



**Bellarine
Bayside**
Coastal Management



PORTARLINGTON INCLUSIVE BEACH STAGE TWO

WHAT WE HEARD

Community Engagement Summary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the Bellawiyn, and we pay our respects to their 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 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.



INTRODUCTION

We believe that everyone has the right to enjoy the beach, and making our coast welcoming and inclusive for all members of the community is a key goal for Bellarine Bayside.

Portarlington's main beach, with its sunny northerly aspect, easy parking, and nearby facilities, is one of the most popular spots along our coastline. We're delivering accessibility and safety upgrades to support people of all abilities to experience our coastal region.

Community feedback shows strong support for improving accessibility along the coast. That's why throughout the project we're engaging with the community and stakeholders, including people with disability, carers and advocates, local inclusion and access groups, and people who live on, work near or visit the coast.

This summary report shares what we heard while developing the concept plan for the second stage of upgrades.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the community engagement. The insights gathered have been invaluable to help us better understand what people would find helpful to improve inclusion and access along the coast.

Your feedback will guide this project and future strategies to make our coastline inclusive for everyone.



STAGE TWO UPGRADES - ACCESSIBLE PARKING, CONNECTIONS AND LANDSCAPING

Supported by the Victorian Government through the Coastal Public Access and Risk (CPAR) grant program, stage two will deliver:

- Accessible car parks in convenient locations.
- Accessible paths and connections linking the new Changing Places facility with the Bellarine Coastal Trail and the beach.
- Landscape improvements that support wayfinding, comfort and inclusion.

The Changing Places facility - the first of its kind near a beach on the Bellarine Peninsula - provides safe, suitable and private bathroom facilities for people with high support needs (including a height-adjustable adult-sized change table, ceiling track hoist, centrally located peninsula toilet and privacy screen).

The stage two upgrades to the surrounding area will support the intent of the Changing Places and allow people with high support needs to enjoy a day at the beach. We worked with Equal Access, a specialist disability access consultant in Universal Design, to develop the draft concept plan.

In July 2025, we invited the community and stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft concept plan. Our goals were to:

- Inform people about the proposed accessible parking, paths and connections.
- Check that the draft concept plan meets accessibility needs.
- Understand usage and improvements for the beach matting trial.
- Explore options for free public beach mobility equipment, such as beach wheelchairs.



Above: Interior of the Changing Places facility.

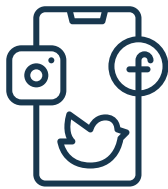
HOW WE ENGAGED

Our Coastal Conversations project page provided comprehensive information on the project, including previously completed upgrades and future upgrades to be considered. The page encouraged participants to complete a survey about accessibility on the coast, the draft concept plan, the beach matting trial, and future public beach mobility equipment.

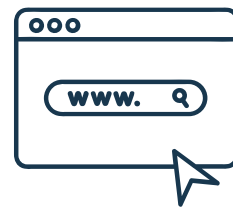
To reach a diverse range of community members, including those who would benefit most from the upgrades, we contacted local inclusion and access reference groups, disability support agencies, and Portarlington community groups to encourage participation.

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement was promoted through a range of channels, including:

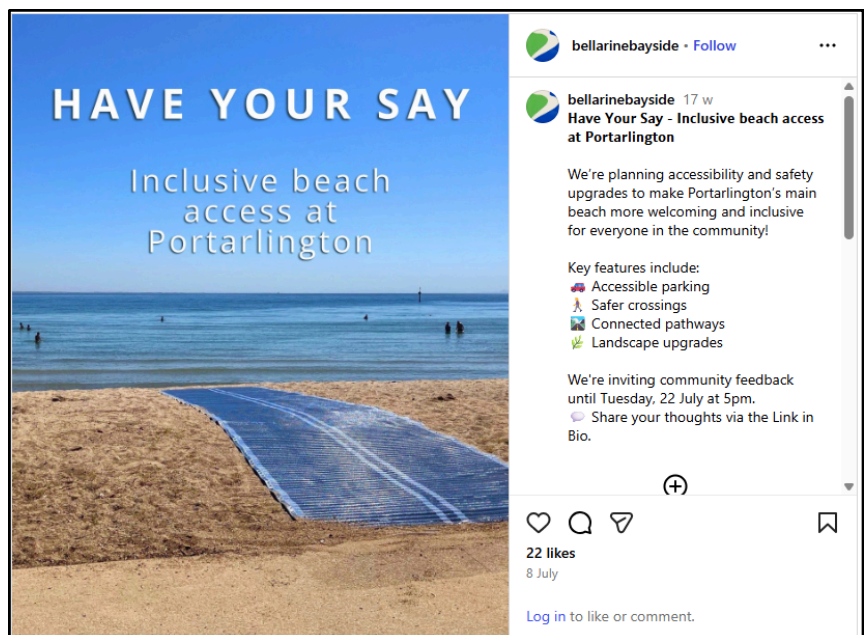
- Bellarine Bayside's digital engagement platform Coastal Conversations.
- Bellarine Bayside's social media channels.
- Signage near the proposed works and at the associated public amenity building.
- Direct email to local inclusion and access organisations and community groups.



