

# Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (Fairhaven to Skenes Creek) Community Engagement Independent Consultation Report



Produced for



**GREAT OCEAN ROAD**  
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY



Environment,  
Land, Water  
and Planning

≧ August 2022 ≦



## Using this document

Discretion should be exercised in making decisions based on the data in this report. Significant effort has been made to reach a broad range of individuals and accurately reflect their contributions.

This report provides an independent summary of the feedback received over several consultation phases. This feedback is subjective and not always consistent. It cannot *necessarily* be construed as an accurate reflection of the weight of broader community or stakeholder opinion. The report does not provide recommendations or opinions of the consultancy team. No formal statistical analysis or fact-checking of data has been undertaken.

No responsibility or liability can be taken for errors or omissions, or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

All photos were provided by DELWP.

## Abbreviations used in this document

DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
GOR	Great Ocean Road
GORCAPA	Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
PCB	Project Control Board
PTV	Public Transport Victoria
RRV	Regional Roads Victoria

*It is acknowledged that this consultation took place on Gadubanud Country, the traditional lands and waters of the Eastern Maar.*

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## Executive Summary

An iconic new coastal walking trail will be delivered on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation, along the Otway Coast from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek. Once complete, approximately 90km of existing and new trails will link the Surf Coast Walk and the Great Ocean Walk. This will result in a continuous walk from Torquay to The Twelve Apostles.

Ongoing stakeholder and community input has and will continue to play an important role as the concept design for the walking trail evolves.

Community input resulted in over 70 revisions of the first alignment concept and, together with an additional round of community feedback, further investigation, agency input and ground-truthing, a further 40 changes to the revised alignment. This process was repeated as the project progressed through a further conceptual alignment before landing on a final 'ground-truthed' alignment. At each stage, community and agency input and data/findings refined the alignment to ensure the best outcomes for the community, environment and trail walkers.

Input provided from community members and agencies included positive and negative alignment suggestions. Positive suggestions related to ideas or suggestions of alignments, views or landscape features to include on the final route. Negative suggestions related to aspects that the trail should avoid, for safety reasons, the protection of environmental or cultural heritage values, private amenity or even future agency management and maintenance. Both positive and negative feedback has been fundamental in determining the final alignment.

The final Draft Master Plan was provided to community members in August 2022. Reactions were overwhelmingly very positive, with suggestions on aspects such as additional trail loops, trail surface, maintenance (especially weed control), getting walkers there, all-abilities access and emergency management.

Some typographical and grammatical errors were also noted, resulting in minor rewording in the Plan. Comments relevant to future planning stages and operations will be passed on as appropriate.



# Engagement Summary

October 2021 – August 2022



## 1. Introduction

### Project background

An iconic new coastal walking trail will be delivered on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation, along the Otway Coast from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek. Once complete, approximately 90km of existing and new trails will link up the Surf Coast Walk and the Great Ocean Walk. This will result in a continuous walk from Torquay to the Twelve Apostles.

The delivery partners for this significant project are the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA), Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation. The project is guided by a Project Control Board (PCB), the membership of which is contained in Appendix A.

The Victorian Government has provided \$23.8 million to plan the entire trail (Fairhaven to Skenes Creek) and build the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River. The Australian Government contributed \$350,000 for planning and feasibility studies (Cumberland to Skenes Creek) through the Geelong City Deal.

Ongoing stakeholder and community engagement play an important role as the concept design for the walking trail evolves.

Kismet Forward was engaged to design and help implement the communication and community engagement activities over four phases to support the Fairhaven to Skenes Creek Coastal Trail Design project.

### Purpose of this report

This report aims to explain the engagement journey through the Master Planning process (October 2021 to August 2022), and the influence community involvement has had on the project's design.

## 2. Engagement guidance

From the outset, the project partners were committed to providing meaningful opportunities for the community to have their say about the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (Fairhaven to Skenes Creek) project.

The engagement process aimed to support the iterative development of the design by gathering feedback that reflected local knowledge, needs and aspirations. It built upon engagement activities during the 2019 development of the project's Feasibility Study. The earlier engagement presented an early draft concept to community members and asked about their vision for the trail, opportunities and challenges, priority design considerations, the idea of suspension bridges and how people might use the trail.

### Engagement objectives

The objectives of this engagement project were:

- Community and stakeholders provide meaningful input into the project
- Nobody is taken by surprise when final applications for relevant authorisations are made

### The community's influence

Community input was sought throughout the master planning process on a range of topics, including the walking trail's alignment, proposed suspension bridges, lookouts, camping sites and other trail features, project design principles, achieving environmental excellence, trail accessibility, car parks and other options for getting to the trail.

Community views informed key decisions and significantly influenced the project design. This will continue as the Master Planning process proceeds through detailed design and environmental assessments and statutory approvals later in 2022 and 2023.

## How We Engaged



**ENGAGE**  
**Herald**  
Surf Coast Times  
The Apollo Bay News

Targeted **social media campaigns** and **print advertising** to keep the community informed of progress and promote opportunities for consultation



**Regular updates** to the project contact list and on the Engage Victoria page



**Online community surveys** via Engage Victoria in October 2021 and March 2022



**Online community drop-in sessions**

8 in October 2021,  
3 in March 2022,  
1 in July 2022 and  
1 in August 2022

**2 online deliberative workshops** with community members in March and April 2022 to discuss proposed suspension bridges and getting to the trail in greater detail



**Pop Up sessions** at Apollo Bay in October 2021 and at Apollo Bay, Wye River and Lorne in March 2022



**Online semi-structured interviews** with key community stakeholders

8 in October 2021 and  
5 in June/July 2022



**Drop-in sessions** in Moggs Creek in July 2022 and in Apollo Bay, Wye River and Lorne in August 2022



**17 Fact Sheets** providing maps and additional information about each section of the trail as the design evolved

## 3. How we engaged

A specialised approach was developed to achieve the engagement objectives and get feedback from as many community members as possible. Engagement phases occurred at critical stages throughout the master planning process (see Appendix B).

‘What We Heard’ documents outlining the results of Engagement Phases 1 (November 2021), and 2 (April 2022) were published on the Engage Victoria website<sup>1</sup>

## Notes regarding this report

This report includes some verbatim comments (shown in *italics*) to demonstrate the range and level of sentiment expressed. All quotes were provided by community members unless otherwise indicated. Some minor grammatical and spelling fixes have been made.

All comments have been consolidated under the appropriate theme in this report.

For more information on each route, including maps, please visit the Engage Victoria website<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://engage.vic.gov.au/trail-design>

## 4. What we heard

### Participation

*Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1, October-November 2021)*

Comment was invited on Concept Route 1, including views about:

- The proposed trail alignment (including the use of existing tracks, new trail sections, alternative routes, and possible short loop walks)
- Existing and proposed features such as underpasses, road crossings, picnic grounds, toilets, lookouts, campgrounds, trailheads, car parks
- Suspension bridges (5 options were presented)

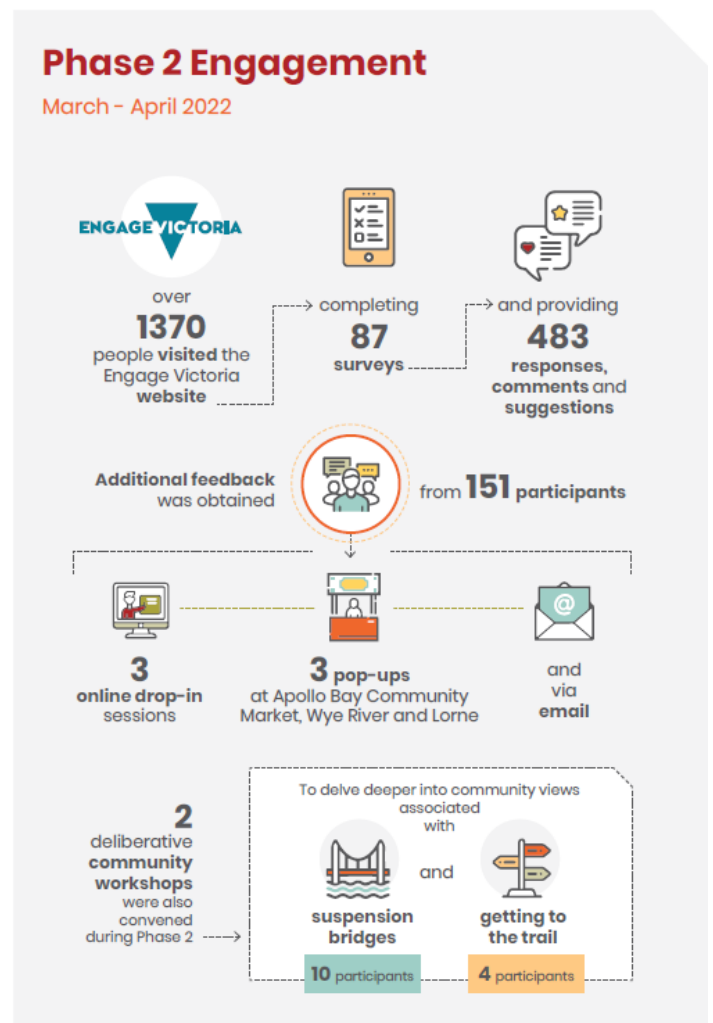
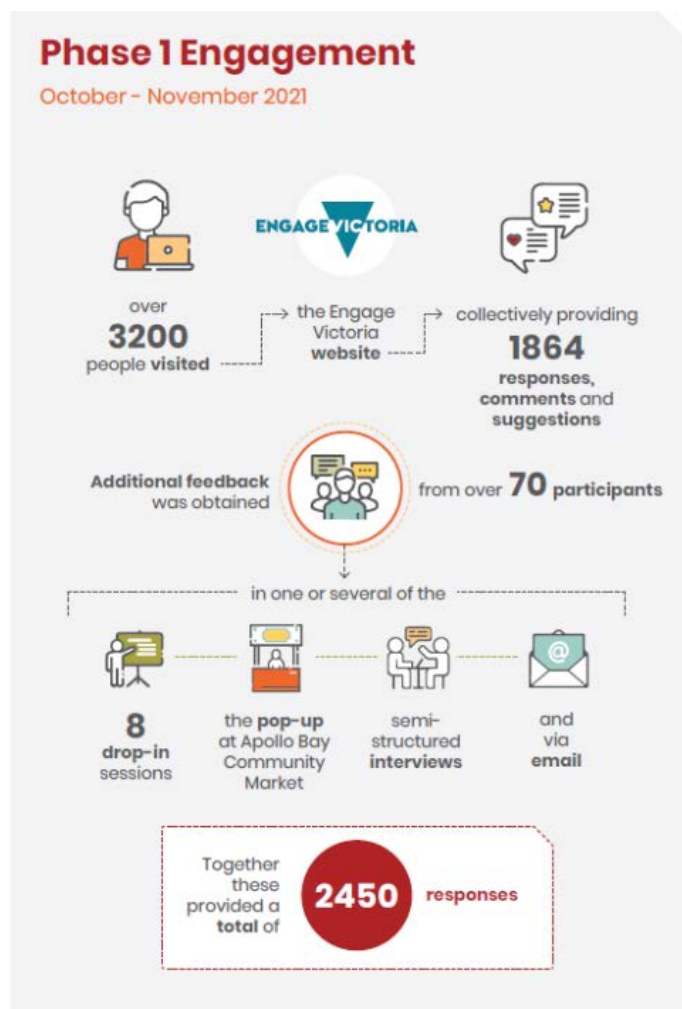
*Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2, March-April 2022)*

