

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Draft Coastal Strategy



June 2023



South Gippsland
Shire Council

Thank you

Council would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who participated in the engagement to inform development of the draft Coastal Strategy. We received significant feedback from the South Gippsland community, indicating a high level of interest in protecting our coastline and our coastal communities. Thank you.

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

eucalyptus, (genus Eucalyptus)

Purpose of this document

This Coastal Strategy is a key strategic document and a Council Plan objective. It sets out how Council will work to identify and mitigate coastal hazards in order to protect coastal communities and our precious coastal environment.



Coastline Toora

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Message from the Mayor

"We know that there are challenges ahead for our coastal communities - such as rising sea levels, population pressures and erosion - and we need to work with our residents and stakeholders now, to plan for our collective future."

Cr Nathan Hersey

Mayor
South Gippsland Shire Council



South Gippsland's coast stretches for approximately 300 kilometres, from Venus Bay in the west to Port Welshpool in the east and includes many small coastal townships and hamlets and the treasured Wilsons Promontory. Our coast sustains our local fishing industry, drives tourism attraction and it is much-loved by residents and visitors.

We know that there are challenges ahead for our coastal communities - such as rising sea levels, erosion and population pressures. Council will work with our residents and stakeholders now, to plan for our collective future.

Through a coordinated community engagement process, we asked our community to provide input so Council could gain important insights and a greater appreciation for how people connect with our coast, and how they would like to see it protected. I am grateful that our community responded.

In total we heard from 770 people, which is a strong engagement outcome. Feedback was collected from our community via an online survey, pop-ups at six locations, in-depth stakeholder discussions with key agencies, an online forum and a half-day dialogue with community representatives. We also received 25 written submissions which provided a range of perspectives.

"We would like to thank everyone for their involvement in the Coastal Strategy consultation. Your feedback helps to guide our Strategy actions and our coastline protection."

Message from the CEO

The South Gippsland coastline is strong, yet fragile. It helps to drive valuable tourism dollars to our region, but it is also at risk from a range of coastal challenges and of being loved to death by its many admirers.

Kerryn Ellis

Chief Executive Officer
South Gippsland Shire Council



The South Gippsland coastline is strong, yet fragile. It helps to drive valuable tourism dollars to our region, but it is also at risk from a range of coastal challenges and of being 'loved to death' by its many admirers.

The South Gippsland Coastal Strategy provides a program of actions to help Council and our community prepare for future challenges and hazards, whilst acknowledging that we must also be ready to adapt and adjust the strategy, if required. Updated inundation data and coastal hazard assessments would help to refine our regional predictions and any movement to state planning policy would need to be incorporated into the strategy to ensure it has the best chance of success.

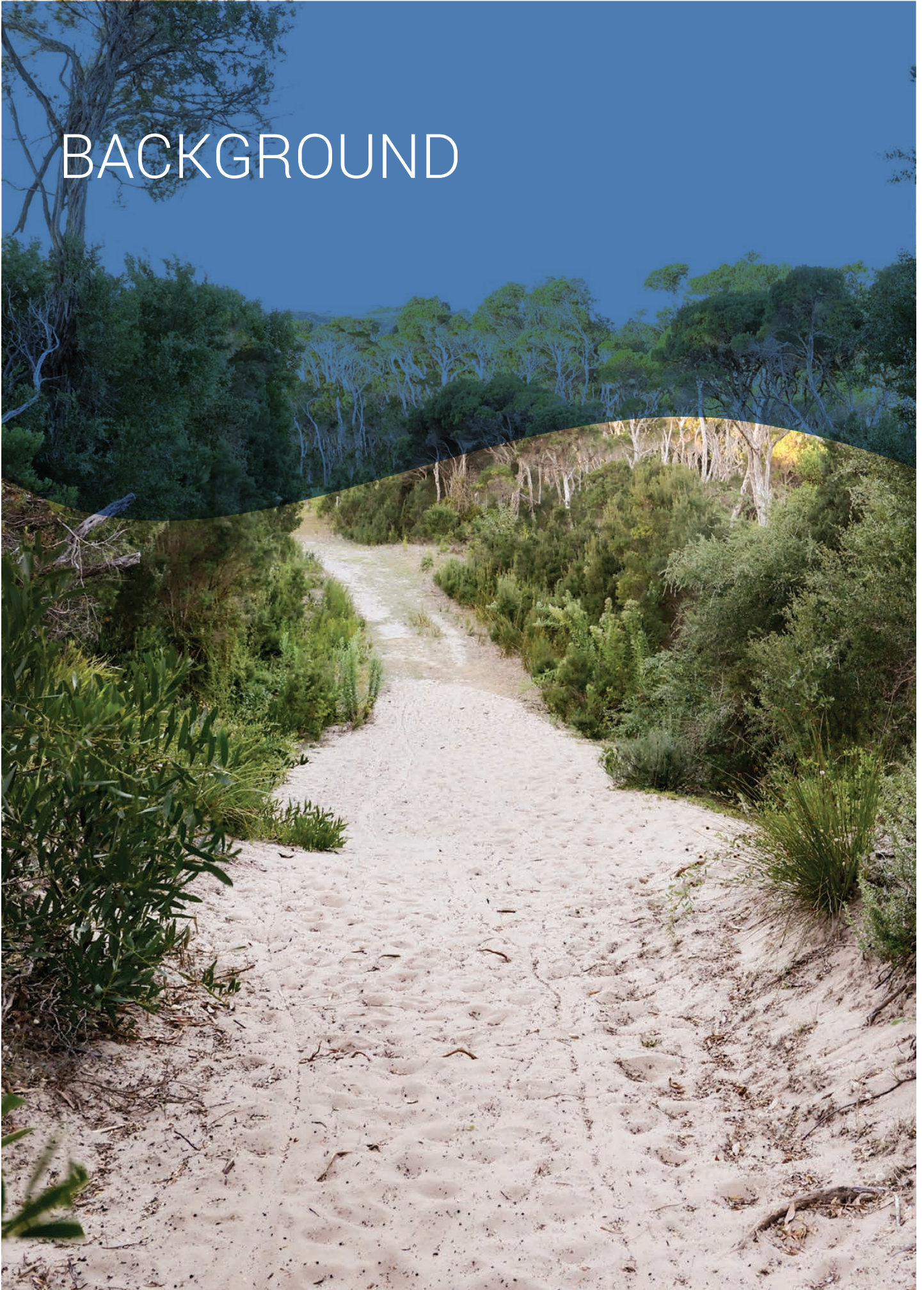
This strategy is not set in concrete. It is the first stone in what is likely to be a long and windy path. We predict and accept, that there will be challenges and frustrations along the way.

Our best chance of success is to work collaboratively with other councils, with the State Government, with local community groups and with residents. Our coastline is loved by so many, and it is going to take a shared, collaborative effort to ensure it remains protected.

I'd like to acknowledge the foresight of our Councillor group in leading and driving the development of this strategy to ensure South Gippsland remains a terrific – and safe – place to live, work and visit into the future, and I'd like to thank Council staff for their work to bring this strategy to fruition. Most of all I'd like to thank and acknowledge the myriad stakeholders that took the time to provide input to this

“Our best chance of success is to work collaboratively with other councils, with the State Government, with local community groups and with residents.”

BACKGROUND



Background

1

Objective Statement

The South Gippsland Coastal Strategy aims to provide strategic direction for the planning of South Gippsland's coastal areas. It considers the impacts and opportunities for growth and development on the natural and built environment. The project is a Council Plan objective whose outcomes will help inform Council's existing operations and future growth management.

Note: Council's Coastal Strategy will be reviewed and updated as policy changes occur and new information becomes available.

The role of federal, state and local government

State and Federal Government policy related to coastal planning and development is constantly evolving, and the regulatory framework governing land use and development along the coast is complex.

The outcomes of our Coastal Strategy must align with the State Government's requirements for it to be successfully implemented by Council.

Further reading:

[Marine and Coastal Act 2018](#)

[Marine and Coastal Policy 2020](#)

[Marine and Coastal Strategy 2022](#)



Adaptation actions

When reading this strategy, it is beneficial to consider the *Marine and Coastal Policy* Adaptation Actions regarding the management of coastal risks. The Adaptation Actions are central principles for coastal planning and are embedded in State Planning Policy - alongside planning for 0.8 metre sea level rise by year 2100 - as key principles for coastal planning.

1 Non-intervention

Allow natural process to occur unhindered.

2. Avoid

Place new development in areas less likely to be affected by coastal processes.

3. Nature-based methods

E.g. restore / protect natural systems like dunes, mangroves and salt marshes to mitigate against coastal erosion.

4. Accommodate

Design buildings and infrastructure to be resilient to coastal processes so they are less likely to fail when exposed to coastal processes.

5. Retreat

Relocate use and development to a location unaffected by coastal risk.

