

**3228 Residents Association Incorporated  
Registered Number – A0058442K**

Submission towards the  
**Governance of The Great  
Ocean Road.**

28 April 2018

We are an organisation representing the residents of the region within the postcode of 3228 Victoria, which includes: Torquay, Jan Juc, Bellbrae and Bells Beach. We wish to submit this document for consideration towards the discussion of the Governance of the Great Ocean Road.

**Public Consultation:**

We would raise the issue of the limited public consultation provided as part of the process of this review.

An attempt was made by members of our group to participate in the online survey, but they were affected by 'time-outs' that removed all inputs when a re-login was entered. This timeout did not allow for any saves and seemed to give inappropriate time for a reasonable input to the questions. We believe that many members of the public may have simply 'given up' and not continued to participate.

We also found that the level of publicity given to the forum locations and dates was insufficient as many of our members were not aware of the open forums until only hours prior.

Again, if this is an example of the process in all regions of the Great Ocean Road (GOR), then we believe that many residents will not have the opportunity to contribute.

It is also noted that the taskforce has not yet created a report, however the Issues Paper indicates on page 44 that the taskforce may already have a preferred position on the governance model – a lead agency. As this was an Issues Paper for public comment, with respect, it appears that the paper was poorly presented as it did not outline other options and seemed to 'lead' the reader in a particular direction.

It is our opinion that the taskforce should rewrite the paper with a greater number of options and allow the public to consider and discuss.

**We respectfully ask that the above be taken into account when deliberating on the inputs to the discussion paper and the eventual decision.**

## **Bells Beach**

We believe that the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve should be excluded from any governance change either proposed by the taskforce in the issues paper or by anything herein. We consider that the Bells Beach reserve is of special significance and should be given special consideration for separate governance.

In consultation with the Bells Beach Preservation Society, a group representing the recreational surfing users of Bell Beach, it is believed that the recreational surfers should have a significant input into the governance of the reserve and separate from other areas in the region.

## **Infrastructure, Jobs, Tourism and the Environment**

The Issues Paper has been presented with a distinct bias towards tourism and its expansion. We would like to offer that this is not likely to be the best overall outcome, particularly for the eastern end of the GOR.

Around the world there are many examples of poor planning with a bias towards expanding tourism that has resulted in poor environmental outcomes with a consequence of either: an eventual downturn in tourist numbers due to degradation of the original attraction, a rise of tourist numbers but a lowering of financial income due to 'poor spending tourists', a dependence on tourism to the extent that any decline for any reason (eg world economic downturn, rise in \$AU) leads to local economy collapse or a resentment by the local community towards the visiting tourists.

Examples:

Bali:

Bali had an explosion of tourism in the 1970's and 80's mainly through surfing. The tourism of Bali was not controlled and development for tourism was encouraged without regard to the local communities or the environment.

Although the tourism numbers in Bali are significant, Bali is now experiencing poor publicity due to the degraded environment. The per tourist spend is not reaching the local community as it once was as profits are being taken by 'offshore' developers and businesses.

The culture has been all but decimated and overrun, particularly in localities such as Kuta and Legian Beach. This expansion is continuing with local communities being significantly affected. The resentment amongst locals towards the tourist is very high and can now be seen in open displays of taunts and even violence.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, the Bali economy all but collapsed due to dependence on the tourist dollar.

New Guinea:

The islands of New Guinea are starting to experience an expansion in tourism, both from Australians visiting the Kokoda Trail and surfing.

New Guinea has recognised the implications of the expansion of tourism and the effect on the local communities and have implemented safeguards to try to control the numbers and still maintain and expand the tourist economy. They have implemented a 'surfing licence' scheme to restrict the number of surfing tourists in any particular location at any time. This has resulted in a control of tourism that in turn has resulted in the tourist dollar being maximised and also being directed towards the local residents rather than developers or large corporations.

Big Sur:

This destination in northwest USA was once a tourist attraction due to its 'pristine' environment, similar to GOR. It is now significantly under pressure from developers and many tourists travelling the stretch of road are disappointed due to the level of development that has been permitted.

Please go to:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/28/us/plan-for-big-sur-severely-restricts-development.html>

Amsterdam:

Although a city, Amsterdam is suffering from 'glut-tourism'. The central part of the city has so much development catering to tourism that shops and restaurants that would normally cater for the local community are being excluded from the inner city due to the rise in rental prices. Locals are now complaining about the lack of facilities like supermarkets and food shops that would normally supply a local resident community.

The city council has recently announced that it is no longer advertising to the tourist market as it believes that tourists now saturate the city and after hundreds of years, the city has lost or is about to lose its distinctive character.

