

Tuesday, 17 March 2015

Western Coastal Board
PO Box 103
Geelong Vic 3220

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: WESTERN REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN 2015-2020 DRAFT

Thank you for providing BWV with the opportunity to comment on the subject draft plan.

BWV represents the common interests of over 70 Victorian bushwalking clubs, with in excess of 8,000 members. BWV also aims to proactively represent the interests of all recreational walkers in Victoria as well as walkers visiting from interstate and overseas. One of the common interests of BWV clubs and their members is the conservation of the ecosystems and natural landscapes through which they walk, so that they can enjoy the maximum variety of native flora and fauna and unspoilt scenery and ensure their preservation for future generations. Founded in 1934, BWV has a long history of active interest in conservation, including being one of a group of like-minded organisations pressing for legislation to create a comprehensive system of national parks in Victoria as early as the 1940s.

Much of the draft report represents laudable planning practices with which BWV has no quibble. However, there are a few areas of concern to us, and these are outlined below.

BWV particularly fears for those areas described at part 4.5, section 3c, page 17 as “vulnerable parts of the landscape that provide sought-after visitor experiences where there is limited scope to reduce demand”. We would urge the Western Coastal Board to do everything in its power to prevent environmental degradation associated with public overexposure in such places even if this involves periodic closure of some areas to allow environmental recovery to occur.

The plan states (part 1.6, fifth column, section 3, page 4 that it is proposed to “Develop methodologies for conducting flood and erosion studies in coastal areas”. BWV assumes that this means “build upon”, rather than designing the methodologies from scratch, as we believe that such methodologies have been extant for a long period of time. We would suggest that, to avoid any

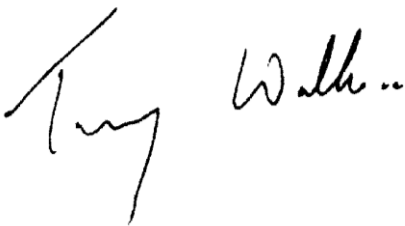
ambiguity, the plan uses the word “refine” throughout, consistent with the usage elsewhere (part 6.3, section 3, page 25 and last box, section 3, page 28).

BWV notes (Appendix 4, left column, second block, page 34 under Victorian Coastal Strategy actions) that there is no mention of environmental factors associated with the objective of facilitating tourism. Further, the way the plan proposes to implement that strategic objective (right column, second block) - “Managing regional visitation pressures and maximising access” - also says nothing specific about environmental considerations, although if the reader drills down far enough there is some concern for “vulnerable parts of the landscape” (see above). We would like to see much stronger evidence of environmental concern reflected throughout the plan.

Chapter 7 (pages 26-27) is devoted to “Supporting Communities Caring for the Coast”, but it is probable (last block, first column, page 34) that the Victorian Coastal Strategy envisaged organisations within its category of “other stakeholders” additional to the ones identified. BWV sees itself very much as a relevant stakeholder here. Our clubs undertake many coastal walks, and the bushwalking community has a strong interest in seeing that coastal developments do not detract from our walking experience by making inroads into the local environment. We also note that the Western Region’s hinterland encompasses some prime walking terrain including the Otways, and that the Great Ocean Walk (photograph page 13) falls within the Western Coastal Board’s bailiwick. We are very interested in the maintenance of, and the amenities attaching to, the walking trails that occur in the magnificently scenic, environmentally fragile areas involved. BWV would wish to see more mention of the walking opportunities available in the Region, and the aims of the Western Coastal Board in relation to them, in this draft plan.

We trust that the Western Coastal Board will carefully take our views into account when deciding upon the final version of the report.

Yours sincerely



Tony Walker
President