

29 February 2016

Point Nepean Master Plan Comments
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Sir/Madam

**POINT NEPEAN NATIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY UPDATE AND DISCUSSION PAPER
JANUARY 2016**

BWV thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this paper.

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.

BWV submitted a response to the Point Nepean Draft Master Plan in August 2010 and, although the present Discussion Paper section “What we have already heard” (pages 8-9) picks up the flavour of some of the points we made, it does not cover them all, and we have appended a copy of our previous submission so that you can reacquaint yourself with our concerns. Of course there have been developments in the interim which render some of the comments we made then no longer relevant. For example, we were extremely worried about the possibility of a large-scale hotel being built in this environmentally-sensitive area, but we have noted that the Victorian Government has decided that this will not happen, so that we feel more comfortable on this score at this point in time. This has also put to rest concerns we had about favoured treatment, even exclusivity, being accorded to affluent visitors at the expense of those less wealthy.

We applaud the continued commitment to the three walking experiences between the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean – the Bay Beach Trail, the Ocean Lookout Trail and the Woodland Network (Plan page 7) – with obvious potential benefits to the community in terms of health and wellbeing, and (ibid) the proposal to utilise existing heritage buildings for accommodation and the central visitor information and services precinct near the current Parks Victoria Offices. There is

perhaps no better way to preserve heritage buildings, with appropriate maintenance, than to keep them in continuous use.

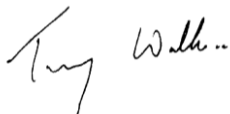
We found the “Master plan concept” you outline at page 7 of the Plan high on infrastructural development proposals and very low on environmental conservation considerations. Clause 13 is the only one that directly embraces the environment. In short we consider that the Plan is unsatisfactory because it almost completely fails to deal with the major conservation issues that will face land managers going forward, and this we see as a very major omission. The points we make below address very important matters, primarily environmentally-based, that the Plan overlooks.

- As in our original submission, we would stress the need for proper signage to preserve walker safety and enjoyment on shared trails. We prefer dedicated walking trails, but we would rather share a trail than be denied access altogether, and with regard to a narrow promontory like Point Nepean, we realise that the possibilities for discrete walking trails, without encroaching more into a fragile coastal environment, which we assuredly do not want to do, are rather limited.
- We would also emphasise the need for paramountcy of environmental considerations over recreational and financial ones, in planning for this most ecologically vulnerable area.
- The control of pest animals and plants in the Park is crucial to the survival of native flora and fauna, and we would urge most strongly, that everything in the land manager’s power is done to ensure that rigorous programs are pursued in this regard.
- There is an overarching need for protection of the Park from wildfire, as all other efforts towards conservation can be nullified in a single uncontrolled conflagration.

We support the plans for major interpretation experiences, new lookouts, the road corridor, improved water access and a visitor information precinct (page 7), providing that all new facilities are constructed having appropriate regard for the surrounding environment, but the Plan as it currently stands carries little guarantee of that. The Vision (page 4), the Principles (page 5) and “What we have already heard” (pages 8-9) contain references to conservation that are virtually ignored in the master plan concept, and that is a matter of continued concern for us.

We trust that you will take the comments above and from our previous submission (attached) into account in developing the final draft of the Master Plan prior to the next consultation phase.

Yours sincerely



Tony Walker
President