

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan

**2025
- 2045**



**Bellarine
Bayside**
Coastal Management

Acknowledgement of Country

This project is undertaken on the lands of the Wadawurrung people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We are privileged to manage the northern Bellawiyn coastal land of Wadawurrung Country. We recognise the unique ability of Wadawurrung people to care for Country and the continuing spiritual, cultural, economic, social and environmental connections they have to the land, sea, sky and waterways.

We are committed to working in meaningful partnership to progress Wadawurrung aspirations for coastal Country.

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Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this plan is accurate. Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

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Executive summary

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is a 62-hectare flora and fauna reserve on the Bellarine Peninsula, managed by Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management. It is a significant natural area that provides habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna, including threatened species, while also offering opportunities for low-impact recreation and community engagement.

The Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan 2025–2045 (the Plan) establishes a 20-year vision for the Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve:

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is a significant coastal haven of woodlands and wetlands, where biodiversity thrives, cultural knowledge is celebrated and an engaged community come together to care for and connect with nature.

To achieve this vision, the plan has identified the diverse range of values which underpin its importance, including:

- Wadawurrung cultural values
- Wetlands and the Growling Grass Frog population
- Native vegetation, biodiversity and its ecological significance
- Visitor experience opportunities and associated low-key infrastructure
- Active involvement and stewardship from the local community

The Plan identifies five primary objectives, with associated strategies, that broadly aim to protect and enhance these values and balance them in a sustainable manner to guide conservation and management efforts:

1. Supporting connections to culture and Country

Working with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in reserve planning, decision making and on Country management, including the reintroduction of cultural burning in the landscape. Increasing acknowledgement and awareness of Wadawurrung cultural heritage through use of language, educational experiences and interpretive signage.

2. Protect wetland values

Maintaining the integrity of the Reserve’s wetlands that provide important habitat for migratory birds and the threatened Growling Grass Frog. Monitoring wetland quality and biodiversity values and working with partners and neighbours to protect wetlands from potential impacts of urban development.

3. Improve habitat quality and maintain biodiversity

Conserving existing Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) through management of invasive plants, use of ecological fire and cultural burning and rehabilitation of degraded areas through revegetation. Improving knowledge of the Reserve’s adaptive capacity to climate change and implementing ongoing monitoring of weeds, habitat quality and biodiversity.

4. Reduce impacts from pest animals

Implementing integrated management of rabbits, foxes and other priority threats identified, to protect native species and ecosystems in collaboration with neighbours.

5. Enhance visitor experience and community engagement

Improving visitor facilities including walking tracks directional signage, parking and access. Support for community involvement through volunteer programs will be strengthened and provision of educational opportunities will be improved through experiences and interpretive signage.

The Plan will be delivered in collaboration with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, government agencies, conservation groups, and the local community. To translate the strategic objectives of the Plan into practical, on-ground actions, the planning framework includes five-year Operational Plans which will inform a rolling five-year review to ensure the strategies remain adaptive, evidence-based, and responsive to emerging challenges. Progress will be

measured through monitoring programs, including ecological health assessments, species population tracking, and visitor engagement evaluations.

By implementing this Plan, Bellarine Bayside and its partners will ensure that Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve remains a place of cultural significance, a thriving sanctuary for biodiversity, and a valued natural space for the community to enjoy for generations to come.



Golden-headed Cisticola
(*Cisticola exilis*)

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Introduction

Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management (Bellarine Bayside) is a not-for-profit organisation entrusted with caring for 17 kilometres of coastal Crown land along the northern Bellarine Peninsula. Established by the Victorian Government in 1994, Bellarine Bayside is a Category 1 Coastal Committee of Management responsible for managing these reserves in accordance with the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*. Among the areas under Bellarine Bayside’s management is Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve (referred to in this plan as "the Reserve" or "the Site"), a place of cultural significance, and a valuable natural asset that provides important habitat for local wildlife and opportunities for the community to connect with nature.

About the Plan

The Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan sets the long-term vision for the Reserve, ensuring its conservation while allowing for appropriate low-impact recreation. Covering the area up to the southern edge of Boat Road to the north, and the eastern edge of Point Richards Road to the west, this plan provides a 20-year roadmap (2025–2045) for managing the Reserve’s ecological, cultural, and recreational values.

At the core of the plan are:

- A vision for the future of the Reserve,
- Key identified values and threats,
- A set of objectives to be achieved over the 20-year period, and
- Strategies that outline how these objectives will be met.

These elements work together to ensure the Reserve is managed sustainably for future generations. To support the long-term vision, the planning framework also includes Operational Plans, which detail on-ground actions within a rolling 5-year timeframe. These shorter-term actions align with the broader strategies and ensure that management efforts remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Wadawurrung Country

Wadawurrung people are the Traditional Owners of the lands on which Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is located. Wadawurrung Country extends across the Bellarine Peninsula, Geelong, and the surrounding coastal and inland areas, where saltmarsh, woodlands, and grasslands have long provided resources for Wadawurrung people. The wetlands and surrounding landscapes supported a diverse range of plant and animal life, essential for food, tools, medicine, and cultural practices. The term ‘Country’ extends beyond the physical and reflects the deep and enduring relationship between Traditional Owners and the land, waters and skies. Country includes knowledge, stories, values, spiritual and ancestral connections. This connection to Country is not just historical—it continues today.

The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for Wadawurrung Country, holding statutory authority under the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage values and culture. This Plan respects and acknowledges the living culture of Wadawurrung people and recognises the broader community’s connection to the land now known as Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve. Historical records suggest that the Bengalat Balug clan may have occupied this specific area (Clark, 1990).

Bellarine Bayside acknowledges and values Wadawurrung people’s rights, aspirations and knowledge, working with them to protect and strengthen connections to culture and Country. Caring for Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve requires collaboration, and this Plan recognises the importance of working alongside the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to ensure that this culturally and environmentally significant landscape remains healthy for future generations.

About the Site

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve (Figure 1) is a 62-hectare coastal reserve located on the Bellarine Peninsula, approximately 40 kilometres southwest of Melbourne. It lies within the Greater Geelong City Council area, the Otway Plains bioregion, and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority region.

Situated just 1.5 kilometres west of Portarlington’s main street, the Reserve is one of the largest remaining areas of native bushland and ephemeral wetlands on the Bellarine Peninsula. Its unique and diverse ecosystems provide important habitat for native flora and fauna, contributing to the region’s ecological richness and biodiversity.



Figure 1 - The parcel of land with which the Site occupies extends 40 to 125 metres north of the site, however, it is only the portion south of Boat Road that is relevant to this plan.



Climate

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve experiences a mild, maritime-influenced temperate climate, with moderate seasonal variations due to its coastal location.

Winters (June–August) are cool and damp, with average daytime highs of 14–15°C and overnight lows around 7–8°C. A significant portion of the 665 mm of annual rainfall falls during these months.

Summers (December–February) are warm and pleasant, with daytime temperatures typically reaching 22–24°C, while nights remain mild at around 14°C.

Coastal breezes help regulate temperatures throughout the year, contributing to a generally comfortable climate. The Site’s mean annual temperature is 20.4°C.

Geology and soils

The Reserve is underlain by ‘coastal dune deposits (Qdl1): generic’ geological unit (DEECA, 2024), consisting of well-sorted, poorly consolidated sands, silts, and clays. These formations are typically found in coastal dunes, beaches, and some swamp environments, shaping the landscape of Point Richards.

The soils are classified as Podzols, characterised by B horizons enriched with organic matter, aluminium, and iron compounds. These are further described as Aeris Podzols, meaning they are well-draining, which influences vegetation patterns and hydrology within the Reserve.

