



# PROTECTING OUR ICONIC COAST AND PARKS

Governance of the  
Great Ocean Road,  
its land and seascapes

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Independent Co-Chairs Final Report  
Great Ocean Road Taskforce

August 2018

Dormant  
Tower Hill Volcano

**8.6m**  
visitors a year  
within ten years

**30** responsible  
organisations

**2/3**  
journeys are  
day trips

Nearly **170,000**  
hectares  
of Crown land

Up to  
**12,000** visitors  
a day to the 12 Apostles

Over  
**200**  
shipwrecks

**5.8m**  
visitors spent

**\$1.3b**  
generating

**2cm/yr**  
the rate at which the cliffs  
are being eroded

From 1846, the 12 Apostles  
were once known as  
**"The Sow and Piglets"**

**7** limestone  
stacks (out of  
the original 9),  
known as the  
12 Apostles

Eastern Maar and  
Wadawurrung  
People have known  
and cared for this  
Country for at least

**35,000**  
years

**2**  
National  
Parks

**11,200**  
jobs

in the region in  
the year ending  
June 2017

In **2011**  
Added to the  
National Heritage List

The Great  
Ocean Road  
is the world's  
largest war  
memorial

Rip Curl Pro at Bells  
Beach is the world's  
longest running  
surfing competition

**24,000**

Number of people in Lorne  
during the Pier to Pub (up from  
normal population of 1,100)

**2**  
Marine National  
Parks

**3**  
Marine National  
Sanctuaries

1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires destroyed

**42,000** and **729**  
hectares houses

2015 Wye River bushfire destroyed

**2,260** and **115**  
hectares houses

Rare polar dinosaur  
fossil sites



# Traditional Owners

The Great Ocean Road Taskforce proudly acknowledges the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People as the traditional custodians of the Great Ocean Road region. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to their traditional lands, which continue to be important to them today.

We recognise the intrinsic connection of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People to their traditional lands and value the contribution their caring for Country makes to the management of the Great Ocean Road region, its land, its waterways, its coastlines, and its seas.

We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People to understand their culture and connections to Country in the way we plan for, and manage, the Great Ocean Road region. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary western ecological knowledge, we can deliver better environmental outcomes and make communities more liveable, sustainable and inclusive.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards equity of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice for Australia's First People.







*Left to Right*  
Corroboree Garden,  
Great Ocean Road  
Chocolaterie & Ice  
Creamery.

Adnate mural,  
Warrnambool  
Source: City of  
Warrnambool

### Purpose

This document is the Great Ocean Road Taskforce Co-Chairs report to Government proposing reforms to the management arrangements of the Great Ocean Road. It has been developed in consultation with the Great Ocean Road Taskforce, a project reference group, key stakeholders and the community. It is a direct response to the issues raised by local communities.

# Foreword

**The Great Ocean Road is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Australia, attracting more visitors than Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef combined.**

It's easy to see why.

The seasons provide an ever-changing sea and landscape for visitors to marvel at and enjoy.

From the bustling seaside resorts and beach lovers' paradise in warmer months, to the wild and untamed waters of the colder months, to the splashes of colour across the bush in the wildflower season, there is always something to marvel at and absorb throughout the year.

Sited on the traditional lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People, huddled between coastal reserves, national parks, and marine national parks, incorporating significant cultural and heritage locations and farmlands, the Great Ocean Road, together with its seas and landscapes, needs to be protected and preserved for this generation and future generations to marvel at and enjoy.

The Great Ocean Road belongs to all Victorians. As a consequence, the residents, visitors and tourists who enjoy the Great Ocean Road share a responsibility to protect and preserve its iconic landscape. The vast bulk of visitors to the Road come from across Victoria. These Victorian tourists have a leadership role to play – demonstrating to visitors from other states and overseas that it is possible to enjoy and protect this precious Country. As Victorians, we need to show the world the true meaning of the maxim: "Leave it as you found it."

Visitors to the Road need to understand that they are visiting and travelling along a war memorial. They should reflect on the courage and determination of the returned soldiers who carved this world-famous road from rock with just picks and shovels. They also need to understand the need to protect the cultural values and the local environment.

The Great Ocean Road, like many international tourist destinations, has been challenged by increased visitor numbers. That challenge will intensify in coming years. The Road is also increasingly challenged by the forces of nature – and the impacts of climate change.

We have taken the view that the most important aspect of the visitor economy is protecting the region's environmental assets.

Environmental protection is the major task, but to do nothing is not an option. We cannot afford to wait and react to each phase in growth of visitors to the region or severe events. Strong leadership and major institutional change is required to protect the iconic coast and parklands for the benefit and appreciation of future generations.

Land managers and the local communities along the corridor support the proposed establishment of a new statutory authority. Having a new statutory authority will create a clarity of purpose and a single point of accountability to lead the protection of the iconic coast and parklands along the Great Ocean Road – facilitating the kind of sustainable tourism that provides a great visitor experience.

We commend this report to the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety – and to the people of Victoria.

**Hon Peter Batchelor and Hon Terry Mulder**  
Co-Chairs Great Ocean Road Taskforce





Hon Peter Batchelor and Hon Terry Mulder,  
Co-Chairs Great Ocean Road Taskforce



# Acknowledgement

It has been our privilege to undertake this independent review of governance arrangements over the past 10 months. We would like to thank the Taskforce members for giving their time generously to the review, regular meetings, range of pertinent inputs, wise advice, and for their openness and willingness to engage as we challenged ideas. This was greatly appreciated. Thanks to Andrew Mason, Bruce Anson, Corrina Eccles, David Madden, Diane James AM, Elaine Carbines, Jamie Lowe, Jason Mifsud, Keith Baillie, Paul Davis, Peter Brown, Robert Dobrzynski, Tony McGann and Wayne Kayler-Thomson.

Whilst responsibility for this report is taken by us, as independent Co-Chairs of the Great Ocean Road Taskforce, we have received excellent professional advice and assistance from a range of people and organisations which has been most helpful and taken on board.

Thank you to the Mayors and Councillors who provided great local knowledge and illustrations of the key issues. We appreciated the frankness of your advice and openness in sharing your experiences.

To the officers of the responsible public entities who generously sought answers to our enquiries and provided briefings, to the reference group members and workshop participants, we say thank you. Particular thanks go to the CEOs and Board members of Parks Victoria, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee and Otway Coast Committee for the frank and forward-looking conversations about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Thank you to all the members of local communities who so generously participated in, and contributed their time, knowledge and experience. As we travelled up and down the Great Ocean Road (the Road), we saw and heard many things that made us appreciate the complexity of the governance arrangements, and the importance of bringing focus and a single point of accountability to the challenges ahead. We met many passionate people along the Great Ocean Road who shared their insights and concerns. They have challenged and inspired us. Every conversation threw up something new for us to contemplate. Thank you also to everyone who provided written feedback to the Governance of the *Great Ocean Road Issues Paper*. Your feedback created a deep evidence base on which we have drawn in the formation of our recommendations.

Thank you to the Regional Directors of Barwon South West (Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning, and Regional Development Victoria) for their support and guidance. Thanks also to the Secretariat Team for their expertise, professionalism and hard work as we navigated our complex task, and to those who provided expert support.

Finally, we would like to thank the Victorian Government for the opportunity to undertake this work. Whilst a complex and at times challenging task, we have found it rewarding.

The Great Ocean Road Region is truly an important Victorian asset belonging to all the people of Victoria. It is, “Our Great Ocean Road” and needs to be looked after for the enjoyment of all.

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# List of recommendations

## Recommendation 1

Recognise the national significance of the Great Ocean Road and its iconic coastal landscapes in State policies and establish a commensurate decision-making framework with a focus on its preservation, sustainable economic development, and a great visitor experience.

## Recommendation 2

Adopt this proposition and five objectives to provide direction to the governance arrangements and decision-making frameworks.

*The iconic landscapes along the Great Ocean Road have outstanding natural, heritage and cultural values and are to be treated as the one integrated and living entity for protection and the appreciation of future generations.*

- i. *Protect the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments*
- ii. *Strengthen Traditional Owner involvement*
- iii. *Protect distinctive areas and landscapes*
- iv. *Grow the local, state and national visitation economies*
- v. *Modernise governance.*

## Recommendation 3

Recognise and protect the marine waters and coastal land along the Great Ocean Road as the state significant 'Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks' for protection, care and investment.

## Recommendation 4

Establish a statutory requirement to develop a shared vision for the Great Ocean Road region with a long-term outlook (50+ years).

## Recommendation 5

Establish a statutory requirement to develop and maintain an overarching Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan that:

- gives effect to the vision
- provides direction to municipal and agency

activities and decision making

- prioritises preservation of the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments
- includes planning for sustainable visitation and travel along the touring route
- is developed with community participation
- is reviewed every 10 years
- identifies elements that organisations must have regard to, and those that are binding.

## Recommendation 6

Establish planning guidelines to accompany the strategic framework plan that provide clear direction on appropriate land-uses and development design standards across the area.

## Recommendation 7

Establish local community reference groups along the Great Ocean Road to provide input and guidance to the development of the strategic framework plan.

## Recommendation 8

Establish a statutory requirement to audit and report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the strategic framework plan by the responsible public entities.

## Recommendation 9

Establish a statutory requirement for the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability to periodically assess and report on the environmental condition of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* as part of the regular reporting on the State of the Environment in Victoria.

## Recommendation 10

Support the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to map their cultural values in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

## Recommendation 11

Establish a standing advisory committee to the Minister for Planning for the Great Ocean Road region (under Section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) to streamline planning approvals and provide independent expert advice on sustainable land development.

### FUNCTIONS:

- i. Act as a review panel for planning scheme amendments and planning permit applications that are "called-in" by the Minister
- ii. Act as a land-use and design review panel for the responsible authorities for visitor economy development proposals that are consistent with the strategic framework plan and associated planning guidelines
- iii. Act as a review panel for coastal and marine management plans, and consents to use or develop marine and coastal Crown land in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
- iv. Provide policy and strategic advice to the Minister on:
  - a. development and operation of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan
  - b. protection of coastal environments and Crown land
  - c. protection of the coastal public land footprint and public foreshore access
  - d. sustainable visitation management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
  - e. related matters referred by the Minister.

### SKILLS:

Whilst the advisory committee can seek expert skills as required, its membership would need to include all of the following skills:

- strategic and statutory land-use planning
- architecture, urban design and landscape architecture
- marine and coastal environmental science
- transport planning
- Traditional Owner values
- heritage
- tourism and economic viability.



**Recommendation 12**

Streamline planning approvals by providing planning services to supplement the councils' capacity to assess large and complex land development projects and ensuring that referral agencies are adequately resourced.

**Recommendation 13**

Establish a new statutory authority, the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority*, with an independent chair and skill-based board, to manage the coastal Crown land and marine parks along the Great Ocean Road.

**FUNCTIONS:**

The primary purpose is to protect and manage visitation of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, to:

- protect and enhance the ecological and landscape integrity of the coastal parks and marine areas along the Great Ocean Road
- protect coastal assets (natural and built), the coastal public land footprint, and community access
- prepare for, and manage, the impacts of natural forces on, and climate change risks to, coastal public land and assets.

**OTHER PURPOSES:**

- sustainable visitation management including:
  - operation of visitor facilities and camping grounds
  - issuing of permits for events and commercial activities, leases and licenses
  - regulation of commercial operation in, on or around the Crown land and marine parks
- support the involvement of the Traditional Owners in the management of cultural values and natural resources (including Crown land)
- coordinate government construction projects and disruptions along the Great Ocean Road
- deliver construction projects
- facilitate appropriate economic development
- educate and foster community stewardship (and volunteerism) of coastal land.

**POWERS REQUIRED TO:**

- ensure funds raised (from caravan parks and leases etc) can be collected, held, remain with, and be allocated to initiatives within the *Great Ocean*

*Road Coast and Parks*

- purchase, consolidate, take on, transfer or otherwise acquire land for inclusion in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
- visitor operations in or on the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*

**INDEPENDENT SKILLS BASED BOARD OF EXPERTS COVERING:**

- land-use planning and landscape architecture
- marine and coastal environmental science
- travel, tourism, hospitality and leisure
- finance and investment facilitation
- construction management
- natural resource management
- Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung values
- heritage values management.

**Recommendation 14**

Establish local community advisory committees, an environmental advisory committee, and a tourism industry advisory committee as ongoing forums for involving local communities and key stakeholders in the management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

**Recommendation 15**

Enshrine the new governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and seascapes in stand-alone legislation that includes a preamble by the Traditional Owners.

**Recommendation 16**

Strengthen the capacity of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to actively participate in the management of their traditional lands.

**Recommendation 17**

Establish long term funding arrangements for the new authority.

**Recommendation 18**

Review the long-term risks from coastal erosion and inundation, severe weather events and climate change on coastal Crown land and assets.

**Recommendation 19**

Review the public land commercial tour operator and commercial activity provider licences system.

**Recommendation 20**

Establish a working group to identify opportunities for shared municipal-like services delivery along the Great Ocean Road and develop an implementation plan.

**Recommendation 21**

Review and align anomalous Crown land reservations and parcel information within the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* with the directions of the strategic framework plan.

**Recommendation 22**

Conduct a capacity analysis for the Great Ocean Road (the road, coast and marine environments, parks and key destinations, accommodation, coastal towns) and identify visitation management options.

**Recommendation 23**

Develop a sustainable visitation management strategy for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

**Recommendation 24**

Review the risks to the ongoing operation and function of the Great Ocean Road and develop a longer-term transport network strategy.

**Recommendation 25**

Work with Road Safety Agencies to review and identify the priority projects to improve the safety and well-being of travellers along the Great Ocean Road.

**Recommendation 26**

Establish the visitor expectations and emergency services benefits of enhanced digital connectivity in towns, and connection to mobile phone services between towns, along the Great Ocean Road..









1.

Introduction





# Introduction

## Background to the review

The 243-kilometre long, National Heritage listed Great Ocean Road<sup>1</sup> that runs from Torquay to Allansford is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes. Its sheer limestone cliffs, pockets of rainforest, shipwreck history, and world-class surfing breaks make the Great Ocean Road one of Australia's most popular destinations for visitors and Victoria's premier tourism asset.



It is one of the best sites in the world to study the entire sequence of limestone coast evolution and includes rare polar dinosaur fossil sites, the best known one being Dinosaur Cove. Fossils collected from numerous sites along the coast are rare and continue to yield important scientific information.

The coastal region is of high cultural, ecological and economic importance to the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People who have known this Country, and cared for it, since the beginning.

The Road is also a permanent memorial to the servicemen who served in World War 1 and a significant part of Victoria's pioneering history. The commemorative road construction project was financed by the Great Ocean Road Trust (with substantial community fundraising

efforts) and provided employment for returned servicemen – opening up access to the dramatic coastal scenery to day-trippers and tourists.

Its construction – built by hand as close as possible to the ocean – was a momentous engineering feat at the time.

Ever since opening, the Road has been recognised as one of the world's great ocean drives. Consequently, in 1955 the Road was the subject of a pioneering planning scheme for coastal and rural scenery protection and planning.

Its coastal towns and settlements are home to 24,000 residents<sup>2</sup> and it is home to international sporting events such as the Lorne Pier to Pub Ocean Swim, the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race and the Rip Curl Pro.

Great Ocean Road construction workers c1920  
Source: Heritage Victoria

It is just 90 minutes' drive from Melbourne, even closer from Avalon Airport (with international flights commencing late 2018), and a key destination for Victorians, interstate visitors and international tourists. The Great Ocean Road region is a more popular tourist destination than Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef combined – and visitor numbers are expected to keep rising.

The combination of environmental stressors and increased visitation is creating significant challenges.

The Road has reached a tipping point. Unmanaged visitation and congestion is destroying the isolated nature experience that is the essence of the attraction. In addition, the touring route lacks the necessary visitor amenities for a great experience (toilets, parking, viewpoints and signage, mobile telephone signal, food/beverage offerings, interpretive information and tourist products).

The natural environment along the Great Ocean Road includes beaches, biodiversity, cliffs, coastal parks, sand dunes, coastal plants and animals. All are under threat from coastal

erosion and inundation. In places, the ongoing operation and function of the Road itself is at risk from land slippages, coastal erosion and cliff regression (all exacerbated by the impacts of climate change).

Future revenue streams from the caravan parks, which provide vital funds for protecting the nearby coastal environment, are also uncertain, with the loss of some camping sites due to coastal erosion and inundation likely.

Significant government investment is already committed to the maintenance of the Great Ocean Road (\$153 million)<sup>3</sup> and the development of a visitor centre at the Twelve Apostles (around \$100 million)<sup>4</sup>. It's likely an even greater investment will be required once strategic assessments and planning are undertaken.

A century on from the initial survey party setting out to peg the route of the Great Ocean Road, there is an urgent need to peg out the governance arrangements required to secure the future of the Road and coastal environment for the next century.

