

GIPPSLAND REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN

Submission



I attended an information session at Lakes Entrance and have read the relevant document and am generally impressed with the range of issues raised and the general thrust of the plan that to me highlights the need to conserve the natural attributes of the Gippsland Coast. I like the concept of a Gippsland wide strategy that can diminish the 'splintering' outcomes evident when different council and other authorities act in relative isolation from each other. If this process can bring these bodies on board to act in the interest of the entire coastline it will be a worthwhile outcome

There are three general points that I would like to highlight as important and underlying everything else and a number of more specific comments and suggestions.

General Points:-

1. Biodiversity

I see biodiversity underpinning all that we do and believe the retention and extension of natural areas and habitats as essential to our survival. Loss of biodiversity across the planet (including the Gippsland coast) is the major threat to life on the planet. Thus any process that diminishes this biodiversity in terms of flora and fauna should be prohibited. For example, a proposed residential subdivision that requires the loss of habitat (even if off-sets are required) should be vetoed across the entire Gippsland coast.

2. Population

The Plan should seriously consider what is an optimum population for the Gippsland coast. This figure should take into account both resident and visitor numbers. Clearly an ever-increasing population places an ever increasing pressure on natural areas generally and fragile areas in particular. Many or even most people may 'Love our Lakes' but the reality is there are a significant number who don't - they litter, make excessive noise and generally abuse this environment. The more people the greater the problem.

3. Climate Change

I am pleased to see that the document does take seriously the issues for the coastline of a rise in global temperatures resulting from human activity. Promoting alternative energy sources, opposing those that contribute to global warming and encouraging a less consumer oriented lifestyle with a focus on 'softer' activities that are not as dependent on fossil fuels should be a high priority. The destruction of natural places, more residents and visitors consuming more resources will only add to and escalate runaway climate change with the increasing rise in ocean water levels destroying the natural and built environment.

Specific Comments and suggestions:-

- **Reduce and manage visitor numbers:** This may be desirable now and if population and visitor numbers increase it will become essential. I support limiting numbers visiting and using natural areas of the coastline, in particular those that are deemed vulnerable or fragile through ballots, 'first in best dressed', closing areas (either temporarily or permanently), etc.
- **Cycling:** cycling as a passive activity is not mentioned in the document. Cycle paths, shared walking/cycling paths and the promotion of recreational and touring cycling in the coastal area should be a priority.
- **The document's photos:** It is interesting to note that there appears to be no photos in the document of the more intrusive boating activities - in particular water-skiing and jet-skis. Was their exclusion intentional so as to down-play the significance and impact of these activities? I believe they are major activities now that will need to be controlled in the future.
- **Promote passive boating activities:** As well as sailing, kayaking and canoeing are now activities (they are growing in popularity) that should be encouraged. Facilities for paddlers (for example safe launching ramps) and promotion of these activities and waterways ideal for them should be a priority.
- **Downplay power boats:** Speed boats, ski-boats and Jet-skis should be discouraged and controlled. Areas specifically for non motorised boating activity should be designated. Hour of use restraints on the noisier activities (ski-boats and jet-skis) should be considered.
- **Residential subdivisions:** Any new subdivisions should not encroach on land with natural attributes. Housing in the hinterland should be encouraged although it is understood that this will likely result in an increase of visitor numbers to coastal areas. The Gippsland coast should be maintained in what remains of its present state as far as possible.
- **Buildings:** Both residential and commercial buildings should blend with the environment in relation to design and external colours used. For example, the 'hotch potch' of colours and many large intrusive 2 story dwellings evident from a boat in Eagle Bay are an eyesore and hardly add to the naturalness and amenity of the area.
- **Erosion:** Where erosion is a natural process including the increase in erosion likely to result from the effects of climate change (rising sea level and increased storm activity), it should be allowed to occur unhindered in natural areas. For example, the silt jetties should never have been rock-walled. Mitigation should only be carried out where human-made structures are threatened. Building in natural areas, in particular those likely to be subject to erosion now or in the future should not be permitted.
- **Alternative energy:** This document should encourage the development of appropriate alternative energy generation including solar and wind power.

I have appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the development of the Gippsland Regional Coastal Plan and again commend the board on their work.

