

**Save the Wetlands.
Save the Boundary.
Save Barwon Heads.**

Strategic Planning City of Greater Geelong
PO Box 104,
Geelong VIC 3220

*Save Barwon Heads Alliance Inc.
c/o 17 River Parade
Barwon Heads 3227*

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Save Barwon Heads Alliance Submission to Amendment C375

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Save Barwon Heads Alliance (SBHA) is a group of over 2800 mainly residents of the Bellarine Peninsula. SBHA is a coming together of people connected by a sense of care and concern for our environment. We consider our close association with the local environment a privilege that carries a responsibility of stewardship to preserve the unique values of the coastal environment in which we live. We understand this area is part of the lands of the Wathaurong people, and we acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners and custodians of these lands.

The SBHA supports the Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 and Amendment C375 which reflect the international, national, state and local planning policy framework and acknowledge the role of Barwon Heads as a seaside holiday resort and residential community with finite capacity in a fragile and highly sensitive environmental context. The 2800 plus members of the Save Barwon Heads Alliance Inc. believe that we should:

- Save the wetlands: Protect the wetlands from threats created by urban development;
- Save the Boundary: Maintain the existing town boundary and consolidate growth in urban areas;
- Save Barwon Heads: Protect the amenity of Barwon Heads by limiting growth to urban areas and enhancing the natural values through science, planning and management actions.

SBHA contends that any residential development in closer proximity to the wetlands than the current developments would be detrimental to the values of the sensitive wetlands, waterways and the threatened biodiversity they support. It would also place unwarranted and unacceptable pressure on the finite coastal infrastructure and amenity of the township, in effect destroying the character of the small coastal township, the very reason it attracts so many visitors year after year.

In supporting the Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 and Amendment C375, we are informed by science-based international, national, state, regional and local policies and strategies which demonstrate the inherent logic of retaining the settlement boundary in its current position. These previous strategic policy and planning processes have led to a convergence of resolve to protect, retain and enhance the environmental characteristics of these wetlands and prevent further impact through inappropriate development and negative human influence.

1 SAVE THE WETLANDS

Existing policies and planning documents support protection of sensitive environmental areas surrounding Barwon Heads from the threatening impacts of urban development:

Wetlands are regarded as ‘iconic natural assets’ of the Corangamite region (CCMA Corangamite Wetland Strategy 2006, p.vi) and Murtnaghurt Lagoon is a beautiful and remarkable example, highly valued by the local community. Wetlands are valuable for the ecosystem services they provide both to the community and the environment, many of which mitigate against the effects of climate change—these ecosystem services include flood retardation; the replenishment of groundwater; sequestration of carbon; stabilisation of local climatic conditions, especially rainfall and temperature; supporting threatened species and ecological communities and providing refuge in drought conditions (CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022 p.21). As stated in the Corangamite Wetland Strategy 2006-2011 (CCMA 2006), *wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth and provide a range of environmental, social and economic services, which we are only beginning to comprehend* (p.6). The value of the wetlands local to Barwon Heads should also be considered in township planning and afforded appropriate protection and comprehensive management.

To meet regional, state and international obligations, notably the Ramsar Convention which requires Australia to protect the ecological integrity of the Ramsar-listed Murtnaghurt Lagoon and Lake Connewarre complex, the threat posed by urban expansion must be recognised. Barwon Heads environs are of high conservation significance, as detailed in SBHA’s submission to the Draft Barwon Heads Structure Plan (and detailed in Appendix A), and are already documented as ‘threatened’. The limited regional studies that have been conducted on wetlands in the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) and Corangamite catchment areas have highlighted the Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon complex as already showing impacts from major threats as summarised in Appendix B. The Auditor General’s 2016 report highlights the lack of collective action to meet our obligations under the Ramsar Convention (Victorian Auditor General’s Office, September 2016). Urbanisation and development are the genesis of all the following threats:

Changed Hydrological Regimes

Land clearing and resultant increase in impermeable surfaces and stormwater drainage systems associated with urban development decrease water infiltration rates, and increase the speed of delivery of stormwater. This has been highlighted as a specific risk for the lower Barwon River Estuary and Murtnaghurt Lagoon in the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Strategic Management Plan (2003, p.22). The CoGG Geelong Wetlands Strategy (A subordinate strategy of the CoGG Environmental Management Strategy 2014 -2017) also recognises that: *some of the most sensitive and high value wetlands are directly impacted by stormwater and these impacts will increase unless specific and strong action is taken* (p.13).

Further urban development outside of the current Barwon Heads boundary will contribute to a changed water regime - increasing the impermeable surfaces in the immediate and adjacent catchment area to these sensitive wetland systems and inherently changing the current local hydrology. Climate change will also play a major factor in changed hydrological regimes impacting on wetlands.

Degraded Water Quality

The threats of hydrological changes and degraded water quality are somewhat linked when discussing stormwater impacts. Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon are directly affected by hydrological and water quality changes due to catchment processes and land use according to the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan (2003, p.10.). It recommends *protection from alterations to drainage (including storm water inputs) as an important management consideration* (p.56). This clearly contraindicates urbanisation that could result in many freshwater inputs to the salt-marsh wetland's hydrological system. This is directly relevant and applicable to the Murtnaghurt Lagoon and the saltmarsh ecological communities within it.

The CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014-2022) lists Lake Connewarre as having high nutrient concentrations and is considered eutrophic with blue-green algal blooms (*Aphanocapsa sp.*) recorded in recent years (2006 to 2008, p.183). Increasing recurrences of eutrophic events due to increased nutrient loads from further urbanisation have the potential to devastate sensitive ecosystems by starving them of oxygen.

Human Disturbance

Retaining the current settlement boundary will prevent further impacts from human populations and their activities in closer proximity to environmentally sensitive areas. The fragile habitat, fauna and flora will be protected from further human activities that negatively impact via direct (ie trampling of vegetation, litter) and indirect (noise from increased traffic and human activities causing migratory birds to flush to cover) mechanisms.

The detrimental impact of human activities on fragile coastal ecological communities is widely acknowledged. The following excerpts from the recent Australia State of the Environment 2016 – Coasts, (2017) report are particularly relevant to the threats facing saltmarsh ecological communities and migratory birds that utilise this habitat in the Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon complex areas:

The distribution of threatened species around the nation is generally related to the distribution of the human population and the intensity of our activities. The species group of most concern is migratory shorebirds, which are declining because of habitat loss and impacts on critical parts of their migratory route in Australia and overseas (p.54).

Declines in resident shorebird abundances are attributed to coastal use and associated disturbance, with recreational pursuits, dogs, 4WDs and horses all adversely affecting shorebirds (p.68).

Migratory shorebirds, of significance at Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon, are particularly at risk from human recreational activities. Birdlife Australia terms this as "recreational disturbance". Recreational disturbance may impact on migratory birds by *wholly or partly limiting their ability to make use of staging areas and stepping-stones where they would normally rest and feed* (Birdlife Australia, 2013, p.3). Trampling of coastal vegetation at Lake Connewarre and the Barwon estuary has been highlighted by The Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Strategic Management Plan (2003, p.27) as an issue as have *Feral cats and, near residential estates, domestic cats, known to disturb and prey on native wildlife. Dogs exercised off leads can also disturb birds* (p.25).

Invasive Fauna and Flora

According to the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan (2003), there is also the risk of invasive flora, particularly *Spartina* invasions which are listed as a threatening process under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act of 1988, with infestations in Lake Connewarre and the Lower Barwon Estuary (p.25). This particularly invasive aquatic species is known to degrade habitats for waterbirds through making habitat unsuitable for use.