Vegetation communities

The Reserve supports a diverse assemblage of Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), reflecting its unique combination of coastal dune and wetland environments. EVCs are the standard unit for classifying vegetation types in Victoria (DEECA, 2024). In addition to the dominant EVC 3: Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland, the site features a rich mosaic of wetland-associated EVCs including:

- EVC 13: Brackish Sedgeland,
- EVC 537: Brackish Aquatic Herbland,
- EVC 821: Tall Marsh,
- EVC 952: Estuarine Reedbed, and
- EVC 1113: Sedge Wetland/Brackish Herbland Complex.

Saltmarsh vegetation is also present in the form of EVC A107: Wet Saltmarsh Herbland and EVC A110: Coastal Dry Saltmarsh.

These EVCs, along with local learned knowledge of indigenous flora, aid in guiding revegetation works in the reserve and surrounding coastal areas. This variety of vegetation communities provides a wide range of habitat types that support both regionally significant flora and fauna and enhance the ecological resilience of the Reserve in a changing climate.

Flora

To date, 268 vascular plant species have been recorded within the Reserve, including 83 species that are not native to Victoria. Among the native species, five are considered rare or threatened, being listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) or the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). However, many of these species are believed to have been planted at the Site. The only naturally occurring rare or threatened species is *Geranium solanderi* var. *solanderi* s.s. (Austral Crane's-bill).

Historically, the site suffered from significant infestations of noxious weeds, but decades of concerted management efforts by Bellarine Bayside and dedicated volunteers have reduced these to negligible levels. However, grassy and herbaceous weeds remain common in some localised areas, continuing to pose a challenge to native vegetation.

The dominant EVC in the Reserve is Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland, a woodland system adapted to the area's sandy, well-drained soils. Despite being classified as a woodland EVC, historical evidence suggests that the landscape may have been more open, with scattered tree cover interspersed with wetlands. Additionally, the Reserve contains seven other EVCs, primarily associated with its wetland environments, further enhancing habitat diversity.

Fauna

The Reserve is home to 158 recorded fauna species, including 10 species listed as rare or threatened. Notably, the Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*)—listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act—has an established resident population within the Reserve. This species relies on the site's wetland habitats, highlighting the importance of maintaining and protecting these ecological features.

The diverse mix of woodland, grassland, and wetland habitats supports a broad range of wildlife, making Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve an important refuge for both common and threatened species and a well-known birding hotspot.

Ecological significance

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve holds exceptional ecological value within the Bellarine Peninsula. The broader study area, which spans a five-

kilometre radius around the Reserve, covers about 4,250 hectares. However, only 11.7% of this area still retains native vegetation. Despite making up just 1.5% of the total land area, the 62-hectare Reserve contains around 13% of the remaining native vegetation. This makes it one of the most significant patches of native habitat in the region and highlights its importance for biodiversity conservation in a highly fragmented landscape.

Much of the surrounding inland vegetation has been cleared for agriculture and development, leaving only narrow strips of coastal fringe vegetation outside the Reserve. This has resulted in a highly fragmented landscape, limiting habitat connectivity and increasing the Reserve's ecological isolation. In contrast, Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve supports a mosaic of terrestrial and wetland habitats, including one of the last substantial examples of Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland on the Bellarine Peninsula—an increasingly rare vegetation type across the region. Together with the adjoining Portarlington Recreation Reserve, which is managed by the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) and features similar vegetation communities, it forms the only sizeable remaining area of this woodland on the Peninsula. Elsewhere, only small, scattered remnants remain, such as near Ocean Grove and Queenscliff. The proximity of these two reserves enhances overall habitat diversity, supports a broader range of flora and fauna, and strengthens ecological resilience. The Reserve's size, ecological diversity, and ongoing community-led restoration efforts makes it a vital stronghold for native flora and fauna on the Bellarine.

Contiguous with the Reserve, the Portarlington Recreation Reserve to the east of Point Richards Reserve is of significant ecological value. With similar vegetation to Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, it not only adds value to the diversity of flora and fauna, but also provides a natural buffer from edge effects including weed invasion and inappropriate visitors. The opportunity the recreation reserve provides for dog walking may reduce the level of non-compliance by dog owners with regulations prohibiting dogs in Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Recreation

While Bellarine Bayside and other coastal committees manage kilometres of significant coastal reserves, terrestrial reserves like Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve are far less common. This uniqueness is valued by the local community and visitors, who appreciate the Reserve for its natural beauty and tranquillity.

The Reserve supports a range of passive recreational activities, including walking, birdwatching, and photography. It is a designated dog-free area to protect the sensitive biodiversity values, including maintaining a safe-haven for ground-dwelling animals such as the local Brown Quail (*Synoicus ypsilophorus*) population. These activities align with the Reserve's conservation objectives, as they are low-impact and encourage an appreciation of the natural environment.

A network of 5.8 kilometres of public walking trails wind through the Reserve, providing access to its diverse landscapes while minimising ecological disturbance. These trails have been designed to strike a balance between visitor experience and environmental protection, ensuring that people can enjoy the Reserve while safeguarding its natural values for future generations.



Austral Crane's-bill
(*Geranium solanderi* var. *solanderi* s.s.)

Recent history

Following European colonisation and early exploration, Portarlinton emerged as a small fishing and farming community. The town became known for its pear orchards, earning it the nickname “The Pear Orchard of the Peninsula”. Over time, Portarlinton has evolved into a popular coastal destination, recognised for its scenic views, wineries, and as a gateway to the Bellarine and Mornington Peninsulas. The large campground opposite the reserve and others along the foreshore have been a popular drawcard since the 1940s (Stokes, 2007).

In the early days, the Reserve was leased out for a number of purposes including potato growing, shell grit extraction and a rubbish dump. Gravel from the old quarry in Church Road was used to build the ‘airstrip’ in 1960-61, which was used to take people on joy rides, for parachute jumping onto the beach and briefly to deliver the daily papers under the name Schutt Aircraft. The airstrip closed in 1975 when it was found to be unsafe for taking off and landing (Stokes, 2007).

In 1964, 158 acres (~63.9 hectares) were formally reserved for public recreation and public purposes, with 50 hectares designated for the conservation of coastal flora and fauna, including habitat for the short-nosed bandicoot (Stokes, 2007). Since that time, the Reserve became heavily infested with woody weeds such as Gorse, Flax-leaved Broom, and Boneseed. This prompted the formation of the Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve in 2001, initiated

through a community meeting and a letter to Bellarine Bayside by founding members Keith Knights and Peter Dalton (Boothroyd, 2020).

The group began with 15 founding members, who initially brought their own tools and found enjoyment in clearing large stands of weeds, always followed by the essential ‘cup of tea.’ They secured a grant to fund the mechanical removal of some weeds and burned weed piles on the nature strip with assistance from the Country Fire Authority (CFA). Following a change in Bellarine Bayside’s management in 2003, volunteers received training in chainsaw use and chemical application and were provided with equipment and ongoing support (Boothroyd, 2020). The group aimed to return the Reserve to a more natural state, and as Steve recalled, “you wouldn’t believe how much was there [weeds], how much work it took to get rid of it all”. The group remains active today, contributing to reserve management and continuing to attract new members.

