

Great Ocean Road Action Plan

Protecting the iconic coast and parks

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Action Plan overview

The Great Ocean Road and its scenic landscapes are so special, and the area is so important to Australia, that dedicated management arrangements are to be established. Major reforms in the Action Plan include:

- **stand-alone legislation** that recognises and protects the iconic landscapes along the Great Ocean Road as the 'one integrated and living entity' and makes the management of the region publicly accountable
- **a dedicated (statutory) coast and parks management agency** with an independent, skills-based board, to manage – and be publicly accountable for – protection of the environment, sustainable visitation and delivery of government investments
- **a new overarching planning framework** enshrined in legislation that has a long term and holistic outlook for the length of the Great Ocean Road to provide direction to localised and/or functional planning
- **regular review** of the implementation of the framework plan
- **a better planning approvals** process.

You can view and download a copy of the Action Plan at www.engage.vic.gov.au.



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If you would like to receive updates on the implementation of the Great Ocean Road Action Plan then send an email to: greatoceanroad.actionplan@delwp.vic.gov.au with "subscribe" in the subject line.

Community input

The local communities raised the need to address the complexity of the management and planning arrangements along the Great Ocean Road as a priority in the Regional Assembly Forums (Barwon in 2016 and Great South Coast in 2016 and 2017).

In a direct response the Victorian Government allocated \$1.3 million in the 2017-18 State Budget, to establish a Taskforce to review the governance arrangements and make recommendations to "simplify the complex management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road".

In September 2017 Government announced the Great Ocean Road Taskforce (the Taskforce) with independent co-chairs Hon Peter Batchelor and Hon Terry Mulder and a membership comprising nominees of the Traditional Owners (Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung), representatives of key stakeholders: Diane James (former Chair of the Victorian Coastal Council), Elaine Carbines (CEO of G21 - The Geelong Region Alliance) and Wayne Kayler-Thomson (Chair of Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism) and the CEOs of the five councils along the Great Ocean Road: Surf Coast, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Moyne and Warrnambool.

The Taskforce took an issue-and-opportunities-led approach to review the current governance arrangements and consulted widely. Considerable stakeholder feedback was provided through the Taskforce meetings and considerable community feedback on an issues paper provided through face-to-face conversations with 780 people (Melbourne, Torquay, Anglesea, Lorne, Wye River, Apollo Bay, 12 Apostles, Port Campbell, Warrnambool and Port Fairy) and more than 570 written survey and submissions.

The Taskforce received considerable feedback from local communities that its *Governance of the Great Ocean Road Issues Paper* had not placed enough emphasis on protecting the environment and the implications of climate change. Other key themes in community feedback were:

- A shared vision of the future for the region and a strategic framework plan is needed.
- Management of traffic and tourism needs to change.
- Major change is required – doing nothing is not an option.
- Strong support for the establishment of a single entity to manage the Great Ocean Road and its environs.
- Each community along the Great Ocean Road is unique and has its own distinct identity – communications and consultation need to be designed accordingly.

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Co-chairs Report

The Great Ocean Road Action Plan follows the 26 recommendations made by the Great Ocean Road Taskforce's independent Co-Chairs – former state transport ministers Peter Batchelor and Terry Mulder.

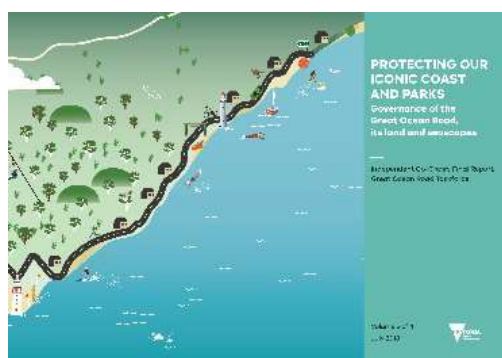
The Co-Chairs examined governance models of a number of places with high visitation around the world and found that no model could be transplanted from another location. Victoria's response to the challenges facing the Great Ocean Road needed to be customised in response to the unique challenges of the region.

The Co-chairs concluded that:

- The area is so important that it needs, and deserves, special place-based governance arrangements - it has outstanding natural, cultural, and heritage values, and is of immense importance to the State economy.
- The first priority must be to protect the environmental assets and isolated beauty experience that are the attraction for visitors.

