

Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan Review

June 2005

Prepared for the Western Coastal Board by Pragmatic Environmental Solutions



Executive Summary3
Introduction.....4
Background5
Assessment.....6
The future of the Warrnambool CAP 11
Conclusion..... 14

Executive Summary

The purpose of Coastal Action Plans is to provide strategic direction and identify priorities for management of local and regional coastal areas in alignment with the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002. The Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan was prepared by the Western Coastal Board pursuant to the *Coastal Management Act* 1995 and endorsed in August 1999 by the Minister for Conservation and the Environment.

This document constitutes the major review of the Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan, in terms of its usefulness to coastal managers in implementing the Victorian Coastal Strategy at the local level, and the wider community's perception of its success. This review also makes recommendations regarding the future of the Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan and provides a basis on which to review other local Coastal Action Plans prepared for areas along the West Coast of Victoria.

The investigation found that the Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan was not used by coastal managers. The method used instead to implement the VCS, although identifying coastal priorities fairly well, did not perform adequately in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness of implementation (it resulted in 63% of Plan priorities being sufficiently addressed).

The wider community generally supported the development of a subsequent Coastal Action Plan; however, improvements to a successor document would be required to ensure its uptake and success.

It was determined that a subsequent local Coastal Action Plan was not necessary because a revised South West Regional Coastal Action Plan (review set to occur in 2007/2008) would suffice to adequately promote implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy at the local level. Revision of the South West Regional Coastal Action Plan document and process would be necessary to facilitate the successful address of unique Warrnambool coastal issues.

Until the Regional Coastal Action Plan's review and revision in 2007/2008, an Implementation Plan may be required to drive implementation of key outstanding coastal priorities. Minimal resources would be required to develop the Implementation Plan.

Introduction

The Victorian Coastal Strategy¹ (VCS) was developed in accordance with the *Coastal Management Act* 1995, and establishes the overall framework for planning and management of the Victorian coast. Coastal Action Plans (CAPs) are developed by the relevant Coastal Boards to assist implementation of the VCS on a regional, local or issues-based level. The CAPs relevant to the Warrnambool coastal zone are as follows:

- South West Victoria Regional CAP;²
- South West Estuaries CAP;³ and
- Warrnambool CAP.⁴

The CAPs provide for strategic coastal planning for the region or local area under the larger framework of the VCS and therefore take a long-term strategic view, clarifying directions for future use and identifying key actions required to achieve preferred outcomes. CAPs also provide managers with a priority rating for each action to help prioritise works.

The *Coastal Management Act* provides that a CAP should be the subject of a major qualitative and quantitative review five years after its commencement, and that an interim review should take place approximately mid-way through this five-year term. The outcomes of a major review will assist the Western Coastal Board to determine whether the CAP needs to be amended or rewritten for the next five years, and if so, what the priority directions and actions might be for the future. The outcomes will also provide the WCB with the ability to improve future CAPs.

The Warrnambool CAP (hereafter referred to as “the Plan”) was endorsed in August 1999 by the Minister for Conservation and the Environment and was the subject of an interim review by the Board in October 2002 (along with Moyne, Lorne and Anglesea CAPs)⁵. This report provides a major review and its purpose is to assess its success in guiding the implementation of the VCS in the Warrnambool coastal zone during its lifespan.

The Plan has been assessed using two types of measures: firstly, a qualitative assessment that focuses on its usefulness to coastal managers and the wider community’s perception of its effectiveness; secondly, a quantitative assessment of the degree to which the actions in the Plan have been implemented.

It should be noted that while Regional CAPs are intended to provide direction for the preparation of local CAPs, preparation of the Warrnambool CAP preceded that of the South West (SW) Regional CAP. Therefore, there are some actions within the SW Regional CAP that are relevant to the Warrnambool coastal zone but do not exist within the Warrnambool CAP document. The focus of this review is the Warrnambool CAP and its actions.