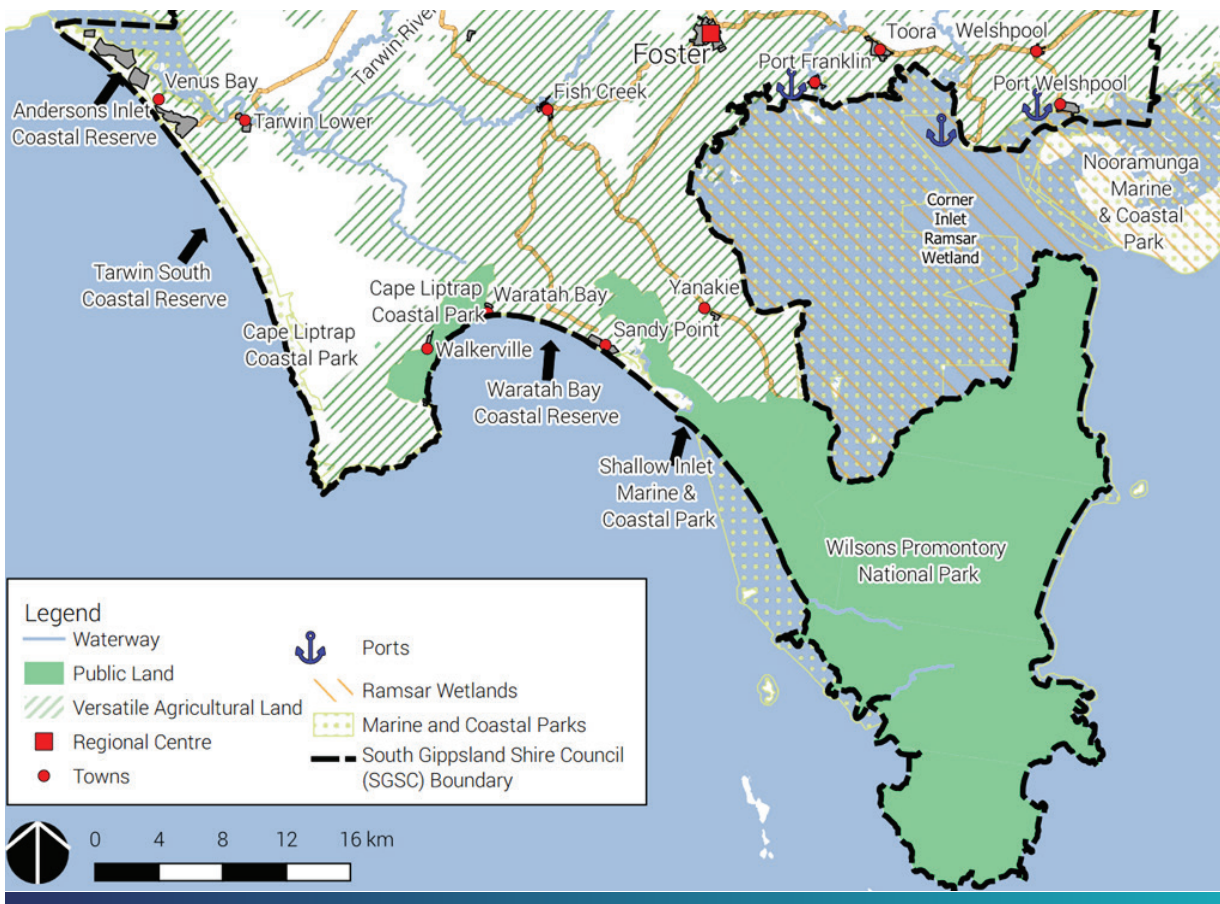
6. Protect

Existing physical infrastructure is enhanced or new infrastructure built to provide a hard engineering protection against erosion or inundation

Responsibility of coastal waters

Responsibility for coastal waters predominantly sits with the State Government. The use and development of land from the high tide mark and inland is predominantly regulated by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the South Gippsland Planning Scheme. Coastal waters up to three nautical miles from the high tide mark are typically the responsibility of the State Government. The Federal Government is the responsible authority for the balance of Australia’s internationally recognised territorial waters.

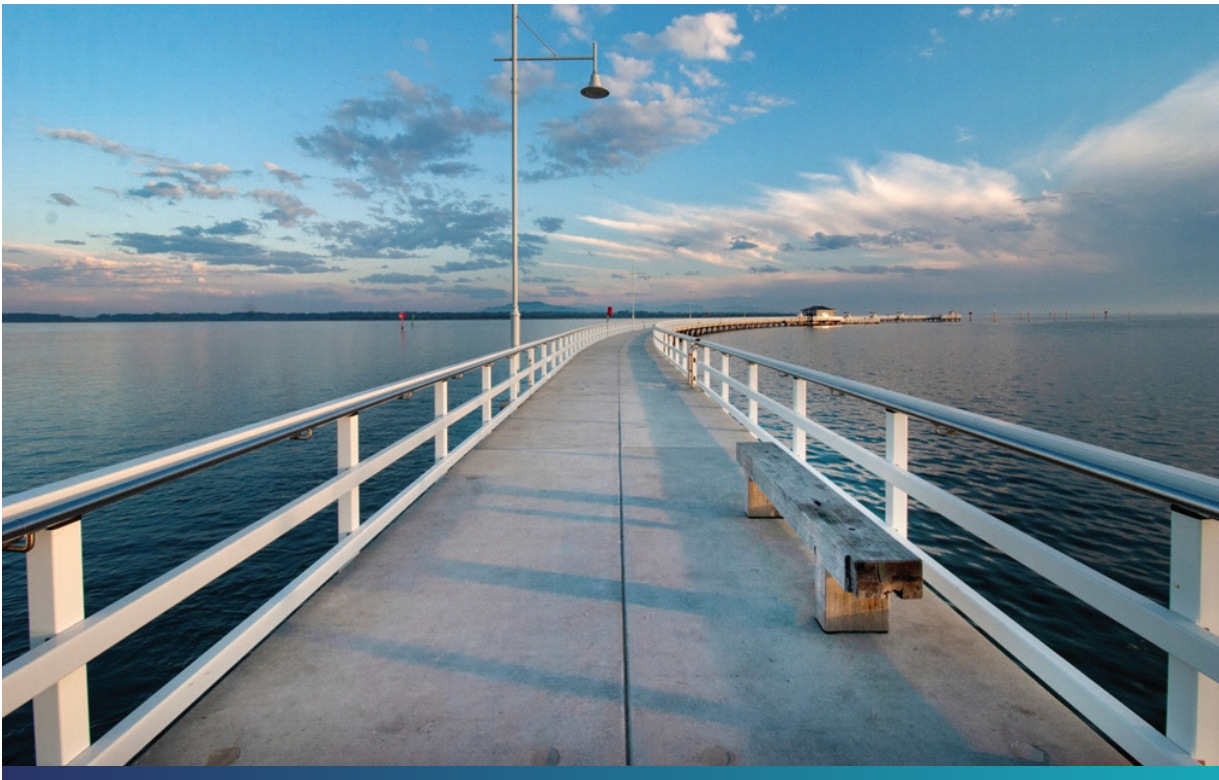
South Gippsland Shire Council has no direct responsibility or control over coastal waters. Offshore wind energy facilities are located in Federal Government waters (Australian Territorial Sea).



Council priorities

Council is committed to responsible planning and management of the South Gippsland coastline, and this is particularly evident in the following Council Plan 2022 - 2026 major initiatives and priorities:

- *Build resilience in our community and organisation to mitigate risk and damage caused by extreme weather events*
- *Support our communities to respond to existing and emerging risks to their liveability and environmental health*
- *Advocate, plan and encourage the protection of our natural landscapes and coastlines*
- *Manage urban growth within defined town boundaries to deliver fit-for-purpose infrastructure in partnership with other agencies that share this responsibility.*
- *Protect the character of our communities including our built, natural and cultural heritage.*
- *Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan in partnership with the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people.*
- *Develop a strong relationship and partnership with the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people to support out common environmental, cultural social and economic objectives.*
- *Investigate opportunities to better manage the impacts of unregistered Short Stay Accommodation.*



Engagement

2

This is what we heard

The South Gippsland Coastal Strategy engagement was extensive and achieved a high response rate.

The feedback was obtained through a variety of methods including online and in-person and included six pop-up events held in Port Welshpool, Toora, Sandy Point, Venus Bay, Tarwin Lower and the Stony Creek Racecourse.

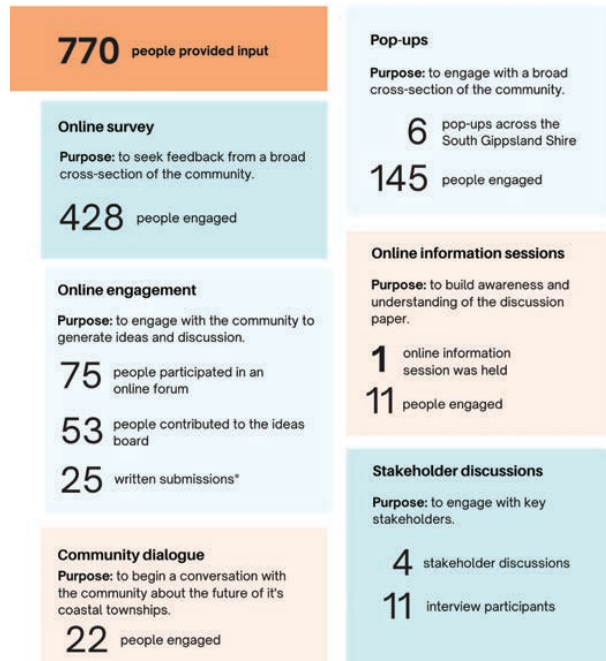
Of the respondents who provided demographic data, 64 per cent stated their main place of residence was in South Gippsland. Thirty six per cent stated their main place of residence was a non-South Gippsland Shire location.

