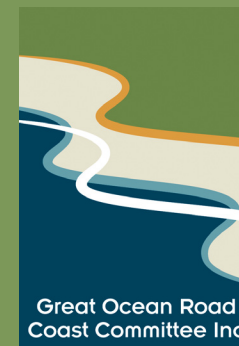




ERSKINE RIVER PRECINCT MASTERPLAN Consultation Report

STAGE 1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013



Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Consultation activities	3
4. Promotion of consultation activities	4
5. Community survey results	5
6. Youth survey results	7
7. Targeted stakeholder consultation	8
8. Next steps	9
9. Indicative project timeline	9



Part of the Erskine River Precinct.

1. Executive Summary

This report details the results of consultation activities held over January/February 2013 as part of the first stage of consultation for input into the development of the Erskine River Precinct Masterplan. The objective of the consultation process was to gain initial input which will be considered in the development of a paper summarising the issues and opportunities associated with the precinct which is expected to be released for in May 2013 as part of the second stage of consultation.

A broad community survey and a targeted youth survey, both containing identical questions, were conducted by the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) and the planning consultant team led by Insight Leisure Planning. 64 responses were received to the broader community survey, whilst 18 students from the Lorne Aireys Inlet P-12 College participated in the youth survey during a workshop held at the school.

Open Houses on the Lorne Foreshore were also held over two days in January, offering opportunities for the community to learn more about the project and speak face to face to GORCC and Insight Leisure Planning staff and pick up hard copies of the survey.

Key themes emerging from the survey responses received were:

- The majority of respondents use the precinct for shopping and sightseeing followed by recreational activities such as fishing, surfing, walking, swimming and relaxation.
- The community's vision for the precinct centres around environmental protection and enhancement, improved amenity and functionality and provision for informal recreational uses of the precinct such as picnicking, walking, fishing and relaxing.
- Respondents felt that the boardwalk, the Swing Bridge, walking paths, existing 'older style' shops and cafes and the natural environment were already working well at the precinct.
- The most commonly suggested areas for improvement varied between the two groups. Traffic management and functionality, natural values, walking paths and the river water quality were the most suggested areas for improvement from the broader community. Student respondents also indicated that they felt walking paths and water quality were areas for improvement, but that cleanliness and access to the river and through the caravan parks was also important.
- Community responses suggested that gaps in the facilities, infrastructure or services within the precinct were felt to be additional park furniture and picnic areas, upgrades to public toilets and improvements to traffic management. Youth respondents agreed that public toilets were required but also suggested the inclusion of a street skate park, greater variety in shops and better path connections.
- Caravan parks and their integration with the precinct was mentioned by a number of respondents, however responses regarding caravan parks varied. Some respondents felt they needed to be upgraded, others felt their importance should be better considered and acknowledged, whilst others felt that certain parks within the Lorne Foreshore Caravan Park should be closed.

Initial consultation has also been undertaken with government agencies (e.g. Surf Coast Shire, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority) to gain their input on the issues and opportunities for the precinct. Key points raised by government agencies so far include the importance of the Visitor Information Centre to Lorne and the precinct, that while there has been improvements in recent times, water quality in the river still remains an issue, and that there may be opportunities to improve road and pedestrian access in the Top Bank/ Swing Bridge café/Cypress Avenue area to enhance open space outcomes and functionality.

2. Introduction

The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) has commenced a masterplanning process for the Erskine River Precinct in Lorne. As part of the planning process, extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the broader community will take place over three stages. This report details the results of the first stage consultation which was held during January/February 2013 to gain preliminary input and feedback regarding the precinct.

3. About the Erskine River Precinct Masterplan

The Erskine River Precinct Masterplan will provide GORCC and the community with a vision and management directions for the precinct into the future.

The planning process is expected to take approximately 10 months, with a final Master Plan to be adopted prior to the 2013/2014 summer season. GORCC is overseeing the project with specialist support from planning consultants led by Insight Leisure Planning.

The precinct is located on Crown land and includes the areas on each side of the Erskine River, from its mouth to the sea upstream to the old Lorne quarry. The precinct includes a number of activities and land uses including:

- The Erskine River Environs
- The old Lorne Quarry site
- The Swing Bridge (and associated cafe)
- The GORCC Lorne Works Depot
- The Lorne Supermarket.
- Caravan Parks (i.e. Ocean Road, Kia Ora, Erskine River, Top Bank)

Detailed consideration of the river itself, including its water quality, is outside the scope of this project as its management is not within GORCC's responsibility. Additionally, the caravan parks in and around the Erskine River Precinct have their own Masterplan already in place. Therefore, this project does not include detailed consideration of the internal workings and layout of the parks, rather the focus will be on how each park can best be integrated with the broader precinct.

