

# Adapt West - Shaping our Shores

Engagement Update 1: Values and experiences community engagement  
July – August 2024



Through the Adapt West project, we're developing a long-term plan to adapt to coastal hazards across the Port Phillip Bay western shoreline. Recent engagement activities focussed on understanding what people think is important and valued about these coastal areas. This update outlines the engagement process and provides a summary of what we heard from our community.

## Introduction

The Port Phillip Bay Western Shoreline Regional and Strategic Partnership (RaSP) is delivering the Adapt West project to respond to coastal hazard challenges for the region, now and into the future. From July to August 2024, we ran a community engagement program, to inform Stage 2 of the *Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+* (VRC) framework.

Engagement sought to establish an appreciation of coastal values, uses and experiences, to help guide coastal hazard adaptation planning.

**i** [Fact Sheet 1 - Project overview](#) provides information about the Regional and Strategic Partnership (RaSP) and the *Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+* (VRC) framework.



### Stage 2: Values, vision and objectives

**Purpose:** Ensure coastal adaptation planning is underpinned by place-based values.

Stage 2 aims to build an understanding of the coastal values and experiences of the region. This provides us with a strong foundation and direction for coastal hazard adaptation planning.



Figure 1. The seven stages of the *Victoria's Resilient Coast - Adapting for 2100+* framework.



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## How did we engage

We hosted a series of interactive engagement activities and events with our community during July and August. These included:



**Engage Victoria webpage:** The webpage provides key information on the Adapt West project. We saw **5,600 page views**.



**Values and experience survey:** A targeted survey to hear about the values and uses of the region's coastal areas, and experiences of coastal hazards. Over **230 people** contributed.



**Interactive map:** A mapping activity where people dropped pins to show the coastal places they enjoy visiting, what they do, why they love these areas and where they've experienced coastal hazards. People contributed 42 pins.



**Pop-up events:** In-person information sessions at local markets in Tarneit and Werribee. We had more than **150 people** stop by to learn about the project.



**Wyndham Makers and Farmers Market pop-up event.**  
Credit: Alluvium.

## What did we ask?

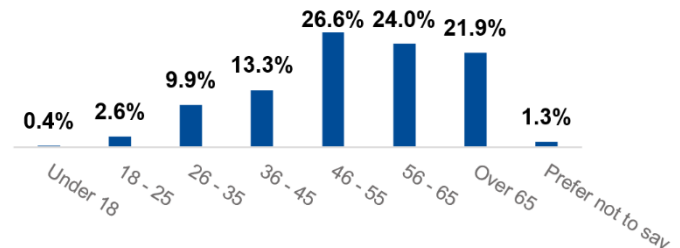
Our online survey, interactive map and in person discussions asked people to consider:

- How they **use and enjoy** coastal areas, including what activities they do around the coast
- What they specifically **value** about these areas and the relative importance of these values
- The role or **function** of coastal areas
- Their **experiences** of coastal hazards (such as inundation and erosion) and how they've seen the coast change over time
- **Aspirations** for coastal areas and perspectives on adaptation planning

## Who did we hear from

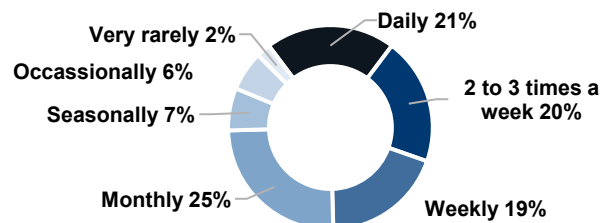
We heard from many community members across the Port Phillip Bay western shoreline. Two thirds of survey respondents were residents of the region, with nearly 40% living within 1 km of the coast.

We also heard from visitors to the region who live outside the project area. Respondents represented 43 local government areas. People from a range of age groups also contributed (Figure 2).