Comment was invited on Concept Route 2, including views about:

- Guiding Design Principles
- The revised trail alignment
- Trail accessibility
- Opportunities to get visitors to the trail
- Suspension bridges (including a sixth option)
- Ensuring environmental excellence

Feedback on the revised trail alignment focussed on Sections 1 through 4 (Fairhaven to Jamieson Creek) and Sections 7 and 8 (Kennett River to Skenes Creek).

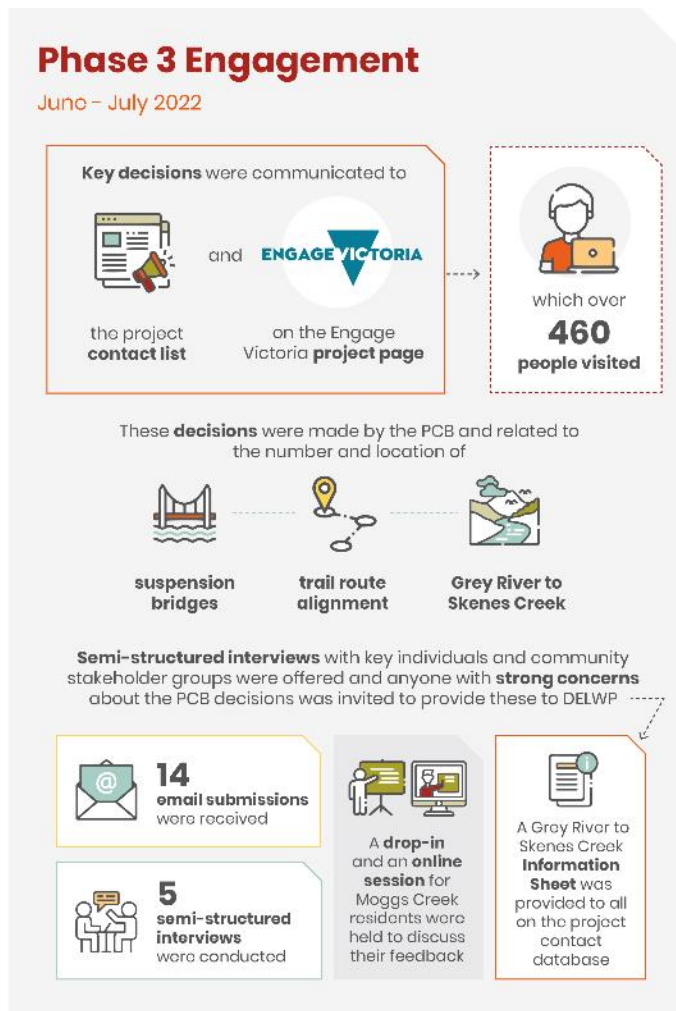
Sections 5 and 6 have recently been constructed from Jamieson Creek to Kennett River.





*Engagement Phase 3 (re the Ground-truthed route, June-July 2022)*

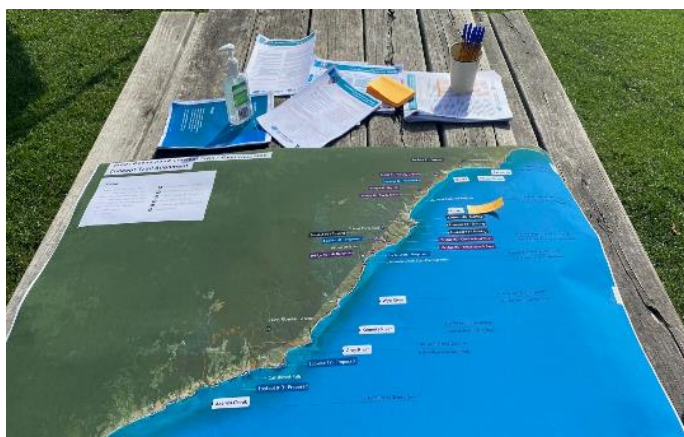
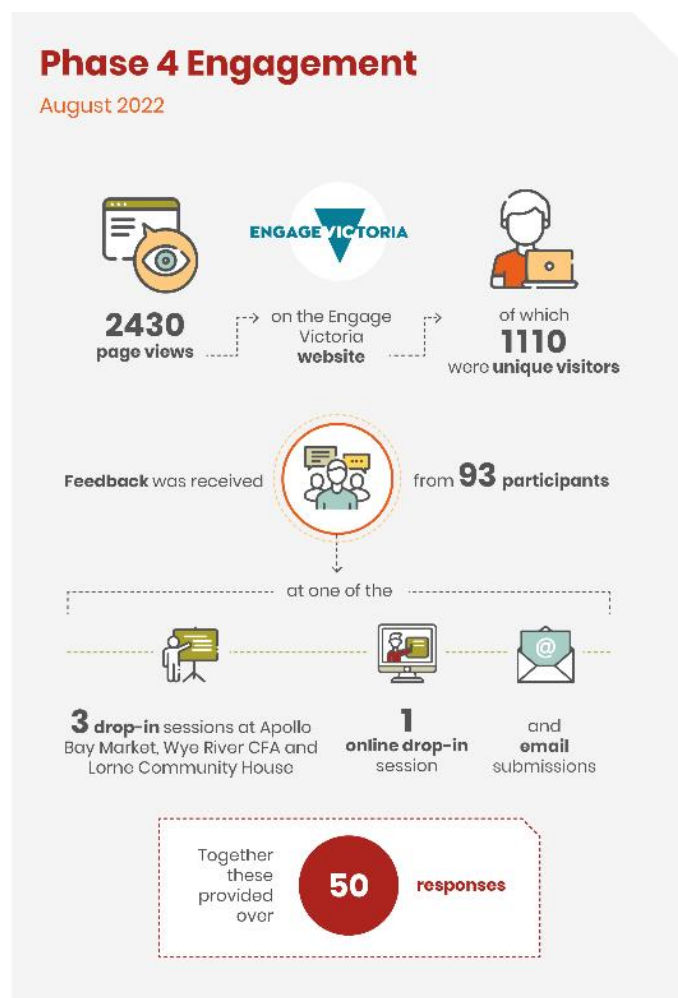
Comment was invited on decisions made by the PCB relating to the number and location of suspension bridges, trail route alignment and the Grey River to Skenes Creek section.



*Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

The final Draft Master Plan delved into the detail of the proposed walking trail, providing a comprehensive understanding of the proposed features, infrastructure requirements, walker experiences, and construction recommendations. It also addressed possible impacts on cultural heritage, European historical elements, biodiversity and more.

The Plan was discussed with community members, outlining how community feedback influenced its development.



## General feedback on the alignment and suspension bridges (all trail sections)

### *Engagement Phase 1 General feedback (re Concept Route 1)*

In providing general feedback about the project during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Suggested that who the trail was being designed to cater for should be made clear, e.g. is it for dedicated wilderness hikers to enjoy, or a drawcard for international tourists and families visiting the region
- Questioned whether a multi-use approach could be delivered (e.g. access for mountain bikes)
- The use of existing tracks, informal paths and powerlines where possible
- Questioned whether ongoing funds for servicing and maintenance, e.g. weed/rubbish control, would be available
- Suggested that the project name be considered, including whether it is called a trail or track
- Suggested that the maps needed improvement
- Requested another round of engagement at a more detailed level

### *Engagement Phase 1 General Suspension bridge feedback*

Community members were asked about building suspension bridges to cross major valleys. Suspension Bridges 1 and 2 were proposed for the Spout Creek to Lily Pond Reserve section, while 3, 4 and 5 were proposed for the Cumberland River to Jamieson Creek section of the trail.

