

Report

# Western Victoria Boating Coastal Action Plan: Summary Discussion Paper for Consultation

**Prepared for Western Coastal Board (Client)**

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**In association with**

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The Western Coastal Board (WCB) is preparing a Boating Coastal Action Plan for the western region of Victoria, extending from Breamlea to the South Australian border.

## 1 What is a Boating Coastal Action Plan

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* provides the WCB with the power to prepare a Coastal Action Plan (section 22a).

A Coastal Action Plan is a strategic regional planning tool with the ability to focus on specific issues and coordinate the factors impacting on them.

It is a strategy for either a particular area or a specific issue relating to coastal management and the use and development of Crown land.

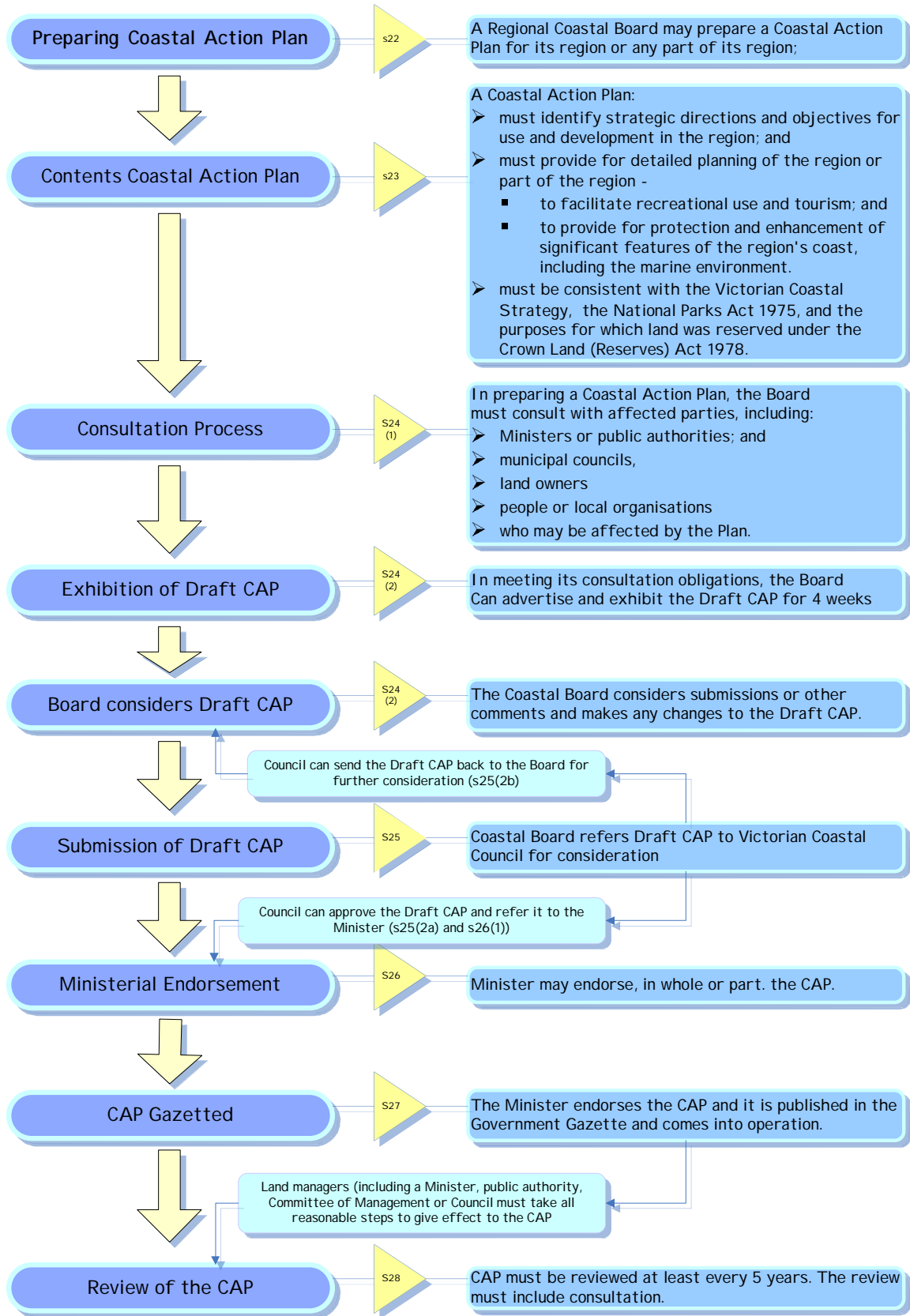


A Coastal Action Plan must:

- n Identify strategic directions and objectives for use and development in the region; and
- n Provide for detailed planning of the region or part of the region to facilitate recreational use and tourism and to provide for protection and enhancement of significant features of the region's coast, including the marine environment.

The following Figure 1 provides an overview of the key stages and requirements for the preparation of a Coastal Action Plan within the Western Coastal Region.

**Figure 1: Western Boating Coastal Action Plan: Process for Preparation**



## 2 What are the expected outcomes of this Plan?

The overall purpose of the Western Victoria Boating Coastal Action Plan (WVB CAP) is to provide a strategic framework to guide the provision of improved and more sustainable boating facilities across the Western Victoria Region.

The main aims of the WVB CAP are to:

- n Provide a vision for the future direction and management of recreational boating facilities in the Western Coastal Region
- n Provide strategic context and guidance for the location and scale of boating use and development in the Western Coastal Region based on environmental, economic and social assessment principles
- n Prioritise for future public and private investment in the development of recreational boating infrastructure in the Western Coastal Region, to maximise benefits to current and future generations
- n Improved co-ordination of the provision and regulation of boating facilities, leading to improved decision making
- n Improved safety standards for boating launch and retrieval activities.

## 3 What area will the Coastal Action Plan apply to?

The WVB CAP will apply to the Western Coastal Region which is defined as Victorian coastal waters, estuaries and bays between Breamlea in the east and the South Australian border in the west. The following six municipalities are located within the Western Coastal Region:

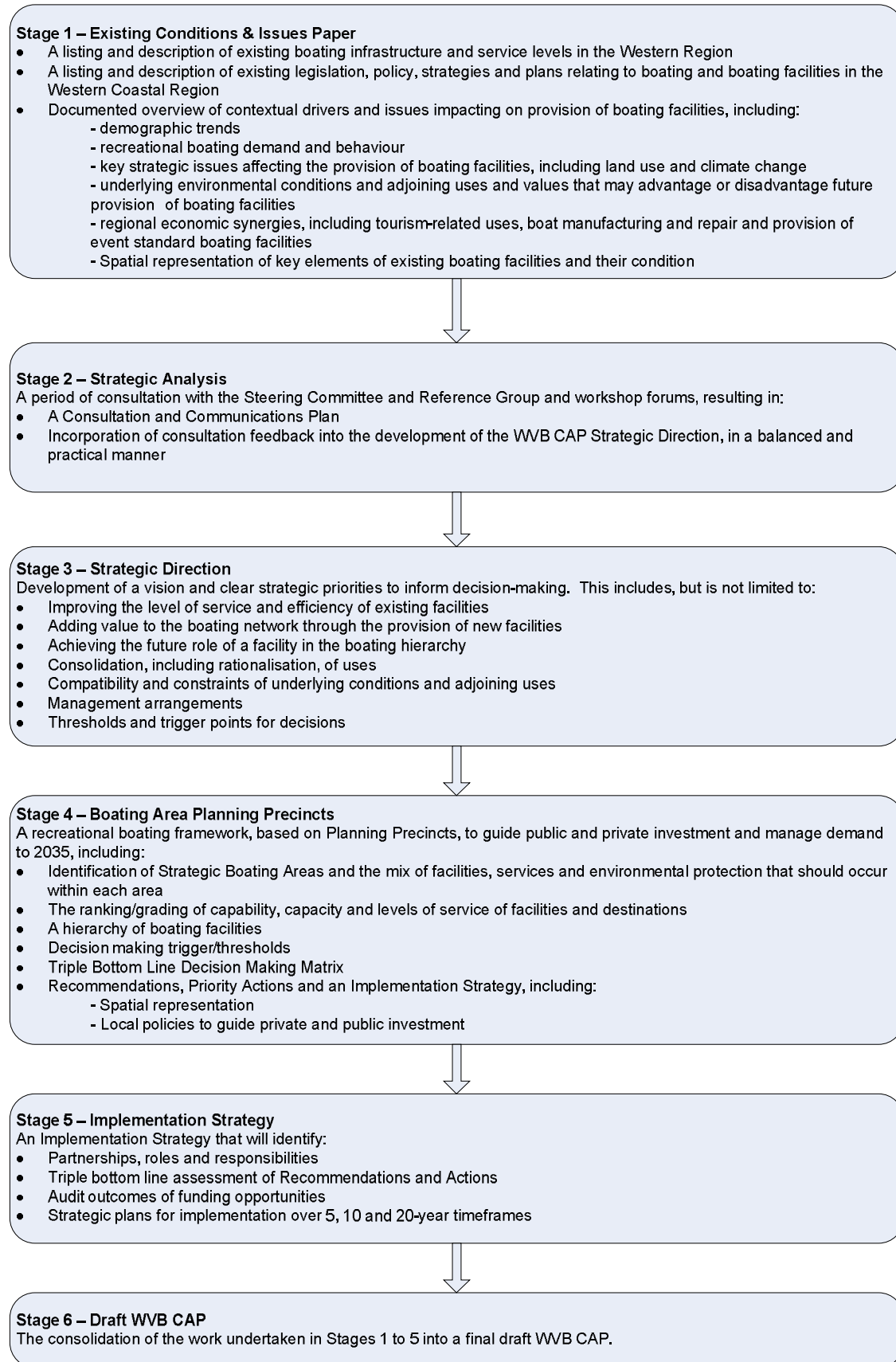
- § Surf Coast Shire
- § Colac Otway Shire
- § Corangamite Shire
- § Moyne Shire
- § City of Warrnambool
- § Glenelg Shire