¹ *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002* State Government and Victorian Coastal Council

² *South West Victoria Regional Coastal Action Plan 2002* State Government and Western Coastal Board

³ *South West Estuaries Coastal Action Plan 2002* State Government and Western Coastal Board

⁴ *Warrnambool Coastal Action Plan 1999* Western Coastal Board and Warrnambool City Council

⁵ *Coastal Action Plan Audit, October 2002* Western Coastal Board

Background

Warrnambool is the principal regional centre in South West Victoria, with a growing local population and a potential as a significant tourism destination. The VCS identifies Warrnambool as a place for foreshore improvement, camping and cabin accommodation, larger tourism facilities and improved boating facilities. The Great Ocean Road Region Strategy (GORRS) was prepared by the Department of Sustainability (DSE) in 2004 and it identifies Warrnambool as a growth node and as a gateway to the Great Ocean Road region. The regional significance of the precinct and its coastal zone means its future needs to be carefully planned.

Warrnambool's coast has been adversely affected by a lack of planning and coordinated management in the past. The major role of the Plan was to build upon the relevant components of existing plans from Levy Point to Lake Gilleard and to develop a framework for the strategic management of Warrnambool's coastal zone.

The zone includes the municipal coastline of Warrnambool City Council, bounded by the lower Merri River corridor, Hopkins Point Road to the Bay of Islands Coastal Park and the State three mile nautical limit to Levy Point.

The preparation of the Plan included the identification of key issues and objectives relevant to the Warrnambool coastal zone, which are listed in the Plan. This process involved extensive consultation with members of the Warrnambool community, interest groups and government departments.

Warrnambool City Council (WCC) has primary responsibility for implementation of the Plan. Other agencies with lead responsibility for implementation of actions in the Plan include the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, VicRoads, South West Water Authority, Framlingham Aboriginal Trust and the Victorian Environment Assessment Council.

Assessment

This review incorporates a qualitative and a quantitative assessment of the success of the Plan. All agencies with responsibility for implementation provided input for the review. However, the WCC is listed in the Plan as having primary responsibility to coordinate the implementation of the Plan. Therefore, a representative of the Council provided the majority of input that forms the basis of this review. Community input was also invited and feedback was incorporated into the qualitative assessment.

Perception of the Plan and Process

The Draft Guidelines for the Preparation, Review and Revision of Coastal Action Plans⁶ (hereafter referred to as “the Draft Guidelines”) state that the function of a CAP is to provide strategic direction and identify priorities for coastal use and development. The WCC reported that it has not used the Plan for this purpose, but has used the following instruments instead:

- the VCS document,
- the SW Regional CAP,
- the Warrnambool Environment Management Plan⁷,
- other local Management Plans and Planning Schemes,
- community feedback, and
- coastal managers’ awareness of key issues.

Projects which have been identified by the WCC as high priorities through this method correlate well with recommendations in the Plan. Consequently, the majority of the Plan’s actions have been inadvertently implemented to at least some degree.

Issues with the Plan

The WCC identified several main issues with the Plan, as outlined below.

1. The Plan is perceived as not useful.

The purpose for which the Plan was intended is fulfilled using other instruments, which the WCC considers effective in implementing the VCS. It is therefore considered likely that if a subsequent Plan were developed it would not be utilised because other instruments would continue to successfully perform its intended function. In addition, the Plan is now considered redundant and no longer caters for the current and future issues that pertain to the Warrnambool coastal zone.

2. The Plan is not reader-friendly or engaging.

It was reported that the Plan is not engaging to read and this decreased the likelihood of it being adopted. It flows poorly, does not adequately recognise the unique environmental aspects of the Warrnambool coastal zone, and is repetitive (particularly the issues and objectives listed for each geographical area). The WCC representative may have used the Plan to encourage and

⁶ *Draft Guidelines for the Preparation, Implementation, Review and Revision of Coastal Action Plans, October 2004* Victorian Coastal Council (currently under review).

⁷ *Warrnambool Environment Management Plan 2002* Warrnambool City Council.

enlist volunteer groups to help undertake actions listed in the document if it had been more engaging.

3. The Plan is not as well-recognised as the VCS document.

The VCS and its direct relationship to the *Coastal Management Act* are well known and understood by local council, other government agencies and the community. This is not so for the Plan; some lead agencies were not even aware of its existence, and this lack of awareness and recognition detracted from its perceived validity.

The wider community believed that the Plan would have benefited from more transparent linkages to the VCS and other relevant statutory and strategic plan provisions (such as the Local Planning Policy Framework and the Warrnambool Planning Scheme). A clear explanation of the context of the Plan within the VCS and the Regional CAPs would also have been helpful.

Progress in implementing the actions of the Plan

This report defines progress in implementation as:

- the degree to which the actions have been (inadvertently) undertaken, and
- the proportion of actions addressed adequately, according to priority rating.