In providing general feedback about suspension bridges for this trail, views regarding proposed Suspension Bridges #1 and #2 were split: roughly equal numbers felt the bridges were unnecessary or they loved the idea.

Those who objected to the proposed Suspension Bridges #3 and #4 did so mainly because they felt these were not a necessary part of a walking track or could be visually intrusive. Those in favour liked the potential experience of using the bridges.

### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- A wide range of key trail user groups is being considered when developing the design: long-distance hikers, day-trippers/tourists, people with limited mobility, families with young children, locals
- This will be a dedicated walking trail (not multi-use)
- The alignment will follow existing tracks and trails where possible
- A maintenance model must be developed
- Naming options for the trail will be considered
- Mapping was updated and further refined
- Another round of engagement was scheduled for March 2022 and June 2022.
- Over 70 revisions were made to the trail alignment (These are discussed further in the relevant sections of this report.)
- An online 'deliberative' workshop was planned for 29 March to build on the various community views regarding proposed bridges.

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*'Trail alignment suggestions resulted in over 70 revisions of the alignment across the extent of the trail.'* (DELWP)

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## Engagement Phase 2 General feedback (re Concept Route 2)

In Phase 2, further community input was sought on the five bridges previously included in the concept alignment, plus an additional bridge across Grassy Creek (called Bridge #0 to save confusion with renumbering the other bridges).

General feedback about bridges as a concept included:

- Respondents were divided in their views, with almost two-thirds of online survey respondents thinking that the proposed suspension bridges were 'really good' or 'good enough'. About 10% said they could live with the bridges following 'a few tweaks'. One-quarter of respondents thought the bridges should not be built.
- Favourable comments about the bridges were that they would be exciting, make for a world-class experience, encourage visitors to stop, stay and spend, help protect the environment, add interesting views and provide access to visitors who may otherwise miss out. People noted this would depend on the bridge size, materials used, engineering impact etc
- Negative comments were that the bridges would be out of character, visually intrusive and unsympathetic in this natural and culturally significant environment, they would present fire and safety concerns, and alternative tracks could create even more impact on the environment. Some respondents questioned their necessity and cost
- Respondents were split on whether the suspension bridges should have alternative crossings, e.g. longer tracks (possibly with stairs) in the valley to the water crossing (possibly with shorter, lower-level bridges). Those supportive of alternative crossings commented that some walkers like the challenge of walking down the valleys, with a different perspective being provided at ground level. Others felt an alternative crossing would create more damage to the creek/valley environment

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*'(Bridges would be) a good way to gain an alternative perspective (of the area) and make it more accessible for some people who otherwise wouldn't get the benefit.'*

*'Structures like major suspension bridges should not dominate the landscape.'*

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Participants at the Suspension Bridges workshop considered the needs of several potential trail user groups, suggesting that:

- Long-distance hikers would appreciate being able to move through a wilderness experience – listen to birds, tread lightly and avoid crowds. After the workshop, a participant added that people interested in the natural environment would want to ensure that the bridges did not disturb habitats or wildlife travel routes.
- Day-trippers and tourists might come for one bridge only and would require nearby car parking with toilets and other visitor facilities.
- People with limited mobility and families with young children would also require nearby vehicle access, with no steps and a gently sloping path.

Workshop participants contributed 21 ideas that could help each bridge, if built, meet the needs/desires of users. These ideas were prioritised and consolidated into the following advice:

- Bridges #0 and #2 (as currently proposed) were seen by this small group of participants to be those most appropriate to remain in the plans; Bridges #3 and #5 (as currently proposed) were least appropriate, with the potential to be removed from the plans
- Long-distance hikers should be recommended an alternate route/track to

- day-trippers (an idea not supported by all participants at the workshop)
- Ambulance and maintenance crew access must be provided
- Visitor facilities and use of the car parks closest to the bridges needed to be considered, e.g. toilets, picnic area
- Bridge locations should be newsworthy, so it is a must-visit site with a 'wow factor' that cannot be accessed in other ways/areas
- Camping at Cumberland River must remain a unique experience and should not be overshadowed by a bridge
- Visibility of the bridges from the Great Ocean Road should be minimal
- Designers should show restraint and avoid the bridges being too intrusive, ensuring the least impact on wildlife
- The bridges must be engineered to reduce the chances of slips, trips and falls.

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Following the input of community members and agencies, further investigation and ground-truthing, over 40 changes were made to the revised concept trail alignment. (These are discussed further within each trail section in the report)
- Alternative routes for suspension bridges were created

Other changes included:

- Several minor modifications were made to the previous concept route across all sections resulting from conditions identified during ground-truthing
- All bridges underwent preliminary assessments on geotechnical, environmental, engineering and cultural values. Further assessments will be undertaken during detailed design (later this year). This will refine the technical feasibility and design,

cultural heritage and environmental considerations, and visual impact and precinct impacts. Three suspension bridges will be prioritised for inclusion in the Master Plan, these being the Cumberland-Winterbrook Bridge (Bridge #4), the Reedy Creek Bridge (Bridge #2) and the Mount Defiance Bridge (Bridge #5)

- A vital component of the ground-truthing exercise regarding lookouts included identifying various location options. Considerations included melding community feedback with distance from other trail features, e.g. bridges, car parks etc., servicing requirements, ease of service access, the capacity of the environment to support the features and visibility to the Great Ocean Road.

*'Community input coupled with further investigation, agency input and ground-truthing led to over 40 revisions of the revised concept trail alignment' (DELWP)*



### *Engagement Phase 3 (re the Ground-truthed Route)*

VNPA expressed concern that new infrastructure, such as car parks, could be added later. They supported the reduction in suspension bridges to 3.

Congestion on the Great Ocean Road during fire emergencies was raised as a concern.

### *Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

In providing general feedback about the alignment, some community members at the drop-in sessions queried whether it would link to nearby trails. Others expressed surprise at the existence of other trails while supporting the intended linkages. One community member enquired whether the project team had considered incorporating into the trail alignment of the Mailman Track, which runs across St George River and was used to take the mail to Wye River.

In providing feedback on bridges and other infrastructure, community members at the drop-in sessions:

- Supported the three bridges in the plan
- Questioned whether hikers' camps will be provided along the trail
- Advocated for toilet facilities and enquired as to their locations
- Stressed the need for car parks not to create additional issues
- Requested that track surfaces maintain a 'remote'/natural feel rather than be hard, compacted gravel that is hard to walk/run on and encourages weeds.

### Getting to the Trail and All-Abilities Access (all trail sections)

#### *Engagement Phase 1*

During the first phase of community engagement in October-November 2021, community members advised that trail designers should avoid building new large car parks or adding to congestion along the Great Ocean Road. Instead, respondents encouraged consideration of other ways to get walkers to the trail.

They also questioned whether aspects of the trail would cater to all abilities.

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The trail must have sections that are compliant with the Federal Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA)
- An online 'deliberative' workshop was planned for 7 April to build on feedback regarding getting to the trail.

#### *Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)*

One of the trail design objectives is to create opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and spend time in the natural environment. During the second phase of community engagement in March 2022, people were asked to suggest parts of the trail that could be accessible to everyone, regardless of their mobility.

#### Possible 'all abilities access' locations

Community members suggested the following possible locations for 'all abilities' access:

- The section between Fairhaven to Spout Creek (possibly on the ridge)
- The Moggs Creek Picnic Area nature trail
- Big Hill from Mair Road
- Along the Lorne Foreshore from Lily Pond Reserve to Point Grey

- From St George River through to Allenvale
- The existing Cumberland River track
- The Kennett River Nature Trail
- Grey River Picnic Area
- Skenes Creek to Petticoat Creek

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*'I hope parts of the trail are accessible for wheelchairs, pushers and bikes.'*

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### Engagement Phase 3 (re the Ground-truthed Route)

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*'We like that the tracks will be step on/step off - people come to do short walks and then would go elsewhere for their accommodation.... Should be only small targeted campgrounds ... so ... minimum impact on the landscape.'*  
(VNPA)

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### Other 'all abilities access' suggestions and considerations

In providing further suggestions and considerations for 'all abilities access', community members added the following:

- The Skenes Creek to Petticoat Creek location would link with the planned all abilities trail from Skenes Creek to Wild Dog Creek and the existing all abilities trail from Wild Dog Creek through Apollo Bay to Marengo. This area has parking access, an all-abilities toilet, and a picnic area at Skenes Creek.
- Some of the identified possible locations would need upgrading
- To make parts of the trail accessible to all, identify short sections from parking to scenic spots that provide a great attraction for people with wheelchairs and prams.
- Select sites close to towns and picnic areas.

- Select wide, non-gravel trails, low gradients, and short loop walks.
- Transport to the trail and track maintenance (e.g. on eroding sections) must be considered.

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*'The Grey River Picnic Area would need upgrading but should be considered because it provides a temperate rainforest experience.'*

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Community members also suggested ways (other than by car) to get visitors to the trail, including:

- Regular shuttle bus services to get visitors to and from designated trail points, including camps, picnic areas, waterfalls and town centres.
- Shuttle buses from larger towns could be used to transfer walkers in and out of the smaller hamlets.
- Utilising the existing V/Line bus service
- Adding or modifying V/Line stops to enable walkers to park in the larger towns with better-suited car parks (e.g. at Visitor Information Centres) and then catch a bus to/from the trail.
- A hop-on/hop-off bus service
- Encourage local businesses such as accommodation providers to offer transfer services, including pick-ups and drop-offs. Tour operators might also facilitate this, with the potential for new businesses to emerge.
- Access the trail by boat or ferry, electric bike shuttles, taxi or uber services, a carpooling system, and use of electric vehicles.

