# Our Bass Coast. Our Future.



# State Government Advocacy Priorities

**July 2021** 





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# Mayor's Message

The effects of COVID-19 hit our community hard. With our economy heavily reliant on tourism many businesses were forced to diversify and pivot to respond to a new world. And while Council has been there to support, we need investment to help grow the local tourism market. Our priorities take advantage of opportunities and present ways in which other levels of government can help us help ourselves so that we can recover and rebound stronger than ever before.

Our priorities also respond to our unprecedented population and economic growth. Since 2007 our population has increased by 21.6 per cent and every summer our population temporarily swells to over 80,000. We also welcome 3.4 million annual visitors. Projected population growth will see Bass Coast grow from an estimated population of 36,320 in 2021 to 46,429 by 2036.

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.

This anticipated growth brings challenges, but also many exciting opportunities. Significant challenges include seasonal visitor fluctuations, labour and skills shortages, key worker accommodation concerns, traffic congestion and transport linkages, global economic uncertainty, increasing environmental pressures including climate change, and increasing competition from other destinations.

We have the opportunity to drive regional tourism through the creation of flagship tourism infrastructure centred around, nature based tourism, recreation, arts and culture. These projects will provide local jobs and grow our visitor economy.



We will focus on ensuring Bass Coast is a place where our people thrive and a region people want to live. We will continue to tackle climate change, improve digital connectivity and work towards making sure your journey, whether on foot or by car or bike, is safer and less congested.

Council continues to invest time and funds into creating strategies that support future development. We are seeing significant investments, both publically and privately and continue to work closely with the State Government to advocate for our priorities, in a highly competitive regional funding environment.

Our community has been very clear. They have asked us to continue to strongly focus on advocating to the State Government on key priorities.

We are thrilled to see our advocacy work already paying off with the funding announcements for the Wonthaggi Hospital, new junior secondary campus at San Remo and most recently, funding for the Wonthaggi Activity Centre Plan. However, it is vital that we maintain our focus for our other priority projects, which are critical to the liveability of Bass Coast.

We look towards Our Future.

Cr Brett Tessari



### **About Bass Coast**

From surfing and cycling to wining and dining, and everything in between, Bass Coast provides the perfect balance of rural, residential and holiday lifestyles for all to enjoy – all with stunning backdrops of beaches, bushland and rolling hills.

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 in the south.

Bass Coast's main centres are Wonthaggi, Cowes, Inverloch, San Remo and Grantville. In addition, Bass Coast comprises a further 28 towns.

Bass Coast has over 35,000 permanent residents and our population more than doubles during the peak summer season. Our proximity to Melbourne makes it also very attractive to visitors and to people wanting to make a sea change.

Bass Coast is home to Phillip Island Nature Parks and boasts many beautiful beaches, unique nature reserves and many major events that attract more than 3.5 million visitors each year, such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix at the Phillip Island Circuit.

## **Snapshot**

36,320

Estimated residential population

Over 80,000

Population during peak visitor periods

865km2

Size of Bass Coast Shire

130km

Approximate distance from Melbourne









# Aquatics - Phillip Island and Wonthaggi

#### Bass Coast Aquatic and Leisure Centre - Wonthaggi

A new centrepiece for leisure activities for Wonthaggi and surrounding townships. The current facility is 45 years old and restricted in its ability to provide the community with programs to improve health and wellbeing, it does little in attracting increased membership, casual use, events, activities and competitions.

The proposed \$42 million Bass Coast Aquatics and Leisure Centre will feature a range of facilities and be capable of accommodating competitive swimming, leisure activities, general community use and major regional events.

Council seeks \$31.5 million towards construction.

#### **Phillip Island Aquatics Centre**

For more than two decades the community has lobbied for an aquatics facility to cater for the Phillip Island Community. Residents must commute long distances to participate in a number of aquatic and recreational activities. 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.

