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Friends of Lorne Submission

1 – Coastal Township Character

1A - Distinct Sense of Place

Both residents and visitors regard the coastal village character of GOR towns as very important. Retaining a low height, human scale coastal town and main streetscape that reflects an `individual sense of place` is essential. We are concerned that coastal councils planning strategy tends not to differentiate sufficiently between small coastal towns and more urbanised and rural towns.

Old planning policies saw many shop verandas removed to the detriment to Lorne`s village character. Mountjoy Parade street lighting was renewed around 6 years ago with uncomplimentary freeway lights. This was after meetings with Vic Roads and Shire managers and agreement for more sensitive style of lighting to be installed. We do not wish to replicate Torquay`s central shopping centre but would like to have similar street lighting to Torquay`s.

1B – Historic Buildings and Services.

Few old buildings remain along Mountjoy Parade with the demolition of the original Cumberland Hotel, significant modification of the Lorne Hotel, demolition of the old Post Office and major development of Erskine House has seen Lorne`s historic building stock. The prominent art deco theatre was recently sold and it`s long term future is unknown.

The two 100 year+ historic churches need additional funding to be maintained for the long term future. A number of grand heritage houses have been subdivided impacting on the grand character and integrity of the houses with neighbouring houses.

The imminent development of Point Grey will be a once in decades opportunity to highlight key aspects of the commercial foundation of Lorne such as timber, fishing and tourism where the pier was pivotal to each industries success. FOL have saved a couta boat and parts of the original crane which we hope to have displayed near the pier. An original horse drawn logging trolley is available. All pieces require significant restoration.

1C – Indigenous Flora and Fauna

More intense development has seen a substantial number of significant indigenous trees removed around Lorne. Revised fire regulations have allowed land owners to remove large native trees with little official assessment. Lorne is in danger of losing considerably more tree canopy in the future predominantly from multi-dwelling sites requiring clearing of most if not all important trees.

Road reserves are an undervalued natural asset. Victorian road reserves contain 25 percent of all endangered species and 45 percent of remaining native grasslands.

The reduction of significant native trees in the more densely built-up areas is impacting on native animals, particularly koalas, requiring them to regularly cross roads to access the reduced number of suitable trees.

Cockatoos are reaching excessive numbers in Lorne mainly because of feeding by tourists. Cockatoos dominate other species of birds, damage buildings, mess tourist facilities and public and residential rubbish bins.

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1D – Erskine River Precinct

The Erskine River Precinct is the perceived entrance to Lorne`s township and as such should mirror the best natural characteristics of Lorne, particularly the Erskine River and Swing Bridge. Presently the caravan parks and the supermarket dominate the precinct. Dense indigenous non-lineal landscaping with increased setback of sites on either side of the GOR. The Erskine River Caravan Park would be greatly improved with fewer premium landscaped sites. Upgrade the sites bordering the GOR to less lineal layout with more internal landscaping and cars parked in inconspicuous clusters.

A safe pedestrian crossing or tunnel across the GOR near the Erskine River bridge, caravan parks and supermarket requires attention before a fatality occurs.

2 – Population and Tourism Impact

2B – Traffic

Continuing increase in visitor and commercial traffic on the GOR is causing congestion, delays and longer trip times especially from Eastern View through the winding sections to Lorne. Small passing bays are generally ineffective particularly for buses and large commercial and tourist vehicles. It is difficult for large vehicles to stop in short bays in steep areas as a slow long run is needed to get back up to speed. International tourists don`t understand the message and the general interpretation of `slow` is problematic to the majority of drivers. There is great need for more, longer passing lanes, safer parking areas at popular viewing locations with longer entry and exit slipways. Dangerous driving by impatient motorists is on the increase.

2C – Parking

Parking in Lorne is an increasing problem and in peak periods all central residential streets are full of parked cars. Irresponsible parking by frustrated drivers proliferates and access to shops and beach is near impossible. Extra peak visitor parking is required but not in the central areas of Lorne as this would be detrimental to the coastal character of the town. Separation of cars and recreation areas must be prioritised. Overflow parking at either end of Mountjoy Parade, such as the old quarry and Slaughterhouse Paddock would be preferable as both locations are unobtrusive and close to excellent walking tracks.

2D – Pollution

Erskine River remains polluted after remedial work at the caravan park and is unsuitable for swimming. Together with the Swing Bridge and café, the river is a place of special significance in Lorne. It is a prominent iconic tourist attraction and has been a favoured safe swimming spot for young children. There have been negative articles in Melbourne newspapers re the poor state of the Erskine River in this supposed pristine, highly promoted and most recognised GOR township. Storm water exuding from drains at various points over rocks near the main beach also challenges Lorne`s pristine image.

2E – Signage

Both commercial and road signage has proliferated to the point of noticeably detracting from the natural coastal and bush beauty of the GOR, Lorne and environs. There is need for coordinated rational public sign policies re. messages, design, size, location and number of signs. Increased use of com-technology including apps and in-car GPS navigation is providing more lateral, flexible solutions to traffic and tourist signage and information, especially for non-English speaking tourists.

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3 - Coastal Management

3A – Management Clarity

With many government and semi-government organisations having responsibility for various and overlapping aspects of coastal management, it is inevitable that duplication in policy regarding human and asset management will have evolved over time. Residents experience delays and inconsistency in decisions and apparent inefficiency and duplication in some service delivery. Examples of years of delays resolving relatively small issues such as the installation of a hand full of flagpoles in Mountjoy Parade and the siting of a piece of public sculpture on the foreshore in Lorne are perplexing.

3B - Erosion

Erosion will be an increasing problem in the sandy coastal areas of Lorne. FOL have noted the success of the short boardwalk linking the path from the Lorne Surf Club to the near the swimming pool both in sand and coastal grass build-up, popularity in use and reduction in pedestrian damage to the beach. FOL has proposed the extension of the boardwalk to connect to the Lorne Beach Pavilion and from Grove Road to the Groyne. Eventually we hope to see the boardwalk connecting to the steps near the Erskine River Café. This will complete what will become a spectacular, highly popular, all weather beach walk from the pier to the river and an effective way to control beach erosion.

3C – Coastal Buildings

FOL support the coastal planning strategy that buildings on the Lorne foreshore are minimal in number, height, scale and are set back from the foreshore as much as is practical. No building or structure should restrict a coastal pathway from connecting continuously along the foreshore from Erskine River to Shelley Beach and eventually to the beginning of the `old logging tramway` trail at Hird Street, Lorne.

