Bass Coast Statement of Planning Policy



March 2025

VICTORIA State Government
Department of Transport and Planning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of the Bunurong land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom have ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partnering and meaningfully engaging with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



Description of artwork

Aaron Duggan, (Gunaikurnai) 'Movements Between the Five Clans' 2019, acrylic on canvas.

'The tracks are going between the five clans of the Gunaikurnai and the hands are the symbols of my spirit travelling around the campsites.'

This artwork was created through programs provided by the Torch. The Torch provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria. The Torch aims to reduce the rate of re-offending by encouraging the exploration of identity and culture through art programs to define new pathways upon release.

Photo credits

Visit Victoria.

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INTRODUCTION

About Bass Coast

The Bass Coast declared area has many places of cultural heritage, outstanding natural beauty and environmental, economic and social significance. The declared area has been under the safe stewardship of the Bunurong people for millennia and is rich in Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The challenge facing the Victorian Government and community is managing the growth of metropolitan Melbourne and the state's regional settlements while conserving and enhancing Aboriginal cultural heritage, significant landscapes, the environment, biodiversity, historic heritage and the unique local characteristics of settlements. The distinctive attributes outlined in the Bass Coast Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) must be conserved and enhanced while also achieving sustainable economic development and the provision of adequate housing and strategic infrastructure. Development should be sensitively designed, scaled and responsive to its local context.

Simultaneously, attributes which make these areas thrive must be recognised, protected and enhanced. This includes productive rural land and natural resources, local businesses, sustainable tourism, and transport and essential services infrastructure.

Table 1: Attributes qualifying the Bass Coast declared area as a distinctive area and landscape.

ITEM	ATTRIBUTE	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES
1	Outstanding environmental significance	– State, national and international areas of biodiversity significance, including Phillip Island Nature Park, Bunurong Marine National Park, Churchill Island Marine Park, Western Port Ramsar Wetland, Churchill Island, Powlett River Mouth and Anderson Inlet and tributaries. – Parks, river corridors, beaches, wetlands and remnant woodland areas, including the Western Port Woodlands, which are home to remnant vegetation, provide habitat for threatened species and important wildlife corridors. – An integrated catchment system of river corridors and coastal waterways (estuaries and wetlands) and a unique marine environment with diverse habitats and important feeding areas.
2	Significant geographical features, including natural landforms	– The Bass Hills and Strzelecki Foothills provide a backdrop to landscapes throughout the shire and are highly visible from main road corridors. – The San Remo to Kilcunda coastline contains open pastoral landscapes edged by rocky cliffs and slopes to Bass Strait. – The Kilcunda to Inverloch coastline (the Bunurong Coast) is recognised for its rock formations, dune systems, dramatic cliffs and rock stacks. Eagles Nest is a dominant feature in the landscape and a site of national and geomorphological significance. – Phillip Island has distinctive landscapes, including rocky cliffs, outcrops of volcanic origin (such as the Nobbies and Pyramid Rock), surf beaches and dune systems.
3	Heritage and cultural significance	– Areas of significant cultural, spiritual and heritage value for the Bunurong people include the coastal sane dune systems, Western Port and Bass Strait, the Bunurong Coast, the Coronet Bay area, Bass Hills, Powlett River and the western and southern foreshores of Phillip Island. – Important post-contact heritage sites significant to Victoria's economic development include the State Coal Mine and associated mining heritage and Churchill Island, the location of the first European farm in Victoria. – A rich surfing history with several beaches recognised as National Surfing Reserve.
4	Natural resources or productive land of significance	– The area is a nature-based tourism destination of national significance, with tourism assets including Phillip Island, the Bunurong Coast and major events facilities. – Extractive industries are of state significance, particularly for their contribution to Victoria's supply of sand. – Agricultural land is high quality, particularly the Powlett River Valley and Gippsland dairy industry land.
5	Strategic infrastructure or built form of significance	– The Victorian Desalination Plant and associated pipeline are significant public infrastructure for Victoria. – Phillip Island Road and Bass Highway form a significant transport corridor essential to the region's functioning.

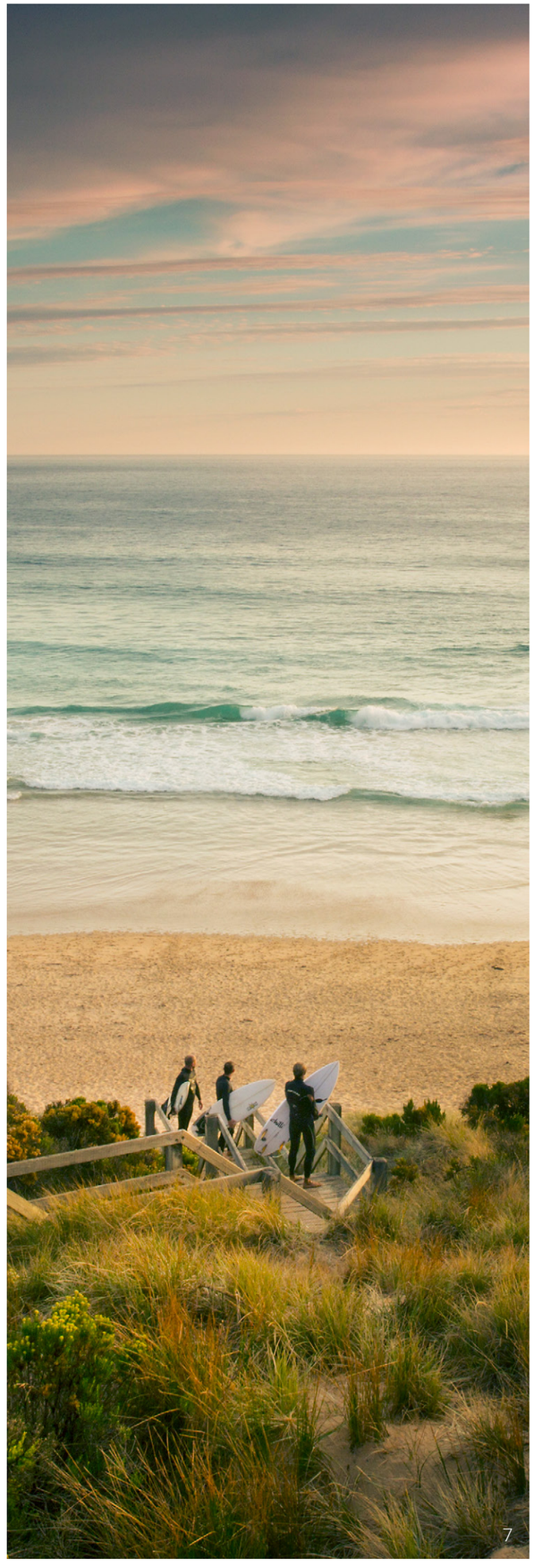
About the declared area

The Victorian Government has legislated to protect and enhance distinctive areas and landscapes for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

On 29 October 2019, Bass Coast Shire was first declared a distinctive area and landscape under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the PE Act) by order of the Governor in Council (GiC) published in the Victoria Government Gazette No. S 430. Since that initial declaration, Bass Coast Shire has been declared and redeclared several times due to various factors that caused delays in the preparation of the Bass Coast SPP. The most recent redeclaration occurred on 8 October 2024, and it came into effect on 9 October 2024, allowing the Bass Coast SPP to be finalised, endorsed and approved.

Under the PE Act, an area of Victoria can be declared a distinctive area and landscape if it has a majority of the attributes section 46AP of the PE Act. **Table 1** lists the attributes required under section 46AP of the PE Act that the Minister for Planning must consider to declare the Bass Coast Shire as a distinctive area and landscape.

Additionally, **Table 1** highlights attributes at risk of significant or irreversible land use changes that would impact the environmental, social or economic value of the area.



Map 1 shows the Bass Coast declared area in relation to the Melbourne Central Business District, the regional City of Latrobe, the metropolitan centres of Dandenong, Mornington and Pakenham, and the regional centres of Leongatha and Warragul within the South Gippsland and Baw Baw shires respectively.

Map 1: Location of the Bass Coast declared area.

(Source: DTP)



Map 2 shows the declared area's boundary aligns with the Bass Coast Shire boundary and extends 600 metres seaward of the low-water mark.