Council has purchased land in Cowes on the southwest corner of the intersection of Phillip Island and Ventnor Roads for the future home of the Phillip Island Aquatics and Recreation Precinct. The proposed \$46 million Centre will provide for anticipated growth and meet the recreation standards expected of a top tourist town.

Council seeks \$34.5 million towards construction.

- Bass Coast Aquatics Strategy 2015
- Active Bass Coast 2018
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan Tourism is Victoria's Business
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20







# **Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail**

The Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail will be a unique and valuable tourism asset that celebrates and promotes the global significance of the region's pre-historic heritage. Bass Coast has the most diverse range of polar dinosaurs in the world and coal reserves in Kilcunda and Wonthaggi were formed from the forests these creatures inhabited.

The Trail builds upon the ground-breaking work and passion of local community, traditional owners and palaeontologists over 40 years. It visibly expresses the sense of wonder, learning and stories in concert with the country that shapes them.

This iconic experience will traverse 40kms from San Remo to Inverloch featuring six creative art sites that link polar dinosaur fossils. These key sites will be fully accessible by car, bike or foot. Council seeks **\$6.4 million** towards the development of the art sites.

The Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail presents an ideal synergy for a museum/cultural centre to be developed in Inverloch alongside a sound and light installation linking science, Aboriginal culture history and the environment. Council seeks **\$600,000** for feasibility studies for the Museum/Cultural Centre and Sound and Light installation.

This leading tourism experience will entice local, interstate and international visitors and encourage extended visitation within the region. The Trail will educate residents and visitors about the embedded value and diversity found within fossils and pre-historic fauna in the region.

- Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-2020
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan Tourism is Victoria





In Bass Coast, climate change and severe weather are impacting our coastal communities and environments now.

#### **Erosion Control: \$1.86 million**

Council is seeking funding to complete urgent coastal erosion mitigation works for our coastal townships:

Inverloch - deliver on the findings of the regional Coastal Hazard assessment that is being undertaken as part of the Cape to Cape Resilience Project.

Cowes- to assist in installing eight timber groynes and a 300 metre rock seawall at Cowes East which was a recommendation of the Cowes East Foreshore Erosion Protection – Functional Design Report.

Kilcunda - deliver on the recommendations of the Kilcunda Foreshore Options Analysis.

#### **Vulnerable Communities Incentives: \$300,000**

Council seeks funding support to administer programs within our community to implement a Pilot 'Supporting Vulnerable Communities' Project. The Project through partnerships, will deliver:

- targeted financial and advisory services to vulnerable communities to responds to climate change impacts
- increase social connectedness to improve social resilience to climate change
- link finance for low cost, high impact housing improvements to reduce energy costs and increase comfort
- leverage available State or Federal Government assistance for housing upgrades
- linking vulnerable community members with existing Council and other social services and programs
- provide an evaluated program model for implementation across other local government areas to assist Victoria's most vulnerable community members.

#### **State Government Climate Policy and Programs**

Council calls on the State Government to:

- Update the Victorian Planning Provisions to include the Sustainable Subdivision Framework
- Fast-track the implementation of Plan Melbourne's Action 80 that seeks to review the Victorian planning and building systems to support environmentally sustainable development outcomes for new buildings to consider their energy, water and waste management performance
- Develop the Statement of Planning Policy to include a Carbon Positive Policy Domain
- Partner with Local Governments to develop Township Adaptation Plans

- Paris Agreement
- Local Government Act 2020
- Climate Change Act 2017
- Marine and Coastal Policy 2020
- Plan Melbourne 2017-50
- Sustainable Subdivision Framework, CASBE
- Bass Coast Planning Scheme
- Draft Statement of Planning Policy
- 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)
- Western Port Local Coastal Hazard Assessment





# Cowes Cultural and Community Centre

In 2022, Bass Coast will have two premier entertainment venues with the new Cowes Cultural and Community Centre set to complement the Wonthaggi Community Union Arts Centre. A vibrant and sustainable regional arts industry, that supports the arts and tourism industries which have been heavily impacted by the pandemic, will strengthen our community, generate jobs and provide further opportunities for social connection.

