



Beach Access Feasibility Study

FAQs

WHY ARE YOU STUDYING BEACH ACCESS?

The Beach Access Feasibility Study aims to ensure access to beaches balances community needs with cultural heritage and environmental protection, inclusive access, safety, and sustainability.

WHAT DID THE STUDY INVOLVE?

The beach access study explored the challenges and opportunities around current beach access points by:

- Undertaking an in-depth analysis to understand the current nature of beach access along the north Bellarine coast.
- Seeking to understand community needs for access.
- Considering safety and accessibility requirements.
- Providing a sustainable long-term strategy to strike a balance between providing access to the beach and minimising impacts on cultural, environmental and social values of the coastal zone.
- Considering the impacts of a changing climate on beach access points.
- Providing a decision-making framework to assist with planning the ongoing maintenance and renewal of beach access points.
- Informing future improvements to beach access along our coast.

WHAT DID THE BEACH ACCESS STUDY FIND?

307 beach access points (both formal and informal) were identified along our 17 km coastline, equating to approximately one access point for every 50 m.

Of these, only two are considered to provide safe access to the beach for people of all abilities.

Many of the recorded access points have been created informally as people opportunistically cross the dune to access the beach.

Informal access points create risks for both people and the precious coastal environment, impacting on coastal vegetation, dune stability and the integrity of cultural sites. They are often narrow, uneven or arriving at beaches where sea level rise and storm surge create unsafe conditions.

WILL YOU BE CLOSING OFF BEACHES OR ACCESS POINTS?

We do not currently maintain all the identified beach access points. Many have been created informally by people crossing the dune to access the beach.

Maintaining over 300 access points along the beach is labor-intensive and costly, so we cannot adopt maintenance of all existing access points.

We need to do more work before we know the most suitable locations to provide and maintain formal beach access. We need to know which access points are valued most by the community. Then, to balance community needs with safety, equity and protection of cultural and environmental values, we have developed a **Beach Access Framework** (see fig 1).



BEACH ACCESS FRAMEWORK

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE FRAMEWORK?

- All beaches remain accessible to the community.
- Improve safety/reduce risks.
- Reduce environmental impact of beach access or improve coastal resilience (less erosion and fragmentation, increase vegetation).
- Better protect cultural values.
- Improve management sustainability, includes climate change resilience considerations (cost + clarity of purpose + standard).
- Increase universal access.

What is a recreation node?

What's involved in a complex assessment?

What is retain/designate and confirm BA category?

How do I know what category my favourite beach access is?

What is considered high value?