Appendix A comprises a table listing the Plan's action with indicators of progress (status), reasons for actions not being implemented (limiting factors), and priority ratings assigned to each action. The table also describes progress to date and the future intentions for implementation as reported by lead agencies.

The Plan includes 80 actions, ranging from low to very high priority. Of these, the majority (89%) have been implemented to at least some degree.

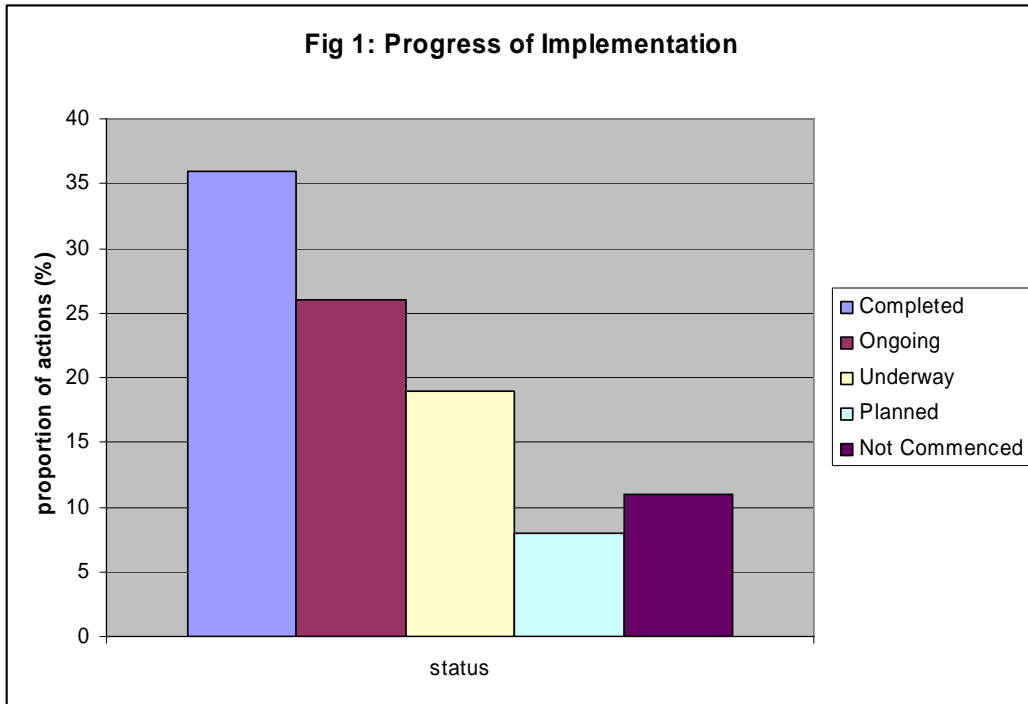
Five indicators have been used to signify action status in this report. They are outlined in Table 1 below, along with the number and proportion of actions that belong to each status category.

Table 1: Indicators of Progress in Action Implementation

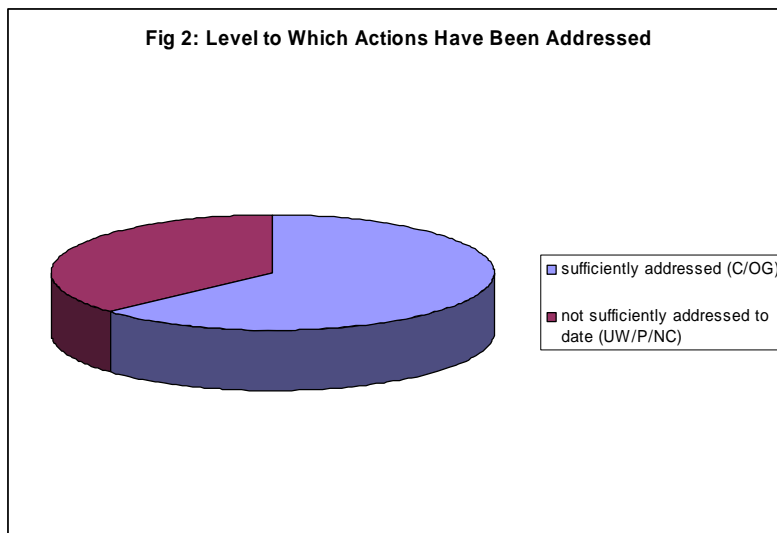
status	description	# actions	proportion of 80 actions
C (completed)	The action has been completed.	29	36%
OG (ongoing)	The action is ongoing in nature and is implemented indefinitely into the future. (Eg: Action 1 – <i>Protect environmental values, in particular the undeveloped nature of the beach</i> . Protection is continued into the future; it is never completed.)	21	26%
UW (underway)	On-ground works have commenced.	15	19%
P (planned)	The action is in the planning stage. This can include discussions with stakeholders; investigations or research; preparation of planning documents; etc.	6	8%
NC (not commenced)	The implementation of the action as it is written in the Plan has not commenced.	9	11%