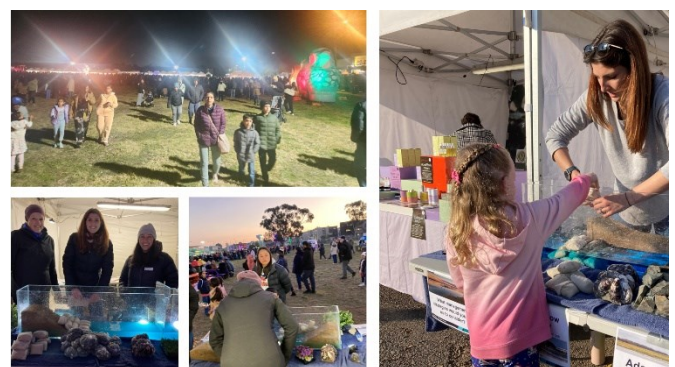
**Figure 2. Survey respondent age groups**

60% of respondents visited the coast at least weekly. 12% of respondents worked in the region and a notable proportion (17%) had a special interest in birdwatching. Overall, many respondents frequently visited the Adapt West coastline.



**Figure 3. Respondent frequency of visiting the region's coastal wetlands, beaches or foreshore areas.**

*Thank you to everyone who took the time to take part in engagement activities and events. We appreciate people sharing their insights and perspectives.*



**Tarneit Firefly Market pop-up event.**  
Credit: Alluvium and DEECA.



## What did we hear

This update summarises the key themes that emerged from engagement activities. Community members shared perspectives across:

- coastal and marine **values** and **activities**
- perceptions on **functions** of coastal areas
- experiences of **coastal change** and **hazards**
- aspirations and ideas for **increasing resilience** of coastal areas into the future



Melbourne City from Cheetham Wetlands. Credit: DEECA.

### Coastal values

Our survey asked participants to consider different values of the Port Phillip Bay western shoreline. Out of eight core values, we asked people to select the five values that were most important to them. People also ranked them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important. Figure 5 shows these results.



*Natural landscapes, plants, animals and habitats* was the most important value to survey respondents. Two thirds of people ranked it as most important. Nearly everyone selected it in their top five values.



*Rest, relaxation, tranquillity and peace; access to water, facilities and recreational pursuits; and natural resilience of coastal environments* were also considered important.



Figure 5. Responses to the survey question: What do you value most about the region's coastal and marine areas?

Figure 4 shows additional values of the region shared with us. These included bird watching and Ramsar site values, the low degree of development and sense of open and expansive space, and its fresh sea air. The accessibility of the region, its proximity to people's homes and lack of cost to visit, were also mentioned.

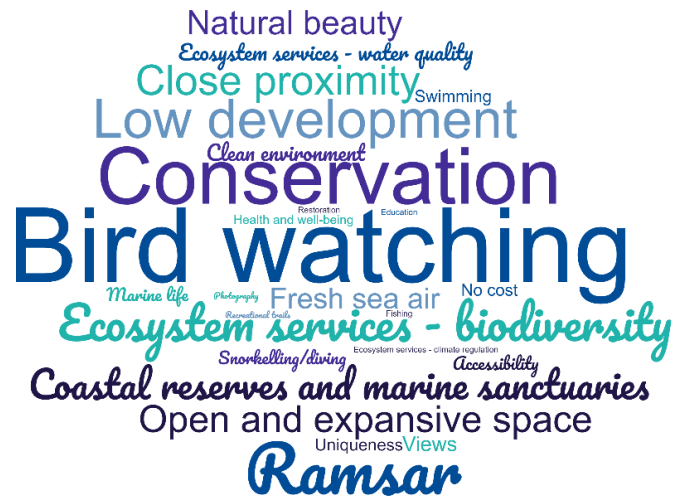


Figure 4. Word cloud of additional values shared. Larger word size indicates more frequent mentions.