Most respondents (just under 60 per cent) were resident home owners, although holiday home owners were also strongly represented (just under 40 per cent).

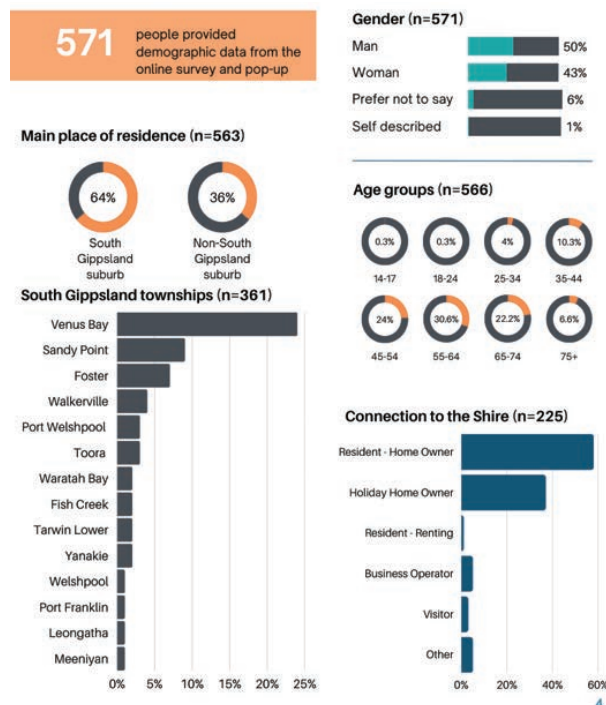
Venus Bay was particularly well represented during the engagement, attracting 24 per cent of responses. This is likely due to widespread interest in the project in Venus Bay and active promotion of the engagement opportunities. The full Coastal Strategy engagement report, can be viewed at: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/coastalstrategy

An important goal of the engagement was to build awareness in the community about the coastal hazards and their potential impacts and to start a conversation about what this means for the future of the coastal townships.

The decision to undertake a broad and inclusive engagement process demonstrates Council's commitment to building trust with the community by involving them in the decision-making process and ensuring the Coastal Strategy reflects their needs and concerns.



Note: Some submissions were submitted via email to Council.



POPULATION PRESSURE AND DEVELOPMENT

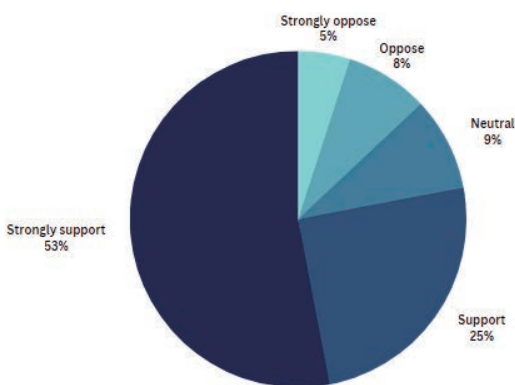


What we heard

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Survey Question: Removal of Growth Areas

Explore the removal of our growth areas from the planning scheme for Venus Bay, Sandy Point and Waratah Bay, which means the townships would not expand beyond their current boundaries.



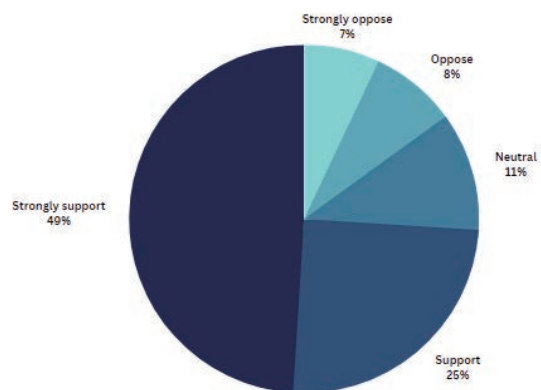
This is what we heard:

The majority of people we heard from supported the removal of growth areas in Venus Bay, Sandy Point, and Waratah Bay. This was primarily due to concerns about:

- The environment (climate change, wildlife conservation and impacts on other environmental issues)
- Infrastructure (roads, parking, water supply, sewerage, powerlines) and
- Maintaining town character (loss of community feel and impact on tourism)

Survey Question: Planning Scheme provisions (one dwelling per lot) and no further subdivision

Council is proposing to explore a Planning Scheme provision that restricts new development to one dwelling per lot and restricts subdivision.



This is what we heard:

The main reasons for supporting the proposed planning scheme provisions (one dwelling per lot and subdivision restriction) were to protect the natural environment and wildlife, preserve the coastal and rural character, and minimise overpopulation and overcrowding.

Residents and holiday homeowners, who made up the bulk of the respondents, also highlighted concerns about overdevelopment and its effects on the community and the need to encourage appropriate and sustainable housing.

Removal of growth areas

77% of survey and pop-up respondents supported this proposed action



Planning scheme provisions

74% of survey and pop-up respondents supported this proposed action



Population pressure and development

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"Maintaining the current character & density is important to me to protect our environment and wildlife. I enjoy the lifestyle here living in nature."

Respondent: Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

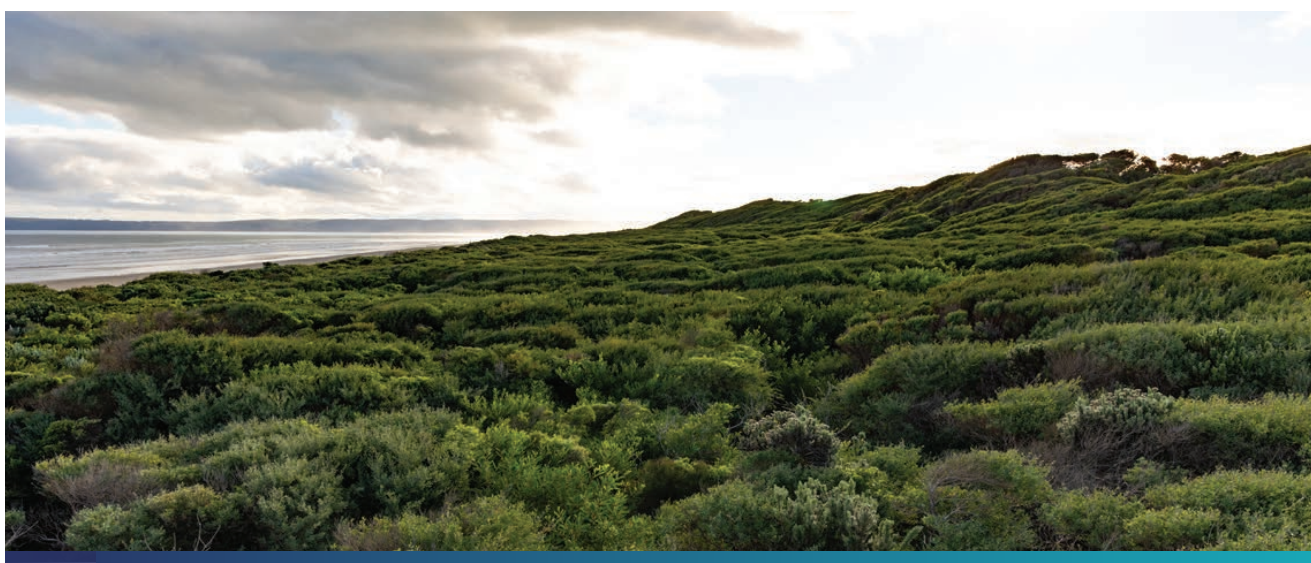
"Services and resources in small coastal settlements can be as fragile as the environment, so human development needs to be realistic, practical and appropriate. The amenity of this area lies in the small scale of towns and community connections, which would be impacted by subdivision."

Respondent: Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Population pressure and development

South Gippsland's coastal area accounts for approximately 13 per cent of the total municipal population. Second home ownership along our coast is unsurprisingly high. Population issues relating to coastal settlements include:

- Greater exposure of residents to coastal hazard risks including flood and fire.
- The continuing transition of holiday homes to primary and part-time places of residence, which could significantly increase permanent settlement populations. Opportunities to work from home will likely see this trend continue.
- Increasing pressure for growth with the likely continuing development of vacant lots and redevelopment of existing housing stock from small scale holiday homes to more substantial structures. This will likely impact township character.
- Increasing service level expectations of residents leading to demand impacts on service providers for both development infrastructure (sewer and water) and social services.
- Issues related to emergency response (e.g. flooding cutting access to townships).
- Housing and rental affordability and the impacts of short stay accommodation on housing supply.



Removal of greenfield growth areas in coastal townships: Retention of existing town boundaries

Urban Design Frameworks prepared in 2005 identified greenfield areas for residential expansion in Venus Bay, Waratah Bay and Sandy Point. To date, only one expansion area has been rezoned in Waratah Bay with the other areas remaining in the Farming Zone.

No other coastal townships have been identified as greenfield residential expansion areas.

At Sandy Point, the residential growth area is now within the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. In Venus Bay and Waratah Bay, the proposed growth areas have a single road access point that is also within the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay.