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*'It would be very easy to integrate the existing [V/Line] service into the trail - and the growth in volume might increase bus frequency.'*

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*'It would be fantastic to have a hop on/hop off ticket which could be used, say for a week, to allow walkers to combine bus/walk over several sections of trail.'*

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Other considerations in getting to the trail

Community members also suggested that:

- Publicising alternatives to driving and parking would be important so visitors could plan accordingly.
- Other transport opportunities are considered in terms of pram and wheelchair access, plus the need for transport services to accommodate large backpacks.
- Travel times, timetabling, and seasonal influences were noted, together with the size of buses and the need for walkers to have a safe place to store luggage and access public transport (e.g. away from the main road if possible)

Key points in getting to the trail

Participants at the *Getting To The Trail* workshop consolidated and prioritised community feedback as follows:

- Car parks at popular beaches/surf breaks are already often full, not always in peak periods
- Car parks at popular camping grounds and trailheads are already full in peak periods (December-Easter), especially Allenvale
- Access to the Great Ocean Road could be restricted if there is too much congestion
- No more large car parks should be built along the Great Ocean Road (parking on the inland side could be considered)
- Car parks have environmental impacts that should be managed (e.g. by meeting the maintenance needs of existing/historic car parking sites)
- The public coach service does not help people to get to the trail (e.g. service is not frequent/stops are not at the right places/not enough bus stops)

- Some existing car parks along the Great Ocean Road are not well signed/ promoted/ known; access to the trail needs to be clear
- Some car parks are not efficiently used (e.g. due to no marked spaces/maintenance needs etc.) or have been closed (e.g. Cape Patton, Carisbrook, Viewpoint)
- Some car parks are under threat due to erosion/sea level rise etc.
- Currently, there is no alternative to driving your car to the part of the trail you want to walk, and there is no convenient way to get back to your car after a day's walk (unless you walk a loop or drop an extra car off)

Workshop participants considered the needs of several potential trail user groups, suggesting the following.

**Long-distance hikers** could require

- drop-off points for food and emergency pick-up at regular intervals (e.g. every 10kms)
- a collection service or locker in town to reduce what they needed to carry
- comprehensive online mapping
- notes in languages other than English
- signage with maps at critical points to ensure walkers aren't reliant on phone reception
- drop-off and pick-up provider contact details.

**Day-trippers and tourists** could appreciate

- knowledgeable guides/tour operators who drop off and pick up walkers
- information about V/Line stops and walking guides from one stop to the next
- live car parking availability information
- tidal information to understand what rock shelves are passable

**People with limited mobility and families with young children** would likely depend on having

- car parks close to features (e.g. bridges or waterfalls), with dedicated car parks if possible

- maps that show 4x4 motorised wheelchair/scooter/pram access
- information that not all tracks will be fully accessible.

**Environmentalists and those interested in cultural heritage** could appreciate

- consideration for minimal car park footprints, e.g. using existing/historic car park sites and considering maintenance and rehabilitation potential
- similar needs to day-trippers and long-distance walkers.

All users might benefit from environmental information or signs to help decide which areas to access and advise about addressing key risks such as snakes and bad weather days.

Workshop participants contributed 32 ideas to enable trail users to get to their desired part of the trail without adding to the previously identified key concerns. These were consolidated into the following agreed advice<sup>2</sup> for the Project Team.

- Improve access to the existing (new) trail at Wye River that connects Paddy’s Path in Separation Creek to the new track from Jamieson Creek
- Upgrade or expand existing car parks (mostly on the pre-existing footprint) to maximise the total number of car parks that can fit into these areas (i.e. increase capacity) without creating undue environmental or cultural heritage impacts
- Explore new car park locations (seven example sites were provided)
- Encourage additional car parking in local towns
- Utilise existing Great Ocean Road bridges to create underpasses for walkers to link the trail, car parks and beaches safely
- Explore options to improve trail accessibility via public transport, i.e. the location of stops and the frequency/timing of services

- Provide information to walkers regarding car park locations, how to access the trail from each car park, and parking capacity (if possible, the number of vacant parks remaining, e.g. achieved via a QR code at car park entrances)
- Encourage carpooling systems to run from local towns  
Encourage private shuttle bus operators.

*Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- While this trail is designed to link the Surf Coast Walk to the Great Ocean Walk, start/endpoints will be needed to access infrastructure for car parking, setting off points, toilets, bins, signage etc.
- The Kennett River Nature Trail, Bert Alsop Track, Shipwreck Trail and Tramway Tracks in Lorne will be considered further as possible locations for ‘all abilities walks’
- Further consideration of other ‘all abilities access’ locations will occur during the detailed design and environmental assessments planned for later in 2022
- Information regarding parking and trail access will be passed to GORCAPA for further consideration.

<sup>2</sup> Note: this advice was not prioritised



## Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

Community members at the drop-in sessions suggested:

- That RRV and PTV should coordinate to ensure reliable public transport services that stop at key points along the trail
- The need for shuttle buses with a potential two-year subsidy to a shuttle bus company to build viability whilst walker numbers are increasing
- Their continued support for no additional car parks
- The need to encourage more all-abilities sections and questioning where these sections may be located
- The need to focus on the current lack of accommodation available in the small towns or commercial campgrounds in peak seasons.



## Ensuring Environmental Excellence (all trail sections)

### Engagement Phase 1

One of the guiding principles is to create a trail that exceeds all environmental obligations and expectations. During the first phase of community engagement in October-November 2021, people raised a range of environmental concerns, including:

- Ensuring ongoing funds for park/trail maintenance
- Preventing new and controlling existing weed infestations
- Removing rubbish and preventing litter and human waste
- Avoiding erosion
- Preventing habitat loss and disturbance
- Protecting animals such as koalas and platypuses
- Maintaining water quality in creeks and rivers
- Controlling pathogens, e.g. *Phytophthora*

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- A maintenance model must be developed
- Several trail alignment revisions were made based on minimising impacts to native flora and fauna

### Engagement Phase 2

During the second phase of community engagement in March-April 2022, community members added the following environmental concerns:

- Keep everything carbon neutral (e.g. solar panels on roofs of visitor facilities and offset carbon emissions during the trail's construction)
- Mitigate the potential increased fire risk posed by walkers

- Minimise visual impacts of the trail from the Great Ocean Road

Previously identified issues were reiterated, including:

- Rubbish dumping and human waste concerns
- Risks to native wildlife posed by dogs
- Risks to sensitive habitats from 4WD access

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*‘Rubbish, bottles, trampling nests, dogs, faeces - as soon as you open up more areas, there will be more of these concerns.’*

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#### Suggested management measures

Community members suggested the following opportunities to reduce the trail’s environmental impacts:

- Consider the location and adequate provision of drop toilets
- Keep dogs and 4WDs away from the walking trail
- Reduce trail duplication
- Minimise environmental impacts during the trail’s construction, e.g. select an alignment that avoids harm to fragile ecosystems.
- Discourage informal trails
- Educate walkers on how they can look after the area’s environment
- Publicise planned burns

#### Environmental and amenity priority over tourism

Many people recommended that environmental protection and walker amenity be prioritised, given the anticipated increased visitor numbers and potential to see tourism and events expand in the area.

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*‘Tourism must be discrete and not be the priority over the environment.’*

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#### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Several trail alignment revisions were made based on minimising impacts to native flora and fauna

#### Revised Alignment (Ground-truthed Route)

Following agency feedback and ground-truthing the alignment for this trail section, other changes included the removal of the Fairhaven to Spout Creek section along the beach due to the presence of Hooded Plovers.

#### Engagement Phase 3 (re the Ground-truthed Route)

Concerns expressed through semi-structured interviews and email submissions related to potential impacts on native flora and fauna, particularly endangered heath and control of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* near Moggs Creek, platypus in the St Georges River area and Hooded Plovers in the Grey River to Skenes Creek section.

Other concerns included the need to prioritise biodiversity and National Park values and the consideration of managing regeneration whilst maintaining view lines.

#### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Community groups would be involved in the preparation of further work, such as a Platypus Management Plan for the St Georges River area
- An alignment that avoids the heath near Moggs Creek would be considered

## Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

Concerns were reiterated at the online drop-in session regarding the spread of, and intended management measures, for *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, given the high potential for its transportation along significant sections of the trail. It was suggested that brushes and boot baths as a management measure do not appear to be working in the Bells Beach/Jarasite Track or other sections past Cape Otway. Other examples of phytophthora spread included Currawong Falls Circuit (Aireys Inlet), the proposed ridge walking track west of Coalmine Creek (Deans Marsh) and Grampians National Park.

Pest plant control was also raised at the online drop-in session with examples of poor management at the You Yangs, between St Georges River and Castle Rock, including the track heading west from Sheoak Falls, the Gentle Annie Track and the Jamieson River to Wye River section.

Other concerns included the need to:

- install more signs about wildlife along the Great Ocean Road
- consider platypuses in the St Georges River through the fencing off of horses on leased land
- strike a balance between helping people enjoy a wonderful environment without destroying the attraction visitors are coming to experience.