Annual funding assistance is sought to assist with professional touring product programming including theatre, live performance and visual arts, ensuring that our regional venues showcase high quality arts and cultural facilities in our programming. This programming support will provide attendees with access to a greater quantity, quality and diversity of arts events and activities which will contribute significantly to the cultural, social and economic development of our regional communities.

Opening in 2022, the \$20 million Cowes Cultural and Community Centre will include a library, theatre/cinema, gallery, café, community hall, meeting and gathering spaces. It will create an events destination, increase visitation and length of stay, and provide for a diverse range of community uses and cultural activities. It will cater to high projected population growth and address impacts of the pandemic.

The Wonthaggi Community Union Arts Centre is a multipurpose venue that attracts a wide range of Australian and international acts including comedy, circus, live performance and theatre productions as well as hosting films festivals and school holiday cinema.

With regional events and exhibitions proven to provide significant economic value, Bass Coast seeks funding to ensure the people living and visiting Bass Coast have access to high quality arts and cultural facilities in our programming schedule. This funding will elevate the visitor experience through the opportunity to present a range of new and valuable cultural events, increasing tourism expenditure and helping to address the severe negative impacts of the pandemic on the arts industry and our local economy.

Council seeks **annual funding of \$150,000 over the next three years** to support programming at the new Cowes Cultural and Community Centre (75%) and the Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre (25%).

- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Cowes Activity Centre Plan 2015
- Bass Coast Arts and Culture Strategy 2019-29
- Bass Coast Towards 2030
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Gippsland Regional Plan
- South East Melbourne Regional Plan





## **Decentralisation**

Wonthaggi is acknowledged in Plan Melbourne as one of seven Victorian Regional Centres. Council proposes that Wonthaggi would be an ideal location for a government agency or the development of a Gov Hub where staff could be co-located in one building, further reinforcing the State Government's commitment to building the economic resilience of Wonthaggi.

In addition, with Phillip Island the second most tourism reliant town in Australia behind Uluru, Council believes there is the opportunity to relocate the Visit Victoria office to Phillip Island.

Both of these opportunities would deliver sustainable public sector employment opportunities and career paths for local people first and foremost, whilst also attracting those living in Melbourne to Bass Coast.

Further to this and with work-from-home now a realistic option, Bass Coast is the ideal destination for skilled workers and their families. With renewed interest in regional locations, especially those within commuting distance of Melbourne, we seek organisational policies to support State Government employees who wish to live in Bass Coast and work from home or in a hybrid model.

Council seeks consideration of Bass Coast in future decentralisation decisions.

- Plan Melbourne
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Bass Coast Towards 2030
- Victoria's Regional Statement
- Gippsland Regional Plan 2015-20
- Wonthaggi Opportunity Unlocked





# Digital Connectivity and Telecommunications

Good digital connectivity is fundamental to attracting investment and tourism to the region and improving liveability for those that reside in Bass Coast. This is increasingly more important with the recent shift in thinking around remote working and the opportunities it presents post-COVID-19.

While the Gippsland Digital Regional Plan analysis offers a solid evidence-base and often indicates good telecommunications and digital connectivity coverage, we know from real world users that the 'lived experience' can be quite different. Newhaven College had to resort to setting up a radio signal to gain access from the Mornington Peninsula and the Phillip Island Nature Parks Koala Conservation Reserve was so restricted to internet access, they could not set up their office as intended.

Further, internationally acclaimed attractions in Bass Coast such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix and Phillip Island Penguin Parade have been identified as having major shortfall in supply and this is also seen across major tourist towns including Phillip Island, San Remo and Inverloch with usage spikes affecting supply. Businesses and vendors report interrupted connectivity, connections and reduced speed impacting their growth, sales and level of service. Existing services struggles to cope with the demand during peak seasons with an influx of tourists adding to the load.

