

# THE 4th VICTORIAN COASTAL STRATEGY

## Introduction

Australians have a strong connection with the coast. It is a place for us to visit, holiday and live. We enjoy the recreational and lifestyle opportunities it provides and appreciate the diverse landscapes and seascapes. We also appreciate that we all stand to benefit from coastal economic activity like tourism and shipping.

The challenge for us all is how we continue to use, share and enjoy the coast so that it remains healthy now and in the future.

In Victoria the Victorian Coastal Strategy, is the government's policy commitment for the coast and marine environment and sets the framework for how we plan and manage the coast.

Under the Victorian *Coastal Management Act 1995* the Strategy is reviewed every five years, and the Victorian Coastal Council has just released the fourth iteration of the Strategy for public comment. A copy of the Draft Strategy is available at [vvc.vic.gov.au](http://vvc.vic.gov.au)

This paper highlights key aspects of the *Draft Victorian Coastal Strategy 2013* and how it has evolved from the 2008 Strategy.

## Coastal Planning and Management Context

The Victorian *Coastal Management Act 1995*, establishes the legislative framework for planning and managing the coast of Victoria. It includes provisions for:

- *Advice* to government and the community through the Victorian Coastal Council and three Regional Coastal Boards
- *Strategic* planning at a state, regional and local level
- *Consents* and approval for use and development on coastal Crown land.



Figure 1. Coastal Planning and Management Context

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* requires the Victorian Coastal Council to review the Victorian Coastal Strategy every five years. This enables emerging coastal issues to be addressed and ensure the Strategy remains relevant and useful for decision makers.

## **Purpose of the Strategy**

The purpose of the Strategy is three fold, it:

- provides *guidance* for agencies and statutory decision-making along the coast and in marine environments
- provides a *framework* for the development and implementation of other plans such as Coastal Action Plans and Coastal Management Plans and a coastal context for the development of related strategies like Regional Catchment Strategies, planning schemes and Regional Waterway Strategies
- *engages* the community to value the coast and marine environment and to participate in its planning and management.

The Victorian Coastal Council is interested in feedback from stakeholders as to whether the Draft currently meets these purposes.

## **Requirements of the Act**

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* sets out a broad level the requirements of the Strategy. The Act states:

*The Victorian Coastal Strategy must provide for the long term planning of the Victorian coast*

*(a) to ensure the **protection** of significant environmental features of the coast*

*(b) to provide **clear direction** for the future use of the coast including the marine environment*

*(c) to identify **suitable development** areas and development opportunities on the coast*

*(d) to ensure the **sustainable use** of natural coastal resources.*

Over the years to assist with decision making, these requirements have developed into a 'Hierarchy of Principles'. This recognises that the foundation of coastal planning and management is a healthy coastal and marine environment.

The Draft Strategy 2013, continues to use this concept and sets out the Hierarchy of Principles as:

1. Provide for the protection of significant environmental and cultural values
2. Undertake integrated planning and provide clear direction for the future
3. Ensure the sustainable use of natural coastal resources

Only when the above principles have been considered and addressed

4. Ensure development on the coast is located within existing modified and resilient environments where the demand for development is evident and the impact can be managed.

Planning and decision making on the coast needs to be consistent with the Hierarchy of Principles.

## Shaping the Strategy

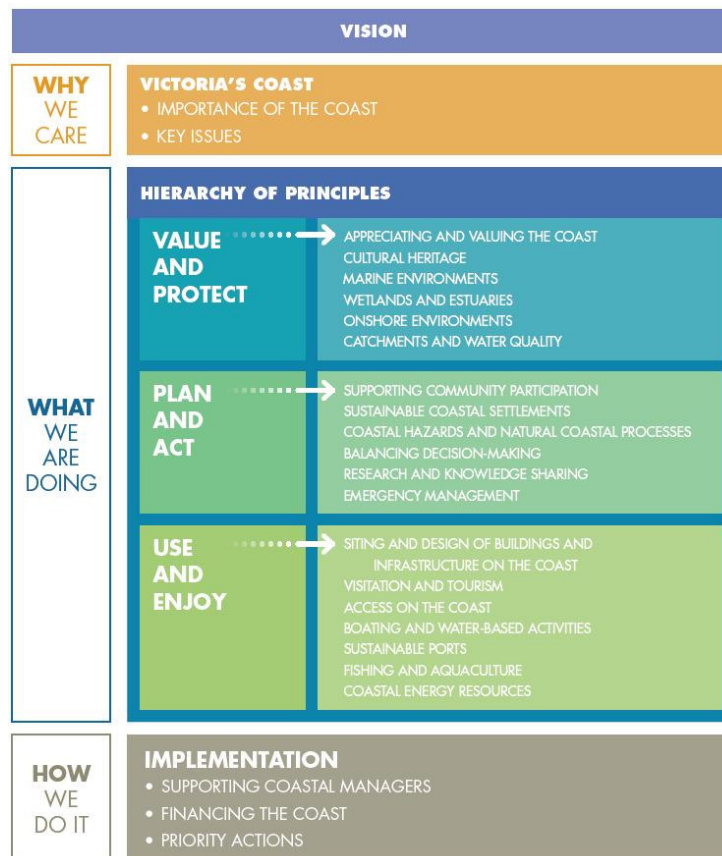
A useful part of reviewing the Strategy every five years is the opportunity to reflect the current science and research. Over the last two years Council has commissioned a number of research and reports that help to inform the Draft Strategy including:

