

Received by email 16/12/2019

Colac Otway Shire's position on the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback into your community engagement process in this matter.

The purpose of this letter is to set out Council's input to the functions and structure of a lead agency for the Great Ocean Road.

Many of Council's views are in response to questions relating to the Issues Paper distributed by the Taskforce. I think that these are still relevant and have attached our responses at that time.

Q3. Our view is that the community should be consulted on:

- a. Long term planning
- b. Environmental conservation and rehabilitation
- c. Location, design and maintenance of facilities
- d. Visitor management

We do not believe that the community should be engaged in the detail of annual budgeting.

Q4. Our view is that we do not believe you should establish a formal structure or mechanism for the community to feed into. Instead we would say that the Authority will need to consult with the broader community on a wide range of issues as set out in Q3.

Should be considered that a representative community committee needs to be established and we suggest that one community committee is created for the whole region. Our third preference would be that if each town is to be represented in this representation should be drawn from an existing community group in each instance.

Q6. Funding options

Council supports consideration of all the four funding options listed. We have some reservations about vehicle infrastructure passes and if such a system was to be considered considerable work would need to be undertaken with our communities to ensure that local communities were not disadvantaged.

We believe there is strong support for parking fees at key sites and tourism operator licenses hypothecated to the great Ocean Road.

Commercial opportunities need to be explored. Consideration needs to be given to licensing smaller businesses rather than focusing exclusively on a large commercial opportunities.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you and your team for the manner in which you have managed and are delivering this very challenging and important project. The people and the agencies of this region will look back upon this work and understand that this was the beginning of a change process which allowed the stewardship of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes to reach the level it must reach.

Cheers

Peter Brown
Chief Executive



Website: www.colacotway.vic.gov.au

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19 April 2018

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Dear [REDACTED]

Colac Otway Shire's position on the Great Ocean Road Issues Paper

The purpose of this letter is to set out Council's response to the Issues Paper as well as Council's initial input to the functions and structure of a lead agency for the Great Ocean Road.

At the Council Meeting held on April 18 Council resolved its position shown in italics below:

That Council:

- 1) *Provides the responses below to the questions posed by the issues paper prepared by the Great Ocean Road Taskforce:*

1. *What do you love most about the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes?*

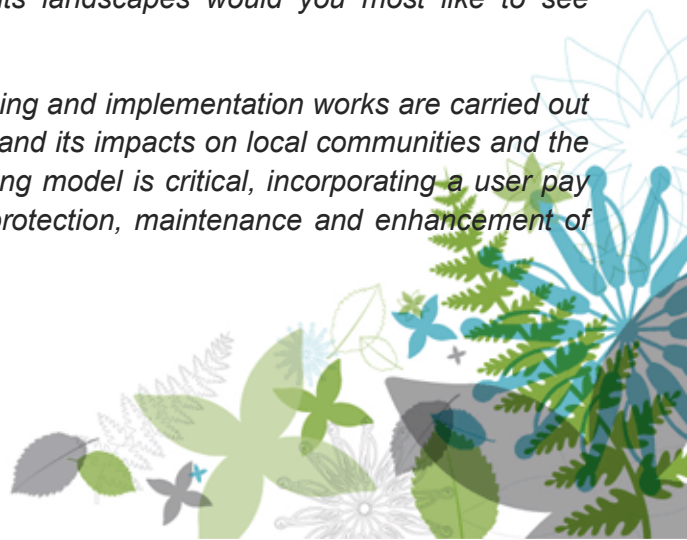
Response: Council values the cultural significance of the Great Ocean Road, the natural environment on and off shore, the vibrant communities that live on the road, the economic significance of the visitor economy and the significance of the area to the Traditional Owners.

2. *What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you like most like to see protected?*

Response: Council requires all of the above to be protected and enhanced.

3. *What aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes would you most like to see changed?*

Response: Council requires that strategic planning and implementation works are carried out to ensure that the visitor economy is supported and its impacts on local communities and the environment are managed. A sustainable funding model is critical, incorporating a user pay principle which sees visitors contribute to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the landscape that attracts them to the region.



4. Do you work for, or own or operate a business, or are you a member of a community organisation, that benefits from visitors to the Great Ocean Road region? What are the key issues for the organisation/business?

Response: Council represents the communities that live and holiday on the Great Ocean Road as well as the wider Colac Otway Shire community.

The key issues for Council have been captured and expressed in the Taskforce Issues Paper.

5. Is there any critical issue or opportunity that we have missed?

Response: In Council's view there are no critical issues or opportunities that have been missed.

6. Do you have any suggested changes to the overarching policy, goals and principles?

Response: Council does not have any suggested changes to the overarching policy, goals and principles

7. What elements would you like to see covered in a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road region?

Response: Council is of the opinion that the key elements of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region have been captured in the Issues Paper. It will be critical to ensure that a sustainable funding model is identified which has an element of a user pay principle which sees visitors contribute to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the landscape that attracts them to the region.

8. What are your thoughts about establishing a new organisation to oversee the development, and coordinate implementation, of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road region?

Response: Council is of the view that a new Authority, created under statute, should be established to develop and coordinate the implementation of a Strategic Framework Plan for the Great Ocean Road region. The Authority should be the lead agency in the implementation of the Strategic Framework Plan. A lead Minister should also be confirmed that the Authority is accountable to. Council is of the view this could be a Tourism or Economic development related Minister and agency.

Based on the above, Council is of the view that Option 4 contained in the Issues Paper establishing a funded new authority by legislation is the preferred option.

