

BELLS BEACH

Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2015-25

UPDATED 2021

**SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGES THE WADAWURRUNG
PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE BELLS BEACH
SURFING RECREATION RESERVE.**



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Acknowledgement

Surf Coast Shire Council proudly acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve. The Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for Crown land within the reserve.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and intrinsic connection to their traditional lands.

We value the contribution their caring for Country makes to the land, coastlines, waterways and seascapes along the coast in Surf Coast Shire, including Bells Beach and its significant cultural heritage sites.

We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with the Wadawurrung People to understand their culture and connections to Country in the way we plan, manage and care for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge and land management practices with contemporary western ecological knowledge, we can deliver the vision to respect and protect the natural environment, indigenous heritage and surfing culture of Bells Beach.

We embrace the spirit of Reconciliation, working towards self-determination, equity of outcomes and an equal voice for Australia's First Nations People.

Acknowledgement in Wadawurrung mother tongue

*Nyatne bengadak baa bengordigek Kilik munya Wadawurrung maewan baa guli bagurk
Murrup Maewan bengordinganak Wadawurrung dja-yu
Baa Koomerringiny beek ngubitj yaluk baa warri baa narroo
Nyatne bengadak karringabil murroop Bunjil karringabil Wadawurrung dja
Nyatne bengadak mundigurk baa wurring-wurring mirriyu Kiliny n baa munya
Kuling wada-ngal*

Written by Corrina Eccles - Wadawurrung women in Wadawurrung Language

We acknowledge and thank the Wadawurrung ancestors and people

Our connection to Wadawurrung Country and continuing care of land waters, rivers and sea

We thank creator spirit Bunjil for creation of Wadawurrung country

We Thank Elders men and women past, today and future

Let us walk together



Mayor's foreword

The Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve is Wadawurrung Country and its story starts with the Wadawurrung People. For their ancestors, it was an important gathering place where many meals were shared, as evidenced by the middens and stone artefacts that have survived more than two centuries of European settlement.

Today it remains a vital meeting and storytelling place, connecting indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, locals and visitors alike, including through events such as the annual Rip Curl Pro and Indigenous Surfing Titles. Through these and other activities, the Wadawurrung People continue to welcome others to their country and to share their stories.

Surfers have also shared a strong connection to Bells Beach, first surfed in the 1930s. As its reputation as a world-class wave spread, uncontrolled access – especially during the 1970s and 1980s – threatened the integrity of its natural environment, degrading the heathland and clifftops.

The combined efforts of Council, local volunteer groups such as Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment (SANE), Torquay Boardriders Club and Surfrider, state government, our local surf industry and school children helped to turn this around, even as the status of Bells Beach across the global surfing community kept growing. In 1971, it was officially named the world's first surfing reserve while the inaugural Easter titles in 1962 continue today as the world's longest running international surfing event: the annual Rip Curl Pro.

The growing tourism appeal of Bells Beach, particularly over the past 20 years, also created additional pressures. Large tourist buses cramming car parks and bringing more people, diesel fumes and litter, for example, often sparked tensions between surfers and visitors, and threatened to ruin much of what makes the area such a special place.

Such pressures led Council, in 2014, to establish a task force to review and explore how the Bells Beach reserve could be better managed to relieve these tensions and preserve the unique environment. Headed by John Thwaites, the task force undertook extensive consultation involving all stakeholder groups. The message from most was loud and clear – “Keep Bells as it is: a natural place” – reflecting the importance of the natural environment to reserve users.

Both the terrestrial and marine environment at Bells Beach include significant values. Vegetation in the reserve includes at risk and relatively intact vegetation classes.

The coastal scrub, heathlands and forests are home to a diverse range of native fauna such as the state-listed Rufous Bristlebird and the Swamp Antechinus. The significance of the marine environment is recognised through the establishment of the Point Addis Marine National Park adjacent to the reserve.

In developing the previous coastal management plan adopted in 2015, the task force articulated – in its vision for the reserve – the need “to respect and protect the natural environment, Wadawurrung heritage and surfing culture of Bells Beach”. This provided the touchstone for various strategies, including those to manage tourism, events and other activities.

Since its adoption, the 2015 plan's implementation has been guided by the Bells Beach Committee, comprising community members and stakeholder representatives, including Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and Surfing Victoria. The committee's efforts so far are to be commended.

This 2019 update meets Victorian Government legislation requiring coastal management plans to be regularly updated. While the vision, guiding principles and management goals remain largely unchanged from 2015, its preparation has allowed for the introduction of some minor changes. Although some were necessitated by recent policy and legislative changes under the new *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, others will continue to help balance visitor and surfer access.

Thank you to everyone involved in reviewing and updating the plan, the Bells Beach Committee and others involved in realising our shared vision for this unique and special place. I am looking forward to watching Bells Beach continue to thrive under your guidance.

Cr Rose Hodge, Mayor
November 2019



Wadawurrung foreword

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that run from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the coast in the south, from Werribee River in the east to Painkalac Creek at Aireys Inlet. Our Country includes hills, rivers and grassy plains, creeks and coasts, as well as encompassing the major regional cities of Geelong and Ballarat.

Bells Beach is Wadawurrung Country, visited by Wadawurrung People for thousands of years and a significant living and gathering place – a place of connection. It remains a special place for the Wadawurrung People and our connection to this land continues to this day.

For thousands of generations, we have cared for and protected the land and waters of our Country, including its heritage, cultural values and traditions.

Our history and connection to this part of Wadawurrung Country is rich in stories, it holds the imprints of the many generations of our people living here in the middens. We held ceremonies, we gathered, hunted, traded and cared for Country with traditional fire burning to renew country. We lived a sustainable life on the land.

When we see Bunjil, our Creator Spirit, we know our waters and land are healthy. Bunjil created our landscape, our stories of all things living. He protects our country and connects us with our stories and cultural beliefs.

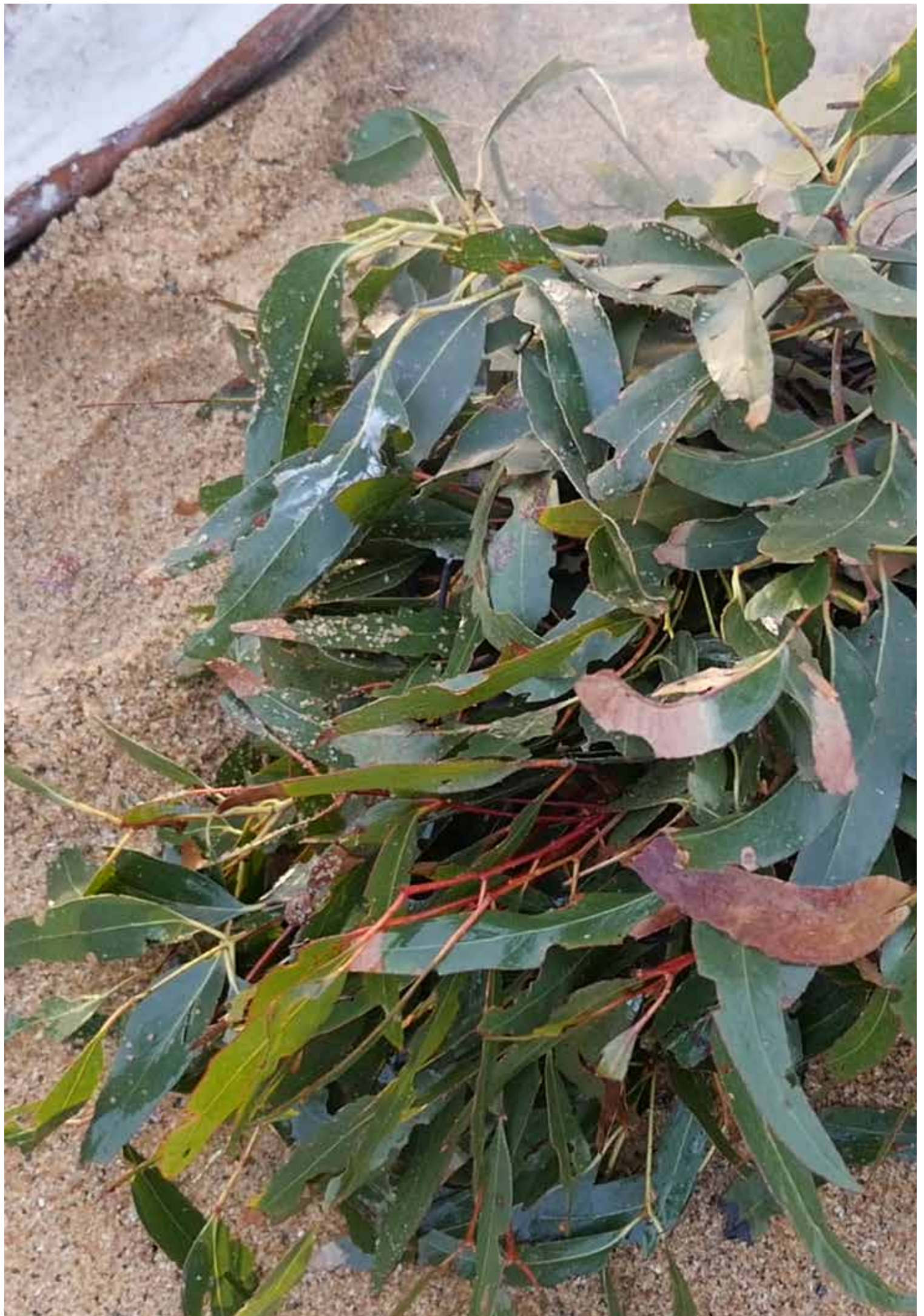
We have a responsibility to protect and we are continuing to protect the stories, values and significant cultural sites in Wadawurrung Country, including Bells Beach. To be able to do this today we need to work in partnership with others. We know that through these partnerships, the cultural importance of this site is valued, protected and monitored, and that this is clearly outlined in governance, law and policy.

That is why it is vital that we, as Traditional Owners, have a voice and decision making input into the management of Bells Beach. We believe that Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to seeing the best outcomes for Bells Beach and we look forward to playing a primary and active role in implementing this coastal and marine management plan.

Tourists and most locals have minimal knowledge of Wadawurrung history and culture in Wadawurrung Country. We know from the work we do that people want to know more about the First Peoples of the land. A Wadawurrung cultural heritage tour at Bells Beach in August 2018 attracted over 70 people. More can be done to acknowledge the Wadawurrung through signage, language, stories and history.

Implementing the cultural stories and values will inform people and enrich the experience of all who visit Bells Beach.

Reconciliation is about bringing all together. Let's walk together, alongside one another, so cultural heritage and values along the Great Ocean Road are known and shared with respect, understanding and accountability.



1. Executive summary

1.1 BACKGROUND

The 48-hectare Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve is located within a two-kilometre stretch of the Victorian coastline south-west of Torquay-Jan Juc. Due to its significant natural, Wadawurrung and cultural values, the reserve has become an internationally renowned surfing and tourist destination.

Surf Coast Shire Council is responsible for managing the reserve to the high-water mark, with the marine areas managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Parks Victoria.

During 2014 and 2015, Council engaged a community task force to develop a new shared vision for the reserve. The ensuing vision is “to respect and protect the natural environment, Wadawurrung heritage and surfing culture of Bells Beach”. Council adopted this new vision to guide its management practices until at least 2025. The vision, detailed management principles and actions for the first three years were included in the reserve’s new coastal management plan released in December 2015. At that time, the plan was due for a minor review and update in late 2018.

In 2018, the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* replaced the *Coastal Management Act 1995*. Consequently, coastal management plans are to be replaced with coastal and marine management plans with slightly different, broader requirements. The plans now have a life of five years rather than the three-year period under the previous legislation.

This 2019 coastal and marine management plan for the reserve is a minor update based on the new legislative requirements and the need to provide clear direction for works implementation. The vision, guiding principles, core values and management goals for the reserve remain largely unchanged from 2015. The previous *Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal Implementation Plan 2015-18* has been updated and is now incorporated within this plan in accordance with *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* requirements (see Section 9 – Implementation Plan).

1.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The establishment of the Bells Beach Committee four years ago reflected a key outcome of the consultation undertaken to inform the 2015 plan. At that time, consultation activities included an online forum attracting more than 1,000 responses, written submissions, public hearings and public workshops.

Setting up the committee was one of the 2015 plan’s priority actions. From the outset, the committee has been vital to providing ongoing community input to the plan’s implementation. The management of events, design of infrastructure upgrades and programming of works to reduce the impacts on reserve users have all been improved by the committee’s involvement and advice.

The committee’s input also helped shape consultation about the updated plan. This more recent consultation included:

- a survey in July and August 2018, which attracted 502 responses and captured general demographic and usage information along with specific feedback about several possible management actions
- a Wadawurrung cultural heritage tour attended by more than 70 people, and
- public exhibition of the draft updated plan during August and September 2019, with 379 survey responses and six submissions received.

