

## Submission to Governance of the Great Ocean Road Region Issues Paper (GOGORRIP)

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The network presented in person by Basalt to Bay Landcare Network Facilitator [REDACTED] at the Warrnambool Session by invitation. This written submission summarises some of the presentation made and reinforces several key points delivered then.

## Key points:

Any investment in consolidating the management ahead for one of Victoria's most precious tourism and ecological natural features assets is vital. Establishing a clear path for agencies of government, community, traditional owners, and the economic benefactors of this asset is overdue and we agree that considering all the options in this process is a beneficial action by State Government.

Our submission is based on our network strategic plan (available from our website [www.basalttobay.org.au](http://www.basalttobay.org.au)) which outlines the key areas to invest for our work. These areas are two on ground projects based north of Port Fairy, and another between Koroit and Minhamite – as well as a strategic project to assist with practice change in agriculture towards a more sustainable and climate resilient economy for our regional primary producers.

Basalt to Bay (B2B) was founded 10 years ago to address a lack of strategy between community need to protect environments, environmental assets needing protection, farm land needing greater support to change unsustainable practices, and farmers needing greater cohesion within their networks on what they could do to prevent land degradation and loss of farming profitability due to climate, weeds, pest animals, and soil decline.

B2B is a volunteer board with one employee based in Koroit. Our region is Moyne Shire and Warrnambool City local government areas – which equates to just under 4% of the land mass of Victoria. Part of our region includes the Allansford to Peterborough section of The Great Ocean Rd. The areas mapped as being the region around The GOR are also part of our region.

One of the key activities that sets our network apart from other community environment not-for-profits is our work with corporate and industry partners to help get information to farmers that drives practice change. In this regard B2B is at the forefront of innovation for community led partnerships with primary production industry proponents in Australia. Recent examples of this function and success include a partnership with the ATO to provide information to primary producers about tax incentives to plant shade and shelterbelts and claim almost 100% of the costs to do this.

We consider The GOR as both a tourism conduit but also as a conduit to show off the best of what our region does for environmental custodianship in a largely agricultural landscape. But there is a trick to that.

The GOR is not a theme park that has a gate fee that then funds development. It does not have a separateness from the surrounding land that would give any visitor the impression that it is. In getting to, along, and away from it – visitors from all over the world literally see what primary production looks like in SW Victoria. The GOR and agriculture are inseparable. But your governance issues paper does not consider this, nor does it consider what the opportunity for co-investment

between the GOR and the businesses of agriculture could afford the future of The GOR Region. We believe this as a future funding model for The GOR should be added to the governance future of The GOR and become a discussion outcome for the future funding model to manage The GOR.

Our presentation highlighted the international visitors coming to the GOR – and how at the present time investment in creating complimentary visitor experiences beyond just the coastal strip is not occurring to match the numbers of visitors coming to the area. So while local people might want to connect with visitors and support them to stay longer and capture more of the spend – they lack the resources to do that at a level that would result in visitor stays being lengthened. So our biggest potential international tourism site funds operators outside The GOR. It does nothing to help the attitudes toward the future management of The GOR to have the investment radar seeming to always point to activities that are short durations – like heli rides and a quick run to lean over the edge of a cliff.

At the same time that local people are frustrated that the GOR is a strip of highly intensive activity that causes problems with traffic and degradation of coastal sites (including some of high heritage sensitivity) but which does not provide them with an income stream– the industries of agriculture are also frustrated by the huge cost of marketing internationally to an international audience that visits and sees agriculture along the GOR but does not stop and taste or experience it. They do not stop and buy Australian made primary produce or end product items made from Australian suppliers while visiting The GOR because they can catch this at the airport. This is really sad because so much of what the visitors pass on their way to The GOR is not able to be found at the airport shop, even though what we produce in this region from primary production is world class. That makes a significant loss to both direct sales to visitors but also to their ongoing purchasing of The GOR region once they return home.

The issue of future proofing the primary products of dairy, meat and sheep is reflected in the strategic plans these industries provide to signal the direction ahead in this dilemma. For example- The Australian Beef Sustainability Framework 2017 states “The Australian Beef Industry recognizes that many consumers want to know where their beef comes from and how it is produced”. 58% of all Australian Farms are beef producers and 74% of that beef is exported. Victoria has 4.1 million beef cattle. Getting the international consumer audience to see and taste our unique point of difference from any other grass fed meat (NZ/Sth America) while they are visiting a tourist site like The GOR is a way that the future management of the GOR could capitalise on a gap in marketing for primary produce that would also resolve the economic flow on to local farms and connect their work with the business of tourism. That in turn would connect our expectations of improvements to farm conditions (native shade and shelter) to the international aspirations of primary production marketers seeking to verify that our animal welfare and land custodianships also meet expectations of consumers. Sheep and dairy also flag this in their plans.

Promoting and protecting the cattle industry is also a key feature of the Meat and Livestock Australia Strategic Plan 2016-2020. A Key pillar for investment is “Market Growth and diversification” with the priority “Marketing and promoting Australian red meat and livestock” with “food” as a key avenue for this action.