## Trail Section 1: Fairhaven to Spout Creek

### Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)

#### Alignment Feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Raised a range of concerns about the walking trail route as currently proposed, including:
  - Environmental risks (e.g. erosion, habitat loss);
  - The proposed route extended too far inland;
  - Proximity to private property
- Considered the road crossing at Spout Creek dangerous, with some suggesting that the Spout Creek crossing could be avoided by using an exit at Coalmine Creek, or walkers could continue on the existing track to Clark Spur Hill.
- Raised concerns that beach walking would make this area even busier, and high tides could make access difficult.
- Offered several alternative walking route options for further investigation. Given the extent of existing tracks, several suggested that there was no need for any new walking trail construction within this section.

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*'This will make the beach busy all year round with so many walkers predicted on the trail, so I would prefer the walkers not go along the beach at all'*

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#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features in this trail section, community members:

- Various felt that proposed suspension bridges in this section were not appropriate

as they would be out of character and add little value to this area

- Were critical of the existing Fairhaven underpass from an aesthetic and functional point of view.
- Felt that the track alignment in this section should use the existing lookouts and views more, while others identified new locations for lookouts.
- Were particularly concerned about the alignment going through the Moggs Creek picnic ground. Several felt that the additional use it would attract would be detrimental to the area's amenity, and the picnic ground should not be on the trail route. If it were on the route, facilities would need upgrading.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets in this section, community members:

- Generally indicated a preference for upgrading existing car parks and toilets rather than building new facilities.
- Referenced the need for more car parking at Fairhaven and expressed concerns about providing such facilities at Spout Creek.
- Suggested sites for new car parks and toilets. Many respondents recommended that the Memorial Arch, which marks the beginning of the Great Ocean Road, be part of the project and provide such facilities.
- Offered diverse views about campgrounds. Some felt that more camping should be provided and suggested locations, while others felt there should be no new campsites.
- Preferred campsites to be basic in design (but with toilets and water) and walk-in only (at least 50m away from a car park).

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*'I don't want to see new facilities dotted along the trail. They need to be carefully thought about and combined.'*

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#### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Realignment of the route away from private property
- Two beach access options would continue to be considered
- Clark Spur Lookout will be an alternative to going along the coastline
- Realignment of the route at the back of Moggs Creek from a Management Vehicle Only Route to an existing walking trail (Ocean View Track) through heathland to a lookout
- The walk from Ocean View Track down to the beach was added to create another loop walk
- A link to Memorial Arch was created

#### Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)

##### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Were predominantly supportive, with over half of online survey respondents providing a positive response to the revised alignment whilst 20% suggested it required minor change, and another 20% felt it should go back to the drawing board
- Provided positive comments about this section, noting the stunning views on offer and the loop walks proposed.
- Considered linking the trail to Memorial Arch important.
- Made further suggestions to improve the alignment of Section 1, including:
  - using the existing track from Moggs Creek Picnic Ground to the lookout (crossing the fire trail); and
  - following the creek from the Grassy Creek camp to Kelsall's lookout to

better use the existing Clark Spur Track.

- Suggested that walker safety should be considered, including the ability for emergency vehicles to access walkers via existing fire trails or other options

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Existing tracks were used at Moggs Creek
- The presence of a small mammal refuge in the sand dunes and gully system at Coalmine Creek resulted in an alignment change further inland to avoid impact
- The alignment after Coalmine Creek was revised to a route with a gentler gradient
- The alignment moved from Lialeeta Road (out of Fairhaven) to Forest Drive through an existing strategic fuel break
- The walk from Ocean View Track down to the beach was removed due to parking/congestion concerns with multiple entrances onto the coast
- A start/end point at the trail's eastern end is recommended near Fairhaven for further consideration in the Master Plan. Several sites are being investigated
- Aireys Inlet will provide another start/end point of the trail with existing car parks and Surf Coast Walk connections

#### *Engagement Phase 3 (re the Ground-truthed Route)*

Concerns related to the impact of the trail alignment on Moggs Creek and Fairhaven residents and the area's character. Walker safety on local roads, impacts on the endangered heath, illegal camping, existing car park/Great Ocean Road congestion and unattended campfires were also raised. A route incorporating the picnic ground at Distillery Creek was suggested as an alternative.

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Removal of the Fairhaven to Spout Creek section along the beach due to the presence of Hooded Plovers
- The Coalmine Creek alignment was brought closer to the coast to follow the burn boundary
- The crossing point at Coalmine Creek was moved upstream and approximately 100 metres inland due to steep terrain, unstable cliffs and threatened species microhabitats
- Realignment of the route to incorporate strategic fuel breaks

Drop-in and online information sessions with Moggs Creek and Fairhaven residents were held in July 2022 to discuss trail alignment concerns. The Project Team committed to considering other alignment options, including the incorporation of Distillery Creek. The Project Team emphasised the need for the trail to connect with the Surf Coast Walk.

#### *Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

Community members at the Lorne and online drop-in sessions reacted positively to the trail alignment in the Moggs Creek area and the access to Kelsall's Rock.

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*'It looks like the Moggs section has been resolved – good outcome'*

*'Access to Kelsall's Rock is excellent – it is fantastic, a highlight'*

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Concerns were reiterated at the online drop-in session regarding the spread of, and intended management measures, for *Phytophthora*

*cinnamomi*, citing key areas of concern in this section being a noticeable increase since mountain biking was allowed along the Currawong Falls Circuit that cuts through outbreak areas, including around a high ridge hikers lookout seat and motorbike activity riding/digging up the existing and proposed ridge walking track to the west of Coalmine Creek. This ridge route is on the edge of a significant grass tree stand, which appears to be one of the more impacted plants.

Pest plant control was also raised at the online drop-in session with recent trail surfacing works on the Gentle Annie Track resulting in weed growth cited as an example of poor management in this section.



## Trail Section 2: Spout Creek to Lily Pond Reserve

### *Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Were concerned about the safety of the Great Ocean Road crossings at Spout and Grassy Creeks
- Wanted to protect the tranquillity of Lily Pond Bushland Reserve
- Offered two main alternative route suggestions to Lily Pond Reserve than that proposed, either staying inland around Big Hill to access better views and features or a coastal option
- Provided further route suggestions, including using existing tracks and powerline easements to minimise the construction of new tracks.

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*‘There are benefits to staying high and walking across the top of this area. This section is more scenic up higher’*

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#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features for this trail section, community members:

- Provided favourable comments about Lookout #1 at the drop-in sessions but were critical of Lookout #2.
- Were concerned about how the proposed crossing at Anderson Creek could be undertaken safely, with some stating a preference for not having any crossings over this busy road.

50% of survey respondents felt both lookouts would be a great feature.

## Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Expressed strong concerns about making the car park at Cathedral Rock available to trail users, suggesting it was already in high demand. Others noted that the existing car park at Lily Pond Bushland Reserve was too small.
- Suggested several sites for new car parks. It was felt that multiple smaller and informal car parks should be created instead of a few large car parks.
- Suggested that smaller, basic toilets should be constructed in locations that serviced only trail walkers.
- Raised the lack of toilets at Cathedral Rock for surfers as a concern.
- Were concerned about adding new campsites in this area, mainly because of the potential for more backpacker use, especially if these were offered at a low cost.
- Suggested that any new camping facilities to providing sites away from roads (walk-in only)
- Suggested luxury 'glamping' style facilities.

Those who completed the Engage Victoria survey preferred basic camping facilities. Several suggested locations were made for further investigation.

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*'If the surf is up, it is often impossible to find a parking space at Cathedral Rock. Maybe a safe walk link could be created to the nearby smaller parking bays?'*

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## Trail Design Responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- A change to the alignment at Spout Creek (Devils Elbow) and Grassy Creek, with the route taken inland to remove the beach section and the Spout Creek underpass crossing
- A realignment of the route to stay to the east after Lily Pond Falls, reducing the need for another stream crossing
- A change to the alignment to include Kellsalls Rock Lookout before continuing to the plateau that leads straight to Big Hill Track
- Use of existing tracks where feasible
- The alignment from Cathedral Rock to Lily Pond Reserve moved to a Management Vehicle Only track to enhance the walker experience and avoid steep, high-risk areas

## Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)

### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Were predominantly supportive, with two-thirds of online survey respondents providing a positive response to the revised alignment. The balance suggested the alignment needed minor change. No respondents felt it should go back to the drawing board.
- When asked what could be changed to make them happier with this section of the trail, one respondent suggested Lily Pond should be avoided as large numbers of walkers could diminish this 'beautiful and calm spot'.
- Suggested that the inland deviations made the trail longer; instead, tracks should go through private land.
- Recommended a shorter option given the length of the section, e.g. a pull-out point before Big Hill Creek.

- Suggested that walker safety should be considered, including the ability for emergency vehicles to access walkers via existing fire trails or other options

#### Suspension Bridges #0, #1 and #2 feedback

##### *Bridge #0 Grassy Creek*

- Two-thirds of survey respondents considered Bridge #0 to look ‘really good’ or ‘generally looks good enough’
- Bridge #0 as currently proposed, was seen by workshop participants to be one of two bridges most appropriate to remain in the plans

##### *Bridge #1 Big Hill*

- Over half of survey respondents thought Bridge #1 looked ‘really good’ or ‘generally look good enough’
- One-third of both survey respondents and workshop participants thought that Bridge #1 should not be built

##### *Bridge #2 Reedy Creek*

- This bridge was the most popular with survey respondents, with over 80% suggesting ‘it looks really good’ or ‘it generally looks good enough’
- Bridge #2 as currently proposed, was seen by workshop participants to be one of two bridges most appropriate to remain in the plans
- One workshop participant thought Bridge #2 could be removed from the plan

#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on lookouts and other trail features during Phase 2, some community members suggested that a constructed lookout was not needed at Kelsalls Rock.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on car parking, camping and toilets during Phase 2, community members identified Big Hill Creek as previously having a campsite for workers that could make a good parking area.

