purpose of competitive and recreational boating and associated social activities and events'

The Recreational Boating Facilities Framework identifies five types of boating facilities, each providing different services and functions:

- Boat ramp
- Marina
- Multipurpose/Safe Haven
- Jetty
- Yacht Club/Motor Boat Club

Commercial facilities are not considered.



Figure 2 Central coastal region

There are 211 boating facilities in the central region (2013). Thirty six more facilities have been identified than in 2007 for the Boating CAP. The reason for this is in the way the components of large facilities have been counted, improved aerial photography in 2012/13 to identify facilities and the fact that some facilities were omitted from the 2007 Boating CAP.

The Boating Service Levels Index (BSLI) assessment was undertaken for the Boating CAP and repeated for this report to provide a snapshot of the existing condition of each boating facility and the services it provides. Data was collected on an assets sheet completed by the facility manager.

Three general categories are used for the overall BSLI rating of facilities; poor, average and good. In 2013 80% of the BSLI assets sheets were completed. Of these, 22% of facilities were rated as poor, 56% as average and 22% as good. This represents a general improvement in the overall condition of facilities since 2007 (see *Appendix 5* for details of this assessment).

As part of the consultation in preparing this report, there have been various suggestions for improving the BSLI methodology including:

- Make it more objective by including measures around age, size and functionality of a facility
- Engage an independent engineer to conduct the assessment and include an audit process
- Revise the weightings given to the key factors assessed
- Clarify the assessment of environmental impact and include impacts from boaters at various boating destinations.

The data has only been used for indicative purposes and provides a useful snapshot of the condition of boating facilities, a more detailed assessment would be required as a basis for investment decisions.

1.3 The boating context

The boating industry is well established in Victoria and a significant contributor to the economy. It is experiencing growth in line with population growth (see Appendix 2 for market and demand update). Planning for recreational boating is made more complex by seasonality and the factors influencing demand, for example, peak demand tends to align with the fishing season and summer holiday period.

Whilst the projected demand for boating facilities is growing, the provision of infrastructure is already restrained in a number of places along the metropolitan coast especially during peak periods. In particular, the congestion on land and the need for more efficient use of boat ramps and parking areas is an issue. It is also important to recognise the need for shared use of coastal Crown land and water areas with other coastal recreational pursuits, residents, visitors and tourists.

The boating facilities within the central coastal area are maintained and developed by the facility managers. A key source of funding available to facility managers to develop facilities is the Boating Safety and Facilities Program administered by the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure. The government has allocated \$20 million over four years to fund this program. A list of recent grants can be found on the Department's web site (www.dtpli.vic.gov.au).

Other recent government initiatives include funding the dredging of Mordialloc and Kananook Creeks and critical infrastructure works at Mornington Pier, St Kilda timber jetty, St Kilda and Portarlington piers and Rhyll pontoon. These types of initiatives ensure that key boating and public infrastructure is fit-for-purpose.

Significant private investment in boating facilities has also occurred over the past five years, for example, the development of Wyndham Cove harbour, upgrade of berthing facilities in St Kilda Harbour, improvements to boating clubs in Hobsons Bay and developments in Docklands, to name just a few.

The amount spent on maintenance of existing boating facilities is not readily available, but is likely to be in the millions of dollars per annum. Revenue generated from boat launching and car parking fees is also not well documented and difficult to ascertain.

1.4 Stakeholder consultation

As part of the process of developing the Recreational Boating Facilities Framework, workshops were held at Portarlington, Port Melbourne, Elwood, Rosebud and Newhaven to consider some of the issues facing recreational boating and seek feedback on boating becoming part of a new Regional CAP. Attendees comprised land and boating facility managers, State government representatives and members from various interest groups.

Some key boating issues and challenges were identified including:

- Insufficient government funding for development and maintenance of facilities, and lack of transparency in how funds from boat licences are allocated
- Unclear roles and responsibilities across and within levels of government in planning for and managing boating activities and infrastructure
- Peak demand causing congestion on boat ramps and parking issues.

The workshops also identified a range of improvements that would assist boating namely:

- Understanding how demographic information and forecasting could assist planning and being able to obtain the relevant data
- Identifying ways to use existing infrastructure more efficiently, particularly the operation of boat ramps
- Predicting demand in peak times and providing better information to boaters including estimated travel and launch times
- Maximising opportunities for private sector investment in boating by introducing longer leases over public land and decreasing State subsidy of moorings and other services
- Streamlining the approach to planning approvals to upgrade or develop boating infrastructure.

In moving from a specific boating CAP to a Regional CAP that includes a section on boating stakeholders wanted the new CAP to:

- Develop a system of nodes or zones to identify priority use and assist decision making on foreshore areas
- Undertake a regional level assessment of where improved access to the water is needed and determine priorities for investment
- Identify safe havens, sites that could be expanded, cruising/tourism destinations around the bays and locations for more and larger boat ramps.