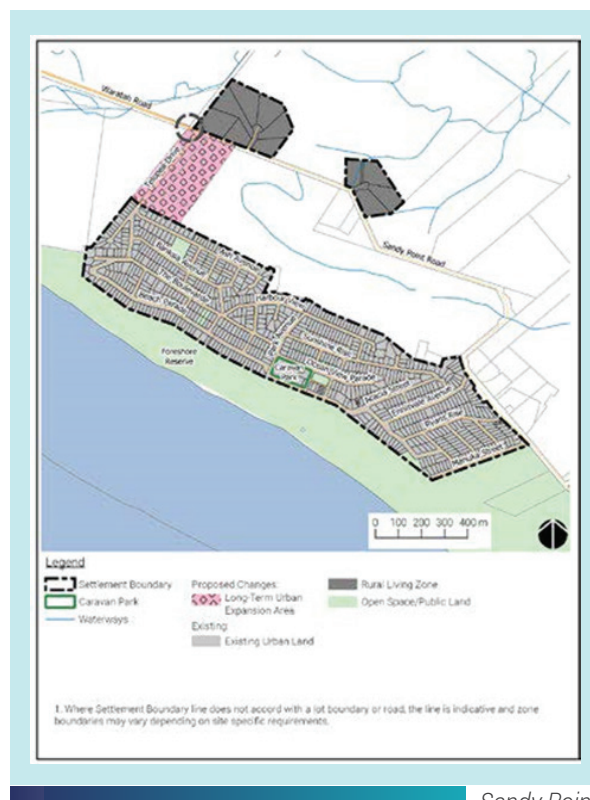
It is likely that these areas would be isolated during a flood event. These residential growth areas are now considered legacy decisions and would be highly unlikely to be supported by either Council, the WGCMA or State Government should a rezoning request be made. Their inclusion in the planning scheme leads people to incorrectly assume the areas have development potential, but this is unlikely to be the case.

Removal of the growth areas is consistent with Council's Housing and Settlement Strategy 2013 which recommended the existing development boundary be made the permanent boundary in accordance with the State policy at that time.

Removing township expansion areas is an effective way to reduce the potential exposure of more people to coastal hazard risk in the future. This Strategy supports the continuing development of existing residential lots for single dwellings within the established township boundaries with an understanding that allowing development to continue to occur will result in more cumulative exposure to risk to people and property over time.



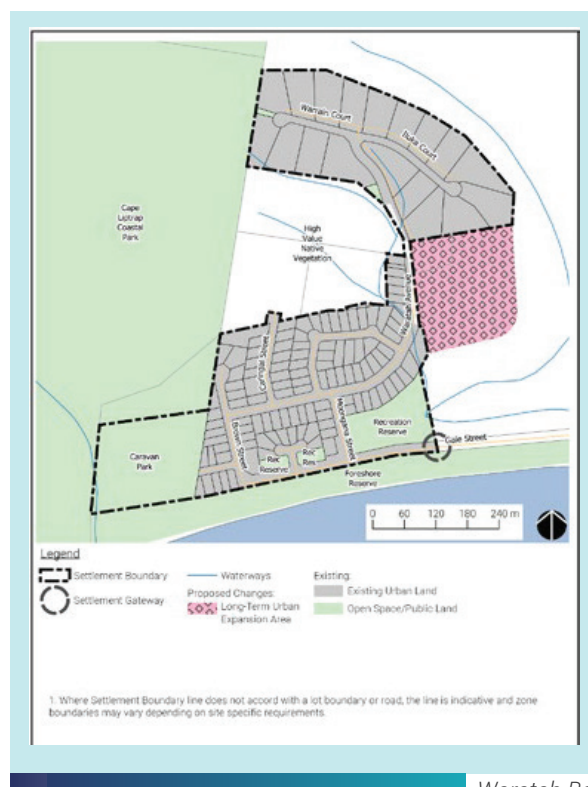
Venus Bay



Sandy Point

Prohibiting the development of existing lots, or government buy-backs of 'at-risk' lots is not supported by government policy at this point in time, and cannot be considered in the absence of clearly elaborated State or Federal Government policy support.

Council should continue to monitor and respond to State and Federal Government policy changes, and best available science, to ensure we manage our coastal planning risks and liabilities on a proactive basis.



Waratah Bay

Second dwellings and residential subdivision restrictions

Unlike most coastal townships closer to metropolitan Melbourne, many of our coastal townships still have a large number of vacant lots yet to be developed and a high proportion of lots with older housing stock which is likely to be redeveloped.

There are approximately 1,200 vacant lots in our coastal townships and Venus Bay is notable for having approximately 700 vacant lots. Some of these lots are in tenement ownership (adjoining lots in a single ownership), most containing a single house.

Each lot in a tenement is potentially separately saleable so the development potential of townships like Sandy Point, Venus Bay and Promontory Views is higher than it appears from casual inspection. An intensification of residential development could fundamentally change the development pattern, visual character and vegetation coverage in our coastal townships.

Although a serious development intensification threat is yet to emerge, it is foreseeable. When combined

with the risk of exposing more people to coastal hazard risks (inundation, isolation, erosion and bushfire), now is an appropriate time to introduce clearly set out planning policy to either strongly discourage or prohibit the subdivision of residential lots, and the development of more than one dwelling on a lot. This precautionary approach to managing exposure to climate change risk is consistent with the 'Avoid' principle set out in State planning policy at Clause 13.01-21S 'Coastal inundation and erosion'. Our existing understanding of the inundation and fire risk to many of our coastal townships supports taking these precautionary actions for our most 'at risk' townships in the near future.

For the purpose of clarity, were this to occur at this time it would still allow the development of a single dwelling on a single vacant residential lot, the redevelopment of a lot with a new dwelling, or the sale of lots out of tenement ownership so that each individual lot in a tenement holding can be developed.

ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

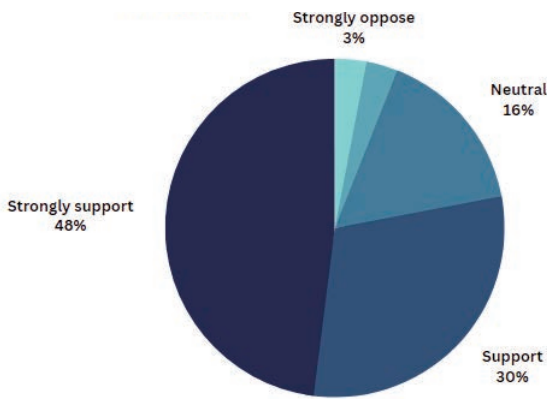


What we heard

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Proposed Action: Common Ground Initiative

Investigate the 'Common Ground' community initiative on the land adjoining Andersons Inlet at Venus Bay that proposes nature-based adaptation concepts that if implemented, will assist in managing storm surge, flooding and coastal erosion. Council's role in the initiative is to advocate to the State and Federal government for funding and support. Please indicate your level of support.



This is what we heard:

Many respondents expressed their support for the Common Ground initiative as a means of protecting and restoring the natural environment. They emphasised the need to preserve and maintain the coastal habitats, wetlands, and native flora and fauna. It was also viewed as important for climate change and flood mitigation and management. Some respondents saw the potential for economic benefits and opportunities for eco-tourism associated with the restoration and management of the natural environment.

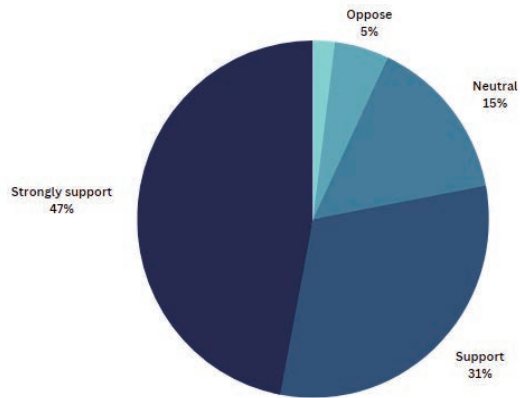
Common Ground initiative

78% of survey and pop-up respondents supported this proposed action



Proposed Action: Nature-based solutions

Like the 'Common Ground' community-led initiative, Council is looking to investigate projects that draw on nature-based solutions to help mitigate coastal hazards, such as salt marshes instead of sea walls and levies. Please indicate your level of support.



This is what we heard:

Nature-based solutions for coastal hazard mitigation are preferred by the community over traditional engineered solutions due to their environmental benefits and cost-effectiveness.

The responses also emphasise the importance of involving local communities and stakeholders in the planning process and call for further research into the effectiveness of these solutions.

People would like a comprehensive, holistic approach that considers multiple factors such as environmental health, hazard management, and economic initiatives to ensure the best outcomes.