The issues under consideration attracted a variety of views. A high proportion of survey respondents (92 per cent in 2018 and 94 per cent in 2019) rated their experience at the reserve as either excellent or very good. It is worth noting that 51 respondents participated in both surveys.

This updated plan considers the feedback from the original consultation in 2015 and the more recent consultation undertaken in 2018 and 2019. Like the 2015 plan, it focuses on keeping the reserve a natural and cultural place, protecting the significant cultural sites, flora and fauna, and addressing public safety, maintenance, legislative and policy requirements.



1.3 VISION, PRINCIPLES, CORE VALUES AND GOALS

The vision for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2015-25 is:

To respect and protect the natural environment, Wadawurrung heritage and surfing culture of Bells Beach.

Translated into Wadawurrung language the vision is:

Gobata gupma weeagon Wadawurrung wurring-wurring baap warrimurrup dja Bells

This translates as: ***To take care of all life, old ways of Wadawurrung and coastal spirit on Bells country***

At the same time, the plan also aligns with the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 vision of:

A healthy coast, appreciated by all, now and in the future.

Two guiding principles – **respect** and **protect** – and three core values – **natural environment, Wadawurrung heritage and surfing culture** – underpin the plan’s vision, goals, actions and outcomes.

The following goals provide a clear direction in relation to the reserve’s future management:

1. Protect and enhance ecological and geophysical values
2. Protect and promote Wadawurrung archaeological, social, cultural and historic values and sites
3. Recognise the Wadawurrung People’s long and ongoing association with the reserve, including the interconnections between land, sea, people and biodiversity
4. Recognise the unique surfing heritage and the importance of surfing, and continue to cater for surfing and surfing events, including the Rip Curl Pro
5. Continue to cater for activities consistent with the vision
6. Ensure risks are minimised, recognising that the reserve is a natural place and risk cannot be eliminated
7. Minimise buildings and infrastructure
8. Protect existing waterways and minimise the site impacts of stormwater runoff, and
9. Acknowledge the importance of the setting within a rural hinterland landscape.

1.4 ENACTING THE VISION



Natural environment

RESPECT

- Reserve retains its unique natural character through effective infrastructure management (eg minimal car parks, signs, buildings, fences)
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's environmental values without additional onsite interpretation
- Infrastructure fits its purpose, has a consistent look and feel, and is visually sensitive to its location
- Reserve retains its rural hinterland landscape setting
- Strong relationships are maintained with community environment groups

PROTECT

- Erosion is effectively managed through the application of best practice erosion protection principles and practices, noting erosion will occur as part of an ever changing coastal landscape
- Stormwater management is improved when consistent with other values such as aboriginal heritage protection
- Events are managed in a way that prevents negative impacts on the reserve's natural and built assets
- Remnant vegetation is protected, restored and improved via effective vegetation management



Wadawurrung Heritage

RESPECT

- Recognition of Wadawurrung connections and culture
- Strong relationships maintained with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and ongoing collaboration with Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (the Registered Aboriginal Party)
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's Wadawurrung heritage values and these are integrated into environmental values where appropriate (ie cultural landscape, bush tucker and resource use)

PROTECT

- Reserve's Wadawurrung values, including significant sites, are protected through involvement of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in best practice cultural and environmental management practices (eg cultural assessments, education and interpretation, Aboriginal Heritage Management Agreement)



Surfing culture

RESPECT

- Reserve recognised for its significance in Australia's surfing history and culture
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's cultural values in relation to surfing
- Young surfers have access to opportunities to develop their skills
- Surfers are aware of surfing etiquette and 'Spirit of Surfing' principles
- Strong relationships are maintained with the surfing community in reserve management

PROTECT

- Reserve's cultural values related to surfing, including artefacts such as the wave sculpture and 'Spirit of Surfing' plaque, are protected in line with Victorian Heritage Register requirements
- Surfing and other events are managed in a consistent way that minimises their impacts on the reserve's values and reserve users
- Revenue raised through licensing, event fees and other means is re-invested into protecting the reserve's values



A healthy coast appreciated by all, now and in the future

- The community understands the Coastal Management Plan's vision for the reserve and is actively involved in its realisation
- Infrastructure management enables people to safely use the reserve without damaging its natural and cultural assets
- Traffic management facilitates safe movement within the reserve's car parks and roads
- Event management focuses on activities appropriate to the reserve's core values (refer to Event Management Policy)
- Sensitive interpretation educates people about the reserve's history and values without additional impacts on the reserve itself
- Local law enforcement protects the reserve's core values without detracting from people's enjoyment

1.5 THE STRUCTURE AND LIFE OF THE PLAN

This coastal and marine management plan replaces the *Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal Management Plan 2015-25*. Given the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* now requires an implementation plan to be incorporated into any new coastal and marine management plan, this plan also replaces the *Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Implementation Plan 2015-18*, which accompanied the previous coastal management plan.

The 2019 plan retains the strategic 10-year vision, principles, core values and goals for the reserve, as originally articulated in the previous plan, and outlines the updated management actions for the next five years. The plan is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides background information on the reserve and the planning and consultation steps behind the development of the 2015 coastal management plan and this updated version.
- **Section 3** sets out the vision, guiding principles, core values and management goals for the reserve, crafted during the extensive community consultation process undertaken in 2015 by the Bells Beach Task Force.
- **Sections 4 to 8** summarise the reserve's core values and issues, and provide long-term strategic management directions to guide planning, decision-making and day-to-day management approaches. Section 4 also reflects new policy and legislative requirements under the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.
- **Section 9** is the implementation plan, describing the detailed management actions to be undertaken over the next five years.
- **Section 10** outlines how the implementation of this plan will be monitored.

Under the new *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, the plan has a five-year lifespan that starts from the day it is approved by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

In October 2018, the state government announced its intention to establish a dedicated statutory parks management authority to protect and manage coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road. Although this may eventually lead to changes in management responsibilities, this plan will continue to guide the reserve's management for the next five years.

1.6 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Council is continuing to work towards implementing the plan with the assistance of the Bells Beach Committee. Since Council adopted the 2015 plan, key actions implemented have included:

- new impartial chair and community advisory committee established and involved in reserve management
- review of tourist bus licences completed with an associated restriction on bus licences and reduction in commercial bus use
- development and implementation of an events policy for the reserve resulting in fewer disruptions to users
- the creation of a new viewing area on the former helipad site
- widening of the Surf Coast Walk through the Winkipop car park to improve safety
- support for regular community conservation initiatives at the reserve, and
- revegetation of bare areas experiencing erosion.

Guided by this plan, on an annual basis Council will:

- a) Review management action commitments and evaluate progress towards implementation.
- b) List outstanding items and barriers to timely implementation.
- c) Compile data on key indicators of reserve condition (eg geotechnical assessments, flora and fauna status, cultural value status).
- d) Provide regular update reports to Council and the Bells Beach Committee.

As part of Council's commitment to accountability and transparency, Council provides the Bells Beach Committee with the results of a formal review undertaken annually. If progress towards implementation is falling behind schedule, actions to address this are developed in consultation with the committee.

2 Introduction



2.1 ABOUT BELLS BEACH

The Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve is located within a two-kilometre stretch of coastline south-west of Torquay-Jan Juc in Victoria, Australia. It comprises 48 hectares of coastal heathland, limestone cliffs and sandy beaches, and borders the eastern edge of the Great Otway National Park.

Surf Coast Shire Council manages the reserve, which extends to the high-water mark. Below the high-water mark, the marine areas are managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Parks Victoria.

Located in Wadawurrung Country, the reserve is a culturally significant place embodying a deep and enduring connection to Country for local Wadawurrung People, with registered cultural heritage sites under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. The Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) is the Registered Aboriginal Party for the reserve.

The surf breaks are renowned for their quality, as evidenced by an association with the Rip Curl Pro Easter surf contest spanning more than 50 years. The reserve's car parks and walking tracks provide access to several high quality, consistent surf breaks and serve as important meeting places for surfers whenever conditions are favourable. The Torquay Boardriders Club,

formed in 1978, is the recognised 'home' competitive surfing club at Bells Beach.

The reserve is also valued for its walking paths, hang gliding launch site, viewing platforms and access to adjoining national parks.

The Bells Beach area has become an internationally renowned surfing and tourist destination. It is fiercely loved by regular local users and is a destination of choice for visitors with an interest in surfing or those seeking spectacular ocean views.

2.2 PURPOSE AND BASIS OF THIS PLAN

A coastal and marine management plan (CMMP) is a strategic document with the purpose of providing "... direction for the future local management of an area of marine and coastal Crown land" (*Marine and Coastal Act 2018*).

The CMMP for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve is built on an understanding of the reserve's values, potential threats to these values, and opportunities to enhance the coastal environment and how locals and visitors alike experience it. The local community's values and interests were an important consideration in the plan's development, along with state, national and international interests. This updated plan must show it

meets the following objectives and guiding principles of the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

Objectives

- To protect and enhance the marine and coastal environment.
- To promote the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems, communities and assets to climate change.
- To respect natural processes in planning for and managing current and future risks to people and assets from coastal hazards and climate change.
- To acknowledge Traditional Owner groups' knowledge, rights and aspirations for land and sea Country.
- To promote a diversity of experience in the marine and coastal environment.
- To promote the ecologically sustainable use and development of the marine and coastal environment and its resources in appropriate areas.
- To improve community, user group and industry stewardship and understanding of the marine and coastal environment.
- To engage with specified aboriginal parties, the community, user groups and industry in marine and coastal management and protection.
- To build scientific understanding of the marine and coastal environment.

Guiding principles

- Integrated coastal zone management
- Ecosystem-based management
- Ecologically sustainable development
- Evidence-based decision making
- Precautionary principle
- Proportionate and risk-based principle
- Adaptive management.

2.3 LAND STATUS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

As shown in Figure 1, the reserve is partly Crown land managed by Surf Coast Shire Council and partly Council freehold land. The reserve adjoins the Point Addis Marine National Park and the Great Otway National Park, both managed by Parks Victoria, and coastal Crown land to the north managed by the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee.

Bells Beach Road passes through the reserve. VicRoads manages Bells Beach Road up until the Southside car park entrance. Beyond this point, Council manages the road.

The Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) is both a representative organisation through which Wadawurrung Traditional Owners care for their Country and culture, and a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) with responsibilities, under state aboriginal cultural heritage legislation, for managing cultural heritage on Crown land within their Country.

A Wadawurrung Traditional Owner was a member of the taskforce that developed the vision for the reserve and the coastal management plan in 2015

Wadawurrung has a Traditional Owner representative on the Bells Beach Committee, which advises Council on this plan's implementation. Wadawurrung People are involved in many activities within the reserve and the corporation advises Council on any works beyond routine maintenance.







At the time of drafting this coastal and marine management plan, the Wadawurrung were finalising the Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan 2019-2024. The Healthy Country Plan will incorporate Wadawurrung People's goals, actions and strategies for looking after and managing Wadawurrung coastal and sea Country, with recommendations for specific culturally important places, including Bells Beach.

Into the future, in 2018 the state government committed to establishing the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to protect and manage coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road from Torquay to Allansford. The new authority is expected to be established by November 2020.

What this means for the management of the reserve will be determined over the next 12 months. Regardless of who is the designated manager for the reserve, this plan will guide management for the next five years.

Figure 1: Bells Beach land status and management responsibility.



-  Surf Coast Shire managed Crown land
-  Surf Coast Shire freehold land
-  Great Ocean Road Coast Committee managed Crown land
-  Parks Victoria managed Point Addis Marine National Park
-  Parks Victoria managed Great Otway National Park
-  Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning managed Crown land



2.4 THE PLANNING AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

The process of developing this plan started in 2013 with the appointment of an independent task force to advise Council on engaging the community in developing a vision for the reserve's future management.

Through an extensive community engagement process – involving an online forum, written submissions and public hearing process – more than 1,000 people provided ideas and input, which helped the task force develop a draft vision. This was released for further public comment before being adopted by Council in September 2014.