A 2008 flora and fauna assessment by Quin & McMahon found:

Two anthropogenically derived vegetation types occur on or surrounding the Lagoon and are replacing threatened saltmarsh and estuarine vegetation communities. Salt Club-sedge (*Bolboschoenus caldwellii*) Sedgeland is invading Beaded Glasswort (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*) from the fringes of a stormwater pond (c. 200 m²) Herbfield in the eastern privately-owned section of the Lagoon. It is associated with the Hopgood Place residential estate stormwater outflow and is having a detrimental effect on the saltmarsh, including the very rare Grey Glasswort (*Halosarcia halocnemoides*) Shrubland. The freshwater effects reach habitat immediately adjoining the Ramsar site. Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) is now a dominant species on the western edge of the Ramsar site and is progressively replacing Sea Rush (*Juncus kraussii*) Rushland and Australian Salt-grass (*Distichlis distichophylla*) Grassland. The expansion of Common Reed is an obvious edge effect and is assisted by, or due to, freshwater run-off from the adjoining Thirteenth Beach Residential Estate and Golf Course (p.4).

The CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014-2022), also recognises the encroachment of freshwater plant species into saltmarsh areas of Murtnaghurt Lagoon due to stormwater discharges to the system (p.185).

Increased urbanisation in the surrounding area is most certainly the cause of these impacts. The retention of the current settlement boundary in the Amendment C375 and Barwon Heads Structure Plan will assist in preventing further alteration of land use in the localised catchment areas that would otherwise only exacerbate detrimental impacts to the saltmarsh habitat.

Disturbance of Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils

The CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014-2022), advises that land adjacent to coastal wetlands has the potential to contain coastal acid sulfate soils (p.183). The 2007 CSIRO Scoping study of coastal and inland acid sulfate soils in the Corangamite CMA contains management advice of "do not disturb" for the Lake Connewarre complex area due to *sulfidic material in coastal swamps and depressions* (p.24). Urban development in areas adjacent to Lake Connewarre Complex and Murtnaghurt Lagoon present both the direct threats of disturbance during construction activities, as well as consequential disturbance from human based activities. Once disturbed: *oxidation of the sulfidic material carries the high risk of a rapid acidification of surrounding water, soil, and loss of vegetation and habitat* (Acid Sulfate Soils - Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Training Manual 2008-2012, p.18).

Climate Change

While climate change is clearly not generated by urbanisation, the impacts of climate change will exacerbate the above threats through more frequent extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms surges (Changhao, Cant, & Todd, 2009).

The degradation of wetlands will also weaken their critical role in climate change regulation through carbon sequestration, and stabilisation of local climatic conditions. The impact of climate change thereby not only exacerbates the impacts of other threats on wetlands by directly impacting on these areas, but also results in a negative feedback loop due to loss of eco-services that mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 highlights the threat projected changes in sea level rise due to climate change may have for Murtnaghurt Lagoon. According to The Corangamite NRM Plan for Climate Change (2016): *the retention of coastal wetlands will require planning approaches which allow for the migration of wetland communities to avoid significant loss in both extent and character* (p.17). This is relevant for the saltmarsh ecological community migrating into the land directly adjacent to Murtnaghurt Lagoon. It also exemplifies the vital importance of not only providing protection for the immediate wetland areas, but also providing planning protections for the surrounding areas to allow for migration of ecological communities due to the impacts of climate change. The CoGG Climate Change SA (2011), proposes the solution of maintaining *'adaptation corridors', designed to allow species to migrate easily to new, more appropriate locations* (p.23). This view is supported by the Corangamite NRM Plan for Climate Change, 2016, which states that:

The retention of coastal wetlands will require planning approaches which allow for the migration of wetland communities in order to avoid significant loss in both extent and character (p.17);

The protection and improvement of the adaptive capacity of these habitats should, and will be, a priority for the region (p.70).

The Barwon Heads Structure Plan and Amendment C375 through retention of the current settlement boundary will provide some protections from the threats to sensitive wetland ecosystem. It will also retain farm land that may act as "adaption corridors" to allow these ecosystems to adapt in response to climate change.

Risk and uncertainty: in the biophysical interactions and climate change impacts

Given our lack of knowledge regarding the interactions of wetlands with groundwater, stormwater drainage, previously altered hydrology and the impacts of climate change, it is appropriate to apply the 'precautionary principle' (Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, 1992) in relation to further urban development.

Given also that these significant wetlands are facing increasing threats from a range of sources including unknown and unmodeled impacts from climate change, there is a clear lack of evidence to suggest that the environment has the capacity to manage drainage and runoff without impacting the highly valued wetland environment. Recent Armstrong Creek/Warralily developments evidence the impact freshwater inflows have on saline environments and the extreme cost of remedial solutions. The difference here is there are no remedial opportunities in the physically constrained environment of Barwon Heads.

Furthermore, the CoGG Engineering Services have a large number of concerns regarding stormwater management which have been outlined in the Draft Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 (P.128) with key concerns regarding stormwater management for any proposed development outside the boundary as follows:

- Council not supporting pumped drainage mains in Greenfield developments and ongoing operational and maintenance costs due to the low lying and saline nature of the groundwater
- The need for detailed risk assessments including structural assessment of the levee and imposition of appropriate buffers in accordance with the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (2016).
- Exacerbation of issues associated with the existing stormwater drainage system in Barwon Heads particularly in relation to accumulative runoff volumes and the resultant negative impacts on the ecological character of the receiving water bodies.
- The need to demonstrate an understanding of the groundwater and geological conditions to show no detrimental impact, and to show no new uncontrolled groundwater discharging to wetlands
- The potential requirement for an Environmental Effects Statement and/or Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act approval to assess impacts of development on the Ramsar wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention, signed by the Australian Government in 1971, aims to halt, and where possible reverse, the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve those that remain through wise use and management. Specific obligations under the Convention relevant to the functions undertaken by the City of Greater Geelong include, as per Article 3.1, *to formulate and implement planning to promote conservation of listed wetlands and as far as possible the wise use of all wetlands* (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2012). The COGG Environment Team has noted the concern of the Federal Environment Office over the City's approach to the increased volume of freshwater from urban development being discharged into the low lying coastal ephemeral wetlands; particularly for Ramsar wetlands (P.99 BHSP 2017). SBHA understand COGG will be making recommendations for additional planning scheme protections for these sensitive areas, and we look forward to reviewing them.

The above evidence demonstrates the impacts of existing urbanisation and threats to the Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon areas and supports the City of Greater Geelong's planning for the retention of the current settlement boundary at Barwon heads. Further urbanisation of the wetland surrounds would have a devastating and detrimental impact on these wetland areas. It would also constitute a failure to meet the obligations of the Ramsar Convention, amongst other national and state obligations, to protect the ecological integrity of these wetlands.

2 SAVE THE BOUNDARY

State and local planning policies align with international and national agreements and support protection from threats and specifically limits to growth in highly sensitive coastal environments:

Amendment C375 is consistent with current State and Local Planning Provisions in retaining the Barwon Heads settlement boundary. This is the second Barwon Heads Structure Plan review and for the past 21 years there has been no strategic document relevant to Barwon Heads at an international, national, state, regional or local level that supports expanding growth in coastal sensitive townships or bringing residential development in closer proximity to internationally recognised environmental assets such as Murtnaghurt Lagoon and the Lake Connewarre Complex. The 25 documents listed in Appendix C highlight the threats from development and/or support protection of the wetlands through minimising urban development in their vicinity, promoting growth inland away from the coast and through urban infill in sensitive coastal areas such as Barwon Heads.