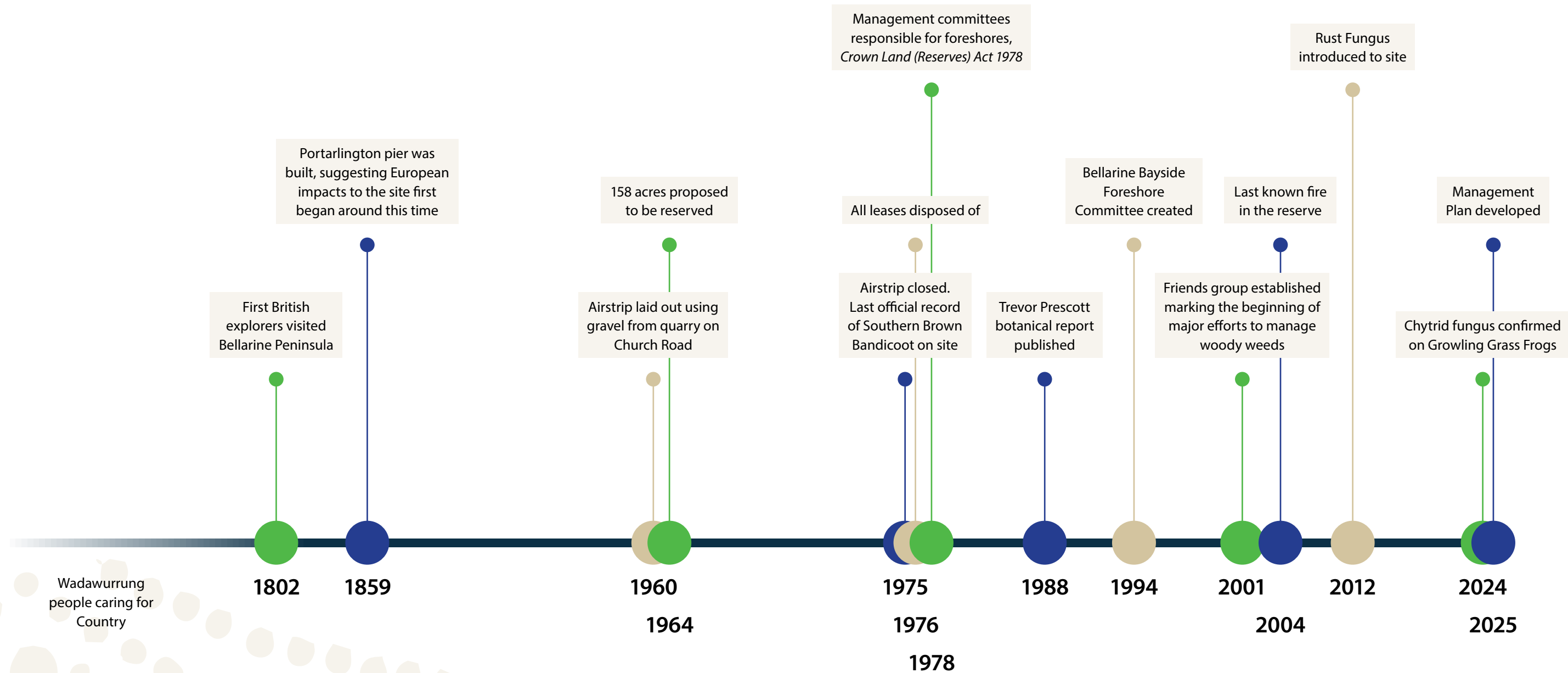
Weed management remains a high priority in the Reserve, as well as pest control, revegetation, and infrastructure maintenance. A network of walking trails, including two boardwalks, has been established and is supported by directional and interpretive signage. Haiku poems have been installed throughout the Reserve in collaboration with the Portarlinton Arts Network, along with nesting boxes for wildlife created by the St Leonards Men’s Shed and the Bellarine Landcare Group.



Contribution of the Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve to the site’s management showing a large wall of Gorse that has been cut down (left), volunteers performing woody weed control (top) and the cup of tea after work (bottom).



An overview of the major, known, recent events of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve



40,000+ years of Wadawurrung history

Bellarine Bayside acknowledges the deep and enduring connection Wadawurrung People share with Country, a relationship that spans thousands of generations.

We acknowledge that Country was never ceded and that colonial occupation caused significant changes to the biocultural landscape of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Vision and values

Vision

Following extensive assessment of the values and threats to the Reserve, and feedback from the community, a vision statement was prepared to steer the long-term management of the Site.

This community-driven approach ensured that the final vision, objectives, and strategies in this Plan reflect both ecological best practices and the values of those who use and cherish the Reserve.

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is a significant coastal haven of woodlands and wetlands, where biodiversity thrives, cultural knowledge is celebrated and an engaged community come together to care for and connect with nature.



Values

The Site is valued for its diverse cultural, ecological, and social attributes. These values reflect the site's cultural heritage, environmental importance and its role in supporting community connection and stewardship. The following key values have been identified through technical assessment and community consultation:

- **Cultural Values**
Lies entirely within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, with moderate to high potential for Aboriginal artefacts and cultural significance to Wadawurrung people.
- **Southern Wetland**
Provides critical habitat for threatened and migratory bird species, supports the resident Growling Grass Frog population, and serves as a key refuge for wetland-dependent wildlife.
- **Growling Grass Frog Population**
A resident and EPBC-listed vulnerable species that represents an iconic and locally significant amphibian of both the Reserve and the broader region.
- **Native Vegetation and Biodiversity**
Supports eight Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), with 268 recorded plant species and 158 fauna species, many of which are rare or threatened.
- **Ecological Significance**
Despite its size, the Reserve represents a large proportion of the remaining terrestrial native vegetation on the Bellarine Peninsula and contains one of the last significant examples of Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland.
- **Visitor Experience and Infrastructure**
Contains an established network of trails, signage, and recreational amenities that support visitor access, site management, and a unique visitor experience.
- **Engaged Local Community**
Supported by an active volunteer group and community participation in cultural engagement activities, ecological restoration and education, enhancing long-term stewardship of the Site.

Planning framework

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve was formally established in 1979 under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Stokes, 2007). Today, it is also protected under the Geelong Planning Scheme, where it is zoned as a Public Resource and Conservation Zone (PRCZ), reflecting its ecological significance and community value.

The Reserve is subject to several planning and environmental overlays that help guide its management:

- The Reserve is classified as an Area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity and a Designated Bushfire Prone Area, requiring careful management to protect both cultural values and visitor safety.
- Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) – applies to the southern portion of the Reserve, recognising its high conservation value.
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) – affects parts of the northern half, acknowledging the site's susceptibility to coastal and flood-related processes (Refer to Figure 2).

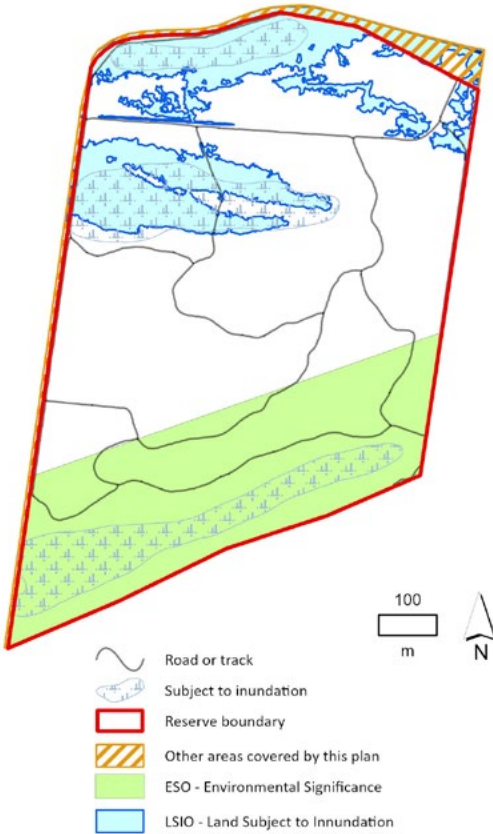


Figure 2 – Planning overlays that impact Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve. Note, that the parcel extends north of Boat Road but is not pictured and not relevant to this plan.