The study area is therefore generally the entire coastal foreshore (and associated land side areas) between approximately Breamlea and the South Australian border, including the lower reaches of estuaries or riverine environs.

## 4 How will this Plan be prepared?

The WVB CAP is being developed in six key stages over the next 12 months (Figure 2). The WCB have appointed Beca Pty Ltd as the lead consultant to assist it with the development of the WVB CAP.

**Figure 2: Six Key Stages to Prepare the Boating CAP**



We are currently completing Stages 1 and 2.

## 5 What are the key influences on recreation boating and boating infrastructure?

Boating is influenced by many different factors which might include the cost of purchasing a boat, maintenance, weather conditions, facility availability and so forth.

These influences, constraints and issues that currently have or might have the potential to impact on the provision of recreational boating infrastructure are reviewed in the draft *Existing Condition and Issues Report*, which is available separately for those seeking to review more detail.

It is important to stress that no decisions as to the future location or nature of facilities can be made until a full strategic evaluation of economic, environmental and social factors has been undertaken within the context of the WVB CAP policy framework. This will necessitate a high level of consultation with boaters and stakeholders in the coastal environment.

Table 1 presents a summary of the key influences identified by the study to date and what this means for boating in the Western Coastal Region.



**Table 1: Key Influences and Issues**

Influences	What does this mean for boating in the Western Coastal Region?
<b>Population and Settlement</b>	
<p>§ Victoria's population growth for the year ending 30 June 2007 was 1.5 %.</p>	<p>§ Forecast population growth levels to 2021 and 2031 in the Western Coastal Region are not significant enough – with the exception of Surf Coast Shire, particularly Torquay, and Warrnambool City – to anticipate major impacts upon demand for boating facilities.</p>
<p>§ The fastest rates of population growth along the western coastline are the Surf Coast Shire in proximity to Melbourne and Geelong and in the City of Warrnambool. The Western Districts, in the coastal hinterland, are expected to experience very low population growth of 0.1 – 0.2 % over the next 30 years.</p>	<p>§ Torquay's annual population growth of over 4% is likely due to its closer proximity to the metropolitan centres of Melbourne and Geelong combined with its appeal of a coastal lifestyle to both young families and retirees. This, combined with the lifestage profile of recreational boaters, suggests that Torquay will continue to grow as a recreational boating destination. The planned replacement of the existing Torquay Boat Ramp facility will contribute to this as it will make launching and retrieval access safer in difficult weather conditions.</p>
