



**Bellarine
Bayside**
Coastal Management



NORTHERN BELLARINE COASTAL ADAPTATION PLAN

WHAT WE HEARD

Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the Bellawiyin, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

We recognise the unique ability of Wadawurrung People to care for Country and the intrinsic spiritual, cultural, economic, social and environmental connections they share with the land, waters and skies.

We are committed to partnering with Wadawurrung to achieve effective management of Country through self-determination.



Introduction

The northern Bellarine coastline is always changing, shaped by natural processes that are driven by winds, tides and currents. The effects of climate change are expected to exacerbate these processes. The Northern Bellarine Coastal Adaptation Plan (NBCAP) will enable place-based, best-practice and long-term coastal hazard risk management and adaptation to respond to these changes.

The draft NBCAP has been developed to address a key action from our Coastal and Marine Management Plan (2020-2025) to align with the Victorian Government's Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+.

Phase 1 engagement with the broader community, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and stakeholders has helped to develop and refine the NBCAP to deliver a draft strategic, place-based framework to manage current and future coastal hazard risk along the northern Bellarine coast.

Phase 2 engagement involved seeking feedback on the draft NBCAP. This engagement summary focuses on what we heard from the community during Phase 2 engagement, held for four weeks from 13 February until 15 March 2026 via pop-up information sessions, presentations and an online survey.

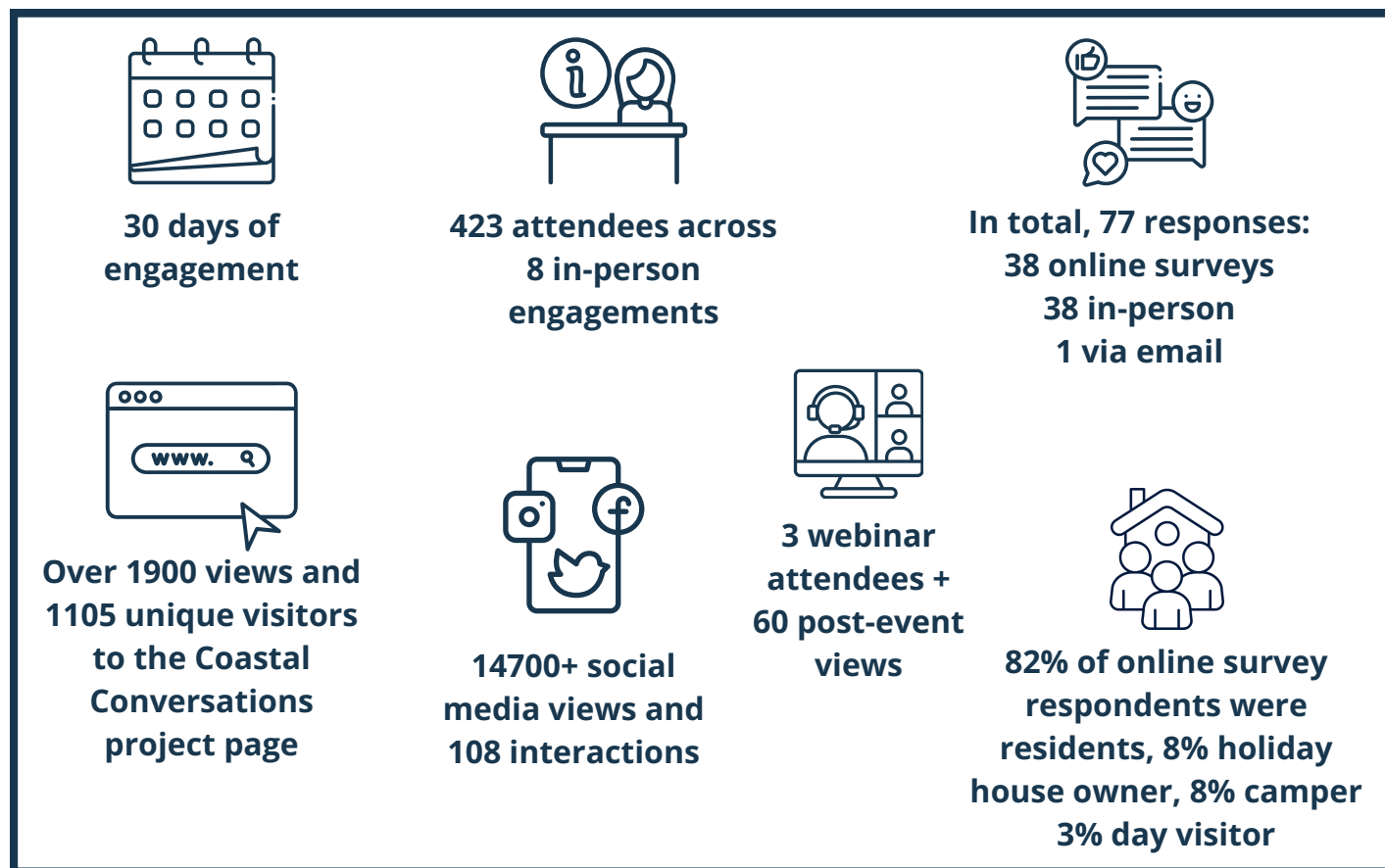
The purpose of Phase 2 was to:

- Present the draft NBCAP to the broader community
- Identify any gaps
- Further understand community priorities
- Understand the level of community support for the proposed adaptation pathways

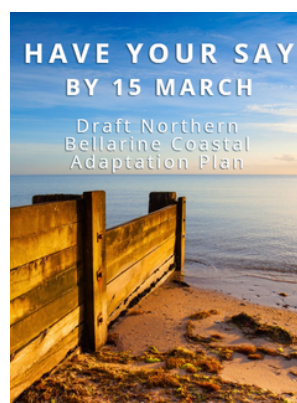


How we engaged

We utilised a range of ways to collect feedback, and promoted the opportunity via social media, print media, posters along the coast, emails to key local and coastal stakeholder groups, targeted presentations and pop-up information stalls.



Engagement Session Outcomes	
Location	Engagements
Portarlington Market	75 people
Wreck 2Reef	65 people
St Leonards IGA	22 people
Indented Head General Store	19 people
St Leonards Sirens	17 people
Presentations	
Bellarine North Rotary	15 people
Climate Risk Forum (Springdale Neighbourhood Centre)	182 people
Portarlington Community Association	28 people
Webinar	3 people



Who we heard from

We talked to a range of people across our pop-up information stalls and targeted presentations, with 423 attendees across 8 in-person engagements and 38 in-person contributions.

Demographic information was only collected for the online survey, of which 38 contributions were completed.

The majority of online respondents were local residents which is an small increase from Phase 1, from 75% to 82%. The Phase 2 consultation period was after the summer holidays which could be a contributing factor.

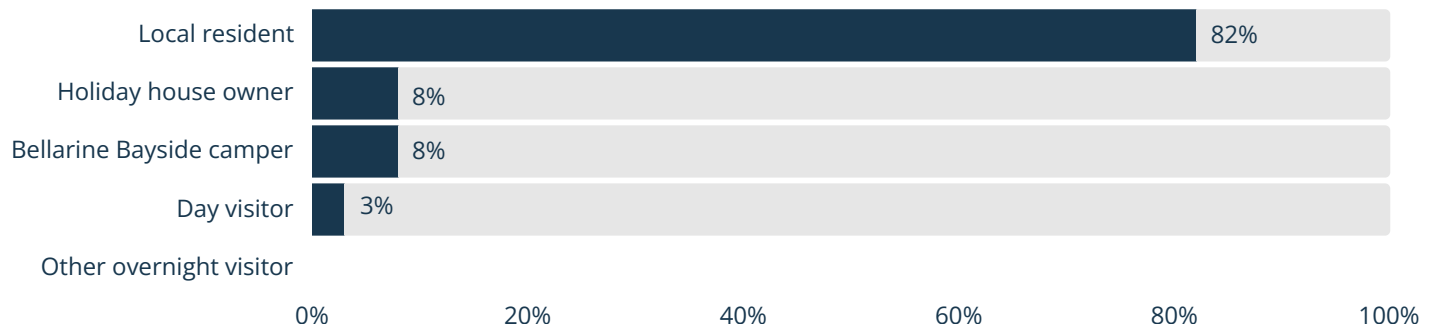


Figure 1. Survey respondents connection to the northern Bellarine coast.

The majority of online respondents in Phase 2 were aged 60 and over, representing an older demographic (67%) compared to Phase 1, where 45% of respondents were aged 60+. There were no respondents below 30 years of age.