This Management Plan delivers on a key action from the Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan (2020–2025), Key Action P1.1, which prescribes the development of a site-specific plan in coordination with relevant agencies and stakeholders (Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management Incorporated, 2019).

Legislative context

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 (CLR Act)

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is reserved under the CLR Act, which provides the legal framework for the reservation and management of Crown land in Victoria. Under the CLR Act, land can be set aside for specific purposes such as conservation, recreation, or community use, and must be managed in accordance with the designated purpose of the reservation.

The Reserve was formally established in 1979 for the purpose of flora and fauna conservation. As such, the CLR Act requires that the site be managed to preserve and protect its natural values. Any use or development of the Reserve must be consistent with its conservation purpose, and proposals that may impact the land—such as works, leases, or licences—require approval from the Minister or delegated authority. The Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management Incorporated is the appointed land manager and is responsible for ensuring that activities within the Reserve comply with the CLR Act's provisions.

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

The entire Reserve is classified as an Area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity, recognising its potential for significant cultural heritage values. A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is required for any high-impact activities, ensuring that any ground disturbance is carefully managed to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, artefacts, and landscapes.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)

The FFG Act is Victoria's primary legislation for the protection of native species and ecological communities. Five plant species recorded within the Reserve are listed under this Act:

- *Acacia uncifolia* (Coast Wirilda)* – Endangered
- *Adriana quadripartita* (Coast Bitter-bush)* – Endangered
- *Eucalyptus leucoxylon subsp. bellarinensis* (Bellarine Yellow-gum)* – Critically Endangered
- *Eucalyptus leucoxylon subsp. megalocarpa* (Large-fruit Yellow-gum)* – Critically Endangered
- *Geranium solanderi var. solanderi s.s.* (Austral Crane's-bill) – Endangered

*Known to be planted and potentially beyond natural extent.

Eight fauna species recorded within the Reserve are listed under this Act:

- *Accipiter novaehollandiae* (Grey Goshawk) – Endangered
- *Biziura lobata* (Musk Duck) – Vulnerable
- *Botaurus poiciloptilus* (Australasian Bittern) – Critically Endangered
- *Falco subniger* (Black Falcon) – Critically Endangered
- *Hieraaetus morphnoides* (Little Eagle) – Vulnerable
- *Litoria raniformis* (Growling Grass Frog) – Vulnerable
- *Pteropus poliocephalus* (Grey-headed Flying-fox) – Vulnerable
- *Spatula rhynchotis* (Australasian Shoveler) – Vulnerable

Additionally, seven threatening processes known to occur on-site are listed under the FFG Act, including predation by foxes and cats, invasive weed species, and loss of biodiversity due to overabundant native species.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)

The EPBC Act protects Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), including nationally threatened species.

Five fauna species listed as threatened under the EPBC Act have been recorded within the Reserve:

- *Botaurus poiciloptilus* (Australasian Bittern) – Endangered
- *Calidris acuminata* (Sharp-tailed Sandpiper) – Vulnerable
- *Gallinago hardwickii* (Latham's Snipe) – Vulnerable
- *Litoria raniformis* (Growling Grass Frog) – Vulnerable
- *Pteropus poliocephalus* (Grey-headed Flying-fox) – Vulnerable

Additionally, six fauna species found on site are listed under international treaties:

- *Apus pacificus* (Fork-tailed Swift)
- *Calidris acuminata* (Sharp-tailed Sandpiper)
- *Calidris melanotos* (Pectoral Sandpiper)
- *Gallinago hardwickii* (Latham's Snipe)
- *Rhipidura rufifrons* (Australian Rufous Fantail)
- *Thalasseus bergii* (Crested Tern)

No EPBC-listed flora species or ecological communities have been recorded at the Site.

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)

The CaLP Act requires land managers to control noxious weeds and pest animals to prevent land degradation.

Fifteen declared noxious weed species have been identified within the Reserve, including:

Regionally Controlled Weeds – Boneseed, Hemlock, Fennel, Flax-leaf Broom, Montpellier Broom, African Box-thorn, Serrated Tussock, Blackberry, and Gorse.

Restricted Weeds – Bridal Creeper, Spear Thistle, Spiny Rush, Wheel Cactus, Soursob, and Apple of Sodom.

Land managers are required to prevent the spread of these species and eradicate regionally prohibited weeds where applicable.

Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Act 2018 (the DAL)

The DAL establishes a new benchmark to guard against inappropriate development in sensitive areas across Victoria and safeguards their unique features for future generations. The DAL recognises the Bellarine Peninsula as an important area to the people of Victoria and aims to protect, conserve and enhance its environmental, social and economic values. Changes to the Statement of Planning Policy could enable increased development around the Reserve and threaten its values.

Other management advice

Several management plans and studies have informed the conservation and restoration efforts at Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve over the years. These documents provide important guidance for maintaining the Reserve's ecological values and aligning its management with broader regional strategies.

- **2015 – Vegetation Management Plan:** This plan covered much of the coast managed by Bellarine Bayside, including Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, and provided recommendations for vegetation management (Trengrove, 2015).
- **2019 – Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan (2020–2025):** This plan, published by Bellarine Bayside, outlined broad coastal and marine management priorities. Specifically, Precinct Action P1.1 called for the development of a site-specific management plan for Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, in coordination with relevant agencies and stakeholders (Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management Incorporated, 2019).
- **2020 – Paleert Tjaara Dja: Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan (2020–2030):** Developed by the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, this 10-year plan outlines a vision for healing and caring for Wadawurrung Country through cultural knowledge, self-determination, and collaborative partnerships. It identifies key cultural and ecological values, threats to those values, and strategies to address them, including cultural burning, language revitalisation, and co-management of land and water. The plan emphasises the importance of Wadawurrung-led decision-making and invites land managers to work

in partnership with Traditional Owners to ensure Country and culture remain strong (Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, 2020).

- **2020 – Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) Management Advice:** Recognising the rapid spread and dominance of Common Reed in the southern wetland, a study was conducted to assess wetland conditions and develop targeted management recommendations (Cook, 2020).
- **2023 – Draft Bellarine Bayside Northern Bellarine Rehabilitation Plan (2023–2028):** While this plan had a broader scope beyond the Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, it included specific management aims for the Reserve, focusing on revegetation, stormwater management, pest animal control, and fire management (Trengrove, Bellarine Bayside Northern Bellarine Rehabilitation Plan 2023-2028, 2023).
- **2025 – Background Report for this Management Plan:** Immediately preceding the development of this Management Plan, a comprehensive Background Report was compiled, consolidating key ecological information and historical data about the Reserve. This report serves as a primary reference for the Management Plan (Schinagl, Clark, Bates, Cook, & Neunuebel, 2025).
- **2025 – (In draft) Northern Bellarine Coastal Adaptation Plan (CAP):** Outlines actions to build resilience and adapt to coastal hazard impacts to the coastal public land on the northern Bellarine Peninsula now and into the future. It will do so by analysing the exposure and risk of coastal hazards to coastal values associated with climate change.
- **2026 – (In draft) The Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2026-31:** Guides management of the marine and coastal Crown land on northern Bellarine Peninsula over the next five years. Provides a coordinated and integrated approach to balance cultural, environmental, social and economic values, highlighting priorities for the next five years in line with a longer-term vision.

These existing plans and reports provide a strong foundation for the ongoing management of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, ensuring that conservation efforts are evidence-based, adaptive, and aligned with regional environmental goals.



White-plumed Honeyeater
(*Ptilotula penicillata*)

Engagement summary

Community and stakeholder engagement played a key role in shaping this Management Plan, ensuring that it reflects the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners, the Friends Group, community and key stakeholders. A Project Working Group was established with WTOAC and CoGG to provide technical expertise into the development of the plan.