That is why they recommended establishment of a new independent statutory authority, the *Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority* to protect the ecological and landscape integrity of the National Heritage listed Great Ocean Road, and its land and seascapes.

You can view and download a copy of the Co-Chair Report at: www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/great-ocean-road-action-plan



Action Plan Detail

The Victorian Government supports all 26 of the Co-Chair recommendations (subject to funding) and proposes to implement the recommendations through 18 actions in five key areas.

Legislation for protection

A standalone Act of Parliament that – for the first time – recognises the landscapes and seascapes along the Great Ocean Road as the *one integrated and living entity* and makes the management of the region publicly accountable.

Action 1: Legislate the policy

Introduce a ground-breaking, standalone, Act of Parliament that:

- recognises the national significance and need to protect the Great Ocean Road, its land and seascapes as a single integrated and living entity for the benefit of future generations
- adopts the recommended five objectives for management of the region
- defines the coastal land and waters along the Great Ocean Road to be known as the 'Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks'
- introduces clear lines of accountability and transparency for all organisations involved in management of the region.

Action 2: Legislate the planning framework

Enshrine the overarching planning framework in legislation including the strategic framework plan's minimum contents, area of coverage, community involvement, preparation process requirements, approval processes, requirements for reporting and revision, and the responsible entities that must have regard to the approved strategic framework plan.

Action 3: Legislate the environmental economic accounts

Establish a statutory requirement for:

- a set of Environmental-Economic Accounts to be developed and maintained for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks
- the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability to report periodically on the environmental condition of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks, as part of the regular Victorian State of the Environment reporting.

A new, dedicated, parks authority

The Victorian Government commits to – for the first time – establish a dedicated, statutory parks management authority, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, to protect and manage the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road for the benefit of future generations.

This will not alter the underlying management tenure and conservation objectives of any national parks areas for which the new authority assumes responsibility. The new authority will work closely with Parks Victoria who retain responsibility for broad-acre parks management - including for most of the Great Otway National Park - and who will provide parks management services to the new authority for its field operations to ensure environmental conservation objectives are met.

This is similar to the management model for the Great Barrier Reef where the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service provide field management services to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the marine and island national parks.

This will simplify the governance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. Currently there are 11 different managers of Crown land operating in different geographical locations



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with different responsibilities, stakeholders, priorities and timeframes. Not one agency has a remit along the full length of the Road.

Action 4: A Great Ocean Road Coast & Parks Authority

Establish an independent statutory authority, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, with a skill-based board and independent chair, to manage the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road.

Further work on the details of, and funding for, the new authority will start immediately so its legislation can be considered by Parliament in 2019.

FUNCTIONS:

The Authority's primary purpose is to protect, and manage visitation of, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks:

- i. manage, protect, rehabilitate and foster resilience of the natural, cultural and heritage values of coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road
- ii. environmentally sustainable visitation management for the National Heritage listed length of the Great Ocean Road to improve the visitor experience and manage visitation 'hot spots'
- iii. a 'coordinator-general' like function to coordinate the timely and efficient delivery of government investment (such as visitor facilities and infrastructure), to minimise the resultant disruption and inconvenience to travellers and local communities, and to deliver government construction projects.

The work of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority will be underpinned by science and research.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP:

- independent chair
- a nominee of each Traditional Owner group for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks area
- up to 8 independent skill-based members.

The authority's functions are broad requiring an independent board with a diverse range of skills including all of the following skills: land-use planning and landscape architecture; marine and coastal environmental science; travel, tourism, hospitality and leisure; finance management and investment facilitation; construction management; natural resource management; and cultural and heritage values management.

Action 5: Work closely with local communities

Establish structures for the ongoing involvement of local communities in the protection and visitation management of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks. The new Authority will also need to establish forums to liaise with and involve key stakeholders (such as an Environmental Advisory Committee and a Tourism Industry Advisory Committee).

Action 6: Traditional Owner Capacity

Support the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung to map their tangible and intangible cultural values in the land and

seascapes along the Great Ocean Road and strengthen their capacity to actively manage their traditional lands.

Action 7: Sustainable funding

Establish funding arrangements for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

A new overarching planning framework

The Victorian Government will, for the first time, take a generational approach to the management of the coastal lands and waters of the Great Ocean Road.