More information on the project is available at www.gorcc.com.au.

4. Consultation activities

4.1 Open Houses

Open houses were held over two days from 9am - 3pm in a prominent position on the Lorne Foreshore in January. The open houses offered the community an opportunity to view information about the Erskine River Precinct Masterplan, speak face to face with GORCC staff and project consultants regarding the precinct and the plan. More than 300 people visited the open houses over the two days.

Hard copies of the community survey (see section 4.2 below) were made available at the open houses and some respondents chose to fill them out on the day or take them home and consider their responses before submitting them.



Community members at the Lorne Open Houses with Jayson Moran of Insight Leisure Planning (centre)

4.2 Community Survey

Feedback on the Erskine River Precinct was sought via a survey which was made available both online and in hard copy. 64 respondents submitted a survey.

4.3 Youth Survey

18 students from the Lorne Aireys P-12 College also completed a survey with almost identical questions to those asked in the broader community survey. The students filled out the survey during a workshop held at the school where GORCC staff talked to them and provided them with information about the study area and the project.

4.4 Targeted stakeholder consultation

Targeted stakeholder consultation was undertaken with relevant agencies and authorities including the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Surf Coast Shire, Parks Victoria, VicRoads and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority through the project's Agency Working Group. See section 7 for more details.

5. Promotion of consultation activities

Opportunities for the community to get involved were promoted via the following:

- Flyer sent to Lorne residents
- Postal and email alerts sent via GORCC databases
- GORCC E-Newsletter.
- Letters to Lorne community organisations and groups
- Media release gaining coverage in the Lorne Independent, Surf Coast Times and the Echo.
- Information on the GORCC our website.
- Large signs on the Lorne Foreshore and at the Pier for 4 weeks.
- Public notices in the Age, the Echo, the Geelong Advertiser and the Surf Coast Times.
- Signage at the Open House events
- Social media notifications – GORCC Facebook and Twitter



Sign on the Lorne Foreshore advertising opportunities for the community to get involved and have their say.

5. Community survey results

5.1 Who we heard from

- A total of 64 respondents submitted a survey, however 15 of those respondents did not complete the full survey.
- 75% of respondents were aged over 55 years while 25% were aged between 35 and 54 years (see Figure 1 below).
- No surveys were completed by people under the age of 35.*
- 52% of respondents were male, 48% were female.

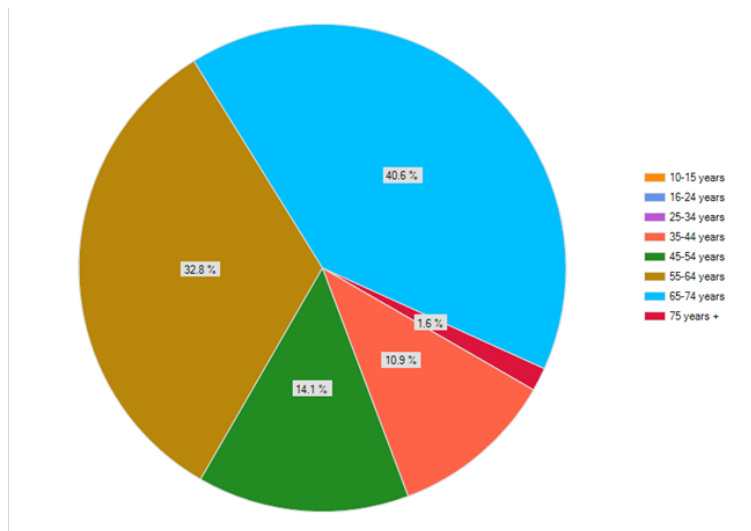


Figure.1. Age range of survey respondents.

* The age profile of respondents reflects the general profile of Lorne which has a higher proportion of older adults compared to the rest of Surf Coast Shire, however younger age groups were significantly underrepresented (e.g. approximately 14.6% of the Usual Resident Population of Lorne were aged between 0 and 15 years in 2011). A separate school survey was subsequently conducted to capture input from younger age groups. Please see section 5 for the youth survey results)

- The majority of respondents resided in Melbourne (48%), followed by Lorne (29%) and then other areas of Victoria.
- The majority of respondents were either holiday home owners (45.3%) or permanent residents (29.7%). A high proportion of respondents also identified as regular visitors (20.3%) or regular campers (12.5%) (see Figure 2 below)
- 64% of respondents indicated that they were members of a Lorne-based community group or organisation. The most common response was Friends of Lorne (31%) and various sporting clubs (31%) followed by other community organisations (17%) and environmental groups (9%).