- VCS 2008 Mid-Term Review (2012)
- Coastal and Marine Attitudes & Behaviours Report (2012)
- Derivation of Victorian Sea Level Planning Allowances (2013)
- Assessing the Value of the Coast to Victoria (2013)
- Population & Settlement along the Victorian Coast (2013)

All these reports are available on the Victorian Coastal Council website ([vcc.vic.gov.au](http://vcc.vic.gov.au))

## Structure of the Draft Strategy

The Draft Strategy is set out in three components. The first component provides the context, long term vision and key issues, the second component is specific policies and actions relating to different themes, and the last component is related to implementation.



## Figure 2. Structure of Draft Victorian Coastal Strategy 2013

### ***Vision***

Each iteration of the Strategy sets out a long term vision of what we are trying to achieve and what we would like the coast and marine environment to look like in 30 to 50 years.

For this Draft Strategy the vision is:

*'A healthy coast enjoyed by all, now and in the future.'*

This vision statement is supported by specific dot points to help built a picture of what the coast will look like. For example:

- Beaches, estuarine and marine waters are clean and healthy
- Victorians are able to access and enjoy the coast as the majority of it is in public ownership. Some areas are easily accessible with high quality facilities and other areas have minimal or no access to maintain environmental and cultural values
- Facilities that support coastal and marine recreation such as life-saving clubs and yacht clubs are well located, attractive and managed to meet community needs
- Coastal cities, towns and settlements have distinctive characters and are separated by natural or rural landscapes

Agreeing on a vision is an important aspect that creates a sense of different users agreeing on how we want the coast to be in the future. The Victorian Coastal Council is keen to hear during the consultation period if people agree with the vision or would like it evolved or further changed.

### ***Key Issues***

Both the built and the natural environments are under pressure from population increase, resource extraction, a changing climate and coastal hazards, ageing infrastructure and competing demands for the use of the coast.

The Draft Strategy provides a summary of six key issues that cut across the wide range of different coastal activities with the intent is to raise the profile of these issues and to begin progressing our thinking on them over the next five years.

#### ***Adapting to a changing climate and increased coastal hazards***

Hazards such as erosion and inundation have always been present, and require consideration in planning and managing the coast. During this century it is possible that the Victorian coast will be impacted by sea level rise, changing sea temperatures, altered rainfall and ocean acidification. This in turn will impact on how we use and enjoy the coast and the health of coastal ecosystems.

A sea level rise planning benchmark provides consistency for decision-making and reduces the level of uncertainty for businesses, communities and individuals in managing coastal hazards.

The Victorian Coastal Council commissioned a report, *Derivation of Victorian Sea Level Planning Allowances, May 2013*, to provide an update of sea level rise projections as they relate to the coast of Victoria. This uses a model that takes into consideration:

- the latest projections of regional sea level rise by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report
- additional contributions to account for vertical land motion caused by past and ongoing changes in land ice melt
- present statistics of storm tides (combination of tides and storm surges), which have been derived from tide gauge observations in Victoria and storm modeling for Australia
- a time period starting at 2010.

The report set out three suggestions for sea level rise planning benchmarks in Victoria:

- to plan for not less than 0.2 metres by 2040
- to plan for not less than 0.4 metres by 2070
- to plan for not less than 0.8 metres by 2100.

As this is consistent with the Victorian State Planning Policy Framework, the planning benchmarks for sea level for Victoria will remain as:

*'Plan for possible sea level rise of 0.8 metres by 2100, and allow for the combined effects of tides, storm surges, coastal processes and local conditions such as topography and geology when assessing risks and coastal impacts associated with climate change'.*

*'In planning for possible sea level rise, an increase of 0.2 metres over current 1 in 100 year flood levels by 2040 may be used for new development in close proximity to existing development (urban infill)'.*

Given the recent release of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, the Victorian Coastal Council is investigating how to consider this new information in finalising the Strategy.

### Managing population growth

The population on the Victorian coast has continued to grow over the past decade although growth rates have fluctuated. In the early 2000s population growth was rapid, particularly in areas within about two hours drive of Melbourne. In the second half of the decade, growth rates along the Victorian coast slowed and there is more growth inland (DTPLI 2013).