1. The 243-kilometre National Heritage listed length of the Great Ocean Road is from Torquay to Allansford. The heritage listing can be viewed at <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/organisations/australian-heritage-council/national-heritage-assessments/great-ocean-road>.
2. Population of coastal towns along the Great Ocean Road from Torquay to Allansford (includes Torquay and Jan-Juc and excludes Allansford) provided by Land Use and Population Research Branch (Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) based on selected data from Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 1996 to 2016.
3. The Australian and Victorian governments have invested \$100 million in the Great Ocean Road Upgrade project to improve safety, and the experience of Australia's most visited destination. This extensive program involves resurfacing the road, pedestrian and cycling improvements, replacement of several bridges and the installation of new drainage at over 100 locations. The Victorian Government has also committed an additional \$53 million to safeguard the geotechnical future of the road following the 2016 floods and landslides at Separation Creek and Wye River.
4. The Victorian Budget 2018/19 invests \$153.2 million towards the Geelong City Deal, with funds going to build the new Convention Centre, progress the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan including the Glenample Visitor Experience Centre at the Twelve Apostles, and advance a strategy to revitalise the city's centre. The projects are dependent however on an equal contribution from the Commonwealth Government.







Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race 2017  
Source: Surf Coast Shire

## Regional advocacy for change

The responsible public entities and key stakeholders (such as the G21 Geelong Regional Alliance, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism and local councils) regard the current approach to protecting the coastal and marine environments along the Great Ocean Road, visitation management, public land administration, land-use planning and community engagement as unsustainable. They want State Government intervention.

The call for intervention is not new. In 2016, the issue was nominated as a priority by the Barwon Regional Partnership at their Regional Assembly to *“Simplify the complex and duplicated management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road”*.

It was also highlighted as a priority for the Great South Coast Regional Partnership at their regional assemblies in November 2016 and November 2017:

*“The Government consider the merits of establishing a coordinated governance mechanism for the Great Ocean Road, to ensure a planned, integrated economically prosperous approach to this iconic destination.”*

This position is supported by local councils with Colac Otway Shire calling for a fundamentally new approach to the management of the Great Ocean Road and coast as part of its submission into the Government’s *Marine and Coastal Act* review, arguing that the coast and road in the region are inherently linked:

*“Colac Otway is arguing that a single, appropriately funded and resourced Great Ocean Road authority should be seriously considered.”<sup>5</sup>*

5. Colac Otway Shire media release 24 November 2016



## Great Ocean Road Taskforce

In May 2017, the Victorian Government allocated \$1.3 million in the 2017-2018 State Budget to establish the Great Ocean Road Taskforce (the Taskforce) to review the effectiveness of current governance arrangements and recommend governance reforms. This original budget has been supplemented by an additional \$625,000 from Regional Development Victoria who, in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, are supporting the project delivery.

In September 2017 the Victorian Government announced the membership of an independently-chaired Taskforce to review the current governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road and its environs and recommend reforms to simplify the management arrangements and:

- i. strengthen protections of the landscape setting
- ii. improve the visitor experience
- iii. provide greater certainty in land-use planning and attract investment proposals that will benefit visitors and local communities.

The Taskforce is overseen by three coordinating ministers (Minister for Planning, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Tourism and Major Events) supported by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

Its membership comprises:

- Independent Co-Chairs:
  - the Hon Peter Batchelor (Victorian Minister for Transport from 1999 to 2006)
  - the Hon Terry Mulder (Victorian Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads from 2010 to 2014)
- Nominees of the Traditional Owners of Country for the Great Ocean Road:
  - Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation: Mr Jamie Lowe (Chief Executive Officer) and Mr Jason Mifsud (Chair)
  - Wadawurrung: Ms Corrina Eccles (Manager Geelong Office) and Mr Paul Davis (General Manager)
- Members with expertise and experience in tourism and coastal management, who understand the key issues relating to the governance of the Great Ocean Road:
  - Ms Diane James, AM (former Chair of the Victorian Coastal Council for over a decade)
  - Ms Elaine Carbines (Chief Executive Officer of G21 – The Geelong Region Alliance)
  - Mr Wayne Kayler-Thomson (Chair of Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism)
- The CEOs of the five Local Government Authorities along the Great Ocean Road:
  - Surf Coast Shire (Mr Keith Baillie)
  - Colac Otway Shire (Mr Peter Brown/Mr Robert Dobrzynski/Mr Tony McGann)
  - Corangamite Shire (Mr Andrew Mason)
  - Warrnambool City Council (Mr Bruce Anson)
  - Moyne Shire (Mr David Madden)



*From left to right: Bruce Anson, Peter Batchelor, Keith Baillie, Jamie Lowe, Wayne Kayler-Thomson, Diane James, Paul Davis, Elaine Carbines, Tony McGann, Jason Mifsud, Corrina Eccles, Terry Mulder. Absent: Andrew Mason, David Madden.*

The full terms of reference of the Taskforce are outlined in Appendix A.

## Review process

This is a Co-Chairs Report. Its purpose is to provide independent advice to Government on the effectiveness of the current governance for the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes, and recommend reforms to simplify the complex management arrangements and:

- strengthen protections of the landscape setting
- improve the visitor experience
- provide greater certainty in land-use planning and attract investment proposals that will benefit visitors and local communities.

The Taskforce's Co-Chairs, in consultation with the three coordinating Ministers, decided to compliment the collaborative approach of the Taskforce investigations, with the independence of Co-Chair recommendations. These decisions reflected the terms of reference for the Taskforce and the forward-looking nature of the review.

The Co-Chairs adopted an issue-and-opportunities-led approach to examining the current governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes – including the policies, legislation and regulation, institutional arrangements, funding, infrastructure and project delivery.

An initial issues paper, *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper*<sup>6</sup> (the Issues Paper), was developed by the

Taskforce in consultation with a project reference group and key stakeholders. The Issues Paper was publicly released on 21 March 2018 to promote discussion and seek community feedback about the opportunities to improve the oversight and management of the Great Ocean Road region.

Submissions closed at the end of April after face-to face conversations with more than 780 people at a variety of locations (Melbourne, Torquay, Anglesea, Lorne, Wye River, Apollo Bay, the Twelve Apostles, Port Campbell, Warrnambool and Port Fairy) and more than 570 written responses.

The Co-Chairs carefully examined stakeholder concerns and the views of the community, and in particular those examples that illustrated systemic issues. This analysis identified critical issues and informed the recommended changes to governance arrangements. The review was not a performance review of the responsible organisations. Therefore, it did not investigate specific issues, problems or complaints, including those relating to statutory decisions.

As required by their terms of reference, the Co-Chairs reviewed past strategies, including the implementation of the 2015–2025 Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy, the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan 2015, the 2004 Great Ocean Road Region Strategy and the VicRoads Great Ocean Road Management Strategy 2013. The experience of cooperative efforts during the Wye River Bushfire Reconstruction process was also reviewed.

The Taskforce investigations also included:

- travelling along the Great Ocean Road with briefings by the Traditional Owners and officers from key responsible organisations on the key issues and opportunities
- holding issues and opportunities identification workshops with key stakeholder representatives
- carrying out a desktop review that examined the governance models of comparable destinations around the world, in particular the Great Barrier Reef (Australia), Milford Sound (New Zealand), Big Sur (California) and Cinque Terre (Italy)

6. Access online at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/great-ocean-road-taskforceee>



- developing and analysing four potential governance options (facilitated by Deloitte Access Economics)
- surveying visitor travel patterns (via people-intercept surveys; the observation of vehicle movements at Anglesea, Apollo Bay, Lorne and Port Campbell; and a number-plate survey of vehicles travelling along the Great Ocean Road).

In addition, the Co-Chairs considered several recent reports that dealt in detail with the issues associated with the management of Crown land. Those pertinent reports were:

- *Protecting Victoria's Coastal Assets* by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (29 March 2018)
- *State-wide Assessment of Public Land Final Report* by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (1 July 2017)
- *Marine and Coastal Act Consultation Paper* (August 2016) and the subsequent Transition Plan, *Strengthening Victoria's Marine and Coastal Management*, by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning that accompanies the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

Note that the Taskforce did not commission any new investigations into management of public land along the Great Ocean Road as the issues and deficiencies are well-known, and have been reported on several times in recent years.

A series of Taskforce meetings over the 10-month duration of this project also provided a valuable and insightful discussion forum to explore the issues raised in greater depth and detail – contributing to the development of the recommendations in this report. The Taskforce also undertook a strategic options evaluation (facilitated by Deloitte Access Economics).

The high-level practicability (and implementation requirements) of proposed changes were taken into consideration during the framing of recommendations. A detailed cost benefit analysis of the recommendations has not been undertaken however, as this was outside the scope of the terms of reference.

**Figure 1: Project timeline**











Community  
engagement

2.



## Community engagement

The *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper* (the 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.

### Who we heard from

Given the large study area, and the number and diversity of users, local communities and visitors interested in the Great Ocean Road, the consultation

process was designed to capture a wide range of perspectives. People were invited to have their say in person; via a written submission; or online via a survey, online mapping tool or submission form. 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, with a mandarin version of the short-form survey also available online.

Community views were provided to the Co-Chairs in face-to-face conversation with more than 780 people (including direct briefings, listening posts and open house sessions). Written comments (online or in hard copy) were also received with 57 submissions and 516 responses to the 11 questions asked in the Issues Paper from a range of government and stakeholder organisations, community groups and individuals.



>780  
face to face  
conversations



57  
submissions



516  
surveys



The Governance of the *Great Ocean Road Region 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 this 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?

## 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.
- Development of a robust funding model is essential.
- Further engagement on any new governance arrangements is desired.

## What we heard

### **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 as to where funding is allocated for critical infrastructure.

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

### **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 George 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 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 also 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 visitation 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



Figure 2: Responses to the question "What do you love most about the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes?"



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

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 also 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 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 over-emphasis 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.



Community consultation,  
Twelve Apostles

### **There is strong support for the establishment of a single entity to manage the Great Ocean Road**

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 new authority/body must have the legislative functions and authority to carry out its remit that covers all of the aspects of the Great Ocean Road region i.e. infrastructure, tourism, economies and environment."*

A number of respondents commented on the composition of the Board of any new entity. Some thought a skills-based board would be appropriate, others preferred having designated positions for key stakeholders. Local communities emphasised the need for community participation in decision making and a direct connection to the Board. Concern was also expressed that decisions affecting local communities would be made by a body removed from the local community.

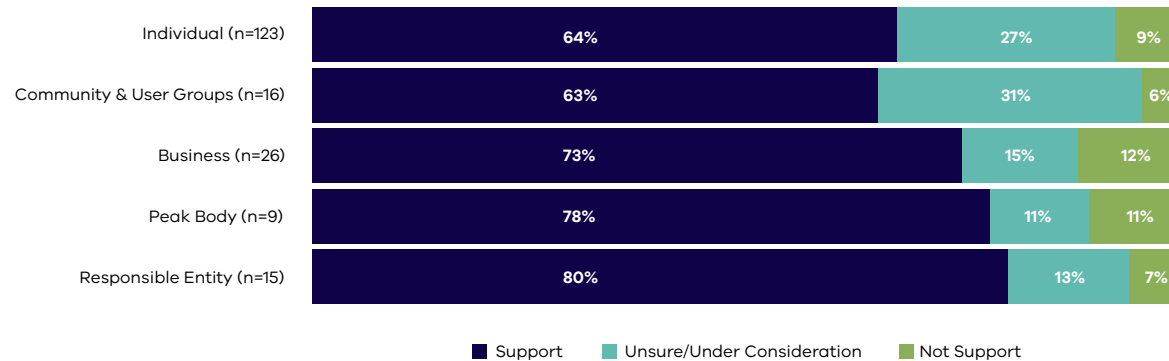
A small number of submissions and respondents desired further consultation to occur on new governance arrangements.

Concerns were also expressed about the time needed to establish any new body, and the need for immediate action on the ground.



**Figure 3: There is strong support for establishing a new authority**

(Total number of responses = 189)



### An agreed vision and a holistic 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 future-proofing 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.

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 should occur

Community and stakeholders held a consistent view that they would like to be consulted on future governance arrangements.

*Whilst Council supports in principle the proposition of a single management authority for the Great Ocean Road, Council 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.'*  
– Corangamite Shire Council

More detailed information on community feedback can be found in the Community Views report<sup>7</sup>.

7. The Community Views Report can be viewed online at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/great-ocean-road-taskforce>







3.

Key findings





# Key Findings

## An international destination of national significance.

### Economic and iconic brand value

In the year ending June 2017, the Great Ocean Road attracted 5.8 million visitors. Those visitors spent \$1.3 billion and supported 11,200 jobs in the region<sup>8</sup>. This tourism is a significant economic driver for the region and vital to Victoria's visitor economy.

### Traditional Owner value

The coastal and forested landscapes along the Great Ocean Road are of exceptional cultural, ecological and economic importance to the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People with evidence of their connection to Country dating back over 35,000 years.

The natural features along the Great Ocean Road are embedded in Traditional Owner culture, spirituality and wisdom. Sacred sites and stories associated with places along the road have been handed down by their ancestors and elders. Traditional ecological knowledge and land management techniques were used (such as fire and seasonal farming)

to identify, harvest and utilise natural resources sustainably.

The region has a high concentration of Aboriginal archaeological sites because the coastal environment was an important resource for the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People. Natural resources like the spear wood from the forests and brightly coloured ochres from the coastlines along the Great Ocean Road were also highly valued and traded with neighbouring Aboriginal groups.

### Environmental value

The coastline along the Great Ocean Road is the best site in Australia, and one of the best sites in the world, to study the entire sequence of limestone coast evolution. It also includes rare polar dinosaur fossil sites, the best known one being Dinosaur Cove.

The parks along the Great Ocean Road – including the Port Campbell National Park, Twelve Apostles Marine National Park, the Great Otway National Park, and many parklands and coastal

reserves of state significance – are rich with Australian native wildlife<sup>9</sup>. The place supports a wide range of plant communities, ranging from tall wet eucalypt forest to coastal heathlands.

Remarkable underwater structures along the coastline provide a complex foundation for magnificent habitats, such as kelp forests and colourful sponge gardens. The marine environment supports seabirds, seals, lobsters, reef fish and sea spiders. The intertidal and shallow subtidal reefs along the Great Ocean Road have the greatest diversity of invertebrates on limestone reefs in Victoria.

Marine mammals also visit the area. Visitors can see Little Penguins which nest in caves below the Twelve Apostles (after dark or in the early morning). And, almost every year between June and September, Southern Right whales return to the waters off Warrnambool's Logans Beach – swimming as close as 100 metres from the shore.

8. Source: Tourism Research Australia's National and International Visitor Survey for Year ending, June 2017 with modelling and interpretation by Deloitte Access Economics.

9. Altogether the Road has nearly 170,000 hectares of Crown land, all of which are managed and administered under a variety of Victorian and Commonwealth legislation.





Couple photographing the Twelve Apostles  
Source: Visit Victoria

## Social value

The Great Ocean Road is part of Australia's pioneering history and Victoria's culture.

The commemorative road construction project combined substantial community fundraising efforts with employment for returned servicemen. The project was planned to open up the dramatic coastal scenery for tourists, and in doing so, to create one of the world's greatest ocean road drives as a permanent memorial to the soldiers who served in World War 1.

Places along the Great Ocean Road also have significant social value such as:

- Shipwreck Coast, between Peterborough to Moonlight Head (including Port Campbell National Park) where the accessibility of historic shipwrecks help deepen the visitor experience by interpreting themes of immigration, shipping and trade
- Bells Beach, an internationally renowned surfing location which is strongly associated with the development of surfing and the surf industry in Australia, and has considerable importance for the large Australian surfing community
- the many beaches along the Great Ocean Road that are easily accessed from Melbourne and Geelong, along with the many camping grounds and caravan parks that are a popular, affordable, family holiday destinations
- treks in the Otways, the Great Ocean Walk, waterfalls, lush forests, cliff top walks, heritage and coastal trails provide nature immersion experiences
- international events including the Falls Festival, Lorne Pier to Pub ocean swim race, Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race and the Rip Curl Surfing Pro.

## A holistic approach to protect its benefits

In 2011, the Great Ocean Road and its environs was placed on the National Heritage list for its outstanding and iconic coastal journey, as well as its nationally significant natural, heritage and indigenous values (including its significant landscape values, biodiversity, geological and geomorphological values and Cretaceous dinosaur fossil sites). The listed area was also included in the Victorian Heritage Register for its historical, archaeological aesthetic and social significance.

## One integrated and living entity

The iconic landscapes along the Great Ocean Road have outstanding natural, heritage and cultural values and are to be treated as the one *integrated and living natural entity* for the protection and appreciation of future generations.

The proposition asserts that the country through which the Great Ocean Road traverses is to be acknowledged, respected and cared for as the one integrated and living entity and not as separate elements. This holistic approach blends the wisdom of the Traditional Owners in 'Caring for Country'<sup>10</sup> with a contemporary approach to protect natural, heritage and cultural values and distinctive landscapes.

Due to the national significance of the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and seascapes, and the contribution of its visitor economy to the state, the Co-Chairs concluded it warrants special, purpose-built governance and decision-making arrangements.

The primary objective of those governance arrangements is to protect the ecological and landscape integrity of the whole of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes and seascapes.

Effectively, the Co-Chairs would like to see the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and its seascapes managed as the one integrated and living natural entity, and not as a sum of parts.

With this concept in mind, the Co-Chairs developed the following analytical

framework to review the effectiveness of governance arrangements across five key elements of landscape management for the Great Ocean Road, and to guide the development of recommended reforms:

- Crown land management (to protect the outstanding natural, heritage and cultural values)
- Traditional Owner involvement in caring for Country
- Land-use and development planning (interface with private investment and the community interest)
- Visitation management (for the length of the Great Ocean Road)
- State construction projects and infrastructure investment.

