



**Victorian
Coastal
Council**

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Dear Dr Doolan

DRAFT VICTORIAN RIVER HEALTH STRATEGY

The Victorian Coastal Council would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all concerned on the development of the Draft Victorian River Health Strategy (VRHS) and make the following submission.

Firstly, Council is pleased to see the VRHS is based upon the principles of ecologically sustainable development, particularly the interdependence between river health and human use. Ecologically sustainable principles also underpin the recently released Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCS). Council endorses the VRHS vision, recognising ecological health of rivers and catchments is essential in ensuring the social, cultural and economic functions continue sustainably.

A high priority for the VRHS is the integration of catchment management through to the coast. The adaptive management concept and the learning from experience approach within the VRHS are consistent with the principles of the VCS for Integrated Coastal and Catchment Management.

Council also supports the development and promotion of more efficient resource utilisation of Victoria's rivers and catchments within the context of regional sustainability and reducing the ecological footprint of human activity. Stakeholder and community education and capacity building will be essential in implementing this action. This will become increasingly important as climate change affects rainfall, runoff and flow in the future and demands on our resources face increasing pressures such as population increase and development.

A key component of river and catchment health is water quality and quantity. Mechanisms to strategically progress consideration of coastal and estuarine impacts on water quality and quantity are required. The significance of water quality and quantity for estuarine environments is identified as a key priority for attention in the VCS and also coastal action plans (CAP) such as the Gippsland Lakes CAP and the South West Estuaries CAP and Gippsland Lakes Future Directions and Actions.

The VCS highlights the need for integration between catchment management and coastal management in Action 2.6.3 'management outcomes to be established through regional catchment strategies or accredited regional plans will incorporate a coastal context to ensure that estuarine and coastal issues are considered by involving the relevant coastal manager or Regional Coastal Board'. The scope of the VRHS outlined on page 20 has the potential to


recognise the integration between catchment management and coastal wetlands and estuaries and clearly state the link between catchment and coastal management.

Council is encouraged by the recognition that 'river flow is the single most valuable aspect of our communities from an economic point of view' (pg. 60), however in the outline of asset registers for regional river health strategies, flow is not recognised as an economic asset.

Implementation and reporting on implementation of the VRHS is not clearly outlined in the document. This is an essential aspect, not only for managers and stakeholders, but also the community, particularly given the emphasis on community participation throughout the document. The document is also repetitive in some sections, particularly Sections 1 and 2, this and the document format could be reviewed to improve readability.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on the VRHS. Council would welcome the opportunity to work together on establishing benchmarks and performance measures for implementing the VRHS. Please do not hesitate to contact myself on ☎ 9412 4690 for any clarification of these comments.

Yours faithfully



John Ginivan
Executive Officer