



# Bass Coast Shire Council

## Submission

Land and biodiversity at a time of climate change

Department of Sustainability & Environment White Paper

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"The White Paper will prioritise the Victorian Government policy and investment in natural resource management, land health and biodiversity for the next 20 to 50 years" - *Minister Thwaites.*

### Terms of Reference

#### Objectives

*The White Paper will:*

- *Set the direction for Victorian Government policy and investment priorities in natural resource management, land health and biodiversity for the next two decades.*
- *Consider how environment and natural resource management activity at the regional, catchment, local and farm scale, and on public land, is contributing to Victoria's overall environmental health and economic and social well-being.*
- *Make sure Government policy and investment is responsive to new threats and opportunities.*

The White Paper will form the basis for a Green Paper which will be the main document for public consultation.

## Bass Coast Shire Council - General Comments

The comments provided below detail areas that need clarification and issues that have not been identified in the White Paper. The comments have been compiled after assessing information from community organisations and individuals and also Council staff.

- It is unclear who the paper will be targeted at e.g. NRM agencies, community, business or possibly all three. This could be clarified as it may affect the style and language of the Green Paper document.
- The term "value" is often used, however, this can mean many things to different people. This should be clarified.
- The term "sea scapes" is used. This needs to be clarified to define what it means. Is it a geographic area, visual amenity or perhaps a whole "eco system"?
- What are the key drivers for the paper, are the current arrangements not adequate? Is it costing too much? Have scientific studies shown a significant decline in biodiversity and productivity? This should be clarified to get an understanding of why the paper is being prepared.

### Comments on Question (Page 12):

*What are the environmental, social and economic values provided by healthy land and biodiversity?*

- Consideration needs to be given to the issue of private land management for the public good, e.g. areas set aside for habitat and biodiversity, water quality improvements etc and how these areas can be sustainably managed e.g. costs, tenure, in perpetuity.

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**Comments on Question (Page 12):**

*What impacts will climate change have on these values?*

- Short and long term approaches to adaptation and minimising emissions rely on good scientific data and integrated programs through a central agency. At present a number of agencies and organisations are involved and it is unclear where the roles and responsibilities rests and therefore difficult decisions are not made.
- Consideration should be given to defining "monitor points" or using "icon species" as key climate change indicators.
- There is no mention of the opportunities (if any) associated with climate change e.g. agricultural diversity or high yield crops.
- There is no mention of the ability of nature to adapt although it is recognised that the speed of change is the biggest issue for nature.

**Comment on Question (Page 12):**

*What are the other threats and opportunities?*

- The most significant impact for land and biodiversity is the growth of Melbourne and the general population and the need for natural resources e.g. energy, water, productive land, etc. to enable the retention of the communities current lifestyle.
- The issue of the cost of transport in the future may require special consideration in relation to supplying food, services, etc.

**Comments on Question (Page 13):**

*What are the roles and responsibilities of individuals, community, business and government and how can we maximise the effectiveness of our joint effort?*

- There is a strong need to integrate monitoring systems across organisations to maximise the effort. This is clearly relevant if standardised "monitor points" or "icon species" are used as Key Indicators.
- At present, there are many agencies involved in "sustainability" issues and the roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined.

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**Comment on Question (Page 14):**

*Are the current institutional arrangements working and how could they be improved to deliver sustainable land, water and biodiversity outcomes?*

- There is a cost associated with organisational and institutional change, therefore any changes should be specific and define roles and responsibilities. Wholesale change should not be considered.
- Many of the issues are of national, regional and State-wide significance and the responsibilities for management and particularly enforcement should not necessarily rest with local government unless resources are provided.
- The three stages of providing information, education and enforcement of legislation needs to be highlighted as the essential components of "cultural change". Enforcement has not been a high priority with NRM agencies in recent years and this should be addressed.
- The integrated catchment model is the best model for overall management of land and biodiversity, however, the current arrangement of coastal boards, catchment management authorities, DSE, DPI, EPA, local government, landcare, etc, with many cross boundary responsibilities (including approvals processes) is particularly difficult for the general public to appreciate.
- The use of "local volunteer" groups to work in their local areas has proven successful, however volunteers should not be left with roles and responsibilities above their skills.
- The "landcare" model for issues on private land has also proved successful, however again, strong professional and resource support must be given to ensure the continuity of NRM programs which can take years to establish.