Nature-based solutions

78% of survey and pop-up respondents supported this proposed action



Environment and landscape

6

"Nature-based approaches are working with the land and natural processes rather than contrary to them."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Environment and landscape

Between now and 2100, the impact of climate change experienced by inundation and storm surge is likely to lead to the following outcomes:

- *Access to coastal settlements being compromised by inundated roads.*
- *Inundation of coastal properties due to sea-level rise.*
- *Inundation of agricultural land along the coastline.*
- *Loss of vegetation (including coastal mangroves) and habitat for indigenous fauna.*
- *Increasing and cumulative impacts on development and community infrastructure including walking tracks, fishing platforms, jetties and boat ramps, rock revetment seawalls and levees.*
- *Impacts on cultural heritage assets such as Aboriginal shell middens and Walkerville lime kilns.*

The following potential actions are identified as opportunities to mitigate risks related to this theme:

- *Update risk hazard mapping and planning provisions when new information becomes available;*
- *Nature-based adaptation opportunities;*
- *Coastal landscape protection;*
- *Coastal risk hazard assessments;*
- *Vegetation protection in coastal townships; and*
- *Advocate for coastal-specific hazard risk planning controls.*



Wave erosion undermining road – Walkerville

Coastal Landscape Protection

In recognition of growing threats to landscape values, the State Government introduced changes in 2018 to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to enact its Distinctive Areas and Landscapes program.

Declaring an area as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) requires:

- *The preparation of a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) led by the State Government in partnership with local government and Traditional Owners.*
- *The development of a long-term vision and strategies to protect distinctive areas in consultation with local communities.*
- *Introducing the opportunity for protected settlement boundaries for townships – like Melbourne’s urban growth boundary.*

These protections are at various stages of development along the Bass Coast, Surf Coast and Bellarine coastlines. The projects are prepared in collaboration with the local council and communities.

Views of the Corner Inlet amphitheatre, long distance views to Wilsons Promontory and the rugged coastal landscape around Cape Liptrap are some of the most spectacular views in Victoria.

Council will monitor the implementation of the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes program across the State. It will consider other Council’s experience and determine whether to advocate to State Government to introduce similar controls in South Gippsland.



Coastal risk hazard assessment

Coastal risk hazard assessments can inform Council and the community of which Marine and Coastal Policy Adaptations Actions are appropriate in the short-, medium- and long-term.

They provide a more detailed understanding of the inundation and erosion risks in our coastal communities, which can help with future planning.

Undertaking coastal risk hazard assessments can be complex and expensive which means there needs to be a strategic determination on when and where assessments should occur.

Council has identified three sites that would benefit from a detailed coastal risk hazard assessment:

- Port Welshpool
- Walkerville North
- Waratah Bay

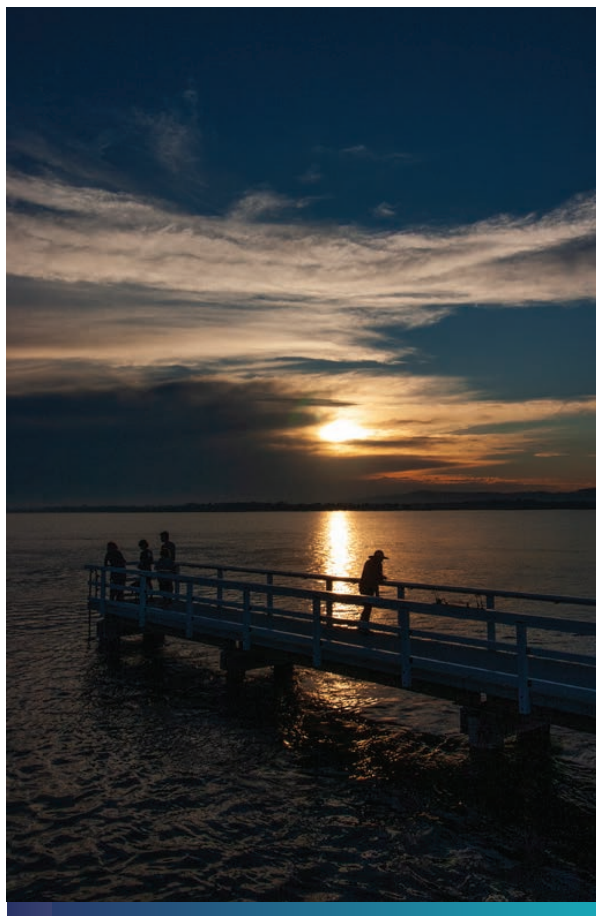
Port Welshpool is included in the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay because of its low elevation and flat terrain.

It should be noted, that even though further investigative work in these communities would be advantageous, this does not mean that other precautionary actions shouldn't be commenced now, based on Council's understanding of the risks.

Responding to climate change is going to be an ongoing process where obtaining and implementing new information will be a constant challenge.

Council is working with the State Government in the preparation of the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan (Cape Paterson to Cape Liptrap) which investigates the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels on our coastline and options to manage the impacts.

The Resilience Plan will be a foundation on which government and the community can adapt to the dynamic changes and growing risks occurring.



Native vegetation protection in coastal townships

Native vegetation in coastal settlements forms a large part of the coastal character of these communities. It also provides important fauna habitat and holds delicate dune systems together.

A challenge with vegetation protection in coastal communities, and particularly in communities where the residential lots are small, is that state planning policy provisions allow for extensive removal of vegetation around accommodation buildings for the purpose of bushfire protection. State planning policy for bushfire prioritises the protection of human life over all other policy considerations.

Outside of township boundaries, on Crown land and in the Farming Zone, the controls to protect vegetation are stronger.

The development footprint of new dwellings in coastal townships is trending larger. This reduces the ability to retain vegetation on the development site and when combined with the need to plan for bushfire safety, vegetation coverage in our coastal townships is noticeably declining.

The loss of vegetation on private land increases the significance of retaining vegetation in the road reserve, which can create more challenges if footpaths are developed. Although Council has limited powers when the vegetation removal is legally undertaken, there is an opportunity to work with landowners to provide education and information resources.

Advocate for coastal-specific planning controls

South Gippsland Shire Council is currently using the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay to identify coastal inundation risk and is likely to use the Erosion Management Overlay in the future.

However, these provisions are a generic planning tool and do not place front-and-centre the issue of climate change risk in the minds of people living in or moving to a potentially at-risk community.

Advocacy alone can be a challenging approach to achieve change unless the advocacy can fit within the framework of an existing State or Federal program. While noting these challenges, this Coastal Strategy suggests that State Planning Policy could be improved by the provision of a planning scheme zone or overlay control specifically designed to more clearly address coastal hazards, the long-term impacts and risks of climate change.

Planning policy is constantly evolving and the rate of change will likely increase as our understanding of environmental risks improve. Local Government has a role in leading and informing this change and to be receptive to proposed changes if appropriate.



Wave erosion undermining road – Walkerville

DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

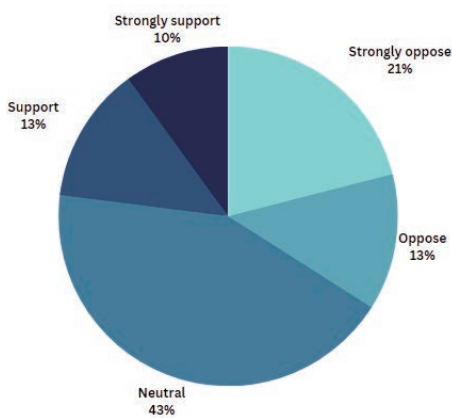


What we heard

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Proposed Action: Transfer of Crown Land

Investigate the transfer of land management responsibility to the State Government for Council managed coastal crown land (such as Yanakie foreshore, Fisher Reserve at Foster and Waratah Bay). Please indicate your level of support.



This is what we heard:

Only about a quarter of the people we heard from agreed with the proposed transfer of Crown Land, emphasising the importance of environmental protection, conservation, and better resource management.

About a third oppose the proposal, expressing concerns about state government management and stressing the significance of local knowledge and input. Slightly less than half remained neutral, citing a lack of information, management concerns, or ambivalence about the potential impacts of the proposed action.



"This will improve consistency of management and bring these areas directly under the state's environmental legislation and policy."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

"Council seems not to have sufficient resources and/or funding/motivation for management required."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

"Local government is more perceptive and receptive of community feedback in relation to land management of foreshore areas."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Transfer of crown land

24% of survey and pop-up respondents were supportive of this proposed action, while 34% were not supportive



What features or characteristics do you value about the township you live in or visit?

People highly value the natural environment and wildlife surrounding our coastal townships. The sense of community and the welcoming, supportive people were also frequently mentioned, indicating strong social networks in the townships. Peace and quiet are important, reflecting a desire for a slower, more relaxed pace of life.

Overall, respondents appreciated the rural or small-town character of the townships and their natural coastal features, such as beaches and scenic beauty, without excessive development or high-rise buildings.

The following features or characteristics were most highly valued by residents and visitors, in order from most frequently to least frequently mentioned:

- Natural environment and wildlife
- Community and people
- Peace and quiet
- Rural and small-town character
- Beaches and natural coastal features



"The natural environment. Living in the bush with space between residences. The abundance of bird life and wildlife. Supportive community."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

"Sense of community and effective community capacity not experienced by me in Melbourne."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

"Proximity to the ocean and inlet for recreational purposes and birdwatching and photography. The enjoyment of being surrounded by native, coastal bush."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Development infrastructure and management

8

"Seawalls and levees in some areas may be necessary to mitigate rising sea levels and protection against storm surge."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Development infrastructure and management

Existing coastal infrastructure is increasingly under pressure, especially during the summer periods, where there is increased usage and demand for public toilets, parking spaces, walking tracks, and boating facilities. Infrastructure such as roads and sea levees are also impacted by coastal hazards and weather events. Establishing, maintaining and renewing public assets in coastal areas comes at a cost for the relevant authorities including VicRoads, South Gippsland Water and Council, especially in areas that face known risks (e.g. flooding, erosion, bushfire). The ongoing demand for asset renewal and investment needs to be carefully considered.