One action, Action 47 (*Widen Point Ritchie Road to accommodate cyclists safely*) has been addressed using a different mechanism, and is considered to be completed. (Rather than widening the road, a shared bicycle and walking path has been built to accommodate cyclists safely.)

Figure 1 below illustrates progress of implementation:



Actions that are considered sufficiently addressed are those that are either completed or are being addressed on an ongoing basis, and these comprise 50 (63%) of the 80 actions. Actions which are not sufficiently addressed are those that require further attention and these include actions that are underway, planned or not commenced. These comprise 30 (38%) of the 80 actions. See Figure 2 below:



While it can be stated that 89% of the Plan’s actions have been implemented to at least some degree, the representation of data in Figure 2 may be more informative, as it reflects the degree of effort that is yet to be expended. It can be seen that a third of actions (assuming all of them are still valid) are yet to be sufficiently addressed.

Implementation and priority rating

Of the 80 actions in the Plan,

- one is assigned a “very high” (VH) priority rating,
- 49 are “high” (H) priority,
- 23 are “medium” (M) priority, and
- 7 are considered to be of “low” (L) priority.

The priority ratings assigned to Warrnambool CAP actions do not correlate to specific timeframes for implementation.

Figure 3 below illustrates the proportion of actions that have and have not been addressed sufficiently, according to priority rating (VH and H have been grouped together, as there is only one action with a VH rating).

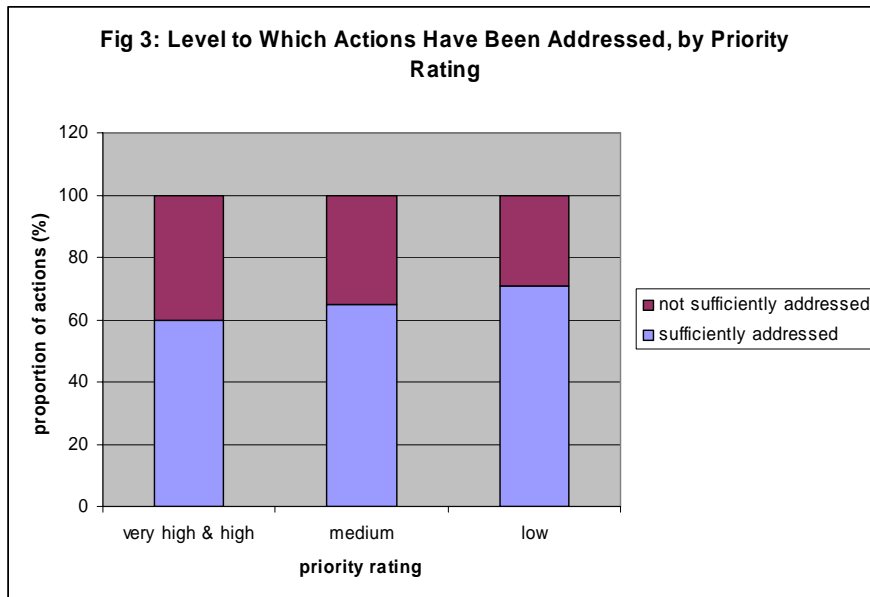


Fig 3 shows that implementation rate is fairly uniform across all rating groups (between about 60% and 70%), demonstrating that coastal projects have not been implemented according to priority rating (considering that the Plan was not used, this is not surprising). Instead, implementation has largely been dependent upon the availability of volunteer groups to undertake coastal projects.

It is important to note that a considerable number of H and M actions (20 and 8 respectively) are yet to be sufficiently addressed.