Map 2: Bass Coast declared area. (Source: DTP)



About the Bass Coast Statement of Planning Policy

Under the PE Act, the Minister for Planning must prepare a SPP for a declared area. The purpose of the SPP is to guide future use and development of land within the declared area to ensure the protection and conservation of its distinctive attributes. The PE Act also specifies requirements for the contents, consultation, endorsement, approval, commencement and amendment of an SPP.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) has prepared the Bass Coast SPP in partnership with the Bunurong people and in collaboration with the Bass Coast Shire Council and other relevant government agencies and authorities. Extensive engagement on the preparation of the Bass Coast SPP was undertaken with the Victorian community.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

DTP supports the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and is committed to ensuring its policies reflect these goals. The Bass Coast SPP will help to deliver on the goals, which provide a framework to achieve a sustainable future.

While the integrated delivery of all 17 goals applies to the declared area, the goals shown in **Figure 1** are most relevant and provide a foundation for the Bass Coast SPP vision, objectives and strategies.



Figure 1: Selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

3 Good health and well-being

The SPP aims to support active transport and healthy communities that have access to clean air and a healthy environment.

6 Clean water and sanitation

The SPP aims to protect water quality by reducing run-off and improving water management.

11 Sustainable cities and communities

The SPP aims to provide certainty about the valued attributes to be protected while indicating preferred locations for potential long-term growth.

12 Responsible consumption and production

The SPP aims to support the protection and sustainable management of natural resources.

15 Life on land

The SPP aims to support the conservation and improvement of biodiversity values.

17 Partnerships for the goals

The SPP aims to support governments working together with stakeholders to implement its objectives and strategies.

8 Decent work and economic growth

The SPP aims to support sustainable economic growth and the visitor economy.

9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure

The SPP aims to protect infrastructure.

13 Climate action

The SPP aims to support mitigation and adaptation to climate change impacts.

14 Life below water

The SPP aims to recognise the importance and support the conservation of marine life.

Implementation of the Statement of Planning Policy

Effective implementation of the Bass Coast SPP will require a concerted effort by governments, public land managers, the Bunurong people, businesses, industries, residents, visitors and the community.

Collaboration, shared knowledge, expertise and resources are needed to support the long-term vision for the declared area.

Implementation through planning schemes

The Bass Coast SPP takes effect immediately after approval and forms part of the Victoria Planning Provisions. Planning scheme amendments will be progressed to implement it into the Bass Coast Planning Scheme to provide a consistent approach to land use planning and development.

The Bass Coast Shire Council must consider the Bass Coast SPP as the planning authority to prepare planning scheme amendments and as the responsible authority to administer and enforce the planning scheme.

In reviewing planning decisions, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal must also consider the Bass Coast SPP.

Implementation by responsible public entities

Responsible public entities (RPEs), as agencies or bodies responsible for managing land in the declared area, must implement the Bass Coast SPP (refer to **Box 1**).

The PE Act requires a responsible public entity must not act in a way that is inconsistently with any provision of the Statement of Planning Policy that is binding on it. This applies when the responsible public entity is performing its function, duties or exercising its powers in relation to the declared area. Therefore, RPEs must not act inconsistently with the objectives of the Bass Coast SPP when developing or implementing policies, programs or decisions in relation to the declared area, including when performing their regular functions or duties.

An RPE should endeavour to integrate the objectives and strategies relevant to its responsibilities into its policies, programs and decision-making in the declared area. An RPE should balance any conflicting strategies in favour of an outcome which best promotes the intent of the Bass Coast SPP for the benefit of current and future generations.

In addition, the PE Act provides guidance for an RPE when developing or implementing policies or programs or making decisions in relation to the declared area.

This will:

- Better coordinate decision-making for land use and development across the declared area to achieve integrated management, environmental, infrastructure and development outcomes.
- Ensure proposals for land use changes and development are consistent with the protection of the declared area's significant landscapes and with significant environmental, economic and Aboriginal cultural and historic heritage values.
- Guide the sustainable use of natural resources in keeping with the declared area's significant landscapes and environmental and cultural values.
- Reinforce the importance of building community resilience to environmental risks and climate change, including the potential effects of natural hazards (such as bushfires and flooding).
- Provide greater certainty for current and future residents and businesses.

Monitoring and review

To provide long-term certainty for the declared area, the Minister for Planning must ensure a review of the Bass Coast SPP occurs no later than 10 years after it commences.

An SPP may be reviewed earlier than 10 years if there are compelling reasons to do so supported by strategic planning and technical studies (such as biodiversity, landscape and settlement assessments).

Following a review, an SPP may be amended or a new SPP prepared. The Minister for Planning must prepare a new or amended SPP in accordance with the PE Act requirements and engage with Traditional Owners, RPEs and the wider Victorian community.

Box 1: Responsible public entities for the Bass Coast declared area.

Bass Coast Shire Council

Corinella Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management

Gippsland Ports Committee of Management

Grantville Recreation Reserve Committee of Management Inc.

Head, Transport for Victoria

Inverloch Recreation Reserve Committee of Management Inc.

Lang Lang Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management Inc.

Melbourne Water

Parks Victoria

Phillip Island Nature Parks Board of Management Inc.

San Remo Foreshore Committee of Management Inc.

San Remo Recreation Centre Inc.

Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

South-East Water

South Gippsland Water

Southern Rural Water

Ventnor Recreation Reserve Committee of Management

Victorian Planning Authority

VicTrack

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Westernport Region Water Corporation

Woolamai Recreation Reserve Committee of Management



BUNURONG STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following statement sets out the significance of Bunurong Country and the declared area to the Traditional Owners.

We the Bunurong People are the Traditional Custodians of this Country, it's alive with our stories. These sands of the Bass Coast contain the footprints left behind by our ancestors in every cultural way.

The responsibility for the caring of our Country belongs to us as its custodians. She is our Mother and Bunjil our Father.

Our Country has always given us our physical means to flourish and survive, food, water and air. We are saltwater people, and the rivers that run into the sea are our Country, and where these rivers meet the sea have always been important places to our people.

Our Country will continue to preserve us and our values into the future, as we will continue to preserve our Country and protect our past and persist within these modern spaces. We have been here since the beginning and will be here until the end.

These places hold our stories, culture and our Ancestors physically as well as spiritually, and it is by the Lore of Bunjil we protect, love and look after her.

OUR VISION



The vision for the Bass Coast declared area is for the next 50 years. It identifies the values, priorities and preferences of the Victorian community in relation to the declared area's distinctive attributes, including preferences for future land use, protection and development.

The vision will be achieved by implementing the objectives and strategies under each policy domain, which are represented on the declared area framework plan.

By 2075 the vision for the Bass Coast declared area is that the Bunurong people (represented by the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation), governments, public land managers, businesses, residents and visitors ensure the declared area's distinctive attributes — the things people love about the declared area and value it for — are protected and enhanced for current and future generations. The Bass Coast continues to be a diverse, sustainable and thriving regional area. Part-time and permanent residents are proud of the Bass Coast and work together to achieve common goals.

The declared area's landscapes, highly valued views, environmental and biodiversity values, Aboriginal cultural heritage, and historic heritage, and each settlement's uniqueness are protected in perpetuity.

Bunurong cultural heritage: The Bunurong people's rights to self-determination and their aspirations for their Country, water and culture are realised through the self-determined transfer of relevant decision-making powers. Bunurong traditional and living knowledge, culture and practices inform planning and management decisions to better protect the declared area's distinctive attributes. The community highly values Aboriginal cultural heritage and sites, and it respects the declared area as Bunurong Country.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation: There are net-zero emissions in the declared area. Extensive revegetation of landscapes and transformed agricultural practices support large-scale carbon sequestration. Investment in public and active transport alongside zero-emissions private vehicles has led to a zero-emissions transport sector. The declared area continues to adapt to the impacts of climate change and natural hazards, including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, inundation and flooding, polluted run-off and bushfires. The built environment has been highly adapted to climate change impacts. Water is conserved, and there is sufficient water for the environment and consumptive uses. Sustainable economic development and strategic infrastructure support climate change mitigation and adaptation.



Landscape: The declared area's significant landscapes and character — with its many views, panoramic seascapes, rugged coastlines, tranquil wetlands, elevated rural hinterland and idyllic pastoral landscapes of rolling rises and gullies — are protected and enhanced. The declared area's scenic beauty is valued and recognised for its importance for the community's health and wellbeing, environment and biodiversity, heritage and the local economy.

Environment and biodiversity: Native vegetation cover is increased, and remnants are protected from clearing and fragmentation. Revegetation on public and private land helps mitigate urban heat, sequester carbon and increase ecological values in urban and rural areas. Native plants and animals flourish within a natural environment that is safeguarded, managed and highly valued by local communities and visitors, particularly the habitat of endangered, threatened and vulnerable species. The health, function and biodiversity values of important riverine, wetland, remnant woodland, coastal and marine areas are protected and restored.