<p>§ The seasonal variation in population for coastal settlements can be significant. The influence of the Melbourne metropolitan population on short term visitation diminishes at locations greater than three hours distance. For the west coast, the influence diminishes significantly for areas west of Port Fairy.</p>	<p>§ Planning and designing for boating infrastructure to cater adequately for the demand experienced during seasonal variations is one of the key challenges of the WVB CAP. The provision of adequate boating facilities needs to be balanced with avoiding damage to the coastal environment and detracting from other coastal user's experience of the coast. This means that when evaluating locations for boating facilities in the Western Coastal Region consideration of the broader social and environmental impacts on the coast must be factored in as well as the demand and supply of boating infrastructure.</p>

Influences	What does this mean for boating in the Western Coastal Region?
<p>§ The Coastal Settlement Framework (Draft Victorian Coastal Strategy 2007) designates Portland, Warrnambool and Torquay as regional centres with high growth potential, Port Fairy and Apollo Bay/Marengo with moderate growth capacity and Nelson, Peterborough, Port Campbell, Princeton, Skenes Creek, Kennett River, Wye River, Lorne, Aireys Inlet, Anglesea and Breamlea with low growth capacity.</p>	<p>§ The Coastal Settlement Framework's (Draft VCS 2007, page 43) expectation that Portland, Warrnambool and Torquay are regional centres with high growth capacity is not entirely consistent with the Recreational Boating Facilities Hierarchy 2030 (Draft VCS 2007, page 42) that nominates only Portland and Warrnambool as State Marine Precincts. Torquay is not considered to be a Regional Boating Facility in this hierarchy, however Nelson, Port Fairy and Apollo Bay are. Matching growth and demand which is anticipated to occur with the provision of recreational boating facilities is important for future facility planning.</p>
<p><b>Tourism Policy and Directions</b></p>	
<p>§ The study area is located wholly within the Great Ocean Road Tourism Region. The Great Ocean Road is a very important region in positioning the State across a number of priority markets. It is considered integral to key strategies including the realisation of increased international visitation and positioning of the State as a nature based tourism destination.</p>	<p>§ The identified growth in tourism opportunities particularly for the Great Ocean Road Region, Apollo Bay Harbour, the Warrnambool Harbour Precinct and Portland Bay all include significant potential to improve and/or increase recreational boating infrastructure. The WVB CAP will assist this by providing the regional strategic justification for implementation of these initiatives in conjunction with the guidance provided in the VCS. Whilst these public infrastructure projects all have significant benefits for the boating industry and boaters, they will also contribute more broadly to providing tourism destinations with the associated regional economic spin offs. An increase in high end accommodation tourism and international visitations is likely to result in an increased demand for charter / hire boat facilities as these visitors are unlikely to own a vessel.</p>
<p>§ Tourism strategies developed by Tourism Victoria have supported the redevelopment of the Apollo Bay Harbour, the redevelopment and upgrade of the Warrnambool Harbour Precinct and the delivery of the Portland Bay Master Plan. The strategies have also supported the further development of high end accommodation, both large scale and boutique at key locations along the Great Ocean Road to increase yield through increased overnight visitation.</p>	