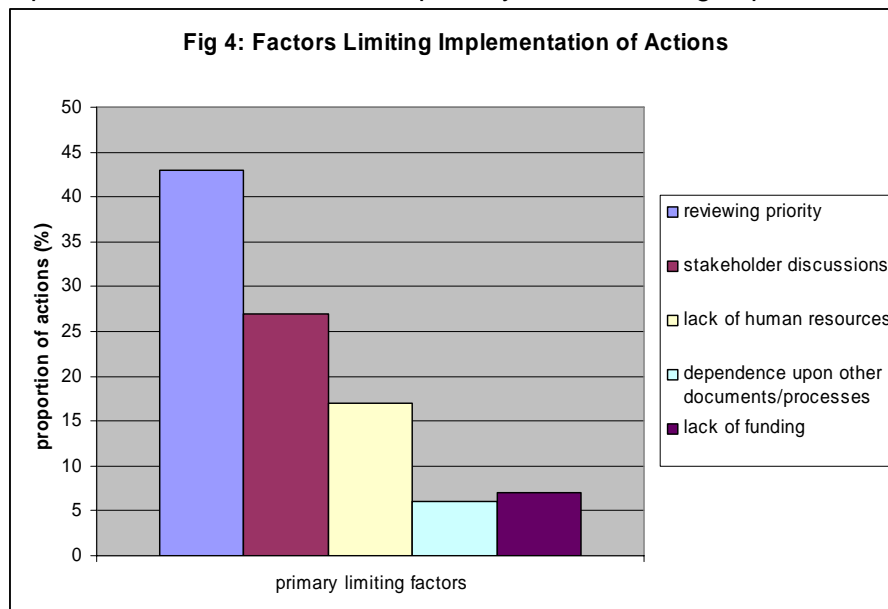
Primary factors limiting implementation of actions

A total of 30 actions in the Plan have not been addressed sufficiently to date. Five primary limiting factors have been identified. They are outlined in Table 2 below, with descriptions, and with the proportion of the 30 actions that fall into this category.

Table 2: Factors Limiting Implementation of Actions

limiting factor	description	proportion of 30 actions
RP (reviewing priority)	Lead agency reviewing importance of action.	43%
SD (stakeholder discussions)	Stakeholder discussions being held to endorse / review / provide input / identify a more appropriate lead role.	26%
LHR (lack of human resources)	Implementation being hindered by lack of staff / volunteer groups to undertake works.	16%
DD (dependent upon other documents / projects)	Implementation of action dependent upon timeline or findings of other reports or implementation of other projects.	7%
LF (lack of funding)	Amount of funding required to sufficiently address action not available.	7%

Figure 4 below provides a clear illustration of primary factors limiting implementation:



The most common reason provided for lack of progress (14 actions) was “reviewed priority”. That is, the lead agency has either lowered the priority of the action but still intends to implement it some time in the future (the case for 5 actions), or it does not consider the action a priority at all and does not intend to implement it in the future (the case for 8 actions).

“Stakeholder discussions” was reported to be the factor limiting the implementation of 8 actions. All of the actions in this category were reported to be either in the planning stage, or underway.

Lack of human resources limited progress of 5 actions. The WCC enlists local volunteer groups such as Green Corp and Work for the Dole to help to implement works (to improve leverage of funds). Works tend to be postponed until there are groups with appropriate skill-sets available to help undertake them.

Dependence upon the finalisation and/or implementation of risk assessments, reports, strategies, plans and other documents was offered as a reason for lack of implementation for 2 actions. It was reported that each action will be implemented in the very near future (possibly by June 2005).

Lack of funding was one of the least-cited reasons for actions not being fully implemented; it was reported as a reason for only two actions. This is an unexpected outcome, given that the interim review reported that this was the most common reason for lack of progress.

The future of the Warrnambool CAP

The following factors, as identified in the evaluation model developed by the WCB, are important to consider when determining the future of the Warrnambool CAP:

- Intended local CAP function, and whether other instruments have performed (or can perform) that function.
- Whether a different instrument besides a subsequent local CAP would be favourable to implement the VCS in the Warrnambool coastal zone in the future.

Function: Local CAP Vs Other Means of Determining Priorities

The use of other instruments besides the Plan to determine priorities has resulted in 89% of actions listed in the Plan being inadvertently implemented to some degree. This approach has also identified priorities that align well with Plan priorities (more so for actions with a prescriptive focus than those with a strategic focus).