Quoted from the Guardian. *"A decade ago Amsterdam pumped money into tourism to recover from the global financial crisis but – even as the city bans 'beer bikes' – can it be saved from a monster industry of its own making?"*

Please see:

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/nov/01/amsterdam-tourists-worst>  
and

<https://www.politico.eu/article/amsterdam-tourism-airbnb-crime-netherlands/>

There are many other examples in the media and anecdotally of the negative effects of 'glut-tourism' and I respectfully ask that any governance model be oriented towards the needs of the local communities rather than a drive (pardon the pun) for a glut-tourist economy, which on historical evidence is doomed to fail in the long term.

Noting the above, there are many localities that have benefited from a controlled tourist sector in their economy, and the GOR can be one of those areas. Control is the key.

Control of numbers.

Control of the extent and types of developments.

Control of the types of tourists.

Currently the statistics indicate that the GOR local revenue from tourism is very low given the number of tourists that visit the region, particularly when measured against the expenditure by the current local authorities. The focus needs to shift from pure tourist numbers to quality of tourist.

**We would suggest that any governance model developed be local resident focussed and the best way to achieve that outcome is to have significant representation from the local community and be significantly answerable to the local communities along the GOR.**

The Great Ocean Road Planning Scheme largely got it right. The priority was on “preserving the scenic beauty” (Issues Paper page 30). This needs to continue as the first and major priority, with the local community’s social needs as an important second priority. If this governance model has the local community and the maintenance of the environment as its focus’ all other issues will follow from those positions to continue to have the GOR as an iconic destination for tourist and a desired place to live for the residents.

It has been stated in the Issues Paper that the GOR now attracts more tourists than the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru.

If that is true, then there is no need to attract even more visitors, but rather to entice those visitors to ‘spend’ locally.

Currently the spend from tourism in the local communities is recognised as very low. The governance model need to be created with a charter to address this shortfall in local revenue, and this is best done with significant local representation that is answerable to the local communities for their decisions.

Decision makers, who are not residents and whose only concern is an overall tourist dollar increase, irrespective of whether the spend is local or non-local, will not make good long-term decisions for the region and will be more likely to use statistical figures on ‘Victorian economy’ or ‘Australian economy’ to justify poor planning and infrastructure decisions.

### **The Great Ocean Road – in three parts:**

We would contend that the GOR needs to be considered as three distinct sections, rather than as a continuous region. The Issues Paper does not differentiate between the distinct sections of the road. We see this as a significant shortfall in the Issues Paper that needs to be considered.

In our opinion the sections are:

The eastern section - from Torquay to Apollo Bay.

The central section – from Apollo Bay to Princetown

The western section – from Princetown to Allansford.

Each of these sections have their own distinct history, environment and economy. They even have different types of tourists.

It should also be noted that tourists travelling to the Twelve Apostles via Geelong often move from east to west and return along an inland route.

Briefly:

The eastern section is the part of the road most widely known as constructed by the returned soldiers and is a memorial to them. It is the section where the road ‘hugs’ the ocean and has some of the most accessible surf in the world. Locals form a significant part of the users of this section of road along with local and tourist surfers. The non-surfing tourists that use this section are divided into day trippers who stop before or at Apollo Bay, longer stay tourists or day trippers that may briefly stop but with a destination of the central section. (Twelve Apostles).

There are many small towns and communities Between Torquay and Apollo Bay. The residents in this section are likely to be the most diverse group, with many even working outside the local region. Farm related activity would form a lesser part of the local economy than the other two regions.

The central section takes in the section of road that is relatively far from the ocean. The main daytime users of this section are likely to be tourists visiting the western section. The region is either Otway National Park bushland or more open farmland. Ocean access is via turn-off roads which would be rare. Other than locals, the other group of users are surfers who bypass the eastern section and travel the inland routes to Lavers Hill, then on to either the local beaches or to the western section. This section is the least popular for stopping by tourists and is generally used to access the western section.

The local residents in this region are more likely to be farmers, particularly dairy farmers. Lavers Hill is the only notable town between Apollo Bay and Princetown.

The western section comprises the Twelve Apostles and other landforms on the ocean side of the road. The landward side is generally farmland. This section is heavily used by day trip tourists stopping to see the unique ocean edge landforms. Port Campbell and Peterborough are reasonably sized communities along this stretch of the GOR. The local residents are probably mainly retirees, farmers or working in service businesses to the farm sector or tourism.

Due to the three separate and distinct sections of road and the diversity of the type of towns and their relative distances, any governance model should consider these differences and the need for different planning or issue decisions for each section.