Historic heritage: The declared area's rich tangible and intangible palaeontological, maritime, sealing, early settlement, convict, agricultural, mining, industrial and leisure heritage is protected, and the relationships between the Bunurong people and our colonial heritage are understood by those living within and visiting the declared area.

Strategic infrastructure: The provision of new community infrastructure — for transport, water supply, waste and resource recovery, energy, telecommunications, education, health and wellbeing, sport and recreation — is timely, integrated and in sequence with development. Investment in public and active transport alongside zero-emissions private vehicles has led to a zero-emissions transport sector. Waste is reduced to close to zero, and very little waste goes to landfills: most is reused, re-purposed or recycled. Infrastructure is resilient to climate change impacts and is sensitive to the declared area's distinctive attributes.

Sustainable economic development: The declared area's growing economy is supported by its distinctive landscapes, environment and Aboriginal cultural and heritage value. The economy is based on sustainable tourism, innovation and environmentally sustainable business practices (particularly in the agriculture, natural resources and manufacturing industries). The declared area uses renewable sources to generate energy, and Bass Coast is a net exporter of renewable energy to other regions. The economy is resilient to climate change impacts, having transitioned to net-zero carbon and beyond. Bass Coast is a leader of regional economies in sustainable economic development.

Settlements: Urban settlements are well-planned and responsive to safeguarding the declared area's unique features and special characteristics, including its coastal vistas and ridgelines, high-quality agricultural land, natural resources and the natural environment. The unique character of settlements is maintained and enhanced by maintaining visible green breaks between them. Wonthaggi is one of Victoria's preeminent regional centres, providing diverse housing, employment, education and health services. Across the declared area, revitalised town centres provide for the economic and social needs of the community.

The Bass Coast is a diverse, sustainable and thriving regional area.

DECLARED AREA FRAMEWORK PLAN

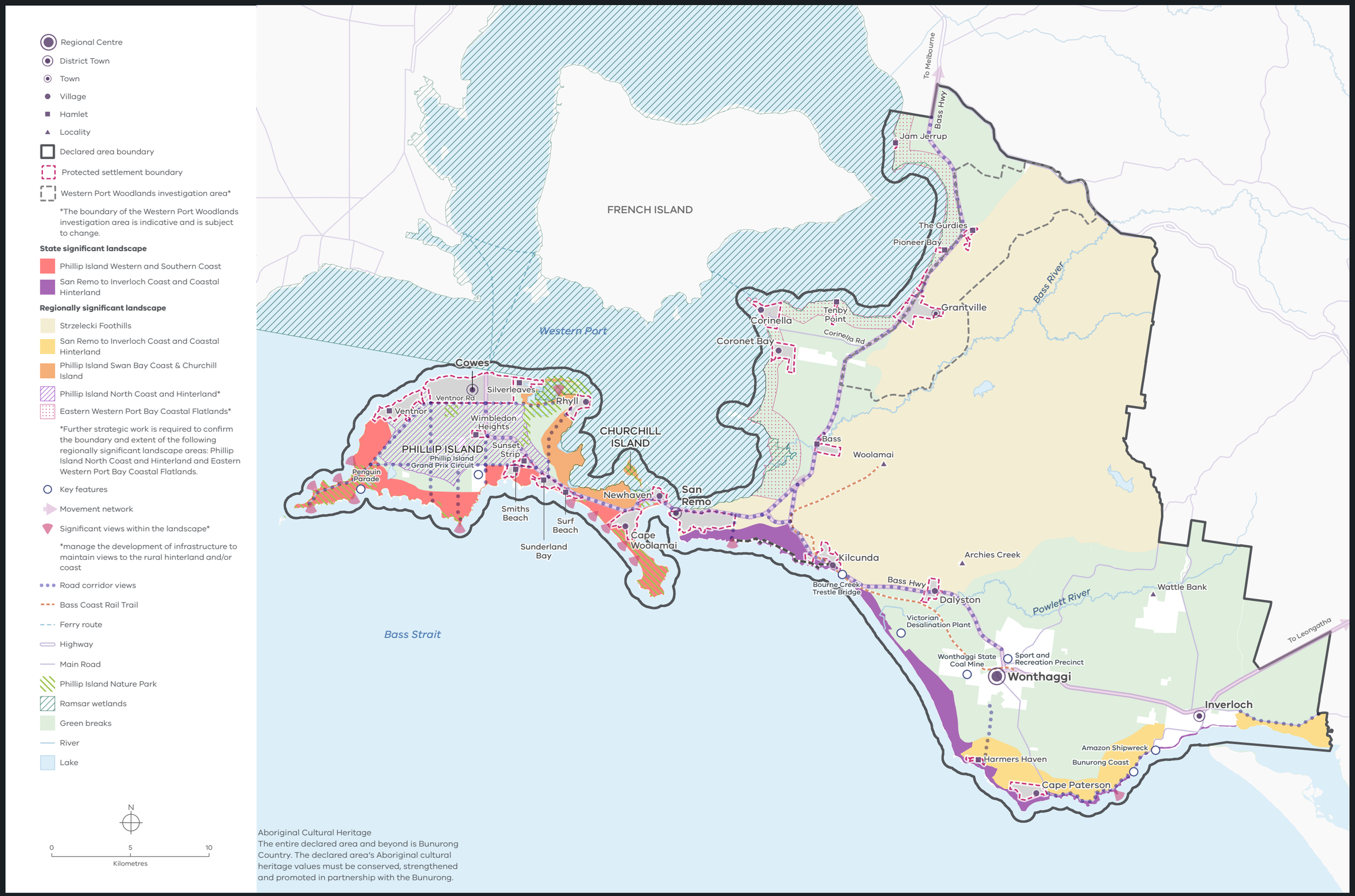
The Bass Coast declared area framework plan spatially represents the strategies for achieving the SPP's vision and objectives, which aim to encourage long-term, sustainable development within the declared area. The plan identifies areas for protection and conservation and for potential change, subject to planning processes. It shows how environmental, social, cultural and economic factors are integrated for the benefit of the community.

Map 3 shows the Bass Coast declared area framework plan.

Map 16 to **Map 35** form part of the framework plan and show the protected settlement boundaries for settlements in the declared area.

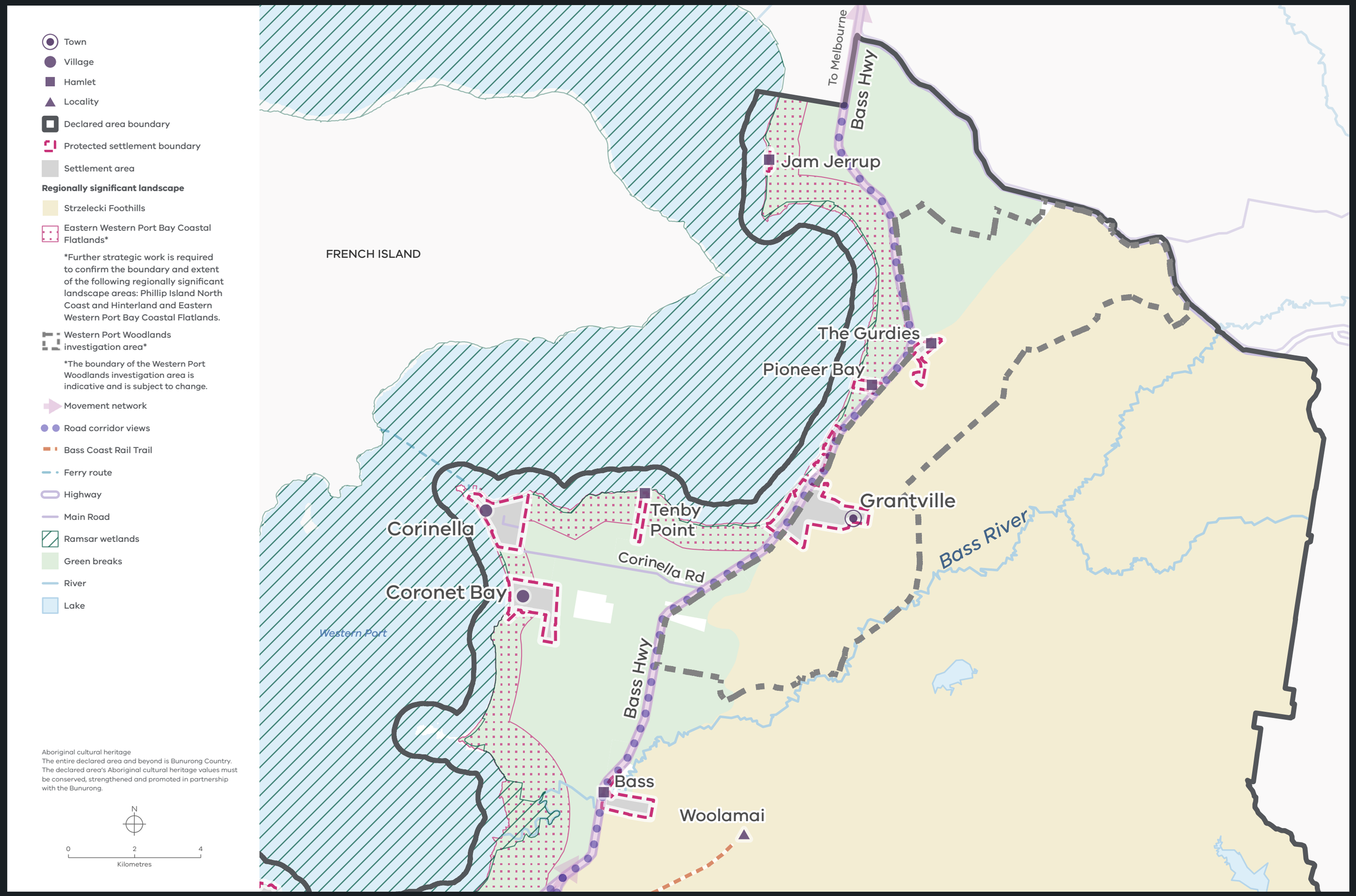
The declared area framework plan must be read in conjunction with the vision and policy domains. Maps provided in the policy domains other than the settlement maps in the **Settlement** policy domain do not form part of the framework plan, and they are published only to provide context.