However, the approach has left 37% of the Plan's actions insufficiently addressed to date. This proportion is comprised of 15 of the 30 strategic-focus actions and 15 of the 50 prescriptive-focus actions. Therefore, the use of instruments other than the Plan has been more effective in identifying and addressing prescriptive actions than in identifying and addressing strategic issues.

Effectiveness

The Draft Guidelines state that a CAP is needed if other mechanisms cannot address the issues more effectively. Using "sufficiently addressed actions" as an indicator of VCS implementation, the use of other instruments has yielded a 63% success rate to date. Assuming that the majority of the remaining 37% actions are still valid, this indicates a fairly low level of effectiveness. This figure may rise in the future, but it is not certain that it will. Additionally, Figure 3 illustrates that there is still a significant number of M and particularly H actions that are yet to be sufficiently addressed. Therefore, it cannot definitively be said that other instruments would have been *more effective* than the Plan in implementing the VCS.

Timeliness

The Draft Guidelines include timeliness as an important factor in implementing the VCS. A significant proportion (37%) of actions have not been sufficiently addressed six years after the Plan's endorsement (this proportion does not include any ongoing actions – they are all being sufficiently addressed).

Efficiency

Using other instruments to implement the VCS is a multi-step approach requiring significant effort on the part of lead agencies. By simply using the Plan, the effort expended to implement the VCS could have been significantly reduced. Additionally, because the Plan has not been used, it is inevitable that coastal management agencies have allocated time and funding to coastal projects that may not necessarily have been coastal priorities as identified by the VCS. This would have decreased efficiency in VCS implementation.

Is a CAP an appropriate instrument to implement the VCS along the Warrnambool Coastal Zone?

The Draft Guidelines state that a CAP is needed if:

- Other mechanisms cannot address the issues more effectively.
- The area has regional importance.
- A number of agencies are involved in the issues.
- A number of areas of land with a range of tenures are involved.

Because the use of instruments other than the Plan has been more effective in addressing prescriptive rather than strategic actions, it is clear that there is a need to more effectively drive the identification and implementation of strategic priorities.

Both the VCS and the GORRS have identified Warrnambool as regionally significant. Fourteen lead agencies have been identified in the Plan, and a range of tenures is involved with land comprising the Warrnambool coastal zone. The VCS and GORRS have acknowledged that this coastal zone will experience increasing capacity pressures and threats to environmental and cultural values as residential and visitor populations rise over time. Management Plans, with their lifespan of ten years, do not afford the flexibility to cater for changes adequately.

A Coastal Action Plan, with its five year outlook and strategic approach, is needed to adequately address the complex challenges characteristic of the Warrnambool coastal zone into the future.

What sort of CAP is required?

A subsequent local CAP

A subsequent local CAP tailored to the Warrnambool coastal zone would be successful if its uptake by relevant coastal managers were significantly increased. Increasing the uptake, however, would require a substantial amount of resources, as the document and the process would need to be significantly amended.

Should a subsequent local CAP be prepared, update of actions to ensure relevance to current times and the next five years, and the addition of clear timeframes for action implementation

would be important. Additionally, the document would need to be rewritten to more effectively engage its readers.

Should a subsequent Plan be developed, the document, its uses and its relationship to the VCS would need to be communicated. More transparent linkages to the VCS and other relevant statutory and strategic plan provisions relevant to the Warrnambool coastal zone would be required. With coastal managers' existing low level of awareness and poor sense of ownership of the Plan, a formal Communication Plan would be needed to improve the likelihood of acceptance of a subsequent local CAP. Additionally, an Implementation Team, comprised of a representative from each lead agency, would support coastal managers to use a subsequent Plan and implement its actions according to timeline.

These amendments would be time-consuming and would require considerable funding to undertake.

A Revised Regional CAP

The existing SW Regional CAP would not be an effective substitute for a subsequent local CAP, because it does not adequately focus on Warrnambool issues. However, it is due for major review and revision in 2007/2008 and could be revised to include particular emphasis on Warrnambool due to the area's significance in the SW region (as identified in the VCS and GORRS).

Complex strategic issues would be addressed through the use of this revised document, as well as some priority prescriptive issues. The majority of the prescriptive actions could be adequately identified and addressed through local planning documents such as the Warrnambool Environmental Management Plan (for a list of these documents, see Appendix D).