Influences	What does this mean for boating in the Western Coastal Region?
<b>Environment</b>	
<p>§ The coastal environment of the western coastal region has some of Victoria’s most spectacular and diverse coastline. Parts of the coast are characterised by a high wave energy and wind environment that continually shapes the coastal environment. The coastal landscape varies from low coastal plains, mobile coastal dunes and brackish wetlands to dramatic cliffs, escarpments and rock platforms.</p>	<p>§ The high wave energy and wind environment that continually shapes the Western Coastal Region also presents access and safety issues for recreational boating activities. There are certain locations where boat ramps on the open ocean could be dangerous and the provision of protective measures would be either expensive and/or technically difficult due to the significant movement of sand along the coast. (Refer to Section 5.3 for the assessment details of each facility). There are a limited number of boat nodes in the region where protection has developed over time and evaluation of these locations for upgrade or decommissioning will include consideration of safety issues, coastal settlement boundaries and tourism objectives in addition to boater demand drivers.</p>
<p>§ The coast contains some extremely harsh environments such as the south-west facing areas of Cape Bridgewater and is home to limestone cliffs and islands of the Bay of Islands Coastal Park and the Craggs, the sheltered lava flows at Killarney and Port Fairy and the famous Great Ocean Road and the Twelve Apostles.</p>	<p>§ The six declared Marine Sanctuaries and three Marine National Parks in the Western Coastal Region also impact upon recreational boating activities providing both an opportunity and constraint. Due to fishing and “no take” restrictions in these areas, boating activity related to fishing is constrained whilst these areas present increased opportunity for diving/snorkelling and eco-tourism operators due to greater marine diversity and protection. The appropriate locating of boating infrastructure within or nearby Marine National Parks and Sanctuaries will be an issue to further explore through the development of the WVB CAP.</p>
<p>§ Along the coast are six areas that have declared Marine Sanctuaries: Barwon Bluff, Eagle Rock, Point Danger, Marengo Reefs, Merri and the Arches. There are also three areas that have been declared Marine National Parks: Point Addis, the Twelve Apostles and Discovery Bay.</p>	
<b>Boating Industry</b>	
<p>§ Victoria is one of the largest boating markets in Australia. Since 1997, boat registrations have increased from 126,758 to 162,869. This is an increase of 28% over the last nine years, which is greater than population increase.</p>	<p>§ The Western Coastal Region attracting the smallest proportion of boating activity when compared to the rest of Victoria is most likely due to the open ocean access, exposed coastline and difficult weather conditions generally experienced in this area, and subsequently the lack of safe harbours and</p>

Influences	What does this mean for boating in the Western Coastal Region?
<p>§ In total, the Recreational Boating Industry generated \$758M (05/06) in expenditure in holidays and day trips in Victoria, making it a significant contributor to the tourism market (BIAV October 2007).</p>	<p>wave protection infrastructure provided. This compares to the relatively sheltered and safe waters of other major boating destinations of Port Phillip Bay, Corio Bay, Western Port and the Gippsland Lakes which are more appealing for novice boat users.</p>
<p>§ The Western Coastal Region attracts the smallest proportion of Victoria's boating activity. The Western Coastal Region is dominated by offshore boating, although the Glenelg and Hopkins Rivers have been subject to substantial growth in nature based boating.</p>	

In summary, two key influences have been identified:

- n The coastal environment and conditions and the pattern of coastal settlement have resulted in the nodal development of boating facilities along the western coastline. It has also resulted in recreational boating and fishing demand being directed to estuaries and river locations and to the inland region.
- n A primary issue on the west coast is safety, given the propensity and speed of weather changes and the effect on open ocean conditions. Accordingly, a limited number of boat nodes with protection have developed over time. The development and upgrade of these nodes to improve safety and meet boater demand and tourism objectives is one of the key focuses of this study.



## 6 What are the key questions to be addressed by this Plan?

It was decided that, from the outset, it was important to identify the key questions to be addressed by the WVB CAP. All the work to be undertaken during the study will be designed and completed to ensure that these key questions in Table 2 are adequately and appropriately addressed.