Over the last five years, Victoria has focussed on managing population and growth by implementing significant landscape overlays and defining settlement boundaries. The successes of this will be built on over the next five years to allow growth to occur in designated areas while maintaining settlement character, and protecting landscape and environmental values that draw people to the coast.

There is also a challenge in managing increases in day visits and greater tourism. Planning for this increase may require different solutions, such as people management strategies.

### *Understanding the value of natural resources*

The Victorian coast is made up of different ecosystems associated with beaches, estuaries, wetlands, coastal vegetation, seagrass meadows and rocky reefs. These ecosystems provide benefits termed 'ecosystem goods and services' that support commercial and non-commercial uses of the coast.

The value of coastal commercial activities is around \$9.8 billion per annum. The total value of Victoria's non-commercial coastal uses, including storm protection, flood and disease control, habitat, biodiversity, recreation and passive enjoyment is \$8.4 billion per year (WorleyParsons, 2013). At present, the non-commercial value of coastal services is given limited if any explicit consideration in planning and management decision-making on the coast.

The report commissioned by the Victorian Coastal Council, '*Assessing the Value of the Coast to Victoria*', is a first step in estimating coastal and marine ecosystems services in Victoria. In the future we can refine these estimates and develop appropriate processes and methods for considering trade-offs in both complex and more straightforward proposals.

### *Integrated approach to marine management*

Coastal and marine systems are dynamic by nature; they involve complex physical, chemical and biological processes. Healthy coastal waters are dependent on how we manage the whole coast – and all of its systems.

The current approach to marine planning and management in Victoria is activity or 'sector' focused. Fisheries, marine parks, resource extraction, ports and shipping, tourism, and catchment management are generally considered individually, particularly on the open coast.

This approach limits our capacity to address the overlapping and cumulative impacts from combined threats and can reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of marine planning and management.

Going forward, it is important that all marine sectors work together in an integrated and holistic way. Such an approach may include:

- shared objectives
- guiding principles
- the identification of areas of environmental, cultural, social and economic significance
- identification of areas for new uses and for the co-location of existing uses.

### *Financing coastal infrastructure and management*

New public buildings and facilities, and planning for new private developments including roads and drainage systems will take account of increased coastal hazards, but the replacement and upgrade of existing infrastructure and public facilities will be a more complex and expensive task. There will also inevitably be pressure on coastal managers to undertake works to protect privately owned land and buildings threatened by coastal processes.

In Victoria there is a long-standing policy that the expenditure of public funds on protection works will be for state-wide public benefit only (and very limited funding is available for this purpose).

Presently the cost of maintaining facilities on the coast rests with a range of state authorities and other entity bodies like Committees of Management, Port Authorities, Parks Victoria, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and local government. Under current arrangements some coastal managers generate significant revenue for reinvestment on their reserves, whilst adjoining reserves have relative little revenue but may have a greater need for investment in coastal protection or new facilities.

In the next five years research on the capacity of entities to fund coastal management actions and future adaptation requirements is needed. This research could identify measures to facilitate the alignment of funding capacity with coastal management responsibilities.

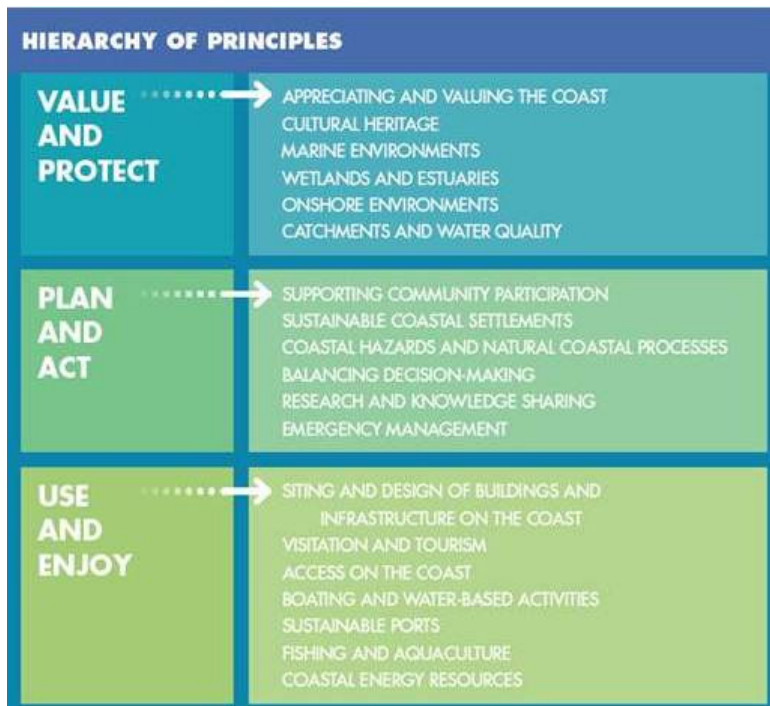
### *Balancing decision making*

Effective coastal management relies on the capacity and capability of coastal land managers and planners.