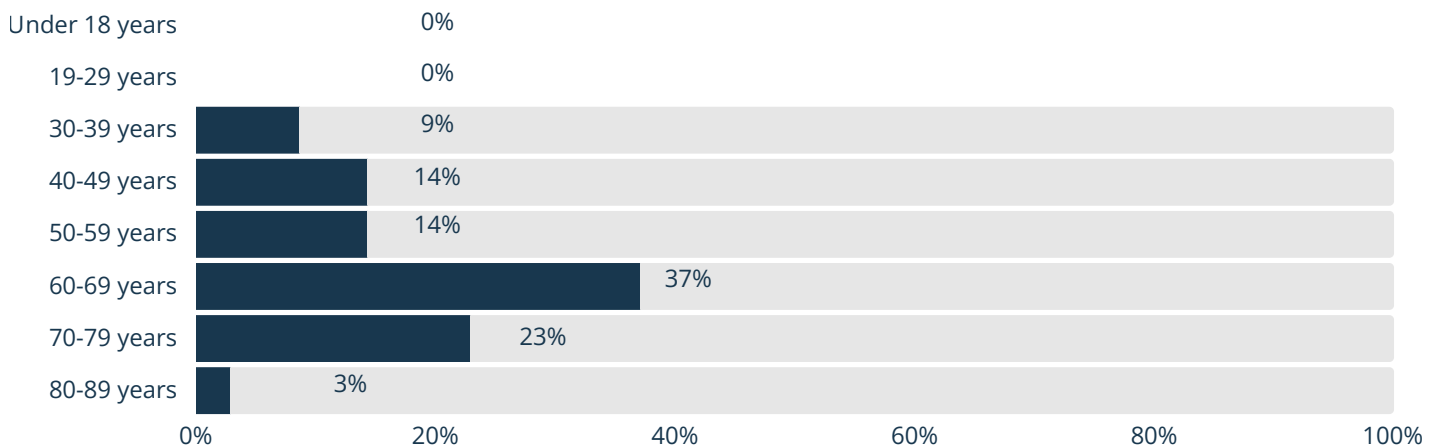


Figure 2. Survey respondents by age.

What we asked

We asked online respondents to share perspectives across:

- How well the draft NBCAP addressed coastal values and hazards identified by community in Phase 1
- Effectiveness of managing coastal hazard risk now and into the future
- Top priorities for managing coastal hazard risk on the northern Bellarine
- How appropriate the adaptation pathways are for each precinct
- Additional actions or feedback on building coastal resilience on the northern Bellarine
- How well the community has been informed throughout the project

What we heard

How informed did the community feel?

We heard that online respondents in Phase 2 felt more informed about future impacts of a changing climate on our coast compared to Phase 1. The number of online respondents who felt 'well informed' and 'very well informed' increased by 16 and 17% respectively. The number of online respondents who felt a little bit informed dropped to zero in Phase 2.

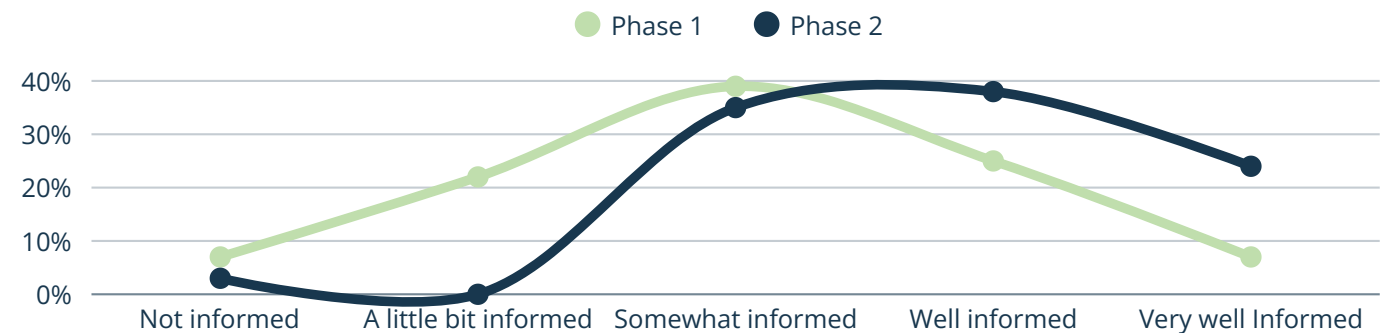
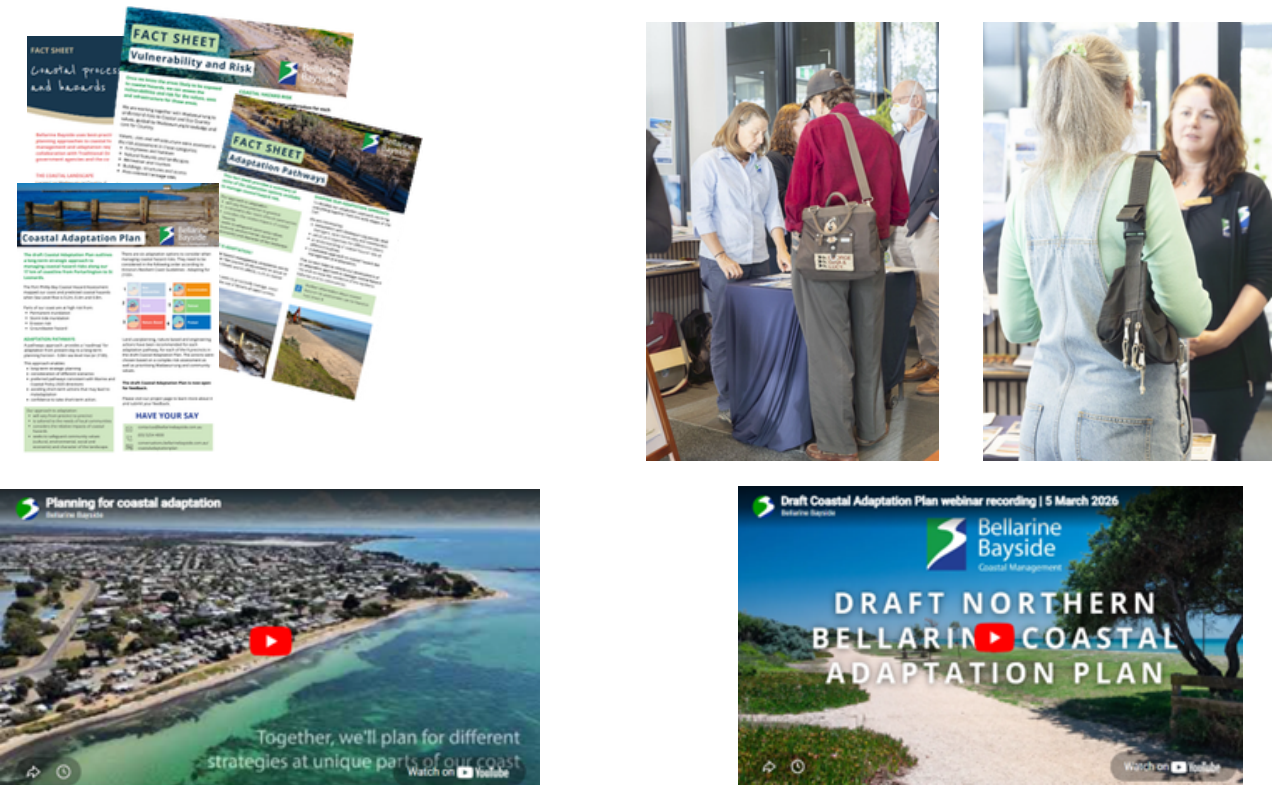