A series of workshops in October and November 2014 provided additional opportunities for the community to be involved in detailed discussions around the key issues to be addressed in the 2015 coastal management plan. The outcomes of these discussions helped shape the overarching management goals, outcomes and

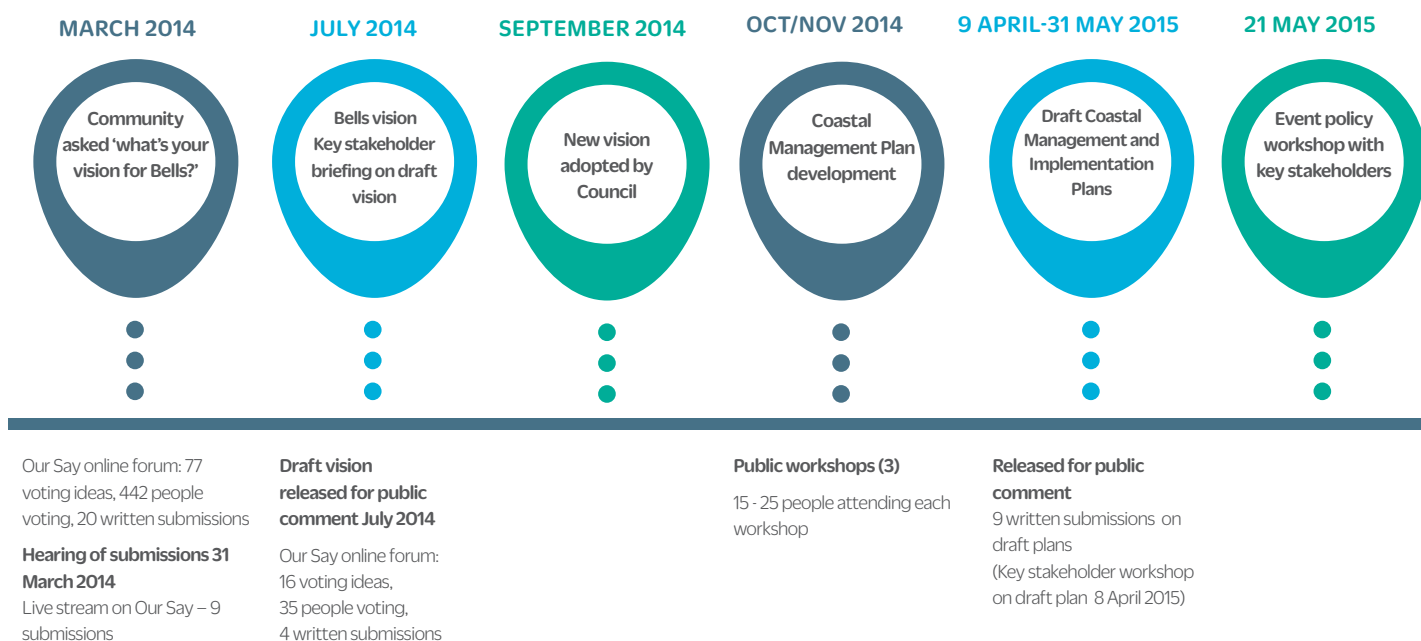
actions articulated in the 2015 coastal management and implementation plans. Each workshop was attended by between 15 and 25 people, with some locals able to attend all three workshops.

Further consultation occurred following the release of the draft plan, including two additional workshops, an open house session at the Australian National Surfing Museum and a public hearing of submissions.

Council then made further amendments before adopting the final plan in October 2015. Since then, the Bells Beach Committee has provided community input on an ongoing basis.

Following three years of implementation, the new *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* required Council to undertake a minor review as the basis for updating the plan to formalise management arrangements for the next five years. This would not entail any changes to the plan's existing vision, guiding principles, core values and management goals.

Figure 2: Bells Beach Visioning and Coastal and Marine Management Plan community engagement



Reflecting the more limited scope of the 2019 review, community consultation was targeted, with feedback sought on specific management actions. The Bells Beach Committee provided advice on the design of the consultation process, which sought to hear directly from as many reserve users as possible and included the opportunity for 'in person' feedback at the reserve.

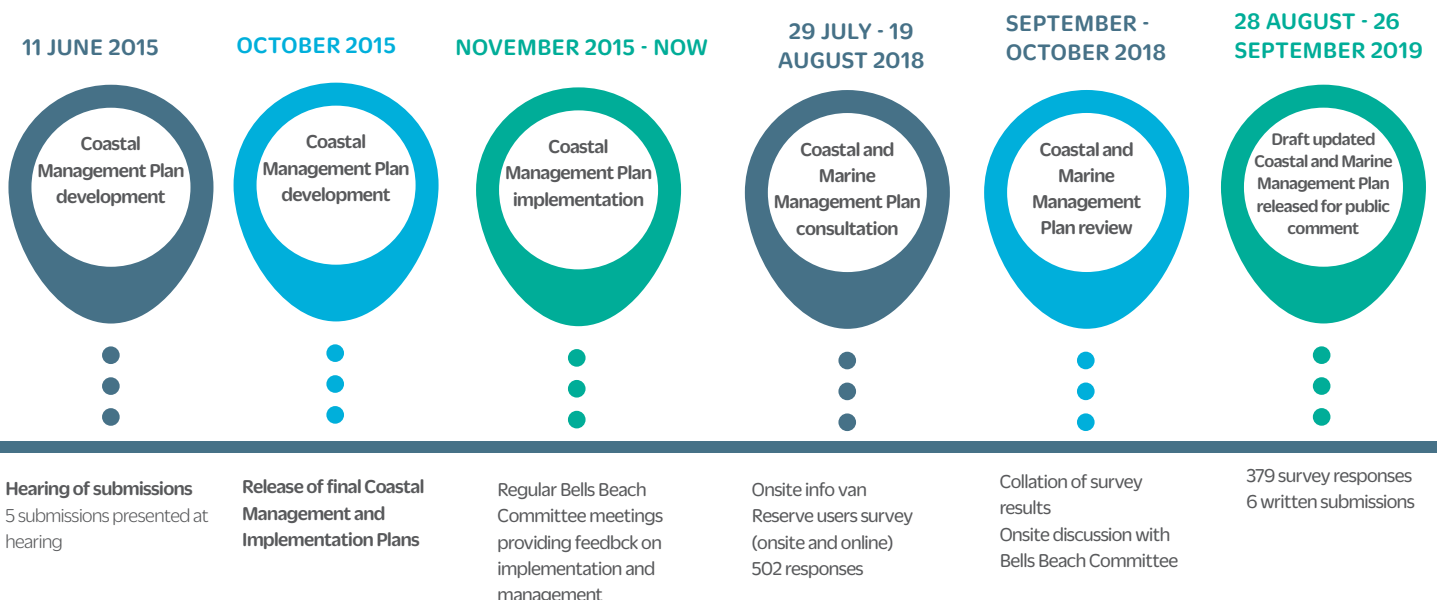
A survey in July and August 2018 attracted 502 responses and captured general demographic and usage information along with specific feedback about several possible management actions. More than 70 people attended a Wadawurrung cultural heritage tour staged as part of the consultation. During August and September 2019, the draft updated plan was placed on public exhibition and received 379 survey responses and six submissions.

The issues under consideration attracted a variety of views. A high proportion of respondents (92 per cent in 2018 and 94 per cent in 2019) rated their experience at

the reserve as either excellent or very good. It is worth noting that 51 respondents participated in both surveys. The full consultation results are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

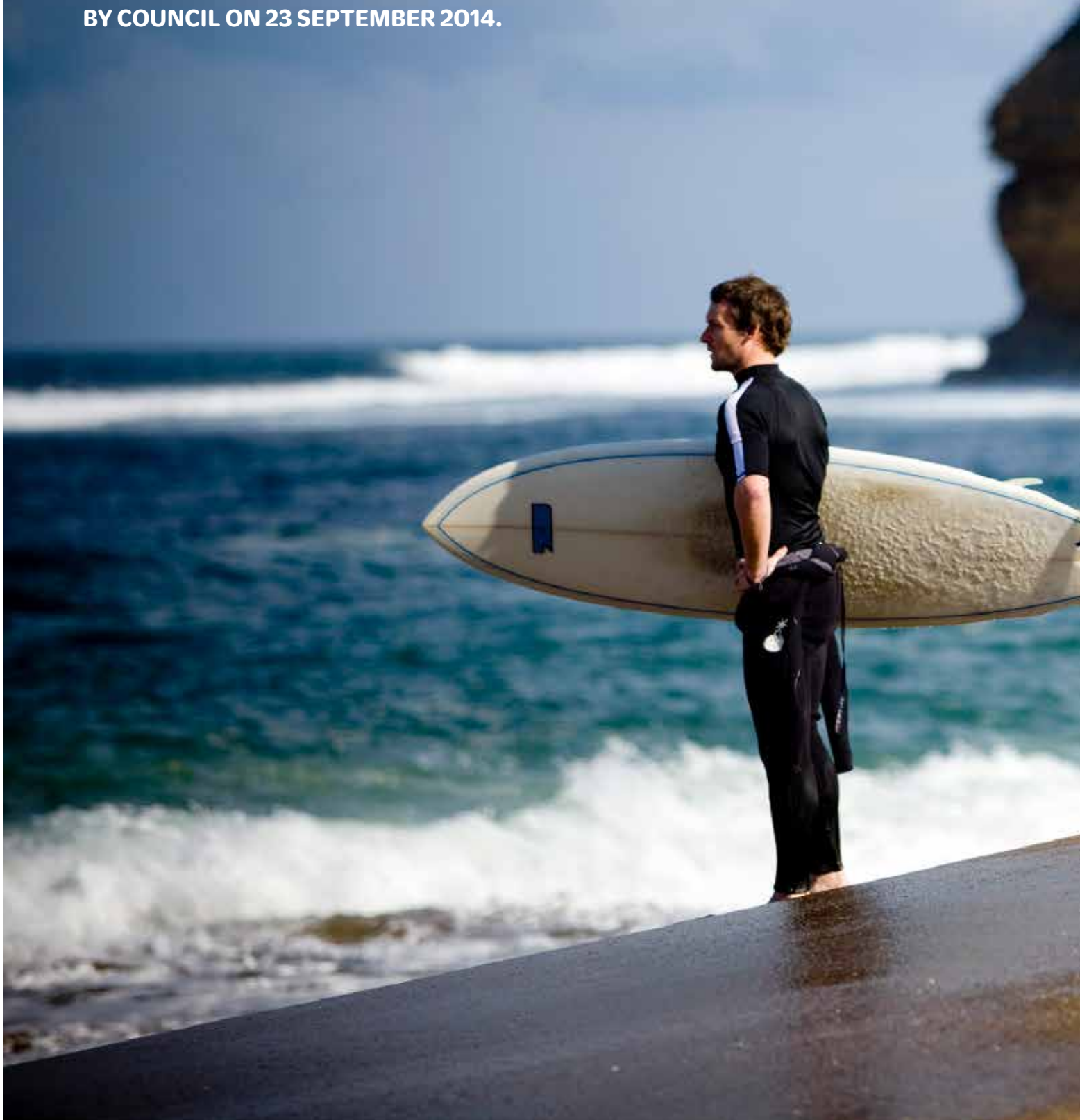
This updated plan retains the vision, guiding principles and goals articulated in the 2015 plan, and aligns with the new legislative and policy framework pertaining to marine and coastal management in Victoria. Updated sections also consider feedback from the original consultation in 2015 and from the more recent process during 2018 and 2019.

As with the 2015 version, this plan focuses on keeping the reserve a natural and cultural place, protecting the significant cultural sites, flora and fauna, and addressing public safety, maintenance, legislative and policy requirements. During both plans' consultation processes, it was acknowledged that protecting and maintaining the reserve's values doesn't mean doing nothing – active and responsive management is required.



3. The vision for Bells Beach

THE VISION REPRESENTS A KEY OUTCOME OF THE TASK FORCE'S WORK AND REFLECTS MAJOR THEMES EMERGING THROUGH THE INITIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS. IT WAS ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2014.



TO RESPECT AND PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, WADAWURRUNG HERITAGE AND SURFING CULTURE OF BELLS BEACH.

Translated into Wadawurring language the vision is:

GOBATA GUPMA WEEAGON WADAWURRUNG WURRING- WURRING BAAP WARRIMURRUP DJA BELLS

This translates as: *To take care of all life, old ways of Wadawurring and coastal spirit on Bells country.*

This statement provided the foundation for defining the plan's guiding principles and core values, and for articulating its overarching management goals and outcomes. As the plan must also align with the *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014*, this plan also identifies a series of outcomes related to the strategy's vision of:

The vision for Victoria's coast

A healthy coast, appreciated by all, now and in the future.

3.1 PRINCIPLES AND CORE VALUES

The vision statement for Bells Beach encapsulates:

- two **guiding principles**: respect and protect, and
- three **core values**: natural environment, Wadawurring heritage and surfing culture.

Table 1 shows how these will be enacted through the plan's strategic statements and management actions.

3.2 MANAGEMENT GOALS

The management goals from the 2015 coastal management plan remain as:

1. Protect and enhance ecological and geophysical values
2. Protect and promote Wadawurring archaeological, social, cultural and historic values and sites
3. Recognise the Wadawurring People's long and ongoing association with the reserve, including the interconnections between land, sea, people and biodiversity
4. Recognise the unique surfing heritage and the importance of surfing, and continue to cater for surfing and surfing events, including the Rip Curl Pro
5. Continue to cater for activities consistent with the vision
6. Ensure risks are minimised, recognising that the reserve is a natural place and risk cannot be eliminated
7. Minimise buildings and infrastructure
8. Protect existing waterways and minimise the site impacts of stormwater runoff, and
9. Acknowledge the importance of the setting within a rural hinterland landscape.