Figure 4: Analytical framework for the review



10. The term 'caring for Country' refers to the land and sea management practices by the Traditional Owners.



## Crown land management is fragmented and inefficient

### Crown land management along the Great Ocean Road is highly fragmented

The coastline of the Great Ocean Road boasts a linear network of marine and coastal parklands and open spaces of state and national significance. Large areas along the coast have been declared national parks, giving them the highest level of protection and management by Parks Victoria.

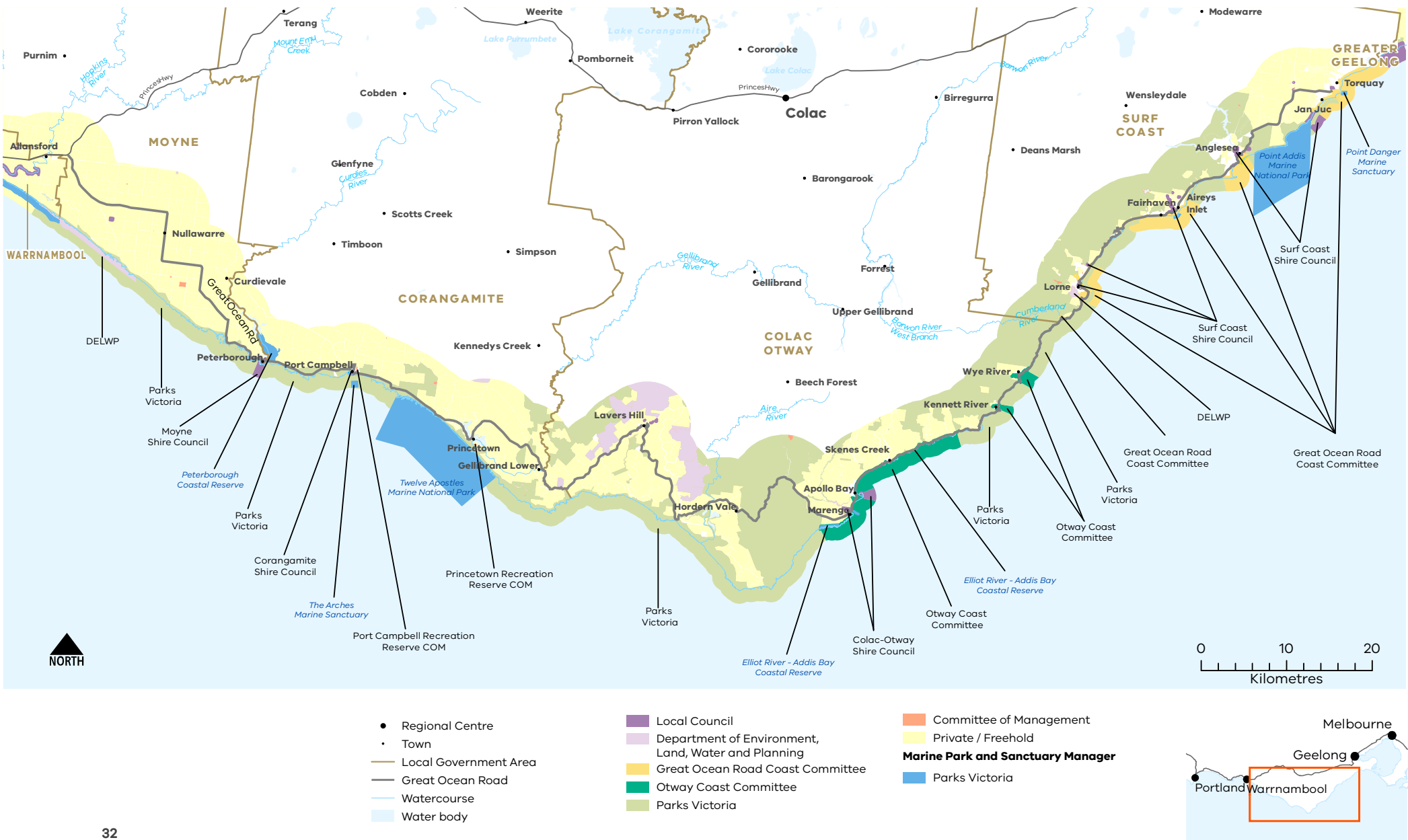
The management of other coastal Crown land along the Great Ocean Road has been delegated to a large number of different entities (the main ones being Parks Victoria, the department, the

Great Ocean Road Coast Committee, Otway Coastal Committee, Surf Coast Shire, Colac-Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, and Moyne Shire, Peterborough Coastal Reserve Committee of Management, Port Campbell Recreation Reserve Committee, and Princetown Recreation Reserve Committee). In a number of instances (particularly in coastal towns), operational management is further fragmented through leases or licenses of small parcels of land to community and government organisations.

Fairhaven Surf Lifesaving Cub



**Figure 5: Fragmented coast and parklands management along the Great Ocean Road**







Aire River

The management of contiguous coastal land is fragmented even further, as illustrated in figure 5.

There are also instances where anomalies from historical public land administration arrangements results in the one public space having multiple land managers (such as the foreshore in coastal towns). This overlap resulted in instances of different contractors and timing for maintenance or cleaning regimes such as gardening/mowing/toilets (and “mow lines”<sup>11</sup>).

The fragmentation of responsibility for management of contiguous coastal Crown land adds unnecessary complexity and inefficiencies, with inevitable variations in performance (such as maintenance standards) and limits responsiveness to changing requirements.

There is an urgent need for the Victorian Government to take a more cohesive and strategic approach to coastal land and marine environment management, the maintenance of quality

public open spaces and facilities, the efficient maintenance and delivery of the municipal-like services (such as gardening, toilets and rubbish collection for foreshores in coastal towns), and the management of the pressures from the increasing numbers of visitors and forces of nature (in particular coastal inundation and erosion, but also land instability and subsidence, cliff regression and undercutting and acid sulfate soils).

11. Mow lines are visible lines in the grassed public open space created when part of the area is mowed up to the boundary of the area maintained by another organisation.

### Inadequate attention to, and investment in, protecting coastal assets (natural and built)

In many instances, the coastal (Crown land) environments adjacent to the Great Ocean Road protect it from the forces of nature (such as the pressures of wave action and storm surges from the Southern Ocean which drive coastal erosion and inundation).

Managing and, where needed, safeguarding these protective structures is vitally important for the Great Ocean Road (and utility infrastructure in road easements) – and will become even more important due to the impacts of climate change.

The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) review of coastal asset protection released 29 March 2018, Protecting Victoria's Coastal Assets found that:

*"Overall natural and built assets on Victoria's coastline are not being adequately protected. The audited agencies' ability to do this strategically and cost – effectively is limited by weaknesses in their coastal asset management practices and a number of governance and management barriers."*

*"The strategic and systematic implementation of actions to respond to climate change has been limited or lacking"*

Key issues identified by VAGO included:

- fragmented and overly complex coastal management and planning arrangements
- the skills and capacities of coastal managers not being well aligned with responsibilities and asset risks
- a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities for asset management and maintenance
- a lack of clarity and transparency around coastal funding and expenditure.

Coastal asset management practices were also found to be inadequate.

VAGO's finding of a "fix on fail" approach to coastal asset management was echoed in feedback the Co-Chairs received from the community. Community members also commented on the closure of access as the primary risk management strategy when asset condition (such as stairway access to the beach) posed a public risk.

The issue was further highlighted at Apollo Bay when coastal erosion during the storms on the weekend of 16-17 June 2018 caused significant damage to the foreshore (refer case study 1) and brought the coastline to within five metres of the pavement of the Great Ocean Road.

The cost of maintaining and protecting coastal assets rests within the operational budgets of the responsible organisations for that area. Under current arrangements, committees of management are self-funded, with funding supplemented by grants programs. Some coastal land managers generate significant revenue (from caravan park operations or leases) whilst adjoining coastal reserves may generate relatively little revenue for investment in coastal land and infrastructure protection.

The Co-Chairs' firm view is that the level of investment in protection of coastal assets should not be determined by the level of operating revenue of the relevant committee of management.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has acknowledged the issue and developed the *Strengthening Victoria's Marine and Coastal Management* (a transition plan accompanying the introduction of the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*).

The Co-Chairs commend the acceptance of all VAGO recommendations by agencies and their commitment to improve the management of coastal assets. However, there has been a long-standing disconnect between policy and implementation due to the lack of appropriate funding, and the challenges associated with the fragmented Crown land management delegations.



## Case study 1: Apollo Bay Foreshore Erosion

The coastal sandunes that protect the Great Ocean Road from the Southern Ocean in Apollo Bay from Marengo to Skenes Creek are susceptible to erosion during coastal storms. In the 1990's camping was stopped at Marengo due to foreshore instability.

During the recent 2018 winter storms, coastal erosion undermined the coastal trail and a beach car park in Apollo Bay. The dune protection of the Great Ocean Road is now less than 5 metres in places.

The Otway Coast Committee (OCC) is the appointed manager of the Apollo Bay foreshore (as part of 28.5 km of coastal Crown land it manages between Marengo and Separation Creek). Funding of its operations is reliant on the limited fees it raises from leases and camping grounds. It does not have the funds to undertake temporary measures let alone a more permanent solution.

DELWP has contributed funding for the renourishment of the sand along the coastline of Apollo Bay. This will protect the Great Ocean Road in the immediate future.

Colac Otway Shire contributes to the sand renourishment through dredging operations in the harbour. VicRoads has not previously contributed funding towards protection works in the past as the erosion is occurring outside the road reservation.

The community is frustrated at the 'fix on fail' approach and is concerned that a breach of the sandune and loss of sections of the Great Ocean Road will occur before the problem is addressed and a longer term solution established.

Figure 6: Coastal erosion of car park, Apollo Bay



Figure 7: Sand renourishment along the foreshore in Apollo Bay



### **The environmental condition of coastal and marine environments needs monitoring**

Access to long-term data and knowledge on the condition of the natural marine and coastal environments is required to make the best use of available funding, and to ensure any actions are delivering the expected environmental outcomes.

Objective and accurate information on the state of the natural assets along the Great Ocean Road is important, and ought to be complimented by an evaluation of the direct and indirect benefits that all Victorians derive from the ecoservices provided by the marine and coastal parks along the Great Ocean Road. This would complement the requirements of the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* for environmental reporting.

### **There are conflicts and tensions associated with coastal consent permit processes**

The use and development of the coastal reserves require the consent of the Minister (or their delegate).

Key stakeholders and members of the community have raised the issue of notable tensions/conflicts between the views of lease holders, committees of management and the department on coastal consent applications

requirements (information required for applications, application processes and timelines, and likely application outcomes including conditions on permits).

The department's transition plan accompanying the new *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* proposes to develop policy guidance and regulations (taking a risk-based approach) to aid in the administration of the requirements of the legislation (including coastal consents). This approach will go some way towards addressing the issues, along with updated coastal management plans initiated by both the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee and Otway Coast Committee.

### **There are considerable inefficiencies and a red-tape burden in public land administration**

*"Modern land administration relies on accurate, up to date mapping and database systems to support planning decision making. There are few areas that are more critical to effective public land management."*<sup>12</sup>

Eleven organisations manage almost 170,000 hectares of public land along the Great Ocean Road, with considerable fragmentation of the responsibilities for the management of contiguous coastal public land.

Land administration and on-ground management is further complicated by the inadequate Crown land information systems. Currently, public land information is held on multiple databases that contain data gaps and inaccurate (and sometimes conflicting) information. There is also the issue of variable implementation of government accepted public land use recommendations. In addition, agreements (such as leases and licences) are not stored centrally.

Identifying who is responsible for the administration of a parcel of Crown land, and identifying government accepted public land use recommendations that haven't been implemented, can contribute to delays in permit applications for land development projects. Stakeholders advised that the current arrangements impact significantly on the timelines, resourcing and efficiency of delivery of State investment commitments (such as for road construction and visitor facilities projects).

The Co-Chairs commend the department's establishment of the Crown Land Information Improvement Project, which will combine all the sources of information into one database. Further work is required, however, to address conflicting information, gaps or the regular instances of anomalous, legacy, administrative arrangements.

12. State-wide Assessment of Public Land Final Report' by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (1 July 2017).



## Case study 2: Duplication of municipal-like services at Apollo Bay foreshore

The foreshore of Apollo Bay (on the ocean side of the Great Ocean Road) is the principle public open space for the local community and visitors alike. It has three responsible public entities.

- Otway Coast Committee is responsible for the coastal reserves and majority of the coastal foreshore area on the ocean side of the Great Ocean Road. It delivers municipal-like services including toilet cleaning and maintenance, rubbish collection, gardening and events management services.
- Colac-Otway Shire is responsible for public open space management and maintenance on the inland side of the Great Ocean Road and provides municipal-like services including toilets cleaning and maintenance, rubbish collection, gardening, events management services. It is also responsible for a portion of the coastal foreshore with a lease for a land area that includes the information centre.
- VicRoads is responsible for the Great Ocean Road pavement and easement which extends into the foreshore area. Some activities require permits from both VicRoads and the Otway Coast Committee

**Figure 8:** Two toilets side by side at Apollo Bay foreshore. The toilet block on the left is part of the information centre with services and maintenance provided by Colac-Otway Shire on a parcel of foreshore land for which it has a licence. The blue toilet block on the right-hand side is part of the Otway Coast Committee's toilet facilities that they service and maintain.





Erskine Falls  
Source: Visit Victoria

## Partnerships with Traditional Owners present an exciting opportunity

### Significant cultural (tangible and intangible) values mapping required

The Great Ocean Road passes through the traditional lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People. The region is of high cultural, ecological and economic importance to their communities. There are sacred sites and resources, values and stories associated with places along the coast and across the region – as well as language and ceremonial practices that have been handed down by Ancestors and Elders. Whilst there are some commonalities between the approach of the two groups, there are also differences (and limited overlap in language) that needs to be acknowledged.

The bulk of the land along the Great Ocean Road is undeveloped and there are many places with tangible and intangible Aboriginal values that are not mapped and registered (as this process is largely driven by the regulatory requirements associated with land development under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*). There is a corresponding lack of interpretive information to allow visitors to better

understand the importance of the Aboriginal cultural heritage in the local area.

Aboriginal coastal sites, such as shell middens, are at risk of damage from coastal erosion, while hinterland sites are susceptible to fires. There is a need to map the Traditional Owners' cultural sites and values so that they can be recognised, promoted and protected.

The community is increasingly interested in understanding the cultural values of the region with increasing demand for cultural tours on Country and interpretive information. The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung are also increasingly engaged to provide ceremonial services (such as Welcome to Country).

As a consequence, there is a need to identify, map, register, protect and promote places with cultural values (tangible and intangible) in the landscapes and seascapes along the Great Ocean Road, including Traditional place names.





Moyjil - Point Ritchie  
Source: City of Warrnambool

### Traditional Owner involvement in natural resources management is increasing

The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung, along with Aboriginal Victoria, are involved in land-use planning processes where regulatory compliance (and cultural heritage management plans) is required. They are also involved in natural resources management (such as priorities for environmental flows and broader catchment management/caring for Country). The Eastern Maar have also been consulted in recent times during coastal planning exercises, such as for the Shipwreck Coast and the Belfast Coastal Masterplan. To-date however, the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung have

had limited input into the development of policies or local management of the 170,000 hectares of Crown land along the Great Ocean Road.

The Australian legal system recognises the rights and interests of the Traditional Owners of Country and for these to co-exist with the Crown land management system. A Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* is currently under negotiation between the Victorian Government and Eastern Maar<sup>13</sup>. This is likely to result in associated agreements

about the use and management of nominated Crown land along the Great Ocean Road.

The Co-Chairs welcome the discussion and look forward to weaving the resultant legal requirements into future governance arrangements. It should be noted that the current fragmented spatial management of the Crown land along the Great Ocean Road will add to the difficulty of a cohesive approach to jointly managing public land with Traditional Owners when the legal direction to do so is established.

13. The Victorian Government and the Eastern Maar have commenced negotiations to enter into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 for land along the Great Ocean Road (for a map of the area under discussion and more information refer [www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/your+rights/native+title/proposed+eastern+maar+recognition+and+settlement+agreement](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/your+rights/native+title/proposed+eastern+maar+recognition+and+settlement+agreement) ). That agreement will recognise the Traditional Owner rights of the Eastern Maar and is likely to include associated agreements about the use and management of nominated public land.



## Land-use planning lacks a clear strategic direction

### Planning hierarchy connects state, regions and local priorities

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* sets out the framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria, including clauses to protect distinctive areas and landscapes.

The framework outlines a planning hierarchy of State, regional and local policies that enable decisions about the use and development of land. It provides for a single instrument of planning control for each municipality, the planning scheme, which sets out the way land may be used or developed. It sets out procedures for preparing and amending the Victorian Planning Provisions and planning schemes,

obtaining a permit under a planning scheme, settling disputes, enforcing compliance with planning schemes, and other administrative procedures. It also provides for the intervention of the Minister for Planning in planning-approval processes.

It is worth noting too, that the State Planning Policy Framework in the Victoria Planning Provisions includes a dedicated section for protecting coastal areas, and a dedicated section for sustainable development of the Great Ocean Road region.