**Table 2: Key questions to be addressed by the WVB CAP**

Key Questions	Matters to be Considered
What will be the network of boating facilities for Western Victoria in 2040	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Whether the upgrade of an existing facility or the development of a new facility diversifies the boating opportunities available in the network generally or within a strategic boating area in which the facility is/will be located.</li> <li>§ Whether an increased level of service will be provided in a strategic boating area and whether additional capacity will meet existing un-serviced demand.</li> <li>§ Whether the role and level of service, either existing or proposed, is consistent with the accepted strategic planning policy for the coast.</li> <li>§ Whether an upgrade or development of a new facility will improve the geographic spread and/or capacity of facilities within the network.</li> <li>§ Whether the upgrade or development of the facility will result in negligible or minimal conflicts with surrounding land uses, compared with alternatives, and represents the best practicable option.</li> <li>§ Whether there is sufficient and appropriate land and water space available for an upgraded, expanded or new role.</li> <li>§ Whether the site and location is appropriate and sustainable with respect to coastal processes and conditions and environmental impacts.</li> <li>§ Whether land based infrastructure can be located away from the foreshore where it does not require a coastal location.</li> </ul>
How will possible environmental impacts be considered and how will these influence the provision of boating facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Whether the site and location will not have an adverse impact on significant environmental features.</li> <li>§ Whether the environmental impacts associated with the construction and maintenance of the facility are minimal.</li> <li>§ Whether the possible impacts associated with sea level rise on the operational efficiency and safety are minimal.</li> <li>§ Whether significant on-going or initial dredging or disturbance is required, or is minimal compared with alternatives that represent</li> </ul>

Key Questions	Matters to be Considered
	<p>best practice.</p> <p>§ Whether sufficient car parking is provided in an appropriate location with minimal environmental, amenity or community impact.</p>
<p>How will possible social and cultural impacts be considered and how will these influence the provision of boating facilities</p>	<p>§ Whether the upgrade or development of a new facility will maximise the public good associated with the provision of boating facilities and public access and amenity and integrates with the local community.</p> <p>§ Whether an upgrade or the development of a new facility will improve boater safety.</p> <p>§ Whether public access can be provided or enhanced to the facility.</p> <p>§ Whether there is the potential for shared recreational and commercial boating facilities.</p> <p>§ Whether there will be a reduction in queuing times without over-catering for demand for the majority of the year.</p> <p>§ Whether there will be a detrimental impact on any indigenous or non-indigenous cultural heritage elements associated with the location.</p>
<p>How will economic and financial impacts be considered and how will these influence the provision of boating facilities</p>	<p>§ Whether the facility is/will be located in areas where future population growth is expected or where there are high levels of visitation</p> <p>§ Whether the facility supports the local and regional economy</p> <p>§ Whether maintenance costs can be identified and funded or can be minimised for the facility</p> <p>§ Whether an on-going revenue stream exists for maintenance to ensure that the facility will form a viable and enduring part of the network</p>
<p>Under what circumstances will the decommissioning and removal or downgrading of an existing facility be considered</p>	<p>§ Whether the facility is providing for an existing or reasonably foreseeable boating demand.</p> <p>§ Whether the facility is appropriately located and whether there are alternative facilities in close proximity.</p> <p>§ Whether one or more of the following are also applicable:</p> <p>§ An upgrade is not considered a strategic priority for the network of boating facilities.</p> <p>§ On-going maintenance liabilities significantly outweigh the benefits.</p> <p>§ The removal or closure of the facility will not detrimentally impact on</p>

Key Questions	Matters to be Considered
	<p>the network and/or the decommissioning is timed with local upgrades.</p> <p>§ The removal or closure of the facility will result in improved coastal processes.</p> <p>§ Public access to the coast and/or foreshore can be enhanced by the closure.</p> <p>§ The facility is causing damage to or negative impact on the coastal marine environment.</p> <p>§ The facility is a potential risk to boater safety.</p>

## 7 How are these questions being addressed?

While the study is in its early days, a draft Existing Conditions and Issues Report has been prepared. The draft Report begins to address the key study questions through:

- n An assessment of existing boating infrastructure in the western coastal region (Section 5);
- n A review of existing legislation, policy, strategies and plan relevant to boating and boating facilities in the western coastal region (Section 3 and in a separate Technical Report); and
- n An analysis of the key influences and issues affecting the provision of boating facilities in the Western Coastal Region (Section 4).



The draft *Existing Conditions and Issues Report* is very much a work in progress. Valuable feedback and information, which will help to improve and finalise this Report, will be obtained from the six community forums to be held along the western Victorian coastline in early-mid November 2008.