

'What We Heard' Portland Cliffs Community Consultation

Community Feedback from a listening post that was held in
Portland on 8 October 2022



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Context

There has been a long history of the Portland community living with the risks associated with cliffs. Heavy and prolonged periods of rainfall during 2013 resulted in significant landslide activity that posed a public safety risk. A geotechnical investigation confirmed the unstable nature of the cliffs and the susceptibility of further landslide activity. This significant event led to the ongoing closure of the coastal path connecting Nun's Beach and Anderson Point.

A recent cliff collapse in Anglesea, Victoria prompted further investigations to be undertaken to understand the current nature of cliff risk across the state. Climate change is accelerating these changes and extensive planning is required to mitigate the risk posed by cliff instability.

In response, the Department Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Glenelg Shire Council (GSC) are working collaboratively to produce a risk-based adaptation plan to inform the long-term options and improve public safety (specifically between Nun's Beach and Anderson Point).

After a review of previous studies and further geotechnical investigation using 3D drone modelling, it was determined that the Anderson Point stairs needed to be closed due to cliff instability starting to undermine footings.

DELWP and GSC understand that the path is valued by the Portland community and is investigating a range of options to mitigate risk to the public.

As part of DELWP's commitment to working with community, a listening post was held on 8 October 2022 to communicate the updated cliff risk assessment and allow the community to provide feedback and comment on the long-term planning.

The event was held at Whaler's Point Lighthouse (10-1pm) and was attended by 25 individuals who provided important feedback which is being included in shaping the long-term adaptation options.



This is what we heard:

The following is a summary of what we heard from the community that attended the listening post.

Community Values the Area

The overarching theme heard during the event was a shared desire to maintain access to the whole area, whether they lived adjacent to the cliffs or in town.

This was primarily due to the amenity (such as the view), the recreation (such as swimming with family) and physical exercise opportunities. Access to the beach was a primary concern as many community members shared how they walk up and down the stairs for exercise and preferred this location over others.

“The stairs are the easiest way for me to access a quieter part of the beach, particularly during summer.”

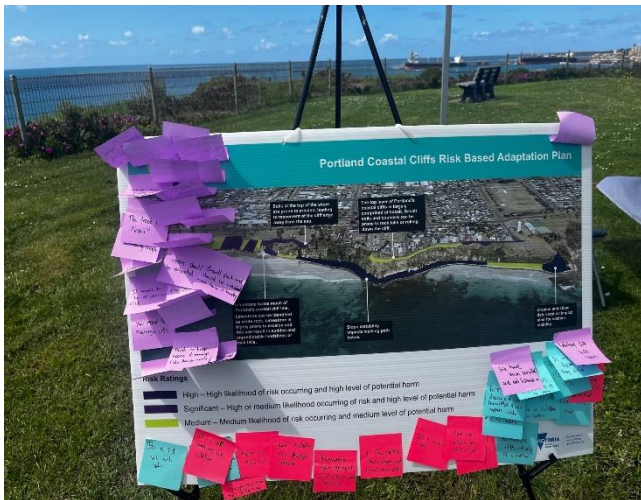
there is also a strong connection to the area with the stairs built primarily by the local Rotary club with funds from a community trust.

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Additional factors contributing to cliff erosion

Some participants believe there were other factors contributing to the erosion of the cliff face including:

- Sand pumping that occurs adjacent to the cliff line
- Rabbits in the area have burrowed into the cliffs that could have destabilised the area
- Poor and old drainage lines as well as the Portland tram that operates in the area could be contributing to instability



Alternative Options

- One suggestion included provided walking trails at a safe distance back from the cliff, so people are still able to exercise and enjoy the view
- People feel there is an opportunity not only to manage the cliffs through vegetation, but improve amenity by planting 'something nice'

“Revegetation makes the most sense. It is a natural way to improve cliff stability while retaining the beauty of the area.”

- There was a suggestion that we should consider upgrading the rock wall at the bottom of the cliffs to prevent waves from eroding the bottom of the cliffs.

Other Comments

Participants also provided additional comments which included the following:

- In the summer, community members can see visible cracks on top of the cliff (Grassed area and have requested re-inspections
- Some believe if the stairs were removed, people will create their own 'goat tracks' to walk down the hill and access the beach
- Maintaining the existing environmental and recreational values of the area and avoiding hard infrastructure would retain amenity values
- Further consultation with community is required particularly around long-term hard infrastructure or managed retreat.

Next Steps

DELWP and GSC thank the participants who provided valuable feedback which is being used in planning decisions.

Stage two of the consultation process will begin in February through Engage Vic. This will allow community to provide detailed feedback on the long-term adaptation options. More information will be shared prior to the next stage of consultation

For more information, please visit

<https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/coastal-adaptation-plans>