### Limited strategic direction

The Great Ocean Road already has a number of stand-alone plans. Those plans include the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan,

the 2013 *VicRoads Great Ocean Road Management Strategy*, the *Strategic Masterplan for the Great Ocean Region Visitor Economy: 2015- 2025*, and individual plans by local government authorities and responsible public agencies.

The 2004 *Great Ocean Road Region Strategy* took an integrated view of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. The Strategy included an implementation plan that nominated actions for the various responsible entities, but did not have an integrated infrastructure plan for the region. In addition, no funding was attached to the Strategy, and no single entity was accountable for the implementation of the Strategy. An Implementation committee was formed but disbanded after a few





Apollo Bay from the Otway foothills  
Source: @ surfcoastimages

years, with the Strategy's implementation carried out by agencies on an ad hoc basis as resources allowed.

In the absence of a shared vision and agreed strategic framework plan for future direction on land-uses across the region, and without guidelines on appropriate design standards, scale and locations, land developers and local communities will continue to have different views on what constitutes appropriate development.

### **An exceptionally sensitive and complex landscape for land development proposals**

The iconic coastal and rural landscapes along the Great Ocean Road have many constraints on land development due to

the significant areas of landscape and, environmental significance, bushfire management requirements, natural constraints (such as coastal inundation and erosion, riverine flooding, land instability and subsidence, coastal acid-sulphate soils) and unmapped Traditional Owner values. The complexity and difficulty of land development and construction projects in such a unique landscape appears to be regularly underestimated with many competing interests to balance.

The multitude of agencies makes a joined-up response to land development proposals difficult. Some environmental, coastal, heritage, Commonwealth, fire and Crown land approvals are outside the operation of planning schemes – and

consequently need to be addressed by proponents in separate processes.

Councils report a lack of resources/ capacity to process large and complex planning applications. Occasionally, decision-making prioritises the local perspective over the broader, whole-of-Victoria, community interest. The planning framework is inconsistently applied and there is uncertainty around assessment processes, and decision-making considerations.

A number of the local land managers have requested a regional or state-led planning approvals mechanism that provides more certainty, establishes ground rules, and identifies clear information requirements up front to fast-track and facilitate significant regional projects.



On holiday

## The visitor economy is important to the future prosperity of the region

### The visitor economy is an important industry for the Great Ocean Road region

Visitation is a major economic driver for the region, and is important to Victoria’s visitor economy.

In 2016-2017 tourism was estimated to be worth \$994 million to the region’s economy (in direct and indirect Gross Regional Product), representing 15.2% of the region’s economy. In the year ending June 2017 its 5.8 million visitors spent \$1.3 billion supporting 11,200 jobs in the region.

### Visitor numbers are steadily growing

The vast majority of visitors to the Great Ocean Road region are Victorians.

There has been a steady growth in the number of domestic overnight trips (increasing by an average of 11 per cent per annum over the last five years) and a steady growth in international visitors (increasing by an average of 22 percent per annum over the last five years). There is a much higher rate of growth in day trips, compared to overnight stays.

Figure 9: The bulk of trips to the Great Ocean Road Region are by Victorians (millions, year ending June 2017)

Origin	Day trips	Overnight	Total visitors
Victorian	2.67	1.75	4.42
Interstate	0.15	0.32	0.47
International	0.71	0.22	0.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>5.82</b>

Source: International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS), Tourism Research Australia (supplied by Deloitte Access Economics). Note Interstate day trips are based on a small sample size.



### The number of visitors will continue to grow, even if we do nothing

Asia's middle class is projected to grow to more than 3 billion people by 2030; the United States' long recovery from the Global Financial Crisis is continuing; and the Australian dollar – having peaked in 2011 – is starting to depreciate.

These factors create a more attractive economic environment for international travel to Australia and increased domestic travel within Australia.

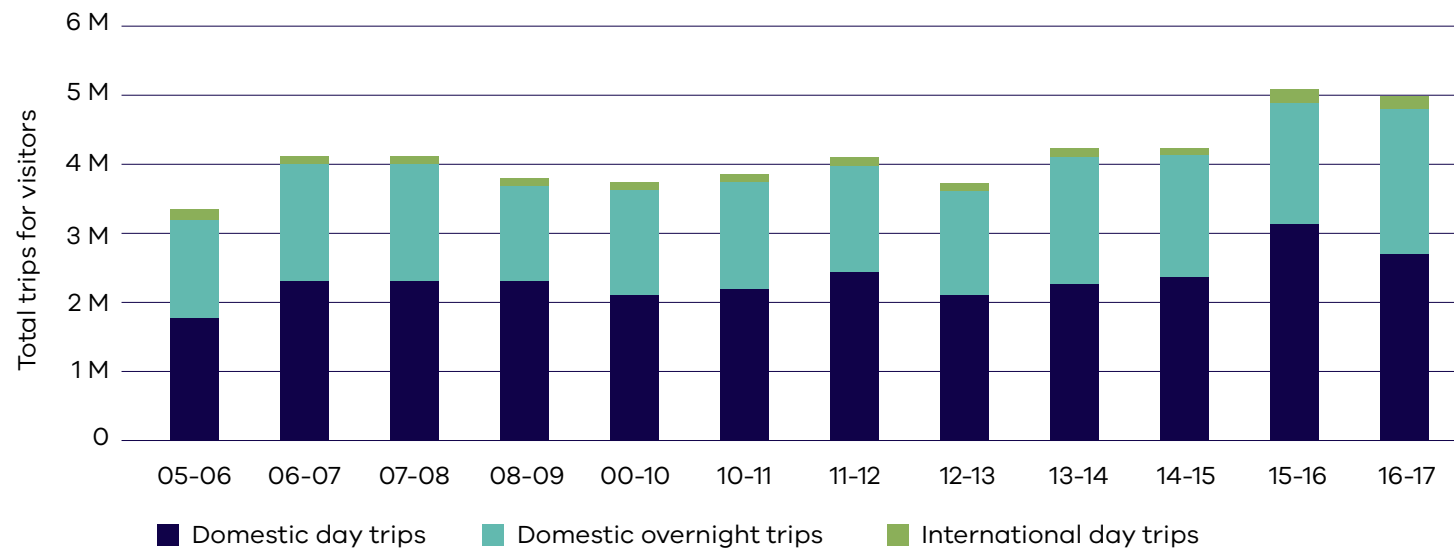
The natural beauty of the Twelve Apostles and Great Ocean Road coastline and its accessibility are the key micro drivers of visitation to the region. The proximity of Torquay to Melbourne makes the region accessible for both day trips and longer overnight and multiday stays.

With the opening of the international terminal at Avalon Airport in December 2018 – just 50 kilometres from Torquay –

the Great Ocean Road is more accessible than ever before.

The challenge for the region is to find ways to manage the visitor congestion and to spread the visitor load across the day, seasons and locations.

**Figure 10: Domestic overnight and international visitors to the Great Ocean Road Region has been steadily increasing**



Source: International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS), Tourism Research Australia (supplied by Deloitte Access Economics).

# Drivers of Tourism

## Macro factors influence domestic and global trends in tourism

### Economic factors:

*Foreign exchange rates:* A weaker Australian dollar makes Australia more affordable for international visitors and international travel more expensive for Australians, encouraging domestic travel.

*Economic prosperity:* Higher individual wealth (GDP per capita), particularly the growing middle class in China and other South East Asian countries, and an increase in disposable income may promote tourism, both international and domestic.

### Geopolitical stability:

Safety concerns including terrorism and political unrest may discourage international travel entirely, but may equally encourage travel to destinations perceived to be unaffected (or relatively less affected) by these concerns.

## Micro factors are site-specific

### Site attractiveness:

The attraction itself, including its natural beauty, historical or man-made features and how these compare to (and compete with) other similar sites is a key driver of both domestic and international visitation to a site.

### Site accessibility:

The more accessible a site, the more attractive it will be to visitors, all else equal.

- A site that is close to a major capital city, with numerous connecting flights, will be more attractive to international and interstate visitors.
- The mode and cost of travel to the site, including any risks posed along the journey, will impact the attractiveness of the site. Safe, well maintained roads, will attract greater vehicle volume than poorly maintained and dangerous roads.

### Accommodation provision:

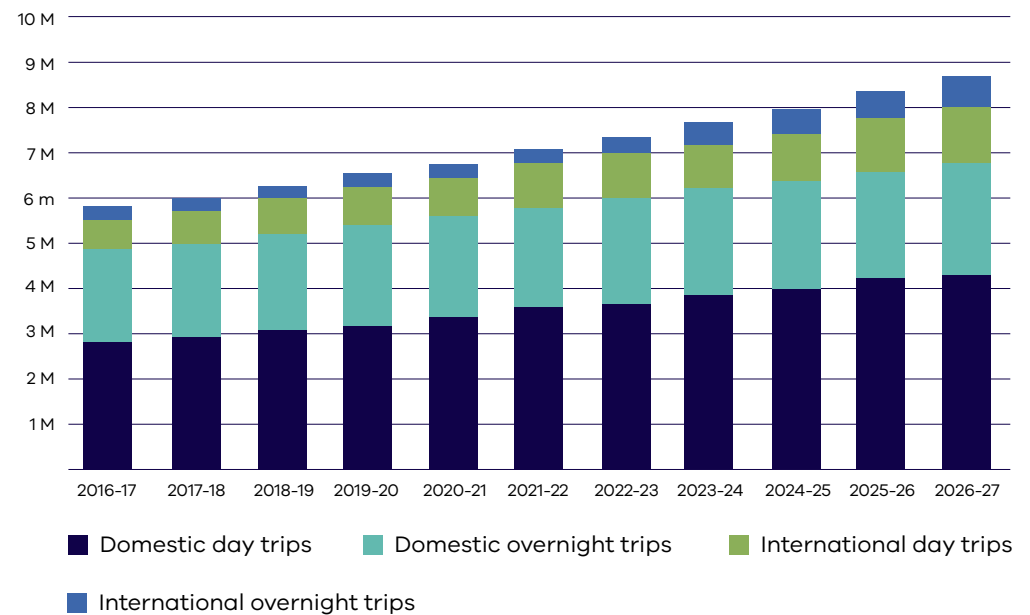
Overnight and multiday stays are in part determined by availability of accommodation. A lack of accommodation will, all else equal, deter stays for more than a day trip.

## The visitor experience could be improved

Visitor amenities and the touring route experience are inadequate, falling well short of expectations. There is a lack of complementary visitor experiences and diverse supporting accommodation that would encourage tourists to do more than just make a day trip to the Twelve Apostles.

Many visitors are satisfied with the experience of seeing the Great Ocean Road from the comfort of a car or bus seat – travelling to and from the Twelve Apostles – but these trips create few opportunities to fully experience the region and meet local communities.

**Figure 11: The growth in visitors to the Great Ocean Road region is projected to steadily continue over the next ten years**



Source: International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS), Tourism Research Australia (supplied by Deloitte Access Economics).



### The challenge is to increase the local benefit from visitors

Tourism is a major contributor to the Great Ocean Road regional economy. However, domestic and international visitors spend less money than the average visitor to Victoria. (Conversely, domestic day trip visitors spend marginally more in the region compared to the rest of Victoria.)

Almost two-thirds of trips along the Great Ocean Road are day trips, with the tourism benefits flowing to tour operators and accommodation in Melbourne rather than expenditure in local communities.

The challenge of increasing visitors' length of stay and level of expenditure along the Great Ocean Road has been considered on many occasions, and acknowledged in several strategies, including in the *2004 Great Ocean Road Regional Strategy*, *Shipwreck Coast Master Plan* and the *Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy: 2015-2025*.

Ultimately, low visitor yield in the region limits the ability for communities to benefit from the growth in the tourism

sector. It also constrains the ability of the region to attract investment for new tourism experiences – creating a catch-22 situation where the region is unable to benefit from longer stays and unable to attract the investment necessary to encourage longer stays.

Part of the problem is the lack of coordinative accountability. Currently, no single agency has responsibility for managing the visitor experience for the full length of the touring route, let alone the provision of basic facilities and amenities (such as parking and toilets) at regular intervals.

### There is no forum with status for local community input

Community support for tourism in popular destinations along the Great Ocean Road is vital, and depends on strong partnerships with the local community, local businesses, and community groups.

To build strong partnerships there is a need for ongoing communication and informed discussion. Currently though, there are no forums for local communities to voice concerns about issues such as the

poor visitor experience or the cumulative impacts of visitors on communities along the Great Ocean Road.

Local communities have many first-hand examples of poor visitor experiences, such as congestion (with visitors travelling three hours only to find the Loch Ard Gorge car park shut), the lack of information about experiences on offer along the Great Ocean Road and the locations of toilets and food/refreshments, the lack of interpretive information and poor mobile phone coverage.

Local people had practical ideas about how to improve the visitor experience, but didn't know where to go or who to talk to about their ideas. Often, local people who tried to raise their concerns or ideas found themselves passed from agency to agency, with no-one taking responsibility.

Likewise, there are currently no forums for local communities to raise concerns about the impacts of increasing visitation or land development planning permit processes (such as the lack of affordable housing, road safety and the cumulative impact of housing development).

**Figure 12: Great Ocean Road Region visitor spend, compared to visitors to Victoria**

Total spend per trip/nights	Domestic day	Domestic overnight	International overnight
<b>Visitors to Great Ocean Road</b>	<b>\$103.00</b>	<b>\$146.72</b>	<b>\$99.09</b>
Visitors to Victoria	\$101.97	\$194.10	\$115.54

Source: Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, 2018; Tourism Research Australia, 2018; Deloitte Access Economics 2018.

## Portfolio based government investments

### Lack of strategic regional infrastructure planning

Planning for tourism developments is a complex activity that requires strategic planning, collaboration and coordination by local governments, agencies and communities.

To achieve the best outcomes, the regional infrastructure needs and development constraints of the region must be fully

understood, and the competing interests and objectives of development proposals must be balanced.

Currently, councils do not have adequate information about the future direction of regional infrastructure strategies and/or regional constraints. Consequently, councils are unable to provide

clear direction to potential tourism development opportunities. Likewise, the lack of information from state agencies and councils about the strategic direction of the Great Ocean Road discourages the level of private and public investment required to deliver desperately needed projects.

Beach patrol.  
Surf Lifesaving Victoria





### **No centralised knowledge management**

The Great Ocean Road travels through complex and sensitive landscapes. Specialist knowledge, data and expert technical studies are regularly commissioned by the many responsible public entities for planning and works along the Great Ocean Road. However, this information is neither catalogued, nor stored centrally for sharing with and/or interrogation by other agencies.

### **Inefficient government investment delivery**

Currently, government investments are portfolio based, with agencies and organisations carrying out separate technical studies and community consultations. Consequently, rather than coordinating and combining planning processes, each stand-alone project goes through the same process of developing solutions, seeking endorsements and inputs from the multitude of responsible entities, and applying for relevant consents and permits.

Despite the willingness and collaborative approach across the many responsible public entities, none are accountable for implementing an integrated whole-of-government planning process. In addition, sorting through the overlapping processes are difficult and time consuming, and sometimes conflicting interests need to be elevated to the Ministerial level to be resolved.

### **Significant joint State and Commonwealth projects ahead**

A significant pipeline of government investment will be required over the next 20 years to ensure the Great Ocean Road remains one of the world's greatest journeys and support the visitor economy.

The Geelong City Deal<sup>14</sup> with the Commonwealth Government proposes investment in projects along the Great Ocean Road. An interface, and protocols, will need to be developed for effective and timely delivery of the jointly funded projects.

Considerable investment is likely to be required to protect the Great Ocean Road from the forces of nature (coastal erosion, land instability, limestone cliff regression) and climate change risks. The Commonwealth and State Governments could jointly consider how investment in the road network (Great Ocean Road, Princes Highway and north-south connecting roads)<sup>15</sup> can be prioritised in Commonwealth funding programs such as the Infrastructure Program over the next 5-10 years.

### **The Great Ocean Road competes with projects across the state for funding**

There is no dedicated funding model (including for asset maintenance) for the Great Ocean Road and its environs in the annual budgets of Parks Victoria, VicRoads or other departments. Instead, funding is ad hoc, with projects prioritised and funded through the annual budget cycle.

14. On 17 January 2018, the Prime Minister and the Acting Premier of Victoria signed a Memorandum of Understanding, committing to work together on a City Deal for Geelong. Areas of focus will include improved transport links in the region, revitalising the Geelong city centre, ensuring the Great Ocean Road reaches its full potential, and supporting innovation and the growth of knowledge industries.

15. A recent numberplate recognition survey along the Great Ocean Road (undertaken by GTA Consultants on Friday 6th to Sunday 8th April) found that the majority of visitor vehicles to the Twelve Apostles – Port Campbell section of the Great Ocean Road travelled to and/or from the area via inland routes.



Kayakers at Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary  
Source: Visit Victoria

## The critical gap – an absence of overarching coordinative management

The governance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes is complex.

It involves a multitude of organisations operating in different geographical locations with different responsibilities, stakeholders, priorities and timeframes. Across the region, there are 11 different Crown land managers, as well as 30 responsible organisations with accountabilities covering strategy development and implementation, land-use planning and development, infrastructure delivery, asset maintenance, emergency management, investment facilitation, destination promotion, and the management of the

environment and local ecology (refer Figure 13).

This jigsaw puzzle of organisations are not bound by an overarching organisational mechanism. Despite the best efforts of each of the responsible organisations, the sheer number of organisations (each with their own priorities) has shown that voluntary “joined up” decision making cannot be sustained over long periods. Inevitably, the delivery of local and functional interests is prioritised.