Map 3: Bass Coast declared area framework plan. (Source: DTP)



Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
The entire declared area and beyond is Bunurong Country. The declared area's Aboriginal cultural heritage values must be conserved, strengthened and promoted in partnership with the Bunurong.

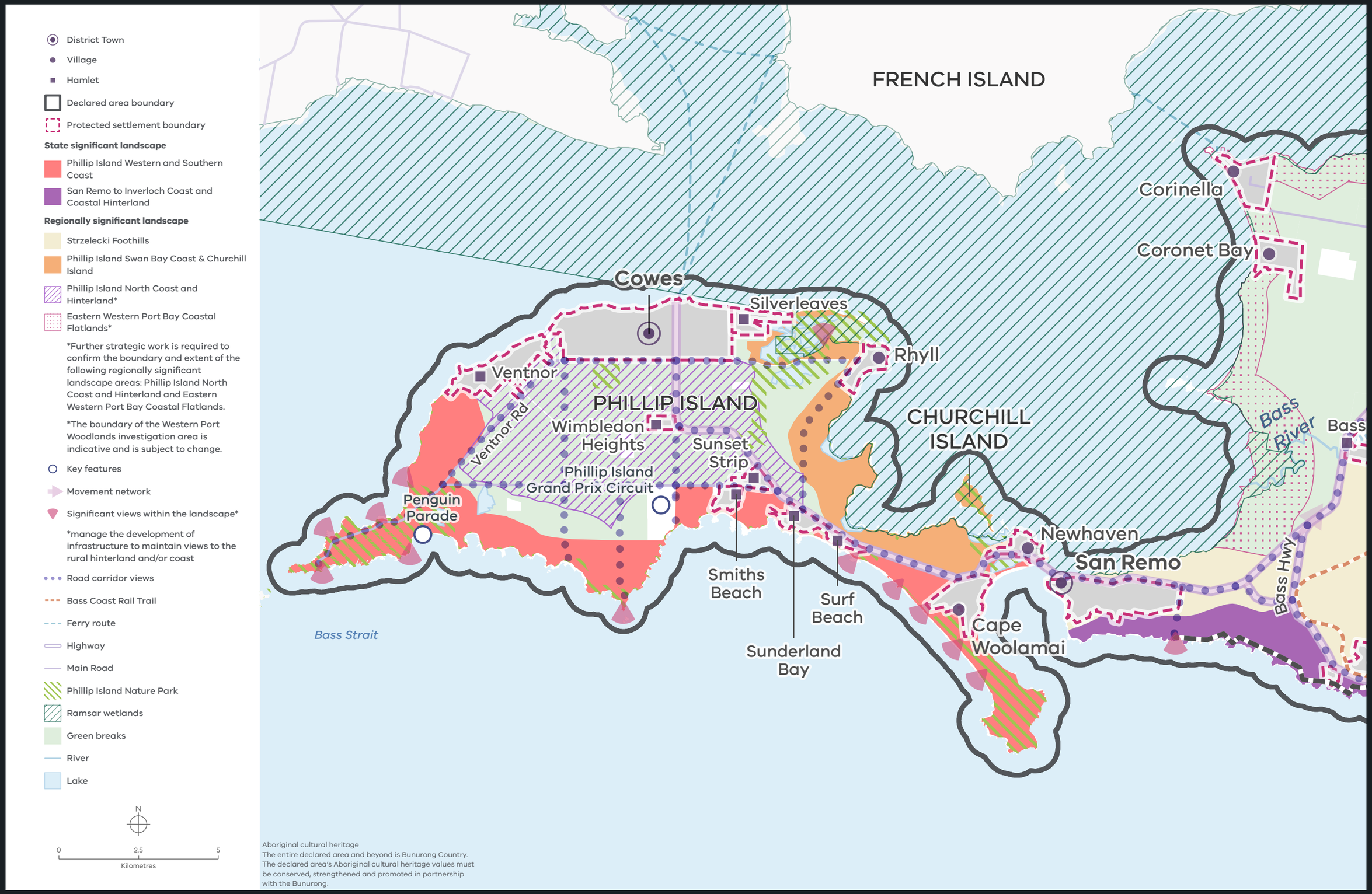
Map 4: Bass Coast declared area framework plan, with a focused overview of the declared area's north-west aspect. (Source: DTP)



▼ Map 5: Bass Coast declared area framework plan, with a focused overview of the declared area's southern and inland aspects. (Source: DTP)



Map 6: Bass Coast declared area framework plan, with a focused overview of the declared area's western aspect, including Phillip Island. (Source: DTP)



POLICY DOMAINS



Table 1 lists the distinctive attributes that qualified the Bass Coast declared area as a distinctive area and landscape under the PE Act. These attributes interact in complex ways, and action is required for each of the policy domains set out in this section to uphold their value and address the threats they face.

Together, the policy domains set out the long-term needs and other considerations to integrate decision-making and planning for the declared area. They provide a framework for achieving sustainable development and land management outcomes.

The policy domains are:

- **Bunurong cultural heritage**
- **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**
- **Landscapes**
- **Environment and biodiversity**
- **Historic heritage**
- **Sustainable economic development**
- **Strategic infrastructure**
- **Settlements.**

Objectives specified in the policy domains are binding on RPEs. RPEs must have regard to the specified strategies to achieve the objective when performing a function or duty or exercising a power in relation to the declared area.

Bunurong cultural heritage

The Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, whose ancestors have occupied the Bass Coast declared area for more than 35,000 years, are its Traditional Owners. The area is just a part of the complex and broader Aboriginal cultural landscape. The Bunurong people have a deep connection with all aspects of the environment, including the earth, sea, rivers and sky. Over millennia of custodianship, the Bunurong people have developed a complete understanding of how to care for and manage Country.

The Bunurong people's connection to Country has been devastated by colonisation. Land-clearing for agriculture and development has destroyed aspects of tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage. It continues to do so, although the Bunurong people are working to preserve and protect their sacred places, traditional cultural practices and stories.

The Bunurong people value the declared area's coastal landscapes as a food source (such as shellfish). They once established campsites near rocky platforms and where there was access to freshwater. They occupied coastal areas in the warm and hot seasons, travelling along the coast to find food-rich sites. In the colder periods, the Bunurong people likely occupied upland and inland areas: mainly flat areas on ridgelines and hilltops. Inland areas provided different seasonal food resources and shelter.

There are 640 Aboriginal places within the declared area recorded on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register. Known places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance are concentrated along the coast, and they include stone artefact scatters, shell middens, burial sites and culturally modified trees: these provide evidence of long-term Aboriginal occupation.

