

GOVERNANCE of the GOR REGION.

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Having read the issues paper and attended a public information session in Apollo Bay it appears to me that most of the issues faced by this region are well understood and articulated.

How to improve the management of this area, and what form this should take, is still shrouded in a swirling coastal mist.

Occasional glimpses are revealed, "integrated management", "recurrent budgets", "strategic planning", "priority project delivery", "sustainable diverse communities", "visitor experience exceed expectations", "user pays", "strategic response to climate effect".

How do we best manage this? What form will this take? Who is responsible for delivery?

What we don't need is another layer of management over the top of the existing bodies. The duck shoving, not my core business, not in my budget, inadequate resources, you don't hear us, territorial type behaviours could still continue. Coupled to this is the notion of better, more timely, planning and service delivery.

And meetings, there are going to be so many meetings. How frustrating is it, often used as a tactic, when agencies send a representative to the meeting who is not empowered to make a decision or commitment to that meeting. The new body must be empowered to achieve an appropriate level of engagement from all participants.

And do we really need the complication of three different Ministers peering at the radar wondering where it is all going?

So let's start here, what is the political appetite for fixing this broken model rather than just another patch applied over the last one. A real commitment would be to:

*A new body reporting directly to a single Minister with the resources and timelines to deliver and implement the, "Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region". (p44). To be followed shortly after with Reform recommendations.*

Yes. Now what exactly is the “Region”?

The study area (first page flyleaf) shows a thin black line tracking along a sea of opportunity and natural beauty, a place that I choose to call home. Where should the “Authorities” authority extend to? Dose it just follow in the wake of the day trippers or, touch the ocean?, Enter the forests?, embrace the communities?.

The Purpose of the Taskforce, (p59) “is to,

4a Boost tourism expenditure and investment along the GOR

4b better support local communities to benefit from the visitation economy

4c maintain appropriate environmental and landscape protections”

We have learnt that the best way to manage our water resources is to use a catchment area based model. I suggest that we use a Community Catchment Model here.

Looking at the Study Area Map, the community catchments become two largely urban area,s one at each end of the road, and the small communities and Nature in between. To the North are communities with distinctly different interests.

*A community catchment model would also guide the best way to deliver integrated services, support local communities, protect and respond to the environment, boost investment and most importantly do the strategic planning across the Region.*

Strategic Planning for the Region needs to be well resourced and working from the same chart. At present we have 5 local government areas all duplicating this function often without dedicated skilled staff. This is coupled with the recent loss of perhaps 50% of the coastal planners and research staff from DELWP. We are certainly now at a place where big improvements are possible.

Both public and private assets will need to be shifted, abandoned or strengthened as we respond to the clear effects of climate change. All future investment must be well informed by the “big picture”. And a collaborative approach taken by owners and managers of both private and public lands to find the best long term options in our response to climate change effects. Local government will have an increasing role in managing and adapting to the effects of climate change. They must have the skill sets to do this.

*Perhaps the Region should only have 3 local government areas that best reflect the community catchment areas. Efficient focussed collaborative engagement, almost a partnership approach, could also be taken when facing the approaching headwinds. Strategic planning would become both possible and timely.*

Should Parks, the Coastal Committees of management and DELWP managed public lands be closer aligned to the Regional strategies and goals. In most of the Region they manage the public lands that attract the visitors. Often have to provide and maintain the facilities, manage the risks and clean up after the days fun.

*Perhaps some of the services provided by three distinct agencies could be amalgamated as a Regional trial.*

Why would you apply the same rules and support across the state to these organisations, Organisations that face unimaginable increases in demand for a “Nature” experience. Who advocates for them at a State and Local Government level. What recognition should be given to providing adequate recurrent resources to balance and provide for so many competing interests?

*A new governance model must accommodate, no recognise and advocate for appropriate resources to support the public land managers. The implementation of subtle user pays systems occurring across the Region will help if the funds are reinvested in the Region.*

*And most importantly yet almost silent in the discussion so far is the development and implementation of a clear, modern organisational culture that respects, supports and develops its human resources. This is quite possible to achieve on a Regional basis. This could flow into a mutual obligation understanding with the residents and visitors alike.*

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