The confusion of governance arrangements also delays and frustrates

the everyday operations of individuals and businesses. In community discussion forums, numerous examples were provided of members with an issue being bounced from one agency to another, with each denying responsibility. Government organisations also reported multiple examples of red-tape, with infrastructure projects delayed because the project team needed to find out which Crown land manager was responsible for a piece of land before they could obtain a planning approval or to gain the endorsement of so many organisations.



**Figure 13: Organisations with responsibilities in relation to the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes**

Current governance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes			
Policies (and regional plans)		Regulation	
Australian's Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2030	Strategic Masterplan for the Great Ocean Region visitor economy 2015-2025	Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007	Heritage (various) Regulations
G21 Regional Growth Plan 2013	Strategy for Australia's National Reserve System 2009-2030	Catchment and Land Protection regulations 2012	National Parks (Tour Operator Licence Fee) Regulations 2011
Great South Regional Growth Plan	Victoria Coastal Strategy 2014	Climate Change Regulation 2011	National Parks Regulation 2013
Great Ocean Road Regional Strategy 2004	Victoria's Climate Change Framework	Conservation, Forests and Land (various) Regulations	Native vegetation clearing regulations
National Landscapes Program (Commonwealth)	Western Regional Plan Coastal 2015-2020	Crown Land (Reserves) (Tour Operator Licence Fee) Regulations 2011	Port Services (local Ports) Regulations 2004 (Vic)
National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development	Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia 1997	Environment Protection (various) Regulations	Subdivision (various) Regulations
Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037		Flora and Fauna Guarantee (various) Regulations 2011	Victorian Planning Provisions
State Environmental Protection Policy		Forests (Fire Protection) Regulations 2014	Water Industry (various) Regulations
		Forests (various) Regulations	Wildlife (various) Regulations
Legislation (Victorian unless otherwise specified)		Institutions	
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1994 (Commonwealth)</i>	<i>Land Act 1957</i>	<b>Strategic and policy responsibilities</b>	<b>Operational responsibilities</b>
<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>	<i>Local Government Act 1989</i>	Australian Dpt. of Environment and Energy	Barwon Water
<i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>	<i>Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009</i>	Regional Development Victoria	Colac Otway Shire
<i>Climate Change Act 2017</i>	<i>Marine and Coastal Environment Act 2018</i>	Tourism Australia	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
<i>Coastal Management Act 1995</i>	<i>Marine Safety Act 2010</i>	Transport for Victoria	Corangamite Shire
<i>Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987</i>	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>	Victorian Dpt. of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources	Dpt. of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
<i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i>	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth)</i>	Victorian Dpt. of Environment, Land, Water & Planning	Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
<i>Emergency Management Act 1986 (Vic)</i>	<i>Parks Victoria Act 2018</i>	Victorian Dpt. of Justice and Regulation	Great Ocean Road Coast Committee
<i>Environment Effects Act 1987</i>	<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>	Visit Victoria	Moyne Shire
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)</i>	<i>Port Management Act 1995</i>	<b>Regulatory responsibilities</b>	Otway Coastal Committee
<i>Environmental Protection Act 1970</i>	<i>Road Management Act 2004</i>	Australian Department of Environment and Energy	Parks Victoria
<i>Fisheries Act 1995 (Vic)</i>	<i>Road Safety Act 1986</i>	Environment Protection Authority Victoria	Princetown Recreation Reserve Committee
<i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i>	<i>Safety on Public Land Act 2004</i>	Heritage Victoria	Port Campbell Recreation Reserve Committee
<i>Forests Act 1958</i>	<i>Subdivision Act 1988</i>	Southern Rural Water	Peterborough Coastal Reserve Committee of Management
<i>Heritage Act 2017</i>	<i>Sustainable Forest (timber) Act 2004</i>	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council	Surf Coast Shire
<i>Heritage Rivers Act 1992</i>	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	<b>Registered Aboriginal Parties</b>	VicRoads
	<i>Transport Integration Act 2010</i>	Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung	Wannon Water
	<i>Water Act 1989, Water Industry Act 1994</i>		Warrnambool City Council
	<i>Wildlife Act 1975</i>		









Real risks

4.



## Real risks

The Co-Chairs identified several state significant risks<sup>16</sup> to the Great Ocean Road region that are not being adequately addressed through current, portfolio-based governance arrangements.

These risks are complex by nature, and beyond the remit of any single responsible entity. They have the potential to have large negative impacts on the public, local communities, investors, stakeholders and the environment.

The need to address these risks is one of the key reasons why the Taskforce recommended major institutional change – creating a single point of accountability for joined-up decision making and risk management from the most executive levels of government down to the project delivery level.

### Risk of reputational damage - the touring route is at a tipping point

The Co-Chairs' view is that the Great Ocean Road, as a key domestic and international tourism destination, is at a tipping point. In the future, unmanaged

and increasing visitation will create congestion peaks (both time of the day and seasonally) – destroying the isolated nature experience that is the very attraction, and causing harm to sensitive landscapes along the Great Ocean Road. In addition, the lack of basic visitor amenities along the touring route (toilets, parking, viewpoints and signs, mobile telephone coverage, food and beverage offerings, interpretive information and tourism products) detract from spectacular views and what should be an unforgettable experience.

In discussions with local communities along the Great Ocean Road, numerous examples were given of the issues associated with a lack of visitor management. Local people expressed concern that poor visitor management was causing reputational damage to the Road, citing examples such as: the lack of bus parking, toilets and viewpoints along the touring route; the

unannounced closure of the Loch Ard Gorge car park at peak periods; the long queues for parking to see the Twelve Apostles; the crowds (to the verge of claustrophobic) at popular viewing points, lack of products/service offerings and state of the toilets along the Road and at the Twelve Apostles visitor centre.

Currently, no single agency has responsibility for managing the visitor experience for the full length of the touring route, let alone the provision of basic facilities and amenities (such as parking and toilets) at regular intervals.

### Risks to the ongoing operation and function of the Great Ocean Road

The Great Ocean Road was constructed as close to the ocean as possible by design, in order to create one of the world's greatest ocean drives for travellers. After almost

16. Definition in the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework - December 2016, published by the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance. "State significant risks are risks where the potential consequences or impacts of the risk on the community, the Government and the private sector are so large as to be of state significance."



**Figure 14:** Landslips and erosion are a major risk along the Great Ocean Road between Lorne and Apollo Bay causing the Road to be closed periodically



Paddy's Path 2016  
Source: VicRoads

100 years the intense wave action of the Southern Ocean pressures has taken its toll on the Road. Coastal erosion of the sand dunes protecting the Road and limestone cliff regression along the Shipwreck Coast present a significant risk to the ongoing operation and function of the Road. The alignment of the Great Ocean Road has already been moved inland near Peterborough due to changes to the coastline. Coastal inundation during winter storm events can shut the Road in multiple locations. Slope instability in some locations has resulted in periodic closures of sections of the Road in the past.

The ongoing viability of the current alignment and form of the Road needs to be examined in several locations. A risk analysis and long-term transport network strategy is required to identify what funding strategies will be required for the (likely to be considerable) investment.

The functional nature of the current governance arrangements (reliant on a coordinative approach where no entity is accountable for integrated decision-making and funding) is a barrier to the management of potentially catastrophic risks of failure of the coastal assets and the Road itself.

This issue is not unique to the Great Ocean Road. Recently the Big Sur in California (a serpentine route with steep cliffs known for its spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean) reopened fourteen months after a massive landslide and US\$54 million investment for the repair of 400 metres stretch. North of Wollongong, a spectacular, off-shore (parallel to coast) bridge has been built on the Grand Pacific Drive when that section of the Road was closed permanently due to rockfalls.



### Short-term and local interests prioritised

Local, short-term and functional interests are prioritised in decision-making by default due to the difficulty and time required to achieve integrated decision making.

Councils report difficulty balancing the local and state priorities on major development proposals, with no strategic directives to provide guidance on state visitor economy priorities. Many interests need to be weighed up when evaluating major land development proposals. The absence of a strategic framework plan creates the risk that local planning decisions will be out of sync with – and

perhaps counterproductive to – wider State planning priorities.

VicRoads delivers defined road projects. It does not have additional funding to evaluate alternatives. When it receives funding for emergencies (such as land slippages) it is required to repair or replace the existing road, rather than use additional funding to construct an alternative design that would provide a more resilient long-term option.

### Environmental risks

Unmanaged visitation to the iconic and sensitive places along the Great Ocean Road (such as the Twelve Apostles) will damage the environment and degrade the

region's isolated natural beauty.

For instance, on busy days, visitors pull off the road and park where they can without regard to the impact on the sensitive coastal environments. A lack of toilets at, or near, popular places to stop along the Great Ocean Road means that visitors are having toilet breaks in the vegetated land beside parking/road pull-offs instead.

### Missed opportunities

The Great Ocean Road Region is not currently positioned to benefit from the rapidly growing international visitor economy (22 per cent per annum for the last 10 years<sup>17</sup>).





Lorne  
Source: Visit Victoria

Creating a strategy to provide complimentary experiences would increase time visitors stay in the region, and spread the visitor load across the day, region, and seasons. Creating a sustainable visitation management plan would protect the coastal and marine environment for future generations, provide a better visitor experience (for both the touring route and places along it) and ensure there were options for affordable family holidays.

Accommodation availability is a key issue. Unless there is a diverse range of accommodation options, visitors will be deterred from staying for more than a day. An additional 3,100 rooms (across all categories) is estimated as being required for the projected growth in visitor overnight stays by 2026-27<sup>18</sup>.

Councils advise that the current governance arrangements hinder, rather than facilitate, suitable group

accommodation proposals that would service the growth in the Great Ocean Road visitor economy. There is significant uncertainty on processes, timing and likely outcomes for development proposal applications – leading to a lack of private sector investment.

17. Deloitte Access Economics report “Strategic Governance Options for the Great Ocean Road” based on International Visitor Survey (IVS), Tourism Research Australia

18. Analysis by Deloitte Access Economics based on International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS), Tourism Research Australia.









## 5. Recommendations



## Recommendations

The Co-Chairs examined the governance models of a number of places with high visitation around the world and found that each adopted arrangements that best suited their location and circumstances. There was no model that could be transplanted from another location.

In other words, Victoria's response to the challenges of the Great Ocean Road must be as unique as the Road.

The area needs, and deserves, special place-based governance arrangements. After all, it has outstanding natural, cultural, and heritage values, and is of immense importance to the State economy.

The first priority must be to protect the environmental assets and isolated beauty experience that are the attraction for visitors.

That is why the establishment of a new independent statutory authority, the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority*, has been proposed. The Authority's function would be to protect the ecological and landscape integrity of the National Heritage listed Great Ocean Road, and its land and seascapes – including all adjacent coastal Crown land and marine parks within the Shires of Surf Coast, Colac-Otway, Corangamite and Moyne (east of Warrnambool) and

the eastern edge of Warrnambool – and to manage visitation.

The transfer of responsibilities for managing the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road from the current 11 responsible entities to the new Authority will provide both the remit and imperative required to protect the distinctive landscapes and improve the visitor experience. It will simplify management arrangements and increase transparency and accountability.

A number of recommendations are designed to provide clear direction and consistent decision-making, increase the community involvement in decision-making and visitor management, streamline planning approvals, and attract development proposals that benefit both tourists and local communities.

Those recommendations include:

- developing a strategic framework plan with local communities that provides

the future direction for development of the region and has a long-term outlook (addressing the risks and opportunities of climate change)

- establishing planning guidelines that provide clear direction on appropriate land uses and design standards across the area
- establishing a standing advisory committee to streamline planning approvals and provide independent expert advice on sustainable visitation and related economic development matters
- establishing a co-ordinator general function within the new Authority to coordinate timely and efficient delivery of the state projects that will be required over the next 20 years (such as visitor facilities and infrastructure), deliver state construction projects, and minimise disruption and inconvenience to travellers and local communities.



# State policy position

A formal state policy position is required to provide direction to the detail of the governance reforms and duties of responsible organisations. This policy position recognises the significance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes and the need for an integrated holistic approach to decision-making for the benefit of all Victorians.

## Recommendation 1

Recognise the national significance of the Great Ocean Road and its iconic coastal landscapes in State policies and establish a commensurate decision-making framework with a focus on its preservation, sustainable economic development, and a great visitor experience.

## Recommendation 2

Adopt this proposition and five objectives to provide direction to the governance arrangements and decision-making frameworks.

*The iconic landscapes along the Great Ocean Road have outstanding natural, heritage and cultural values and are to be treated as the one integrated and living entity for protection and the appreciation of future generations.*

- I. *Protect the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments*
- II. *Strengthen Traditional Owner involvement*
- III. *Protect distinctive areas and landscapes*
- IV. *Grow the local, state and national visitation economies*
- V. *Modernise governance.*

## Explanation

Clear objectives are important for the design of governance reforms and ideally, should be embedded in legislation and regulations.

The objectives and principles will provide direction to the implementation of the recommended governance reforms, and to responsible organisations for duties that will have an impact on the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. These have been developed with the Great Ocean Road Taskforce members and key stakeholders, and then tested and refined through public consultation processes.

The proposition asserts that the country through which the Great Ocean Road traverses is to be acknowledged, respected and cared for as one integrated and living entity. This holistic approach blends the wisdom of the Traditional Owners with a contemporary approach to protect natural, cultural and heritage values and distinctive landscapes.

## Implementation detail

- Embed in the new legislation, State Planning Policy Framework and municipal planning schemes.
- Embed in future Crown land management plans and land-use/landscape strategies for areas within the view of the Great Ocean Road.

Torquay Farmers Market  
Source: Surf Coast Shire



**Figure 12: Policy objectives to guide the design of governance arrangements and decision making**

Objective	Principle
<b>Protect the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the marine and coastal environments along the Great Ocean Road, including the unique habitats, ecosystems, biodiversity and landscapes.</li> <li>• Integrate Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary western ecological knowledge in environmental management.</li> <li>• Maintain the coastal assets and secure the coastal public land footprint for the enjoyment and appreciation of future generations.</li> <li>• Prepare for, and manage, impacts of climate change on coastal public land and assets.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase Traditional Owner inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People as Traditional Owners of the land, coastlines, waterways and seas along the Great Ocean Road.</li> <li>• Recognise, protect, and promote the values, rights, and interests of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People.</li> <li>• Support, and equip the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to play an active role in shaping the future of their traditional lands, waterways and seas.</li> <li>• Partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung in the development of policies, planning and management of the Great Ocean Road, its coastlines, landscapes and seas.</li> </ul>
<b>Protect distinctive areas and landscapes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise, protect and promote the natural, heritage and cultural values and distinctive characteristics of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes and towns.</li> <li>• Conserve the unique features and special characteristics of the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and seascapes.</li> <li>• Touch the land, coastlines, and waterways lightly and ensure there is a net gain for the environment out of any individual action, development or policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Grow the local, state and national visitor economies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the importance of the Great Ocean Road, its land and seascapes to the economic prosperity, liveability and wellbeing of local communities and for all Victorians.</li> <li>• Enhance the experience of the touring route and its destinations for all visitors, including international tourists.</li> <li>• Recognise the importance of liveable coastal communities along the Great Ocean Road.</li> <li>• Ensure responsibility for sustainable development of the Great Ocean Road visitor economy is shared by all levels of government, industries, businesses, local communities, and Victorians.</li> </ul>
<b>Modernise governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide visionary leadership and overarching direction to the management of the Great Ocean Road and its coastal landscapes and seascapes.</li> <li>• Adopt a holistic approach with integrated strategic planning, coordinated implementation, and aligned decision-making for the length of the Great Ocean Road.</li> <li>• Partner with Traditional Owners in the design of policies and planning for the future direction of Crown land and parks in the region.</li> <li>• Protect the rights and interests of the Traditional Owner groups.</li> <li>• Maintain ongoing dialogue with local communities, and prioritise community engagement in designing policies and planning for the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes.</li> <li>• Develop a secure, long-term commitment to fund the delivery of strategic goals.</li> </ul>

19. The definition of marine and coastal environments here has been adopted from the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

20. The definition of Environment here is the "whole of the environment". This definition has been adopted from the *Environmental Protection Act 1970* "the physical factors of the surroundings including the land, waters, atmosphere, climate, sound, odours, tastes, the biological factors of animals and plants and the social factor of aesthetics".



**Recommendation 3**

Recognise and protect the marine waters and coastal land along the Great Ocean Road as the state significant '*Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*' for protection, care and investment.

**Explanation**

A clear message from stakeholders and the community is that there is a need for an increased focus on protecting the coastal and marine environments along the Great Ocean Road, and for a consolidated approach to the protection, restoration, and visitation management of public lands. A shared overarching (regional) identity for the combined parks and public open spaces along the Great Ocean Road underpins such an approach.

Declaration of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, and their state importance, provides the basis for:

- developing a cohesive and holistic approach to protecting the ecological and landscape integrity of the Great Ocean Road, and engaging local communities and visitors in its care
- developing and maintaining contiguous coastal land experiences (such as trails)

- prioritising projects along the Great Ocean Road that protect and enhance the natural beauty and resilience of coastal assets, and/or improve the visitor experience.

**Implementation detail**

The *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* would be formally recognised as a state-significant integrated and living entity in the new legislation and in policy documents.