Recent amendments have strengthened support for the current settlement boundary through promoting infill growth and growth in designated growth areas. The adoption of the VPP 11 Settlement amendment as recently as March 2017, supports: *Protection of environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources* and that the policy should *Deliver networks of high-quality settlements by Preserving and protecting features of rural land and natural resources and features to enhance their contribution to settlements and landscapes* including protection for *long term natural and non-urban uses* (11.01-1)

Throughout the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPPs) and Local Planning Provisions (LPPs) objectives and strategies limit expansion of small coastal settlements. The G21 Regional Growth Plan, 2013, the Victorian Coastal Strategy, 2014 and the Bellarine Localised Policy Statement, 2015, all support limits to growth in coastal townships and promote policies to protect, restore and enhance sensitive environmental assets.

The Settlement Networks Policy (VPP 11.01-1) recognises the role of Geelong as a regional city and a focus for investment and growth, and ensures that regions and their settlements are planned in accordance with any relevant regional growth plan; in the City of Greater Geelong's case this is the G21 Regional Growth Plan (Geelong Regional Alliance, 2013 and VPP 11.09). The VPPs and this plan do not designate Barwon Heads as a growth area.

The Urban Growth, Supply of urban land (VPP 11.02-1) ensures that there is sufficient land available to meet forecast demand and to accommodate Bellarine projected population growth over at least a 15-year period. It also clearly stated that residential land supply will be considered on a municipal basis, rather than a town by town basis.

Urban Growth - G21 has identified adequate areas for new residential development - Barwon Heads is not included.

The G21 Regional Growth Plan 2013 specifically refers to limiting growth adjoining the coastal settlement of Barwon Heads. In March 2017, the VPPs (11.02) were amended with increased reference to this Plan which clearly states that it has identified areas for population growth for the next 20-30 years (11.09). Growth for Barwon Heads is unjustified, undesirable and unnecessary as Barwon Heads is not a designated growth area and is surrounded by four major growth areas in

Torquay/Jan Juc, Armstrong Creek, Ocean Grove and Leopold. The Plan describes the role for Barwon Heads in the context of the Bellarine Peninsula and future role of other settlements: *limit growth in adjoining coastal settlements of Barwon Heads ... to existing settlement boundaries as per Structure Plans and Coastal Spaces Strategy* (p.50).

Further support in the Victoria Planning Provisions for wetland protection includes

- *Consider impacts of any change in land-use or development that may affect the biodiversity value of adjoining national parks and conservation reserves or nationally and internationally significant sites including wetlands and wetland wildlife habitat designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention), and sites utilised by species designated under the Japan-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (JAMBA) or the China-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (CAMBA) (VPP 12.01);*
- *...ensure development conserves, protects and seeks to enhance coastal biodiversity and ecological value (12.02)*
- *adopt a best practice environmental management and risk management approach which aims to avoid or minimise environmental degradation and hazards and to identify and manage the potential for the environment, and environmental changes, to impact upon the economy or the social well-being of society (VPP 13)*

Victorian Coastal Strategy, 2014 - recognises the environmental values of the Bellarine Ramsar sites and establishes clear principles for considering development in coastal areas

The VCS provides a long-term vision and a framework for how we plan and manage the coast, and enshrines the following hierarchy of principles directly from the *Coastal Management Act 1995* to ensure long-term planning:

Principle 1: Ensure the protection of significant environmental and cultural values; then

Principle 2: Undertake integrated planning and provide clear direction for the future; then

Principle 3: Ensure the sustainable use of natural coastal resources; and only when the above principles have been considered and addressed, consider the final principle

Principle 4: Ensure development on the coast is located within existing modified and resilient environments where the demand for development is evident and any impacts can be managed sustainably (p.1).

These principles require first and foremost the protection of the fragile coastal values, then integrated planning and sustainable use; and only once these have been achieved does it allow for the contemplation of development with the stipulation that it occur *only in existing modified and resilient environments where demand is evident, and impacts can be sustainably managed (p.1)*.

With no evidence of demand, in a fragile landscape on the shores of Ramsar wetlands, the Barwon Heads Structure Plan and amendment C375 complies with the VCS principles and does not contemplate development outside the Barwon Heads current settlement boundary.

Local Planning policies – strongly supports enhancement of natural areas

CoGG's Local Planning Policies support retention of the town boundary and preclude urban sprawl particularly in sensitive coastal areas. There is no justification for the boundary expansion in any of the City of Greater Geelong's Local Planning Policy or strategic planning work.

The City of Greater Geelong Council's vision is: *Geelong, coast country and suburbs is the best place to live through prosperity and cohesive communities in an exceptional environment* (LPP 21.01).

'Coast country' is not a term well known, but could easily refer to the locality of Barwon Heads and the exceptional environment provided by our waterway, wetlands and coast. These are worthy of protection, restoration and enhancement as described in the first element of the City of Greater Geelong Sustainable Growth Framework: Managing Urban Growth (LPP 21.02). Council sets out clear instructions that it will:

- Set clear settlement boundaries and consolidate development within those boundaries in a managed way;
- Encourage diversity in all communities;
- Design healthy, walkable neighbourhoods;
- Strive for engagement and inclusion in all communities;
- Protect, restore and enhance Geelong's biodiversity and natural systems (LPP 21.02).

The local planning provisions of the Geelong Planning Scheme mirror the State provisions and are categorical in their intention and strategies to reduce urban sprawl and consolidate urban development around places of activity and public transport infrastructure (LPP 21.06). The Urban Growth provisions, following the lead from G21 Regional Growth Plan, do not designate Barwon Heads as a growth area (LPP 21.06-2). Rather the Urban Consolidation provisions seek to accommodate growth within existing boundaries (LPP 21.06-3). The Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 is well aligned with these policy objectives.

From Barwon Heads, Armstrong Creek is an 11-minute drive and will provide 22,000 homes for an additional 65,000 people. Ocean Grove, situated within walking distance from Barwon Heads or a 5 minute drive, will have a population of close to 20,000 by 2031, many of which will be regular visitors to Barwon Heads (Ocean Grove Structure Plan, City of Greater Geelong, 2016, p 12). The Ocean Grove Structure Plan finalised by the municipality in December 2016, is categorical that there is no need for additional broadhectare land supply: *There is between 19 and 24 years of currently zoned residential broadhectare land stocks in Ocean Grove* (p.97). This leaves no justification for opening further lands at Barwon Heads.

In addition, Barwon Heads is showing signs of urban renewal, and Amendment C375 seeks to apply newer State Residential zones and a Design Development Overlay that will encourage diversity of housing stock, including higher densities. This will encourage and allow for future growth through infill. Barwon Heads is already moving in this direction with 25% of building permits replacing one house for two or more (BHSP, 2017 p.73). As this is the main thrust of State Planning Policy, to accommodate growth and create more sustainable towns with less reliance on private vehicles, it is imperative that this policy be given time to take effect. Releasing more land would have the opposite effect to that intended by this policy as it would encourage further urban sprawl and increase traffic movements.

Key issues and influence for the CoGG local planning policies regarding Natural Environment are the threatened flora and fauna found in the wetlands and waterways of the municipality and their importance given that only 5% of remnant vegetation remains across the municipality (LPP 21.05). It specifically references that *Urban and rural growth has had a direct impact on the municipality's natural environments and the flora and fauna that they sustain. There is a need to protect and enhance the natural environment and provide for more sustainable development.* With regards to

waterways, the objective is to: *protect, maintain and enhance, to protect connectivity between waterways and wetlands and reduce runoff from urban development* (LPP 21.05-2). Similarly the objective for Biodiversity is to: *protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity within the municipality, through strategies that ensure that land use and development enhances areas ... minimises the fragmentation ... protect[s] from impacts of land use and development* (LPP 21.05-3).