Australian Wool Strategic Plan 2016-2019 States” This strategy will focus on improving global recognition of wools environmental and wellness credentials and thereby maximise future demand for wool”

Dairy Australia's Strategic Plan 2016 to 2019 In Industry SWOT highlights "industry reputation as clean and green" as a strength while a key challenge is "optimise investment to best support social licence objectives".

The idea that Dairying is on show along The GOR is not new and partially catered for by Cheese World at Allansford and Timboon Ice Cream. But having an eating and interactive experience that showcases dairying and other primary industries to support international marketing and strengthen the GOR primary producers is not catered for.

So we would like to submit to the GOGORRIP that this partnership with agriculture be an important part of the future funding planning of whatever governance structure is decided, and that as the broker of this connection we be offered the opportunity to provide support to build that GOR/Primary Production connection over the coming years. Whatever we can do to lead primary production in Victoria towards a future that brings environment, climate resilience, and animal welfare together is what we are focusing on – and tourism is one way to help escalate these changes.

Other less key points from submission comments on GOGORRIP:

- Increasing the duration and authenticity of visitor experiences that are not mass marketed or produced is a key to ensuring that in "selling our natural assets" we also retain the right to control how they are sold and to how many people and for what aim. One of our on ground project sites "The Green Line" has a section in it that could showcase a style of guided tour that aims to have low numbers of visitors taken on an exclusive journey through a remnant of a Victorian Volcanic Plains vegetation preserved on a former railway line. It could be a seasonal high value guided tour blending conservation, science, ecology, indigenous heritage, engineering, and bush foods. We need to GOGORRIP to vision around the GOR and look at what opportunities there are to support conservation projects already occurring in the local area. It is part of drawing the stay length beyond one day.
- The small towns that are also part of the visitor routes to and from The GOR are somewhat overlooked in the issues paper – particularly in regards to how these small towns that are often not set up or supported to attract visitors can be the beneficiaries of greater investment to generate those tourist experiences without the local people having to have a tourism expert in every store. Take for example the town of Panmure that has a small freedom camping site. The Panmure Action Group set up a visitor's book in 2016 to chart where people were from and record what they liked about Panmure. It was part of showing Moyne Shire Council that the toilet and swimming area and playground needed to be retained and who was using it. In the first months of 2018 the visitors book was upgraded to ask a couple of key questions – where are you from, how many are you traveling with and where are you going to next. It revealed that tourists from Germany and France travelling to Adelaide are a key niche of visitors and that typically over the summer between 2 and 7 people are in each camping group. They like Panmure for the toilet, the swimming hole, and the free bbq. None of this data is being collected by anyone else and it is not being used by Tourism Victoria because they don't pay attention to a little town with a visitors book. But imagine if they gave Panmure some support to share that data and make a feature of it and boost up the visitor experience in Panmure at the shop and at the pub. Imagine if they provided maps and brochures for visitors to take with them. It doesn't happen. There is no mentoring for community volunteers or small businesses servicing small towns in hospitality.

There is no structure to support this type of small initiative. Likewise there is no funding for community groups who want to provide more public but also tourism sites to break up journeys and get visitors to stop and take a break. Little things like getting stickers for the waste bins to encourage visitors to pick up litter to protect the wildlife around the swimming hole pitched to Sustainability Victoria in 2017 and couldn't be supported. If the whole of government approach doesn't pick up on small towns and their capacity to drive visitor experiences in the "hinterland" then this is a problem for the future management of The GOR – because getting visitors to wander and stop is what the GOR region needs. A collaborative multi-level plan that delivers capacity to communities requires direction and a desire to work beyond government and councils. We hope the management ahead will consider this and work to address it.

- Vline, Victrack, The TAC, and key industries on the GOR like Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Factory (WCB) are absent from the organisations in Appendix B. We think this is an oversight that forgets that Vline runs a regular train and coach service to and along the GOR, and that The TAC is a key stakeholder in trying to address road safety issues in Victoria. If your team hasn't asked WCB (and the other dairy factories picking up milk all the way down to Gippsland) how many tankers they send down the GOR every day – then perhaps it is time that was asked. How the road functions as a conduit for commerce and the value of those traffic movements is overlooked in your issues document. That transport of produce has a value and economic consequences if changed or increasingly impacted by tourism pressures.
- There is confusion about the area that the issues paper covers as the way the study area is described keeps changing in the plan. The study area map 1 shows a very large area all the way inland to Camperdown, Colac, and Geelong - then the Maps 2 – 5 show a much narrower region that reduces the study area a considerable amount. The issues paper also switches between describing a road and a region and then a road and landscape and then a primary study area as the road and its landscape followed by a secondary study area and its hinterland. This is then combined to describe a project area. If the writers are unsure about the scope of the issues paper geographically – then how can submitters be certain that what they submit is to the correct version of The GOR and how can the management region be defined and resourced?
- Suggest that future issues papers have a Word version minus the photos so that when printing out it takes less paper and less ink.