Council is of the view that a dedicated and ongoing secure funding source is required that is not dependent on the annual budget cycle and allocation. This funding source would provide for the administration and activities of the new Authority, including existing operational funding gaps to maintain, renew and develop public infrastructure.

9. *What current constraints need to be addressed in the future governance arrangements?*

Response: *Council is of the view that the current constraints have been captured in the Issues Paper with an additional constraint being a commitment with government agencies to accept change in accountabilities. This will be important as clearly the existing approach has failed.*

Council wishes to reiterate a sustainable funding model is critical which would include a user pay principle which sees visitors contribute to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the landscape that attracts them to the region. The existing funding model is equally as much of a constraint as that of the current poor governance model. Changing the governance model without an agreed funding model will not succeed.

10. *Are there any other management models/options we should consider?*

Response: *Council is of the view that the feasible options have been highlighted and that Option 4, a legislatively established, funded separate authority with lead agency functions, is the most appropriate option.*

Council's participation on the Taskforce has allowed access to the Taskforce work of reviewing other models national and internationally. Council is supportive of this work and the examples considered.

11. *What criteria should the Taskforce use to evaluate the management model options?*

Response: *Council is of the view that the Taskforce should evaluate the management model options considering the organisational sustainability and the ability of the various options to address the problems which have been exposed by the Taskforce.*

To assist the taskforce with this work Council offers the following criteria for consideration. It would be critical that the new authority:

- *Has clear statutory powers and responsibilities with a lead Minister.*
- *Has a defined partnership role with the traditional owners.*
- *Ability to engage local communities.*
- *Has a sustainable funding model not subject to annual allocation.*
- *Improves the coordination and integration of relevant organisations in the region.*
- *Reduces the total number of agencies/organisations with responsibilities in the region.*
- *Maximises the strengths of existing organisations and ensures that there are not duplicated functions.*
- *Responsibility for the development, co-ordination and implementation of a Strategic Framework Plan.*

2) *Indicates within its submission the following matters which it specifically draws to the attention of the Great Ocean Road Taskforce as important considerations:*

- a. *The Authority established must place a high priority on advocating for significant improvements to major road routes connecting the Great Ocean Road to the Princes Highway to address major safety issues and cater for the high traffic volumes experienced.*

- b. *The Council anticipates the Authority will interface with major tourism infrastructure developers and have an on-going engagement with Councils to provide strategic framework plan recommendations and all advice and support to Councils. Council is open to considering improved approaches to statutory land use planning for the Great Ocean Road region which may include a role for a new Authority. It will be critical any changes maintain the existing opportunity for community input and Councils to represent their communities and influence decisions.*
- c. *A clear definition is required on “tourism development” that will fall within the jurisdiction of the Authority.*
- d. *The context of jurisdiction of the Authority should, in addition to the defined “tourism development” be spatially described defining the geographic area within which the Authority will operate.*
- e. *Whilst the Council supports the Authority having revenue raising powers through user charges, the Council considers it premature to specify in its submission how the revenue should be raised at this time.*
- f. *The Council supports VicRoads continuing to be legislatively responsible for management and maintenance of the Great Ocean Road and other major roads within the Great Ocean Road tourist route. The Council supports strong advocacy to the State Government in order to secure specific, dedicated provisions within the State Budget for improvements and maintenance of the Great Ocean Road and its feeder roads.*
- g. *The Council urges the Taskforce to consider alternative models for membership of any separate Authority established. Membership representative of a skill based criteria, community membership and Council membership should be explored. In this regard the Council notes membership of Waste Boards with four (4) skills based members and four (4) members drawn from local government.*
- h. *The establishment of the separate Authority needs to encapsulate legislation providing referral authority powers to the Authority. This will mandate engagement with the Authority on matters relating to the Great Ocean Road region by the various organisations, government departments and agencies who have jurisdiction in specific matters which exist for the Great Ocean Road region.*
- i. *The Council provides advice to the Taskforce that it is undertaking an investigation on the viability of Colac Otway Shire assuming responsibility for functions currently undertaken by the Otway Coastal Committee.*
In this regard, the Council seeks to specifically engage with the Taskforce to discuss the following:
 - *the Otway Coastal Committee is under resourced to undertake its functions to the standard the community expects, notwithstanding the commitment of the Committee*
 - *many of the areas currently under the authority of the Otway Coastal Committee are crucial to the proper planning and delivery of high standard facilities and services to communities within Colac Otway Shire. This planning and delivery is currently suboptimal due to the limited resources available.*

- *the Colac Otway Shire seeks funding from the Taskforce to undertake business case modelling to determine areas of responsibility of the Otway Coastal Committee that should be transferred to Colac Otway Shire with an associated funding commitment to enable capital expenditure to upgrade facilities and recurrent expenditure to enable appropriate maintenance activities.*
- j. *The Council supports a program of transition arrangements to give effect to the establishment of a separate Authority and the transfer of arrangements from the current plethora of authorities engaged within the Great Ocean Road.*

3. Hold a half day Council workshop, as appropriate, to consider the functions of a new Great Ocean Road Authority and sustainable models to fund it.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you and your team for the manner in which you have managed and are delivering this very challenging and important project. The people and the agencies of this region will look back upon this work and understand that this was the beginning of a change process which allowed the stewardship of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes to reach the level it must reach.

If you have any inquiries concerning this matter please contact me on 5232 9482.

Yours faithfully,


Acting Chief Executive Officer