As populations in coastal settlements grow, pressure for more services also increases. This pressure is compounded by rising community expectations of what is acceptable as a minimum level of infrastructure. How we manage growth and what level of servicing we provide in our coastal townships will be a key focus for Council.

As infrastructure provided by Council and other agencies ages, decisions need to be made about whether to repair, redesign, or renew the infrastructure. New and renewed infrastructure in vulnerable areas may not be appropriate if it is likely to be affected by climate change, for example, placing a building in a primary coastal dune. The South Gippsland Blueprint for Community and Economic Infrastructure is best positioned to take into consideration these pressures and risks and guide Council and the community in making informed decisions regarding infrastructure.

Council has an opportunity to proactively prepare a position that guides asset investment, renewal and removal in coastal areas, particularly in areas affected by coastal hazard risks. This would reduce impact on resources associated with asset protection and construction where it is likely to be damaged or destroyed in the future. It could also apply to service provisions.

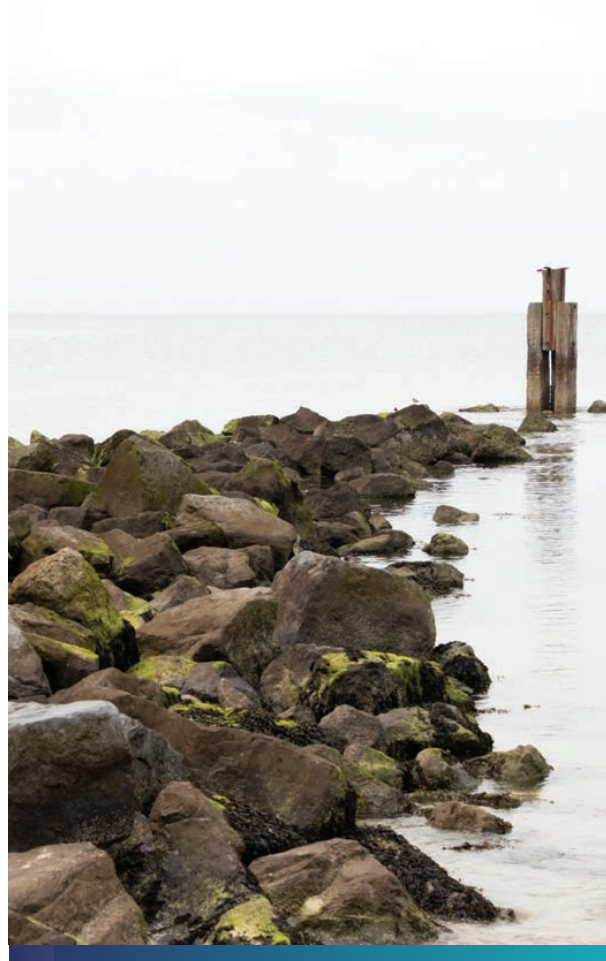


Sea walls and levees

Approximately 90 kilometers of sea walls and coastal levees were established in South Gippsland, mostly to protect agricultural land. Almost all coastal Levees (rammed earth formations that make up the majority of the 90 kilometer extent) are located on private land. Sea walls (block work or concrete constructions) are relatively rare and are more commonly public infrastructure and associated with urban areas and ports.

Key risks to the management of levees

- *Some beneficiaries of levee protection have been managing and maintaining the structures through agreements with landholders, however some levee sections have no such agreement and are unmaintained. Preliminary investigations by Council have found that erosion and failure of coastal levees has the potential to impact hundreds of residential properties, farming land and major access roads.*
- *Levees and seawalls were not designed to manage the impacts of climate change and while they may provide some short-term benefit, they are not a long-term solution.*
- *The presence of coastal levees can create false security and the unrealistic expectation that levees can address the impacts of rising sea levels and increased storm activity. It is a common belief that public authorities will assume responsibility for their management and maintenance as a response to managing climate risk, however this is unlikely to occur.*



Bores and wastewater treatment systems

Many properties in coastal areas depend on bores for their non-potable water supply. Bores are regulated by Southern Rural Water and approved without consideration of development impacts. Wastewater systems must not be located close to bores for health reasons. If a wastewater system cannot be accommodated on a vacant residential property because of the close proximity of an existing bore, then it cannot be developed with a house. Existing mapping of bores that are available is often inaccurate and hard to verify and, as a result,

Committees of Management

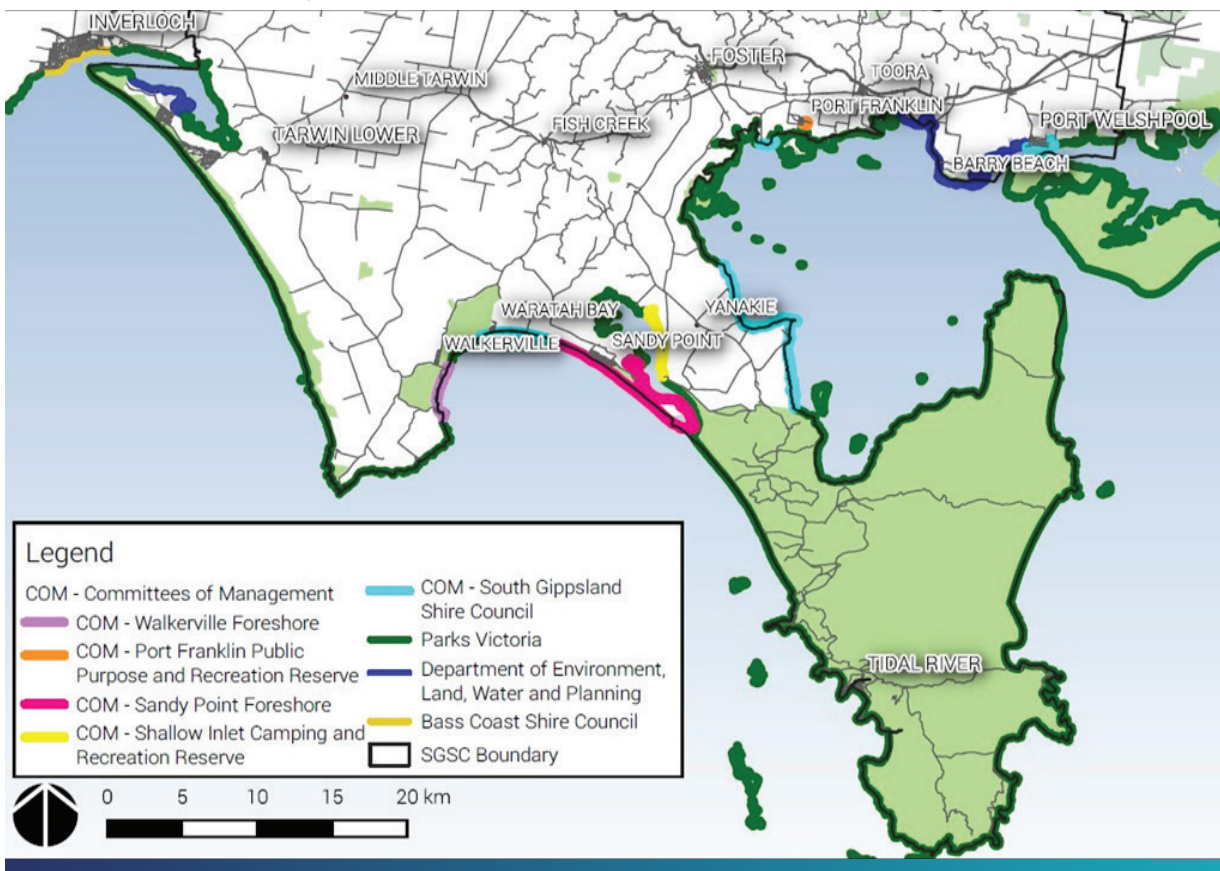
South Gippsland Shire Council is the Committee of Management for three sections of coastal Crown Land:

- Yanakie foreshore (18 kilometres);
- Fisher Reserve;
- Foster Beach Fisher Reserve (1 kilometre); and
- Waratah Bay (4.5 kilometres).

Council faces a range of issues in managing this land including a lack of resources for monitoring, enforcement and asset maintenance. The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Marine Investigation (2014) recognises the significant natural ecosystems of Corner Inlet and proposes that the boundaries of the Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park be formally defined.

The State Government has previously indicated to Council that they would be willing to take over responsibility for the Yanakie foreshore, subject to reaching an agreement with Parks Victoria to become the land manager. It is likely that a similar arrangement could be struck regarding the other Council-managed sites.

However, feedback on this matter during the engagement period was mixed, and no definitive result was able to be drawn. In fact the majority of respondents when asked if land management should be transferred to the State Government were neutral, which shows a high level of uncertainty. There was also significant concern expressed by owners of boat sheds on the Yanakie foreshore, which indicates - at the very least - that more consultation with impacted residents and stakeholders would need to be occur before any action was undertaken.