3.3 ENACTING THE VISION

The following, which remains the same as in the 2015 plan, provides an overview of the links between the vision (as expressed here in the principles and core values) and the plan's strategic statements and management actions.

Table 1: Principles, values and outcomes



Natural environment

RESPECT

- Reserve retains its unique natural character through effective infrastructure management (eg minimal car parks, signs, buildings, fences)
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's environmental values without additional onsite interpretation
- Infrastructure fits its purpose, has a consistent look and feel, and is visually sensitive to its location
- Reserve retains its rural hinterland landscape setting
- Strong relationships are maintained with community environment groups

PROTECT

- Erosion is effectively managed through the application of best practice erosion protection principles and practices, noting erosion will occur as part of an ever changing coastal landscape
- Stormwater management is improved when consistent with other values such as aboriginal heritage protection
- Events are managed in a way that prevents negative impacts on the reserve's natural and built assets
- Remnant vegetation is protected, restored and improved via effective vegetation management



Wadawurrung Heritage

RESPECT

- Recognition of Wadawurrung connections and culture
- Strong relationships maintained with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and ongoing collaboration with Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (the Registered Aboriginal Party)
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's Wadawurrung heritage values and these are integrated into environmental values where appropriate (ie cultural landscape, bush tucker and resource use)

PROTECT

- Reserve's Wadawurrung values, including significant sites, are protected through involvement of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in best practice cultural and environmental management practices (eg cultural assessments, education and interpretation, Aboriginal Heritage Management Agreement)



Surfing culture

RESPECT

- Reserve recognised for its significance in Australia's surfing history and culture
- Visitors are informed about the reserve's cultural values in relation to surfing
- Young surfers have access to opportunities to develop their skills
- Surfers are aware of surfing etiquette and 'Spirit of Surfing' principles
- Strong relationships are maintained with the surfing community in reserve management

PROTECT

- Reserve's cultural values related to surfing, including artefacts such as the wave sculpture and 'Spirit of Surfing' plaque, are protected in line with Victorian Heritage Register requirements
- Surfing and other events are managed in a consistent way that minimises their impacts on the reserve's values and reserve users
- Revenue raised through licensing, event fees and other means is re-invested into protecting the reserve's values



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- The community understands the Coastal Management Plan's vision for the reserve and is actively involved in its realisation
- Infrastructure management enables people to safely use the reserve without damaging its natural and cultural assets
- Traffic management facilitates safe movement within the reserve's car parks and roads
- Event management focuses on activities appropriate to the reserve's core values (refer to Event Management Policy)
- Sensitive interpretation educates people about the reserve's history and values without additional impacts on the reserve itself
- Local law enforcement protects the reserve's core values without detracting from people's enjoyment

4. Strategic actions to protect and respect the natural environment



The beaches, rocky cliffs and heathland at Bells Beach are part of Victoria's coastal interface ecosystem, where terrestrial and marine life and non-living components – such as air, rocks and water – interact and function together. The system is dynamic with natural forces and human pressures contributing to ongoing change.

Following the completion of baseline landslide risk assessments in 2006 and 2007, the reserve was zoned in relation to the nature of the slope stability hazards present. This led to many changes to reduce risk and improve the resilience of natural systems and important infrastructure, including:

- beach access pathways realigned and changed from gravel to raised timber stairs
- the Button lookout shifted further back from the cliff edge
- stormwater management enhanced with further improvements planned
- ongoing planting works to reduce erosion
- fencing installed to keep people within stable areas
- signage to alert users to unstable cliff edges and overhanging cliffs.

Ongoing work is needed to manage risks and hazards levels at the reserve.

Responding further to the need to collect baseline information and to improve monitoring, 3D imagery of the entire reserve was captured in 2016. This has enabled assessment of difficult-to-access areas and will help with monitoring rates of change. There is also the potential to use the flyover images to better inform users of the hazardous nature of unstable cliffs in the reserve.

Climate change impacts are likely to drive future changes. According to the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee's *Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Study* (SKM, 2012), different inundation patterns, storm erosion and beach recession will place increasing pressures on the reserve's cliffs and dunes. Surf breaks are also likely to experience changes, with some breaks predicted to become less reliable.

The structural integrity of all staircases and lookouts was assessed in July 2018, with the remaining life of these structures estimated at between five and 15 years. Replacement is not likely to be required during the life of this plan, but maintenance materials and schedules are important as they impact overall infrastructure life.

Community and industry involvement in protecting and managing natural values is ongoing and supported by Council. Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment (SANE) hold regular working bees in the reserve while Rip Curl employees have staged part of their annual Planet Day works at Bells Beach each year since 2000. Environmental works include weeding, planting, rubbish collection and erosion control.

4.1 COASTAL AND MARINE VALUES

On the land

Aerial photographs dating from 1947 show much of the reserve's vegetation has been affected by land clearing for agriculture, beach access, parking, camping, event management and other human activities.

This was first noted as a concern during the late 1960s, which marked the start of ongoing rehabilitation and improvement works. In 1971 for example, the Australian Surfriders' Association required Conservation Contest competitors to plant a tree to obtain entry.

Since forming in 1988, SANE has continued to work voluntarily to preserve the reserve's natural values, helping to turn a serious degradation issue into an environmental success story. SANE is aided by Rip Curl employees who spend two days each year undertaking environmental works in the reserve. The Surf Coast branch of the Surfrider Foundation, formed in 1996, also holds an annual clean-up day.

Beyond the main car park area, the reserve supports relatively intact vegetation belonging to a mix of ecological vegetation classes. Coastal Alkaline Scrub (endangered) including the Coastal Moonah Woodland community, Coastal Headland Scrub and Clay Heathland (both vulnerable) occur mainly on the clifftops on the southern side of Bells Beach Road.

North of the road, Shrubby Dry Forest (least concern) dominates with this community including the nationally significant Glenelg Pomaderris. Recent investigations by botanist Geoff Carr found this vegetation type may grade further inland to an undescribed vegetation community he called Red Ironbark-Moonah Scrub or Low Open Forest.

The vegetation is home to the state-listed Rufous Bristlebird (vulnerable) and Swamp Antechinus (near-threatened), along with a diverse range of other native fauna, such as the Sugar Glider, Echidna, Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-lipped Snake and Gould's Wattlebird. Maintaining the vegetation in good condition ensures that it can provide quality habitat for local fauna.

Weeds are an ongoing threat to the quality of the reserve's remnant vegetation. High-threat weeds include Boneseed, Serrated Tussock, Chilean Needle-grass, African Weed-orchid and a wide variety of woody weeds, as documented in the *Integrated Vegetation Management Plan for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve 2009*. This plan provides more information on the biodiversity values and guides vegetation management activities within the reserve.

Approaching the reserve from any direction offers sweeping views of the rural hinterland, featuring farm paddocks with clumps of trees and mobs of grazing kangaroos set against the ocean in the background.

This landscape creates a sense of space around the reserve while providing a transition to the Bells Beach and Great Otway National Park landscapes. Its importance to the reserve itself is recognised in the *Surf Coast Planning Scheme*. Protection of the Bells Beach hinterland was supported and clarified by Amendment C121 to the planning scheme in early 2018.

In the ocean

While Council does not directly manage the marine areas, activities, works and visitors within the reserve interact with the marine environment and potentially have marine impacts. The plan's goals and actions reflect this.

Council works with adjoining land managers on an ongoing basis. Important areas where Council can positively support management of the marine environment include advisory and regulatory signage, enforcement of local laws such as dogs on leash, containment of litter, stormwater treatment and event management.

The significance of offshore areas is recognised by their inclusion in the Point Addis Marine National Park. The park was declared to give enhanced protection to the wide sandy beaches (including the Bells Beach intertidal zone), rock platforms and small limestone reefs occurring in the area. The subtidal waters are known for their rhodolith beds (aggregations of coralline red algae), coloured sponge gardens, and a high diversity of invertebrate and fish species.

Further information on the marine park can be found in the *Point Addis Marine National Park, Point Danger Marine Sanctuary and Eagle Rock Marine Sanctuary Management Plan* (Parks Victoria, 2005). This plan recognises the iconic importance of Bells Beach, as evidenced in one of its management directions: "Bells Beach will remain a surfing icon, protected and accessible for recreational and competitive surfers".

4.2 ISSUES RAISED DURING PREPARATION OF THE 2015 PLAN

The reserve's natural environment is widely recognised as its most significant value, as evidenced by the high number of people expressing support for keeping "Bells as it is... a natural place".

Concerns about negative impacts of infrastructure development – existing and potential – attracted the highest number of comments during consultation on the coastal management plan in 2014-15. Most of the existing infrastructure exists to manage the general use of the reserve and ensure minimal damage to its natural assets.

An earlier coastal management plan developed in 2010 proposed various infrastructure improvements, including a second public toilet block in Winkipop car park, new showers and onsite interpretation. There was little or no support for these actions in 2015.

Stormwater management remained an improvement opportunity despite recent advances (eg connecting the existing toilet block to the town sewer system, installing litter traps). These were recognised as positive steps forward with further improvement work supported (eg updated kerbing following water-sensitive urban design principles).

Other improvement opportunities included signs (number and diversity with many using styles, colours and materials at odds with the coastal location), memorial

plaques and car parking. Different car parking options were considered without attracting any clear support for major changes.

Maintaining current viewing areas and stabilising and formalising, in a low-key manner, the former helicopter landing area attracted general support (completed in 2016). The condition of the toilets, while cleaner than previously, remains an ongoing concern.

The issue of protecting privately owned rural hinterland was also discussed during the 2014 and 2015 workshops. The 2018 planning scheme amendment has helped to strengthen references to the scenic, environmental and cultural values of the Bells Beach hinterland.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).



4.3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

Strategic management actions for natural environment values remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 2. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 2: Strategic actions to respect and protect natural values

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
RESPECT		
Reserve retains its unique natural character through effective infrastructure management (eg minimal car parks, signs, buildings, fences)	a) Maintain infrastructure for public safety purposes and to manage visitation impacts (eg ensure people keep to pathways) b) Retain the existing car park footprint	Community concerns about negative infrastructure impacts on reserve's natural character and a desire to "leave Bells the way it is"
Visitors are informed about the reserve's environmental values without additional onsite interpretation	c) Explore and develop options for making information about the reserve's terrestrial and marine ecosystems available onsite via new technologies (eg phone apps, QR scanning) and at suitable offsite locations (eg Australian National Surfing Museum)	Strong community desire for no new onsite interpretation
Infrastructure fits its purpose and is visually sensitive to its location (eg signs have a consistent 'look and feel')	d) Use materials and colours sympathetic to the reserve (eg earthy tones) and natural materials (eg timber and iron) where possible	Community concerns about the visual impacts of essential infrastructure
Reserve retains its rural hinterland landscape setting	e) Support protection of the Bells Beach hinterland through planning scheme processes	Concerns about protecting the reserve's rural hinterland landscape
Strong relationships are maintained with community environment groups and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners	f) Support community weeding and revegetation activities by groups such as SANE and environmental activities such as Rip Curl Planet Day and Clean Up Australia Day	Concerns about the condition of native vegetation
PROTECT		
Erosion is effectively managed through the application of best practice erosion protection principles and practices, noting some erosion will occur as part of an ever-changing coastal landscape	g) Continue to undertake annual geotechnical inspections to assist in understanding erosion issues and public safety management risks, and consider how climate change may impact the reserve and management decisions h) Undertake additional geotechnical assessments, if considered prudent after significant weather events	Ongoing concerns about natural erosion
Stormwater management is improved when consistent with other values such as indigenous heritage protection	i) Undertake further stormwater management works in conjunction with other protection measures (eg Wadawurrung heritage protection)	Ongoing concerns about stormwater management impacts
Events are managed in a way that prevents negative impacts on the reserve's natural, cultural and built assets	j) Ensure event management plans for approved events in the reserve are consistent with the environmental outcomes expressed in the coastal and marine management plan	Community concerns about the impacts of major events (eg Rip Curl Pro)
Remnant vegetation is protected, restored and improved via effective vegetation management	k) Continue to implement the Integrated Vegetation Management Plan for the <i>Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve 2009</i> l) Ensure infrastructure maintenance, event management and public use is managed to provide for protection and enhancement of the condition of native vegetation within the reserve m) Ensure reserve management is consistent with <i>Parks Victoria's Point Addis Marine National Park, Point Danger Marine Sanctuary and Eagle Rock Marine Sanctuary Management Plan 2005</i> n) Improve knowledge of flora and fauna occurring within the reserve	Recognised need to preserve and restore reserve's remnant vegetation

5 Strategic actions to protect and respect Wadawurrung cultural heritage



5.1 WADAWURRUNG CULTURAL HERITAGE

The reserve is on Wadawurrung Country and is a significant cultural landscape with Wadawurrung living and gathering places, as evidenced by the many documented Wadawurrung cultural values, stories and activities.

