Representing our community: shaping our future

Advocating Bass Coast’s priorities

January 2019
Bass Coast Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians and recognises that they have a unique relationship with the land and water.

Council also recognises that we are situated on the traditional lands of the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung, members of the Kulin Nation who have lived here for thousands of years. We offer our respect to their elders past and present and through them, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Last updated December 2018
Advocacy was a key theme which was constantly reappearing during our extensive community conversations and consultation to ‘Help shape a better Bass Coast’ in early 2017. Throughout the Council Plan engagement we asked our community:

- What would make living, visiting or investing in Bass Coast better?
- What would you like to see retained or improved?
- What health and wellbeing issues are you concerned about?
- What would you like Council to achieve in the next four years?

During the consultation we repeatedly heard that the community wanted Council to focus on advocating on issues and projects which require support from higher levels of government.

We learnt that the community expect Council to represent them and advocate on their behalf to other levels of government, and drive home the needs of Bass Coast in the major areas of roads, health, education, and a range of other state or federal government controlled areas.

As a direct result of this feedback, we developed our very first Advocacy Strategy, and an Advocacy Priority List which sets out the top ten advocacy items for our community.

It’s important to understand that the Advocacy Strategy and Priority List is a direct result of the rigorous community consultation involved in the development of our Council Plan.

Our first Priority List was adopted in September 2017 and within 10 months we began to prepare the next version, which was adopted in August 2018. We are now onto our third edition, thanks to the delivery of key advocacy projects including: the Wonthaggi Hospital upgrade, a new senior campus for Wonthaggi Secondary College, a shared Wonthaggi Highball facility, intersection upgrade for Phillip Island Road/Back Beach Road, 24 hours medical care in Cowes, and junior secondary school campus for the Phillip Island and Waterline communities.

While we feel our Council Plan engagement provided a real understanding of our community’s priorities in advocacy, it doesn’t stop here. We are continuing to listen to our community’s needs and advocate on their behalf.

We are excited by our success to date, however there is still much to be done. It is critical that we continue to focus on our advocacy priorities, which are fundamental to the liveability of Bass Coast.

From the Mayor and Councillors
Bass Coast is approximately 130km south east of Melbourne and is bounded by Western Port in the north and west, Cardinia Shire in the north east, South Gippsland Shire in the east and Bass Strait to the south.

Our major industries are tourism, construction, agriculture and manufacturing. Tourism generates $339 million in direct visitor expenditure and supports 3,100 direct and indirect full-time equivalent jobs.

### Snapshot

- **32,848** Estimated residential population
- **865km2** Size of Bass Coast Shire
- **Over 80,000** Population during peak visitor periods
- **130km** Approximate distance from Melbourne
Today’s Reality
Our natural environment is our economy. People visit for the environment and stay to join tight knit communities that are passionate about protecting natural assets and growing business opportunities while creating safe and supportive townships in which to raise their families.

Bass Coast Shire Council is facing unprecedented growth pressure. Our population challenges are twofold: since 2007 our population has increased by 21.6 per cent and every summer our population temporarily swells to over 80,000.

Our economy is growing; in fact we are the fastest growing economy in regional Victoria and the third fastest growing economy in Victoria. Since 2007 our economy has grown 45.6 per cent, out pacing all other local government areas except Wyndham and Melton.

Tomorrow Unchecked
Under a business as usual model, by 2035, Bass Coast Shire Council will be experiencing the following:

- 37% increase in the number of residents
- Environmental protection will be crucial to maintain resident quality of life and attract visitors
- Upwards of 235,000 new residents will move into areas to the north and east of the region (within a one hour drive)
- An extra 1.6M per annum in domestic and international visitors in 2035
- 71% increase in residents aged 70-74 years old
- An additional 3,950 visitor movements generated per day (on average)
- Every weekend the region will reach or exceed capacity in peak months
What is Council requesting?