Figure 3. Comparing the distribution of responses to how well informed people feel they are about the future impacts of a changing climate on our coast from Phase 1 to Phase 2

Phase 1		Phase 2
7%	not informed	↓ 3%
25%	A little bit informed	↓ 0%
39%	somewhat informed	→ 35%
22%	well informed	↑ 38%
7%	very well informed	↑ 24%

Figure 4. Comparing the change in responses to how well informed people feel they are about the future impacts of a changing climate on our coast from Phase 1 to Phase 2



Coastal values

The way in which people use, value and enjoy the coastal and marine areas of the northern Bellarine Peninsula helps us understand what is important to community.

Adaptation pathways were informed by ranking these values.

To ensure we didn't miss any values that are important to the community, we asked survey respondents if there were any values that are important to them that had not yet been identified in the NBCAP. Nearly half the online respondents agreed (46%) that the NBCAP identified values important to them. Feedback confirmed that the draft NBCAP covered the coastal values people care about with no significant gaps identified.

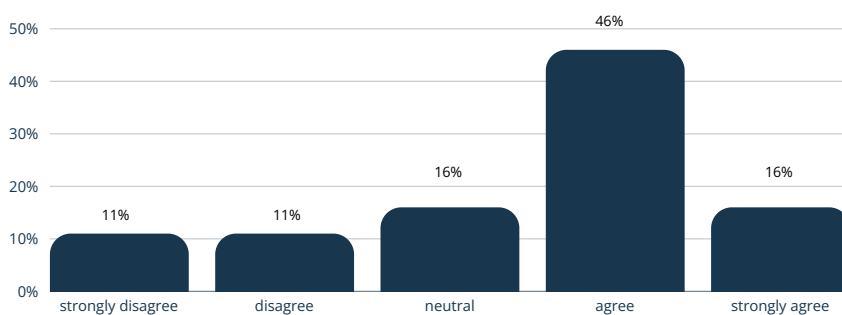


Figure 5. Distribution of responses about whether the NBCAP captured all the coastal values important to the respondents.

All coastal values captured.

"Love the sand that has been put on the beach in front of salt lagoon. Have loved seeing families start to use it."

"Safe easy access for kayaking and fishing".

"More on the impact to flora and fauna especially bird".

"While it is hard to understand the CAP, I hope that there is serious thought in ensuring Point Richards is maintained to ensure that it continues to have a safe beach and boat ramp free from hazards".

"A lot of community members use the Indented Head Hall. Major asset we need to protect".

"Protect the swimming beaches we have eg. Half moon bay and St Leonards".

Coastal hazard risk

The survey asked respondents if all coastal hazards had been captured and half the online respondents agreed (50%) that the NBCAP had identified all coastal hazards they were concerned about.

Despite 22% strongly disagreeing, there were no new climate change-related coastal hazards raised. The community reiterated concerns about erosion at known hotspots, including Steeles Rock and several locations in St Leonards.

Such concerns are highlighted in the Feedback on adaptation pathways section of the summary report.