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The alignment between Spout Creek and Clark Spur Track was moved north away from private property fence lines
- The alignment was moved away from a private property boundary as it comes into Lily Pond.
- Another alignment option coming through North Lorne Parklands to avoid Lily Pond was added
- All bridges had preliminary assessments on geotechnical, environmental, engineering and cultural values undertaken
- An alternative route for each suspension bridge was created

#### *Revised alignment (Ground-truthed Route)*

Following agency feedback and ground-truthing the alignment for this trail section, other revisions included:

- The Reedy Creek Suspension Bridge (Bridge #2) was selected as the second priority bridge for the Master Plan. It offers good accessibility and views, elements well supported by community and government agencies to maximise user experience. Further assessments will be undertaken during detailed design (occurring later this year) to refine the technical feasibility and design, cultural heritage and environmental considerations, plus visual impact and precinct impacts
- The Lily Pond Bushland Reserve entrance into Lorne was confirmed, as it provides a gentle entry into Lorne from the north with a relatively small amount of new trail required. It aligns with the endorsed design principles of providing experiences to embrace the uniqueness of the landscape, including the geology of this reserve, whilst reducing native vegetation removal



- From Coalmine Track toward Spout Creek, a new section of trail was identified where the previously identified existing informal motorbike track was found to be steep and badly eroded
- The Cathedral Rock to Lily Pond Reserve section was revised to a combination of Management Vehicle Only and new tracks to avoid private property boundaries
- The Cathedral Rock route incorporated a feature that incorporated an informal trail, locally known as the 'Sunken Garden' or 'The Gorge'

#### *Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

Concerns about the Stony Creek area and potential traffic, fire and rubbish issues associated with Big Hill campground were expressed at the Lorne drop-in session. Community members also stressed the preciousness of the Lily Pond area, seeking more detailed maps of the area, questioning whether dogs would be allowed and seeking assurance that no more paths be built there. Enquiries were also made as to whether there were plans to upgrade the Doug Stirling Track along the Lorne foreshore.



## Trail Section 3: Lily Pond Reserve to Cumberland River

### *Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Offered little support for creating new tracks on this section of the walk, suggesting the need to keep new track work to a minimum
- Considered the proposed route to be missing scenic view opportunities.
- Provided a range of options, including:
  - Queens Park as an alternative trailhead to Allenvale
  - Following the St George River rather than Cherry Creek (although there were environmental concerns about potential environmental impacts on the river)
  - The Brothers Ridge
  - A track behind QDos Fine Arts from Allenvale Road
  - Sheoak picnic area and Sheoak Falls car park as alternative trailheads.

#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features for this trail section, community members:

- Indicated that the Great Ocean Road crossing at Hird Street could work well with minor modifications
- Suggested additional lookout locations

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Expressed considerable concern about the car parking and toilet facilities at Allenvale. Contributors stated that it was used extensively by those with tight budgets (including seasonal workers) and that the area required creative thinking to better

cope with the current demand rather than adding to the problem by making this a focal point for the trail. Additionally, concerns were raised that this area is a platypus habitat and must be protected.

- Suggested that Cumberland River campground was too small for an overnight stopping point
- Identified the need for toilets at Sheoak Falls car park
- Stated that there should not be any new campsites in this section.

- using a short section of Sharps Track
- remaining inland at Castle Rock on existing tracks before using the proposed track and Bridge 3 to Jamieson Creek
- A more direct path (shorter walk) from Sheoak to Castle Rock

- Suggested that the revised alignment took the trail too far inland, preferring to keep closer to the coast (note that this response was provided by one person only).

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Both the St George River and Cherry Creek options would be considered, subject to further investigation
- A new track will be added behind QDos (inland of Lorne)
- The new trail from Allenvale Road down to Sheoak Falls was removed in favour of using the existing walking track between Sheoak Picnic Area to Sheoak Falls
- Added The Brothers Track to the alignment
- The short historical loop down from Castle Rock would be reinstated
- The alignment out of Castle Rock would pick up the existing informal track

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*‘The option to walk from Lorne to Sheoak picnic area on a designated walking track is good, as currently, many walkers use the Allenvale Road to complete loop walks in the area. It’s not great for drivers (dangerous) or walkers (dusty and not as scenic).’*

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### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on lookouts and other trail features during Phase 2, community members indicated that the views from Teddy’s Lookout were stunning, and the use of existing tracks was pleasing.

### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on car parking, camping and toilets during Phase 2, community members reiterated that:

- The Cumberland River campground was too small to be an overnight stopping point
- Toilets are needed at Sheoak Falls car park

Over half of the online survey respondents responded positively to the revised alignment for this section of Concept Route 2. Over one quarter suggested it required minor change, and 20% felt the alignment should go back to the drawing board.

### Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Appreciated that the alignment would mean people would no longer have to walk on Allenvale Road.
- Made several suggestions for improving the alignment, including
  - using the Cherry Creek trail

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Inclusion of the Tramway Track in the alignment
- Heading southwest from Lorne, the existing St George River Track will be the main trail, offering walkers natural beauty and a gentle gradient. This alignment will include developing an environmental management plan to protect the platypus habitat.
- Cherry Tree Creek Track has been identified as a secondary route if the St. George River Track is subjected to flooding.
- Existing trails were used where possible
- Another option from the Sheoak Picnic area to Castle Rock (shorter walk and more direct path) was incorporated into the alignment
- Removal of The Brothers Track from the alignment

### Revised alignment (Ground-truthed Route)

Following agency feedback and ground-truthing the alignment for this trail section, other changes included:

- The use of an existing track to take walkers off Allenvale Road



Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

In providing feedback about the final alignment, community members at the Lorne drop-in session:

- Questioned whether there was any specific funding allocated to upgrade the Shipwreck Trail (Lorne to Point Grey) and how it will fit in with the Point Grey Precinct
- Questioned whether a link to Teddys Lookout could be included.

Pest plant control was raised at the online drop-in session. The spread of bone seed between St Georges River and Castle Rock, including the track heading west from Sheoak Falls, was cited as an example of poor weed control in this section.



## Trail Section 4: Cumberland River to Jamieson Creek

### *Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Expressed support for Cumberland River being a focal point for walkers.
- Supported the proposed 'Long Loop' walk, though with considerable concerns about its construction and user safety feasibility.
- Provided less support for the 'Medium Loop', primarily on environmental grounds, especially as it travelled through 'wild' country.
- Provided more support for the 'Short Loop', suggesting a few additions and alternatives.
- Raised the potential for side trips rather than loop walks.
- Suggested the proposed suspension bridges would not be required (see the next section) if a different trail alignment were used.
- Offered an alternative inland route option from Cumberland to Jamieson Creek.

#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features for this trail section, community members:

- Offered little support for proposed lookouts #4, #5, #6 and #7 due to the inferior views from these locations.
- Noted that new lookouts should be located where clear views were possible, so vegetation was not cleared to provide sight lines.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- In supporting Cumberland River as a focal point of the walk, raised the issue of how an

increase in facilities could be accommodated, including the necessary increase in car parking and toilet facilities, whilst retaining the 'low key' character that many valued

- Suggested alternative locations for car parks and toilets for consideration whilst identifying the impact of rising sea levels and potential for coastal erosion as a limiting factor.
- Generally felt that the existing camping facilities in this trail section were sufficient. Some low-key upgrades were suggested.
- Offered some potential camping sites near the proposed Lookout #7 and an alternative 'backpacker' site on the open land at Hird St

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Cumberland River would remain a focal point
- The 'long loop' would be altered to consider two options subject to further investigation
- Reduced large switchbacks in the original route
- A loop to Cumberland Falls would be investigated
- A new trail was added to create a short half-day walk, starting and finishing at Cumberland River, incorporating Langdale Pike and one of the proposed suspension bridges

### *Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Were split in their support for the revisions. 50% of online survey respondents responded positively to the revised alignment; one quarter suggested it needed minor change, and a further quarter said it should go back to the drawing board. Concept Route 2 for

Section 4 was, therefore, the least supported of any trail sections.

- Expressed concerns regarding the environmental impacts of the new trail and bridges. One respondent suggested this section of the trail should not be built, given it would pass through largely natural bush.
- Mentioned sections of steep terrain on the track up to Castle Rock and potential landslides.
- Suggested realignments of Section 4, including exploring the use of Cumberland Track and connected logging track and Old Telegraph Track leading north of Jamieson Creek Campground (following the ridgeline).

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*'The Cumberland is a near-wilderness area. Our concerns are for the settlement itself, the river and the surrounding forest.'*

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#### Suspension Bridges #3, #4 and #5 feedback

When considering each bridge, in turn, community members responded as follows:

##### *Bridge #3 Cumberland River*

- Over half of survey respondents considered Bridge #3 to look 'really good' or 'generally look good enough'
- The largest percentage of survey respondents (more than one third) considered Bridge #3 should not be built
- Bridge #3 received the most survey comments about potential impacts with a change in the siting of this bridge suggested
- This bridge received the equal highest number of votes from workshop participants for removal from the plan

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*'The Langdale Pyke is a very unusual geological structure,*

*so why change (its impressive look) by adding Bridge 3 here?'*

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##### *Bridge #4 Cumberland-Winterbrook*

- Over two-thirds of survey respondents considered Bridge #4 to look 'really good' or 'generally look good enough'
- One-third of workshop participants considered Bridge #4 should not be built

##### *Bridge #5 Mount Defiance*

- Over two-thirds of survey respondents considered Bridge #5 to look 'really good' or 'generally look good enough'
- One-third of survey respondents considered Bridge #5 should not be built - the equal highest number of votes from workshop participants for removal from the plan

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on car parking, camping and toilets during Phase 2, community members suggested there was limited space at Cumberland River campground and car park.

#### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The alignment out of Castle Rock picking up the existing informal track was changed due to its dangerous and steep terrain
- An existing telegraph track down the ridgeline to the north of Jamieson Creek was incorporated to avoid areas of high geotechnical risk or ecological significance
- All bridges underwent preliminary assessments on geotechnical, environmental, engineering and cultural values.
- Alternative routes for suspension bridges were created

### *Revised alignment (Ground-truthed Route)*

Following agency feedback and ground-truthing the alignment for this trail section, other changes included:

- Cumberland-Winterbrook Suspension Bridge (Bridge #4) was selected as the top priority for the Master Plan. It has good accessibility for construction, dramatic ocean and Great Otway National Park views and is likely to sit well in the landscape in terms of visual obscurity. Preliminary geotechnical and engineering assessments indicate the current design is feasible.
- Mount Defiance Suspension Bridge (Bridge #5) was selected as the third priority bridge for the Master Plan. It provides spectacular views down the valley, across the Great Ocean Road and over the ocean.
- For both bridges, further assessments will be undertaken during detailed design (occurring later this year) to refine the technical feasibility and design, cultural heritage and environmental considerations, plus visual impact and precinct impacts
- A slight route realignment of the trail as it descends from Mt Defiance will use an existing informal walking track, coming down the ridgeline from Mt Defiance to Jamieson Creek. This will be a shorter, more direct route than previously proposed
- The loop walk out of Cumberland Falls was removed

### *Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

A community member at the Apollo Bay drop-in session suggested that a bridge over Cumberland Falls would be a positive addition to the trail and open up the ridgelines.

## Trail Section 5: Jamieson Creek to Wye River

### *Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Supported the recent completion of this section by Parks Victoria.
- Suggested a few improvements, including better signage for safety and directions and track repairs/ detailing to enhance accessibility.
- Offered suggestions for small loop walks, particularly via the beach

#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features for this trail section, community members suggested that lookouts could provide more glimpses of the ocean.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Stated that car parking at Separation Creek was already fully used in summer and that the Jamieson Creek camping car park needed upgrading. However, there was strong objection to upgrading the small car park on the ocean side of the road at Jamieson Creek. Additional suggestions included creating new small car parks at several locations along the section and using existing car parking at Boggaley Creek.
- Noted that toilet facilities were currently limited and suggested several locations for new facilities.
- Liked the new campground at Jamieson Creek, though there was interest in creating dedicated areas for different users and larger sites within the camping area. Some respondents, however, felt that no additional

camping facilities were required in this section, although suggestions were made on where small hiker camps could be added.

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*‘There should be more room on campsites to provide space between people in the age of COVID-19.’*

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### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The route alignment is set for Jamieson Creek to Kennett River.
- Further works may be undertaken on this section if deemed not up to the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail standard.
- In response to community feedback on the walking experience in this section, Parks Victoria is undertaking additional works to address issues raised along steeper components.

### Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

In providing feedback about the alignment in this section, a community member at the Wye River drop-in session suggested that access from Jamieson Track to Boggaley Creek to the Great Ocean Road and ocean be added, creating a loop walk back along the beach, tide permitting. It was also suggested that Separation Creek be shown on the trail map.

Pest plant control was also raised at the online drop-in session with this section complimented for its incredible views but bemoaned for the weed growth that has resulted from the track works. The track surface was also considered poor for walking or running.

## Trail Section 6: Wye River to Kennett River

### Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Offered good reviews for this recently created section of the trail, albeit with some suggestions for minor adjustments. These included:
  - Creating a few more ocean views
  - Additional access ways to the beach to create loop walks
  - Better detailing on the steep sections, e.g. minor realignment or the addition of steps.

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*‘Some parts are extremely steep - steps may assist plus warning signs. More glimpses of the ocean would be terrific. We love the path.’*

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#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features for this trail section, community members suggested adding seats to improve the visitor experience. Suspension bridges over the creeks were also suggested.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Considered car parking at Wye River inadequate, with visitors currently using Morley St, which was not ideal.
- Suggested locations for new parking areas and toilet facilities.
- Advised that the existing toilets at Wye River need upgrading.

- Generally recommended the use of existing campgrounds, and if additional sites needed to be constructed, for these to be basic and walk-in, i.e. inaccessible by car

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*'We desperately need a new toilet block at Wye River - not bigger, but new.'*

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### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The route alignment is set for Jamieson Creek to Kennett River.
- Further works may be undertaken on this section if deemed not up to the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail standard.
- As a response to community feedback on the walking experience in this section, Parks Victoria is undertaking additional works to address issues raised along steeper components

### Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

Community members at the Apollo Bay drop-in session reiterated the desire for further work to be undertaken to upgrade and improve the track design in section 6..

Regarding the final trail alignment, a community member at the online session supported the optional route in this section.

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*'There are a lot of campers here and I can imagine this getting a lot of use'*

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## Trail Section 7: Kennett River to Grey River

### Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Generally liked the two route options
- Suggested improvements for Route 1 from Kennett River (nearer the coast), including providing ocean views and incorporating some points of interest. It was noted that some parts would be very steep, thus requiring careful planning and construction.
- Expressed two key areas of concern for Route 2 (from the Kennett River Nature Trail): The path along the river is prone to flooding and access through koala habitat (also seen as an attraction by some).
- Suggested that walkers could find it challenging to avoid 'getting wet feet' further along the section near Grey River.

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*'There are two routes proposed. Does this mean that both will be built? We are concerned about the koala population on Route 2 as monitoring shows their numbers have decreased greatly. So our preference would be the lower route closer to the coast (Route 1).'*

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#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Community members suggested several new locations for lookouts in this trail section, including at the headland and along the ridgeline towards Grey River.



## Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Identified the need for additional car parking and suggested potential locations, including Grey River, where the track crosses the road north of the bridge at Kennett River.
- Ranged in their views on toilets from not providing anything additional to creating new facilities at the junction of the road and track at Grey River.
- Were varied in their views about campgrounds in this section. Some felt new campsites were unnecessary, while others suggested they be provided at each end of the section, or a small hikers camp could be provided. As with other trail sections, respondents generally preferred that new campsites not be accessible by car.

### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and, together with ground-truthing, confirmed the following:

- The existing track in Kennett River heading towards Grey River moved to an alignment toward the beach to create a connection and footpath from the General Store to the Surf Life Saving Club, improve walker safety and experience by removing them from Grey River Road and incorporate the headland and viewing points up the ridgeline
- The alignment followed an existing dozer line from Grey River Road to Grey River

### *Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)*

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Were supportive, with over two-thirds of online survey respondents providing a positive response to the revised alignment.

The remaining respondents suggested the alignment only required minor change. No one felt it should go back to the drawing board.

- Were largely positive in their comments, supporting the inclusion of loop walks (particularly for families with young children) and a range of potential highlights (e.g. koalas, coastal views, waterfalls).
- Requested more information on distances and topography (elevation) and questioned the use of busy Grey River Road by walkers.

The revised alignment of this section was the most supported of all trail sections.

### *Trail design responses*

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The Kennett River Nature trail would be considered further as a possible location for an All Abilities section
- A minor alignment alteration was made to the loop walk

### *Revised alignment (Ground-truthed Route)*

Following agency feedback and ground-truthing the alignment for this trail section, other changes included:

- The consideration of two possible locations along Grey River Road for a lookout

### *Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)*

Regarding the final trail alignment, community members at the Apollo Bay and Wye River drop-in sessions:

- Suggested that the Wongarra section will be 'pretty hard going'.
- Expressed support that the trail will assist walkers in experiencing the inland forest areas.

## Trail Section 8: Grey River to Skenes Creek

### Engagement Phase 1 (re Concept Route 1)

#### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the first Concept Route alignment for this trail section, during Engagement Phase 1, community members:

- Provided conflicting views about this section, which has yet to be funded for construction. Some felt it should not be progressed, while others felt that funding its construction should be prioritised.
- Raised specific concerns on the use of the beach and The Rise. Common suggestions offered were to use an inland route around Carisbrook Falls as well as a loop walk at Hickey's Cutting near Skenes Creek.
- Raised an additional concern regarding how the track at Cape Patton could be constructed to be safe and environmentally sensitive to the environment. It was noted that beach walking further along this section could impact Hooded Plover breeding sites.

#### Lookouts and other trail features feedback

Regarding lookouts and other trail features, community members focused on the danger of crossing the Great Ocean Road at Carisbrook Falls, the Rise and Grey River. It was suggested that if the route went inland, some crossings would be avoided, and great views could be provided for walkers.

#### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Regarding car parking, camping and toilets for this trail section, community members:

- Generally felt there was no need to build any new car parks in this section. It was suggested, instead, that the existing parking areas at Grey River, Carisbrook Falls and Skenes Creek be expanded.
- Recommended new toilets at Skenes Creek and access points to the trail. However, managing the tension between providing

toilets at Carisbrook Falls and illegal camping was also identified. Providing 'hikers only' toilets away from car access was also recommended.