Inadequate fixed line broadband and mobile coverage has been identified as a key issue as well as the provision of adequate business-grade NBN services in our townships. With the Bass Coast population expected to grow from an estimated 36,083 in 2021 to 46,429 by 2036 this will put increased strain on our networks.

Council is requesting that Bass Coast is prioritised for infrastructure upgrades to facilitate better higher speed connections that can handle usage spikes during visitor peak seasons. Areas such as tourism and hospitality, food and fibre, education, e-health and professional services will all benefit from better services. Further education in regional areas is also needed to ensure community is well-placed to maximise their digital connectivity.

- Gippsland Digital Plan 2019
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Council's Economic Development Strategy 2016-21
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 Growing Tourism
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 'All Politics is Local'





# Extractive Industries and Freight Transport

The extractive resources industry continues to grow rapidly in Bass Coast; as a critical supply point for sand supporting Melbourne's growth. With this growth comes increased pressures on our freight networks and local road routes. Council is eager to work in partnership with local industry and all levels of government, to ensure this growth is managed in a way that brings maximum value and minimum disruptions.

By 2050, neighbouring South Gippsland is forecast to be the largest supplier of sand to Greater Melbourne. The impact of congestion created by freight, alongside heavier and more frequent freight volumes, will impact on the liveability of our community.

The Victorian Government commissioned the Extractive Industries in South Gippsland Supply Chain Study 2018. This Study estimates that freight will grow steeply with demand for resources. The estimated truck journeys per day on local roads are estimated to increase from 607 vehicle movements a day in 2015 to 2586 movements per day in 2025 and 3940 in 2050. The estimated B-Double truck movements on local freight routes represent 5.4 vehicle movements a minute in a 12-hour working day.

**Council seeks funding to develop strategic plans**, analysis and investment towards recommendations from a study into the potential impact of extractive resources industries on Bass Coast. The study would recommend projects to offset the impact of the extractive resources industry and improve local amenity, infrastructure, environment and liveability in Bass Coast.

- Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources
- Gippsland Freight Strategy
- Wonthaggi Activity Centre Plan
- Extractive Industries in South Gippsland Supply Chain Study 2018 Victorian Government
- South East Metro Integrated Transport Group Freight Strategy





## Inverloch and San Remo Activity Centre Plans

Activity Centre Plans are required for each Centre to provide a long term shared vision and decision making framework to identify the type and scope of change projected within these Centres over time. These plans will address, land use, access and movement, built form and the public realm.

#### San Remo

The Activity Centre Plan for San Remo will focus on the commercial and foreshore areas on Marine Parade and will develop strategies to consolidate the centre, and expand the range of available services, in conjunction with improved access, amenity and parking facilities. Key issues the Activity Centre Plan will address includes:

- Enhancing San Remo's foreshore, already a big drawcard for visitors but which presently offers very little in the way of a cohesive and connected experience.
- Development of effective strategies to encourage the redevelopment of San Remo commercial town centre to improve design, integration with the foreshore and provide a wide variety of retail and civic type land uses.

#### **Inverloch**

The Activity Centre Plan for Inverloch will focus on the town centre around A'Beckett Street and Reilly Street and its connection to the foreshore reserve which includes 'The Glade' picnic ground and adjoining Wyeth-McNamara Park (Rainbow Park). Specifically, it will develop strategies to enhance the pedestrian experience in the town centre, improve safety and circulation, improve the amenity for outdoor dining and cafes, improve integration with The Glade and ensure development responds to and enhances the town centre's valued coastal setting.

Council seeks funding support of **\$400,000 towards the development** of Activity Centre Plans for San Remo and Inverloch.

- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Bass Coast Towards 2030
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Gippsland Regional Plan
- San Remo, Newhaven and Cape Woolamai Structure Plan, 2010
- Inverloch Design Framework, 2011
- Bass Coast Planning Scheme





# **Public Transport**

Transport into and around Bass Coast needs improvement to the number of services, connectivity and infrastructure. Improved transport options will increase accessibility to jobs and education and have a significant impact on the local community. These improvements will also ensure that the transport system can cope with anticipated growth in Bass Coast, in particular in the areas of population, tourism and freight. Bass Coast Shire has experienced a 20 per cent population growth in the past 10 years, with a further 28 per cent growth predicted by 2036, with the population growing to 46,429.

Rising traffic congestion is a concern in our major towns. The evidence suggests we have a car dependency problem. Traffic congestion is a symptom of a lack of viable alternatives to the car. Solving congestion can only be achieved by shifting a significant proportion of car trips to public transport.

There is a developed public transport network for Bass Coast Shire, which covers the main townships. However, it is infrequent and, in the case of the town buses, does not operate on weekends. Since the adoption of the Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study in 2014 minimal changes have occurred with regard to public transport. Timetables for all Public Transport Victoria (PTV) services in Bass Coast have generally not been updated since 2012, with some not updated since 2009. This indicates that Bass Coast has been a low priority area.

Enhancements to existing public transport services will reduce the region's private car dependency, resultant greenhouse gas emissions and significant congestion during peak periods. Council has declared a climate emergency and will work with the community towards achieving net-zero emissions over the next ten years. Better public transport services will help our community achieve this goal.

Improved and safe public transport infrastructure is also required throughout Bass Coast with non-existent or inadequate infrastructure at a number of bus stops throughout the Shire.

Council seeks a **review of service levels, infrastructure and connectivity** of the public transport network within Bass Coast.

- Regional Public Transport Strategy
- Gippsland Freight Strategy
- SEATS Priority Document
- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study





# Road Upgrades

#### **Shetland Heights Road - San Remo**

Shetland Heights Road is currently an unsealed road with no footpaths. This road provides the most direct access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles from the San Remo township to the new junior campus of Wonthaggi Secondary College currently under construction. The development of the junior campus fails to provide upgrades for either vehicles or pedestrians along Shetland Heights Road and the school will undoubtedly place additional burden on this road. Council is seeking funding to upgrade approximately 900 meters of road and construct a footpath to allow safe access to the school. This upgrade is estimated **at \$2.35 million.** 

#### Kilcunda

Within the next 20 years, the average daily traffic volume on the Bass Highway between Anderson and Inverloch is expected to exceed 19,000 and congestion will become a critical issue along the highway. Key issues identified Regional Roads Victoria at Kilcunda include a lack of crossing opportunities along the Bass Highway, increasing the safety risk for vulnerable road users as the highway divides the shops and cafes from the beach and caravan park. The lack of dedicated turning lane into the service lane and informal parking also present a hazard to highway traffic. Council seeks **funding of \$7.5 million allocated to Regional Roads Victoria** for the implementation of the pedestrian and intersection safety improvements in Kilcunda Township. This project is considered critical to Council and the local community.

#### San Remo

Back Beach Road and Bergin Grove in San Remo require improvements to tackle significant safety and access issues onto Phillip Island Road. Current access issues are anticipated to worsen. The Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 states that Phillip Island can expect an additional 4,300 visitors per day by 2035. Phillip Island is the second most visitor reliant economy in Australia behind Uluru.

Council seeks funding of **\$23 million allocated to Regional Roads Victoria** for the implementation of the Phillip Island Road transport infrastructure improvements in San Remo township at Back Beach Road intersection

- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 Growing Tourism
- Regional Public Transport Strategy
- Gippsland Freight Strategy





# Tourism Infrastructure – Bass Coast Tracks and Trails

Tracks and trails play a critical role in the health and wellbeing of a community. They provide connection, recreation and exploration for all and in Bass Coast, they also make a significant contribution to our visitor economy, providing links to key attractions and contributing to our unique eco-tourism.

