



ENVIRONMENT AND LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

for

**Coastal Crown Land Reserves
Between Torquay and Lorne**

Volume 1: Main Report



Final - November 2006

Great Ocean Road Coast Committee

www.gorcc.com.au

Environment and Land Management Plan: Volume 1: Main report

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Photographs: Robin Crocker and Associates, Ecology Australia, Context

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Cover Photo: View of Split Point Lighthouse from Fairhaven beach

Note:

Volume 1 (this volume) of the Environment and Land Management Plan sets out the basis for the plan, summarises the values and issues identified and includes a vision, goals, actions and implementation program.

Volume 2 provides detailed information on natural values.

Volume 3 provides detailed information on cultural heritage and landscape values.

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Foreword



This Environment and Land Management Plan provides a framework for making management decisions that preserve important environmental values along the coast. It aims to protect the natural and cultural values and ensure that development and recreation activities have minimum adverse impacts.

The coastal region managed by the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) includes diverse physical and ecological systems ranging from intensely developed and populated urban areas to remote more pristine areas. All of these areas in their own way deliver enormous benefits to residents, visitors and commerce. They underpin local communities, property markets and tourism through their aesthetic, cultural, recreational and environmental values.

Such a diversity of interests often give rise to possible courses of action that are conflicting. In the past, guidance to foreshore managers in the five separate communities in the region was provided by official coastal action plans or formal/informal management plans. Most of these plans are now outdated. The appointment of GORCC as the foreshore manager for the whole region provided the opportunity, indeed the responsibility, to update and integrate management guidelines for the entire region.

A unifying concept for all sections of the communities along the coast is the overriding importance of the environment. Holiday makers, tourists, residents and businesses are all attracted to the region either directly or indirectly by the environmental values of the coast and wish to retain them.

The Plan is very comprehensive, largely framed in strategic and generic terms but specific enough to give directional guidance in each of areas along the coast. It comprises 3 volumes, the latter two providing more detailed information to assist implementation. It is intended to be an evolving document with regular updates. It will complement other plans for caravan parks, communication, risk, finance etc and will be implemented progressively through ongoing GORCC business plans.

I wish to express my congratulations and thanks to all organisations and individuals who contributed to this unifying contemporary plan.

Dr Lawrie Baker
Chair, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee
November, 2006

Summary

Good coastal management requires adequate resources, skilled managers and an integrated approach. But it also requires a detailed understanding of the coast's special values and good planning to develop clear actions and priorities.

The recently formed Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) has considerable skills and resources to help it manage coastal reserves from Torquay to Lorne, but has recognised the need to base its management decisions on a more detailed understanding of the natural, cultural, landscape and recreational values along the coast. To achieve this, a project team with a wide range of experience was commissioned to investigate coastal values and threats, review issues and opportunities, and develop actions to ensure protection of key values while still continuing to provide for compatible recreation.

The project focussed on four individual coastal reserves managed by GORCC – centred on Torquay, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne - but also considered adjacent coastal land managed by Surf Coast Shire and Parks Victoria.

The project team worked closely with GORCC, other organisations and the community during the project, reviewed existing studies and plans and undertook extensive field work. These investigations identified significant natural values, important Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage sites and highly valued landscapes.

Invasive weeds were found to be by far the greatest threat to natural values. Unless effective management action is taken against these weeds in the next decade or so, many biodiversity values will be lost.

“Invasion of indigenous vegetation and fauna habitats by environmental weeds is the overwhelming environmental management issue in the study area and the region generally. This issue dwarfs all other biodiversity management issues combined and this will remain the case, whatever global climate changes occur.” (volume 2, sec 5.2)

Other important threats identified include unregulated recreational access in sensitive areas, pest animals, loss of indigenous vegetation, and visual intrusions from development and infrastructure.



Left: Area of short coastal heath at Anglesea. The view, and heathland, will be obliterated by invading Coast Tea-tree unless action is taken.

Right: Severe erosion of dunes at Point Impossible resulting from unrestricted access.

Consultation for this plan, and related projects in Surf Coast Shire, found a high level of community interest in the coast and very strong support for its protection and enhancement. A network of active 'Friends' and other volunteer groups have also made a major contribution to coastal management, through weed removal, rehabilitation and other projects.

As a result of investigations of coastal values and community views, a **vision** for the coast was prepared, a series of management principles and goals developed, important management actions and priorities determined and an implementation program developed.

'The coastal reserves from Torquay to Lorne are a model of sound coastal management, protecting significant landscapes and important natural and cultural values.' (From vision statement.)

The five **goals** are:

- Goal 1: Protect and conserve natural values
- Goal 2: Protect and conserve cultural values
- Goal 3: Ensure recreation and development minimises impacts on landscape and associated natural values
- Goal 4: Ensure coordinated and sustainable management of public land
- Goal 5: Increase community involvement and appreciation

Important **actions** included:

- Undertaking a major ongoing program to control or eradicate major weeds at nominated sites along the coast, in conjunction with the community and other coastal management agencies.
- Continuing to minimise recreation impacts by defining and regulating vehicle, foot and bicycle access through good design, fencing, signs and education.
- Providing ongoing protection of cultural heritage sites and interpreting coastal heritage
- Developing demonstration sites incorporating high quality coastal design, management and protection, and promoting these sites to increase community awareness and involvement.
- Undertaking community education programs to increase understanding of coastal values leading to actions to reduce human impacts on environmental and landscape values.
- Reviewing management activities and developing sustainable practices in all GORCC activities.
 - Monitoring progress at implementing this plan and reporting regularly to local communities on progress.



Volunteers at Moggs Creek removing invasive weeds – a key task identified in this plan (photo courtesy Marg McDonald).

The plan stresses the need and opportunity to work closely with other coastal managers to share knowledge and skills and to initiate joint projects to tackle issues such as weeds and pest animals, and recreational impacts.

The plan also recognises the need to engage the community, including Indigenous groups, more fully, manage land and recreational facilities more sustainably, and respond to future impacts from pressures ranging from residential development to global warming.

The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee will oversee implementation of the plan. Funds from GORCC's caravan park and reserve operations, along with grants and other sources will be used to implement priority actions. Strong partnerships with individuals, groups and organisations will play a key role in ensuring the success of the plan.