The Great Ocean Road passes through an ancient and dynamic landscape – with strong cultural meaning for indigenous and nonindigenous Australians.

The geological events that created and continue to change the landscape began millennia ago. The works that created the Road began a century ago. And the environment, social and economic needs of the area will keep changing in the face of climate change, increased tourism numbers and community demands.

The competing needs of the region cannot be balanced unless it is seen as a single, integrated and living entity. That is why a new overarching planning framework, enshrined in legislation, is needed.

Action 8: Community Involvement

Involve the community in developing long-term objectives and a shared vision for the future of the Great Ocean Road region that protects the distinctive landscapes and liveability of local communities and provides a great visitor experience.

Action 9: A Strategic Framework Plan

Develop and maintain an overarching Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road region that:

- has a 50-year outlook and gives effect to the vision
- provides direction to municipal and agency activities and decision making
- provides future direction to land use and development in the region
- recognises, protects and promotes Traditional Owner values and heritage values
- prioritises preservation of the ecological and landscape integrity of coastal and marine environments
- includes planning for sustainable visitation and travel along the touring route
- is developed with community participation
- is reviewed every 10 years.

Action 10: Monitor implementation

Require all public entities with delivery responsibilities in the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan to report regularly on their progress for an annual report to Parliament submitted by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

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A better planning approval process

The Victorian Government will strengthen the planning system to properly protect the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes from inappropriate development.

By creating a standing advisory committee that will give expert advice on development proposals, this reform will streamline the process for appropriate development projects and stop inappropriate proposals in their early stages.

We need to encourage smart, environmentally sustainable developments that will secure the region's future prosperity and liveability.

Action 11: Standing Advisory Committee

Establish a standing advisory committee for the Great Ocean Road region (under Section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) to provide independent expert advice on sustainable land development and development proposals. This reform will stop inappropriate development proposals in their early stages and streamline the progress of appropriate development proposals.

FUNCTIONS:

- i. act as a Review Panel for Planning Scheme Amendments and Planning Permits that are called-in by the Minister for Planning
- ii. act as a Land-use and Design Review Panel for councils, for visitor economy development proposals that are consistent with the Strategic Framework Plan and associated Planning Guidelines
- iii. act as a Review Panel for coastal and marine management plans, and coastal land consent permits within the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks area
- iv. provide policy and strategic advice to the Minister for Planning.

SKILLS:

Whilst the advisory committee can seek expert skills as required, its membership will have an understanding and appreciation of the region and include all of these skills: strategic and statutory land-use planning; architecture, urban design and landscape architecture; marine and coastal environmental science; transport planning; Traditional Owner values; heritage values; tourism and economic viability.

Action 12: Planning Guidelines

Identify options for planning guidelines to accompany the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan that provide clear direction on appropriate land-uses and development design standards across the area.

Action 13: Planning services support to councils

Identify options for planning services support to supplement the councils' capacity to assess large and complex land development projects.

Supporting initiatives

No single action will secure the future of the coastal land and waters of the Great Ocean Road. What is required is a generation of actions. These supporting initiatives are no less important than the earlier major reforms.

Action 14: Sustainable Tourism

Develop a sustainable visitation management strategy for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks that focuses on a great visitor experience and increasing the economic benefit to local communities including:

- a capacity analysis for the Great Ocean Road (coast, parks and marine environments, the road, key destinations, and land-uses) to understand visitation management options and constraints
- better visitor facilities, amenities, products and services
- enhanced digital connectivity to boost both visitor experience and emergency services needs
- identifying other tourism infrastructure/facilities requirements along the Great Ocean Road.

Action 15: Improved road access and safety

Develop a transport strategy for the regional network (including the Princes Highway and north-south links to the Great Ocean Road) and prioritise the pipeline of investments required. Work with road safety agencies to review and identify priority projects for improving the safety and well-being of travellers along the Great Ocean Road.

Action 16: Crown land administrative arrangements

Review and align Crown land reservations and parcel information within the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks with the directions of the Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework Plan.

Action 17: Shared deliver of municipal like services

Establish a working group to identify opportunities for councils and government agencies to work together to deliver municipal-like services such as facilities maintenance and cleaning, gardening and waste collection.

Action 18: Commercial tour operator licences

Review the public land commercial tour operator and commercial activity provider licences system.

Accessibility

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