A review by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries identified the huge variance in the capability and capacity of coastal managers across the state to deal with current and future coastal management challenges. The review recommended developing business models based on sustainable revenue streams for managers. It also recommended that larger groupings of reserves under the one manager should be investigated – the aim here would be to distribute the gathered funds across a wider area thereby improving the ability to target available resources to key priorities.

### ***Specific Policies and Actions***

The policies and actions in the Strategy are grouped to align with the Hierarchy of Principles. They cover the wide range of issues and values connected with the coast including cultural heritage, estuaries & wetlands, coastal hazards, community participation, coastal settlements, tourism, siting and design of buildings, boating, ports, and fishing.



**Figure 3. Groupings of policies and actions in the Draft Strategy**

### ***Implementation***

Many organisations have a role in caring for and managing the coast. These include volunteer groups, Committees of Management, local councils, catchment management authorities, regional coastal boards, government agencies and industries.

Key elements for the effective implementation of the Strategy include:

- lead agencies collaborating and working in partnership
- building the capacity and supporting coastal managers
- long-term financing for managing the coast
- monitoring and reporting to understand if we are achieving the vision.

### **Coordination**

In 2008, sixteen organisations were identified with leadership or partnership responsibilities for implementing actions in the Victorian Coastal Strategy. Consequently, a Coordinating Committee was established to provide a 'whole of Strategy' implementation approach. The Committee developed an Implementation Plan that set out priority actions and identified gaps in resources and capacity to deliver on the Strategy.

The Coordinating Committee proved to be a useful vehicle for agencies to share ideas and coordinate the implementation of actions – especially in times of reduced funding and staff capacity. The Victorian Coastal Council has again proposed the use of the Implementation Coordinating Committee to drive the implementation of the 2013 Strategy.



### Capacity Building

Within the many organisations involved in coastal management are scientists, policy officers, planners, infrastructure managers, engineers and facilitators who work with each other and the community. For Victoria to remain at the forefront of delivering effective ICZM we need to ensure there is a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. This requires opportunities for learning (through degrees, diplomas and certificates) and opportunities to share experiences and hear the latest science.

The Draft Strategy includes actions that focus on identifying demand and encouraging training and development opportunities for the coastal workforce. It also suggests a Victorian Coastal Conference be organized in the coming years.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

While a degree of Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) has occurred over the life of the three previous Strategies, incorporation of strategic MER into the 2013 Strategy may assist in understanding and communicating how we are progressing towards achieving our long-term vision for the coast.

This Strategy establishes a platform for consistent and cooperative coastal and marine planning, management and decision-making across a range of lead agencies. Accountability for actions, adherence to policy directions, and progress towards outcomes, rests not with the Strategy but with those lead agencies.

Reflecting this, coastal MER for Victoria will need to occur at three levels through:

- Victorian Coastal Strategy (state)
- Coastal Action Plans (regional)
- Coastal Management Plans (local)

When supported by standards and criteria for the collection of marine and coastal data at local and regional scales, the framework can be used to provide a 'whole-of-coast, state-wide picture' of the health of Victoria's coastal and marine environments.

The Strategy describes some elements for MER, including the vision, desired outcomes, and policy directions. Further work is required with stakeholders to progress a MER for the Victorian coast.

## **Conclusions**

In the reading speech introducing the Coastal Management Bill on 21 March 1995, former Minister for Conservation and Environment, the Hon Mark Birrell MLC said:

*"Our coasts are coming under increasing pressure for a variety of uses, which can result in land use conflicts and the degradation of coastal habitat. The challenge is to ensure that its many attributes are managed in a sustainable fashion and that decisions about competing uses are balanced in the interests of all Victorians".*

Balancing these interests continues to be the primary objective of the Victorian Coastal Strategy and it is a testament to the people and governments of Victoria that each

Strategy builds on the previous in maintaining sound policy to improve the planning and management of the coast.

The Victorian Coastal Council looks forward to receiving submissions on the Draft Strategy and using this information to further improve and refine the next version.

It is envisaged the Victorian Coastal Council will deliver a final version of the Victorian Coastal Strategy to the Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change for his consideration in March/April 2014. Once approved by cabinet the fourth iteration will become government policy to be applied and implemented across the state.

## **References**

DTPLI 2013. *Population and Settlement along the Victorian coast*, Prepared for the Victorian Coastal Council by the DTPLI Spatial Analysis and Research Branch.

John Hunter, 2013. *Derivation of Victorian Sea Level Planning Allowances*.

WorleyParsons, 2013. *Assessing the value of coastal resources in Victoria*. Prepared for the Victorian Coastal Council. Melbourne.

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