The area would undoubtedly have Aboriginal cultural heritage sites yet to be identified and protected. Much of the area has not been thoroughly investigated, and dunes, sand ridges, freshwater sources, former swamplands, floodplains and areas of remnant native vegetation indicate areas of potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity.

Loo-errn

Stories about the land highlight the cultural significance of the coastal landscapes of Bunurong Country. One such story is the story of the Loo-errn, a gigantic, being-like blackfellow who lived on the Yarra. While baking eels in a ground oven on the Yarra flats, he spotted a swan's feather being carried by the south wind. He traced it to its source, where he found flocks of swans resting on Western Port. After a time, the swans flew off to the east, and Loo-errn followed them to the Corner Inlet at Wamman (the Bunurong name for Wilson's Promontory).

— Bunurong Land Council

The Bunurong people are the custodians of the declared area and have a deep connection to Country. Aboriginal cultural heritage must be acknowledged, and Aboriginal knowledge and practice protected by enabling the Bunurong to heal and strengthen their Country. A holistic approach to managing the declared area sees oral histories, cultural practices and values shared and understood, as culturally appropriate. This approach will contribute to resilient communities and help increase understanding, respect for and appreciation of the area's rich Aboriginal cultural heritage.



Objective and strategies

Objective 1

To recognise, conserve, strengthen and promote the declared area's Aboriginal cultural heritage values and work in partnership with the Bunurong people in caring for Country.

Strategies

1.1 Acknowledge Bunurong values, cultural practices and knowledge in decision-making about land use, development and land management.

1.2 Actively involve the Bunurong people in identifying, protecting, managing and enhancing Aboriginal cultural heritage places and tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

1.3 With the Bunurong people, promote and improve community education, awareness and understanding of Bunurong values, Aboriginal cultural heritage, language and cultural practices.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Current and future climate change hazards and their impacts are an existential threat to the Bass Coast declared area and Victoria, and sustained action and greater community resilience is needed.

In coming years, the area is forecast to experience higher average temperatures, more extreme heat events, less rainfall, longer droughts, more frequent extreme storm and flood events and rising sea levels. This will increase coastal erosion, coastal inundation and flooding, and bushfire risk, as well as decrease water security and degrade water and soil quality.

Effective, sustained actions to mitigate climate change — to slow and then stop global warming and to better live with the effects of climate change — need all levels of government, the private sector, non- government organisations and communities to work together. Planning policies and other planning controls are essential tools to achieve these goals.

The response to climate change must be global. In 2015, 196 parties (including Australia) to the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Paris Agreement. The primary goal of the agreement is to limit global warming to well below two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. The agreement came into effect in November 2016.

To implement the Victorian Government's support for the Paris Agreement, the *Climate Change Act 2017* sets a long-term target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. *Victoria's Climate Change Strategy* sets out the strategies to achieve this target.

Bushfire risk management

There is a need to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfires through risk-based planning which prioritises protecting human life over all other policy considerations.

Much of the declared area has been cleared and is mostly grassland across a mix of flat ground, undulating hills and smaller areas of steeper topography. These areas generally have a lower fuel load, but areas of unmanaged grass vegetation are vulnerable to ember attack and fast-moving, wind- driven fires. There are also some areas with higher bushfire risk (such as coastal parks, reserves and foothill areas), where the vegetation is denser, and fire behaviour is likely to be more intense and unpredictable.

Land use planning is key to managing and minimising bushfire risk in the declared area now and in the future, and it helps communities prepare for bushfire events. Settlement planning and development activities should direct development away from high-risk areas and include bushfire protection measures to reduce risks.

In planning settlements, careful consideration must be given to the need to protect vulnerable communities and larger populations in bushfire-affected areas, and it must link to emergency management planning.

As well as threatening human life and the environment, bushfires have significant economic consequences. Tourism businesses and destinations may need to close when bushfire risk is high, and agricultural businesses can lose land, stock and infrastructure. Businesses need emergency management and bushfire risk mitigation planning and actions to minimise these risks.

Bushfire risk management that integrates scientific expertise with Traditional Owners' fire management knowledge can protect and enhance biodiversity values, mitigate bushfire risk and other climate change impacts and deepen peoples' appreciation of and respect for Country.

Coastal erosion

The declared area's beaches, cliffs, mudflats, coastal wetlands and estuaries are increasingly exposed to rising sea levels, storm surges and erosion. These climate change impacts alter the natural patterns and rates of erosion and longshore drift: the movement and deposition of sand, sediment and other material along the shore by waves. Coastal modifications (such as dredging, stormwater disposal, coastal protection structures and harbours) can have positive and negative effects on the coast.

Infrastructure (such as recreational facilities and buildings), particularly in low-lying areas, are at high risk of damage from coastal erosion. Aboriginal cultural and historic heritage sites are also threatened. The Bunurong people are saltwater people, and many Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are on or near the coast.

Changing erosion patterns along coastlines force marine and coastal plants and animals to migrate inland. Estuary and wetland vegetation (such as mangroves) will naturally migrate inland to areas less threatened by rising sea levels and permanent inundation. Hard infrastructure (such as seawalls and settlements) close to aquatic vegetation are barriers to the natural inland migration process. More visitors and greater use of beaches may damage dune vegetation and affect erosion if not managed adequately.



Coastal inundation and flooding

Coastal inundation and flooding occurs before high waters damage assets (such as infrastructure and agricultural land) on surrounding floodplains. However, if these assets are under imminent threat, an estuary may need to be artificially opened to prevent damage. There are severe environmental risks with artificially and reactively opening estuaries, including mass fish deaths due to low oxygen levels, exposure of acid sulphate soils and disturbances to wetlands.

Floods often accelerate the erosion of river channels and damage nearby infrastructure and the natural environment. This is particularly so in areas cleared of plants that protect the soil. Low-lying urban and non-urban areas around waterways are at greater risk of flooding. More areas near water bodies and coastal reserves will be unavailable for existing uses at times due to inundation, and the ecology of these areas will change due to flooding and storm events.

Water security

To ensure its future water security, the declared area must plan for declining surface water and groundwater availability and greater demand for water. Demand for water in the declared area is increasing as its population grows and demand from agricultural uses increases, but the amount of available surface water and groundwater is declining.

Run-off-fed reservoirs are the traditional source of water for communities. Alternatives (such as stormwater harvesting and reuse, water sensitive urban design, passive irrigation and recycled water) must be pursued in new development to provide water security in established urban centres and agricultural areas. Additionally, water infrastructure (such as the Victorian Desalination Plant) must be safeguarded within the declared area to better prepare it for climate change. The Strategic infrastructure policy domain also addresses water security infrastructure.

Objectives and strategies

Objective 2

To protect and enhance environmental assets and ecosystem services and support their resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts and natural hazards.



Strategies

2.1	Avoid locating new development and retreat existing development from areas with significant biodiversity and/or high bushfire risk to increase resilience.
2.2	Utilise Bunurong biocultural knowledge and practices to better manage bushfire risk.
2.3	Retain and enhance the declared area's valued biodiversity, landscape character, vegetation and canopy cover (to the extent practicable, having regard to bushfire risk) to sequester carbon and reduce heat island effects in urban areas.
2.4	Ensure coastal infrastructure is designed to respond to future climate change impacts and has minimal effect on existing environmental features, including vegetation, natural landforms and natural water flows.
2.5	Minimise the disturbance of coastal acid sulphate soils, particularly around Western Port, Anderson Inlet and the Powlett and Bass river mouths.
2.6	Minimise the need for artificial estuary openings by mitigating flood risks with alternative methods.
2.7	Use best practice water sensitive design and alternative water sources to reduce potable water consumption and protect and improve the health of waterways, wetlands, beaches and the marine environment.

Objective 3

To ensure communities are prepared and places designed to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

Strategies

3.1	Avoid locating new development and take a pathway approach to managing existing development and sensitive land uses in areas adjacent to waterways and estuaries or at risk of coastal and riverine flooding and coastal erosion.
3.2	Ensure coastal erosion mitigation strategies and approaches restore and preserve natural systems, allow for wetland migration and reduce negative impacts on coastal environments.
3.3	Ensure coastal and waterway infrastructure is located and designed to minimise impacts on existing environmental features including vegetation, habitat, natural landforms and natural flows of water.



Landscapes

The coastal and rural landscapes of Bass Coast are of outstanding natural beauty. Residents and visitors highly value the declared area's beaches and bays, rugged coastlines, rock platforms and formations, seascapes and bush for the diverse enjoyment opportunities they provide. There are countless panoramic seascapes and views across Western Port and along the Bass Strait coastline. Moving inland, rolling, pastoral hills and a patchwork of paddocks and native vegetation give way to the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges, known locally as Bass Hills, which form an iconic backdrop to the rural hinterland.