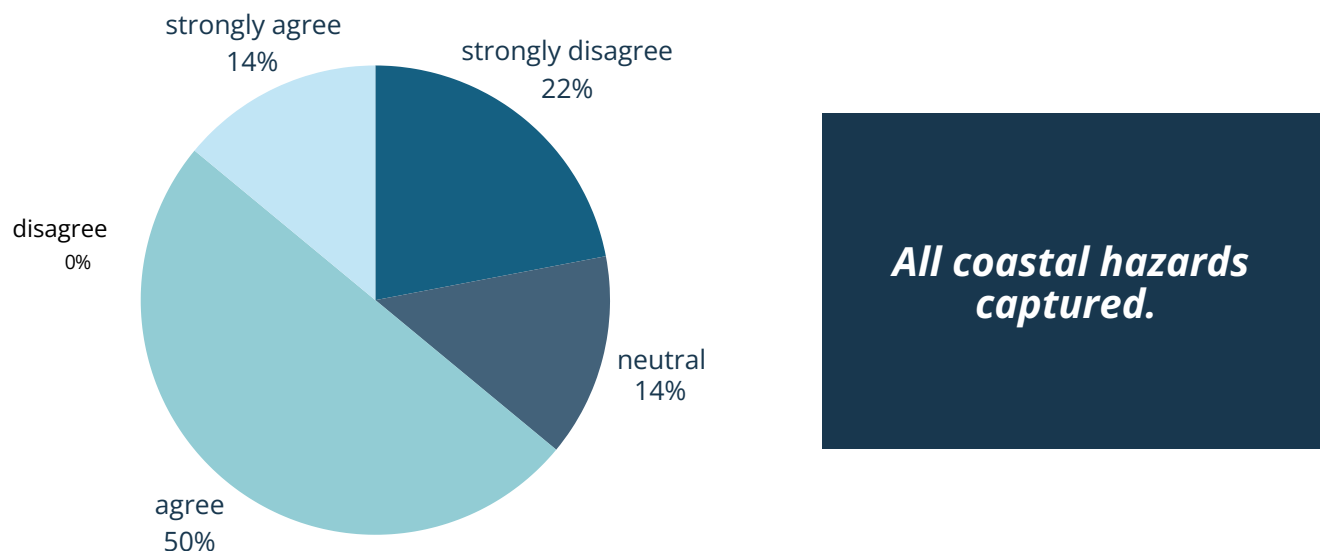


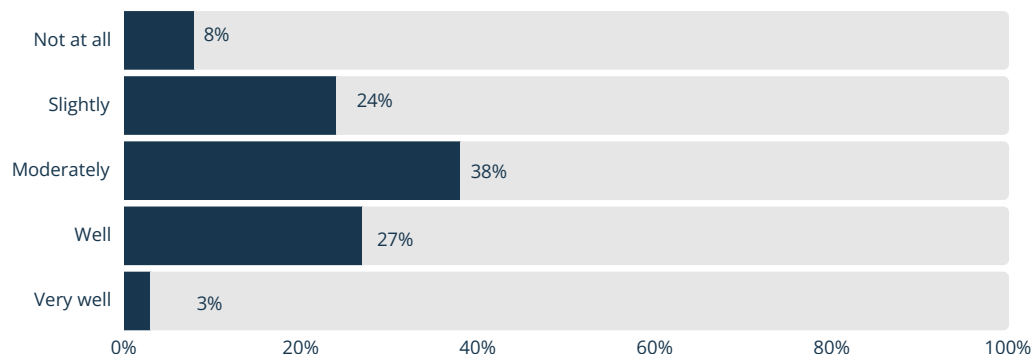
Figure 6. Distribution of responses about whether the NBCAP captured all the coastal hazards



Support for the Plan

We asked respondents how effective they felt the NBCAP will be to build coastal resilience by managing coastal hazard risks.

The majority of online respondents (68%) selected ‘moderately well’ to ‘very well’ to indicate how effective the NBCAP would be at building coastal resilience by managing coastal hazards. When asked how well coastal hazard risk is currently managed and how much the plan would improve coastal resilience, perceptions remained consistent.

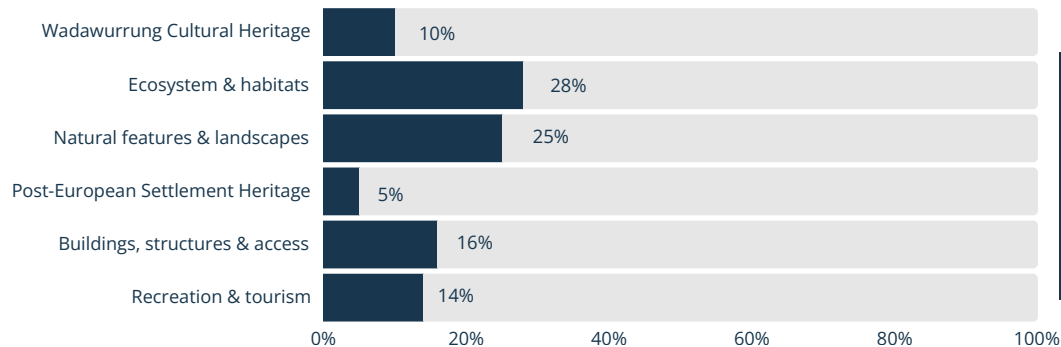


The majority of online respondents **supported** the NBCAP.