Collaborating with Wadawurrung

Bellarine Bayside are privileged to have worked closely with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in the development of this Plan. This included an on-Country site visit, key workshops and as a member of the Project Working Group.

Engagement centred around:

- Ensuring cultural values and significance of the site are protected and recognised.
- Supporting Wadawurrung aspirations and initiatives for Country in Paleert Tjaara Dja- let’s make Country good together 2020-2030 - Wadawurrung Country Plan.

What we heard

- Support for Wadawurrung community to get on Country and undertake cultural practices.
- Opportunities to improve cultural recognition, education and interpretation.
- Facilitate more opportunities to care for Country through on-ground management.

Community engagement

Community engagement for the Management Plan followed a two-step process.

Stage 1 - Understanding values and vision

Between November 2024 and January 2025, community feedback was sought via:

- An online survey and mapping tool as part of Planning our Future Coast, an integrated engagement project.
- Six pop-up info stalls in the community.

What we heard

The community most values Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve for providing:

- **A quiet retreat**
Appreciation for a peaceful natural setting.

- **Environmental protection**
Strong support for conserving the natural environment.
- **Walking tracks**
Appreciation for the existing track network.
- **Wildlife**
Appreciation for seeing and hearing wildlife.

We also heard a desire (85% support) for new, low-key visitor infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience.

Our response

The Stage 1 feedback directly influenced the first draft of the vision, values and objectives, which were refined at a stakeholder workshop attended by WTOAC, CoGG, Friends of Point Richards, Bellarine Landcare Group, Bellarine Catchment Network and Geelong Field Naturalists Club.



Stage 2 –Consultation on the Draft Plan

In June 2025, the Draft Management Plan was released for community feedback. Input was received via an online survey, complemented by an information session.

What we heard

- 100% of survey respondents supported the plan.
- 81% of survey respondents supported improved cultural connections.
- Strong support for better facilitation of access and visitation (e.g. trails, signage, facilitated activities) and continued biodiversity management.
- Support for trialling cultural and ecological burning.

Our response

The following table summarises our response to key community concerns in the plan.

Community concern	How we responded
Climate change impacts	We will ensure climate change impacts are addressed through our Coastal Adaptation Plan
Impacts of proposed bird hide	We will analyse risks and benefits to inform any decision
Wildlife signage on road	We will work with authorities to investigate signage
Stormwater impacts on wetlands	We commit to work with lead agencies to mitigate impacts to the wetlands
Impact of proposed southern access track	We will not progress this proposal
Risks posed by cats to wildlife	We will collaborate with CoGG to raise community awareness about domestic cats impacting wildlife

Objectives

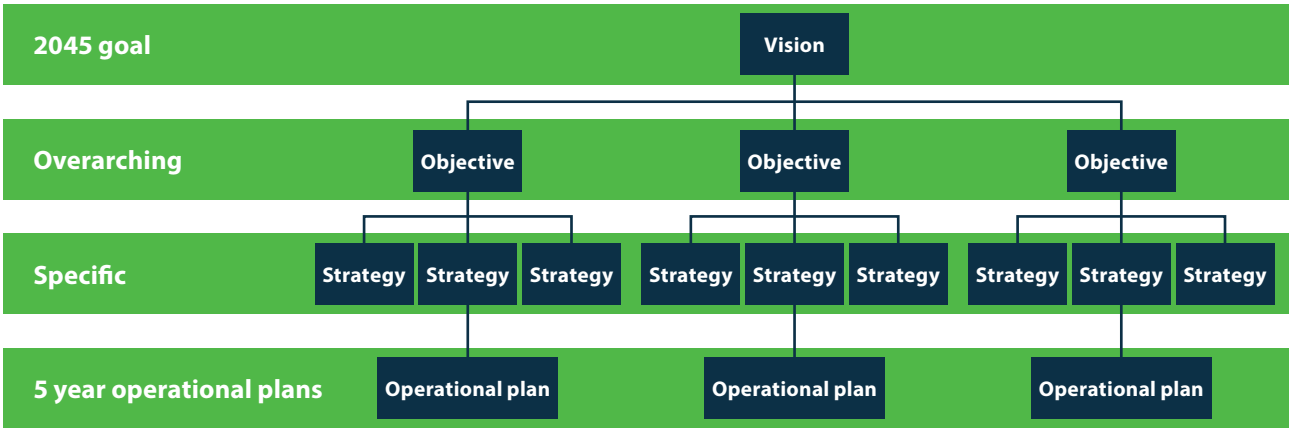
The Management Plan follows a hierarchical structure, with each level reflecting a different time scale and management focus. At the highest level is the vision, which defines the long-term goal for the Reserve by 2045.

The objectives provide long-term direction, outlining key focus areas for management.

The strategies translate objectives into clear, actionable activities that guide year-to-year decision-making.

Strategies, in turn, inform on-ground actions, which are documented in Operational Plans—detailed management plans with a five-year implementation window that ensure actions are practical, measurable, and adaptive over time.

The hierarchy is shown below (please note, this does not signify actual numbers of objectives, strategies and operational plans).



Sun Orchid
(*Thelymitra* sp.)

1. Support connections to culture and Country

The Site sits within Wadawurrung Country and Wadawurrung people have cared for this landscape for tens of thousands of years.

While historical records provide insights into Aboriginal land use, much of this information was recorded by non-Aboriginal observers, requiring careful interpretation. The Bengalat Balluk clan, whose territory included the eastern Bellarine Peninsula, is thought to have occupied the area surrounding Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve prior to European contact.

A desktop cultural heritage assessment has identified the Site as having a moderate to high potential for surface and subsurface Aboriginal lithic artefacts. There is a need for careful management of the landscape to prevent unintended impacts.

The Reserve provides an important opportunity to celebrate cultural values and enhance public understanding of Wadawurrung Country, heritage and traditional knowledge. Through collaboration, learning and engagement there is an opportunity to deepen connections between people and place.

Threats to connections to culture and Country in the reserve:

- Disturbance to cultural heritage**
Ground disturbance from excavation, construction, or fire management may damage or destroy significant cultural sites, artefacts, or landscapes, leading to the irreversible loss of historical and spiritual values. This could also impact cultural identity and legal protections associated with heritage sites.
- Erosion of Traditional Owner connections to Country**
A lack of active engagement with Traditional Owners in the management and interpretation of the Site may weaken cultural connections over time. Meaningful collaboration with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation will ensure support for aspirations for Country and initiatives in Paleert Tjaara Dja- let’s make Country good together 2020-2030-Wadawurrung Country Plan.

Strategies		Partners
1.1	Collaborate with Wadawurrung in the planning and decision making of the Reserve to support aspirations for Country and initiatives in Paleert Tjaara Dja- let’s make Country good together 2020-2030-Wadawurrung Country Plan	WTOAC
1.2	In collaboration with Wadawurrung, create a visitor experience dedicated to celebrating and creating awareness for cultural heritage	WTOAC FoPRFFR
1.3	Work with Wadawurrung to consider options to return language to Country through renaming the Reserve	WTOAC
1.4	Ensure Traditional Owners can contribute to the on-ground management of the Reserve, including:	
	1.4.1 Conducting cultural burns	WTOAC DEECA CFA
	1.4.2 Managing pests and healing the land	WTOAC
	1.4.3 Engaging Wadawurrung’s Gobata Dja team to undertake or support works in the reserve	WTOAC DEECA CFA
1.5	Support opportunities for Wadawurrung to undertake Cultural practices to connect with Country	WTOAC

WTOAC Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
FoPRFFR Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve
DEECA Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
CFA Country Fire Authority



Cultural education session conducted by proud Wadawurrung man Ash Skinner in Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, on Wadawurrung Country.