The midden sites along Bells Beach are the footprints left by past generations of Wadawurrung ancestors camping, living and cooking. The Coastal Moonah holds traditional stories that teach this and future Wadawurrung generations what happens if cultural practices aren't maintained. Bells Beach is full of important bushfoods and resources and is home for Bunjil, the Wadawurrung People's creator spirit.

Knowledge and stories continue to be strengthened and understood through new investigative work and this history is being passed on through Wadawurrung involvement in events and management of the reserve. There is an approved *Cultural Heritage Management Plan* (No. 10062) for the reserve, covering activities in the main visitor use area and providing management guidance.

Under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) is the Registered Aboriginal Party for this area, with its

members involved in cultural education, planning for and implementing works in the reserve. There are strong connections between Wadawurrung People and surfing. The National Indigenous Surfing Titles are held in the reserve annually and an ongoing relationship exists with the staging of the Rip Curl Pro.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and associated regulations guide the protection of cultural values and places at Bells Beach, and officially recognise and support Traditional Owners' connection with and care for their Country.

The Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan 2019-2024 is being developed by the Traditional Owners to map out a collective dream and direction for the future of Wadawurrung Country. The plan will guide how and who Wadawurrung People work with to look after their Country to realise the aspirations most important to them as Traditional Owners.

Climate change and accompanying sea level rise is likely to present challenges to the management of Wadawurrung sites in the reserve such as the midden.

Corporation members provided advice and input to many aspects of the development of the original plan and have provided input into this review and update.



Image: 2019 Rip Curl Pro Welcome to country, WSL

5.2 ISSUES RAISED DURING PREPARATION OF THE 2015 PLAN

Acknowledging, respecting and protecting the reserve's Wadawurrung heritage values emerged as a very strong theme during the community consultation phases in 2014 and 2015.

Bells Beach is an old place that has seen many changes. Its status as a surf break, for example, only emerged several decades ago and its landscape will change again in the future. For Wadawurrung People, it is important that their long history with the reserve continues to be recognised and respected.

The reserve's natural and indigenous values must be nurtured, protected and managed in a way that ensures compatible use and enjoyment by all people. Although Wadawurrung People appreciate surfers' love for Bells Beach, they are clear about the reserve being for everyone's enjoyment and the need for all users to respect the area.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

5.3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – WADAWURRUNG HERITAGE ISSUES

Strategic management actions for Wadawurrung heritage values are shown in Table 3. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 3: Strategic actions to respect and protect Wadawurrung heritage values

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
RESPECT		
Recognition of Wadawurrung connections and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continually seek advice from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on reserve management b) Advise Wadawurrung Traditional Owners of any issues (eg damage or erosion) to cultural heritage sites in the reserve 	Strong desire to respect and honour Wadawurrung People's long association with the reserve
<p>Strong relationships maintained with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and ongoing collaboration with Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (the Registered Aboriginal Party)</p> <p>Visitors are informed about the reserve's Wadawurrung heritage values and these are integrated into environmental values where appropriate (ie cultural landscape, bush tucker and resource use)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to develop and tell the Bells Beach story in relation to its cultural heritage values d) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to better understand the cultural heritage of the midden site e) Look for opportunities to link Wadawurrung heritage activities with other relevant events (eg Indigenous Surfing Titles, NAIDOC Week) f) Explore and develop options for making information about the reserve's Wadawurrung's heritage available onsite via new technologies (eg phone apps, QR scanning) and at suitable offsite locations (eg Australian National Surfing Museum) g) Wadawurrung Traditional Owners conduct small 'On Country' learning and site tours at the reserve to share oral history and significance of the cultural sites and place 	<p>Strong community desire for no new onsite interpretation</p> <p>Wadawurrung People wanting to learn more about the cultural heritage of the midden</p> <p>Wadawurrung People wanting updated interpretation of cultural history</p>
PROTECT		
Reserve's Wadawurrung values, including significant sites, are protected through involvement of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in best practice cultural and environmental management practices (eg cultural assessments, education and interpretation, Aboriginal Heritage Management Agreement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h) Protect all Wadawurrung places within the reserve by implementing the approved cultural heritage management plan and obtaining heritage approvals for works beyond routine maintenance i) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to apply to Heritage Victoria to amend the heritage listing for the reserve relating to the mural on the exterior wall of the toilet block. j) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and Corangamite Catchment Management Authority to appropriately name the unnamed creek at Bells Beach a Wadawurrung language name. k) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and the Bells Beach Committee to liaise with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria towards achieving a more integrated approach to planning and managing Wadawurrung Country. 	Concerns about protecting the reserve's indigenous heritage values



6 Strategic actions to protect and respect surfing culture

6.1 SURFING CULTURE

Bells Beach is named after local landholders, the Bell family, and was first surfed in the 1930s. It has since acquired a mythology, among the local and worldwide surfing community, making it the stuff of legend. The combination of its unique geography and local weather conditions produces a world class wave, highly valued by surfers.

The reserve is listed on Victoria's Heritage Register and is part of the federal listing of the Great Ocean Road as a National Heritage Place due to its surfing values, natural history, spectacular views and for being part of an exemplar coastal drive. The National Heritage Place listing also recognises the reserve as:

- having strong links to the surf industry and technological innovations (eg board design and composition)
- the location of the world's longest, consecutive international surfing competition, and
- the first site to be officially named a surfing reserve (in 1971).

Torquay's surf industry shares a strong connection with Bells Beach. Local companies such as Rip Curl and Quiksilver were initially set up by local surfers as small shopfront or backyard operations, growing to become global corporations. Their involvement in and sponsorship of local surfing contests have similarly seen an event like the annual Easter rally develop over the years into the major international sporting event that is today's Rip Curl Pro.

Surfing culture is also a key element of Surf Coast's sense of place with many residents choosing to live in the municipality to be close to quality surf breaks such as Bells Beach.

The Torquay Boardriders Club is currently the only community group that runs local surfing competitions and related activities in the reserve. Formed in 1978, the club's values align closely with those articulated in this coastal and marine management plan (eg the club's value to "protect the Bells Beach spirit of surfing by respecting the ocean, respecting the land and respecting each other").

Bells Beach has provided a stage for the development of Australia's surfing culture – from its early beginnings last century through to the present day – and will continue to play a key role in its ongoing evolution in future. The Australian National Surfing Museum located in Torquay

is an important place to visit to better understand the profound links between Australian surfing culture and Bells Beach.

Rising sea levels are a future threat to the quality of the surfing conditions at the reserve. With the prime breaks at Bells Beach being reef-based and performing best at low tides, if sea levels rise significantly as predicted, favourable surf conditions may be impacted.

6.2 ISSUES RAISED DURING PREPARATION OF THE 2015 PLAN

The need to recognise the role of Bells Beach in Australia's surfing heritage and culture represented another dominant theme raised during the 2014-15 community consultation on the coastal management plan. There was a strong desire to see this role more actively promoted and acknowledged.

Management planning and decision-making processes and practices also emerged as key concerns, particularly in relation to events and commercial activities. Surfing contests comprise the majority of events occurring in the reserve with people expressing concern about their number, organisation and impacts on regular users.

While some argued for reducing the number, others pointed out the value of surfing contests in developing local surfers and juniors. Many surfers are uncomfortable delineating between competitive and recreational surfers because they see themselves purely as surfers who surf for the love of the experience.

There was consensus that non-surfing events (eg Bells Bash) passing through the reserve were acceptable, but there was no support for weddings or commercial activities. It is recognised that, from time-to-time, paddle-outs in memory of surfers who have passed away may occur independently of Council. People also wanted to see revenue raised through licensing, event fees and the like expended directly on the reserve rather than going into general Council revenue.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

6.3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – SURFING CULTURE ISSUES

Strategic management actions for surfing culture values remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 4. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.



Table 4: Strategic actions to respect and protect surfing culture values

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
RESPECT		
Reserve recognised for its significance in Australia's surfing history and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Retain the name Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve b) Continue to acknowledge the significant role of surfing in shaping Surf Coast's sense of place, including the special connection between Bells Beach and Australia's surfing culture 	Strong desire to acknowledge the reserve's unique surfing heritage
Visitors are informed about the reserve's cultural values without additional onsite interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Explore and develop options for making information about the reserve's surfing culture available onsite via new technologies (eg phone apps, QR scanning) and at suitable offsite locations (eg Australian National Surfing Museum) 	Strong community desire for no new onsite interpretation
Surfers are aware of surfing etiquette and 'Spirit of Surfing' principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Actively promote surfing etiquette and 'Spirit of Surfing' principles 	Concerns about anti-social behaviour
Strong relationships are maintained with the surfing community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Ensure surfing interests are represented on the Bells Beach Committee f) Seek opportunities for surfing interests to partner with events to promote improved environmental and cultural outcomes awareness 	Desire to ensure the needs of surfers are considered during management decisions
All surfers using the reserve are recognised as stakeholders when making decisions that potentially impact surfing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Design community engagement strategies to include all surfers 	Concerns that surfers aligned with different surfing groups will be treated unequally
PROTECT		
Reserve's cultural values related to surfing, including artefacts (eg wave sculpture, 'Spirit of Surfing' plaques), are protected in line with Victorian Heritage Register requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h) Maintain the wave sculpture and 'Spirit of Surfing' plaques in line with Victorian Heritage Register requirements 	Concerns about protecting the reserve's surfing heritage and culture

7 Addressing other values



Courtney Conlogue Rip Curl Pro 2019
Image: WSL

7.1 RECREATIONAL

While surfing represents the dominant recreational activity undertaken at Bells Beach, the reserve offers opportunities for other compatible social and recreational activities, including hang gliding, walking, cycling and sightseeing. The Surf Coast Walk passes through the reserve, providing hundreds of residents and increasing numbers of visitors with an off-road link to Bells Beach from Torquay-Jan Juc and other coastal townships.

Hang gliders have used the cliffs north of the Winkipop car park since the early 1970s with the site offering a natural launch pad. This use is restricted to advanced pilots and contingent on strong east to south-east wind patterns. Since these conditions are infrequent, the site is only used approximately 10 to 15 days a year. Pilots set up on the west side of Bells Beach Road and walk across the road to launch. Council formalised this use in 2012 by granting a licence to the Hang Gliding Federation of Australia.

Issues raised during the preparation of the 2015 plan

Access represented the key issue for recreational users in 2014-15, including access to surf breaks during major events, to the hang-gliding launch site and to car parking.

In the past, some reserve users have had their dogs unrestrained on the reserve's beaches. Dogs are not permitted off-lead on beaches within the Point Addis Marine National Park. There will be an increased effort to ensure dogs are kept restrained within the reserve.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

Strategic Management – Recreational issues

Strategic management actions for recreational issues remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 5. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 5: Strategic actions for recreational values



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Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
Infrastructure management enables people to safely use the reserve without damaging its natural and cultural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Maintain infrastructure such as pathways and fencing to allow continued safe visitor access (refer Section 8.3 Infrastructure for more detail) b) Continue to enable hang glider use of the licensed launch area north of Winkipop in accordance with the licence conditions c) Continue to monitor cultural sites, especially the midden, and notify Wadawurrung Traditional Owners of any erosion or damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire for recreational use to not adversely impact reserve's core values Recognition of unique opportunity that launch site provides for journeys to Apollo Bay
Traffic management facilitates safe movement within the reserve's car parks and roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Improve the line marking, parking arrangements and bus licence requirements to maintain and improve public safety within the reserve's busy car parks (refer Section 8.4 Traffic Management for more detail) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about public safety in the reserve's busy car parks
Local laws enforcement protects the reserve's core values without detracting from people's enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Undertake local laws enforcement to ensure unlicensed buses, unrestrained dogs, camping and litter do not damage the reserve's values or reduce users/visitors' enjoyment (refer Section 8.5 Management and Enforcement for more detail) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns that some users' actions are threatening the reserve's values or spoiling others' experiences

7.2 HISTORICAL VALUES (OTHER THAN WADAWURRUNG AND SURFING)

Following European settlement, the land in and around the reserve was farmed from the 1840s onwards with several families using it as part of their pastoral run. Elias Harding's Mount Pleasant Run, for example, included land from Torquay to Point Addis, but the Steele and McVean families also held part of this run at different times.

These larger runs were later split into smaller allotments with William Bell acquiring the land adjoining Bells Beach in 1857. D. Cyril Lewis purchased the land in 1899 and then sold it to John Calvert Bell in 1905. Mr Bell and his family leased the adjoining foreshore (now the reserve) for grazing from 1905 until 1940-41, using it to run sheep.

Detailed historical information from the time of European settlement is contained in *Farmland, Forest and Surf, Environmental History: Surf Coast Shire Heritage Study Stage 2b* (Kellaway, 1998) and *Barrabool: Land of the Magpie* (Wynd, 1992).