**Example:** The towns along the road in the eastern section are close enough to Melbourne and each other that there is no need for additional toilets to cater for the tourists travelling to the Twelve Apostles. Any additional toilet between towns will only encourage tourists to stop outside the towns and not contribute to the local economy. If toilets are considered for the beach goers, then they should be small and unobtrusive such as those at Point Addis. Facilities enough to cater for the beach goers but limited in number and rustic enough to discourage the more “delicate” tourist from, for example, the buses.

**It is our opinion that any governance model should be based on either a ward system or having three ‘committees’ that come together for major decisions that affect the entire road.**

### **Start at Geelong:**

We would like to suggest that the emphasis on Torquay as a growth node be removed. Even though the GOR officially ends at Allansford, Warrnambool is included in the Issues Paper as a ‘defacto’ end of the road.

We believe that there is a similar relationship with Geelong and the Great Ocean Road. Geelong is currently experiencing significant growth and optimism, and we believe that as Victoria’s second city and this is an opportunity to capitalise on that sentiment and name Geelong as the “gateway to the Great Ocean Road”.

We see this as having at least two benefits:

1. Geelong, with its expanding apartment availability, could be a destination rather than a ‘pass-by’ location. Tourism could use Geelong as a jumping point to the Bellarine peninsular as well as the Great Ocean Road.
2. A boost to the Geelong economy benefits the residents of the GOR, whereas a tourist boost to Melbourne’s economy does little for the residents along the GOR. In fact, many tour operators to the Twelve Apostles start in Melbourne, with little or no economic benefit to the local residents of the road.

Having major cities at each end of the road is a logical outcome.

It appears that there is some agenda that Torquay become a city on the ocean, but as exemplified by the Gold Coast, this outcome is not necessarily desirable.

Noosa Heads has already recognised this and implemented planning safeguards to prevent the degradation of their town. It has now been proven that an economy which is driven by its desirable destination and quality tourists is far superior to an economy based on tourist numbers.

With the opening of the Geelong Ring Road, Torquay is no longer a direct route to the GOR proper. This is proven by the need to constantly improve the road between Anglesea and Wairn Ponds. The emphasis for Torquay needs to move away from becoming a ‘city’ and towards planning for it as a destination that is desired and which attracts tourists willing to stay and businesses that will enhance the economy.

**Torquay is unique in the world:** No other place in the world can boast having some of the best and world renowned surf breaks and so many in such a small stretch of coastline. These surf breaks are popular with tourists because, whilst being world standard, they are often rideable for ‘average’ ability surfers. This is only one aspect that Torquay can offer, but if the town becomes a ‘city’ it will lose its appeal and its uniqueness.

Why go to Torquay if it becomes crowded and city-like, especially when Torquay does not have the weather of NSW or Queensland? Surfers brave our eastern section of the GOR because of these attributes, if they are lost, they will go elsewhere, similar to surfers who no longer see Bali as a desirable destination. And as given above, Bali tourism started with surfers.

Quicksilver, a surf industry company that began in Torquay has just announced that it is moving its head office interstate. This is an indicator that Torquay is losing its appeal. A city by the ocean is not appealing in Victoria – too cold. Torquay needs to be better planned. Geelong is a logical alternative: it is already a city; it has existing infrastructure; it has public transport; it has accommodation; it has city vibrancy and it is a gateway to the Great Ocean Road, either via Torquay or directly via Anglesea.

We suggest that any governance structure for the Great Ocean Road should include in its consideration the establishing of Warrnambool at the western end and Geelong at the eastern end. Both these cities will need to be represented in some form in any structure.

### **Focus on Developers who live local and develop local.**

**It is our opinion that any governance model for the Great Ocean Road needs to have a focus on encouraging local residents and businesses to undertake any developments along the GOR.**

We contend that developers from outside the region do not have the interests of the local communities as part of their thinking as financial returns are more important.

Local developers are more likely to consider the local residents for employment and for the infrastructure requirements, while also considering the impacts on the environment.

Local developers are more likely to want visually appealing buildings and infrastructure and are more likely to understand the importance of the local environment and its appeal to both residents and tourists.

Along with the likelihood that developments by local business people will be more sympathetic to the environment and communities, they are also proven to be more likely to employ local residents.

By way of example is Bunnings in Torquay. Prior to Bunnings opening in Torquay, the only other hardware was a Mitre10 operated under franchise and owned by a local resident. The vast majority of the employees were local residents. Bunnings opened with promises of hiring 80 employees mainly from the local community. The reality appears to be that Bunnings now have far fewer than 80 employees and a significant proportion come from outside Torquay.