Establishment or continuation of funding programs which support the delivery of key local community and regional infrastructure initiatives eg National Stronger Regions Fund.
Grant funding of $12 million to support the redevelopment of the Cowes Cultural and Community Centre (CCCC).

Why?

The current Cowes Cultural Centre is ageing and does not meet growing community and visitor needs. The permanent population of Phillip Island is expected to increase by over 45 per cent to 15,777 by 2035. Tourism is a key economic driver on Phillip Island, which attracts over 1.85 million visitors annually. Visitor numbers are projected to grow by 4.2 per cent per year to reach over 4 million visitors by 2035.
The Cowes Revitalisation Projects include three projects to enliven and rejuvenate Cowes: the Jetty Triangle redevelopment, Transit Hub and CCCC redevelopment. Significant state government support towards two of the projects means the CCCC redevelopment remains as the only project missing from the revitalisation of this key tourist area.

Key elements of the proposed CCCC facility include:
• new library and research hub
• multipurpose community hall with 400 seat capacity
• theatre/cinema/concert and lecture hall
• modern dressing rooms, storage and stage management systems
• great hall thoroughfare and reception space
• accessible toilet facilities
• art studio and exhibition space
• operational facilities for local historical and genealogy societies
• commercial kitchen and servery

The redevelopment of the CCCC has been a priority for the community for many years. In 2014 the San Remo District Financial Services Limited (Bendigo Community Bank) committed funding as a catalyst to revisit the redevelopment of the Centre. Council has allocated $650,000 towards development of detailed designs and costings for the proposed CCCC redevelopment. Completion of this work is anticipated by 30 June 2019 with our focus then shifting to securing required funding for subsequent construction.

Anticipated cost

We estimate this to be a $18 million project and seek funding of $12 million with the remaining costs contributed by Council.

Supporting strategies

• Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
• Cowes Activity Centre Plan - 2015
• Bass Coast Towards 2030
• Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
• Gippsland Regional Plan
• South East Melbourne Regional Plan
Climate Change and Adaptation

Environment and Erosion
What is Council requesting?

Urgent mitigation action in the order of $6 million is required to implement critical erosion infrastructure in Cowes and Inverloch.

The next vital step in preserving and protecting Western Port’s environment is to implement a more strategic and holistic approach to foreshore management, and install erosion control infrastructure.

We need a national strategy for erosion mitigation and adaptation due to impacts of climate change on coastal communities and environments. A collaborative approach involving Federal, State and Local organisation will be key in moving forwards.

Why?

The natural environment is Bass Coast’s greatest asset; our economy is based on tourism and agriculture. The Bass Coast Shire coastline is subject to damage from storm surges and coastal inundation which causes significant erosion and is placing public, natural and community assets at risk such as Surf Life Saving Club buildings, emergency vehicle access tracks and recreational pathways.

Inverloch

Since 2012, the Inverloch surf beach foreshore has retreated 33.5 metres, placing the Surf Life Saving Club rooms and observation tower at risk. Council has had to remove the observation tower four times due to severe erosion events (2013, 2016, twice in 2018). The recession of the Inverloch surf beach shoreline inland is now at unprecedented levels, with a coastline retreat of up to 36 metres in some areas. Intervention is critical.

Cowes

Technical reports have been completed (2018) providing erosion management options for Cowes Main Foreshore and the Cowes East foreshore areas. These reports provides both “hard” and “soft” engineering options and the associated cost to protect existing coastal assets that have fallen into disrepair, and installation of new coastal infrastructure. The replacement of seven deteriorated groynes at Cowes East (three in 2015, four in 2018) has demonstrated the effect and benefit of asset renewal with sand being retained on the beaches.

These Cowes beaches sit within Western Port, which is identified as a RAMSAR Convention Wetlands of International Importance and a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve and requires ongoing protection.