Issues raised during the preparation of the 2015 plan

The need to acknowledge the reserve's pastoral heritage, alongside its indigenous and surfing heritage, was raised in 2014-15 as a minor issue to be considered within the plan's overall development.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

Strategic Management – Historical issues

Strategic management actions for historical issues remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 6. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 6: Strategic actions for historical values



A healthy coast appreciated by all, now and in the future

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
Sensitive interpretation educates people about the reserve's history and values without additional impacts on the reserve itself	a) Explore and develop options for making information about the reserve's pastoral history available onsite via new technologies (eg phone apps, QR scanning)	Desire for the reserve's early pastoral history to be recognised

7.3 ECONOMIC AND SUSTAINABLE USE VALUES

Bells Beach carries significant economic value as a quality destination for surfing and non-surfing tourists. This value underpins the local surfing industry, Surf Coast Shire's most significant industry sector.

The value of this sector to the local economy is evidenced by the outcomes of a study commissioned by Council in 2014. This found that:

- Surf Coast Shire's surfing industry represents 29.6 per cent of total full-time employment locally
- direct employment accounts for 1,532 full-time equivalent positions, over 500 more than the next biggest sector (construction)
- the industry generates 26.5 per cent of industry value-add activity in the municipality
- direct industry value-add contributions total \$155 million, 50 per cent higher than the next biggest contributor (ownership of dwellings)

- the surf industry accounts for more than 28 per cent of all incomes generated in Surf Coast Shire
- wholesale trade and retail trade are the biggest contributors to the surf industry, and
- excluding Quiksilver and Rip Curl, approximately 79 per cent of goods and services are sold locally, 12 per cent nationally, five per cent regionally and four per cent internationally.

In terms of surfing-related tourism, around 140,000 people from outside the Surf Coast and Geelong regions visited the municipality in 2014 to go surfing, contributing close to \$50 million to the local economy. This confirms the value of local surf breaks like Bells Beach to the shire's economy, compared to use of the reserve by large tourist coaches whose contribution tends to be more at the state level.

Surf Coast Shire is also home to:

- Australian National Surfing Museum (formerly Surf World), the only accredited surfing museum in the world

- Surfing Victoria, one of the world's oldest surfing administration organisations and Victoria's largest state sporting organisation based outside Melbourne, and
- Torquay Boardriders Club, one of Australia's largest, most successful and active boardriding clubs.

These organisations share a direct link to Bells Beach that supports their activities and/or economic viability. In addition, the reserve is used for major events such as the Rip Curl Pro and Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, providing direct and indirect significance to the value of local, regional and state economies.

Issues raised during the preparation of the 2015 plan

Minimising tourism impacts on the reserve's environmental, indigenous heritage and surfing culture values represented a major concern for many in 2014-15. While most people supported tourists visiting Bells Beach, the preference was for managed, sustainable tourism rather than large coaches packed with day-trippers. The significance of the travelling surfer making the pilgrimage to Bells Beach was also recognised as valuable to the local economy and seen as highly compatible with the reserve's other values.

The need to ensure management of the reserve continues to support the staging of the Rip Curl Pro formed part of the discussions. The event's standing as the world's longest, continuously held surfing event is an important part of the reserve's history.

There was general support for providing visitors with an appreciation of the reserve's core values in a way that doesn't involve onsite interpretation. This could be addressed via offsite interpretation at the Australian National Surfing Museum and use of technology (eg phone apps, QR codes) to minimise onsite interpretation impacts. Other suggestions for a stronger connection between the reserve and the Australian National Surfing Museum included a shuttle bus, bike hire and walking tours.

Note about 2018-19 consultation

In preparing this 2019 update, community consultation sought feedback on specific management actions and demographic and usage information. Feedback was not sought on the vision, guiding principles, core values or management goals of the 2015 plan, as these remain the same.

The full results of the consultation undertaken to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

Strategic Management – Economic and Sustainable use issues

This plan deals with land use and management issues directly associated with the reserve. It is beyond its scope to recommend offsite actions, such as measures to support the surf industry within the shire. These are however indirectly addressed by management actions listed in other sections, specifically those relating to events and surfing culture, which consider the need to:

- protect all the reserve's values over the long-term
- provide for sustainable tourism opportunities, and support the staging of an agreed type and number of surfing events that assist in maintaining the local surf industry's stature.

More information on the value of surfing to Surf Coast Shire's economy is available in *Economic Value of the Surf Industry to Surf Coast Shire: Final Report, December 2014*.



8 Management issues and actions

8.1 MANAGEMENT, RELATIONSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

The term 'governance' relates to how reserve management decisions, including stakeholder engagement, are made and delivered in accordance with the relevant legislation, policies and strategies.

Council has been appointed under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* to act as the Committee of Management for the Crown land portion of the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve. Council also manages its privately owned land in the reserve in a similar way. More information about the reserve's status and legislative framework is contained in Appendix 12.1.

As land manager, Council's association with the reserve goes back to the former Shire of Barrabool, which started undertaking works after public access was improved in the early 1960s. This arrangement was formalised in 1971 when Council was appointed as the Committee of Management. Since then, Council has worked to involve local community members and event organisers in the

reserve's management via sub-committees, advisory committees and the community consultation process associated with developing the coastal management plan.

The latter confirmed a desire for the community and other stakeholders to continue to be involved in the reserve's ongoing management, preferably via a well-supported, formal committee comprising Council representatives and those representing environmental, indigenous, surfing and other community interests.

Council has committed to retaining its Committee of Management responsibilities for the Crown land and to engaging with stakeholders, including Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, on how this occurs.

Strategic Management - Management, Relationships and Governance issues




Strategic management actions for governance issues remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 7. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed actions.

Table 7: Strategic actions for management, relationships and governance issues

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Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
The community understands the coastal and marine management plan's vision for the reserve and is actively involved in its realisation	a) Re-establish a committee – to be known as the Bells Beach Committee and comprising members with knowledge and experience in environmental management, indigenous heritage and surfing – to advise Council on the plan's implementation b) Appoint an independent chair to the Bells Beach Committee c) Allocate adequate Council resources to support the committee's proper functioning	Desire for community members to have an ongoing role in reserve management

Respect

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
 Ongoing cooperation and collaboration with Wadawurrung People	d) Include a Wadawurrung Traditional Owner representative on the Bells Beach Committee e) Continue to work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on management of the reserve	Desire for ongoing indigenous input into reserve management
 Strong relationships are maintained with the surfing community	f) Include a Surfing Victoria representative on the Bells Beach Committee g) Encourage surfers who regularly use the reserve to participate in the Bells Beach Committee	Need to have surfers and event managers involved in reserve management
 Strong relationships are maintained with community environment groups	h) Include community representatives on the Bells Beach Committee with knowledge, skills and experience in environmental management relevant to the Bells Beach environment. i) Continue to support community environmental activities in the reserve	Desire for local environmentalists to advise on reserve management

8.2 EVENTS MANAGEMENT

The majority of events occurring in the reserve are competitive surfing events including:

- Rip Curl Pro, an annual international surf contest, which has been run at Bells Beach during Easter since 1962 (the Surfing Rally of 1961 was not an official contest)
- Surfing Victoria national and state competitions, including the Australian Indigenous Surfing Titles, and
- Three Torquay Boardriders Club contests, which give local community members an opportunity to compete at Bells Beach.

Other non-surfing events generally pass through the reserve (eg Bells Bash and other distance running events using the Surf Coast Walk). Event organisers are required to apply for and obtain a permit from Council setting out the conditions under which the event is to be staged. These events must not have detrimental impacts on the values of the reserve, including the natural environment, cultural heritage and reasonable access for surfers.

Traditional Welcome to Country ceremonies (smoking ceremony and dance) are conducted by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on occasions.

As land manager, Council receives numerous requests to use the reserve for various other commercial and non-commercial events and activities, including filming, photography, weddings and memorial services. These are assessed on a case-by-case basis against existing Council policy before a decision is made whether to issue a permit or not.

There has been a 'no weddings' policy in place for several years and Council's Events Policy makes it clear that commercial activities such as filming, if it is unrelated to indigenous culture or surfing, are not permitted.

It is recognised that, from time-to-time, paddle-outs in memory of surfers passed away are likely to be arranged independently of Council. As these events occur in the water outside the reserve boundary, Parks Victoria and DELWP approval may be required for these events.

The community consultation raised various issues regarding the type and management of events in the reserve. Private events (eg weddings) and non-surfing commercial events were not supported. There was also consensus about ensuring any events taking place in the reserve did not impinge on recreational surfing activities, with concerns raised about various aspects of the Rip Curl Pro (eg duration of bump in/bump out period, event infrastructure).

Section 6 – Protecting and respecting surfing culture details other issues relating to events at the reserve along with a series of broad strategic actions. Council’s Events Policy for the reserve is important in preserving surfing culture.

Improving the sustainability of events is a focus. Minimising waste and diverting waste from landfill has been a major achievement for the staging of the Rip Curl Pro over many years and improvements are made annually. All events must adhere to Council’s Plastic Wise policy.

Strategic Management – Events Management issues

Strategic management actions for event management issues vary slightly from those in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 8. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 8: Strategic actions for event management issues





Respect		
Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
 Surfing and other events are managed in a consistent way that limits their impacts on the reserve’s values and reserve users	a) Implement Council’s Events Policy and associated guidelines, and work with event organisers to ensure compliance b) Continue to restrict the number of competitive surfing events in the reserve, in line with the Events Policy c) Consider the staging requirements of surfing events when renewing infrastructure within the reserve d) Improve the sustainability of events and links with other reserve users e) Implement Council’s Plastic Wise Policy during all events staged in or passing through the reserve f) Continue to work on ways of improving the bump in/bump out periods associated with the Rip Curl Pro g) Promote better knowledge of upcoming events and communicate more effectively h) Continue to retain access to surf breaks in the reserve during competitive surfing events in line with Council’s Events Policy	Concerns about the impacts of events on the reserve’s values and regular users in the absence of a publicly available events policy Desire to enable surfing events catering for surfers of all levels Need to offer surfing opportunities during events for people not competing Desire for event dates to be known well in advance
 Revenue raised through licensing, event fees and other means is re-invested into protecting the reserve’s values	i) Expend revenue raised through licensing, event fees and other revenue-raising activities at Bells Beach on reserve maintenance and improvement costs	Desire to see revenue raised from activities in the reserve spent on its maintenance and protection

Table 8: Strategic actions for event management issues continued

Respect

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
 Young surfers have access to opportunities to develop their skills	j) Identify strategies to cater for young surfers' development needs via discussions with key groups (eg Surfing Victoria, Torquay Boardriders Club, schools)	Desire to foster young surfing talent
 Reconciliation with Wadawurrung People is supported	k) Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and key surfing and environmental groups (eg Surfing Victoria, Torquay Boardriders Club and SANE) to hold an annual 'Clean Up Country' day	Desire to foster Reconciliation

8.3 INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

The reserve's infrastructure includes signs, car parks, lookouts, toilet block, memorial plaques, fences, stormwater drains, pathways and other built assets. The general condition of most of this infrastructure enables it to perform its function although there are some issues with the condition and performance of some infrastructure assets. These include:

- bitumen car park surfaces show deterioration in some areas and concrete kerbing is ageing which, if not renewed, could affect its ability to cope with stormwater flows
- established pathways work effectively to keep pedestrians and cyclists to designated areas, but the gravel surfacing is steep in some sections leading to erosion risks and increased risk to the public of injury from slips and falls
- some concerns remain about the visual impact of the stormwater outfall to the southern end of the beach



- the Victorian Heritage Register-listed toilet wall mural is starting to deteriorate, and the images do not accurately represent Wadawurrung stories for Bells Beach
- the toilet block is ageing and would be improved by an upgrade, though there are concerns with the location of the facility limiting its usefulness
- reserve furniture (eg picnic tables, bollards) is a mix of ages, materials and styles, including treated pine bollards and barriers showing clear signs of age, and other ageing or redundant fencing requiring replacement or removal, and
- while safe, aesthetically pleasing lookouts have been constructed at various vantage points, but vegetation growth could restrict viewing opportunities in fut

Strategic Management – Infrastructure issues



Strategic management actions for infrastructure management issues have changed little from the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 9. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 9: Strategic actions for infrastructure issues

Respect

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
 Reserve retains its unique natural character through effective infrastructure management (eg minimal car park signs, buildings, fences, etc.; no new memorial plaques; obsolete fencing and gates removed)	a) Minimise infrastructure within the reserve/ confine infrastructure to existing modified areas b) Investigate improving toilet facilities in ways that improve their utility without contributing to increased built infrastructure c) Remove obsolete infrastructure and memorial plaques d) Close the northern part of the overflow car park (except during the Rip Curl Pro)	Community desire to keep Bells Beach in a natural looking state
 Infrastructure fits its purpose and is visually sensitive to its location (eg signs have a consistent 'look and feel')	e) Maintain infrastructure so it performs its intended function f) Ensure consistency in colours, materials and design.	Belief that the appearance of the reserve can be improved by using a consistent set of materials that are sympathetic to the reserve's location and history

Protect

 Erosion is effectively managed through the application of best practice erosion protection principles and practices (noting some erosion will and should be allowed to occur as part of an ever-changing coastal landscape)	g) Base erosion management actions on expert advice received as part of the annual geotechnical inspection h) Factor potential climate change impacts into erosion management decisions i) Monitor the impact of erosion on cultural sites	Concerns with how erosion will be managed
 Stormwater management is improved when consistent with other values such as indigenous heritage protection	j) Install new stormwater pits in the main car park areas k) Look for opportunities for further stormwater improvements as part of general infrastructure maintenance (eg kerb and channel maintenance and replacement)	Desire to improve stormwater management

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Infrastructure management enables people to safely use the reserve without damaging its natural and cultural assets	l) Include public safety considerations in infrastructure management decisions m) Maintain infrastructure to keep visitor activities within approved/suitable areas	Need to manage risks and manage high visitor numbers
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8.4 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Population growth and increasing independent, non-commercial tourist numbers continue to place added pressure on traffic management and parking in the reserve. As well as the Wave, Winkipop, Bells and Hammerhead car parks, vehicles also use what is known as the 'overflow' parking area to the west of Bells Beach Road. This area is used for parking during major events and occasionally by hang gliders.

