



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
REGIONAL TOURISM LIMITED

23rd March, 2015

RE: SUBMISSION TO WESTERN REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN 2015-2020 DRAFT

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board is the regional tourism board for the Great Ocean Road Region extending from Torquay (Surf Coast Shire) in the east to the South Australian border in the west. Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd (GORRT) was formed in November 2013, to lead and facilitate the development, marketing and management of the visitor economy of the region in partnership with state and local government and the industry. GORRT Board would welcome the opportunity to develop stronger ties with the western Coastal Board and other coastal land managers to ensure a collaborative approach to the marketing, management and development of this part of the region.

The Great Ocean Road region is the most visited region of Victoria outside of Melbourne, attracting over 5 million visitor's per annum including 600,000 internationals. The board of GORRT commissioned an economic analysis of the regions visitor economy in 2014 (copy attached), which identified that the visitor economy represents 7.6% of the regions GRP and 10.8% of its jobs.

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism has facilitated the development of 8 Destination Action plans for key destinations within the region including the coastal destinations of Torquay, Anglesea, Lorne, Apollo Bay, 12 Apostles Warrnambool and Port Fairy. These plans identified the key priorities for each of the destinations over the next 3 years. These plans focused on affordable, achievable priorities that can positively impact the visitor economy. The key issues, especially those of regional significance will also be elevated for inclusion in the regions Strategic Master Plan which is currently being prepared. A draft plan will be available for comment in May 2015. GORRT sees these plans as another vehicle to ensure consistency of approach in the identification and prioritisation of coastal management.

This process, has already identified a number of issues which are reiterated in your draft plan including:-

- The challenges of visitor management, especially in peak season and the need for innovative and bold solutions;
- The lack of investment in key public infrastructure over the past 10 years; and
- The need for the regions branding and marketing to influence visitor behaviour and focus on growing high yield, conscious travellers that share our values and vision for the sustainability of the natural attraction.

Critical to the issue of visitor management and not specifically discussed within the draft plan is the need for a dedicated strategy to manage “freedom camping”. Anecdotally, the number of visitors “freedom camping” is increasing and is negatively impacting on the liveability, manageability and experience of the coast. Development and implementation of a collaborative and consistent approach to the management of this issue must be a priority of the plan and all land management partners.

GORRT is supportive, in principle, of the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan however is cognisant that implementation of the full plan is a long-term strategy dependant on large-scale public investment. There are visitor management issues that need to be addressed as a priority immediately. GORRT is committed to identifying actions that will have the greatest impact on the current issues, as priority actions, within the Great Ocean Road Master Plan and encourages the Coastal plan to also look at priority actions that will make a visible difference now.

It is also critical that the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan implementation is undertaken in light of a need to address the management and servicing issues of coastal destinations outside of the Shipwreck Coast parameters but also experiencing visitor management issues. This is imperative in developing sustainable solutions for the whole of the region.

In addition, the key challenges and actions identified in section 4.5 of the draft plan have timeframes that are not scheduled for implementation until 2017 and beyond. This timeframe does not appear to recognise the severity of current issues and the need for more urgent action.

GORRT would welcome the opportunity to work with the Western Coastal Board and other land managers to ensure sustainable management of the western coast to ensure it remains an asset for the enjoyment and benefit of its local community and visitors. From a visitor management and servicing perspective, successful, sustainable management is contingent upon development of a collaborative, integrated multi agency strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Yours sincerely,