Black-winged stilt. Credit: Patrick Kavanagh

## Coastal activities

We asked people what activities they undertake when visiting the region's marine and coastal areas. Top activities people participated in included:

-  Walking (77%)
-  Bird or wildlife watching (56%)
-  Relaxing (55%)
-  Socialising with friends or family (45%)
-  Sightseeing or photography (42%)
-  Swimming (39%)
-  Bike riding (33%)
-  Visiting shops, restaurants, markets etc. (32%)

Other activities included volunteering, water sports and boating, working, snorkelling/diving and dog walking.








Kite surfers at Altona. Credit: Alluvium.

The way in which people use, value and enjoy the coastal and marine area of the western shoreline helps us understand what is important to people. This informs adaptation planning by ensuring we are protecting, enhancing and supporting these values into the future.

## Functions of coastal and marine areas

Coastal and marine environments provide a range of uses, roles and functions. Healthy, functioning ecosystems can provide a range of services that are of value and benefit our communities.

Our engagement survey asked people to consider the broader functions of coastal areas. These include benefits beyond what these places provide to individuals. We asked people to select and rank what they consider to be the five most important functions of the region's coastal and marine environments. Rank 1 is the most important (Figure 6).

*Providing habitat for flora and fauna* was the most important function. The majority of people ranked it the most important. Nearly every person selected it in their top five.

The function of coastal and marine areas to act as a *physical buffer to coastal hazards* was also considered important. The functions these spaces provide as a *place for experiencing nature, spending leisure time*, and as places for *cultural practices* were also valuable.

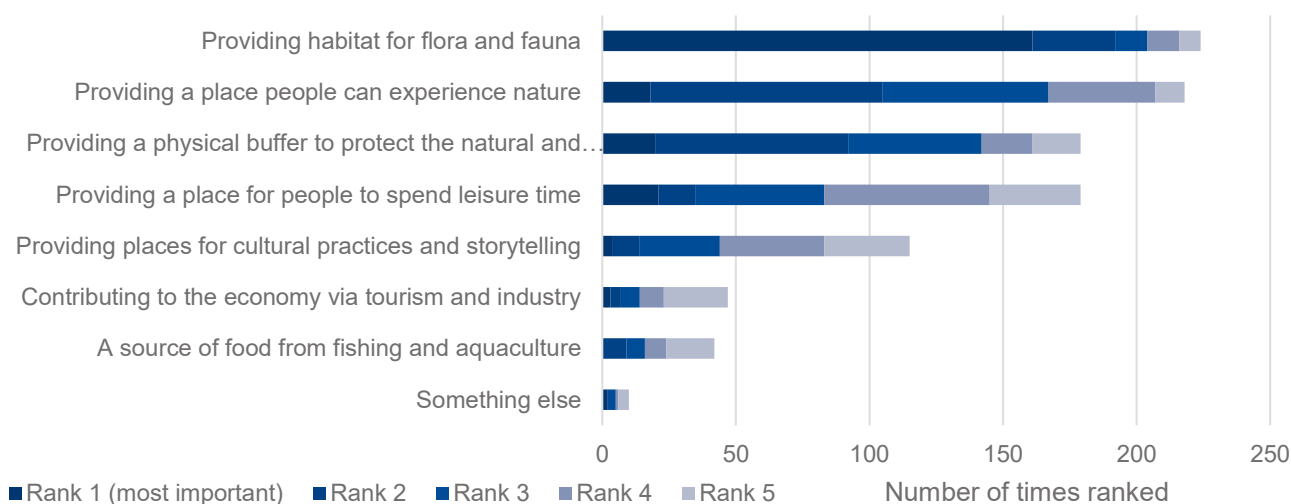


Figure 6. Responses to the survey question: What do you think are the most important functions of coastal areas?

## Coastal change and hazards

The coastal environment is a dynamic place. We spoke to people during the engagement period who shared their first hand experiences of coastal change.

Many people enjoyed trying out the wave tank and learning more about when natural coastal processes such as inundation (flooding) and erosion (sand loss) can become coastal hazards.



You can learn more about coastal hazards at the [Port Phillip Bay Coastal Hazard Assessment webpage](#).