While the introduction of *Victorian Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licences in 2012* has helped reduce the number and impacts of large tourist coaches, some unlicensed companies continue to use the reserve. Council will use traffic signage to enable the *Road Safety Act 1986* to be used to enforce the requirements for commercial buses to have a licence.

Other traffic management issues include:

- non-commercial long vehicles (eg vehicles with trailers or caravans) in the reserve's car parks where there are restricted opportunities for parking, turning and reversing safely

- capacity of car parks to cater for growing visitor numbers and potential to reduce congestion by encouraging people to access the reserve by bike or foot, with the viability of running a shuttle for casual visitors from Torquay to be explored
- on high quality surf days, cars parking within the car parks and along Bells Beach Road in a manner that is not compliant with road safety rules, and
- safety concerns related to the steep gradient, high pedestrian numbers and vehicle speeds.

Strategic Management – Traffic Management issues

Strategic management actions for traffic management issues remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 10. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 10: Strategic actions for traffic management issues

 **A healthy coast appreciated by all, now and in the future**

Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
Traffic management facilitates safe movement within the reserve's car parks and roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue to offer, through a competitive allocation process, a restricted number of licences (8) for tour operators to bring long vehicles into the reserve (restricted to 22 seats or less) b) Investigate sustainable and innovative tour operators offering services such as a shuttle bus from the Australian National Surfing Museum to the reserve c) Continue to allow non-commercial vehicles to enter the reserve's car parks d) Retain the Hammerhead car park and existing pedestrian crossing in the Bells Beach car park but minimise related signage 	Concerns regarding the functioning of the car parks and their use by commercial operators
Local laws enforcement protects the reserve's core values without detracting from people's enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Maintain traffic signage within the reserve to enable enforcement under the Road Safety Act 1986 of the requirement for commercial buses to hold a licence f) Undertake regular patrols by local laws staff to deter and fine unlicensed commercial vehicles g) Ensure the licence conditions for commercial tour operators minimise the impacts of commercial operations on other reserve visitors h) Enforce road safety regulations in relation to parking within the car parks and along Bells Beach Road to assist with the management of visitor numbers and improve safety 	Frustration with unlicensed buses entering the reserve car parks

8.5 ENFORCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Managing the reserve and enforcing compliance with regulations to effect positive outcomes, for the reserve itself and its users, requires:

- environment and event planning staff
- on-ground cleaning, maintenance, waste collection and vegetation management staff
- staff involved in engineering design, planning and implementation for capital works projects, and
- local laws enforcement officers.

The presence of Council staff in the reserve was regularly raised during the 2014-15 community consultation, specifically in relation to enforcing Council regulations pertaining to:

- unlicensed buses
- overnight camping and sleeping in vehicles
- parking infringements
- litter (including toilet paper from people using the Winkipop car park island as a toilet), and
- dogs (Bells Beach is a dog-free zone due to the beach being part of the Point Addis Marine National Park), with dogs left off-leash and unsupervised while their owners surf being a common problem.

In addition, the following management activities were also recognised as critically important to the reserve's ongoing maintenance:

- vegetation management works (eg weed removal and revegetation using locally indigenous plants)
- litter pick-up and waste management

- improved toilet cleaning, and
- improved fence, track and sign maintenance.

During the initial 2014-15 consultation process, there was broad community support for having a full-time ranger in the reserve. This approach, trialled in the past, occurred when there were large numbers of commercial tour operators coming into the reserve daily in large coaches, which required a range of management interventions. With the introduction of commercial tour operator licences, these large commercial coaches are no longer allowed into the reserve.

A team-based approach currently applies to the day-to-day management and maintenance of the reserve, involving local laws officers responsible for patrol and enforcement, a Council parks crew and a toilet cleaning contractor. This enables a wide variety of tasks to be completed by appropriately skilled people.

Community members have also contributed significant time and effort to reserve management activities. This includes ongoing conservation works and clean-up days undertaken by Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment and Surfrider Foundation volunteers, and those involved in the annual Rip Curl Planet Days. This work is greatly appreciated by Council.

Strategic Management – Enforcement and Reserve Management issues

Strategic management actions for enforcement and reserve management issues remain the same as in the 2015 plan and are shown in Table 11. Please refer to Section 9 for detailed management actions.

Table 11: Strategic actions for enforcement and reserve management issues



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Outcomes sought	Strategic actions	Responds to
Infrastructure management enables people to safely use the reserve without damaging its natural and cultural assets	a) Improve regulation messages to reserve users	Concerns that users are disregarding or not informed about regulations relating to dogs, parking, litter and camping
Local laws enforcement protects the reserve's core values without detracting from people's enjoyment	b) Provide adequate Council resources to enable the reserve to be effectively managed in accordance with this plan, including the enforcement of regulations	Desire for greater Council enforcement presence
The community understands the plan's vision for the reserve and is actively involved in its realisation	c) Facilitate community involvement in management activities (eg working bees, community education activities)	Desire for reserve users to be involved in on-ground management activities, including education campaigns

8.6 CARRYING CAPACITY

The issue of the reserve's carrying capacity was raised during the initial 2014-15 consultation, with people questioning the number of users/visitors Bells Beach can support without significantly impacting the reserve.

Before Council implemented a range of access control measures (eg sealing car parks, installing extensive fencing and pathways), degradation of natural and historic values was clearly visible. This included areas denuded of vegetation, erosion of cliffs and dunes, and the impacts of unrestricted access to culturally significant sites (eg middens). Infrastructure is now used to encourage people to stay within designated areas.

Management Actions – Carrying Capacity issues

The plan makes many recommendations aimed at improving the resilience of the reserve's core values to withstand user/visitor pressures. Actions such as maintaining vital infrastructure (eg fences and pathways) to high standards, managing erosion-prone areas and undertaking weed removal and revegetation works will help to manage potential impacts. Other recommendations will assist in managing visitor numbers (eg events management conditions, tour operator licences, enforcement of parking restrictions and road safety regulations).

Through its multi-pronged approach, the plan aims to facilitate a degree of self-management of visitor numbers and their expectations. The current restrictions include a ban on coaches and limiting the number of bus licences. During the past five years, these measures have demonstrated the effectiveness of this type of strategy in impacting positively on the experiences of regular reserve users and one-off visitors.

One of the responsibilities of the new Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority will be to undertake a capacity analysis of key visitor destinations. A regional approach to visitor management will assist with implementing effective management strategies, although increasing tourism and the growing local population means capacity pressures are likely to continue.

9 Implementation Plan

Under the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, coastal and marine management plans must incorporate an implementation plan. Previously, the implementation plan for the reserve was a separate but accompanying document to the coastal management plan.

Based on the reserve's vision, core values, goals and guiding principles and the strategic management actions recommended in Sections 4 to 8, the tables in this implementation plan detail the actions planned for the next five years. While each action has been assigned to the most relevant heading, it should be noted that many have beneficial outcomes across multiple areas.

Most of the actions are ongoing, continuing from the 2015 coastal management plan. There are some actions that are either new or more detailed. Such changes have been made following the update consultation undertaken in 2018 and 2019. The full results of the consultation to inform this 2019 update are available on Council's website www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au.

At the time of drafting this coastal and marine management plan, the Wadawurrung were developing a Healthy Country Plan, which will incorporate Wadawurrung People's goals, actions and strategies for looking after and managing Wadawurrung coastal and sea Country. The Healthy Country Plan will include recommendations for specific culturally important places, including Bells Beach, and will inform the implementation of this coastal and marine management plan.

Council is continuing to work towards implementing the plan with the assistance of the Bells Beach Committee. Key implementation progress under the 2015 plan includes:
































- new impartial chair and community advisory committee established and involved in reserve management
- review of tourist bus licences completed with an associated restriction on bus licences and reduction in commercial bus use
- development and implementation of the Events Policy for the reserve resulting in fewer disruptions to reserve users
- a new viewing area on the former helipad site
- widening of the Surf Coast Walk through the Winkipop car park to improve safety
- support for regular community conservation initiatives at the reserve, and
- revegetation of bare areas experiencing erosion.

9.1 PROTECTING AND RESPECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The reserve's natural environment, including its wild heathland vegetation and the limestone cliffs, are highly valued. Although past grazing, uncontrolled recreational activities and other human impacts led to some degradation, extensive restoration works from the early 1970s onwards have contributed to improved vegetation cover, less erosion, fewer weeds and increased habitat values. The following actions are intended to support ongoing protection and restoration efforts.

Table 12 Protecting and respecting the natural environment actions

Projected timeframe

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Enhance weed control in line with the Integrated Vegetation Management Plan.					
Continue to revegetate and/or brush-mat eroded areas from past uncontrolled use.					
Support SANE, Planet Days, Surfrider and other community groups in undertaking environmental initiatives consistent with the coastal and marine management plan.					
Employ a contractor to undertake quarterly rubbish collection in the reserve beyond the main car park area.					
Undertake a flora and fauna survey every five years.					
Undertake a geotechnical inspection before the Rip Curl Pro each year or at other times if considered necessary (eg after major storm events).					
Provide information on terrestrial and marine ecosystems through technologies with a focus on innovative interpretation and offsite messaging rather than signage.					

9.2 PROTECTING AND RESPECTING WADAWURRUNG HERITAGE AND SURFING CULTURE
















































The reserve has a rich Wadawurrung history and more recently has evolved as a significant surfing cultural site. Various legislation and government policies guide the protection of these values. The following actions reflect Council's commitment to collaborating with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to ensure protection of significant sites and Wadawurrung values at the reserve. Council acknowledges that maintaining honest and respectful relationships with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners will be critical to successfully implementing this coastal and marine management plan.

In addition, the reserve's surfing culture and other related values (eg hang gliding, pastoral heritage) are addressed by actions intended to improve visitor knowledge without extensive onsite interpretation.



Table 13 Protecting and respecting Wadawurrung heritage and surfing culture actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Liaise regularly with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on planning and management directions for the reserve.					
Use the approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (No. 10062) to guide management in the main visitor use areas.					
Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on cultural heritage approvals for all activities above routine reserve maintenance, including preparation of cultural heritage management plans and supervision of works, and ensure public access to indigenous places is controlled.					
Obtain Heritage Victoria permits as required for works above routine maintenance to ensure the full consideration of indigenous and surfing cultural matters.	 	 	 	 	 
Promote the reserve's heritage and cultural values at the Australian National Surfing Museum.					
In partnership with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, and the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung), apply to Heritage Victoria to amend the heritage listing of the mural on the toilet block exterior wall.					
Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on a new way of telling their stories at the reserve (other than the toilet block mural).					
Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to better understand the cultural heritage of the midden site.					
Provide information on the reserve's indigenous heritage and surfing culture through technologies (eg QR codes) with a focus on innovative interpretation and offsite messaging rather than signage.	 	 	 	 	 
Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and key surfing and environmental groups (eg SANE, Surfrider, Surfing Victoria, Torquay Boardriders Club) to hold an annual 'Clean Up Country' day.	 	 	 	 	 
With the Bells Beach Committee, continue to implement strategies for ensuring current and future events protect and respect indigenous heritage and surfing culture.	 	 	 	 	 
Develop an Aboriginal Heritage Agreement for the reserve to provide cultural protection and management of the reserve linked to the cultural heritage management plan.					




































9.3 MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The community has formally advised Council on management of the reserve since Council's predecessor, the Shire of Barrabool, was appointed Committee of Management of the reserve in 1971. This tradition continues with the appointment of the Bells Beach Committee.

The following actions aim to support the committee's operations.

Table 14 Management and governance actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Appoint committee members, including an impartial chair.					
Support the committee's operations in line with its endorsed terms of reference.					
Provide resources to manage the reserve and support the Bells Beach Committee.					
Coordinate the plan's implementation, including budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and all relevant stakeholder engagement and statutory approvals.					
Obtain the necessary statutory approvals for all works.					
Undertake community engagement as needed to ensure reserve users understand implementation works and disruptions to use are minimised.					
Use data collected on visitor views, experiences and traffic counts to inform maintenance and management.					