Furthermore, Council's planning provisions regarding Natural Environment (21.05) including Waterways, Biodiversity, Coastal Environments, and Climate Change provisions calls upon Council to **protect, maintain and enhance** the natural environment. Importantly the Coastal environments provision includes a strategy calling for Council to:

...setback future land use and development from coastal areas, estuaries and coastal wetlands to provide a buffer which is adequate to accommodate coastal recession and the landward migration of coastal wetland vegetation communities such as mangroves and saltmarsh (LPP 21.05-4).

The Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 supports the intent of these policies and strategies through retaining the current settlement boundary.

3 SAVE BARWON HEADS

the existing amenity of the township that attracts tourists is protected by retaining the settlement boundary:

In the process of Strategic Planning the notion of 'amenity' is as important as it is elusive. The SBHA sees the amenity of Barwon Heads as features of the area that provide comfort, convenience or pleasure in the lives of residents and visitors to the town. In 2008, the Victorian Government Solicitor, via a ruling in the Court of Appeal, stated that:

Amenity is an elusive concept. It has its usual meaning of pleasantness, but also has a wider ambit. It has a physical (or tangible) component, which could include character and appearance of building and works, proximity to shopping facilities, quality infrastructure and absence of noise, unsightliness or offensive odours. It has been said to embrace all the features, benefits and advantages inherent in the environment in question. It also has a psychological or social component (p.1).

Further to this The Court has confirmed that amenity is a:

...wide ranging and flexible concept; that subjective views need to be considered ... a responsible authority must consider as appropriate ... the effect on the amenity of the area in deciding a permit application or approving a plan. It must also consider the objectives of planning, one of which is securing a pleasant working and living environment. A pleasant environment equates with amenity (p. 1).

The points above validate current community concerns regarding the amenity of Barwon Heads. They speak to the continuing relevance of the Barwon Heads Urban Design Framework (BHUDF), adopted by Council in 2003. The vision, quality and imperatives of the BHUDF informed the Barwon Heads Structure Plans of 2010 and 2017. For over twenty years, government bodies, residents and visitors have consistently promoted the material and less tangible qualities of Barwon Heads. It is the amenity and its values that are important, relevant and defining. Federal, State and local government planning agencies are tasked to protect the amenity of Barwon Heads - it is their responsibility, intention and mandate to do so.

The Barwon Heads' community and visitors to the area are strongly opposed to any plan involving the development of land to the west of the Settlement Boundary. During the 2007 Barwon Heads Structure Plan consultation there were 771 out of 873 submissions opposed to a change in the settlement boundary (CoGG, Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017, P.127). In the Planning Panel decision of January 2010 regarding Amendment 159, the Panel considered that community opposition was something that it could not dismiss. This community opposition has grown with time, with the 2017 Barwon Heads Structure Plan generating 1050 submissions of which 1033 were of SBHA members and supporters opposing any change in the Settlement Boundary (CoGG, Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017).

The following aspects of amenity are important to the people of Barwon Heads.

The Coastal Village Feel of Barwon Heads as Amenity

In 2016 the Barwon Heads Structure Plan Engagement Report sought to document the views of the Barwon Heads community. The subsequent report released by COGG states:

The coastal seaside village character is very important to the community. There is little support for growth and a view it can be provided by existing and proposed developments in neighbouring areas. Retaining the village feel means not extending the existing town boundary (p.1).

Contributing to the village feel of Barwon Heads are the non-urban breaks between Barwon Heads and other residential localities. In regard to this the Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCS), 2014, states:

There is a range of different non-urban breaks between settlements along the Victorian coast. They are characterized by natural or rural landscapes that help shape and define settlements and their communities. Not only do these breaks provide increased **amenity** to those who live or visit these areas, they play an important part in providing links for wildlife habitat, appropriate disturbance buffers to support coastal biodiversity and ensuring coastal settlements maintain their own identity or character (VCS, 2014, p.60).

This is further supported in VPP 11.05 that elevates the Bellarine Peninsula to a distinctive area of state significance and references the Bellarine Localised Planning Statement 2015 (Victorian Government). It requires Council to implement the following strategies:

- Recognise the significant geographic and physical features of these area;
- Protect the identified key values and activities of these areas;
- Support use and development where it enhances the valued characteristics of these areas;
- Recognise the important role these areas play in the state as tourist destinations;
- Avoid use and development that could undermine the long-term natural or non-urban use of land in these areas; and
- Protect areas that are important for food production.

The Bellarine Localised Planning Statement (2015), mirrors this with the following statement:

There is a long history of planning policy maintaining non-urban breaks between settlements on the Bellarine Peninsula. Non-urban breaks foster a sense of identity for each township and protect the intrinsic qualities of the environs surrounding existing settlements. Urban consolidation is encouraged to enable the existing boundaries of urban townships to be maintained and provide for increased densities that will justify provisions of additional services

and utilise surplus capacity in existing services. The non-urban breaks between settlements include areas of environmental significance, areas with significant landscape value, sites with significant vegetation and some of the most productive rural land within the City of Greater Geelong (p.7).

The existing open rural space west of the Barwon Heads settlement and the scenic and ecological buffer it provides between the wetland and the urban area is a valuable contributor to amenity. Any development of these areas would erode the expansive open rural spaces that are of immense value to the environment, the community and the values of the Bellarine Peninsula.

The Bellarine Localised Planning Statement (2015) also states:

- The environment on the Bellarine Peninsula is one of the key reasons people are attracted to it, with its strong farmed landscape character between settlements. It also includes significant coasts and environmental landscapes, beaches and waterways, some of international significance. This character is extremely important and highly valued by the local community (p.5).
- Barwon Heads is located at the mouth of the Barwon River. With proximity to the Lake Connewarre Complex, Bass Strait and Murtnaghurt Lagoon the environment is a key influence. Its role is as a seaside resort and home to a growing population of permanent residents (p.8).

As the Planning Statement says, environment is a *key influencer* and it is what makes Barwon Heads so special: its intrinsic relationship with the wetlands, river estuary and ocean and their protection assists in maintaining the amenity of the township.

Finally, the Planning Statement acknowledges the town's role in the regional economy as a seaside resort (p.8) and the pressure it faces from the growing numbers of regional and state visitors (p.3).

- Forecast growth in the region, its adjoining regions and Melbourne, when combined with increased tourism and recreational visitation, will place additional pressure on the natural assets of the Bellarine Peninsula. As the area grows it is important that these characteristics are upheld by continuing to maintain key coastal landscapes and agricultural production in rural areas (p.5).

This statement exemplifies the Barwon Heads experience of growth threatening amenity. The township does feel these visitation pressures and needs Council's support to protect the natural assets that make it a coastal attraction; that is the non-urban breaks and the surrounding water assets of the highest value that create the small coastal town that visitors love. We must support limits to growth to ensure the protection of our finite coastal resources.

Protect amenity by enhancing the natural areas through science, planning and management action

The local planning provisions for the City of Greater Geelong mirror the VPPs and Planning Statement by highlighting the importance of non-urban breaks between settlements as they are highly valued for their amenity contribution *scenic attributes, tourism function, environmental function and lifestyle appeal (LPP 21.14-1)*. It recognises that managing urban growth on the Peninsula is a critical issue and includes the objective to *protect and enhance the rural and coastal environment and maintain non-urban breaks between settlements and preserve the individual character, identity and role of each Bellarine Township (LPP 21.14-02)*. It undertakes to ensure that

development responds to the identity and character of the individual township and to protect rural and coastal environments from inappropriate urban encroachment.

