



Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes

8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Telephone: 03 9637 9504
DX210098

Ms Kathy Mitchell
Chief Panel Member
Planning Panels Victoria
GPO Box 2392
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Ms Mitchell

**REFERRAL OF BELLS BEACH ELEVATED WALKWAY AND VIEWING PLATFORM
TO GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

I refer the Bells Beach elevated walkway and viewing platform components of the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2015-25 to the Great Ocean Road Region Standing Advisory Committee (GORRSAC) appointed under Part 7, section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* for advice. Under its Terms of Reference, GORRSAC can provide advice on matters referred to it by me, including review of coastal and marine management plans.

The Surf Coast Shire Council is the committee of management for the reserve under the *Crown Land Reserves Act (1978)* and has submitted the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2015-25 (CMMP) for approval under the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

The Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve is an important place to the Traditional Owners of Country, the Wadawurrung people, an important part of Victoria's heritage, and an internationally renowned surfing location. It is included on the Great Ocean Road and Environs National Heritage listing and Victorian Heritage Register and is designated as a landscape of national significance.

The CMMP proposes to replace the current concrete paths with an elevated timber walkway that can also function as a viewing platform during surfing events. The proposed elevated walkway and viewing platform is the one component of the draft CMMP that I seek the advice of the GORRSAC, rather than the broader CMMP.

On-site surveys were undertaken in 2018 and 2019 to gauge public opinion on the proposal. There were 502 respondents to the first survey and 379 respondents with 6 separate written submissions to the second. The majority of respondents in 2018 were in favor of the proposal (or said they could live with it), while the majority of respondents to the 2019 survey, which included a design concept, were not. Further consultation was planned to take place at this year's Rip Curl Pro however this has not taken place due to the postponement of the event.

The key unresolved issues raised in submissions by respondents that are to be subject of GORRSAC's considerations are:

- the function and need for the proposed structure (adequacy of existing viewing platforms)
- response to site context including siting and design of the proposed structure
- intrusion upon the natural environment and landscape, including views from the water
- permanency of the structure
- potential increase in tourists, leading to more litter, greater visual intrusion and damage to the natural environment.

In addition to the issues raised by respondents, other issues for consideration by the GORRSAC include:

- Aboriginal values (tangible and intangible)
- post-contact cultural heritage values
- proposed design and impact upon a landscape of national significance, including views from the water
- safety upgrade requirements
- protection of vegetation adjacent to the proposed walkway and viewing platform
- provision for faunal movement
- the Victorian Government's policy commitments in the Victorian marine and Coastal Policy, Great Ocean Road Action Plan and declaration of the Surf Coast Distinctive Area and Landscape.

Out of scope is a review of the broader CMMP. The advice from GORRSAC should include a recommendation on the appropriateness of the proposed elevated walkway and viewing platform as well as any proposed design and any mitigating measures to be considered.

As the Surf Coast Council has already undertaken considerable public consultation on the CMMP, I would like the GORRSAC to undertake targeted consultation in round table meetings or small group forums with key stakeholders (including discussions with the six submitters to the CMMP where the issue of the walkway was raised). This may be undertaken by video conferencing or similar technology to allow the review to be conducted as soon as possible. I would appreciate timely advice about the outcome of the review, preferably by the end of October, to allow me to finalise this matter.

Please include representatives from the following organisations as part of the review discussions:

- the Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation as the recognised Traditional Owner group for the reserve
- Surf Coast Shire Council as the committee of management for the reserve
- the Bells Beach Committee which advise Council on the management of the Bells Beach Surfing Reserve
- local user groups such as Greater Torquay Alliance, Surfers Appreciating Natural Environment, Surfrider Foundation
- surfing event organisers such as the Torquay Boardriders Club and the World Surf League
- the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

A referral package of information including the 6 submissions, additional background information including a summary of submissions received in relation to the proposed elevated walkway and viewing platform, will be forwarded to Planning Panels Victoria shortly.

If you require any additional information about this project, please contact Michael Noelker, Program Manager Land and Built Environment, Barwon South West, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, on (03) 5220 2011 or at michael.noelker@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes
05 / 08 / 2020



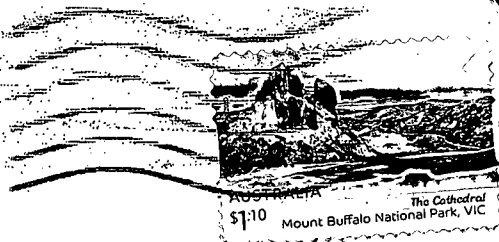
If not claimed, return to:
PO.Box 500 East Melbourne Victoria 8002

DLC CFCP 454

13. 08. 20 03h05

Stay safe

Australia



Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

