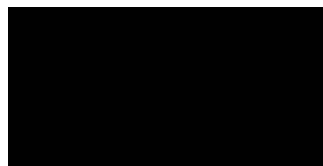


Ref: STK/01-0014

20 March 2015




Dear 

**Re: Draft Western Regional Coastal Plan 2015-2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Western Regional Coastal Plan ('the Plan').

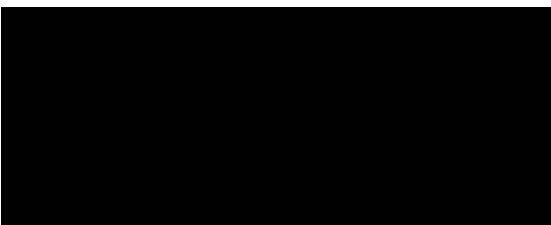
To assist in shaping the draft Plan, we have attached a detailed response for your consideration, which builds on previous advice provided during the development of the Plan. In this response we have provided some overall feedback on the Plan as a whole, and some more specific feedback on individual sections of the Plan.

Our response draws from our expertise in natural resource management, including the development and implementation of the Corangamite RCS, the Corangamite Waterway Strategy, the Corangamite Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy (2009), estuary management and planning, our floodplain statutory role, and being the host of the state-wide Coastcare and EstuaryWatch programs.

We would be happy to discuss our response with you in more detail. If you wish to do so please contact 

We look forward to our feedback being considered.

Yours sincerely



## Corangamite CMA response to the draft Western Regional Coastal Plan

### Overall comments

We welcome the development of the Plan, which provides a broad strategic overview to guide sustainable long term use and protection of our much loved, but fragile coastal environments. We also appreciate the measures adopted in the Plan to highlight the range of organisations and existing strategic documents at play in the coastal management space, building on the Victorian Coastal Strategy direction for integrated coastal zone management.

We also support the **hierarchy of principles** and in particular that the environment is first. We believe this provides a good framework to balance environmental management with the use and development of the coast. This also supports the overall goal of the Corangamite RCS, which is to increase protection, enhancement and restoration of valuable natural resources to improve the health and sustainable productivity of the Corangamite catchment.

We feel that this hierarchy, however, could be better reflected by being reinforced throughout the entire document. Protecting biodiversity is also recognised as the first act in which to achieve the vision (p3), but this does not flow into the rest of the Plan. The Plan reads with a heavy focus on managing visitation, amenity, access and economics with little discussion on how this impacts on environmental values.

To reinforce the hierarchy of principles and the vision, it is recommended that overall the Plan incorporates a stronger emphasis on environmental assets, including improved description and mapping of regional environmental assets and inclusion of actions to show how the Plan will support and contribute to environmental and biodiversity protection. In particular:

1. **Mapping environmental assets of regional significance.** Corangamite's Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS), and its sub-strategies (the Corangamite Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy and the Corangamite Waterway Strategy (CWS)) provide information and maps with the region's natural resource areas of significance, priority rivers, wetlands and estuaries (including those deemed of regional social priority), high value native vegetation and threatened species. Whilst we appreciate the scale of the maps used makes it difficult to identify all of the region's high value assets, it is important that the information in these strategies is used and these regional assets are recognised in the Plan to achieve integrated coastal zone management. This could be assisted by greater links to these existing strategic NRM documents, by listing the key regional assets relevant to Plan's area and/or by the use of enlarged maps of high value areas. GIS layers identifying these assets (e.g. high value and priority waterways) can also be provided upon request.
2. **Threatened species and communities.** The existence of these within the region should be highlighted under Section 2.1 (environmental values). Examples include the EPBC listed (nationally vulnerable) coastal saltmarsh community, orange-bellied parrot, southern brown bandicoot, Yarra pygmy perch, Australian grayling and Anglesea grevillea. Sensitive habitat for threatened species as well as listed ecological communities could be relevant under the visitation actions in Chapter 4; vulnerable parts of the landscape.

3. **Recognising key threats to coastal environmental values.** Altered fire regimes and invasive species pose a very high risk to the values of coastal environments, particularly onshore environments, and these threats are not currently recognised in the draft. The threat of new and emerging invasive species should also be noted, especially those that could have serious socio-economic impacts (e.g. coastal fire ant). It is recommended that these types of threats are recognised and that regional actions are set to show how the Plan will contribute to managing these issues. In addition the increasing pressure placed on environmental values from population growth and development (etc.) should be incorporated more thoroughly throughout the Plan. As detailed above, these actions should refer and link to existing NRM strategic plans relevant to the Western Coastal region.

### **Comments on specific sections**

#### **Section 1.6 – The plan at a glance**

4. The logic presented here would benefit from aligning the regional issues with the state-wide issues that they are expected to contribute towards. This would more clearly demonstrate the logic and the links between the regional Plan and the VCS and give the reader a better understanding of the context for regional actions. For example, the ‘community coastal values understood’ regional issue could sit under the state-wide box for valuing the natural environment. The draft Central Coastal Plan (p19) provides a good example of this.
5. Integrating marine planning has been highlighted, but does not appear to be addressed by the Plan. If there is a reason for this, then this should be stated, otherwise a section on how the region intends to act on this issue may be warranted.
6. The ‘community coastal values understood and valued’ and text for the approach to this issue should emphasise or at least refer to environmental values.