The coastal and rural landscapes are important to the region's Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage: there are many reminders of the declared area's agricultural, industrial and maritime past.

The declared area's landscapes are at risk of incremental, cumulative and irreversible damage from human impacts and climate change.

Human impacts can include urban development and encroachment, visitation and trespass, water contamination from pollutants and run-off, vegetation removal and other damaging land management practices. Climate change impacts can include rising sea levels, flooding, storm surges, changes in ocean temperature, erosion and bushfire. Long-term planning for the declared area can help to address these issues and safeguard its landscapes for current and future generations.

The declared area's landscapes are defined by both their character and significance. 'Landscape character' is different from 'landscape significance':

- **Landscape character** is the interplay of geology, landform, vegetation, water form and other natural features, combined with the effects of land use and built development, that makes one landscape different from another (refer to **Map 7**).
- **Landscape significance** is based on the visual values of a landscape (that is, its scenic beauty, with consideration of other values such as Aboriginal cultural and historic heritage and environmental values) and less- tangible values (such as memories or associations) (refer to **Map 8**).

Landscape character

With respect to landscape character, the declared area comprises:

- **Landscape types** are areas with a generally similar landscape character.
- **Landscape areas** within the landscape types are separate geographical units with varying local conditions.

The declared area's four landscape types — South Gippsland Coastal Plains, Bass Strait Coastal Cliffs, Strzelecki Highlands and Western Port Localised Flatlands — and the landscape areas within each, are outlined in **Map 7** and the following narrative overviews.

South Gippsland Coastal Plains

The South Gippsland Coastal Plains landscape type, which comprises the coastal and coastal hinterland areas of Gippsland that extend east to around Lakes Entrance, is shown in **Map 7**. In the declared area, this landscape type has four landscape areas: Westernport and Bass River Lowlands, Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland, Bunurong Coast and Powlett River Lowlands, and Inverloch and Anderson Inlet.

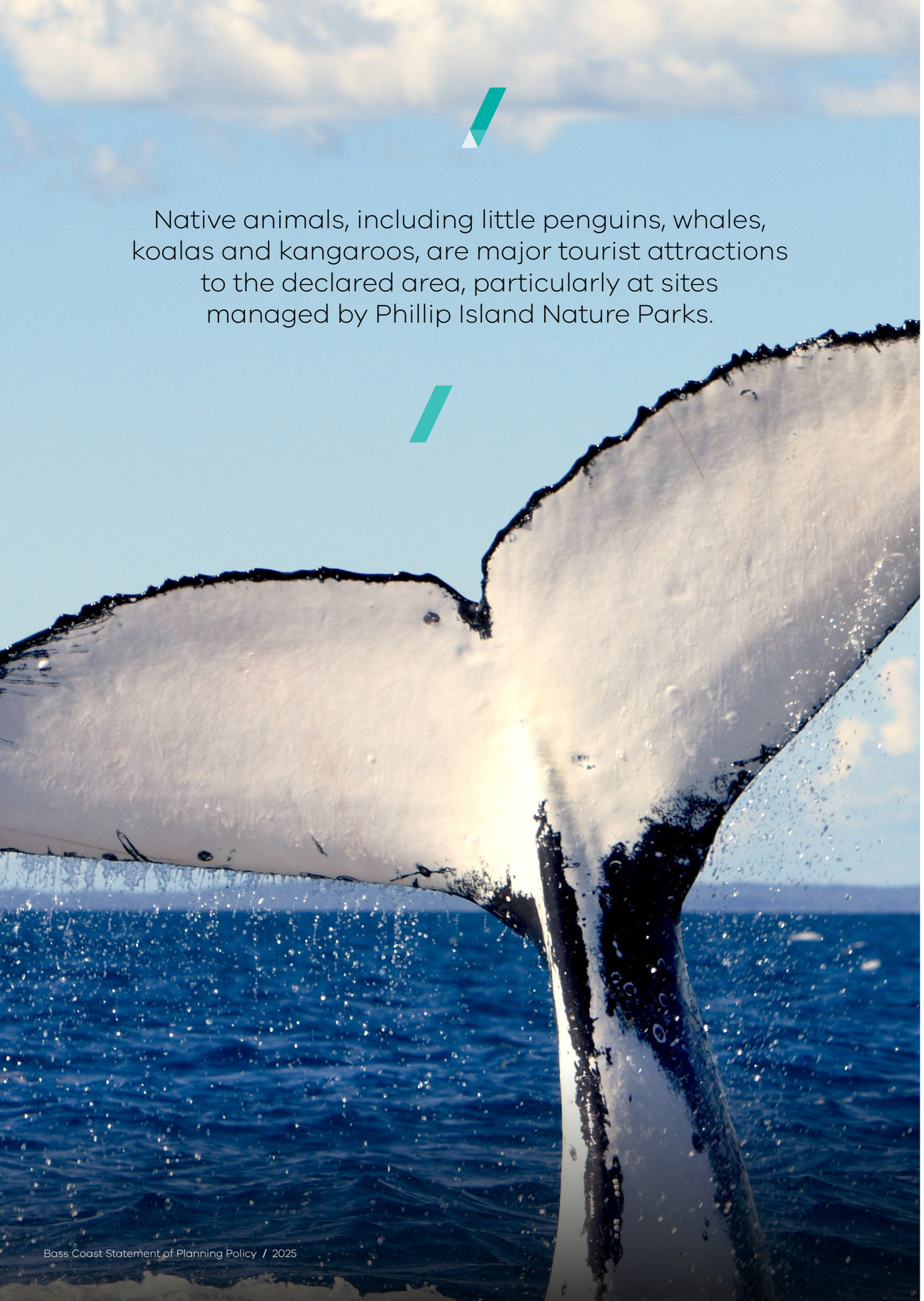
Westernport and Bass River Lowlands

The Westernport and Bass River Lowlands landscape area is mainly rural, low-lying and flat to gently undulating. It has two areas abutting the eastern edge of Western Port: the northern area, and an area east of Jam Jerrup between the Bass and South Gippsland highways. The larger part of the area takes in the relatively flat coast and coastal hinterland further south, extending from Corinella to Woolamai, a small settlement at the base of the Bass Hills.

Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland

The Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland landscape area is on the Phillip Island north coast, between Coghlan Road at the eastern edge of Cowes to the west beyond Ventnor, around Davie Lane. The area extends inland, taking in central Phillip Island's rolling, rural landscape. The north coast is a sandy, mostly low-energy coastline adjoining Western Port and is elevated in parts. The hinterland features a patchwork of paddocks separated by long, straight roads running mostly north-south that are draped across the landscape.





Bunurong Coast and Powlett River Lowlands

The Bunurong Coast and Powlett River Lowlands landscape area includes the diverse, rugged Bunurong Coast between the southern edge of Kilcunda and The Caves to the west of Inverloch and a largely cleared, rolling, pastoral hinterland that extends inland to the Strzelecki Foothills. High dunes, sea cliffs, rocky headlands, rock stacks, and beaches are valued landscape features along the Bass Strait coast. The immediate hinterland is largely undeveloped, and in places it supports intact coastal banksia woodland communities and large swathes of coastal heathland vegetation.

Inverloch and Anderson Inlet

The Inverloch and Anderson Inlet landscape area is centred on Anderson Inlet, a shallow, sandy estuary where the Tarwin River meets Bass Strait. The landscape extends inland to take in the slightly steeper and more undulating hinterland to the south of the Powlett River flats, and it extends from the declared area's eastern boundary to west of Inverloch.

Bass Strait Coastal Cliffs

The Bass Strait Coastal Cliffs landscape type occurs in two parts of Gippsland: **Map 7** shows the part in the declared area. The type comprises a basaltic volcanic geology — the Mornington Volcanic Group — which also covers the Mornington Peninsula and French Island. At its interface with Bass Strait, winds and waves have shaped this geology into a varied, dramatic landscape of rugged headlands, sea cliffs and dunes. In the declared area, this landscape type has one landscape area: Phillip Island Coastal Cliffs.

Phillip Island Coastal Cliffs

The Phillip Island Coastal Cliffs landscape area is on the southern side of Phillip Island between Cape Woolamai and around Davie Lane southwest of Ventnor. The area is a varied, dramatic coastline of sea cliffs, granitic headlands and rocky platforms, with an elevated hinterland of rolling hills. Some beaches are small and sheltered, while others (such as Smiths and Woolamai) stretch out in long crescents with surf breaks that attract residents and visitors year-round.