This appears to be typical. Large corporations tend not to give priority to hiring from the local community, particularly over time after opening when the initial intake may be localised, but thereafter replacement employees are not prioritised as needing to be local.

### **Events on the Great Ocean Road.**

With the increasing focus on tourists, there seems to be an increasing number of events using the GOR.

These events often impede traffic or close the road entirely, both significantly affecting the local residents.

**The number and type of events along the GOR needs to be rationalised and the governance of permits for the events considered for the road sectionally - eastern, central and western sections.**

Events that centre in towns not moving along the road are generally preferred to road travel events.

Town based events draw participants and their families to a town and boost overnight stays and therefore the town's local economy.

Road travelling events tend to move quickly through the town and do little for local businesses, sometimes actually causing a negative, economic impact. This negative impact is due to less day trip tourists using the GOR or because of delays in travel; they are not stopping in towns and move on to their (Twelve Apostle) destination without spending on their travels.

### **Guiding Principles:**

We generally agree with the guiding principles as presented on page 41 of the Issues Paper document but with the following alterations or comments:

Dot point 2 - include after "...net gain for the environment", the words ***and at no net loss of natural habitat***

Dot point 3 - Have a community discussion and establish what are the heritage, cultural and identity values of the Great Ocean road.

After dot point 6 **add dot point** - Partner with the local residents in the development of policies, planning and management of the Great Ocean Road, its coastlines, landscapes and seas.

Dot point 8 - At the start of the sentence add; ***Without creation of infrastructure....***

Dot point 9 - Add at end of sentence; ***with priority given to removal and relocation of assets above protection for those assets and public lands.***

Dot point 10 - Remove the words; ***and access***

Dot point 12 - Delete dot point.

Add dot point. - ***"within the eastern section of the Great Ocean Road between Torquay and Apollo Bay, only provide additional facilities within existing townships unless proven as unavoidable, and then only provide in a minimalised manner"***

Dot point 14 - Delete dot point.

Add dot point - ***"Establish town boundaries for all communities between Torquay and Apollo Bay"***

Dot point 15 - Add at end of sentence; ***while giving priority to these guidelines.***

Dot point 18 - Replace the "and" after "Eastern Maar" with a ",". Add after "...Wadaurung people" the words ***and local residents....***

Dot point 19 - Replace words "prioritise community engagement" with ***"Provide local community representation on any authority engaged ...."***

### **Preferred Governance Model:**

*Our local resident's association represents only a small part of the Great Ocean Road community and we have neither the resources nor the expertise to provide a comprehensive outline of a model for the governance of the Great Ocean Road.*

We would like to put forward the concepts we believe that a model should endeavour to achieve:

1. Local community representation - We believe that for long term success, the model needs to consider the environment and local communities as priorities over all other considerations. If the communities become disenfranchised or socially disjointed, they effectively will fail. This will impact the economy, the developers desire to invest and the tourist experience.
  - a. We believe the model needs strong community representation, not just input.
  - b. We believe that if any powers of planning are transferred away from local councils, then the new authority needs to be accessible and answerable to the residents along the Great Ocean road, in a similar way that community currently has input to councils through planning submissions and by elections of councillors.
  - c. We believe that if any strategic or lower planning consideration for the Great Ocean Road are to be based on 'expert reports', then those reports need to be fully independent and not funded by any developer group. The community should be involved in briefing and scope for any reports.
2. Community interaction with authority - Currently organisations such as GORCC are administrating their part of the Great Ocean road in an excellent manner. Based in Torquay, which is local to the community, there is an accessibility that may not be available if a larger authority were administrators. We would not like to have the role of GORCC diminished, nor their jurisdiction or authority. We put forward that any governance model should incorporate organisations like GORCC into the structure.
3. Funding - The funding of any governance system should not put further burden on the local communities. As an example, GORCC funds itself without any direct input from the communities it serves. Mainly the funds are from the caravan parks and infrastructure grants. Any new funding stream imposed on the local persons or businesses should only be levied when it can be shown that there is a direct financial benefit to that business or person.
4. Create a governance model that includes members of communities as representatives.
5. Create a governance model that provides for the three distinct sections of the Great Ocean Road with each able to administer locally and 'feed' into an over-arching body that administers on major decisions that affect the entire road and its communities.
6. Develop a model that includes Geelong and Warrnambool as "end towns" for the Great Ocean Road.
7. Any new authority should be representative of the communities of the Great Ocean Road, preferably by election, which could be undertaken at the same time as council elections.

Provided by the committee of 3228 Residents Association Incorporated

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