

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY SEPTEMBER 2021



## PROJECT OVERVIEW – Southeast Bellarine Coastal Strategy

The City is leading the development of the Southeast Bellarine Coastal Strategy. This strategy aims to provide an overarching vision and guidance for the region, ensure the protection and enhancement of this significant environment and consider the feasibility of opportunities for the area. Threats, values and uses are being evaluated in consultation with Traditional Owners, adjacent land managers, private land holders and community to ensure the pursuing guidelines are collaboratively implemented and maintained.

This project stemmed from a high level of community interest after Ocean Grove Community Association (OGCA) organised a public forum to discuss future developments between the townships of Point Lonsdale and Ocean Grove. The forum objective was to produce a draft vision for the future of the area and an understanding of the concerns, opportunities and risks of a Southern Bellarine Coastal Trail. The community response to this proposal was varied with conflicting views due to the environmental significance of the dune, lakes, saltmarsh and woodland environs.

The City allocated \$160,000 based on a community budget bid from OGCA to develop the Southeast Bellarine Coastal Strategy. In this way extensive community consultation could be sort to provide an impartial and current collection of public view on what actions the City should take to manage this region.

## ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Due to the complex nature of this landscape and high interest from the community, a comprehensive engagement plan was established with detailed activities to capture community and stakeholder consultation throughout the strategy development.

### *Engagement Objectives*

- To inform that the project has commenced, and a project manager has been appointed
- To consult with community and collaborate with land managers on the values, threats, uses and issues of the site
- To involve the Geelong community in developing a greater sense of stewardship of the site
- To collaborate with the Traditional Owners and land managers in the management of the area
- To ensure that the strategy is accepted by community and implemented by land management partners

## WHO WE ENGAGED

All stakeholders who attended the initial forum in 2019 were directly engaged. Landholders and fringing households were notified along with the broader Bellarine community. Social media, print media, postcards, direct email and letters were used to broadcast the program and Have Your Say (HYS) page opportunity.

A land management group was formed including the Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC), along with State and Local authorities. This included representatives from eight different management groups.

## HOW WE ENGAGED

The following tools were used to engage the community and stakeholders:

- Have Your Say page
- Online survey
- Online usage mapping tool
- Online Open Houses
- Directly via phone/email/online meeting



### CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

100 Brougham Street,  
Geelong VIC 3220  
8.00am – 5.00pm

### CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

WADAWURRUNG COUNTRY  
PO Box 104, Geelong VIC 3220  
P: 03 5272 5272  
E: [contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au](mailto:contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au)  
[www.geelongaustralia.com.au](http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au)

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## Community Consultation – Phase One

Activities performed:

From 26 July 2021 to 12 September 2021 engagement was sort through the following methods:

1. Have Your Say page – online survey and usage mapping tool <https://yoursay.geelongaustralia.com.au/SBCS>
2. Online Open Houses – 24 August and 6 September
3. Phone, Email and Online Meetings – Group and individual submissions and consultations
4. Formation of a land manager working group with private HYS page

Initially the community engagement was planned to close on the 25 August following three open houses. Due to covid lockdown impacts, the two scheduled walk-in open houses were cancelled, and the engagement timeline extended. An additional online open house opportunity was subsequently created, and the community consultation period extended by three weeks.

The survey contained questions relating to demographics and connection to this location and asked for input on current use, values, threats, future protection and future use. The usage map allowed a spatial representation of how community members currently utilise the area.

Community engagement opportunities were promoted by means of: direct email to community groups and stakeholders, print media, social media, 500x postcards, community group newsletters and HYS followers. Landholders were sent a personally addressed letter inviting them to provide input and book a meeting to discuss their unique future visions for the land and the region.

A land manager working group was formed including representatives from the following organisations:

- Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning – Distinctive Area Landscape and Biodiversity
- Parks Victoria
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
- Borough of Queenscliffe
- Barwon Coast
- Barwon Water
- City of Greater Geelong

Initial steps have been taken to create a strategic partnership with the Wadawurrung TOAC and align their Healthy Country Plan with the Strategy. A private Have Your Say page was established as a knowledge and idea sharing portal for the land management working group. This site will be used throughout the Strategy development to create collaborations and recommendations to inform the outcomes.