With regards to the boundary issues Amendment C375 seeks to strengthen local policy (21.14-02):

Maintain a compact urban form and avoid outward sprawl by ensuring that urban development does not occur outside of the defined settlement boundary.

Protect the unique character of Barwon Heads as a coastal village located within a sensitive environment and significant landscape setting.

These provisions are completely consistent with all previously discussed policy and strategy that logically results in retaining the current settlement boundary.

These State and Local policies remain consistent with the view of the community. Thirteen years after the 2003 BHUDF the wants and concerns of the community then, are almost identical to those in the 2016 Engagement Report. The people surveyed were different and methodology may be different yet the outcomes are consistent. This indicates that the environmental amenity values of Barwon Heads are enduring and evident to planners and the residents alike. Across generations there is a continuity of community concerns from before 1996 to the present. There is an understanding that any changes to the current rural zoning will severely prejudice the amenity as well as the physical habitat/environment that is Barwon Heads.

These aspects lend themselves to the vision for Barwon Heads as restated in the Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 derived from the Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan (BPSP) 2006–2016.

In the year 2016, Barwon Heads will be a unique, sustainable, residential and environmental hub; a landlocked community surrounded by pristine river, coast and wetlands. An intimate community which supports all age groups and provides a place of belonging for residents and visitors alike; where human impact is managed to support the fragile natural surroundings by:

- 1. Clearly defined limitations on urban development;*
- 2. Protecting and nurturing natural surroundings by managing human footprint;*
- 3. Supporting walking, cycling, fishing, sailing, surfing, swimming and generally enjoying what our coastal village has to offer in an environmentally sensitive way (p.7).*

Growth beyond the boundary impacts amenity

Large population increases beyond the boundary will result in more car usage, more traffic, more congestion, decreased safety and destroy the amenity of the town as we know and enjoy it. However, this submission acknowledges and supports the policy that population growth should occur within the current planning envelope. *Council does not support the western expansion of the township and this therefore has an implication on where growth will occur in the township in line with the G21 Regional Growth Plan 2013 (BHSP, 2017, p.18).*

Barwon Heads is surrounded on four sides by fragile waterways consisting of wetlands, the river and the ocean, which as discussed are important to the amenity of the town. In the past 10 years the expanding population in growth areas has impacted the amenity of Barwon Heads and the capacity of its roads, carparks and foreshore infrastructure to accommodate swelling visitor numbers. Barwon Heads has finite resources in terms of physical foreshore access and road access, the use of

which is already at capacity and cannot support further growth of the township itself. Armstrong Creek Growth Area and Ocean Grove are two very significant urban growth areas. The former is planned to accommodate 65,000 people and the latter will have a population of 20,000. These are very significant numbers of people in immediate proximity to Barwon Heads. CoGG and the Barwon Coast Committee of Management acknowledges that this will increase visitor numbers in Barwon Heads and put pressure on the amenity, infrastructure and facilities of the town (BHSP, 2017, p46). Given the policy and planning practice regarding settlement sizes, firm boundaries and designated growth area, it is appropriate that the Structure Plan not contemplate any increased housing developments to the west of the current town boundary. It would have a profound negative effect on the livability of Barwon Heads and its surrounding wetlands (VCS, 2014). Barwon Heads must be protected, it is too loved to lose.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

SBHA congratulates COGG planners on the excellent research and planning undertaken in development of the Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2017 and the implementing Amendment C375.

We support the Amendment C375 statement to exclude residential development from the golf focus stage3 13th Beach Resort development and require demonstrably net environmental benefit. We also support protections for the remnant Moonah Woodland Community.

The Barwon Heads Structure Plan (and Amendment C375) recognises the sensitive coastal values inherent in the physical and ecological surrounds of the township and the threat that urban development represents to these values. It aligns with international, national, state and local planning that overwhelmingly supports limits to growth particularly in sensitive coastal areas where our knowledge is uncertain. Lastly, it respects the amenity value of our Bellarine coastal village, Barwon Heads, which attracts visitors year-round and is defined by non-urban breaks between settlements. The retention of the current settlement boundary is entirely consistent with the logic of planning policy in Victoria for the past 21 years.

SBHA members have shown their concern for the wetlands through the 970 submissions to the Structure Plan consultation and well over 600 to Amendment C375. SBHA looks forward to the opportunity to represent its 2800 plus membership at the panel hearing in August 2018 with its legal team and expert witnesses.

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Clause 11 – Settlement

11.01 Settlement Network

11.02 Urban Growth

11.05 Planning for distinctive areas

11.09 Geelong (G21)

Clause 12 Environmental and landscape values

12.01 Biodiversity

12.02 Coastal areas

Clause 13 Environmental Risks

13.01 Climate change impacts

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Clause 21 Municipal Strategic Statement

21.01 Introduction

21.02 City of Greater Geelong Sustainable Growth Framework

21.05 Natural Environment

21.06 Settlement and Housing

21.14 The Bellarine Peninsula

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Environmental significance of coastal environments of Barwon Heads

Lake Connewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon complex environmental values	Reference
Wetlands of international importance	Ramsar convention 1982
Important linking site for migratory shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.	Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula East Asian - Australasian Flyway Site (site no. EAAF065)
<p>Lake Connewarre State Wildlife Reserve forms part of the largest area of native vegetation remaining on the Bellarine Peninsula.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a good example of a wetland type occurring within a biogeographic region within Australia. • It is a wetland which plays an important ecological or hydrological role in the natural functioning of a major wetland system/complex. • It is a wetland which is important as the habitat for animal taxa at a vulnerable stage in their life cycles, or provides a refuge when adverse conditions such as drought prevail. • The wetland supports 1% or more of the national populations of any native plant or animal taxa. • The wetland supports native plant or animal taxa or communities which are considered endangered or vulnerable at the national level. 	Directory of Important Wetlands (Environment Australia, 2001, p.11)
Significant Ecological Vegetation Communities	
Tropical and Temperate Saltmarsh Ecological Community, nationally vulnerable	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182, p.185
Coastal Saltmarsh (Endangered)	2008 Flora and Fauna study of Murtnaghurt lagoon (Quin & McMahon)
Estuarine Flats Grassland (Vulnerable);	2008 Flora and Fauna study of Murtnaghurt lagoon (Quin & McMahon)
Estuarine Flats Grassland (Vulnerable);	2008 Flora and Fauna study of Murtnaghurt lagoon (Quin & McMahon)
Estuarine Wetland (Endangered)	2008 Flora and Fauna study of Murtnaghurt lagoon (Quin & McMahon)
Saline Aquatic Meadow (Rare)	2008 Flora and Fauna study of Murtnaghurt lagoon (Quin & McMahon)

Significant Faunal Species	
Australian painted snipe (<i>Rostratula australis</i>), listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182
Lake Connewarre has supported 40% of the world population of Orange-bellied Parrots (<i>Neophema chrysogaster</i>) (Nationally Critically Endangered and listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act);	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182
The Great Egret (<i>Egretta alba</i>) (listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 1988);	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182
Fairy Tern (<i>Sterna nereis</i>) (Nationally Vulnerable and listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act);	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182
Blue-billed Duck (<i>Oxyura australis</i>) (Nationally vulnerable and listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act)	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182, (NRE 1995a)
Australasian Bittern (<i>Oxyura australis</i>) (Nationally endangered and listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act)	CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy, 2014-2022, p.182, (NRE 1995a)
Lewin's Rail listed under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG)	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Hooded Plover listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Little Egret listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Fairy Tern listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Caspian Tern listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Swamp Skink listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Yellow Sedge-skipper listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Pied Cormorant, Pacific Gull, Royal Spoonbill, Whiskered Tern and Glossy Grass Skink otherwise listed in Victoria	Quin & McMahon (2008),
Environmental Services provided by the wetlands	
Murtnaghurt Lagoon and Lake Connewarre have been identified as important areas of blue carbon habitat. As part of a study in 2014 by Deakin University (commissioned by Corangamite CMA) into blue	(Corangamite Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change, 2016, p.73).

carbon stocks it was found that:

Saltmarsh habitats comprised almost half of the vegetated coastal habitat samples in the region and were found to have high carbon stocks, with exceptionally high values recorded at Aireys Inlet, Breamlea, Lake Connewarre, Hospital Swamp, Indented Head and Swan Bay (Corangamite Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change, 2016, p.73).