#### **Section 2.1 – Environmental values**

7. This section would benefit from being more specific on some of the important biodiversity values, including migratory species (both marine and avifauna). There are a large number of migratory species that utilise marine and coastal habitats and these should be considered as a part of coastal planning, particularly those that are rare or threatened and those under migratory bird agreements (e.g. Korea-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement for migratory shorebirds (ROKAMBA)). The Corangamite Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy provides more information on marine and coastal biodiversity in the region, and is available on the Corangamite CMA website.
8. The Plan would benefit from including a new sub-category to describe estuaries. They are unique ecosystems and should be considered as a separate environmental value to marine, foreshore and hinterland ecosystems. This is the approach that has been adopted as part of the Victorian Waterway Strategy, that distinguishes between rivers, wetlands and estuaries.
9. Refer also to overall comments #1-3 (above).

## **Section 2.2 – Social and cultural values**

10. The Plan should consider including volunteerism and community groups, research and education (the coast is a significant asset for research and education institutions) as social values.
11. The Plan should consider including recreational activities as a social value, rather than as an economic value. Whilst recreational activities can have an indirect influence for economic gains, they are predominantly carried out as social activities for enjoyment rather than for economic gain.

## **Section 2.4 – Protecting coastal values**

12. The Plan would benefit from having actions to highlight how coastal values will be protected (as discussed in overall feedback, above).
13. Note that the regional waterway strategies were completed in 2014. Data to show priorities for the Corangamite Waterway Strategy is available upon request, and as discussed in overall comments, the Plan would benefit from mapping these waterways (rivers, wetlands and estuaries) in Figure 3.
14. Note that development of the Corangamite NRM Plan for Climate Change and associated tools is well underway, with completion expected in 2016.

## **Section 3.2 – A changing climate**

15. It is worth noting here that as part of the development of the nation-wide Regional NRM Planning for Climate Change project, all coastal CMAs in Victoria are exploring opportunities for protecting and enhancing blue carbon habitats (i.e. sea-grass meadows, mangrove communities and areas of saltmarsh) to improve the carbon sequestration potential of these areas. New data is now available and can be provided upon request.

## **Chapter 4 - Managing visitation pressures and access**

16. The Plan would benefit from including information on environmental impacts of visitation and managing these. For example the spread of invasive plant species can be linked to use and visitation of the coast (i.e. dispersing weed seeds via vehicle, pets and on person). In addition the impact of increased levels of planned burning will influence the areas that people can visit at any point in time.
17. Action 3b. Data is already available for Corangamite's regional assets (set through the RCS and CWS) along with climate change vulnerability assessments for particular assets. Consider incorporating this into the existing action (as a collation exercise) and including CMAs as a partner, or, adding as a new action.

## **Chapter 6 - Planning for coastal flooding and erosion**

18. The Corangamite CMA supports the intent and the actions of this section.

## **Section 7.1 – Background**

19. We support the intent for community participation in caring for the coast and reference to the Statewide Coastcare Strategy.
20. Consider expanding the scope of the background content to reflect the broader monitoring role of the Coastcare program (refer to comment #22, below). Incorporating this broader monitoring role will be of greater assistance in.
21. The Corangamite CMA has supported delivery of significant on-ground action for the protection and enhancement of estuarine and coastal environments, in partnership with agency and community stakeholders (such as Coastcare and Landcare networks and public and private land managers), which continues to be underpinned by significant investment from the Australian and Victorian governments. This on-ground work could be noted with reference to key projects such as: Managing Our Great Ocean Road Estuaries; and Coastal Engagement and Incentive Project (including CoastalTender).

## **Section 7.2 – Implementation actions**

22. Action 2a. This action would better represent the Coastcare Program and Strategy by supporting the collection of ‘all forms’ of coastal monitoring data to inform local decision making. This would then encompass the programs mentioned in Action 3 (Reefwatch, Seasearch, EstuaryWatch and Fishcare) and support other monitoring programs such as Mangrove Watch, Seagrass Watch, Shore bird monitoring, beach debris, etc. and be of greater assistance to meet the key challenges and issues described on page 25.
23. Action 2a&b. It is unclear what is within the scope of ‘support’ for these actions. The Plan would benefit from defining this scope.
24. Action 3. DELWP (Regional Coastcare Facilitators) currently perform this role and may be better placed than WCB to lead this action. Alternatively, consider defining the scope of this action - how the WCB intend to promote and support these groups.
25. Supporting research and educational activities would also assist in knowledge sharing and valuing/protection of the coast and should be considered as an action/s for the final Plan.

## **Appendix 1 – other coastal plans**

26. The status/date released column needs clarification, i.e. are commenced and underway can read as the same thing (plan is being developed), likewise commenced and implementation can read as the same thing (plan is being implemented).
27. Based on our interpretation of the status column the following updates are required:
  - a. the Anglesea River Estuary Management Plan 2012-2020 needs to have its status updated, the plan is complete and being implemented. Additionally remove the duplicate listing of this plan against Surf Coast Shire (Corangamite CMA is the author).
  - b. The Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy and Corangamite Waterway Strategy are both complete, and are also being implemented at present.
28. An Aire Estuary Management Plan is currently in development/underway. This can be noted under Corangamite CMA.