

# COMMENTS BY COMMUNITY GROUPS ON THE PROPOSED BUNURONG COASTAL PARK – MAY 2019

## Introduction

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At the time of writing community groups in the Bass Coast area who care for and live near areas likely to be affected by the Victorian Government proposed Bunurong Coastal Park (including walking track and camping grounds) have little information about the proposal other than that the park will:

‘link the existing Bunurong Marine Park and Bunurong Coastal Reserve, Punchbowl Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve along 40 kilometres of coastline from San Remo to Inverloch. This will extend the George Bass Coastal Walk, making it possible to walk from San Remo to Inverloch.’ (Pre-election statement).

The statement referred to a budget of \$19.6 million to purchase land and ‘to build new campgrounds, paths to access beaches, walking paths and to undertake revegetation works’.

The following community groups have agreed to form a partnership to discuss the proposal and, where appropriate, present a shared response:

San Remo Foreshore Committee  
Kilcunda Community Association  
Friends of Wonthaggi Heathland  
Harmers Haven Residents and Ratepayers Group/Friends of Harmers Haven  
Cape Paterson Residents and Ratepayers Association  
Peregrines Walking Group  
South Gippsland Conservation Society

We applaud the Victorian State Government for aiming to consolidate and expand the protected parts of this coastline at the same time as providing opportunities for the public to be enjoying our natural environment. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the project.

## General principles to be considered in planning the project

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The group would like to see the following principles as part of the planning and implementation of the proposed project.

***That the community be engaged and consulted with as much as possible. This would mean that:***

- The community, both through community groups and through general consultative processes, be invited to have input into and be involved in the project from the initial planning stages through to final implementation;
- A community representative be included in the project team;
- That community groups consider how they can best contribute to the project outcomes.

***There should be minimal impact on the coastal environment. This would mean that:***

- Overall, there would be an increase in the area included in protected public parkland much of which should be revegetated;
- The track should not cut through narrow bands of rare remnant coastal vegetation;
- Existing coastal wildlife corridors should be preserved and where possible, extended;
- The track should be narrow, ie a walking track, not established as a fire break or vehicular track;

- Cycling, motorcycling and horse riding should not be permitted on the walking track;
- No fires be allowed in any part of the Park;
- No new camping grounds be established. There is already adequate camping accessible to walkers at San Remo, Kilcunda, Powlett River, Cape Paterson and Inverloch and a concern that creating new bush campgrounds will be a threat to the coast vegetation.

***There should be due consideration given to the amenity, privacy and security of local residents and their homes. This would mean that:***

- There should be a minimum distance between the track and houses;
- Consideration be given to where walkers might park if they intend to walk only a section of the walk.

### **Comments on specific parts of the 'walk'**

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#### **San Remo to Kilcunda**

- The San Remo Foreshore Committee have been actively working on a proposal to extend the existing coastal walking path from San Remo to the end of Potters Hill Rd and have made considerable progress. This work should be included within the Project.
- To get from Potters Hill Rd to the beginning of the George Bass Walk (Punch Bowl Rd) could be either along the coast or inland along an existing easement.
- The George Bass Walk is already established as a spectacular walk.

#### **Kilcunda to Wonthaggi/Harmers Haven/Inverloch**

- Our preferred option is to utilise the existing inland rail trail from Kilcunda to Wonthaggi and from Wonthaggi to Inverloch create a new inland path using road reserves. This latter path has been under discussion in the community for years and could be designed to support bicycle users as well as walkers.
- An alternative path could be made through from Kilcunda to the mouth of the Powlett River, behind the Desalination Plant joining the rail track (via Baxters Wetland) just before Wonthaggi.
- The Coastal Reserve from Kilcunda to Harmers Haven and then to Cape Paterson is vulnerable with fragile, complex dune systems, narrow remnant coastal Banksia woodland (a threatened, listed EVC) and coastal indigenous vegetation. The remnant coastal vegetation in the reserves adjacent to the Wonthaggi Heathland and Harmers Haven is the largest, least weed-infested and least fragmented remnant coastal vegetation in Bass Coast, east of the western waterline townships.
- The indigenous bushland along the coast between Cape Paterson and Inverloch is very narrow in parts (less than 6 metres in places). Clearing a path through these two areas would seriously impact on it; increasing fragmentation, loss of resilience and exposure to greater weed infestation.
- The road and shoulder between Cape Paterson and Inverloch is also narrow and has become more dangerous over time with increased traffic including cyclists and walkers. The road is under serious threat from incursion by the sea at it arrives in Inverloch and it is hard to justify spending public funds constructing a pathway in such a fragile area of the coast.