APPENDIX B: Threats to the Lake Connewarre and Murnaghurt Lagoon Wetlands

Threat	Details of impacts	Reference
<i>Changed Water Regime</i>	<p>The CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014-2022), recognises the encroachment of freshwater plant species into saltmarsh areas of Murnaghurt Lagoon due to stormwater discharges to the system (p.185, A).</p> <p><i>The clearing of land and the increase in impermeable surfaces and stormwater drainage systems associated with urban development have decreased water infiltration rates and dramatically increased the speed of delivery of stormwater to creek and river systems. This represents a potentially significant risk at Reedy Lake, Limeburners Bay, southern Swan Bay and the lower Barwon River estuary and Lake Murnaghurt. (p.22, B)</i></p> <p><i>The discharge of urban stormwater to waterways and bays from the large and growing urban centres has the potential to adversely impact on water quality and hydrology in wetlands. Some of the most sensitive and high value wetlands are directly impacted by stormwater and these impacts will increase unless specific and strong action is taken. (p.13, C)</i></p>	<p>(A) CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014 - 2022)</p> <p>(B) Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan</p> <p>(C) Geelong Wetlands Strategy, CoGG</p>
<i>Degraded water quality</i>	<p><i>Lake Connewarre has high nutrient concentrations and is considered eutrophic with blue-green algal blooms (Aphanocapsa sp.) recorded in recent years (2006 to 2008). Lake Connewarre is considered to be nitrogen limited e.g the nutrient concentrations within 1986/87 were: Max total phosphorus of 670µg/L; and oxidised nitrogen generally <15µg/L; and total nitrogen of 130µg/L. (p. 183, A)</i></p> <p><i>" Lake Connewarre and Lake Murnaghurt are directly affected by hydrological and water quality changes due to catchment processes and land use." (p.10, B)</i></p> <p><i>Coastal Saltmarsh Aggregate (EVC9) - "This EVC is potentially vulnerable to freshwater inputs/run-off from adjacent land uses. Protection from alterations to drainage (including storm water inputs) is an important management consideration. " (p.56, F)</i></p>	<p>(A) CCMA Corangamite Waterway Strategy (2014 - 2022)</p> <p>(B) Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan, DSE</p> <p>(F) A guide to water regime, salinity ranges and bioregional conservation status of Victorian wetland Ecological Vegetation Classes (DSE)</p>

Threat	Details of impacts	Reference
<p><i>Human Disturbance</i></p>	<p><i>Trampling of coastal vegetation is a particular problem on the Barwon estuary and Lake Connewarre. (p.27,B)</i></p> <p><i>The massive clearance of vegetation / fauna habitat in the City of Greater Geelong has resulted in a predominantly altered landscape with relatively few major refuges containing natural habitats for vertebrate fauna. Those refuges include: .. Lake Connewarre, ... Murtnaghurt Swamp" (p.12, D)</i></p> <p><i>The ecological integrity of the dynamic land–water interface is diminished through continued development of shorelines and the spread of invasive species. Aquatic habitats are affected by the alteration of flow and water quality through upstream development, modification of entrance dynamics, and climate-related changes in precipitation patterns. Many of the ecological services and processes that ecological communities deliver and depend on are disrupted by human-driven deterioration of the coast. For example, widespread nutrient enrichment of coastal waterways has substantially altered the processes of nutrient cycling, sulfur metabolism and carbon fixation. Destruction of critical nursing, roosting and nesting sites has broad-reaching ramifications for species that rely on networks of sites to maintain populations (e.g. shorebirds). Critical habitat-forming species groups, such as saltmarsh, seagrass and shellfish, have failed to fully recover from extensive historical losses, although restoration programs are currently under way. (p.iv ,E)</i></p> <p><i>The distribution of threatened species around the nation is generally related to the distribution of the human population and the intensity of our activities. The species group of most concern is migratory shorebirds, which are declining because of habitat loss and impacts on critical parts of their migratory route in Australia and overseas. (p.54, E)</i></p>	<p>(B) Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan</p> <p>(D) Environmental Management Strategy 2014 -2017 CoGG</p> <p>(E) Australia State of the Environment 2016 - Coasts - Commonwealth of Australia 2017</p>

Threat	Details of impacts	Reference
<p><i>Invasive Fauna and Flora</i></p>	<p><i>Feral cats and, near residential estates, domestic cats, are known to disturb and prey on native wildlife. Dogs exercised off leads can also disturb birds. (p.25, B)</i></p> <p><i>Spartina grows in marine intertidal areas subject to regular or occasional freshwater influence. Spartina invasion is a listed threatening process under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and has been listed as a noxious aquatic species under the Fisheries Act 1995. There are infestations in Lake Connewarre and the lower Barwon estuary. Spartina is known to seriously degrade habitats for waterbirds, particularly shorebirds, by occupying and rendering both feeding and roosting areas unsuitable (Lane 1991). (p.25, B)</i></p> <p><i>Increased urbanisation in the surrounding area has the potential to result in increased stormwater discharges to the system. This has had a number of effects including the encroachment of freshwater plant species into saltmarsh areas (e.g at Lake Murtnaghurt; D. Quinn, Ecology Australia, pers comm). (p.4, A)</i></p>	<p>(A) CCMA Corrangamite Waterway Strategy (2014 - 2022)</p> <p>(B) Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan</p>
<p><i>Climate Change</i></p>	<p><i>Wetland ecosystems are fundamentally linked to hydrology, which creates the physico-chemical conditions that make them different from well-drained terrestrial or fully aquatic deepwater systems (Mitsch and Gosselink 2000). Thus wetlands are naturally sensitive to changes in hydrology. Climate change and variability are the biggest factors affecting water availability and reliability (DSE 2008a). The ecological consequences of climate change on wetlands will depend largely on changes in hydrological regime and water quality. The most pronounced effects will occur through altered hydrological regimes and more frequent or intense extreme weather events (heatwaves, droughts, storms and floods) (Bates et al. 2008). (pg 3, G)</i></p>	<p>(G) Climate Change Impacts on Wetlands in Victoria and Implications for Research and Policy, 2009 (Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research Department of Sustainability and Environment)</p>
<p><i>Disturbance of Acid Sulfate Soils</i></p>	<p><i>Adjacent land has the potential to contain coastal acid sulfate soils or inland waterway is at high risk from acid sulfate soils. (p. 183, A)</i></p> <p><i>Management advice from CCMA- "do not disturb" (p.24, H)</i></p>	<p>(A) CCMA Corrangamite Waterway Strategy (2014 - 2022)</p> <p>(H) 2007 CSIRO Scoping study of coastal and inland acid sulfate soils in the Corangamite CMA</p>