2. Protect wetland values

The Site contains three distinct wetland areas—northern, central, and southern—covering a total of 8.36 hectares. These wetlands provide critical habitat for threatened and migratory bird species and support the resident Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) population, a species listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act. The southern wetland is particularly significant, serving as a key refuge for wetland-dependent wildlife. Its importance is formally recognised by an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO), which places restrictions on development activities to protect its ecological integrity. While the Growling Grass Frog is primarily associated with this wetland, it is possible to be found in other parts of the Reserve, reinforcing its status as an iconic species of both the Site and the broader region.

In addition to their ecological importance, the wetlands at Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve support seven distinct EVCs, each contributing to the Site’s biodiversity and habitat diversity. These vegetation communities provide a mosaic of wetland ecosystems, essential for the persistence of wetland flora and fauna.

Threats to wetland values:

- **Stormwater impacts on the southern wetland**
Residential development to the south has altered the natural hydrology of the wetland, affecting

wetting and drying cycles, increasing pollution risks, and potentially introducing and/or exacerbating impacts from diseases and pathogens e.g. Chytrid fungus. Continued development may result in increased stormwater effluent impacting the wetland environment.

- **Loss of biodiversity from invasive plants**
Environmental weeds, invasive species, and overabundant native species threaten wetland vegetation by outcompeting native flora, altering soil chemistry, and changing fire and hydrological regimes.
- **Impacts on wildlife from pest animals**
Foxes and cats pose a serious threat to wetland fauna, particularly small mammals, birds, and amphibians, while also contributing to the spread of weeds and diseases.
- **Climate change impacts**
Rising temperatures, reduced soil moisture, and altered rainfall patterns increase drought stress, reduce habitat quality, and intensify bushfire risk, leading to long-term changes in vegetation composition and wetland function. In addition, sea level rise may elevate local groundwater levels, potentially altering the hydrological regime and maintaining or increasing salinity levels in coastal wetlands, further affecting wetland ecology.

Strategies		Partners	
2.1	Maintain the available habitat for threatened species in the southern wetland at 2025 levels	CoGG, FoPRFFR	
2.2	Ensure the current wetland vegetation types (with the exception of Estuarine Reedbed) do not reduce in abundance, quality and extent	FoPRFFR, Ecologists	
2.3	Work with partners to monitor the volume of freshwater and associated pollutants entering the southern wetland, and act if these threaten the ecological values of the wetland	CCMA, PRFFRW, CoGG, Ecologists	
2.4	Work with neighbouring land managers and authorities to ensure the wetland is protected from future potential development impacts and steps are taken to mitigate current impacts	CoGG, CCMA, Ecohydrologist	
2.5	Promote awareness around wetland health	FoPRFFR, Community	
2.6	Establish formal, long-term monitoring programs for:		
2.6.1	Water quality (from the perspective of environmental health)	CoGG, Water monitoring specialist	
2.6.2	The Growling Grass Frog population	Ecologists	
2.6.3	Avifauna	FoPRFFR, GFNC	
2.6.4	Common Reed extent	Mapping specialist	

CCMA	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority	CoGG	City of Greater Geelong
FoPRFFR	Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve	GFNC	Geelong Field Naturalists Club
PRFFRW	Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Waterwatch		

Common Reed
(*Phragmites australis*)

3. Improve habitat quality and maintain biodiversity

The Site contains eight EVCs, contributing to its ecological diversity. It is home to 268 recorded vascular plant species, including several rare or threatened species such as *Acacia uncifolia* (Coast Wirilda), *Adriana quadripartita* (Coast Bitter-bush), *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *bellarinensis* (Bellarine Yellow-gum), *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *megalocarpa* (Large-fruit Yellow-gum), and *Geranium solanderi* var. *solanderi* s.s. (Austral Crane's-bill). However, with the exception of Austral Crane's-bill, these species have been introduced through planting efforts rather than occurring naturally within the Reserve. Nevertheless, their presence warrants conservation effort.

The Reserve also provides critical habitat for 158 recorded fauna species. The southern wetland, in particular, is an important refuge for migratory birds and wetland-dependent species including the Growling Grass Frog, Grey Goshawk, Musk Duck, Australasian Bittern, Black Falcon, Latham's Snipe, Little Eagle, and Australasian Shoveler. The Grey-headed Flying Fox has also been recorded in terrestrial areas of the Reserve.

While the Site remains a significant biodiversity refuge, weed invasion continues to pose a management challenge. Herbaceous weeds are particularly persistent in the understorey and degraded areas, requiring

ongoing control efforts. However, noxious weeds listed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic)* and those classified as Weeds of National Significance occupy only a minor proportion of the Reserve, indicating that targeted weed management efforts have been largely effective in limiting their spread.

Additionally, some native species, such as Coast Tea-tree, Sallow Wattle, Coast Wattle, Coast Banksia, Common Reed, and Sweet Pittosporum, can be considered as occurring beyond their natural range, or exhibit invasive tendencies and require careful management. Fire has not occurred within the Reserve for 20 years, raising considerations for ecosystem processes that rely on periodic fire regimes.

Threats to habitat quality and biodiversity:

- Loss of biodiversity from invasive plants**
Weeds and overabundant native species outcompete native vegetation, alter soil chemistry, fire regimes, and hydrology, and disrupt habitat conditions.
- Loss of biodiversity from inappropriate fire regimes**
A lack of fire or excessive fire frequency can disrupt ecological processes, affecting plant regeneration and increasing wildfire risks.

- Impacts on wildlife from pest animals**
Foxes and cats pose a severe threat to native fauna through direct predation, particularly for small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.
- Impacts on biodiversity from pest herbivores**
Rabbits and hares contribute to overgrazing, preventing the regeneration of woody vegetation and altering plant composition in favour of unpalatable or invasive species.
- Climate change impacts**
Rising temperatures, sea-level rise, reduced soil moisture, shifting rainfall patterns, changes to groundwater levels and salinity, and extreme weather events threaten the long-term resilience of ecosystems, increasing the risk of bushfires, habitat degradation, and species decline.
- Local population increases and development**
Future urban development surrounding the Reserve could result in higher instances of misuse and pressure on biodiversity.

Strategies			Partners
3.1	Maintain threatening weed cover (WoNS and CaLP) at negligible levels (<1% cover) with 0.1% attributed to reproductively mature weeds and no new species established		FoPRFFR
3.2	Reduce overall weed cover to below 5% and maintain at or below that level in perpetuity		FoPRFFR
3.3	Rehabilitate 6 ha of degraded understorey (not including wooded areas)		Local indigenous nurseries FoPRFFR
3.4	Improve habitat quality by 5 points (as measured by a vegetation quality assessment) and provide additional habitat through nesting boxes and woody debris		Local indigenous nurseries
3.5	Collaborate with Wadawurrung and other agencies to implement fire as a vegetation management tool for ecological outcomes		WTOAC CFA DEECA CoGG
3.6	Engage with neighbours in the management of weeds to mitigate edge effects		FoPRFFR Community CoGG
3.7	Maintain surveillance for new and emerging weeds. If identified, they should be integrated into monitoring and control programs		FoPRFFR Community
3.8	Increase understanding and adaptive capacity of vegetation to climate change impacts		DEECA
3.9	Establish long-term monitoring programs for:		
	3.9.1	Weed cover and weed diversity	Ecologists
	3.9.2	Habitat quality and plant diversity	Ecologists
	3.9.3	Avifauna diversity	FoPRFFR GFNC

CaLP	Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994	CFA	Country Fire Authority
CoGG	City of Greater Geelong	DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
FoPRFFR	Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve	GFNC	Geelong Field Naturalists Club
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation	WoNS	Weeds of National Significance



Hop Bitter-pea
(*Daviesia latifolia*)

4. Reduce impacts from pest animals

Foxes and cats pose a significant threat to native fauna within the Reserve, preying on small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, contributing to population declines and disrupting ecosystem balance. In addition to predation, pest animals also impact native vegetation, altering habitat conditions and reducing biodiversity. Rabbits and hares exert excessive browsing pressure, inhibiting the regeneration of native plant species and altering the understorey composition. Left unmanaged, these herbivores selectively feed on seedlings and palatable species, reducing plant diversity and encouraging the persistence of weeds and less desirable vegetation.