Anticipated cost

Cowes Main Beach seawall construction in the order of $1 million
Cowes East Beach upgrades to rock and timber walls and renourishment in the order of $3 million
Inverloch coastal infrastructure in the order of $2 million

Supporting strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy 2016 – 26
- Victorian Auditor General’s Office - Protecting Victoria’s Coastal Assets
- Coastal Erosion Management Options Cowes Main Beach Foreshore Reserve (April 2018)
- Cowes East Foreshore: Erosion Management Option (July 2018)
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria’s Business
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 ‘All Politics is Local’
- Western Port Local Coastal Hazard Assessment
Connectivity and Telecommunications
**What is Council requesting?**

Ongoing investment in eliminating mobile blackspots across Bass Coast to reduce social disadvantage and support business and tourism growth.

Continued support through the Mobile Blackspot Program (currently round four) and accurate data available to assist Council in determining areas of greatest need.

**Why?**

The Bass Coast community is reasonably well served with National Broadband Network (NBN) infrastructure and services especially in the main population centres. The hinterland and some of the more remote parts of the Shire are not served so well, largely due to the undulating terrain and the high cost of providing services in these areas. There are mobile blackspots which place people at risk in emergency situations, limit their quality of life and restrict their capacity to operate a business in those locations.

We also experience a decrease in network quality during peak periods. During the holiday season, our population swells and in some townships, triples.

Council participates along with the other five Gippsland Councils in the Federal Government’s Mobile Blackspot Program. This is however a competitive national program with no guarantee that local issues and needs will prevail.

Council’s need access to the most up to date data provided by the various mobile phone companies about their existing network coverage and planned system upgrades. This can then be integrated with the experience of people ‘on the ground’ to ensure that Councils are in the best position to nominate areas.

**Anticipated cost**

The $26 million Mobile Black Spots Program is a collaborative funding program which seeks joint funding from the Federal Government, Council and mobile carriers. Council seeks an allocation of funding towards the top priority blackspot areas in the municipality.

**Supporting strategies**

- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2016 – 2021
- Council’s Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 - Growing Tourism
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 ‘All Politics is Local’
Phillip Island Recreation and Aquatics Precinct
What is Council requesting?
Funding to develop the new Phillip Island Recreation Precinct in Cowes. The Precinct will include:
• multipurpose aquatics and leisure centre, including a 25m indoor pool, water therapy pool and gymnasium
• sporting fields and pavilion catering for football, cricket and soccer
• cricket training facilities
• netball, basketball and tennis courts
• playground
• landscaped open spaces, including accessible pathways for informal recreation and social gatherings for all ages and abilities.

Why?
The proposed Phillip Island Recreation and Aquatics Precinct will provide Phillip Island with an essential recreation and aquatics facility to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and visitors. For over 20 years the local community has fundraised and lobbied for better facilities on the Island. Local clubs and associations are at full capacity at existing locations and residents are forced to commute long distances to participate in a number of aquatic and recreational activities.

The current facilities on Phillip Island do not meet community and visitor expectations in line with Phillip Island’s high profile tourism status. In addition to this, the population of Phillip Island and San Remo is anticipated to increase by 37 per cent by 2035 and host an additional 1.6 million visitors per annum. This exponential increase will put substantial pressure on the existing sports and recreation resources. The proposed Precinct will help to relieve this pressure, and also provide excellent health and wellbeing opportunities for the future population and visitors. Council is committed to providing Phillip Island with these essential recreation facilities. Council has made a financial allocation in its Long Term Financial Plan for the identification and purchase of a key site for a future recreation precinct. We have also committed to the development of an Aquatics Strategy and Master Plan, and a now ready for final designs and construction.