The use of a revised SW Regional CAP would increase the likelihood of timely implementation, as the document is relatively well-recognised, and all recommendations have a clear timeframe ("Performance Target Dates", as listed in section 9.0 of the current document). The revised SW Regional CAP would promote efficiency by eliminating the need for coastal managers to adapt the statewide principles of the VCS document to the local level. With its five year outlook, it would allow flexibility in managing the high rate of change along this part of the coast.

Appendix B illustrates the proposed process to address strategic and prescriptive coastal priorities using a revised SW Regional CAP instead of a subsequent local CAP. Improvements to the process and the SW Regional CAP document would be required, as outlined below.

Improvements to the Process

Due to the fact that the SW Regional CAP is better recognised than the Warrnambool CAP, a formal Communication Plan may not be required. Informal communication of the revised document and its importance in implementing the VCS should build on existing awareness and understanding. All stakeholders who would have a role in implementing the regional CAP would be involved in its review and revision.

Improvements to the Document

Suggestions for changes to the SW Regional CAP to better cater for the Warrnambool coastal zone are as follows:

- Section added, “Key Coastal Zones in the South West Region”, and Warrnambool coastal zone added to this new section.
- The section would include a brief outline of the reasons why Warrnambool is considered an area of regional significance, and a list of strategic actions (and some priority prescriptive actions) to address the unique complex issues that pertain to that part of the South West coast.
- Transparent linkages to the VCS and other relevant statutory and strategic plan provisions (such as the Local Planning Policy Framework and the Warrnambool Planning Scheme) would be included.

Implementation Plan

A Warrnambool CAP Implementation Plan could be prepared to address priority Warrnambool coastal issues until the review and revision of the SW Regional CAP in 2007/2008. Its preparation would involve a quick desk-top exercise requiring minimal resources, and would include valid actions from the 1999 Plan which are currently underway, planned, not yet commenced and ongoing, with timeframes for implementation. This document would be used in conjunction with a South West Regional CAP Implementation Plan currently being prepared by the WCB, which will highlight outstanding regional priorities.