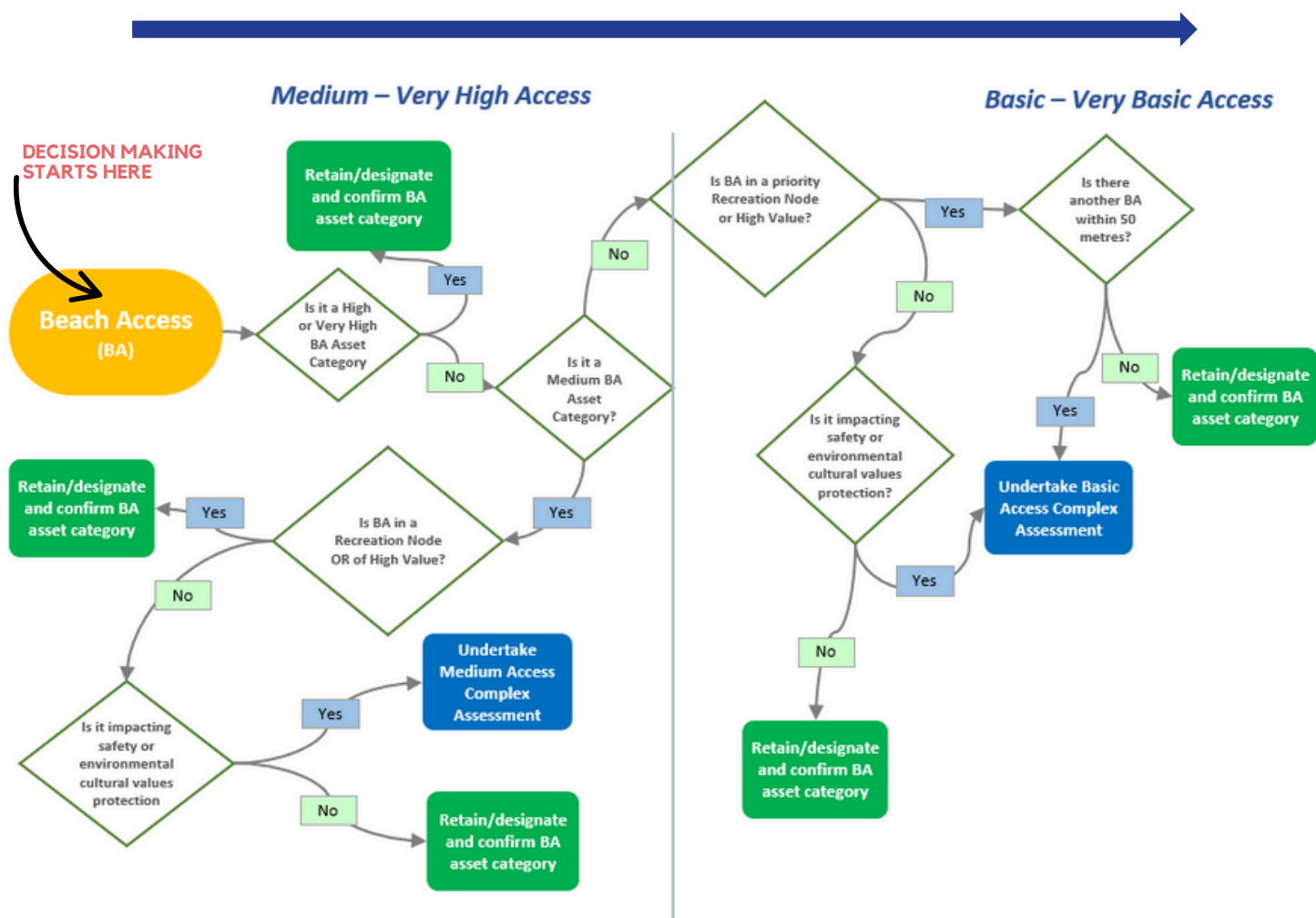


FIGURE 1. PROPOSED BEACH ACCESS FRAMEWORK

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WHAT ARE RECREATION NODES?

Recreation nodes are a strategic planning tool (defined in the Victorian Government's Marine and Coastal Policy 2020) for identifying and improving current and future activity and recreation developments in the marine and coastal environment.

Recreation nodes are located on marine and coastal Crown land and provide access and infrastructure for recreation and coastal-dependent activities.

Recreation nodes on the northern Bellarine will be defined in our Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP).



WHAT DOES RETAIN/DESIGNATE AND CONFIRM BA CATEGORY MEAN?

When a Beach Access (BA) is proposed to be retained and designated, it will be assessed to confirm which BA category is most appropriate and then aligned to minimal category standards (for example: signage requirements, accessibility parking, type of access).

All BA points that are retained or designated will be maintained by Bellarine Bayside.

WHAT ARE THE BA CATEGORIES?

Beach Access (BA) categories have been defined in the Beach Access Feasibility Study as:

Very High - Fully accessible beach access with continuous universal access to sealed path or boardwalks, well signed, adjoining formal parking, catering for large catchment or major visitor node.

High - Formalised with sealed path with high levels of supporting infrastructure and well-maintained grounds.

Open Beach Access - Maintained grassed areas. Typically associated with caravan park frontages but not limited to, and unrestricted by fences and vegetation.

Medium - Formalised path, typically with basic signage.

Basic - Consists of basic tracks with minimal infrastructure, typically no signage, no adjoining facilities.

Very basic - Informal beach access tracks. With no infrastructure, no signage and no adjoining facilities.



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WHAT WILL A COMPLEX ASSESSMENT INVOLVE?

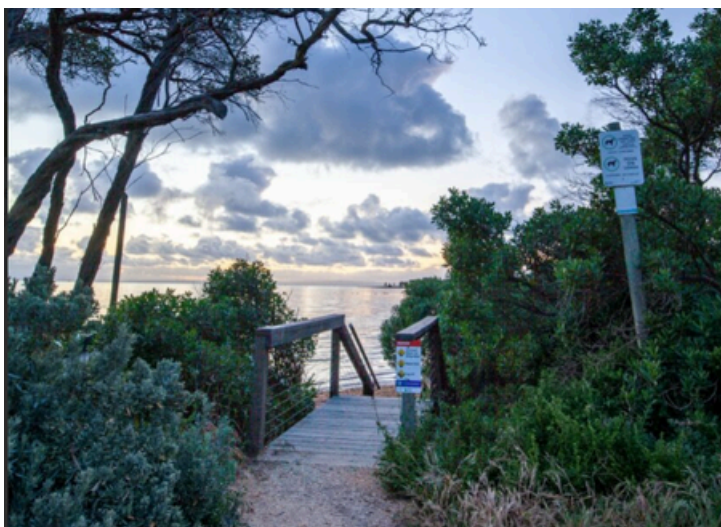
We will seek to understand community's beach access values and needs as well as other relevant criteria including cultural values, supporting infrastructure, environmental values, and coastal hazards.

A **Medium Access Complex Assessment** will seek to optimise access by identifying **potential changes** such as:

- upgrade of existing access
- change of structure / asset type (e.g. sand ladder to stairs)
- relocation
- reprioritisation
- infrastructure investment (e.g. new signage, path widening etc).

A **Basic Access Complex Assessment** will identify any **required changes** such as:

- upgrade of existing access
- change of structure /asset type
- relocation
- consolidation
- infrastructure investment (e.g. new signage, path repair etc).



WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

We will be developing a **Beach Access Implementation Plan** with support from the Victorian Government's Coastal Public Access and Risk Grants Program.

The Implementation Plan will provide a clear roadmap for managing and improving beach access, building on the findings in the Beach Access Feasibility Study.

The Implementation Plan will translate these insights into actionable steps and support consistent, informed decision-making for the ongoing and future management of beach access along the coast.

The Plan will utilise the Beach Access Framework to assess beach access points to:

- Prioritise actions based on cultural, environmental, safety and community needs.
- Determine whether upgrades, consolidation, or new infrastructure is needed.
- Ensure resources are used efficiently and transparently.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Have Your Say on the Beach Access Framework and tell us how effective you think it will be to inform decision-making about beach access on our coast.

Go to:

conversations.bellarinebayside.com.au/beach-access-study



The Beach Access Feasibility Study was supported by the Victorian Government through the Coastal Public Access and Risk Grants program.

Stay connected



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