Figure 7. Distribution of responses showing how effective respondents feel the NBCAP will be in building coastal resilience.

Prioritising adaptation

When asked what values were most important to protect, online respondents prioritised **ecosystems and habitats**, followed by **natural features and landscapes**.



Respondents highly valued natural beauty and the environment in both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Figure 8. Distribution of responses showing how respondents prioritised adaptation responses based on values on the NB coast



Feedback on adaptation pathways

We asked if the adaptation pathways would be effective at mitigating coastal hazard risks and if not, to suggest alternative options.

None of the adaptation pathways and options were unsupported.

Feedback on adaptation pathways was diverse:

- Some people used the opportunity to express their values or concerns about the coast.
- Some people suggested adaptation options for the Precinct.
- Some people provided general feedback about the overall approach to coastal adaptation.

No feedback was noted for adaptation pathways in Precinct 1 and 3.

All feedback on adaptation pathways in this section was received via our online survey, email or noted during in-person engagements.



"As long as the shore is protected, then whatever has been decided is fine. Heavy machinery involving large changes is not the way!"
P2

"Clean the beach. Remove the rocks"
P8

"Placing large boulders up against the base of the cliff face would assist in reducing the erosion to the cliff"
P7

"Cliffs have formed in this section especially the last year or so. The path is already being impeded by this erosion and in other spots soon will do so. You either need to reduce the wave motion or move the path further inland which is difficult."
P9

"Groynes built directly on the shoreline have historically been ineffective. They tend to shift the erosion problem to neighbouring beaches rather than solving it."
P5

"Over tourism in the future increasing the pressure on the natural environment"

"Sand dredging - While temporarily successful, it is not a long-term solution because the sand is eventually removed again by storm events."
P5

Precinct specific feedback on adaptation pathways

The following table presents feedback received that was specific to each precinct and how we responded. Feedback has been categorised by concern, support and suggestion.

Precinct	Feedback type	Subject	How did we respond?
2	Concern	Boat ramp functionality	Precinct 2 pathway reviewed.
2	Concern	Retreating cabins at Portarlinton Holiday Park	Precinct 2 pathway reviewed.
4a	Suggestion	Steeles Rock would benefit from the measures taken in the Ramblers Rd precinct (offshore solution).	No offshore solution has been included in the adaptation pathway due to the natural reef that already exists. A feasibility study will be undertaken to determine the best location/s for offshore solutions along the coastline managed by Bellarine Bayside.
4b	Concern	Reduced habitat for red-capped plovers	Levanto St and Mercer St have been identified as priority sites in the upcoming sand renourishment project.
4b	Suggestion	Extend the ephemeral wetland to act as a storm surge catchment	Extending the Coastal Saltmarsh is a priority in Bellarine Bayside's conservation program. Management of biodiversity values will be described in the NBCAP.
4b	Support	Recreate artificial dune to protect coastline from Grassy Point to Point George	Revegetation and dune renourishment are existing options in the adaptation pathways for Precincts 4b, 5 and 6b. This has been better described in the final NBCAP.
5	Suggestion	An artificial reef or other offshore solution to buffer wave action	A feasibility study will be undertaken to determine the best location/s for offshore solutions along the coastline managed by Bellarine Bayside.
6a	Suggestion	Include groynes to assist in retaining sand in 6a.	Building new hard-engineering options such as groynes, rock revetments, seawalls and offshore breakwaters is a last resort option (Marine and Coastal Policy 6.7). Sandbags are already in place within the area and are predicted to continue providing protection. As a soft-engineering measure, they are anticipated to have minimal impact on surrounding areas compared to hard engineering options. We will monitor the condition and performance of existing sandbags, and adapt, repair or redesign if required.
6b	Support	Elevate pathway from 6b to 6a	Elevating the Bellarine Coastal Trail in P6b and P6a has been considered in the adaptation pathway.
6b	Strong concern	Erosion near Salt Lagoon about to impede the trail	Addressed in precinct values. Precinct 6b has undergone major sand nourishment in 2021 with monitoring ongoing.
7	Suggestion	Place boulders at base of cliff to reduce erosion	This area is being regularly monitored, and we will be reviewing existing studies here. This has been addressed in NBCAP
8	Strong concern	Erosion throughout this precinct	A range of adaptation options have been proposed for this precinct to increase coastal resilience. Precinct 8 adaptation pathway has been reviewed.
9	Strong concern	Erosion of the cliffs at South Red Bluff	Bellarine Bayside is aware of this concern shared by the community. Precinct 9 adaptation pathway has been reviewed
9	Strong concern	Erosion is creating a "sand cliff" and nearly impeding the trail	Bellarine Bayside is aware of this concern shared by the community. Precinct 9 adaptation pathway has been reviewed.