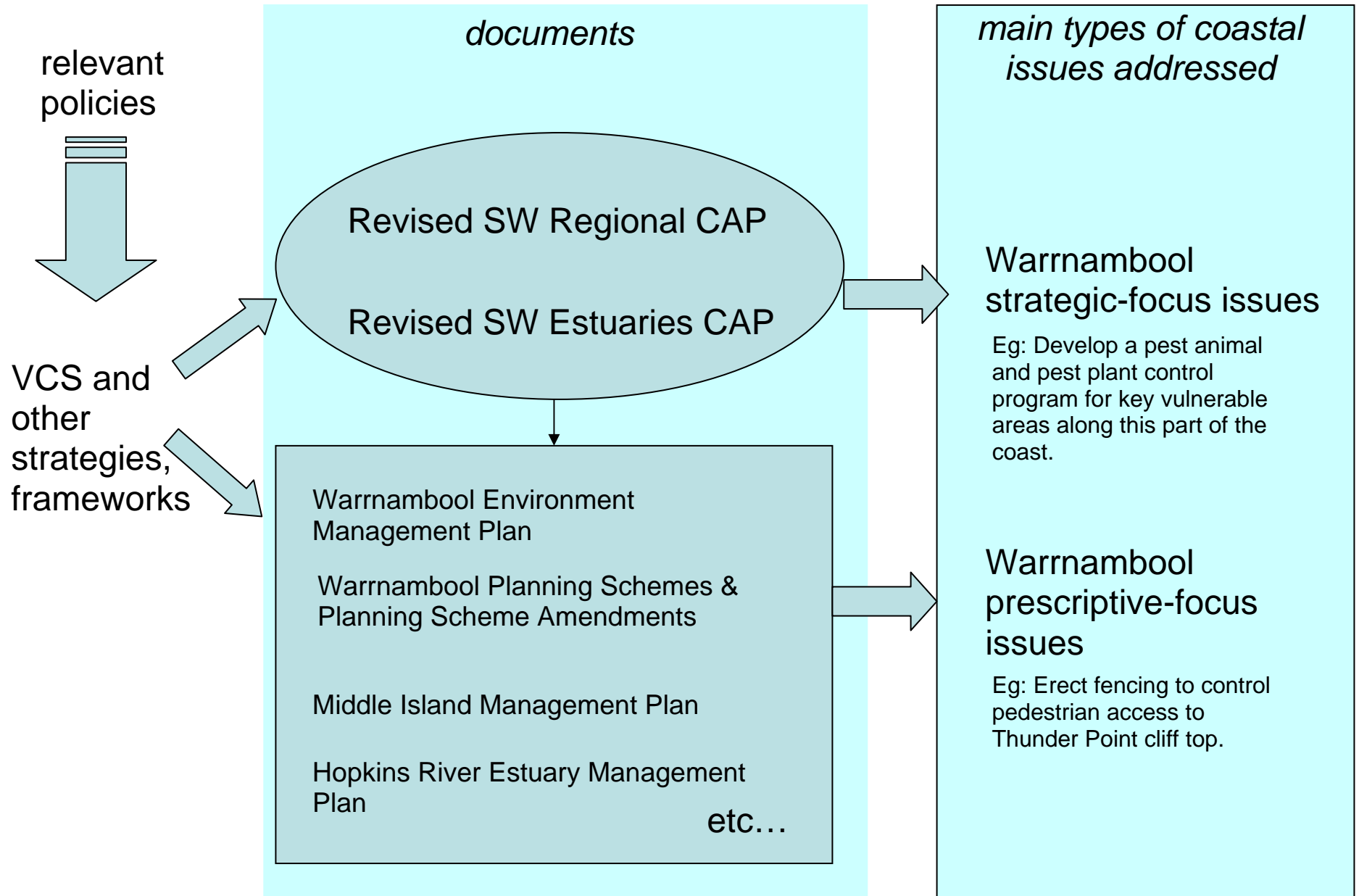
Conclusion

While a subsequent Warrnambool CAP may adequately facilitate VCS implementation and community feedback indicates support for a successor document, the amendments needed for its success would require significant resource input. A suitable alternative has been identified, and so the preparation and use of a subsequent Warrnambool CAP is not recommended.

The use of a revised SW Regional CAP would promote the effective, efficient and timely implementation of the VCS along the complex Warrnambool coastal zone into the future. A Warrnambool CAP Implementation Plan would be required to highlight priorities for coastal managers until the Regional CAP’s review and revision in 2007/2008.

Coastal initiatives with a prescriptive focus should be transferred to the Warrnambool City Council’s Environmental Management Plan 2002 and other documents with a local prescriptive focus (Appendix D provides a list of such documents).

Appendix B: Proposed Instruments to Address Warrnambool Coastal Issues



Appendix C

Other documents relevant to Warrnambool that could provide prescriptive direction to coastal managers:

- Warrnambool Environment Management Plan 2002 , WCC (includes list of key actions to address issues such as waterways, coastal areas, access issues and general environmental issues).
- Warrnambool Planning Scheme and Amendments, WCC.
- Middle Island Management Plan 1999, Deakin University for WCC.
- Warrnambool 2010, WCC (addresses general issues with some level of prescription).
- Merri Marine Sanctuary Management Plan – to be developed.
- Glenelg-Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy & Implementation Guide 2003-2007, GHCMA.
- Hopkins River Estuary Management Plan, GHCMA.
- Proposed Merri River Estuary Management Plan, GHCMA.
- Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Nutrient Management Plan 2002, Gillian Holmes for GHCMA (includes monitoring and nutrient-load reduction directions for freshwater catchment flowing into coastal waters).
- Draft Native Vegetation Plan, GHCMA (revegetation directions).
- State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria) Guidelines 1998, EPA.
- Boating Safety and Facilities Program (annual publication), MSV.
- Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004-2007, TV (includes a prescriptive implementation plan).
- Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast 1998, VCC.

Key:

WCC – Warrnambool City Council

GHCMA – Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority

EPA – Environment Protection Authority

MSV – Marine Safety Victoria

TV – Tourism Victoria

VCC – Victorian Coastal Council

Appendix D

Summary of community feedback regarding the Warrnambool CAP:

Lindsay Merritt, Chief Executive Warrnambool City Council

- Supports the preparation of a successor Warrnambool CAP with an improvement in the process and the document.
- Believed that the Plan would have benefited from more transparent linkages to the VCS and other relevant statutory and strategic plan provisions (such as the Local Planning Policy Framework and the Warrnambool Planning Scheme).
- A clear explanation of the context of the Plan within the VCS and the Regional CAPs would also have been helpful.