It is intended that the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* includes:

- all Crown land that is part of the *Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs* National Heritage listing (including Port Campbell National Park and coastal strip of the Great Otways National Park)
- marine waters along the Great Ocean Road including Point Addis Marine National Park, Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary, Twelve Apostles Marine National Park and the Arches Marine Sanctuary
- all public land managed by Great Ocean Road Coast Committee and Otway Coast Committee
- all coastal Crown land in the Surf Coast Shire, Colac-Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, and Moyne (east of Warrnambool)

- all undeveloped Crown land within the settlement boundaries of coastal towns along the Great Ocean Road (from Torquay to Allansford) that is not required for utilities or community infrastructure
- any other public land between the Great Ocean Road and the ocean, with the extent of public land on the inland side of the Road, and through the middle of the Great Otway National Park to be established during preparation of the legislation
- all visitor facilities and sites along the Great Ocean Road located on public land (including private land leased by the Government or obtained by some other arrangements).

The intent is to establish an identity for the contiguous strip of coastal public land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road as the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*. Note that the declaration is not intended to alter the reservation status or public use classification of the Crown land parcels.

# A new overarching planning framework

A new planning framework is required to establish clear direction, consistent decision making and enable streamline planning approvals to facilitate appropriate development proposals that will service the visitor economy and provide a great visitor experience.

## Recommendation 4

Establish a statutory requirement to develop a shared vision for the Great Ocean Road region with a long-term outlook (50+ years).

## Recommendation 5

Establish a statutory requirement to develop and maintain an overarching Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan that:

- gives effect to the vision
- provides direction to municipal and agency activities and decision making
- prioritises preservation of the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments
- includes planning for sustainable visitation and travel along the touring route;
- is developed with community participation
- is reviewed every 10 years
- identifies elements that organisations must have regard to, and those that are binding.

## Recommendation 6

Establish planning guidelines to accompany the strategic framework plan that provide clear direction on appropriate land-uses and development design standards across the area.

## Explanation

The experts and officials canvassed by the Taskforce emphatically believe that a unifying, strategic framework plan is required to provide the broader context, and coordinate functional and municipal planning processes along the length of the Great Ocean Road. This would create a longer-term, geographical view of future directions for land-uses, landscape management, and visitor facilities/amenities.

Once approved by the Minister and tabled in Parliament, the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan would align the fragmented decision-making and subsidiary planning processes and activities of all relevant agencies and local government authorities. It would integrate multiple policy priorities and a range of land uses. It would establish and manage interconnected urban and rural areas along the full length of the Great Ocean Road. In addition, it would necessitate the refreshing and rethinking of stand-alone regional plans, portfolio or place-based plans, and other statutory planning products required (such as

coastal and marine management plans) – creating a clean slate for the future management of the Road.

The Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan requires statutory backing to ensure it has the technical basis and power to provide direction and guidance to various public agencies for planning, infrastructure, services delivery and economic development. The Plan would be incorporated into planning schemes so that future local amendments to planning schemes would give effect to its land-use directions and private development would operate within its confines.

The accompanying planning guidelines would provide more detailed direction on appropriate land-uses and development design standards expected across the area. Development proposals that meet or exceed the expected guidelines and design standards, and have met the obligation to work with the local community to mobilise broad support for their project, would have access to streamlined planning approvals processes (as outlined in the recommendation on a standing advisory committee).



## Preparation

The development of shared objectives and a strategic framework plan will integrate planning spatially and across portfolios. As a key policy setting process, it would be led by DELWP in collaboration with all the public entities that will be responsible for its implementation. Extensive public participation – both within local communities and along the touring route and its hinterland – will be required at multiple points during the development process.

The first step is the assembly of the considerable body of work that has already been done in subsidiary plans, strategies, technical reports, and baseline data for the region, with an assessment of the gaps and hot spots requiring attention.

Comprehensive and detailed technical studies will need to be commissioned to better understand the values for protection, the key difficulties/constraints on land-uses (such as land slippage or subsidence, cliff regression, flooding, coastal inundation and erosion, acid-sulphate soils, bushfire risks), visitor capacity (road, accommodation, environment and land-use), demand for facilities and services along the Great Ocean Road, and opportunities for sustainable economic development within the region and interface areas.

The early development of a longer-term transport network plan for the Great Ocean Road (including the Princes Highway and north-south connecting

roads) will be important. This should include an assessment of the risks to the Road from natural forces and climate change, and the associated investment required to manage and protect the assets.

Shared objectives would be developed to clearly outline the desired future for places along the entire length of the Great Ocean Road, with an outlook of at least 50 years so that it considers the risks and challenges of climate change.

The contents of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan would cover the themes in Figure 16 and include:

- shared long-term objectives for the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and seascapes
- a land-use management plan that gives effect to the vision and provides direction on future land-uses along the Great Ocean Road and settlement boundaries for coastal towns
- recognition, protection and promotion of natural, Traditional Owner, heritage and social values
- protection of the unique features and special characteristics of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes
- sustainable visitation management plan and regional economic priorities (ensuring that touring route issues such as visitor accommodation, parking, and toilets are properly integrated)
- strategies to address the risks of climate change, particularly for coastal towns, coastal assets and to the Great Ocean Road

- outcomes and standards for the whole of the Great Ocean Road, and key places along it
- strategic projects, priorities and outcomes.

The Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan would be accompanied by:

- detailed land-use and design planning guidelines, complete with relevant standards and planning permit considerations, and case studies/examples
- an implementation plan
- development contributions plan(s) and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.

The Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan would be supported by a number of updated or new (subsidiary) companion documents:

- Great Ocean Road touring and visitation management plan
- marine and coastal Crown land management plan(s)
- integrated coastal landscapes and public open space masterplans for coastal towns along the Great Ocean Road
- site masterplans for other high visitation places along the Great Ocean Road (such as coastal town foreshore areas)
- regional infrastructure strategies – transport, telecommunications, energy, water and wastewater servicing strategies.



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### Coverage

The coverage of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan is based on the National Heritage-listed length of the Great Ocean Road and its land and seascapes, from Torquay to Allansford, with secondary interface areas to the east, west and north (where significant tourism developments servicing the Great Ocean Road might be located). The area of coverage includes the distinctive areas and landscapes, and national parks as well as the coastal towns.

The indicative area (below) would be refined during preparation of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan.

### Implementation detail

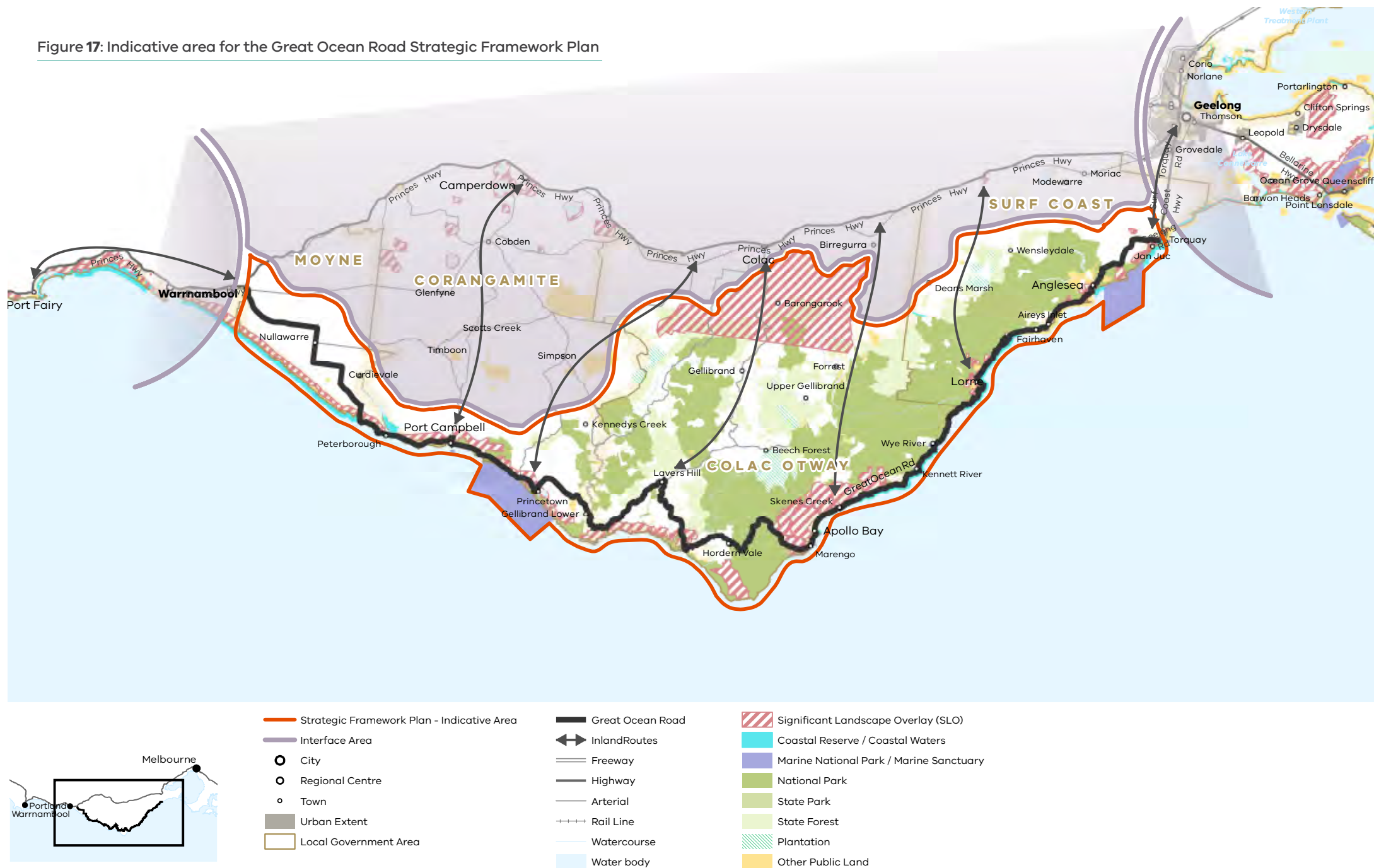
- The requirements for preparation of the shared vision and strategic framework plan would be set out in the new legislation including its contents, area of coverage, the responsible entities that must have regard to the strategic framework plan and processes for preparation and approval.
- DELWP would lead development of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan. This work is likely to take a couple of years and should commence as soon as it is funded. The introduction of the legislation will strengthen its provisions and provide consistent direction in the longer term.

**Figure 16:** The Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan would provide the “bigger picture to future local municipal and agency planning, and the means by which local planning gives effect to State priorities.”





Figure 17: Indicative area for the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan



### Recommendation 7

Establish local community reference groups along the Great Ocean Road to provide input and guidance to the development of the strategic framework plan.

#### Explanation

Engagement is about making better and more sustainable decisions through an inclusive process that engenders trust and credibility. Community and stakeholder engagement contributes to informed decisions by bringing all perspectives to the table, identifying important issues early, and allowing decisions to be understood and owned by as many people as possible. Engagement can also build and strengthen relationships, which ultimately leads to community ownership of outcomes.

Community co-design processes, with opportunities for deep public participation and debate, will be essential to:

- identify community values and preferences
- provide the broadest platform possible for local communities, and all Victorians, to hear about and contribute to establishing the future directions for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks
- build capacity of stakeholders and interested communities to participate in the project

- ensure there are no surprises at a later date by engaging the community early in the process
- increase local community and key stakeholder understanding, and strengthen support for the final recommendations.

#### Implementation detail

- Embed in legislation a requirement for public participation in the development of the strategic framework plan.
- Work with already established local community groups, structures and local forums where possible.

### Recommendation 8

Establish a statutory requirement to audit and report annually to parliament on the implementation of the strategic framework plan by the responsible public entities.

### Recommendation 9

Establish a statutory requirement for the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability to periodically assess and report on the environmental condition of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* as part of the regular reporting on the State of the Environment in Victoria.

#### Explanation

The new governance arrangements are designed to increase accountability and transparency.

An annual audit and report to Parliament on the extent to which progress is being made on implementing the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan will provide an incentive to all responsible organisations to align their operational priorities and reporting. The report to Parliament will provide increased transparency on the level of progress being made.

It is also important to periodically check that the implementation of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan is delivering meaningful progress towards the desired longer-term outcomes, such as the protection of the ecological and landscape integrity of the coastal and marine environments.

We have come to the view that, in addition to a periodic assessment and reporting on the environmental condition, it is also desirable to build a set of Environmental Economic Accounts for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*. This will assist in tracking changes to state of the marine and coastal environments, impacts of management and external drivers, and the contribution of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* to Victoria's social and economic benefits.

This approach is consistent with the work of the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, who is required to report periodically on the State of Victoria's environment (at least every five years) along with the preparation of regional reports (such as the State of the Bays, State of Yarra River land).



## Implementation detail

Enshrine in legislation the requirement to conduct:

- an annual performance audit and report to parliament on the implementation of the *Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan* by the responsible organisations
- a periodic assessment and report on the environmental condition of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability as part of the regular State of the Environment reporting for Victoria
- build and maintain a set of Environmental Economic Accounts for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* by the end of 2019.

### Recommendation 10

Support the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to map their cultural values in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

## Explanation

The marine, coastal and forested landscapes along the Great Ocean Road are of immense importance to its Traditional Owners – the Eastern Maar

and the Wadawurrung People. The sacred sites, and the resources, values, and stories associated with places along the Road – as well as language and ceremonial practices – have been handed down by their Ancestors and Elders.

Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected in Victoria under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, which is given effect through the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018. The Regulations prescribe standards, set out the circumstances in which a Cultural Heritage Management Plan should be prepared, and set fees and charges. This system of protection is, however, triggered by land development.

A project is required to support the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People (and Aboriginal Heritage Victoria) to systematically recognise, map and (where appropriate) promote their tangible and intangible values so that all Victorians can better understand the importance of the cultural heritage of the area.

## Implementation detail

Work with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung, along with Aboriginal Victoria to establish the methodology, project plan and timelines for the recording of tangible and intangible Aboriginal values of places along the Great Ocean Road.

21. There are areas in the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks that do not have a Registered Aboriginal Party (a Traditional Owner group that holds the decision-making responsibilities for the protection, management and preservation of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in their appointed areas) and therefore the responsibilities fall to Aboriginal Victoria who administers the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.



# Institutional changes

The suite of proposed institutional changes have been designed to work together as a state-led, place-based, governance and decision-making framework.

## Recommendation 11

Establish a standing advisory committee to the Minister for Planning for the Great Ocean Road region (under Section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) to streamline planning approvals and provide independent expert advice on sustainable land development.

### FUNCTIONS:

- i. Act as a review panel for planning scheme amendments and planning permit applications that are “called-in” by the Minister
- ii. Act as a land-use and design review panel for the responsible authorities for visitor economy development proposals that are consistent with the strategic framework plan and associated planning guidelines
- iii. Act as a review panel for coastal and marine management plans, and consents to use or develop marine and coastal Crown land in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
- iv. Provide policy and strategic advice to the Minister on:
  - a. development and operation of the Great Ocean Road Regional Strategic Framework Plan
  - b. protection of coastal environments and Crown land
  - c. protection of the coastal public land footprint and public foreshore access
  - d. sustainable visitation management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
  - e. related matters referred by the Minister.

### SKILLS:

Whilst the advisory committee can seek expert skills as required, its membership would need to include all of the following skills:

- strategic and statutory land-use planning
- architecture, urban design and landscape architecture
- marine and coastal environmental science
- transport planning
- Traditional Owner values
- heritage
- tourism and economic viability.

## Explanation

The coastal and rural landscapes along the Great Ocean Road are sensitive and complex environments and have numerous constraints on land development. These constraints are due to the substantial areas of landscape significance, environmental significance, bushfire management requirements and other natural constraints (such as coastal inundation and erosion, riverine flooding, land instability and subsidence, acid-sulphate soils). A standing advisory committee would facilitate consistent decision-making on complex technical matters over the long term.

The councils along the Great Ocean Road state that they lack the capacity to process large and complex planning applications. As a result, councils are increasingly asking the Minister for Planning to call in large and complex proposals. Councils would have access to the standing advisory committee for expert advice on visitor economy development proposals that are consistent with the Great Ocean Road





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Strategic Framework Plan. This would allow councils to identify appropriate developments and issue permits, reduce the uncertainty that currently exists in the planning approval processes pathway, and simplify and expedite the approval of complex projects.

Given the national importance of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, the standing advisory committee would also be asked to provide independent expert advice to the Minister on coastal management plans and coastal consent permits.

#### Implementation detail

- Establish a standing advisory committee established under Section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

- Prepare clearly articulated information sheets outlining the application process, information requirements and fees.
- The Secretariat to the advisory committee would provide pre-application discussions for development proposals to assist the land owner/developer understand the application requirements and identify the key issues.
- The area of coverage for the advisory committee would include the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan area but may also include additional hinterland for projects servicing the Great Ocean Road regional visitor economy.

#### Recommendation 12

Streamline planning approvals by providing Planning services to supplement the councils' capacity to assess large and complex land development projects and ensure that referral agencies are adequately resourced.

#### Explanation

Councils along the Great Ocean Road report that they don't have the capacity to undertake the work required for decision-making on complex tourism land development proposals in sensitive landscape settings.

The department would provide specialist planning services to assist council staff assess and administer development proposals that service the visitor economy.

