

Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002





The Victorian Coastal Strategy has been prepared by the Victorian Coastal Council and adopted by the Victorian State Government. The *Coastal Management Act 1995* established the Victorian Coastal Council as the peak body for the strategic planning and management of Victoria's 2000 kilometres of coastline and marine environment. The Council provides advice on coastal issues to the Minister for Environment and Conservation.

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Foreword

The Victorian Coastal Strategy provides a vision for the Victorian coast and the actions Victorians need to take today to achieve that vision. This Strategy brings together the many stakeholders and agencies with responsibility for managing different parts of the coast, its catchments, waterways and the near shore marine environment to facilitate coordination and ensure an integrated approach is taken in the management of Victoria's coast.

This Strategy focuses on the special nature of the coastal and marine environment. The coast is an area of immense environmental, social and economic significance. There is great biological diversity both on land and in the sea. It is a dynamic, changing environment where natural forces shape its character.

Culturally, the coast has great significance, not only for indigenous communities, but also for the history of early settlement in Australia and now for millions of Victorians who recreate, work or live in coastal areas. Great economic value is associated with the coast, both in terms of natural resource industries and through activities that prosper through operation in a coastal environment, including tourism and recreation.

Because of its very nature, the coast is also an area where there are many competing demands and expectations for use and also many potential impacts on important natural and cultural values.

This Strategy establishes the framework for long term ecologically sustainable management of the coast. Principles, that build on well accepted international and national principles for coastal and marine management, are established to guide decision making in the long term public interest.

This assessment requires that the environmental, social and economic consequences of activities be properly considered in decision making.

Objectives and actions that implement the principles and guide planning and management in the short to medium term are identified. To ensure accountability for action, the strategy identifies a lead agent who is responsible for ensuring the action is progressed in partnership with other agencies and the community.

This Strategy encourages a broad approach to coastal issues and recognises that what we do in catchments along the coast has great influence on estuarine water quality. It supports innovation and new approaches to addressing issues and achieving improved outcomes for the coast through the application of best practice. It also encourages cooperation and coordination of effort and the establishment of partnerships and region wide approaches to tackling issues.

The implementation of this Strategy will ensure that Victorians can continue to use and enjoy the coast, that the coastal environment that fundamentally underpins its significance is well managed and enhanced. The legacy will be a coastal and marine environment that is in a better condition than it is today.

Sherryl Garbutt MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation

DIANE JAMES
Chairman – Victorian Coastal Council

January 2002

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What Will this Strategy Do?

This Strategy will help conserve and manage the Victorian coast for present and future generations. It takes a broad view of the coast, from the top of the catchment to offshore, and deals with issues in a long term, ecologically sustainable context.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy is the key document which provides a shared vision to guide all decision making by the community and governments that affects the coast. It facilitates coordination of relevant agency programs and statutory responsibilities as well as activities and use by the community and industry.

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* requires that the Victorian Coastal Strategy provides for long term planning for the Victorian coast to:

- ensure protection of significant environmental features;
- provide clear direction for the future use of the coast, including the marine environment;
- identify suitable development areas and opportunities on the coast; and
- ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Act recognises that coastal and marine areas are used for a variety of purposes. It also recognises that there are significant values that need to be protected for the long term benefit of the environment (eg. biological diversity), for social well being and for the economic prosperity that is associated with a sustainable natural environment.

This Strategy establishes principles to underpin decision making to protect the broad public interest in the long term. Recognising that there are many competing pressures for use, and great natural and cultural diversity, this Strategy describes a framework for Ecologically Sustainable Development (**ESD**). The need for improved integration and coordination of decision making is addressed. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (**ICZM**) is supported and encouraged, meaning that we need to be diligent in ensuring that the consequences of potential decisions that might be made by one sector affecting other interests are properly considered.

The **vision** describes community aspirations for the Victorian coast that have been gathered from market research, public consultation and discussions with peak bodies and key stakeholders.

The **environmental, social** and **economic** significance of the coast are considered as integral aspects of coastal planning. Detailed actions are identified to guide short to medium term priorities so that the vision can be realised. This Strategy will evolve over time and should be reviewed regularly to maintain its relevance, but it will always have the conservation of the coast as its central tenet.

