

Wednesday, 25 March 2015

Central Coastal Board
PO Box 500
East Melbourne Vic 8002

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Central 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 4.3, third column, section 3c, page 19; Regional Priority 6, Priority Action 6.3c, page 29; and Regional Priority 6.3, page 33 as “vulnerable parts of the landscape that provide sought-after visitor experiences where there is limited scope to reduce demand”. We would urge the Central 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 4.3, second column, section 3, page 19 and Table 10.2, Regional Priority 2.3, page 32) 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” rather than the word “develop” in the relevant sections. This has been done in segments that appear on pages 25 and 28 of the Western Regional Coastal Plan 2015-2020 Draft.

BVV notes (Appendix 3, left column, second block, page 36 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 ostensible concern for “vulnerable parts of the landscape” (see above). BWV would like to see stronger evidence of environmental concern injected into this part of Appendix 3.

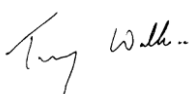
Having said that, BWV is very pleased to see Regional Priority 1 (page 20), which includes “the protection of significant coastal environmental values” and Regional Priority 7, titled “Protecting significant coastal systems and habitats” (page 30), which together provide an environmental focus little evident in the Western and Gippsland Draft Coastal Plans.

BWV also appreciates the breadth of stakeholders that the plan envisages will have an interest in the Central Coastal Region (page 31), including the commitment to provide “Support for community groups and programs”, which we believe is more in line with the Victorian Coastal Strategy action set out in Appendix 3, last block, left column, page 36 than the commitment in relation to that in the right column of the last block, and what has been documented in the Western and Gippsland Regional Coastal Plans. We are also pleased with your recognition of the work of volunteers (page 31) which is recorded thus: “The Board values the work of volunteers and will work with them where possible ...”

In relation to stakeholders, BWV sees itself very much as a relevant party here. Our clubs undertake many coastal walks, and we have 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 in addition to magnificent coastal walks such as those on the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas and Phillip Island, the Central Region encompasses some prime walking terrain in its hinterland including the You Yangs, Brisbane Ranges National Park (home of the much-walked Anakie Gorge), Bunyip State Park (including the popular Kurth Kiln area), Enfield State Park and part of the often-visited Lysterfield Park. 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 wishes to see more mention made of the walking opportunities available in your Region, and the aims of the Central Coastal Board in relation to them, in this draft plan.

We trust that you will carefully take our views into account when deciding upon the final version of your report.

Yours sincerely



Tony Walker
President