Council has prioritised a series of tracks and trails requiring investment.

#### Inverloch to Wonthaggi

The construction of a 14km shared pathway linking Wonthaggi to Inverloch, completing a tourism trail that stretches from Cowes to Inverloch. Council seeks **\$5.5.million** for construction of this path.

#### Cowes to Rhyll – Partnering with Phillip Island Nature Parks

Completion of the off-road Cowes to Rhyll link between Oswin Roberts Reserve and the Rhyll Township, connecting popular walking trails. Council seeks **\$800,000** towards construction.

#### Cowes to Penguin Parade – Partnering with Phillip Island Nature Parks

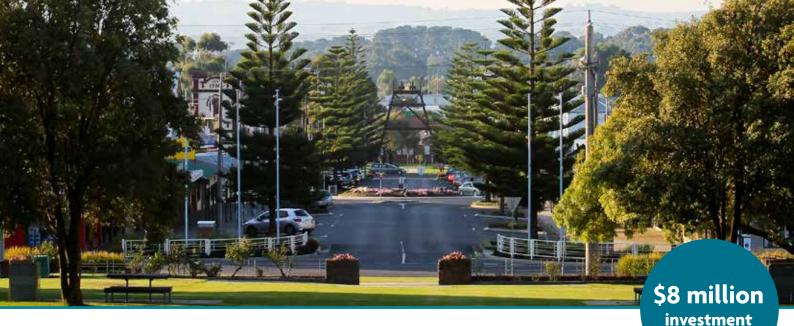
Creation of a shared pathway linking Cowes to the biggest tourism attraction within the region; Phillip Island Nature Parks Penguin Parade encouraging pedestrian and cycling activation. Council seeks **\$250,000** for strategic planning.

#### Signature Gippsland Trail: Bass Coast Rail Trail extension - Woolamai to Nyora

Strategic 24.3km link joining up with the Great Southern Rail Trail at Nyora, creating a super trail from Cowes all the way to Welshpool. The signature 'Gippsland Trail' would connect Gippsland's main towns and experiences, providing strong marketability and offering large commercial opportunities for trail and off-trail businesses. Council seeks **\$800,000** for strategic planning working in partnership with neighbouring councils.

- Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study
- Active Bass Coast 2018
- 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





# Wonthaggi Opportunity Unlocked

Wonthaggi is a vital regional centre for Bass Coast and Southern Gippsland. Experiencing continued population growth, Bass Coast is the fastest growing regional economy in Victoria, up 45.6 per cent since 2007, with continued forecast growth of 37 per cent by 2035. Unlocking Wonthaggi's full potential aligns with the objectives of key State and Federal planning strategies relating to regional regeneration, urban decentralisation, population growth and investment attraction.

Acknowledged in Plan Melbourne as one of seven Victorian Regional Centres able to forge greater economic and social links with Melbourne, Wonthaggi is primed for positive change that will support new jobs and attract continued investment in the town and region. To prepare for the growth Council, in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority has prepared a Precinct Structure Plan and Developer Contributions Plan for the Wonthaggi North-East Growth Area.

#### Wonthaggi North-East

Wonthaggi North-East will provide the structure for sustainable, housing growth, guiding investment in construction of homes for 12,000 new residents, community amenities and an expanded business and industry precinct. It will:

- Facilitate the development of 450 hectares of residential land allowing 4,400 residential plots
- Facilitate 70 hectares of commercial land creating 2940 jobs over the life of the plan
- Double the size of Wonthaggi
- Provide affordable housing options for Victorians with the average house price in Wonthaggi \$385,000 vs Melbourne's \$700,000