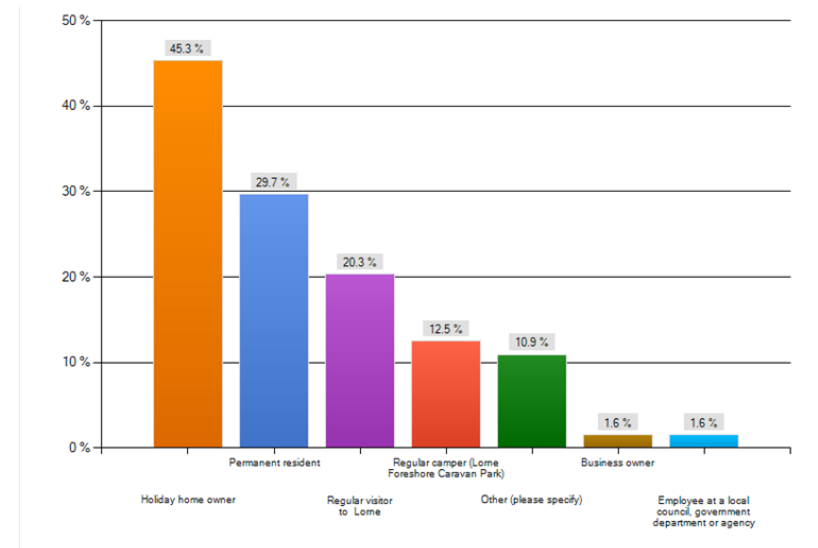


Figure.2. Primary place of residence of survey respondents.

5.2 What we heard

5.2.1 Imagine its the year 2030. In a perfect world, what would the Erskine River Precinct be like (i.e. your vision for the precinct)?

There was a variety of responses to the question, however, a large number of respondents placed emphasis on the natural beauty and recreational value of the lower reaches of the Erskine River. The importance of protecting and enhancing the river environment was also consistently mentioned.

Many respondents also expressed a strong desire to improve the current amenity, functionality, environmental values and informal recreational uses of the precinct (including picnicking, walking, fishing and places for quiet relaxation).

Mixed views were expressed regarding the future of caravan parks in the precinct, ranging from a desire to see the caravan parks improved and an acknowledgement of their social importance and contribution to the character of Lorne through to the removal of caravan parks, particularly the Erskine River Caravan Park.¹

5.2.2 What activities do you currently use the precinct for?

The most common types of responses to this question were:

• Shopping (including accessing the supermarket)	40%
• Sightseeing	21%
• Fishing	15%
• Accessing the Swing Bridge	13%
• Walking, swimming or relaxation	13%
• Accessing cafes	9%
• Camping	7%
• Nature appreciation	7%

5.2.3 What do you feel is currently working well at the precinct?

The most common types of responses to this question were:

• Boardwalk	51%
• Swing Bridge	30%
• Walking paths	26%
• Cafes	22%
• Natural environment	18%
• Older style shopping area	16%
• Caravan parks	12%
• Fishing platforms	6%

5.2.4 What do you think could be improved about the precinct?

A variety of views were expressed in response to this question, however, the most common types of responses to this question were:

• Improve traffic management and functionality	51%
• Improve natural values	30%
• Improve and expand walking paths	26%
• Improve river quality	22%
• Improve the Erskine Avenue precinct	18%
• Regular maintenance and weed removal required	16%
• Improve camping areas	12%
• Return the Erskine River Caravan Park to open space	6%

¹ The caravan parks in and around the Erskine River Precinct have their own Masterplan already in place.

Therefore, this project does not include detailed consideration of the internal workings and layout of the parks, rather the focus will be on how each park can best be integrated with the broader precinct.

5.2.5 Are there any gaps in the facilities, infrastructure or services within the precinct?

The most common types of responses to this question were:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Additional park furniture and picnic areas | 15% |
| • Upgrade and additional public toilets | 13% |
| • Improve traffic management | 11% |
| • Upgrade caravan parks | 9% |
| • Keep as natural as possible | 6% |
| • Improve pedestrian safety and crossings | 6% |

5.2.6 Do you have any other comments, suggestions or feedback in relation to the future management of the Erskine River Precinct?

The most common types of responses to this question were:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Do not over develop the precinct | 23% |
| • Retain and enhance the natural character | 20% |
| • Upgrade the caravan parks | 16% |
| • Improve river health | 6% |
| • Improve walking paths | 4% |
| • Improve the Supermarket area | 4% |

6. Youth survey results

6.1 Who we heard from

- 18 students from the Lorne Aireys P-12 College were surveyed.
- The students were in years 9-10 and were all under 18 years of age.
- 56% of respondents were male, 44% were female.
- The majority of students resided in Lorne (55%), while the rest resided in other areas of the Surf Coast.
- 50% of students indicated that they, or a member of their family, were members of a Lorne based community group or organisation, with the vast majority of those students being members of a local sports club.