A total of 14 pest animal species have been identified within the Reserve, with foxes, feral cats, and rabbits being the primary concerns. Both fox predation of native wildlife and vegetation loss caused by rabbit grazing are listed as threatening processes under the

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic). While the primary concern is environmental degradation, rabbits also impact cultural heritage values and undermine infrastructure, including fences and walking tracks, creating maintenance challenges.

Threats from pest animals:

- Impacts on wildlife from pest animals**
Foxes and cats cause direct predation on small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates contributing to population declines. They also act as vectors for weeds and diseases, further impacting the Reserve’s ecological health.
- Impacts on biodiversity from pest herbivores**
Rabbits and hares contribute to overgrazing, preventing the regeneration of native vegetation, altering species composition, and creating conditions that favour invasive plants.

Strategies		Partners
4.1	Establish an integrated pest animal management plan that addresses foxes and rabbits	Ecologists
4.2	Establish a pest animal control program that includes monitoring of target and off-target species	Ecologists
4.3	Maintain surveillance for new and emerging pests. If identified, they should be integrated into the pest animal management plan	Community
4.4	Engage with neighbours in the management of pest and domestic animals to improve outcomes	Community CoGG

CoGG City of Greater Geelong



Brown Quail
(*Synoicus ypsilophorus*)

5. Enhance the visitor experience and community engagement

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve is a valued natural space that provides opportunities for low-impact recreation, environmental education, and community involvement. The 5.8 km network of walking tracks, primarily composed of bare earth (sand) paths, allows visitors to experience the diverse landscapes while minimising environmental impact. The Reserve also features five official access points, two small sections of boardwalk, and basic recreational infrastructure such as picnic tables and seating. While parking is limited to road verges and grassed areas, these access points allow the community and visitors to connect with the Reserve.

These features are illustrated in the preliminary landscape concept plan provided at the end of this section, along with a range of additional ideas designed to enhance the overall visitor experience, including improved accessibility, interpretive signage, and opportunities for passive recreation.

The Reserve attracts a mix of local residents, regional visitors, and tourists, with peak visitation occurring on weekends, holidays, and during warmer months. The typical visitor profile includes families, retirees, nature enthusiasts, walkers and birdwatchers, who appreciate the tranquil setting and ecological significance of the

Site. The absence of high-energy or thrill-seeking activities aligns with the Reserve’s conservation-focused management approach.

Community engagement plays a vital role in the management of the Reserve. The Friends of Point Richards Reserve group, active since 2001, meets weekly to assist with weed control, revegetation, and habitat restoration, contributing significantly to the Site’s ecological health. Broader community involvement extends to educational programs, including guided walks, field trips e.g. Geelong Field Naturalists, walking groups, art sessions and a bush kinder program launched in mid-2024, fostering environmental awareness and stewardship.

In late 2024, an online community survey was conducted to gather public perspectives on priority management areas. Respondents highlighted their appreciation for the Reserve’s wildlife, walking paths, and conservation efforts, with many advocating for minimal changes to preserve its natural values. These insights reinforce the importance of ongoing community engagement and infrastructure maintenance to sustain visitor enjoyment and protect the Reserve’s environmental integrity.



Threats to visitor experience and community engagement:

- **Inadequate maintenance on infrastructure and tracks**
Deterioration of access tracks, signage, and other assets could lead to increased maintenance costs, increase in establishment of informal tracks through sensitive areas, and reduced emergency service access, compromising visitor safety and site management.

- **Lack of inclusivity i.e. all-abilities access**
Limiting access to only certain demographics or capabilities.
- **Failure to maintain engagement with the community**
The local community provides invaluable support in Reserve management. A decline in engagement could result in reduced volunteer efforts and a loss of local awareness and stewardship, negatively impacting conservation outcomes.

Strategies		Partners
5.1	Install interpretive signage that seeks to improve visitors understanding of values within the Reserve, including Wadawurrung stories, values, and uses	WTOAC FoPRFFR
5.2	Improve parking facilities at the Reserve to better accommodate day visitors	CoGG
5.3	Improve the formal entrance on Boat Road	FoPRFFR
5.4	Increase the number and variety of visitor experiences at the Reserve, including new seating options	FoPRFFR CoGG
5.5	Create an all-abilities trail experience for visitors including access and seating areas	Community Disability advocacy groups
5.6	Update signage in the reserve to improve wayfinding, including new signage at major entrances	FoPRFFR
5.7	Improve trail linkages to visitor nodes including the Point Richards foreshore area, the Portarlinton Holiday Park, the adjacent Recreation Reserve and local, residential areas to promote visitation and appreciation of the Reserve	CoGG Community
5.8	In consultation with relevant authorities, establish directional signage guiding visitors to the reserve, along with installing wildlife safety signage near roads	CoGG DTP
5.9	Engage with community groups and educational organizations to support conservation efforts, educational programs, and monitoring activities, while ensuring that recreational use of the Reserve remains low-impact and aligned with its ecological values	Community Educational institutions
5.10	Monitor visitor numbers and demographics so that they can be used to guide future decisions	Community
5.11	Investigate options for dog access to the CoGG recreation reserve from the residential area via a designated linking track	CoGG Community
5.12	Investigate feasibility of installing bird hide and implement if appropriate	DEECA Ecologists

CoGG	City of Greater Geelong	DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning	FoPRFFR	Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation		

Strategies related to site development are subject to planning approvals.

Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Landscape Concept Plan



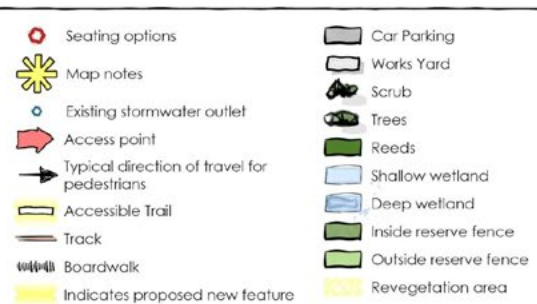
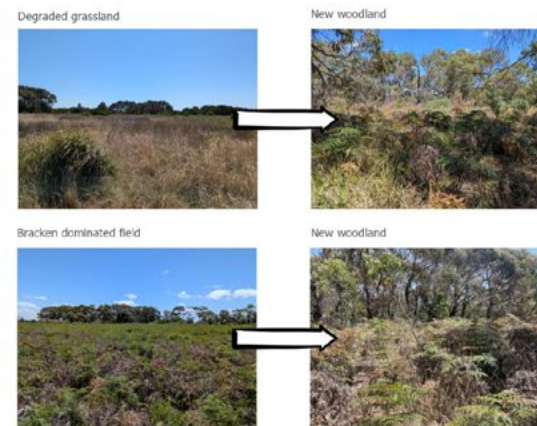
NEW MAJOR ENTRANCE

Proposed location of new entrance on Boat Road (map note 5). This location has space for parking, and greater access potential for the holiday park. It can easily connect to the proposed hub (map note 3) and can be upgraded with an all abilities path. This and the existing entrance will boast interpretive shelter, shown below.