The Victorian coast is broadly defined to include:

- the sea and the seabed to the State limit - three nautical miles or 5.5 kms; and
- land and inland waters within the coastal catchment.

This definition enables this Strategy to address all activities or processes that may impact on coastal and marine areas, thus encouraging the implementation of integrated coastal zone management. This Strategy provides direction for activities that occur on what we commonly know as the coast, including:

- the foreshore or coastal Crown land strip;
- national parks on the coast or in the marine environment;
- private land adjacent to and within the critical views of the foreshore and nearshore marine environment; and
- the seabed and water immediately offshore.

It also relates to and encourages:

- an integrated approach to coastal and catchment management;
- protecting and rehabilitating the coastal environment and maintaining biodiversity;
- recognising the established and valued community uses of the coast;
- recognising the economic value and contribution of the coast;
- respect for, and protection of, cultural issues including aboriginal, scientific and historic sites; and
- improving knowledge and awareness.



International, National & State Context

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the nations of the world discussed marine and coastal issues that were considered as being of major importance to the planet. Chapter 17 of "Agenda 21" (the conference's global action plan) was entirely devoted to coastal and marine management.

A major commitment was made for nations to implement Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). ICZM attempts to integrate planning and management in a region (eg. the State of Victoria) across the land / sea interface and the private / public land interface, to treat the coastal zone as one biophysical entity. In practice this involves:

1. Horizontal integration or the integration of planning and management by the coordination of activities of the various government agencies and non-government organisations in the coastal zone.
2. Vertical integration of the various tiers of government action or the integration of the coastal and marine activities of the Commonwealth, State and local governments, including a commitment to community consultation at all tiers.

State governments have agreed to implement ICZM, which is now the accepted approach to managing areas such as the Victorian coast. The Victorian Coastal Strategy is based on these ICZM principles.

The Victorian Government is committed to the protection of our marine and coastal ecosystems and to building the principles of ecologically sustainable development into decision making processes across government. The sustainable management of Victoria's marine and coastal environments requires recognition of the interaction between management activities on the land and in the sea, as well as along the whole length of the coast.

This involves consideration of ecological, social and economic values and the impacts of uses on those values; the coordination of sectoral (eg. fishing, petroleum and mineral exploration, tourism, marine conservation, recreation, shipping, cultural uses, research) management activities within and between spheres and levels of government; and the involvement

of community, stakeholder and industry groups in management decisions and implementation.

Historically, the management of oceans and coastal areas has been based on 'sectoral' planning, which is typically characterised by institutions executing their roles and responsibilities in isolation of each other and making decisions without consideration of other existing or potential uses. The process of integrated coastal and marine management is designed to overcome these deficiencies.

Ecologically sustainable use and development of Victoria's coastal and marine areas will require recognition, acceptance, and a shared understanding of this common goal.

While this Strategy seeks to provide leadership and ensure coordination of action across the State, implementation will be achieved through the responsibilities of agencies and groups, guided to a large extent by existing statutory mechanisms. Whilst there are reasonably well developed coordination arrangements for terrestrial issues, consideration needs to be given to future governance arrangements for marine areas. Effective mechanisms must exist to coordinate decisions that have cross sectoral impacts, and importantly to ensure, in the long term, that coordination and planning arrangements are in fact working.

A list of relevant international, national and State agreements, conventions and strategies is attached as appendix A.



Vision

This vision is wide-ranging and inclusive. It is a vision that preserves the diversity of our coast, its flora and fauna, its natural beauty, and the diversity of activities you'll find there.

It is a vision which invites all Victorians to become involved, to take pride in our coast and to share in its stewardship.

Then what will our coast look like?

An imaginary journey could begin with the endless beaches stretching out from the State's far east, including fishing and tourist towns such as Mallacoota and Lakes Entrance, take in the peace and wildlife of the Gippsland Lakes, the awe-inspiring cliffs of Wilsons Promontory, the holiday hamlets of Phillip Island (and its penguins and seals and their attendant tourists), the seagrass and internationally significant bird habitats of Western Port, the heritage and maritime landscapes and sandy beaches around Port Phillip and Corio Bays that provide recreational opportunities for millions who live nearby, or the scale of the shipping terminals of Melbourne, Geelong, Westernport and Portland, and on through the surf beaches and maritime history of the west coast; along the truly great Great Ocean Road.