Appendix C. Policy documents opposing urban development near sensitive wetlands

<p>International</p>	
<p>RAMSAR Convention of Wetlands 1971 and Bonn Convention http://www.ramsar.org/about/the-ramsar-convention-and-its-mission</p>	<p>The Convention’s mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”. This means ensuring that activities which might affect wetlands will not lead to the loss of biodiversity or diminish the many ecological, hydrological, cultural or social values of wetlands.</p> <p>The wise use of wetlands is “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development.”</p>
<p>ROKAMBA, JAMBA and CAMBA Agreements http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory-species/migratory-birds</p>	<p>“Threats</p> <p>Wetland habitat loss and degradation is a significant threat to migratory waterbirds, and the conservation of important sites both within Australia and along their migration routes is essential to their survival. Many pressures are contributing to this degradation, of which population growth and associated coastal development are of particular concern.”</p>
<p>National</p>	
<p>Inter Governmental Agreement on the Environment, 1992, Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, States and territories of Australia. http://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/esd/publications/intergovernmental-agreement</p>	<p>3.5 The parties further agree that, in order to promote the above approach, the principles set out below should inform policy making and program implementation.</p> <p>3.5.1 precautionary principle –</p> <p>Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and 2. an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options. <p>3.5.2 intergenerational equity –</p> <p>the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.</p> <p>3.5.3 conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity –</p> <p>conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration.</p>

<p>EPBC Act Saltmarsh communities Conservation Advice</p> <p>Australian State of Environment Report 2016, Australian Government https://soe.environment.gov.au/</p>	<p>Sub-tropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh Conservation Advice – listed as vulnerable http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/118-conservation-advice.pdf</p> <p>P868 Urbanisation has been identified as a major pressure on biodiversity, water resources, cultural and natural heritage, marine environments and atmosphere in other chapters of this report. Growing coastal populations require houses, wastewater treatment, roads and other facilities. Environmental controls on urban development and the need for onsite containment of wastes are of vital concern in coastal areas, and adequate development and implementation of these can be a major challenge for resource-limited coastal councils.16 As noted in Chapter 8: Biodiversity, the impacts of urbanisation are not just direct (e.g. removal or modification of ecosystems) but also indirect (e.g. the consumption of natural resources as an indirect result of consumption of goods by people living in urban areas).</p>
<p>State</p>	
<p>State Planning Policy Framework http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/</p>	<p>See item 2</p>
<p>G21 Geelong Regional Growth Plan 2013 Victorian Government http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21_regional_growth_plan_-_april_2013_-_low_res_0.pdf</p>	<p>See item 2</p>
<p>Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 Victorian Government http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au/assets/media/menu_files/VCS_2014.pdf</p>	<p>See item 2</p>

<p>The Bellarine Peninsula Localised Planning Statement 2015, Victorian Government</p> <p>http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8d1a46f84b71dc2-Bellarine%20Peninsula%20Localised%20Planning%20Statement_Sept%202015_WEB.pdf</p>	<p>See item 2</p>
<p>Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study – City of Greater Geelong Reference Doc (December 2006) Victorian Government</p>	<p>2.1 Lake Connewarre flats: Settlements threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of open rural character through poorly designed sited residential and rural living developments throughout the Character Area, particularly visually intrusive designs close to roads and without vegetation. • Visually exposed development along lake and waterway edges, including urban sprawl from Barwon Heads. • Development which impacts on the integrity of lake and waterbody landforms.
<p>Landscape Setting Types for the Victorian Coast, May 1998 Victorian Government</p> <p>http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au/resources/landscape/</p>	<p>Lake Connewarre and the Barwon River are inland extensions of the coastline experience with high conservation values and flat open landscape with low visual absorption. Urban development at Torquay, Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads is tending to spread and is compromising the coastal quality.</p>
<p>Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast, May 1998, Victorian Government</p> <p>http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au/assets/media/files/sitingdesignguidelines.pdf</p>	<p>If there is an overriding need for greenfield development and one that can be sustained on rigorous environmental planning grounds then only areas of low level impacts should be selected. These can be defined as areas where impacts on the ecology and aesthetics of the area, the coastal character, and other qualities would be minimal. P10</p>
<p>Victorian State of the Environment Report 2013 Victorian Government</p> <p>http://www.ces.vic.gov.au/publications/state-environment-report-2013</p>	<p>Development of coastal areas – Although 96% of the Victorian coast is on public land and mostly protected in parks and reserves, much of it has been impacted by development for industry, tourism and urbanisation. These development pressures are predicted to increase in the future. Extensive coastal modification has resulted in the significant disturbance or loss of coastal ecosystems and biodiversity, including coastal vegetation. Most of Victoria’s estuaries, particularly those around the more populated coastal centres, have been degraded and</p>

	<p>modified to the extent that only a few, in the far east of the state, remain in near-pristine condition. The conversion of coastal land to intensive uses also places pressure on coastal water quality. P165</p> <p>There remains little data available on the ecological condition of estuaries, although it is evident that most of Victoria's estuaries have been degraded. • Victoria's bays and inlets are under substantial environmental pressure and so are vulnerable to environmental changes. P167</p> <p>Data on the condition of coastal land and marine and coastal ecosystems is not gathered in a comprehensive manner, making assessment of the condition of coastal and marine systems difficult. P189</p> <p>http://www.ces.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Part-A-Chapter-4.pdf</p>
<p>Regional</p> <p>Central West Victoria Regional Coastal Action Plan (CAP) 2003 (Western Coastal Board)</p> <p>http://www.wcb.vic.gov.au/cwvrcap/cwvrcap.pdf</p>	<p>The coastal towns are extremely popular, typically having a small permanent population with large influxes of visitors at holiday times particularly during the summer months. These towns offer tranquil lifestyles, access to quality coastal and marine areas, and cultural experiences such as cafes and galleries. For example Barwon Heads' distinctive urban character is symptomatic of its natural wetland systems and associated boating and other recreational activities and services. schemes in the region to ensure they protect and enhance coastal and marine values and give effect to the recommendations from the Central West Victoria Coastal Planning Scheme Review 2001, zone and overlay application review, endorsed CAPs and other regional and local strategic planning policy that relate to coastal and marine areas.p27</p> <p>The challenge therefore is to provide sustainable development opportunities for residential and visitor accommodation within strategically defined township boundaries, that respects and contributes to the coastal township character and residential amenity of coastal settlements, and does not negatively impact upon environmental qualities and features or scenic landscapes. There are a number of examples of good planning processes applied to coastal towns in the region which factor in these issues and which could be applied elsewhere (eg. Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove).p39</p> <p>Key Action 3.6.3: Review and continually improve the effectiveness of planning schemes by identifying gaps in strategic planning policies and controls to ensure that they clearly express future growth outcomes and expectations, including limitations, for townships along the coast taking into account social, economic and environmental impacts. This includes a priority program for actions such as urban character studies , vegetation assessments, local siting and design guidelines, township strategies and rural residential strategies.</p>
<p>Central West Estuaries Coastal Action Plan 2005</p>	<p>P16 Many of the environmental issues for estuaries and their catchments are primarily the result of cumulative</p>