**Recommendation 13**

Establish a new statutory authority, the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority*, with an independent chair and skills-based board, to manage the coastal Crown land and marine parks along the Great Ocean Road.

**FUNCTIONS:**

The primary purpose is to protect and manage visitation of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, to:

- protect and enhance the ecological and landscape integrity of the coastal parks and marine areas along the Great Ocean Road
- protect coastal assets (natural and built), the coastal public land footprint, and community access
- prepare for, and manage, the impacts of natural forces on, and climate change risks to, coastal public land and assets.

**OTHER PURPOSES:**

- sustainable visitation management including:
  - operation of visitor facilities and camping grounds
  - issuing of permits for events and commercial activities, leases and licenses
  - regulation of commercial operation in, on or around the Crown land and marine parks
- support the involvement of the Traditional Owners in the management of cultural values and natural resources (including Crown land)
- coordinate government construction projects and disruptions along the Great Ocean Road
- deliver construction projects
- facilitate appropriate economic development
- educate and foster community stewardship (and volunteerism) of coastal land.

**POWERS REQUIRED TO:**

- ensure funds raised (from caravan parks and leases etc) can be collected, held, remain with, and be allocated to initiatives within the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
- purchase, consolidate, take on, transfer or otherwise acquire land for inclusion in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*
- regulate commercial visitor operations in, on or around the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

**INDEPENDENT SKILLS BASED BOARD OF EXPERTS COVERING:**

- land-use planning and landscape architecture
- marine and coastal environmental science
- travel, tourism, hospitality and leisure
- finance and investment facilitation
- construction management
- natural resource management
- Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung values.

**Explanation**

The most important governance task for the Great Ocean Road is to protect the environmental assets and isolated beauty experience for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

The protection and management of the Crown land along the Great Ocean Road is becoming an increasingly complex and challenging task. The challenge is expected to escalate into the future, due to the increased visitor numbers and climate change accentuating the

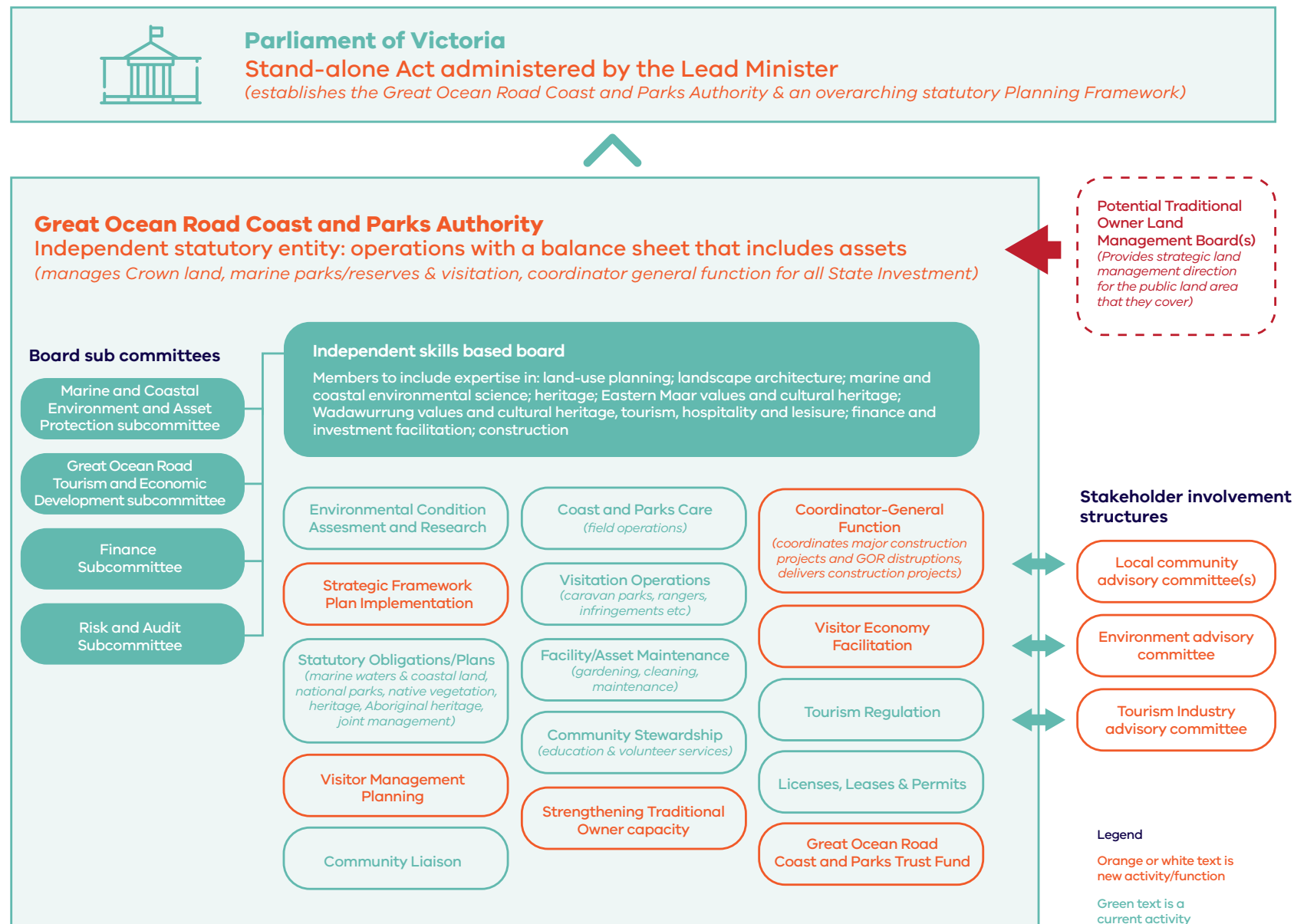
harsh forces of nature that the coastal environment experiences. A holistic, whole-of-Great Ocean Road view is required to protect our coastal assets, improve the visitor experience and manage visitation hot spots.

A major change in governance arrangements is required for this extraordinary and iconic place. This area is so special, and so significant, that it needs and deserves its own special governance arrangements. It requires a dedicated, place-based, focus by an entity that does not have to balance the allocation of resources to many competing priorities across the State. In our opinion, this is best achieved through the consolidation of the management of all coastal public land and marine waters into the one new, independent statutory authority that reports to one, lead Minister.

The totality of the tasks ahead requires a great degree of dedicated focus and coordination for the full length of the Great Ocean Road. This goes well beyond the current remit and capacity of the fragmented approach to Crown land management by eleven different organisations with very different capabilities and funding.

Transfer of the responsibilities for managing the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road from the current eleven responsible entities to the new authority will provide both the remit and imperative required. It will simplify the management arrangements considerably and increase transparency and accountability from the most executive levels of government down.



**Figure 18:** A new statutory parks management authority, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

Like the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the work of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* would be underpinned by science and research. Its primary obligation would be to protect, rehabilitate and foster resilience of iconic coastal Crown land and marine areas along the Great Ocean Road.

Consolidation of Crown land management along the coastline under the management of the new entity will strengthen the governance and oversight of public land of national importance, and provide a stronger basis for integrated, risk-based, management of coastal assets. It will reduce the difficulty of delivering multi-portfolio and multi-jurisdictional projects. It will also provide the remit for a touring-route approach to visitor management – delivering a better visitor experience.

The new Authority will also require a coordinator-general function for effective and reliable delivery of the considerable pipeline of State and Commonwealth investment ahead. It will manage disruptions to travellers and local communities, deliver construction projects and maintain an ongoing dialogue with local communities along the Great Ocean Road. The co-ordinator general function in the new Authority could also be used to deliver Geelong City Deal projects along the Great Ocean Road.

The new agency will need to be adequately funded to build the critical organisational capability, staff and expertise to protect coastal and marine parks, protect coastal assets, manage

sustainable visitation and coordinate the effective and timely delivery of the major state projects (visitor facilities and infrastructure) that will be required over the next 25 years (including coordination of major disruptions along the touring route). The level of investment, and the technical challenges of building in sensitive landscapes, make the future government investment pipeline on par with major precinct scale development. These complex projects need to be managed and delivered with the appropriate project governance and risk management skills, systems and performance monitoring.

The new agency will be a central point of accountability and coordination for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, and the point of contact for all stakeholders, businesses and local communities on the management of coastal environments and its visitation. It would also provide advice on economic development facilitation

### Implementation detail

- Prepare legislation to establish the new independent *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* that includes a preamble by the Traditional Owners of Country.
- As a statutory authority, it will have a skills-based board comprising independent members, and an independent chair to promote independence and objectivity in decision-making.

- The Authority's functions are broad encompassing advisory, regulatory, management and service delivery, scientific research, park management, inter-jurisdiction activities, program design and implementation, coordination and client representative for delivery of major state construction projects. A Board of between seven-and-twelve independent directors with a diverse range of skills will be required to govern the Authority.
- The role of the Minister is to establish the overarching expectations of government and to oversee its performance, typically formalised through a Statement of Expectations (or obligations). This will require the Minister to liaise with other portfolio Ministers given the coordinative (multiportfolio) coordinator-general function of the Authority.
- The Minister should preserve a level of independence for the new Authority to promote the objective, scientific and expert based management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.
- The Chairperson is a pivotal role that needs to be independent, and filled by a highly regarded individual of recognised integrity and national credibility who is astute, understands strategic leadership and has the gravitas to lead the board and mentor the chief executive. It will be important that the Chairperson is



not seen as representing a particular interest group, is able to develop trust and respect within local and scientific communities, and is able to command respect internationally.

- The other board members should be independent and have significant standing in their fields of expertise. The board membership must include (but should not be limited to) an intimate knowledge and familiarity with Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung culture, values and practices; marine and coastal environmental sciences; land-use planning and landscape architecture; tourism; finance and investment facilitation; and construction management. To the greatest extent possible, the board ought to reflect Traditional Owner, Victorian, national and international perspectives.
- Given the major changes and challenges facing the new Authority, it will be important to ensure that the CEO has strong strategic capabilities, so that the board's agenda is supported with effective decision-making on a day-to-day basis. The CEO will also need the credibility and background to represent the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* internationally.
- The new Authority will be expected to provide advice and make recommendations in relation to the care and development of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, and regulation of its visitation.
- Research is a critical part of the response to climate change and the Authority will be expected to form close partnerships with the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, various universities and other institutions, to arrange and carry out research relevant to the coastal and marine parks.
- In addition to its primary accountability to the Victorian Government, the Authority will also have responsibilities to the Australian Government, its stakeholders and local communities.
- The co-ordinator general function in the new Authority will provide an important interface for coordinating delivery of projects under the Geelong City Deal, and protocols for working together will need to be developed.
- Transfer Crown land and marine parks management responsibilities from the eleven existing entities to the new *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* (refer Maps 2- 5 for the proposed area of coverage).
- Broad acre parks management will remain the responsibility of Parks Victoria and fire management responsibilities are unchanged.

### Recommendation 14

Establish local community advisory committees, an environmental advisory committee, and a tourism industry advisory committee as ongoing forums for involving local communities and key stakeholders in the management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

### Explanation

It is critical for the board of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* to understand the concerns and needs of all stakeholders, as well as other factors influencing the Authority's operating environment.

The work of the new Authority will be supported on an ongoing basis by inputs and contributions from community and environmental advisory committees and a tourism industry advisory committee. These advisory committees will serve as forums for involving the local communities and representative organisations along the Great Ocean Road, along with key stakeholders and industry groups in the management of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

An ongoing forum with status, and a process that engenders trust and credibility will assist not only the new authority but all the responsible organisations to produce better and more sustainable decisions and be more responsive to local community and visitor needs. Community

and industry support, including a social license to operate are central to positive, non-confrontational interactions, local stewardship and volunteerism.

### Implementation detail

The advisory committees should be non-statutory as their structure and composition is likely to need to modify over time. Their purpose will be to:

- advise the authority (and other agencies) on issues and policies as they arise
- facilitate communication between user groups and interested parties in the local community
- promote the exchange of information and raise awareness of issues impacting on the ecological and landscape integrity of the marine and coastal environments
- increase the involvement and support of local communities in the stewardship and visitation management of their part of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

### Recommendation 15

Enshrine the new governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and seascapes in stand-alone legislation that includes a preamble by the Traditional Owners.

### Explanation

The new governance arrangements need to be set out in legislation to establish an enduring and lasting legacy for future generations that cannot be easily undone and destroyed by short-term imperatives.

Stand-alone legislation will ensure that in future governments, there will always be one Minister with accountability for protecting the Great Ocean Road and its distinctive landscapes, improving the visitor experience and attracting investments that benefit both tourists and local communities.

Given that the new legislation is place-specific, it is important to recognise the First Nations People by the inclusion of a preamble written by the Traditional Owners, the Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung.

### Recommendation 16

Strengthen the capacity of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to actively participate in the management of their traditional lands.

### Explanation

The preparation of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan will require significant input and resourcing from the Traditional Owners of Country, the

Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung. Support is required to strengthen their capacity to commit the time and resourcing required for such a large program of works and for technical assistance for their tasks.

This additional support, resourcing and time is required to meet the minimum standard of "free, prior and informed consent"<sup>22</sup> of future projects or decisions that affect Crown land that is the traditional lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People.

### Implementation detail

- All responsible public entities provide regular briefings and training on policies, regulatory systems and other relevant topics.
- Make a commitment to strengthen the capacity of Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung to actively participate in the governance of the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.
- Provide financial and technical support for the Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung to establish an easy to use information storage and retrieval system to support their cultural heritage management.

22. Australia supports (announced 3 April 2009) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which affirms the minimum standard of free, prior and informed consent before decisions on projects or decisions that affect traditional lands.



# Sustainable funding model

Funding is required for the operations of the new authority, and for the pipeline of projects required to maintain and grow the visitor economy.

## Recommendation 17

Establish long term funding arrangements for the new authority.

## Recommendation 18

Review the long-term risks from coastal erosion and inundation, severe weather events and climate change on coastal Crown land and assets.

## Explanation

The new *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* will require sufficient funding to employ staff and deliver its functions with autonomy.

The current funding model for the management of Crown land and protection of coastal assets is primarily based on the revenue that can be raised from that land (through leases of land, caravan parks and camping, and activity permits). The level of investment and protection of coastal assets ought not be dependent on the revenue stream that can be raised from those assets.

Whilst revenue streams will be transferred with the Crown land management responsibilities for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks (primarily from caravan parks) these are insufficient for the coastal asset protection, let alone to support the additional functions required as part of the new governance arrangements.

A key principle of operation for the new authority will be that funding raised on Crown land within the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks will be reinvested locally.

## Recommendation 19

Review the public land commercial tour operator and commercial activity provider licences system.

## Explanation

A licence is required by people or businesses who conduct organised tours or recreational businesses for profit on public land in Victoria (including land and waters managed by and on behalf of the Crown). Tour Operator Licences are issued under the relevant Act by which the public land is managed. Parks Victoria

issues and administers tour operator licences.

The fees, set in accordance with the *Tour Operator Licence Fee Regulations 2011*, comprise an annual fee plus a use fee (which includes an annual cap on the total amount of "use" fees a tour operator is required to pay). A single licence covers all public land in the state that has the same manager.

In 2017, Parks Victoria reported that 38,660 coaster buses (22 seaters) and 3,850 large coaches visited the Twelve Apostles (and Port Campbell National Park). The total funds raised from these visits is unknown, as is the number of buses that operated on the one licence, or the revenue raised could not be directly attributable to the Twelve Apostles.

## Implementation detail

The review would explore the structure of the fees, the level of the cap, and the impact on operators of different fee scales. It would also assess licencing administration and enforcement processes, the revenue raised annually, and the criteria around the allocation of raised funds.



# Supporting initiatives

There are a few actions required to support the governance reforms, and make an early start on implementation

## Recommendation 20

Establish a working group to identify opportunities for shared municipal-like services delivery along the Great Ocean Road and develop an implementation plan.

delivery of a number of municipal services (such as cleaning and maintenance of toilet and other visitor facilities, gardening, waste collection and management, compliance and enforcement).

## Implementation detail

## Explanation

Municipal-like services are being delivered by multiple organisations along the Great Ocean Road, based on legacy land management responsibilities. This is creating duplication (such as two rubbish collection contracts for the same road) and different standards (such as mow lines<sup>23</sup> in the middle of foreshore parks from contractors operating on different timing cycles). There is scope for greater efficiencies and consistent standards for

- Establish a project with support for a working group comprising staff from the department, councils, current committees of management and Parks Victoria to identify opportunities and options for reduced costs and consistent standards through shared delivery arrangements for municipal-like services.
- Build off the similar work already undertaken by Surf Coast Shire and Great Ocean Road Coast Committee.

23. Mow lines are visible lines in the grassed public open space created when part of the area is mowed up to the boundary of the area maintained by another organisation.



**Recommendation 21**

Review and align anomalous Crown land reservations and parcel information within the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* with the directions of the Strategic Framework Plan.

**Explanation**

There are almost 170,000 hectares of public land along the Great Ocean Road managed by at least 11 different organisations, with considerable fragmentation of contiguous coastal public land and administration based on legacy arrangements.

Land administration and on-ground management is difficult because information systems for Crown land are inadequate, with multiple databases requiring consultation, gaps and inaccuracies and sometimes conflicting information. In addition, agreements (such as leases and licences) are not centrally stored.