## Community Education – Phase Two

The second stage of engagement is about further educating the community and stakeholders about the significance of the area. Site tours were scheduled for early September to showcase the Spring flowering season, however due to covid restrictions these events were postponed. Four guided site tours are planned in early October within the restricted guidelines of 10 people per tour. This will demonstrate the City's efforts in managing woody weed in Buckley Park Foreshore Reserve and the significance of this dune system.

Educational videos are being created to showcase the values of this area and create greater community awareness and appreciation for this significant environment. The focus of each short film (2-3min) are as follows:

1. Launch video – Drone imagery as overview of site and Mayor Stephanie Asher (released)
2. Cultural heritage and connection to country
3. Vegetation values and pest plant threats
4. Lake system and bird habitat
5. Coastal and climate change influences

## Community Engagement – Phase Three

It is expected that once the draft strategy is complete it will be released to the public for review and input. A draft is scheduled to go to Council for consideration and approval for release late 2021.

A symposium will be organised by the City to present findings of the project and outline recommendations based on input and feasibility assessment. The symposium is planned for early 2022.



Click play to watch

## ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

- 1208 visitors to the HYS page
- 385 contributions through HYS page
- 105 followers of HYS page
- 2 online open houses (29 / 37 registrations)
- 9 landholders made written submissions
- 8 community groups made written submissions
- 7 community members made written submissions
- 24 online meetings with stakeholders
- First management working group meeting and online portal set up to collect contributions
- 571 views in first week of Launch video



**49 DAYS**

Engagement (Stage 1)



**~460**

Contributions



**1208**

Visitors to HYS page

## WHAT WE HEARD

This report provides a summary of the key findings and observations provided by the community during the pre-draft consultation period.

- 89% of people who engaged were full-time residents with 93% from surrounding suburbs on the Bellarine Peninsula
- 66% of people who engaged have lived in the region for at least 10 years and 62% were over the age of 55
- Top 3 current uses: access to Beach/ocean, Nature walks, Walking/running (Birdwatching high in mapping tool)
- Top 5 values: Beach and ocean, Birdlife and fauna, Remnant vegetation, Waterways and lakes, Cultural heritage
- Top 5 threats: Development, Climate change impacts, Dune erosion, Pest plants, Pest animals
- Top 3 comments for future of this region: Stop development/further subdivision, Leave untouched for nature, Ensure trail is outside this area

To summarise the results, all input was included whether it be through the Have Your Say page survey and usage mapping tool, online open house session, written submissions, phone submissions or individual meeting submissions. Not all people provided comments however; the most popular comments supported the following:

1. 162 comments - Enhancing the area through action, such as: planning controls, revegetation/restoration on private land, water management, pest animal and plant control, people and dog access management, increased education/signage, increased input from Traditional Owners, purchasing private land.
  2. 159 comments - Protecting the environmental assets and limiting development and use
  3. Trail specific: 41 comment - supported no trail through the area, 17 comments – supported nature walks only through the area, 15 comments supported bike trail through the area, 8 comments – trail along Creswell Rd, 7 comments – bike path alongside Shell Rd as a separate route.
- 100% of written submissions lodged by community groups supported protecting the environmental assets of this landscape and strongly opposed a trail or increased access in this green break. They supported greater recognition and protection of this area to ensure it is retained and improved for protected flora and fauna populations. 4 of the 9 groups were in support of an alternative trail route established via Creswell Rd.
  - Landholder input varied greatly between supporting subdivision, increased use and eco-tourism whilst others supported no development, protecting and enhancing the environmental assets on their property and the area.
  - Land managers recognise the environmental significance of this region and all are pleased to work together to achieve an overarching management strategy and increase capacity building collaborative projects. They also support increased incentives for land holders to protect and enhance environmental values on their land and do not support a trail through the dune system or one that impacts on the Lonsdale Lake environs and inhabitants.