9.4 EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Council's Events Policy for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve was developed through extensive community consultation as part of the development of the original coastal management plan.

The policy supports the staging of the Rip Curl Pro, Australia's most significant surfing event. The policy also directs that all events are consistently managed in a way that limits their impacts on users and the reserve's natural, cultural and surfing values.

The policy restricts the number of surfing events and the types of events that can be staged. Commercial events or activities, such as filming not related to indigenous culture or surfing, are not permitted. Events along the Surf Coast Walk can pass through the reserve, but the car parks are

not suitable for the setup of infrastructure associated with these events because of the impacts on surfers.































The staging of the Rip Curl Pro each year by the World Surf League (WSL) is managed via a Crown Land (Reserves) Act licence agreement with Council for the Crown land portion of the reserve and a separate but similar licence covering use of Council's freehold portion.

The current five-year licence agreements are for 2019 to 2023. They outline the direct and in-kind support provided by Council towards the event. In return, WSL provides an event contribution and delivers a range of sponsorship benefits, listed in the agreements.

The Crown land licence agreement required state government approval.

Table 15 Events management actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Manage all events and event applications in accordance with Council's Events Policy for the reserve.					
Maintain the restrictions on the number of surfing events and the types of events as per the Events Policy.					
Set all event dates for the coming year at a November meeting between Council, Surfing Victoria and Torquay Boardriders Club, with dates to be published on Council's website and on Surfing Victoria and Torquay Boardriders Club websites.					
Provide an opportunity for Bells Beach Committee members to participate in reserve condition inspections before and after the staging of the Rip Curl Pro.					
Ensure event organisers implement a Council-authorized event management plan for the Rip Curl Pro.					
Continue implementation of the recommendations of the Rip Curl Pro Bump In/Bump Out Audit completed in 2016.					

9.5 INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

Depending on surf conditions, the number of people visiting the reserve each day regularly exceeds 1,000 (based on traffic count data for cars, following the introduction of the bus licensing system). Without any supporting infrastructure, this level of visitation would lead to the site's degradation, as occurred when it first became popular in the 1960s.

The following actions have therefore been designed to keep the reserve similar to its current state, in terms of infrastructure, while ensuring onsite infrastructure fits its purpose and meets safety requirements. Management actions also support infrastructure maintenance and replacement sensitive to the coastal environment by using appropriate design, materials and colours. In this way, these actions protect the reserve's natural, cultural, surfing and other values.





































The 2018 and 2019 consultation asked reserve users their views on a range of infrastructure issues. These included toilet facilities, types of materials used for pathways and built structures, replacing a section of concrete path with an elevated pathway, resurfacing a steep, unstable gravel section in the lower car park, stormwater improvements and safety enhancements at the base of the Winkipop stairs.

Most infrastructure issues attracted consistent survey responses and the draft plan was updated to reflect this feedback. No changes were made where issues attracted little or no comment or support.

Table 16 Infrastructure management actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE					
Reserve maintenance to comprise: Council infrastructure officers and nature reserve crew, tools, vehicles and other equipment, stormwater, sewer, water supply (other than toilet cleaning – see section below). Actions include weed management, native vegetation management, pathway and fence maintenance, repair and/or replacement of minor infrastructure as required.					
Implement maintenance of beach access stairs, lookouts and other structures in line with the recommendations of the 2018 structural assessment.					
GENERAL SIGNS (OTHER THAN TRAFFIC)					
Minimise signage throughout the reserve but ensure there is sufficient advisory and regulatory information to support public safety and enforcement of appropriate behaviours.					
Acknowledge Wadawurrung People’s heritage on signs when opportunities arise, in collaboration with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.					
Conduct an audit of existing signage with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to determine which signs require an upgrade in terms of Wadawurrung People’s heritage and provide for appropriate Wadawurrung story telling following review of the future of the mural on the toilet block.					
FENCING AND PARK FURNITURE PROJECTS					
Remove obsolete infrastructure.					
Replace ageing or damaged infrastructure as required.					
Use materials consistent with the natural appearance of Bells Beach, with priority given to the sustainability of the materials and avoiding undesirable impacts such as the spread of micro plastics.					
Fence the western side of the back-track beach access to properly define the track boundary and restrict public access.					
Install additional bins in Winkipop and Bells Beach car parks.					
MEMORIAL PLAQUES					
Publicise the ‘no memorial plaques’ policy.					
Remove all new memorial plaques as they appear in the reserve and attempt to return them to family members.					

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
VIEWING AREAS					
Maintain views from existing viewing platforms to encourage visitors to stay out of fenced areas. This may involve minor vegetation trimming.					
PATHWAY PROJECTS					
Upgrade the cracked concrete pathway with concrete aggregate for the path to the Button lookout.					
Reduce the width of the pathway envelope to the Button lookout by removing old fencing and replacing with new post and wire fencing closer to the pathway edge.					
Revegetate the gravel areas where the pathway envelope has been reduced in width.					
Replace sloping gravel sections in the lower Hammerhead car park with more stable materials.					
Incorporate picnic tables into the changed treatment of sloping areas in the lower Hammerhead car park and ensure they can easily be taken out and replaced during the Rip Curl Pro staging.					
Maintain pathways to ensure they provide safe public access.					
TOILETS AND SHOWERS					
Work with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and a specialist heritage advisor on amending the heritage listing for the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve to better recognise and acknowledge Bells Beach as Wadawurrung Country while removing specific mention in the listing of the mural on the external wall of the toilet block.					
Maintain the existing toilet facilities.					
Clean toilet block daily.					
STORMWATER, KERB AND CHANNEL, AND CAR PARKS					
Continue to implement stormwater improvements, including the installation of new stormwater treatment pits.					
Maintain and renew, as required, existing kerb and channel assets within the main car parks to ensure effective stormwater management.					











9.6 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The following actions aim to address a range of traffic management issues, including parking availability and restrictions, and enforcement of licensing requirements for commercial passenger vehicles. They should be read in conjunction with the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Traffic Management Plan 2018.

Other outcomes include compliance with the Road Safety Act 1986 and minimising signage while meeting safety and enforcement requirements.

Table 17 Traffic management actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME











Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Use the Road Safety Act 1986 to enforce parking permit and licence requirements.					
Continue to use Public Land and Tour Operator licences (8 maximum and limited to no larger than 22-seater buses) to manage commercial vehicles in the reserve. An expression of interest process will be used to manage the licence process and the licence term will generally be three years.					

9.7 ONSITE ENFORCEMENT AND BEHAVIOUR

Not all users respect the site's significance, with a small number behaving in a manner impacting on the reserve's values and others' experiences. The following actions relate to providing a regular staff presence onsite to minimise such impacts.

Table 18 Onsite enforcement and behaviour actions

PROJECTED TIMEFRAME

Management action	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Ensure Council's local laws staff undertake regular patrols to enforce regulations relating to bus licensing and parking, off-lead dogs, litter and sleeping in vehicles.					
Communicate reserve regulations to all users to assist with compliance.					

10 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

This coastal and marine management plan gives strategic management direction until at least 2025 and provides detailed management actions for the next five years, pending establishment of the new Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

Guided by this plan, on an annual basis Council will:

- a) Review management action commitments and evaluate progress towards implementation.
- b) List outstanding items and barriers to timely implementation.
- c) Compile data on key indicators of reserve condition (eg geotechnical assessments, flora and fauna status).
- d) Provide regular update reports to Council and the Bells Beach Committee.

As part of Council's commitment to accountability and transparency, Council provides the Bells Beach Committee with the results of a formal review undertaken annually. If progress towards implementation is falling behind schedule, actions to address this are developed in consultation with the committee.



11 References

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12 Appendices

12.1 ACTS AND REGULATIONS

There are numerous State and Commonwealth Acts that control or influence how the reserve is managed. The following describes the most relevant documents.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978

The *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* enables the reservation of Crown land, the creation of management regulations and the setting of licensing provisions. It is under this Act that Council has been appointed the Committee of Management for the reserve.

Crown land within the reserve is permanently reserved for public purposes and protection of the coastline under this Act. In Victoria, an Act of Parliament is required to revoke the reservation of permanently reserved Crown land. This means that there is a high level of protection for the site and any proposed change would be subject to parliamentary and public scrutiny.

While it is not currently possible to reserve Crown land in Victoria for surfing purposes, in 1971 the land was assigned the name 'Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve' under the *Survey Co-ordination Act 1958* (today Victorian place names are assigned under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*). This name recognises the importance of the reserve for surfing.

Regulations for the care, protection and management of the reserve were updated in 1993. They are a consistent set of regulations for all coastal Crown land reserves between Portarlington and Aireys Inlet, and outline approved activities, permit requirements and offences. These regulations are made under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Marine and Coastal Act 2018

The *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* replaces the *Coastal Management Act 1995*. This act aims to establish a coordinated approach to the protection and management of Victoria's marine and coastal environment, improve coastal and marine planning decisions, and set out principles for ecologically sustainable development. Consents for the use and development of coastal Crown land are managed by this act.

Victorian Coastal Strategy (2014)

The vision for coastal management in Victoria is 'A healthy coast, appreciated by all, now and in the future'.

The *Victorian Coastal Strategy* is a strategic planning document that sets out a hierarchy of principles to achieve the stated vision as shown below.

Victoria's Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018

This act and regulations provide for the protection of indigenous heritage within the reserve. The Act and Regulations enable the appointment of a Registered Aboriginal Party (Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation – trading as Wadawurrung – in the case of Bells Beach), outline cultural heritage management plan requirements and detail the approval processes for works or uses that potentially impact upon indigenous heritage values.

The Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the reserve was prepared in 2011 under the provisions of the Act. Site-specific cultural heritage management plans are required for locations that have not been covered in detail in this plan. The approved CHMP provides guidance for reserve management decisions. Council discusses works beyond maintenance with Wadawurrung Traditional Owner representatives and then follows the Regulations to prepare site-specific cultural heritage management plans as required.

Heritage Act 1995

In regard to surfing values, the reserve is included on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H203), established under the *Heritage Act 1995*. Inclusion on the VHR reflects the iconic status Bells Beach has for Australian surfing culture, its location as the world's longest continuous running surf competition and its impacts on surfboard and wetsuit technology in Australia. The register specifically includes the wave sculpture, the toilet block mural and the three 'Spirit of Surfing' sandstone markers.

At a national level, the reserve was a 'Listed Place' on the Register of the National Estate (place identification 103928). The listing recognised "...the special place of surfing and Bells Beach in Victorian social history". However, this register is no longer a maintained statutory list. Protection provided by the listing was restricted to the control or guidance of potential adverse actions undertaken by Commonwealth agencies. It is now considered more appropriate for the protection of sites of state and local significance to be protected by state and local government.

Hierarchy of Principles

Managing the coast now and in the future requires responses to the many ongoing pressures we face.

To assist with this, previous strategies have introduced a Hierarchy of Principles.

This strategy continues a Hierarchy of Principles and recognises that the foundation of coastal planning and management is a healthy coastal and marine environment.

The Hierarchy of Principles gives effect to the directions in the *Coastal Management Act 1995* and is included in the State Planning Policy Framework and in planning schemes across Victoria. Planning and decision-making on the coast needs to be guided by and consistent with the Hierarchy of Principles.

The policies and actions in the strategy have been grouped into three sections that align with the Hierarchy of Principles:

VALUE & PROTECT	1. Ensure the protection of significant environmental and cultural values
	The starting point is recognising and protecting what we value on the coast, based on identification and sound understanding of coastal and marine features and processes, vulnerabilities and risks.
PLAN & ACT	2. Undertake integrated planning and provide clear direction for the future
	This highlights the importance of having integrated policies, plans and strategies that respond to the major issues affecting coastal and marine environments, provide clear direction for protection, management and sustainable development, and involve coastal stakeholders and the broader community.
USE & ENJOY	3. Ensure the sustainable use of natural coast resources
	This emphasises that natural coastal resources are a limited and valuable public resource, and if developed or used, this should be done wisely and deliver proven new community and public benefits for current and future generations.
	Only when the above principles have been considered and addressed:
	4. Ensure development on the coast is located within existing, modified and resilient environments where the demand for development is evident and any impacts can be managed sustainably
	This aims to ensure that development on and adjacent to the coast is of high quality design, sensitively sited, suitable and sustainable over the longer term. Development on coastal Crown land must have a demonstrated need to be located on the coast and a demonstrated public benefit.

12.1.1 OTHER RELEVANT VICTORIAN ACTS

Protection of natural values is provided for under a variety of Victorian legislation such as the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (which includes native vegetation clearance requirements), the *Wildlife Act 1975* and the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (which sets out pest plant and animal obligations). Offshore waters that are included in the Point Addis Marine National Park are protected under the *National Parks Act 1975*.