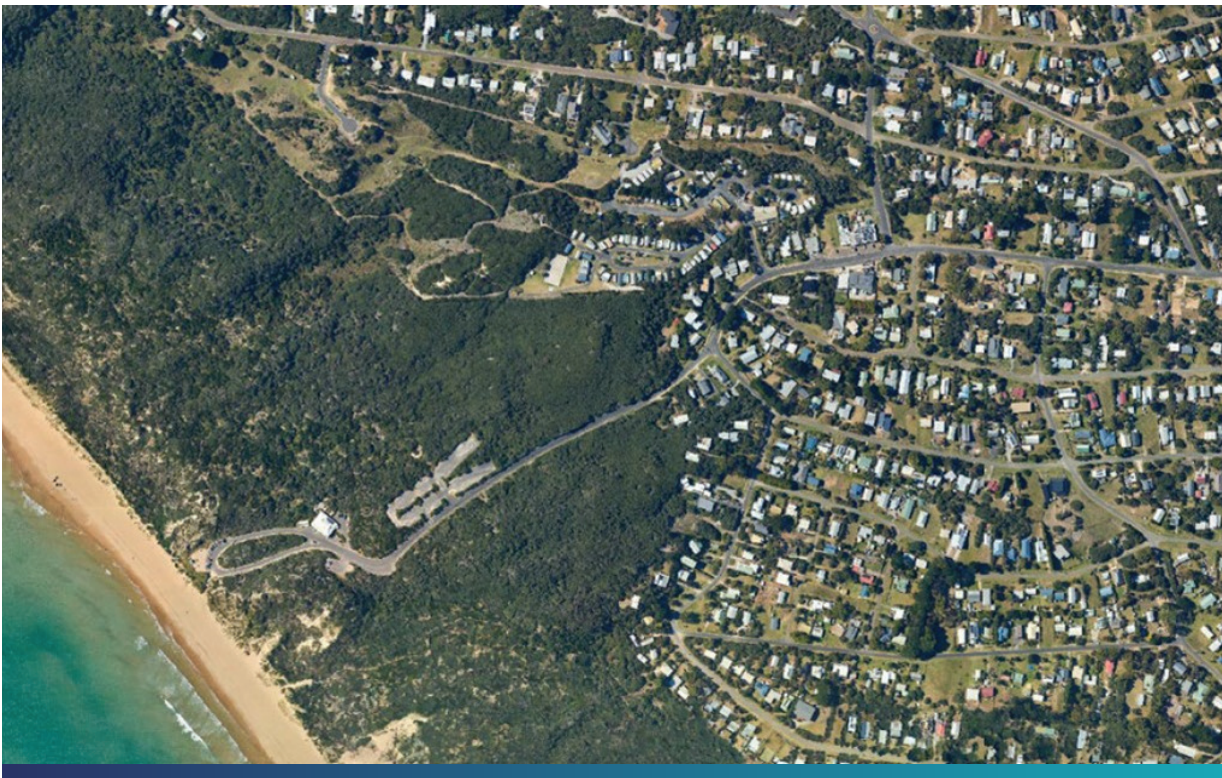
Township character protection

Each coastal township has its own unique character. Port Welshpool and Port Franklin are long established townships and have a built form which is significantly different to more recent subdivisions like Promontory Views and Sandy Point, which were established in the 1950s and 60s during Victoria's first coastal holiday township boom.

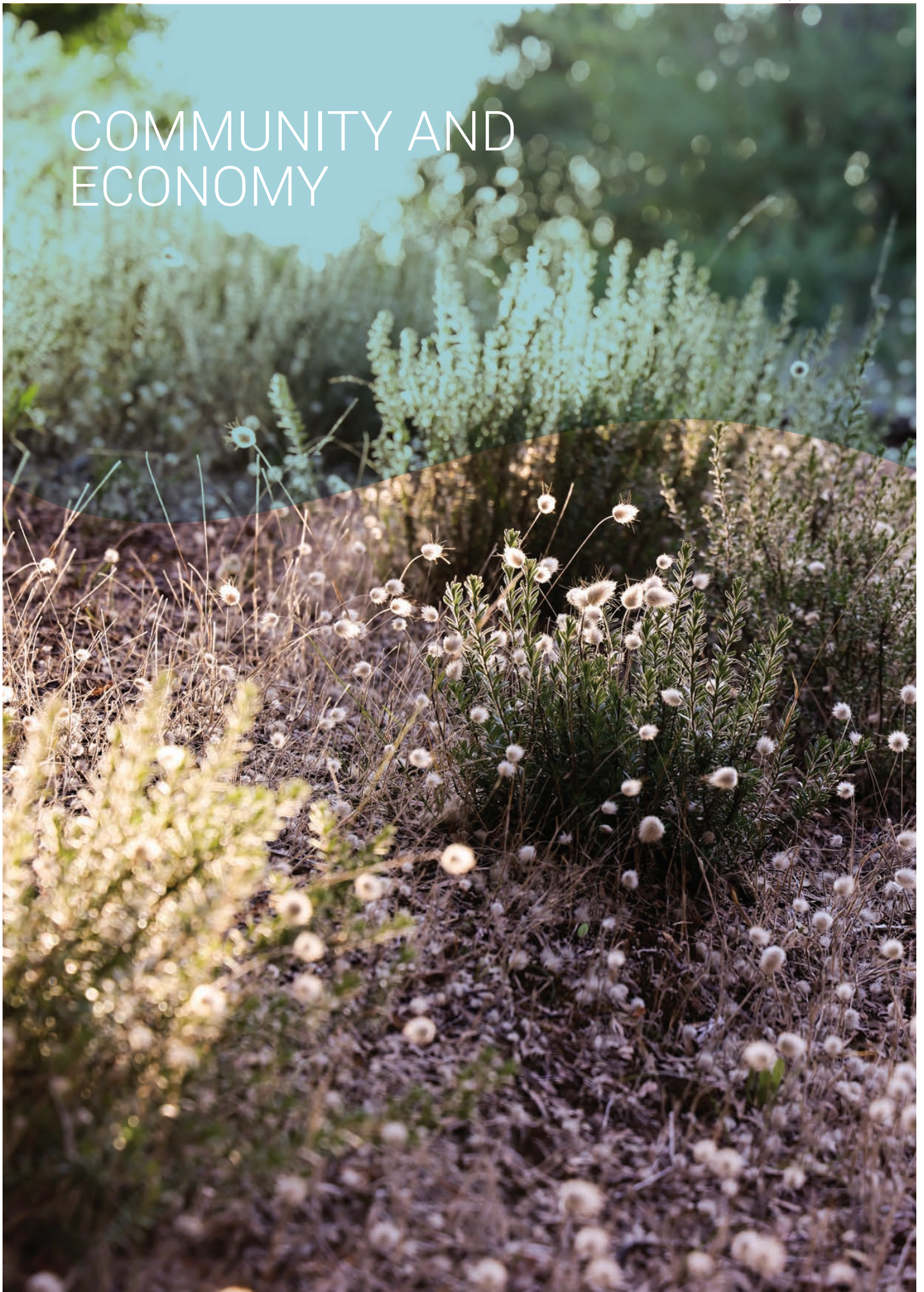
Townships will typically change over time as new design preferences emerge. Township character is a process of evolution and there is no single answer to what character a township should have now or in the future. The planning scheme can guide the development of township character through the introduction of built form and design controls.

If a desire emerges to explore measures to protect key elements of our coastal townships that are central to character protection, Council has the option to review its current zoning and planning scheme overlay controls. One option may be application of the Neighbourhood Residential Zone which requires the preparation of a character statement to guide building design.

As shown in the engagement overview, Coastal Strategy survey respondents had clear ideas about what attracted them to the South Gippsland coastline and what attributes they would like to see protected. Based on the feedback received, a township character assessment would be well-received by local residents, however this would be a large - and potentially costly - piece of work that, would sit outside of the Coastal Strategy.



COMMUNITY AND ECONOMY



What we heard

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Community Dialogue

A Community Dialogue was undertaken to take an in-depth look at the possible impacts of limiting growth in coastal townships in response to coastal challenges.

Twenty-two people from various South Gippsland community groups were asked to identify priority areas that would need to be addressed if planning controls were put in place.

Participants explored the impacts of limiting growth through the lens of the environment, infrastructure, population/community, and economy. The big issues and questions identified by the community were:

Community and social equity

- There was a concern that limiting growth would lead to more 'exclusive' communities as property prices increase and families and workers are priced out of the housing market.
- Concerns were raised that by restricting further development, coastal townships would increasingly be reserved for wealthy people and families purchasing holiday homes.
- Finding affordable and accessible accommodation was identified as a major concern for business and industry.
- Loss of volunteer base is also a priority concern- it is already an issue but is expected to become even more difficult.

Infrastructure

- The community recognised that infrastructure spending is typically tied to population, so if the population is not growing, the coastal communities are unlikely to attract further funding.
- There is an expectation that as Melbourne/ Victoria's population continues to grow - the coastal townships are at risk of being 'loved to death' by tourists and day-trippers.
- As infrastructure ages and new infrastructure is not built in response to coastal hazards what will this mean for tourism?