Coastal villages will retain their seaside and village characters, remote locations will be preserved so you feel you're the first soul who has trod them.

Rivers and estuaries will flow clean from where they rise to where they enter bays and oceans. Local native vegetation will be encouraged along our coast. National parks and reserves will provide a haven for the plants and animals and a place for people.

Our coast. For it will remain, almost all of it, the property of the people of Victoria.

Skilled and professional coastal managers and staff will continue to work to keep you safe and make sure you find the facilities you need where you need them.

Townships will no longer grow like topsy. They will be recognisably coastal in character and grow within planning frameworks which respect the environments within which they're built. Ecologically, culturally, aesthetically.



Much of the coast between townships will be preserved undeveloped while metropolitan beaches will be more intensively utilised and will vary from cosmopolitan through to quiet places to relax.

The quality of the tourism experience on the coast will increase. Choices for recreation will diversify while still allowing people to 'get away from it all'. The recognition, use and re-use of cultural heritage assets along the coastline will positively contribute to local communities and economics.

Safe access will make it easier for more people to get to many places. Vehicle access will be managed so that it does not detract from the environment that is the attraction.

One of Victoria's great economic drivers and advantages, our ports, will continue to be developed. Our fishing industry will be sustainably managed while a broadening of recreational boating choices, from private pleasure boats to tourism craft will be encouraged.

Increasingly people will experience the coast from above and below the water.

Wind, wave and tidal power generation, commercial fishing and aquaculture will be encouraged to find environmentally sustainable, socially acceptable and economically viable ways of developing.

The vision is ambitious.
The potential is amazing.



'A biologically rich and diverse coastal and marine environment for our use and enjoyment today and for our children tomorrow'.



Who Does What Along the Coast?

Many people and agencies have responsibility for, or a keen interest in, coastal planning and management (refer to Figure 2).

Only 4% of the Victorian coastline is privately owned. The remaining 96% of coastal land is held by the Victorian Minister for Environment and Conservation on behalf of the Crown for all Victorians. One third of Victoria's coastal Crown land is reserved as national park under the *National Parks Act 1975* and managed by Parks Victoria. The majority of the remaining coastal Crown land is reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* for a variety of public purposes - generally for the protection of the coast. Management of these reserves is usually by a Committee of Management, appointed by the Minister. A Committee of Management can consist of local community representatives or may be an existing agency such as a municipal council, Parks Victoria or the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE).

Small areas of public land along the coast and most of the seabed remain unreserved and are managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

The large number of agencies with an interest in Victoria's coast is reflected in the number of those whose planning impacts directly or indirectly upon the coast and similarly those who regulate activity along the coast or in the marine environment (refer to Figure 2). This Strategy encourages continuous improvement in approaches to integrated coastal management.

Victoria's indigenous communities also have a strong interest in planning and management for coastal areas and in decisions affecting the use of coastal resources and values. These interests may be realised through involvement in decision making forums and through native title related negotiations such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

The role of the community is vital. Not only do they contribute significantly to coastal planning and management through active involvement and participation in local management activities, but also

through the range of services and facilities provided by a wide variety of groups (eg. life saving, conservation, water access and safety, and education and training).

This Strategy seeks to provide leadership and ensure coordination of activities affecting the coast. Implementation of this Strategy will be achieved through the responsibilities of agencies and groups, guided to a large extent by existing statutory mechanisms.

For coastal and marine areas there is always:

- an 'owner';
- planners concerned with the future;
- a manager;
- agencies who regulate use and behaviour; and
- a public interest.

Key legislation guiding strategic and statutory planning for the Victorian coast includes the *Coastal Management Act 1995* and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. There is a range of other legislation that provides for the management of specific uses and spaces within the coastal and marine environment, including the *Heritage Act 1985*. The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* will be increasingly important in guiding decision making regarding matters of national and environmental significance.



Figure 2: Who does what along the coast?



*Committees of Management include Municipal Councils, Department of Natural Resources & Environment, Parks Victoria, and locally appointed committees.