Strzelecki Highlands

Map 7 shows the Strzelecki Highlands landscape type, which comprises the steep, dissected, rugged Strzelecki Ranges and its shallower foothills. The landscape type stretches between San Remo in the west to around Longford in the east and inland to the Latrobe River. In the declared area, this landscape type has two landscape areas: the Bass Hills and Kilcunda Coast, and The Gurdies Hills.

Bass Hills and Kilcunda Coast

The Bass Hills and Kilcunda Coast landscape area comprises the most prominent landforms within the declared area: the westernmost part of the Strzelecki Ranges, which rises steeply from the surrounding coastal plains, and the dramatic coastline between San Remo and Kilcunda. The coastal hinterland is elevated and pastoral, with the Bass Hills further inland consisting of rolling, cleared pastures.

The Gurdies Hills

The Gurdies Hills landscape area also forms part of the Strzelecki Ranges. It is located at the ranges' westernmost edge and separated from the Bass Hills area by the Bass River Valley. The hills are lower and more undulating, and large areas of remnant forest and woodland cover parts of them. Within the declared area, they stretch from the shire boundary in the north to just south of the Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve.

Western Port Localised Flatlands

Map 7 shows the Western Port Localised Flatlands landscape type, which comprises flat, coastal areas of intertidal mud and sand flats, marshes and wetlands characteristic of this part of Western Port and its extensive tidal range. The landscape type is adjacent to or forms part of the Western Port Ramsar site, a wetland of international significance. In the declared area, this landscape type has two landscape areas: Coastal Mangroves and Mudflats, and Rhyll Inlet and Churchill Island Wetlands.

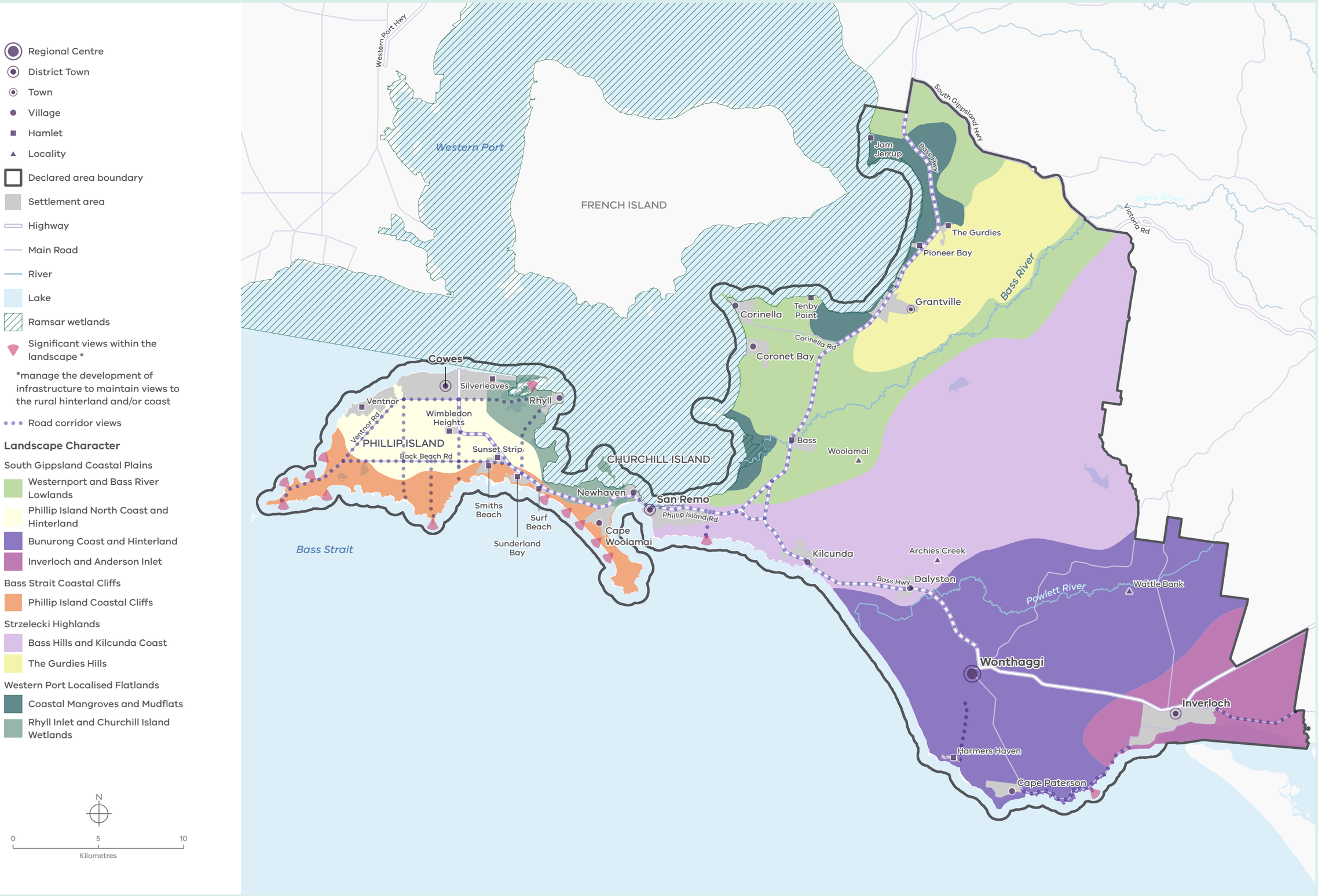
Coastal Mangroves and Mudflats

The Coastal Mangroves and Mudflats landscape area occurs in two locations on the eastern edge of Western Port. The northernmost location hugs the smaller bay on which Grantville is situated, and the other is centred on the Bass River estuary. Both locations have intertidal mangroves, mudflats at their coastal edges and a flat, low-lying, rural hinterland of cleared, marshy paddocks.

Rhyll Inlet and Churchill Island Wetlands

The Rhyll Inlet and Churchill Island Wetlands landscape area is on the eastern coastal edge of Phillip Island, and it hugs the low-energy, south-western side of Western Port. It is a tranquil, low-lying landscape comprising wetlands and a rural hinterland and includes Rhyll Inlet and Churchill Island.

Map 7: Landscape character types and areas. (Source: DTP)





Landscape significance

All landscapes have a character, but not all landscapes are significant. Significant landscapes are areas of land that are valued for their natural, cultural, and/or aesthetic qualities. They can be categorized as having either state or regional significance. State significance indicates that higher levels of protection and management are required.

Map 8 shows the declared area's six significant landscapes, which are the:

- Phillip Island Western and Southern Coast landscape, which is of state significance.
- San Remo to Inverloch Coast and Coastal Hinterland landscape, which is of state and regional significance.
- Phillip Island Swan Bay Coast and Churchill Island, Eastern Westernport Bay Coastal Flatlands, Strzelecki Foothills, and Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland landscapes, which are of regional significance.

Phillip Island Western and Southern Coast (state significance)

The Phillip Island Western and Southern Coast landscape includes the coast and coastal hinterland generally between Cape Woolamai and the south-western edge of Ventnor, including the Summerland Peninsula and Seal Rocks. It is a varied, dramatic coastal landscape of stunning sea cliffs, granitic headlands, rocky offshore reefs, basalt stacks and high dunes. Some sandy coves are small and sheltered; others (such as Woolamai and Smiths beaches) form long crescents pounded by sought-after surf breaks. The landscape's well-known and highly valued views are of regional and state significance.

Bass Strait's high-energy winds and seas have shaped this dynamic and picturesque coast, its exposed position further contributing to its untamed character. The landscape includes numerous visually and geologically significant features, including the seamed, granitic stack of Cape Woolamai, the multisided columns of The Colonnades, the craggy Forrest Caves and Pyramid Rock's black basalt stack.

Cat Bay and adjacent coves on the north-western Western Port coast are no less spectacular and rugged, with high, grassy dunes, rocky spills, black platforms and stunning offshore basalt stacks and islands. The nightly Penguin Parade at Summerland Bay attracts over 700,000 visitors annually, and Seal Rocks is home to one of Australia's largest Australian fur seal colonies.

The elevated landscape edge and hinterland give rise to spectacular coastal views from the many lookouts and access points: there are far-reaching panoramas along the coastline and out to sea. While quite accessible to visitors, the western and north-western parts of the landscape beyond Smiths Beach have a particularly wild, undeveloped character. To the southwest, it is open ocean between here and Antarctica.