Precinct specific concerns

*"concerned about erosion of cliffs to north of pier."
P7*

*"The cliffs have experienced significant erosion along the lower bluff, leaving several sections of the track vulnerable and at risk of collapsing into the sea".
P9*

*"I'm concerned about Steeles Rock"
P4a*

*"The sea wall on the south side of the boat ramp is causing considerable erosion and retreat of the foreshore. newly planted plants are ending up in the bay. Easterly winds are not mentioned in your CAP, yet these seem to be increasing and causing considerable erosion and wind damage to newly planted and established trees. Clearly some of these issues are related to Climate Change, yet this is not really mentioned. Community needs to be aware."
P8*

*The red capped plovers are already gone with the cliff formed in the past few years. You are behind the eight ball on this one.
P4b*

*"My concern is the proposal of the cabins in the Portarligton caravan park. If they need to relocate, is there concern for the houses on Ramblers road and bottom of Point Richards Road. I like the thought of building vertical walls."
P2*



Feedback on adaptation pathways across multiple precincts

Support for artificial reefs

We have heard support for hybrid solutions such as artificial reefs Precincts 4a, 5, 6a and 6b.

A feasibility study will need to be conducted to determine which locations are best suited, as it is not economically feasible to build one in every Precinct. This has been added as an overarching action in the NBCAP.

*"offshore solution at
Half Moon Bay"*
P5

*"artificial reefs like that
at Ramblers Road
Foreshore and Dell Eco
Reef need to be
considered and funded
now"*
P6b

*"Inclusion of groynes and
artificial reefs (as per Point
Richards) to assist in
retaining the sand and
reducing erosion should
definitely be a serious
consideration."*
P6a

*"Steeles Rocks and the little
cove to the west are
especially at risk from
erosion. This is possibly an
area that would benefit from
the measures taken in the
Ramblers Road precinct".*
P4a



Ramblers Reef image: City of Greater Geelong

Gaps identified

Community feedback has strengthened the NBCAP by highlighting what was missing or needed expansion.

In response, we have either added or improved sections on:

- Community stewardship (including the role of citizen science in adaptation planning).
- Key existing and future studies, plans and documents.
- Current coastal management works.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- Strengthening the use of science in decision-making.
- Emerging and future adaptation technologies.
- Stormwater and drainage.
- Clarification of the data used for vulnerability and risk assessment.

"The report needs to recognise the significant role volunteers and recreational organisations play in coastal care, including general foreshore maintenance, litter removal and tree planting and monitoring. This omission undermines the community partnership the CAP seeks to promote."

"What links in this plan are there to CoGG or VicRoads climate change and adaption strategies?"

"The CAP appears to rely on tide information from Williamstown, which is located at the northern tip of Port Phillip Bay, with a completely different tidal regime, exposure, and geomorphology compared to the Bellarine."

"The CAP needs to incorporate Bellarine Baysides own Beach Watch data collected by volunteers which incorporates over 10 years of data plus drone mapping. These map sand movement and shoreline change. This is a valuable, locally specific dataset that should inform hazard assessments."

*"Sand replacement on beach has been a marvellous success but needs to be monitored and replenished when required."
P6b*

*"Measures to address wind-driven erosion because easterly winds are not mentioned. The adaptation measures do not address them. Needs to add 1) wind-resilient dune planting 2) strategic wind-break vegetation zones. 3) Revised design standards for assets exposed to easterly winds".
P8*

Strong support for revegetation

Many responses recognised vegetation as highly important to protect the coast but expressed strong concern that revegetation efforts are failing in some places due to vandalism, erosion or lack of watering.

Revegetation is an ongoing priority for Bellarine Bayside and has been included as a nature-based method in all adaptation pathways along our coast due to the important role plants play in stabilising sediment.

We will continue to work through the challenges of successful revegetation.

*"concerned about beach in front of Harvey park. Would like revegetation to occur to curb erosion but also improve aesthetics.
P7*

*"Easterly winds are not mentioned in your CAP, yet these seem to be increasing and causing considerable erosion and wind damage to newly planted and established trees. Clearly some of these issues are related to Climate Change, yet this is not really mentioned. Community needs to be aware"
P8*

"Trees that were planted have died"

*"While the CAP proposes tree planting, it does not address how plantings will be protected from vandalism—an ongoing issue, particularly along The Esplanade. Without mitigation measures, revegetation efforts may fail"
P8*

*"When trees are vandalised please put up screens to advise such, as other coastal management authorities and councils do. Recently planted plants are falling into the sea"
P9*

"Allow grasses and trees to slow and filter runoff into the bay. Plant more trees on nature strips to absorb and slow water runoff as nature does".

"Native grasses not working to stop erosion. Marram grass (although a weed) does the best job."