Anticipated cost
Sporting Facilities and Open Space - $17 million
New Aquatics and Leisure Centre - $30 million
Total - $47 million

Supporting strategies
• Bass Coast Aquatics Strategy 2015
• Active Bass Coast 2018
• Cowes Future Recreation Land Master Plan (and incorporating a new master plan for Cowes Recreation Reserve) October 2014
• Bass Coast Sports and Active Recreation Needs Assessment 2016
• Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
• Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035
• Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Fund Incorporated Masterplan October 2018
• Phillip Island Aquatics and Leisure Draft Component Plan 2017
• Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 ‘All Politics is Local’
Homelessness and Emergency Housing
What is Council requesting?
Allocate $1.25 million to local agencies to identify and develop emergency housing in Bass Coast and prioritise increased funding for urgently needed support services such as emergency relief funding.

Why?
Bass Coast is experiencing an increased incidence of people facing homelessness or being at risk of homelessness. Our community has a range of challenges and complex issues which increases the need for emergency accommodation, including three areas of Bass Coast being in the top 13 percentile of SEIFA index of relative social disadvantage across Australia (Wonthaggi area and Waterline townships).
Bass Coast has a 25 per cent higher rate of family violence incidents compared to Victoria and the population of Bass Coast is increasing rapidly at 2.15 per cent per annum with an ageing demographic profile (second oldest median age in Victoria). Limited public transport opportunities also mean that access to homelessness services is difficult for the community.

Anticipated cost
$1.25 million for local agencies to identify and develop appropriate emergency housing/shelter in Bass Coast

Supporting strategies
- Bass Coast Shire Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 - 2021
- Bass Coast Shire Council Youth Action Plan 2016 - 2020
- Change for Sam Advocacy Strategy (2018)
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 'All Politics is Local'
What is Council requesting?
Visitor Economy Infrastructure funding of $10m towards Council’s top three pathway projects: Cowes to Rhyll, Wonthaggi to Inverloch and Guy Road, Corinella

• **Wonthaggi to Inverloch**
  
  *Option one:* Design and construction of 12km of shared pathway along an existing unmade road reserve through farmland between Wonthaggi and Inverloch.
  
  *OR, Option two:* VicRoads to coordinate the design and construction of a shared pathway alongside the Highway.

The construction of a shared pathway from Wonthaggi to Inverloch would complete a tourism trail from Cowes to Inverloch, complementing the aspirations of the Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 – Growing Tourism (VES).

The VES identifies pathways as a way to link primary visitor accommodation nodes with key attractions, and also estimates that by 2035 an additional $3.8 million could be generated through the development of pathways. Once completed, the 60km trail from Cowes to Inverloch would provide a stunning two day hike option involving panoramic views across Bass Strait and Phillip Island, halfway stop overs in the beautiful seaside hamlets of Kilcunda or San Remo, and finishing or beginning in the main tourism hubs of Inverloch or Cowes.

This pathway would also provide a safe commuter option and would link with the cycling corridor through both Wonthaggi and Inverloch, supporting the objectives of the Victorian Cycling Strategy.
Cowes-Rhyll Road from Thompson Avenue, Cowes to Rhyll

*Design and construction of 7km of shared concrete pathway*

The shared pathway between Cowes and Rhyll would link the accommodation options of Cowes with the seaside hamlet at Rhyll, a popular spot for visitors and also the current location for passengers to disembark from cruise ships visiting Phillip Island. It would also connect with the popular walking trails through protected bushland at Oswin Roberts Reserve and Conservation Hill Reserve.

As identified in the VES, linking accommodation and attractions via a range of mediums such as walking and cycling helps the region become a sustainable destination. Providing opportunities for visitors to walk and cycle enables them to fully experience the region's attractions with minimal impact on the environment and a reduction in traffic congestion.

This pathway would also provide a safe commuter option for students and professionals who live in Rhyll and study or work in Cowes.

Guy Road, Corinella

*Construction of 5.9 km of shared concrete pathway (design is complete, this project is shovel ready.)*

Council has completed designs for a 2.5m wide shared pathway along Guy Road in Corinella, from Jamieson Street to Bass Valley Primary School and is seeking funding to construct the path.