6.2 What we heard

5.2.2 Imagine its the year 2030. In a perfect world, what would the Erskine River Precinct be like (i.e. your vision for the precinct)?

There was a variety of responses to this question, however an overriding theme was a desire for protection and enhancement of the natural environment and improvements to and provision for recreational opportunities within the precinct.

5.2.2 What activities do you currently use the precinct for?

The most common types of responses to this question were:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • Sightseeing | 29% |
| • Surfing | 23% |
| • Fishing | 17% |
| • Going to the Rapids | 17% |
| • Hanging out | 11% |

5.2.3 What do you feel is currently working well at the precinct?

The most common types of responses to this question were the existing shops, the swing bridge, the river, that natural environment and access to the water.

5.2.4 What you think could be improved about the precinct?

The most common suggestions related to cleanliness, walking tracks, water quality, access to the river and access through the caravan parks.

5.2.5 Are there any gaps in the facilities, infrastructure or services within the precinct?

There were a limited number of suggestions for infrastructure improvements with many respondents believing the precinct is adequate as is. Suggestions for possible changes/additions included a street skate park, greater variety in shops, public toilets and better path connections to surrounding areas.

5.2.6 Do you have any other comments, suggestions or feedback in relation to the future management of the Erskine River Precinct?

There were limited suggestions for improvements. A number of respondents expressed a desire not to over develop the area and to retain its natural character. Improved cleanliness and environmental outcomes were mentioned, along with the suggestion of the addition/development of a wave pool.

7. Targeted stakeholder consultation

Initial consultation has also been undertaken with government agencies (e.g. Surf Coast Shire, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority) to gain their input on the issues and opportunities for the precinct. As with the broader community, consultation with these stakeholders will also continue throughout the project. Key points raised by government agencies so far include the following:

- The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) needs to be acknowledged as a key activity node. It is the busiest VIC in regional Victoria and the third busiest VIC in the entire State (including Melbourne) and is expected to get busier, especially with the planned addition of the Great Ocean Road Heritage and Interpretive Centre. Access to adequate parking and public toilets are issues that need to be considered.
- The functionality and legibility of walking paths could be improved throughout the precinct, including better clarity of walking routes through active caravan park areas.
- There may be opportunities to improve road and pedestrian access in the Top Bank/Swing Bridge café/Cypress Avenue area in order to enhance open space outcomes and functionality.
- Consideration could be given to incorporating a wetland and/or Water Sensitive Urban Design features into a renewed design for the precinct in order to contribute to water quality outcomes for the river.
- Water quality in the lower reaches of the Erskine River remains an issue, despite significant improvement in recent years, especially with work of GORCC, the Surf Coast Shire and Barwon Water to improve infrastructure.
- There is an opportunity to improve people's understanding of the water quality issues through increased interpretation information in the precinct.
- Aside from water quality issues, ecologically the river is in good condition, especially the fish populations.

- There may be opportunities to remove disused and/or under utilised infrastructure, including the old rock wall upstream of the Erskine bridge (having regard to bank stability issues).
- Run-off from the quarry during significant rain events enters the river and causes large plumes.
- Potential use of the former quarry site for special cultural or artistic events may provide a good fit with other Lorne tourism initiatives.
- The Master Plan should acknowledge and reinforce Lorne as a “Place of Natural Beauty and Special Significance.”
- There may be opportunities to address the issue (lack) of Low Cost Seasonal Accommodation elsewhere in Lorne.
- There are opportunities to improve the foreshore area, road, pedestrian access and amenity of the area between the Mantra and the foreshore.

8. Next steps

All comments received as part of the first stage of consultation period will be used to inform the preparation of a paper summarising the issues and opportunities associated with the precinct. It is expected the paper will then be released for further consultation over the May/June 2013 period.

Later stages of the project then include development of a draft masterplan and its release for public consultation which will then be followed by the development of a final version of the masterplan.

INDICATIVE PROJECT TIMELINE:

(Subject to change)

October 2012 - December 2013	Initial research.
January 2013 - February 2013	First phase of consultation - Initial input into planning process sought.
March 2013 - April 2013	Consideration of feedback and development of an Issues and Opportunities Paper.
May 2013 - June 2013	Second phase of consultation - feedback sought on Issues and Opportunities Paper.
July 2013	Consideration of feedback and development of a draft plan
August 2013 - September 2013	Third phase of consultation - feedback on the draft plan
October 2013	Consideration of feedback and preparation of the final masterplan
November 2013 onwards	Approval process