- Varied in their views about camping in this section. Some questioned the need for new camping areas in this section of the trail, stating that some informal campsites had been removed due to lack of use. There was a perception that most hikers would likely stay in town at vacation rentals. However, many others felt that a 'hikers only' campsite in this section would be good, ideally away from the coast and potentially on private land. Reinstating camping near Carisbrook Creek and several rural settings with coastal views were suggested.

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*'It would be good to have a few basic walk-in sites for proper hikers. Most can/will want to use Airbnb or current commercial camping at Skenes, Cumberland, Wye, Kennett, Apollo Bay.'*

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#### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- An inland route to Carisbrook Falls was added as an alternative option for further investigation
- Due to the alignment over The Rise impacting several private properties and not being supported locally, it was moved further inland with several options provided for further investigation

## Engagement Phase 2 (re Concept Route 2)

### Alignment feedback

In providing general feedback about the second Concept Route alignment for this trail section, community members:

- Were generally supportive, with almost two-thirds of online survey respondents providing a positive response to the revised alignment. About 25% of respondents suggested the alignment only required minor changes. About 10% said it should go back to the drawing board.
- Offered largely positive comments, with many respondents stating the proposed alignment enabled walkers to access interesting hinterland and that the inland route would help make it an iconic walk.
- Identified potential highlights, including:
  - the glow worms off the main trail,
  - a sheltered bay as walkers head towards Smythe Creek, and
  - pockets of the original forest.
- Suggested inclusion of the popular loop around Hickeys Cutting from Petticoat Creek to Skenes Creek and use of the gravel road up from Cape Patton.
- Raised concerns about protecting natural and cultural values on the beach route, including walkers potentially trampling Hooded Plover nesting sites and middens.
- Raised concerns regarding the inland route, including disturbance of platypus in Carisbrook Creek and that walking in the dense forest may not be as enjoyable as beach walking.
- Provided feedback about potential impacts on private property.

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*'I'm a walker, and I would really appreciate this opportunity to walk inland (as the rest is along the beach).'*

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### Car parking, camping and toilets feedback

Whilst feedback was not explicitly sought on car parking, camping and toilets during Phase 2, community members suggested reactivating the old campsite near Carisbrook Falls.

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Removal of the alignment through Carisbrook due to safety concerns around Carisbrook Creek and private property biosecurity concerns
- The loop walk around Cape Patten was removed due to environmental concerns
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail project has funding for planning a walking trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek and is seeking additional funding for construction of this section once the alignment is finalised
- Through stakeholder and community consultation, as well as specialist assessments of geotechnical and environmental considerations, it has become clear that Grey River to Skenes Creek has many complexities that must be worked through to finalise the alignment. As such, the Master Plan for the project will illustrate a finalised alignment for Fairhaven to Grey River and where further investigation is required for the stretch to Skenes Creek. Investigations of Grey River to Skenes Creek will continue to progress for a feasible alignment
- Options to investigate a start/end point for the western end will be reconsidered in light of the recommendation that the Master Plan does not include the final trail section from Grey River to Skenes Creek

### Engagement Phase 3

Concerns expressed through semi-structured interviews and email submissions related to dissatisfaction that this section of the trail was not funded and prioritised for construction, suggesting that the Skenes Creek to Petticoat Creek section, particularly, would be simple to construct.

Concerns were also expressed regarding potential impacts on native flora and fauna, particularly remnant vegetation and Hooded Plovers, should the Grey River to Skenes Creek section be constructed.

### Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- A Skenes Creek Information Sheet has been provided to all on the project contact database explaining the rationale for the current proposal to delay construction of the Grey River to Skenes Creek section



### Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

Regarding the final trail alignment, community members at the Apollo Bay, Wye River and online drop-in sessions:

- Suggested that the Wongarra section will be 'pretty hard going'.
- Questioned why the trail went so far inland.
- Expressed support that the trail will assist walkers in experiencing the rainforest inland.
- Lamented that hikers can't use the same 'rights of way' that walkers can use over private property in the United Kingdom.
- Were excited to see this section built, stating that it will be very different to other sections with this new alignment.
- Expressed concern that the Smythe Creek to Skenes Creek section along the road may be noisy and dangerous due to the proximity of cars to walkers and called for a suitable safety barrier treatment.
- Expressed interest in being updated regarding the progress of the adjoining Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay (Wild Dog Creek) trail project.

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*'We need to get the last section sorted!'*

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## Principles to guide the project (all trail sections)

### *Engagement Phase 2*

During the second community engagement phase in March 2022, people were asked their thoughts on the principles to guide the project. The Guiding Design Principles outline the vision and core values of the trail.

In addition to general feedback, the community was asked for specific input on the six key Objectives, each with more detailed principles:

- Objective 1. Walking on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation.
- Objective 2. Conserving and protecting the Otway Coast.
- Objective 3. Encouraging all to be active.
- Objective 4. Showcasing the landscape.
- Objective 5. Providing economic benefits.
- Objective 6. Creating a unique visitor experience

### Objectives in order of priority

The overall community ranking of objectives 2-6 was as follows:

1. Conserving and protecting the Otway Coast
2. Showcasing the landscape
3. Encouraging all to be active
4. Creating a unique visitor experience
5. Providing economic benefits

Of these, 'Conserving and protecting the Otway Coast' was a clear priority, voted by 94% of respondents as the most important objective.

Respondents were not asked to include Objective 1 in their ranking, as it will remain the top priority.

Additional objectives/design principles to be considered

When considering additional objectives or design principles that needed to be considered, community members suggested:

- The addition of 'restoration' to the 'conserving and protecting the Otway Coast' objective
- Enhancement of the 'conserving and protecting the Otway Coast' objective through direct mention of wildlife and ecosystems (or biodiversity)
- Inclusion of older and disabled people as well as children in the 'encouraging all to be active' objective
- That the opportunity be taken for education on natural values and cultural heritage to help visitors better understand and appreciate the ecological and cultural significance of the coastline
- That the opportunity be taken for the trail to reconnect people with nature and provide transformative engagement with the natural world
- That the trail is open to all user groups, including walkers, runners, mountain bikers and horse riders. While the decision has been made that this will be a dedicated walking trail, many respondents felt that allowing mixed use would offer an experience to a greater variety of users, including on-lead dog walkers and trail runners.

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*'We want to preserve this precious area while giving people an enjoyable experience, so they want to preserve it too.'*

*'Road bikes on the Great Ocean Road are an issue as there are increasing numbers and risk. It's a shame the trail won't fix this, i.e. get them off the road.'*

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## Additional comments

When asked whether they had any additional comments about the vision, objectives or principles, community members added the following:

- Don't overcomplicate the Governance model
- Provide support for health/wellbeing and accessibility
- Environment/conservation should be prioritised and local biodiversity encouraged
- Environmental management must improve, and trail maintenance be well resourced
- Manage congestion on the Great Ocean Road
- Support Traditional Owner engagement/input
- Promote sustainable business activation

## Trail design responses

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- The objectives and principles guide the project team throughout all project stages, from design to construction. They are the values the project will live by and be known for
- Reiteration that this will be a dedicated walking trail (not multi-use)
- The alignment follows existing tracks and trails where possible, with 56% of the revised alignment on existing trails

## Engagement Phase 4 (re the final Draft Master Plan, August 2022)

Community members attending the drop-in sessions reiterated their desire to walk their dogs (on leash) along sections of the route and that the trail should also provide for cyclists, particularly given the dangers associated with cycling on the Great Ocean Road.

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*'I would like to go cycle-touring along this part of the coast. I'm happy to carry my bike up steps – it doesn't all have to be ramps'*

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## Additional comments about the project

In providing further general comments about the project, community members at both the face-to-face and online drop-in sessions:

- Expressed genuine excitement and support for the project including the opportunity it will provide to showcase the region and increase tourism
- Expressed concern that the region is relying too heavily on tourism and that the project may affect land values
- Questioned construction timing and duration
- Suggested the need for walker induction on safety issues e.g. fire and trail information on trail section degrees of difficulty, tides etc
- Expressed surprise at not having heard about the project.



## 5. Where to from here

Issuing the final Draft Master Plan in August 2022 allows it to progress through endorsement by the governing bodies and delivery partners, including Parks Victoria, Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP Secretary, and the Project Control Board.

Once endorsed, the Master Plan journey continues as it works its way through statutory approvals and detailed design. The detailed design process will include technical assessments (such as carpark design and the application of road standards), more precise costings for the trail construction and associated infrastructure (e.g. campgrounds) and further cultural heritage, environmental and engineering assessments.

Additional revisions to the planned route may occur as a result of these other assessments.

Further detailed design of the trail and associated infrastructure (lookouts, car parks etc.) is planned to commence later in 2022 and will involve additional community consultation.

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*‘There is no better way to see this area than when you are walking!’*

*‘It sounds great! I’m not a walker, but I support the concept ‘*

*‘Please start building from the Fairhaven end, so we can use the new trails quickly!’*

*‘I hope this project doesn’t affect our land value!’*

*‘There is an over-reliance on tourism along the Great Ocean Road.’*

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## Appendix A Project Control Board Membership

The Project Control Board comprises representatives from the following organisations:

Position	Organisation
Chair	
Member	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Final Co-Chair (community representative)	Wye Separation Kennett Renewal Association
Regional Director Western Region	Parks Victoria
Director of Operations	Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
Chief Executive Officer	Colac Otway Shire Council
Senior Responsible Officer, Barwon South West	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Director Regional Operations Barwon South West, Regional Development Victoria	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Regional Manager Forest & Fire Planning	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Project Manager Barwon South West	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning



## Appendix B Design and Engagement Roadmap