Primary Woodland Zones

While open areas of the reserve are encouraged to persist, they are disproportionately represented. It is proposed that woodland 'bands' are established spanning from east to west. Not only will these areas increase the habitat complexity of the site, but they will focus on some of the more degraded areas offering a simpler pathway to restoration through the planting of trees. These woodland bands will compliment the existing open meadows, marshes, grasslands, and scrubs. Furthermore, they will provide additional shade on walking tracks.



MAP NOTES

1. The open space

The existing open space and shelter at this location will be maintained for community use and as a destination for walkers.

2. New entrance and accessibility circuit

Greater parking capacity with an accessible entrance to the reserve. The parking and entrance give way to a hardened path suitable for wheelchairs. Designed to be a circuit with the new hub being the focal point. At approximately 800 m in length, the path would also cater for families with young children. Most of the path will have shade from the adjacent tree cover but there will be some open areas for viewing.



3. The hub

The primary destination for the new accessibility circuit. It will feature rest facilities, interpretational opportunities and viewing.

4. Wetland bird hide

After parking at the southern parking spot on the western boundary, a visitor will find a new track on the right hand side after approximately 100 metres. The new track soon gives way to a boardwalk which terminates in a bird hide facing south towards the largest part of the wetland. This is the ideal location for bird watching as it offers views across a range of habitats and open water. Given the reserves size, it is important to ensure the bird hide has a small footprint and has a low visual profile on the site. This could be through a roofless hide (first picture below) or a rooved option (second photo).



5. New visitor entrance to holiday park

5. New visitor entrance to holiday park
Improve tourist visitation by creating two direct access points from the holiday park into the reserve.

6. Management vehicle access

6. Management vehicle access
Add a gate able to be used by emergency and management vehicles. This creates direct access to the old airstrip, and greater access to the main visitor hubs near the main entrance.

7. New connection to adjacent reserve

7. New connection to adjacent reserve
Additional access point to adjacent reserve increases the potential for larger walking circuits.

8. New linking trail

Improved access to the western side of the reserve from the northern entrance.

Planning note:
All asset and infrastructure projects are subject to planning and Traditional Owner approval prior to commencement. Planning restrictions may prevent some projects from being realised.

Implementation

Working with community and partners

The Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan provides a framework for the long-term sustainable management of the Reserve. Its success relies on collaboration between Bellarine Bayside, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, key government agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders. Implementing this Plan will involve a combination of routine management actions alongside targeted projects and programs that address key conservation challenges and enhance community engagement.

The strategies and goals outlined in this Plan will guide future management efforts, ensuring that all actions contribute toward the protection and enhancement of the Reserve’s cultural, natural, and recreational values. While the Plan provides a long-term vision, implementation will occur progressively over time, with priorities shaped by funding availability, resource capacity, and collaborative partnerships. Establishing and maintaining strong partnerships will be essential to achieving the objectives set out in this Plan.



Several organisations and community groups play a key role in the management and stewardship of the Reserve:

- **Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)**
The Traditional Owners of Country and the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) responsible for cultural heritage management and protection within the Reserve.
- **Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve (FoPRFFR)**
A dedicated local volunteer group actively involved in weed management, revegetation, and habitat restoration.
- **Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Waterwatch (PRFFRW)**
Conduct monthly water monitoring of the southern wetlands at the Reserve for health parameters.
- **Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)**
Provides policy guidance, funding, and oversight for the management of Crown land and biodiversity conservation initiatives.
- **Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA)**
Supports projects related to wetland and waterway health, as well as broader catchment-scale environmental programs.
- **City of Greater Geelong (CoGG)**
Oversees land use planning, infrastructure, and community services, including coastal and environmental management initiatives that impact the region. This includes neighbouring reserves of which the adjoining Recreation Reserve is a key feature.
- **Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN)**
Coordinates and supports a wide range of environmental programs across the Bellarine Peninsula, including coastal restoration, biodiversity monitoring, and environmental education. BCN provides strategic guidance and collaboration opportunities that align with landscape-scale conservation goals, and has previously supported wetland management and community engagement initiatives at the Reserve.
- **Bellarine Landcare Group (BLG)**
Supports conservation and revegetation efforts on the Bellarine Peninsula through community-driven environmental projects.

- **Geelong Field Naturalists Club (GFNC)**
Conduct organised field trips in the reserve to study and record fauna and flora, specialising in birds.
- **Local schools, environmental education programs, and research institutions**
Contribute to environmental learning opportunities, citizen science, and monitoring programs that enhance understanding of the Reserve’s ecological values.

By fostering these collaborative relationships, Bellarine Bayside and its partners can effectively implement this Plan, ensuring the long-term protection of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve while enhancing community connections to this significant cultural and natural landscape.

Operational Plans

The Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan establishes a long-term strategic direction for managing the Reserve over the next 20 years. To translate these strategic objectives into practical, on-ground actions, a series of Operational Plans will be developed, each with a 5-year scope. These plans will guide targeted management efforts, ensuring that work remains focused, responsive, and aligned with conservation priorities.

The proposed Operational Plans include:

- **Vegetation Plan**
Addresses native vegetation conservation, revegetation, weed control, and the management of overabundant native species. Also includes fire planning and implementation, ensuring appropriate fire regimes support ecosystem health.
- **Threatened Species Plan**
Focuses on the protection, habitat management, and monitoring of rare and threatened flora and fauna, ensuring their long-term viability.
- **Pest Animal Plan**
Guides control efforts for foxes, cats, rabbits, and other invasive species, incorporating population monitoring and impact assessments to reduce threats to native biodiversity.
- **Visitor Experience and Community Engagement Plan**
Guides maintenance and improvements to visitor infrastructure, interpretive signage and community engagement, in line with the Preliminary Landscape Concept Plan.

These Operational Plans will be updated on a rolling basis every five years, ensuring that management efforts remain relevant, evidence-based, and responsive to emerging challenges. The effectiveness of these plans will be assessed through monitoring and review processes, as outlined below.

Adaptive management, monitoring and review

Effective management of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve requires a flexible and evidence-based approach, ensuring that conservation actions remain responsive to changing environmental conditions, emerging challenges, and new scientific insights. This Plan adopts an adaptive management framework, where decisions are continually refined based on monitoring results, stakeholder input, and periodic reviews.

A critical component of this approach is ensuring that every strategy outlined in this Plan delivers on clear objectives and is accompanied by actions and measures. This ensures that progress can be measured, evaluated, and adjusted as needed. Monitoring will focus on key cultural, ecological and visitor experience indicators, helping to track the effectiveness of management actions and identify areas for improvement.

Monitoring approach

Each strategy will be supported by specific, measurable indicators to assess management effectiveness. These indicators may include:

- Ecological health metrics, such as vegetation condition, weed cover, and species diversity.
- Population trends of threatened and key fauna species, including the Growling Grass Frog and significant bird species.
- Pest animal impacts, measured through population monitoring and habitat assessments.
- Community engagement levels, evaluated through participation in volunteer programs, surveys, and education initiatives.
- Infrastructure and access conditions, ensuring that walking tracks, signage, and facilities remain well-maintained and support conservation goals.

Review process

To support accountability and adaptive management, this Plan will be reviewed every five years through the renewal of Operations Plans. These reviews will:

- Assess monitoring data to determine the effectiveness of management actions.
- Identify emerging threats and new opportunities for conservation.
- Ensure that strategies remain aligned with best practices and community expectations.
- Adjust priorities and update actions as needed to improve outcomes.
- Test assumptions’ and objectives’ feasibility.

Continuous improvement

By embedding an adaptive management approach in this Plan, Bellarine Bayside and its partners can ensure that the Reserve is managed effectively over the long term. This approach allows for evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that resources are directed towards the most effective conservation and management strategies.

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