Many people are aware of the risk the region faces from coastal hazards now and into the future. 81% of people reported they felt it was either likely or very likely the region will be affected in the future.

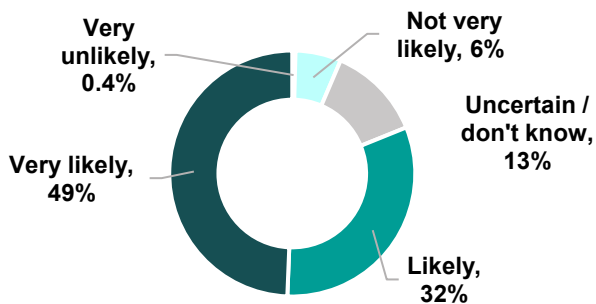


Figure 7. Result of survey question: How likely is it that the region will be affected by coastal hazards?

About half of people felt there is a lot more planning and preparation required to manage coastal hazards. This shows the value of undertaking adaptation planning through the Adapt West project.

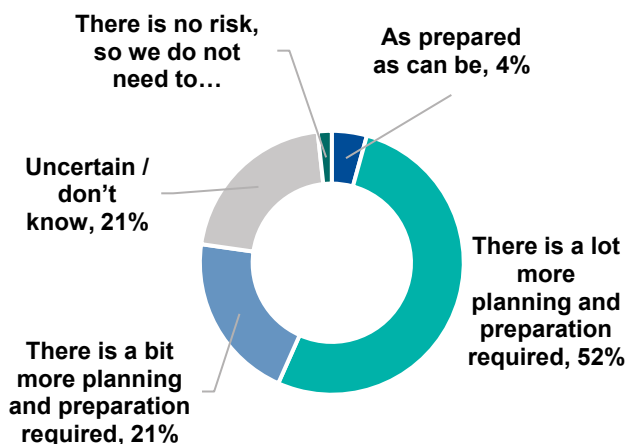


Figure 8. Result of survey question: How prepared is the region for future impacts?



Werribee South foreshore. Credit: Wyndham City Council.

## Increasing coastal resilience over time

At our pop-up events, we had some great conversations with people. We spoke about options and actions for increasing the resilience of our coastal and marine spaces to coastal hazards over time.

Figure 8 shows community ideas and suggestions on how we could help our coastal areas be more resilient. There was a strong preference for ecosystem restoration and nature-based methods. People also mentioned avoiding development in coastal zones, engineering solutions and ensuring hazard information is robust and well-communicated.



Figure 9. Word cloud of ideas and suggestions for increasing coastal resilience.

Future engagement activities will delve deeper into adaptation option preferences and planning.



Mangroves. Credit: DEECA.



## Next steps

Place-based community values and aspirations shape adaptation and resilience planning. Understanding what people value about these areas provides the foundation for adaptation planning. This includes setting future adaptation aspirations, vision and objectives.

Community perspectives and values presented here will inform our adaptation planning by:



Guiding adaptation aspirations, objectives and a vision



Using local knowledge to inform the understanding of coastal processes and hazards



Considering impact and consequence of coastal hazards on people and communities

The Community and Social Values study will provide further details of community and social values. Separate ecological, cultural and economic values studies are also underway. Together, these will inform a vision and adaptation objectives for the region as part of a Stage 2 summary report.

The next stages of the Adapt West project build from these foundations. Stages 3 and 4 embed place-based values and aspirations into hazard exposure, risk and vulnerability assessments.

### How can I get involved?

To keep up to date with the Adapt West project, visit the Engage Victoria website at:

**[engage.vic.gov.au/adapt-west](https://engage.vic.gov.au/adapt-west)**

There you can:

- Follow the project to ensure you keep up to date with the project and upcoming activities
- Read our latest project updates and factsheets
- Email us at: [adapt.west@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:adapt.west@deeca.vic.gov.au)

We acknowledge Victorian Traditional Owners and their Elders past and present as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters and commit to genuinely partnering with them and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.



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ISBN 978-1-76136-961-2 (pdf)

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