The pathway will link the popular coastal hamlet of Tenby Point with Corinella and Coronet Bay and, via the Corinella punt, with French Island. The path will provide an option for visitors to experience the Waterline area through walking and cycling.

This pathway will also establish a safe commuter link from Tenby Point and Corinella to Bass Valley Primary School. This aspect of the path links with the Victorian Cycling Strategy which seeks to increase cycling as transport and support cycling to school.

**Anticipated cost**

- **Wonthaggi to Inverloch shared path**
  - Option 1 – $5.5 million
  - Option 2 – VicRoads design and construction along Bass Highway – $5 million

- **Cowes-Rhyll Road shared path**
  - Stage one: Thompson Avenue to Coghlan Road (3.2km) – $1.63 million
  - Stage two: Coghlan Road to Rhyll (3.8km) – $1.88 million

- **Guy Road, Corinella shared path** – $2.51 million
  - Shovel ready

**Supporting strategies**

- Aspirational Network Pathways Plan 2016
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 – Growing Tourism
- Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28
- South East Transport Strategy
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria’s Business
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
Tertiary education investment
What is Council requesting?
Extend/reinstate the Federal Government Regional Study Hubs Funding Program in 2019.
Allocate $2 million towards establishment and operation of a Bass Coast Country Universities Centre in Wonthaggi.

Why?
The Bass Coast community has limited access to higher education and skills training. Bass Coast also experiences a shortfall in skilled workers. Bass Coast students are less likely to complete year 12, less likely to go to university and less likely to complete a degree they start at university compared to metropolitan students. Many of the obstacles relate to the need to relocate to pursue further studies. Providing a local education pathway would improve retention and participation, and support students at risk of poor learning outcomes to reach their potential and stay in education for better life opportunities. This also leads to the retention of skilled workers in our community and is a benefit to the local economy.

Council is seeking to establish a tertiary regional study hub and university centre located in Bass Coast. It would work with existing education providers and attract new opportunities and pathways to support the delivery of a range of courses and programs.

The model would deliver courses in mixed-mode, providing a blend of online curriculum, resources and activities together with face-to-face tutorials, laboratories and workshops. Council will continue working in partnership with Regional Development Victoria and Department of Education to develop this as a potential pilot program for Victoria.

Anticipated cost
$2 million to establish and operate over four years

Supporting strategies
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria’s Business
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
- Bass Coast Country Universities Centre Business Case 2018 (TBC)
Wonthaggi as a Regional Centre

Redevelopment of Bass Coast Aquatic Centre and key town centre projects
What is Council requesting?
Funding towards key regional town centre projects identified in the Wonthaggi Activity Centre Plan and the redevelopment of the aquatics facility in Wonthaggi.

Why?
Wonthaggi is the commercial hub of Bass Coast, servicing a large geographic area extending as far as Grantville and Phillip Island. Plan Melbourne identifies Wonthaggi as a regional centre with significant growth occurring in Wonthaggi North East. In the last 12 months Wonthaggi has secured commitments towards a new hospital, a new senior school campus and a new highball stadium. What is missing is a modern aquatics facility and town centre amenity upgrades.

Also, a revitalised town centre that enhances and promotes existing assets will encourage business investment and tourism growth. This will allow Wonthaggi to play its true role as a regional centre. Council has allocated $3 million of its own funds to improve town centre functionality, walkability and amenity.

The existing 40 year old aquatics facility is ageing, outdated and does not meet the functional demands of a regional aquatic and leisure facility. It is restricted in its ability to provide the community with programs to improve their health and wellbeing.

Anticipated cost
$5 million in funding towards key town centre projects identified in the Wonthaggi Activity Centre Plan
$30 million in funding towards redevelopment of aquatics facility in Wonthaggi

Supporting strategies
• Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
• Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria’s Business
• Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
• Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 'All Politics is Local'