**Social media posts received
13,903 views and 145 interactions.**



**There were 217 views of the project
webpage on Coastal Conversations.**



Above: Signage and social media posts promoting the Inclusive Beach Access at Portarlington upgrades.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

During the engagement we received feedback from a range of users, including access and inclusion professionals (client engagement and access consultants), coastal users with lived experience, carers and community members.

A total of 30 people provided feedback on the project.

Generally, we heard:

- Positive feedback about the draft concept plan and the considerations already made for coastal users with lived-experience.
- Insights on how the elements can be improved to best meet needs, e.g. different ideas about garden edging for optimal wayfinding (navigation).



We spoke to 6 people with lived-experience or who represented local inclusion and access advocacy groups.



24 people provided feedback on the project via the online survey.



50% of survey respondents identified as living with disability or a person caring for someone living with disability.



83% of survey respondents were either a local resident or holiday house owner.



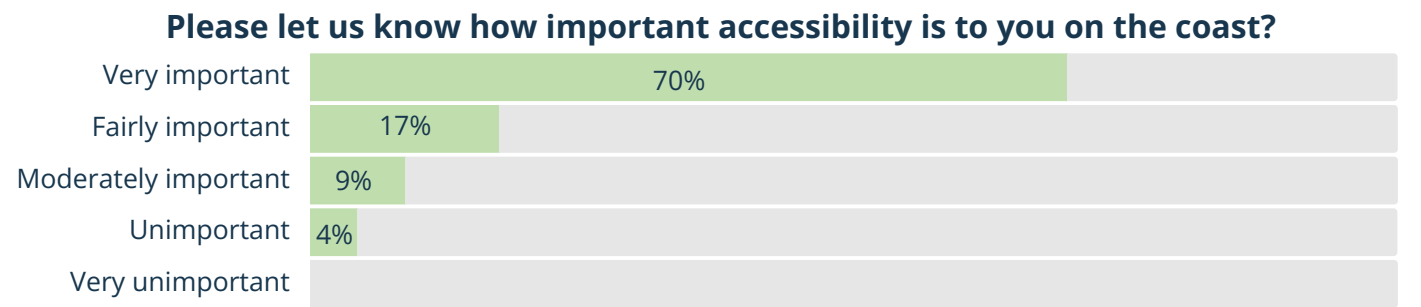
Ages were well represented from 25-74, with the largest groups being 60-64 (26%), 55-59 (17.4%), and 45-49 and 65-69 (both 13%)

WHAT WE HEARD

Accessibility matters

We know from Planning Our Future Coast that our community values the incorporation of inclusive facilities to make our coast welcoming for all.

- During this feedback period, 96% of participants told us that accessibility on the coast is important to them.
- 30% of respondents said they use or would use accessible public facilities on our coast.
 - 30% said they are a support person assisting someone who uses, or would use, accessible public facilities on our coast.



Support for the concept plan

Participants were invited to provide feedback on the concept plan for accessible car parks, paths and infrastructure to link the new Changing Places facility with the Bellarine Coastal Trail and beach.

Overall sentiment for the stage two concept plan was positive, with most people welcoming the addition of these facilities to complement the new Changing Places.

Beach matting trial

We asked people if they used the beach matting and, if so, how they found it.

- 9 people said they used the beach matting:
- 4 people found it great.
 - 5 people said it was ok but could be improved.

- Suggestions to enhance the beach matting experience:
- Make it longer so it reaches the water.
 - Adjust the design at the end to improve the ability to turn around - a circle, T or horseshoe shape were all suggested.
 - Trial different lengths at other suitable areas to provide choice.



Beach mobility equipment

13 survey respondents (54%) said they would use free public beach mobility equipment for available through a managed booking system.

Of those 13 respondents, 62% nominated a two-hour booking period as most preferable, 30% preferred more than two hours, and 8% did not indicate a preference.

People supported an easy online, self-service booking process and asked for a human contact option (for when something goes wrong or for those preferring in-person support).

Several respondents would like to see equipment available at multiple locations across the region.



Other suggestions to reduce barriers

While outside the scope of stage two, we heard many ideas that could enhance inclusivity across our coast. We will consider these in future stages of the project and during broader planning for our coast.

Ideas included:



More accessible car parks

There was a strong emphasis on universally designed parking in key visitor areas and amenities (universally designed for equitable outcomes).



Suitable pathways for mobility aids

Sealed linking pathways with appropriate access ramps to connect facilities, would improve options available to people with varying accessibility needs.



Seating and tables

There is a desire to incorporate more universally designed picnic and seating options.



Universal access - consider a range of needs

Design for a range of needs, including safe interactions on shared trails (e.g. between people with visual or hearing impairments and bikes).

NEXT STEPS

We have considered community feedback alongside Wadawurrung values and knowledge, environmental and social outcomes, funding requirements and current policies and legislation for coastal Crown land.

The final design for accessible parking, connections and landscaping has been completed, with minor changes made in response to community and stakeholder feedback.

The design has been finalised, subject to approval processes. We anticipate the upgrade works will commence in 2026, and we will continue to share updates and highlight how feedback is shaping delivery as we move into construction.

Stay connected

Follow the project, receive updates and hear about future engagement opportunities:

- **Coastal Conversations**

www.conversations.bellarinebayside.com.au/inclusive-beach-access-portarlinton

- **Social media**



facebook.com.au/bellarine.bayside



@bellarinebayside

- **Contact us**



contactus@bellarinebayside.com.au

(03) 5254 4000