San Remo to Inverloch Coast and Coastal Hinterland (state and regional significance)

The San Remo to Inverloch Coast and Coastal Hinterland landscape is state-significant, and the coastal hinterland beginning slightly east of Kilcunda is regionally significant. The highly valued views along the coast are varied and include views of state significance.

The landscape's coast is one of stunning contrasts and iconic features. The high sea cliffs between San Remo and Kilcunda (where the Strzelecki Foothills meet Bass Strait) include jagged headlands and rock shelves — exposed to and battered by Bass Strait seas — interspersed with sandy coves and isolated beaches. The George Bass Coastal Walk from San Remo to Kilcunda offers commanding views of the dramatic coastline and Bass Strait.

The coastal edge between Kilcunda and west of Inverloch is just as visually arresting, with elevated cliffs and dunes, the iconic Cape Paterson headland and nearby offshore rock formations. Eagles Nest, between Cape Paterson and Inverloch, is a particularly notable sandstone formation protruding from the shore platform high out of the water. South of Kilcunda, the large, scenic estuary of the Powlett River meets the coast; there is a hinterland of intact and significant coastal banksia woodland communities to the north and south. There are also views of iconic structures in the landscape (such as the Kilcunda Trestle Bridge and the Wonthaggi Wind Farm turbines).

As the coastline approaches Inverloch from the west, the elevation of the coastal topography steadily declines, merging into tidal sand flats and the low-energy Anderson Inlet landscape. This shallow, dynamic river mouth, edged by broad, sandy beaches and low, grassy dunes, provides important habitat for endangered migratory birds and other animals.

Phillip Island Swan Bay Coast and Churchill Island (regional significance)

The Phillip Island Swan Bay Coast and Churchill Island landscape is a tranquil, low-lying landscape along the northeastern coastline of Phillip Island. The landscape has valued views of local and regional significance.

Rhyll Inlet provides a rich diversity of habitat for coastal plants and animals, and it is accessible along boardwalks through coastal woodland and paperbark forest to intertidal mudflats and mangroves. There are expansive views from Conservation Hill across the inlet to Western Port.

Churchill Island is more undulating than the adjacent coastal flats. The island's cleared, rolling landscape is hillier on its northern side, supporting an ancient Moonah forest. The land then climbs to a central high point with historic farm buildings. There were once several islands off the Phillip Island coast (such as Cape Woolamai and The Nobbies), but Churchill Island is now the only one. Views directly to the east across Swan Bay of Churchill Island are particularly noteworthy: the island appears to float on the still waters of the sheltered cove.

Beyond this landscape's marshy, intertidal coastal edge is a rolling, rural hinterland with indigenous vegetation and exotic shelterbelts. From here, the topography slopes up to a ridge that partially encircles the landscape, providing shelter and a quiet stillness to this significant part of Phillip Island.

Eastern Westernport Bay Coastal Flatlands (regional significance)

The Eastern Westernport Bay Coastal Flatlands landscape is a low-energy coastline of intertidal mangroves interspersed with shallow, sandy beaches and areas of low, eroding sandstone cliffs. The Bass River estuary is a unique estuarine saltmarsh environment in the southernmost part of the landscape. The low-lying landscape has a serene, secluded quality, affording expansive views across this sheltered part of Western Port to the heavily vegetated eastern side of French Island.

White mangrove mudflats are a spectacular feature of this landscape, and they are sensitive to changes in the duration and frequency of inundation, changes forecast as a result of rising sea levels. They provide a vital breeding ground for fish and are an important habitat for shorebirds. There are intact areas of coastal saltmarsh immediately inland of the marine and estuarine tidal flats, beyond which is a backdrop of indigenous coastal shrubs and grasses. Reef Island, a tertiary volcanic outlier joined to the coast by a basalt rubble ridge, is another remarkable feature. Beyond the landscape's intertidal coastal edge is a flat, low-lying rural hinterland of cleared, marshy paddocks with linear eucalypt reserves and exotic shelterbelt planting.

The Corinella Peninsula is more undulating and elevated than the rest of the landscape, and it has a variegated and visually interesting coastal edge. There are 15-metre cliffs at Settlement Point and a substantial ironstone plane (known as the Corinella Fault), which has resisted erosion to project out above the level of the beach. Other coastal-edge features of the peninsula include protected, sandy coves scattered with rocks, substantial bushland reserves right up to the shoreline and small offshore stands of white mangroves.





Strzelecki Foothills (regional significance)

The Strzelecki Foothills landscape incorporates the Bass Hills, The Gurdies Hills and the picturesque Bass River Valley that separates them. These features are some of the most defining of the declared area, particularly the Bass Hills that rise steeply from the surrounding coastal plains, providing a distinctive and highly visible backdrop to the Western Port lowlands.

The Bass Hills are a mostly cleared, pastoral landscape of bucolic rises and gullies. The foothills are steep and incised in some areas and more rolling in others. Exotic shelterbelts divide patchworks of paddocks, inclines and falls, and remnant native vegetation lines roadsides and waterways. By contrast, The Gurdies Hills on the other side of the Bass River Valley are lower and less visually arresting than the Bass Hills. They undulate beneath large areas of remnant forest and woodland, particularly on the western side, providing a heavily vegetated edge to the Bass Highway and a bushland backdrop to the hamlets of Pioneer Bay and The Gurdies.

The Bass River meanders between the hills, creating a fertile valley floor with a serene, rural character. Remnants of riparian forest line the river, alongside which the railway line once ran. There are picturesque, pastoral views from within the dale, framed by the valley walls. The adjacent hills also provide many opportunities for panoramic views out over the grids of roads and shelterbelts of the pastoral plains to Western Port and French and Phillip islands.

Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland (regional significance)

The Phillip Island North Coast and Hinterland landscape is a picturesque, rolling, rural landscape with a low-energy frontage to Western Port. Volcanic activity has shaped the island, and its basaltic geology forms an undulating hinterland punctuated by hillocks.

The topography is draped with long, straight roads and is overlaid with a patchwork of cleared paddocks. There are corridors of remnant native vegetation adjacent to roadsides, and swathes of Swamp paperbark populate waterways and depressions. Rows of Cypress pines act as windbreaks and form iconic shapes on elevated horizons. There are numerous brick and iron chicory kilns in the hinterland, many ramshackle and abandoned. They are reminders of an important industry in the past.

The north coast comprises a series of dune-backed beaches separated by rocky headlands, some high cliffs and wide basalt reefs that extend offshore. Red Rock Point is a particularly compelling feature of the Western Port coast, comprising stunning red basalt outcrops that contrast with the adjacent muted sand. Further west, McHaffie Point is likely an eruption centre from the Older Volcanics geological period and comprises 10–12-metre cliffs cut in hard, red volcanic tuffs. Rather more tranquil are the lower reaches of Saltwater Creek, an intermittent stream that is frequently sand-blocked; it is the only valley open to the sea on Phillip Island's north coast.

Objective and strategies

Objective 4

To protect and enhance the declared area's significant landscapes, including their distinctive characters, physical features and cultural values.

Strategies

4.1 Ensure landscape and seascape features sensitive to change and threats to them are identified and addressed early in strategic planning processes.

4.2 Contain urban growth within protected settlement boundaries, and maintain green breaks between settlements.

4.3 Ensure development responds to the surrounding landscape character and maintains the visual dominance of the natural landscape by:

- being sited so that works and buildings are tucked into the landscape and use established vegetation or new vegetation buffers to screen development when viewed from the public realm.
- providing substantial setbacks from road corridors and publicly accessible land.
- using building forms, design detailing, materials and colours that immerse buildings within the landscape so they are not visually dominant.

4.4 Ensure development is located away from and does not protrude above hilltops and ridgelines, so the natural contours and vegetation remain visible.

4.5 Manage land use, development and infrastructure to ensure that the dominance of significant landscapes, views and vantage points is conserved and enhanced by:

- retaining the rural outlook from inland, main road corridors, particularly the scenic panoramas available of the Bass Hills from the Bass Highway.
- retaining views to the coastline and water from scenic coastal drives (such as the Bunurong Coastal Drive between Wonthaggi and Cape Paterson, and Cape Paterson and Inverloch).
- retaining and planting native and indigenous vegetation.

4.6 Retain and enhance remnant native vegetation in coastal reserves, along road and waterway corridors and on private land (for example, in shelterbelts, along fence lines and on steep agricultural land), where appropriate and to the extent practicable, having regard to bushfire risk.

Map 8: Landscape significance.

(Source: DTP)