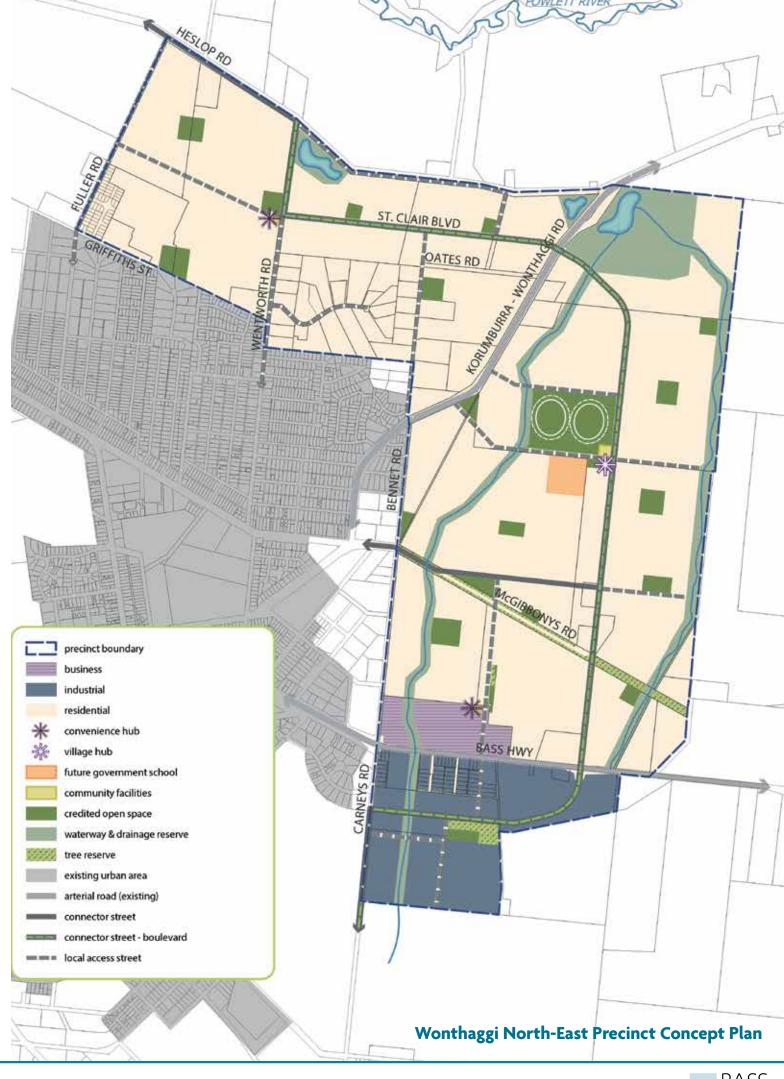
This land makes a significant contribution to Bass Coast in terms of maintaining a minimum 15 years of residential land supply and increasing vacant lots in Wonthaggi. Funding support is required to provide key infrastructure items (traffic and drainage) upfront to facilitate the development in a timely manner. In order to unlock the precinct, two large roundabouts will be required on the Bass Highway, in order to open up the only vacant commercially zoned land which is critical for continued economic development. The roundabouts will be required prior to Council securing sufficient developer contributions to fund the projects.

Council seeks \$8 million towards construction of roundabouts.

- Plan Melbourne
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Victoria's Regional Statement
- Gippsland Regional Plan 2015-20
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Wonthaggi Opportunity Unlocked







#### **Contact us**

Ms Ali Wastie Chief Executive Officer 0419 111 716 ali.wastie@basscoast.vic.gov.au

#### Mr Christian Stefani

Executive Manager Advocacy and Engagement 0402 976 640 christian.stefani@basscoast.vic.gov.au

Visit our website at www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/advocacy

Bass Coast Shire Council, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi | DX 34903 Wonthaggi PO Box 118, Wonthaggi VIC 3995 | 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211 or via the National Relay Service (for people with speech or hearing difficulties) on 13 36 77 | basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au www.basscoast.vic.gov.au