Economy

- The participants were concerned that without growth, businesses will struggle. This was especially a concern with businesses in townships with huge tourism surges that also saw numbers dwindle in the off-season.
- Concerns that limiting growth and subdivision would make it more difficult to find affordable housing and accommodation, making it increasingly difficult for businesses to find staff.
- There were concerns that the struggle to find and accommodate workers in coastal townships would become worse, as participants noticed this is an issue already affecting the community. In particular, participants were concerned about the hospitality industry that relies on younger people, and farmers and fishers seeking labourers.
- The participants were concerned with the increasing trend of Airbnbs and holiday lets, which could also push families and workers out of coastal areas.
- The group also expects expanded shoulder seasons as more people visit during off-peak periods.



Community and economy

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"There needs to somehow be a balance between allowing town/population growth and protecting the unique places we live (and why we live there)."

Coastal Strategy Engagement 2023

Community and Economy

South Gippsland Shire Council has an extensive range of adopted policies related to community and economic development. The Coastal Strategy aligns with Council's existing suite of adopted policies and focus on strategic gaps where benefit may be found in undertaking further work related to supporting the growth of sustainable and prosperous coastal communities.

In recognition of the extensive scope of policy work already undertaken by Council, the Coastal Strategy focus on the following key points:

- Protection of cultural heritage.
- Grow social and economic capital.

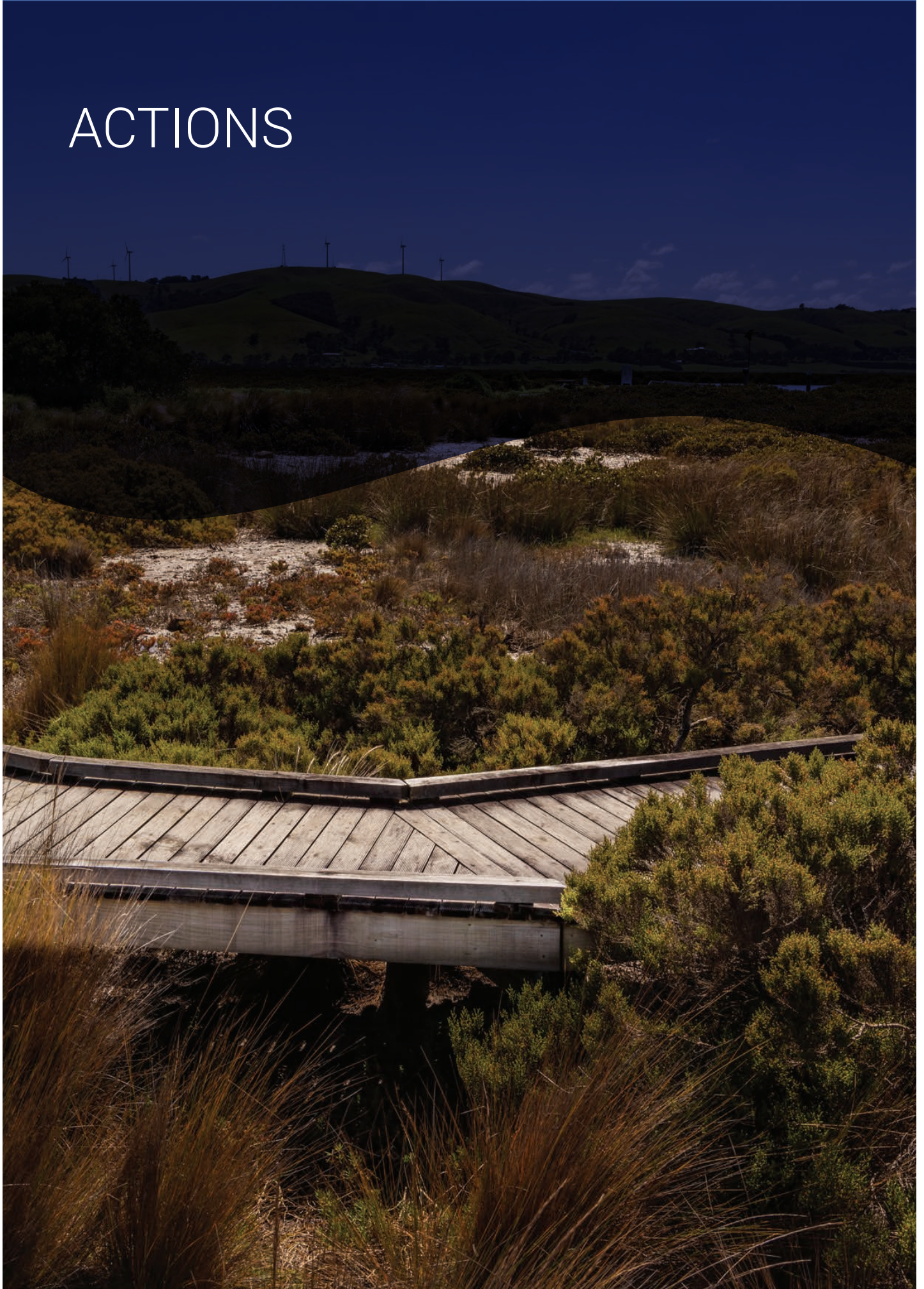
The transition to renewable energy and the establishment of an offshore wind energy industry will bring economic benefits and challenges to coastal communities. The Barry Beach ports are likely to play an important role in the development of the industry. The ports, and the surrounding industrial zoned land, are a strategic economic asset likely to have State significance in the nation's transition to renewable energy.

Traditional Owner Heritage

Our coastal townships and land management practices were developed before consideration was given to the cultural and physical heritage of Indigenous people. Pre-colonial Indigenous people valued the coastline for many of the same reasons as post contact settler communities (e.g. beach and waterway access, transport, shelter and resources), creating overlapping habitation areas that has resulted in significant destruction of First Nations heritage. Protection of heritage is an increasingly important issue for all levels of government and is especially the case where urban development opportunities overlap with areas of high heritage significance like at Venus Bay.



ACTIONS



1. POPULATION PRESSURE AND DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS		Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
1.1	Review and update the Housing and Settlement Strategy as appropriate to reflect updated conditions, policy or available science affecting coastal settlements		X	
1.2	Where state coastal planning policy is being considered for change, advocate for change that more directly communicates coastal hazard and climate change risk through new planning scheme zone or overlay controls that more directly identify, address and promote the risk.	X		
1.3	Remove all coastal township greenfield residential growth areas from the planning scheme framework plan maps, and retain the township boundaries consistent with the current application of each township's urban land zoning.		X	
1.4	Explore the strategic justification for Council to restrict or discourage the development of more than one dwelling per lot and the subdivision of land which increases dwelling development potential	X		
1.5	Support existing State Planning Policy in a commitment to retain coastal townships to within their existing urban zoned boundaries.	X		

2. ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

ACTIONS		Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
2.1	Advocate for the implementation of new or updated hazard risk mapping and policy changes to identify, to our best ability, current and anticipated coastal hazard risks affecting the values of our coastal areas.	X		
2.2	Investigate the 'Common Ground' community initiative on the land adjoining Andersons Inlet at Venus Bay that proposes nature-based adaptation concepts that if implemented, will assist in managing storm surge, flooding and coastal erosion.		X	
2.3	Proactively work with, and advocate to, the State and Federal Government for the preparation and implementation of nature-based solutions to manage the impacts of environmental coastal hazard risks.		X	
2.4	Prioritise the implementation of new or updated hazard risk mapping and policy changes to identify current and anticipated coastal hazard risks affecting the values of our coastal areas. This includes timely planning scheme implementation of the recommendations of the Cape to Cape Resilience Project.	X		
2.5	Update Council's local planning policy on coastal climate risk to more clearly set out the long term risks posed to our townships.	X		

3. DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE LAND MANAGEMENT

ACTIONS	Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
3.1 Engage with communities in Venus Bay and Sandy Point to determine their preferences and priorities for paths and trails infrastructure. The engagement will build on information that was obtained through the coastal strategy consultation and address specific projects and routes.	X		
3.2 Investigate development of a township character study for South Gippsland.			X
3.3 Ensure community town plans are updated to align with the Coastal Strategy and the Blueprint for Community and Economic Infrastructure. Updates should occur when the documents are due for renewal.		X	
3.4 Work with Southern Rural Water, the Environmental Protection Authority Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action to resolve the issue of ground water bores.			X
3.5 Partner with the State and Federal Government to investigate options and issues with seawalls and coastal levees.		X	
3.6 Engage with Yanakie Boat Sheds owners, and other related stakeholders, regarding future land management options.		X	

4. COMMUNITY AND ECONOMY

ACTIONS	Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
4.1 Work with community and emergency organisations to identify areas of concern in relation to volunteer recruitment and identify opportunities for volunteer collaboration and connection.	X		
4.2 Engage with coastal communities to determine if there are specific actions or initiatives that can be included in the <i>Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2031</i> , the <i>Economic Development Strategy 2021-2031</i> and the <i>Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Strategy 2022 - 2026</i> .		X	
4.3 Thorough Council's Emergency Management team, work with other emergency services, community groups and resident associations to promote community safety in coastal areas.	X		
4.4 Develop a Short Stay Accommodation strategy in consultation with local communities, particularly those located in coastal areas that may be impacted by future planning controls.		X	
4.5 Continue to work with Indigenous communities and State Government in the protection of cultural heritage in our coastal areas and consider heritage values and protection in the preparation of coastal hazard assessments.	X		
4.6 Investigate if there is interest in reconvening the Community Dialogue group on a semi-regular basis.		X	

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