<p>(Western Coastal Board)</p> <p>http://www.wcb.vic.gov.au/cwvecap/CWECAP2005.pdf</p>	<p>impacts from a variety of land and waterway uses and activities. These contribute to changed estuary processes including reduced water quality and quantity. New and existing land use and development (eg. urban development, agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation) contribute to the impact on aquatic health of estuaries. These threats include: • encroaching urban development; • flooding and altered flows; • clearing of vegetation; • effluent and stormwater discharge; • demand for access by livestock and people; and • pest plant and animals.</p>
<p>Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2019, Corangamite Catchment and Land Protection Board</p> <p>http://www.ccma.vic.gov.au/admin/file/content/2/c7/CCMA%20RCS%20FINAL%20JUNE%202013.pdf</p>	<p>Factors that have contributed to a decline in the health and condition of rivers, estuaries and floodplains and have the potential to threaten their future values include: Urban development and inappropriate recreational activities. p 14 and P18</p> <p>There are significant gaps in knowledge of the condition of wetlands in the Corangamite region.p17</p> <p>Threats to coasts include: • population growth and urban development p29</p> <p>Foundation Action: Ensure protection of natural resources and productive land are considered through local government planning provisions and Regional Growth Plans.P 53</p> <p>Improve their quality relative to 2009 benchmark data -Continue to manage those wetlands listed in Ramsar or the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia to protect and enhance their ecological character. P54</p>

Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) & Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Strategic Management Plan 2003

- https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=i&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjov-W-4JHUAhUMvrwKHaosC08QFgg2MAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fparkweb.vic.gov.au%2F_data%2Fasset%2Fpdf_file%2F0014%2F313430%2FPort-Phillip-Bay-Ramsar-Site-Strategic-Management-Plan.pdf&usg=AFQjCNHvEjevlpW9zmFmZO9VF775Rznhg&sig2=EI05FKoQheT-jV05Gsnkvw

In particular, urbanisation can reduce the quality of stormwater flowing into wetlands and increase levels of disturbance from humans and domestic pets. It also has the potential to degrade, and in some cases destroy, fauna habitat if areas are not properly protected and managed. Components of the site that have significant urban development adjacent or close to them are:,,, Lake Connewarre State Game Reserve. P6
Limeburners Bay, Lake Connewarre and Lake Murtnagurt are directly affected by hydrological and water quality changes due to catchment processes and land use.p10

The local catchment of Lake Connewarre includes grazing land and the towns of Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads. Lake Murtnagurt is connected by a floodway to the Lake Connewarre system but also receives runoff from a small catchment that includes some grazing land as well as urban and rural residential land around the township of Barwon Heads.p11

In the Barwon estuary and Lake Connewarre, localised river and lake bank erosion occurs due to trampling by pedestrians, and boat wake exacerbates this in places.p21

Disturbance of waterbirds and other wildlife by people is becoming an increasing problem where urban areas have spread to the edge of Ramsar wetlands in Port Phillip Bay. Areas where urban pressures have become a particular problem include the Cheetham Wetlands (Point Cook), Lake Connewarre and the lower Barwon estuary, the southern part of Swan Bay and Limeburners Bay. P28 Based on our current understanding altered water regimes, pollution, pest plants, pest animals and recreation and tourism are considered the most serious threat to the site's environmental values and ecological character.p29

Table 5.1 Level of risk to the ecological character of the Port Phillip Bay Ramsar site

	Risks							
	Altered water regime	Salinity	Grazing	Pollution	Pest plants and animals	Resource Utilisation	Recreation & Tourism	Erosion
Lake Connewarre State Game Reserve	◆◆◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆◆	◆	◆◆	◆◆

<p>Barwon River Land Use and Open Space Corridor Plan (2003)</p>	
<p>City of Greater Geelong Local Planning Provisions http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/scheme/s/greatergeelong</p>	<p>See Item 2</p>
<p>City of Greater Geelong Stormwater Management Plan, WBM Oceanics, 2003 http://www.ccmaknowledgebase.vic.gov.au/resources/R.W00234.001.02.COGGSWMP.Voll.pdf</p>	<p>Catchment values: Ocean Grove is a predominantly rural subcatchment that is located on the lower reaches of the Barwon River, and contains the Barwon River Estuary draining to Bass Strait (a Very Highly valued receiving environment). The in-stream and riparian flora and habitat values in the Ocean Grove subcatchment are considered to be High to Very High, primarily due to the importance of Salt Swamp, Lake Murtnaghurt and the Barwon River Estuary which are sites of international importance. In addition, marine and foreshore habitat rate Very High due to the internationally significant Barwon River Estuary and the relatively undisturbed foreshore reserve. Both recreation and visual and landscape amenity values are rated Very High. Property and tourism values are also rated as Very High. Flood conveyance is of High value to the flooding issues identified in the Barwon Township.p4-6</p> <p>Catchment Threats: Land and Infrastructure Development particularly relates to elevated sediment loads, due to the clearance and disturbance of soils. Development is occurring throughout the municipality, with ... Ocean Grove, earmarked as major growth areas. In accordance with this land and infrastructure development, the subcatchments of ... Ocean Grove subcatchments Moderate to High stormwater threats p4-8.</p>
<p>City of Greater Geelong Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan 2005-2016 http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/public/Documents/8cc118122839958-Bellarine%20Peninsula%20Strategic%20Plan%20Summary%202006.pdf</p>	<p>Barwon Heads Community Vision 2006–2016 In the year 2016 Barwon Heads will be a unique, sustainable, residential and environmental hub; a landlocked community surrounded by pristine river, coast and wetlands. An intimate community which supports all age groups and provides a place of belonging for residents and visitors alike; where human impact is managed to support the fragile natural surroundings. P2</p>
<p>City of Greater Geelong Environment Management Strategy 2006-2011</p>	<p>Lake Connnewarre and Murtnaghurt Lagoon among the few last major refuges containing natural habitat for vertebrate fauna within the municipality (p. 12)</p>

<p>http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/environment/article/item/8cbc875c9ea9a7e.aspx</p>	<p>Population is a major driver of environmental impacts, both positive and negative. At the local level this is mainly due to increased urban development for housing, services, recreation, transport and employment. Geelong contains designated growth areas in Armstrong Creek, Lara, Leopold, Drysdale, Clifton Springs and Ocean Grove and has experienced enormous urban growth in the past decade, characterised by low-density urban sprawl. The City of Greater Geelong’s population has grown by 12% over the last decade to 225,245 and is projected to grow to 297,957 or 32% by 2031. (p14)</p>
<p>Local</p> <p>Barwon Heads Structure Plan, City of Greater Geelong 1996 and 2010 and Draft 2017</p>	<p>The year 2016 Barwon Heads will be a unique, sustainable, residential and environmental hub; a landlocked community surrounded by pristine river, coast and wetlands. An intimate community which supports all age groups and provides a place of belonging for residents and visitors alike; where human impact is managed to support the fragile natural surroundings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined limitations on urban development • Protecting and nurturing natural surroundings by managing human footprint • Supporting walking, cycling, fishing, sailing, surfing, swimming and generally enjoying what our coastal village has to offer in an environmentally sensitive way”. <p>P7</p>
<p>Barwon Heads Urban Design Framework, City of Greater Geelong 2003</p> <p>http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/strategicplanning/documents/item/8cbc15ca828cd46.aspx</p>	<p>A place that is defined by the natural landscape features that surround it – the Bellarine Peninsula’s ‘island’ community.</p> <p>A town of diverse character where development is largely nestled into the coastal vegetation, or if development is not tucked away, it is honestly expressed and well designed.</p> <p>A place where the informal qualities are retained, because it is these elements that give the town its special character, and where the interface of the town with the ocean, wetlands, river and rural land demonstrates an environmental sensitivity.</p> <p>A township where people can walk safely, and experience a strong sense of nearness to the water through buildings and vegetation that highlight the coastal environment and unique landforms.</p> <p>A place where a diverse and environmentally aware community want to live and visit”.</p>