

# 'What We Heard' Wye River Community Consultation

Survey Feedback from Engage Vic and a listening post that was held in Wye River on 6 March 2022



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**Participants were asked to comment on existing and foreseeable challenges facing the foreshore around the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club. Four coastal adaptation options were presented, and respondents were given the opportunity to provide feedback on each option. This is what we heard:**

There was an understanding of the environmental pressures facing Wye River and the risk to all open coasts in the region. Some of the issues identified included sea level rise, climate change and erosion of the foreshore impacting the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club (WRSLSC) and adjoining caravan park.

Participants indicated the site was highly valued for recreational activities by local residents and holiday makers who have developed a strong connection with the area over the last 60 years. The integrated sand management option received the strongest support while hard, physical structures had the least support. Alternative options including sandbags, geo-rock bags and dune revegetation were also suggested by participants.

**Four long-term erosion management options were presented in a report, the following provides a summary of the feedback.**

## **Integrated Sand Management Plan**

Participants highlighted this option was more environmentally sensitive to the landscape and would likely have limited unforeseen or ongoing negative impacts. There was acknowledgement that natural processes would be respected, and that erosion has existed within Wye River long before the most recent erosion event. Participants identified that this option was a short-term measure that could be used proactively, however noted ongoing costs as the main negative to supporting this option. Other concerns for this option were that the sand would be washed away quickly and would be ineffective over the long-term. There were also concerns around the consistent use of machinery on the beach impacting the amenity.

Overall, integrated sand management received strong support over the short term.

**“I have seen significant variation in the near shore environment at Wye River in the 40 years I have been camping there. Taking a light-handed approach seems sensible.”**

**“The sand will constantly wash away and be a costly exercise to reinstate all the time.”**

## **Managed Retreat**

There was general support for this option among most participants even if it was not preferred. There was acknowledgement that sea level rise would place increasing pressure on the natural and built environment so managed retreat would be a supported option if done with extensive community consultation. Concern was raised about the cost, lack of space to relocate the surf lifesaving club and impact on how the coast was used recreationally if managed retreat was implemented.

**“Although not as palatable, this would future proof the services of the SLSC for a 50-year period. It would also allow the estuary to evolve in the most natural fashion.”**

**“Relocation of the surf club would be costly, disruptive and hinder the ability of the SLSC to adequately respond during peak times.”**



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## Rock Groyne

The majority of respondents did not support rock groynes due to the negative impact on amenity, the environment and recreational values. Some participants identified that while amenity values would be lost, this option represented a long-term solution that was less intrusive and would retain sand on the beach. Alternative suggestions were made including sandbags and geo-tech bags as a medium-term option.

**“This would significantly impact the beach appearance and amenities and safety view of life savers to river outlet.”**

**“Loss of use of the area and long-term impacts on amenity, and unknown side effects to other areas of the beach is a concern”**

## Engineered Revetment or Seawall

There was consensus among participants that a revetment or seawall would be effective and provide long-term protection, however the natural environment is likely to be negatively impacted through end scouring processes elsewhere. It was also noted that revetments or seawalls would also impact the natural beauty of Wye River.

Other participants recognised that this option has successfully been implemented and used extensively along many parts of the Great Ocean Road and would likely be needed in the future as sea levels rise.

Revetments or seawalls received the least support.

**“This would significantly impact the beach appearance and amenities and safety view of life savers to the river outlet. It would be devastating to lose the beach.”**

**“Sea walls and physical armouring has been used in a number of locations recently and seems to be effective and aesthetically pleasing if it has a natural look.”**

## Other Comments

- Most participants also provided additional comments, which have been summarised into the following key themes
- Respecting natural processes
- Cautioning intervention relative to the risk

- Alternative adaptation options as seen in other countries
- Consideration of Traditional Owner cultural values
- Maintaining the existing environmental and recreational values of the area and avoiding hard infrastructure
- Further consultation with community and generational campers is requested, particularly around long-term hard infrastructure or managed retreat.

## Next Steps

DELWP and Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority thank participants for providing valuable feedback which is being used for planning decisions and has informed the next steps.

An integrated sand management program in combination with dune rehabilitation activities will be undertaken within the Wye River Foreshore over the short term. The program involves the movement of sand from the western foreshore to the eastern foreshore and will provide the foreshore with greater resilience from coastal hazards particularly during winter. These works will be monitored regularly by Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority using drone surveys to understand when further sand movement is required.



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