*“Modern land administration relies on accurate, up to date mapping and database systems to support planning decision making. There are few areas that are more critical to effective public land management.”<sup>24</sup>*

**Implementation detail**

Conduct a detailed review and update of the public land reservations and information for public land in the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*, and tidy up anomalous land management delegations.

**Recommendation 22**

Conduct a capacity analysis for the Great Ocean Road (the road, coast and marine environments, parks and key destinations, accommodation, coastal towns) and identify visitation management options.

**Recommendation 23**

Develop a sustainable visitation management strategy for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.

**Explanation**

Visitor capacity was a key question raised in the community feedback discussions. The view of many people from local communities is that this capacity is already reached at peak times throughout the year. The consequences of exceeding the visitor capacity are significant – environmental degradation at key sites (such as in the Port Campbell National Park), poor visitor

experiences and reputational damage, environmental damage, increased challenge for emergency management, social and traffic impacts on local communities, boom and bust cycles for local businesses and road safety issues.

**Implementation detail**

- Conduct a multi-dimensional examination of capacities and issues along the Great Ocean Road to inform the development of a sustainable visitation management plan for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks*.
- Develop a sustainable visitation management plan for the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks* that protects the coastal and marine environment for future generations, provides a great visitor experience (for both the touring route and places along it) and continues to provide options for affordable family holidays.

24. State-wide Assessment of Public Land Final Report' by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (1 July 2017).

### Recommendation 24

Review the risks to the ongoing operation and function of the Great Ocean Road and develop a longer-term transport network strategy.

### Recommendation 25

Work with Road Safety Agencies to review and identify the priority projects to improve the safety and well-being of travellers along the Great Ocean Road.

### Explanation

There are significant risks and hazards to the ongoing operation and function of the Great Ocean Road. The Road is protected in many instances by adjacent coastal assets (natural and built) that are subject to intense pressures from wave action and erosion. Other nature-based risks include slope instability and subsidence, and limestone cliff regression. The Road has been closed a number of times since it was built due to storm damage and flooding, coastal inundation and landslides. It has also been moved inland near Port Campbell due to cliff regression.

A long-term transport network strategy is required to maintain the ongoing function and operation of the Great Ocean Road as close to the ocean as possible.

Princes Highway West (Melbourne to Colac) provides important access to the Great Ocean Road and is

already included in the National Land Transport Network. The State could ask the Commonwealth to consider placing the Great Ocean Road and its connecting (north-south) routes to the Princes Highway on the National Land Transport Network (in recognition of the national economic benefit from visitors to the Great Ocean Road region and the investment required to manage and protect those road assets). The Commonwealth and Victorian Government could consider how investment in the road network can be prioritised in Commonwealth funding programs such as the Infrastructure Program over the next 5-10 years.

In addition, VicRoads advise that the Great Ocean Road has an above average incidence of traffic accidents resulting in serious injuries.

### Recommendation 26

Establish the visitor expectations and emergency services benefits of enhanced digital capacity in towns, and connection to mobile phone services between towns, along the Great Ocean Road.

### Explanation

Currently there is limited mobile phone service along the Great Ocean Road and no signal at all between towns west of Lorne. In locations along the Great Ocean

Road where there is a mobile signal, the capacity is insufficient for the demand during busy days making it difficult (and sometime impossible) to obtain a mobile phone signal.

Digital connectivity is important for several reasons:

- a. Improved visitor experience by providing:
  - just-in-time access to information (such as nearby toilet or cafes)
  - real-time touring information and/or augmented reality tour applications
  - the ability to share your experience with others – increasingly part of the visitor experience is being able to instantly share their experience with others on-line (and post selfies)
  - navigation aid and trip advisory information.
- b. Road Safety – in the case of accidents being able to raise the alarm or seek assistance, noting that the topography is such that if a car goes off the edge of the road there may be no other way of raising the alarm or seeking help.
- c. Warnings – in the case of severe weather or emergency events (such as bushfires), information can be pushed through text messages to people in the area warning them of imminent hazards or risks.





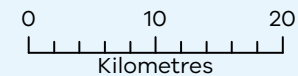
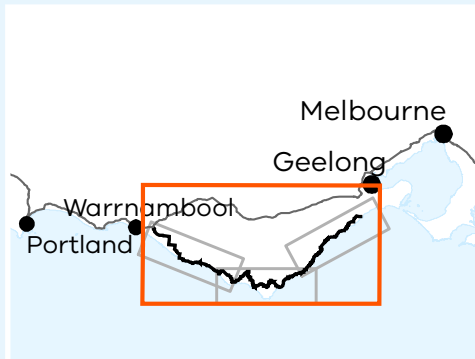








# Maps





## Legend



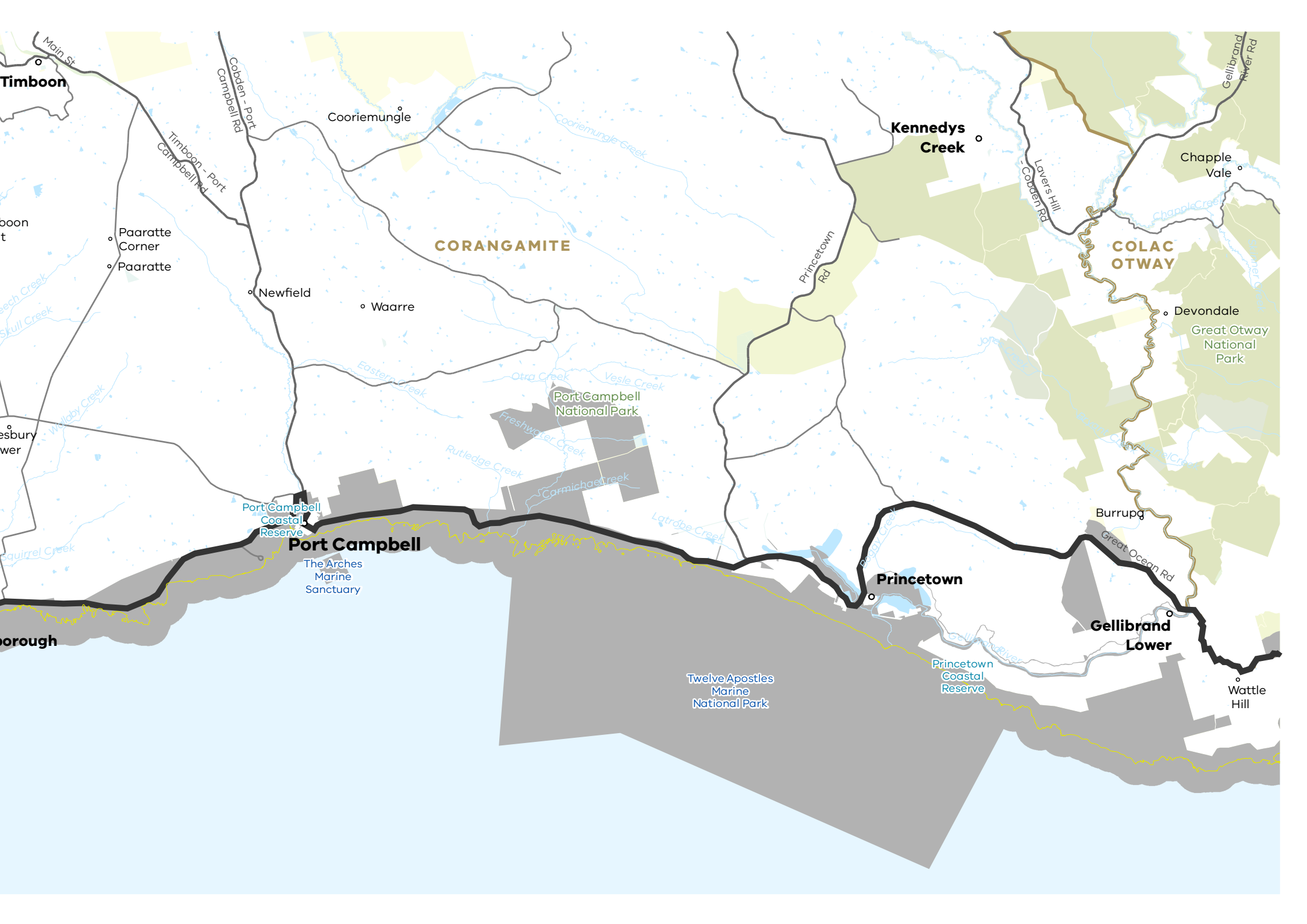
- City
- Regional Centre
- Town
- Local Government Area
- Urban Extent
- Great Ocean Road
- Freeway
- Highway
- Arterial
- Rail Line
- Watercourse
- Water body
- Coastline
- Proposed Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Area
- National Park
- State Forest
- Plantation
- Other Public Land
- Coastal Reserve / Coastal Waters Planning Scheme Zones
- Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ) & Public Parks and Recreation Zone (PPRZ)



Apollo Bay Harbour

























# Appendix

# Appendix A – Terms of Reference

## Name of Project

Great Ocean Road Taskforce

## The issue

The 243km Great Ocean Road is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes. Its sheer limestone cliffs, pockets of rainforest, shipwreck history, and world class surfing breaks makes the Great Ocean Road one of Australia's most popular destinations for visitors and Victoria's most significant tourism asset.

The coastal and forested landscapes along the Great Ocean Road are of high cultural, ecological and economic importance to the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung People who have known this Country, and cared for it, since the beginning. The coastline also includes rare polar dinosaur fossil sites, the best-known one being Dinosaur Cove and fossils collected from numerous sites along the coast continue to yield important scientific information.

Constructed by returned servicemen as a memorial to Victoria's First World War servicemen and women, the Great Ocean Road is a constant reminder of their war service and sacrifice. It was a huge engineering feat at that time and connected isolated coastal communities.

The Ocean Road Planning Scheme was developed in 1955 by the Victorian Town and Country Planning Board to establish an integrated approach across four local shires to

protect and preserve the exceptional scenery of the tourist road. It was a pioneering planning mechanism that led the way in the protection of land for its scenic environmental value. On 7 April 2011, the Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs was added to the National Heritage list for its extraordinary historic and cultural significance.

Today the Great Ocean Road governance arrangements involves many different organisations that operate across a range of geographical scales, timeframes and jurisdictional boundaries. There are over 20 responsible public entities with accountabilities from strategy development and implementation; land-use planning, management and administration, infrastructure delivery, asset maintenance, emergency management, investment facilitation, destination promotion and brand stewardship. Responsibility for managing the contiguous coastal foreshore, public open spaces and parklands along the Great Ocean Road is also fragmented.

The Victorian Government has established the independently chaired Great Ocean Road Taskforce to review the effectiveness of current governance arrangements and to make recommendations to strengthen protection of the landscape setting, improve the visitor experience, provide greater certainty in land-use planning and attract investment proposals that will benefit tourists and local communities.

## The Project

On 14 September 2017, the Victorian Government announced an independently chaired Taskforce to investigate the management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road. The Taskforce functions are to:

1. Review the effectiveness of the current governance arrangements.
2. Consult extensively with Traditional Owners of Country, responsible public entities and local communities.
3. Make recommendations on governance reforms to protect the distinctive landscapes, improve the visitor experience and attract investments that benefit both tourists and local communities.

The Taskforce investigations are to include examination of options for reducing barriers to appropriate development in the area, consideration of an over-sighting body or independent authority covering the length of the road, and examination of other appropriate governance arrangements.

The work of the Taskforce will build on, and review the implementation of, the 2015-2025 Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy, the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan 2015, the 2004 Great Ocean Road Regional Strategy and the VicRoads Great Ocean Road Management Strategy 2013. It will also draw on the experience of cooperative efforts during the Wye River Bushfire



Reconstruction process.

The Taskforce will report to three coordinating Ministers: Minister for Planning (lead), the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Tourism and Major Events.

### Study Area

The primary study area is the Great Ocean Road and its landscape from Torquay to Port Fairy (including settlements). The secondary study area includes more of the hinterland for consideration of infrastructure and projects that contribute to the Great Ocean Road visitor experience. The project study area includes parts of the municipalities of Surf Coast, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Moyne and Warrnambool.

### Purpose of the Taskforce

The Taskforce is to

1. Review the effectiveness of current Great Ocean Road governance arrangements.
2. Undertake extensive consultation with the Traditional Owners of Country, responsible public entities, key stakeholders and the community.
3. Report to the Victorian Government within twelve months with recommended reforms to governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes.
4. Make recommendations on governance reforms to:
  - a. boost tourism expenditure and investment along the Great Ocean Road
  - b. better support local communities to benefit from the visitation economy

- c. maintain appropriate environmental and landscape protections.

### Roles & Tasks

The role of the Taskforce is to identify gaps, points of duplication and recommendations for better coordination across government agencies in project delivery and communications to achieve better tourism, access and environmental outcomes.

The Taskforce will undertake extensive consultation to consider the strengths and weaknesses of current management arrangements and an assessment of project delivery processes across government departments and agencies.

The outputs to be delivered comprise:

- Initial report to the coordinating Ministers at the end of 2017 on early insights and key issues.
- An Issues and Options Discussion Paper for public release and comment.
- Community views report.
- Final report with recommended governance reforms.

The final report is to canvas options for reducing barriers to appropriate development in the area, evaluate the merits of an over-sighting body or independent authority covering the length of the road, and examine other appropriate governance arrangements. It is to make recommendations on reforms to governance arrangements for the Great Ocean Road to improve economic, community and environmental outcomes, improve project

delivery processes and improve communications with visitors and local communities.

The Taskforce will undertake the following administrative tasks:

1. Receive and note monthly reports on progress against program milestones, sign off status and scope change.
2. Provide input into all Taskforce discussion papers and reports.
3. Review relevant materials prior to all taskforce meetings.
4. Endorse relevant papers and reports for Ministerial consideration.
5. Provide input into communications applicable to the project.
6. Confirm completion and handover of the project.

### Constraints

The Taskforce can only make recommendations in relation to the scope and content of this Project.

The role of the Co-Chairs of the Taskforce is to provide independent advice to the coordinating Ministers (Minister for Planning, Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Tourism and Major Events).

The Chairs will seek (and record) the views of Taskforce members on their recommendations to Government.

The advice and recommendations will inform decision-making by the Victorian Government.

## Membership

The Taskforce membership comprises:

- independent Co-Chairs Mr Peter Batchelor and Mr Terry Mulder
- nominees of the Traditional Owners of Country for the Great Ocean Road:
  - Eastern Maar
  - Wadawurrung
- members with expertise and experience in tourism and coastal management, and have an understanding of the key issues relating to the governance of the Great Ocean Road:
  - Ms Diane James
  - Ms Elaine Carbines
  - Mr Wayne Kayler-Thomson
- CEOs from the Local Government Authorities along the Great Ocean Road:
  - Mr Andrew Mason – CEO Corangamite Shire
  - Mr Bruce Anson – CEO Warrnambool City Council
  - Mr David Madden – CEO Moyne Shire Council
  - Mr Keith Baillie – CEO Surf Coast Shire
  - Mr Robert Dobrzynski/Mr Tony McGann – Acting CEO Colac Otway Shire

## Project Reference Group

The Taskforce will also be supported by a Project Reference Group. The Project Reference Group will be convened by the Secretariat and will consist of the Traditional Owners of Country for the length of the Great Ocean Road (Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar), responsible public entities and key stakeholders.

Permanent members of the Reference Group include:

- Barwon Regional Partnership

- Barwon Water and Wannon Water
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
- Country Fire Authority
- DELWP Barwon South West and RDV Barwon South West (Project co-sponsors)
- Emergency Management Victoria
- Great Ocean Road Committee of Management and Otway Coast Committee of Management
- Great South Coast Regional Partnership
- Heritage Victoria
- Major Economic Projects and Transport for Victoria (DEDJTR)
- Parks Victoria
- VicRoads, South West
- Visit Victoria

Other bodies to be consulted and invited onto the reference group on an as needs basis.

## Support

The Taskforce will be supported by a Secretariat to be convened by DELWP, and comprise a Project Manager and Project Officers in the initial one-year period (equivalent to at least 2 full people). The role of the secretariat is to:

- Develop a Project Plan, Budget, Communications and Engagement plan, risk register and other project management tools as required
- Support the Taskforce in the review of the delivery of the 2004 Great Ocean Road Strategy and project delivery processes across government departments and agencies relevant to the delivery of the strategy
- Manage stakeholder and consultation activities.

- Support the Taskforce in developing options for the management of the Great Ocean Road.
- Oversee any consultancy work undertaken for the Taskforce.
- Prepare a report with proposed recommendations regarding management arrangements, project delivery processes and communications.
- Following the response from government, prepare a business case for the establishment/ongoing management of the Great Ocean Road.

The Secretariat will also provide the following support to the Taskforce:

- Prepare and distribute agendas
- Prepare and distribute meeting minutes
- Undertake project work between meetings.

Information for the Taskforce will be distributed at least five working days prior to any meeting to ensure members have adequate time to read any documentation.

## Meetings

The first meeting will be convened in October 2017. The Taskforce will meet regularly with the agenda prepared by the Project Manager and distributed at least five days before the meeting. Meeting dates will be determined as required but are envisaged to be approximately bi-monthly.

## Timeframe

The Taskforce is to review the effectiveness of current governance arrangements and recommend governance reforms by the end of 2018.

The Taskforce will operate until the project is completed or until the project is placed on hold for a period more than six (6) months.





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