*"protective guards and fencing for new plantings, surveillance or community reporting mechanisms"
P8*

*"Dossedor Rd. 1m grass washed away just planted. Created a step"
P6b*

Concerns for the Bellarine Coastal Trail

Many responses recognised the Bellarine Coastal Trail as an important asset to protect and highlighted their concerns due to erosion. In particular, we heard from the community that the coastal trail in precincts 6b and 9 are at risk. The coastal trail is addressed in the adaptation pathways for these precincts.

"Coastal trail is a very important asset to protect. Use it all the time. Shouldn't change it but agreed with raising or realigning in order to protect it"
P7

"Coastal trail - where will we move it to?"
P9

"The newly created 'cliff' near the salt lagoon in this section is about to impede the trail".
P6b

"Doing a great job. Love the trails in Indented Head"

"Again the bay is about to carry your path into the sea on the lower bluff. Not many options and where to move the path to? Yet this is not mentioned in your report".
P9

"If the pathway in precinct 6B to precinct 6A was elevated by approximately 200 to 300mm as was done in this pathway in P7 with added soil on the beach side of the pathway which the current vegetation would grow through and firm up. This would act as a sturdy barrier regarding storm tides.

This would be a cost-effective way to provide safety to people using the pathway/walkway as well as a level of security to the integrity of the road and buildings in this low-lying area."

P6b



Suggestions to build more seawalls

Several comments were received about building new seawalls.

Building new hard-engineered structures, including revetements such as seawalls, is considered a “protection” action and is an option of last resort due to expense, highly localised benefits and nearby impacts.

The suitability of a revetment will be explored at Steeles Rock to protect the boat ramp and car park from erosion and all nearby impacts will be taken into consideration.

*“Portarlinton caravan park
Boat Ramp. Sand build up
by end of season (March).
People get stuck, wheels
spinning. Its neglected.
People go to Pt Richards
instead. Could we put a
rock wall on the east side?”
P2*

*“Seawalls work -
why reinvent the
wheel?”*

*“Steeles Rock is really good
for grandkids. Not good
enough to just put sand
down. What would work
best is to build a seawall
around the entire
coastline”.
P4a*

We must take a risk-based approach to planning adaptation, considering potential cultural, environmental, social and economic impacts.

Adaptation options are considered in a strategic order, defined by the Marine and Coastal Policy 2020, and described in Victoria’s Resilient Coast - Adapting for 2100+ Framework and Guidelines.

This order is:

- 1. Non-intervention**
- 2. Avoid**
- 3. Nature-based methods**
- 4. Accommodate**
- 5. Retreat**
- 6. Protect**



Concern about vessel generated wake

Vessel wake can affect sheltered shorelines under some conditions and may contribute to sediment disturbance or localised erosion. Wake wash is an operational vessel and waterway management issue rather than a coastal hazard associated with climate change. Parks Victoria is the local port manager of Port Phillip Bay, and Ports Victoria manages Victoria's commercial ports.

Bellarine Bayside will continue to work with the lead agencies and monitor for any observed shoreline impacts.

"I notice the wake at Portarlington and Indented Head. Erosion at Portarlington is noticeable. Used to be a slope, now it's a step"

"Slow the Tas and Port Phillip ferries. Their speeds cause more and more erosion of natural features. Same too jet skis and fast speed boats. They are all increasing coastal erosion".

"Man made hazards create damage day after day - both the Tasmanian ferry and Port Phillip ferries create too much eroding wealth. Also since the west finger of the Safe Harbour was built the pollution of the bays on either side have continued to worsen".

Feedback outside management boundary

We received feedback about areas and assets outside Bellarine Bayside's geographic management boundary, such as Edwards Point Nature Reserve, The Esplanade roadway, and privately owned land. Bellarine Bayside is responsible for managing coastal Crown land reserves delegated to its management. Impacts to public assets or private land outside Bellarine Bayside's management are not described in the NBCAP.

We recognise that the marine and coastal environment is an integrated landscape and value the feedback received. We are committed to working collaboratively with lead agencies and partners through an Integrated Coastal Zone Management approach to support the wider coastal community.

"Extend Precinct 9 to cover the housing area beyond beach road and infrastructure as well as mitigate coastal erosion by managing tidal erosion in Swan bay"

"The plan only covers to beach Road in St Leonards. below beach Road and all of Edwards point reserve has been left out. Both in regards changes to the wetland area and constant coastal erosion as well as the homes along the edge of the wetlands that."

"What is being done to protect the road in this section from the bay joining the Salt lagoon. This is a critical link between St Leonards and Indented head/Portarlington for all locals and tourists."

Feedback outside the scope of the NBCAP

We received comments about water quality and impacts from stormwater runoff. We recognise the community's concern about erosion and flooding due to increased hard surfaces and reduced ground permeability. Managing stormwater and drainage risks requires a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders, including local government and utility providers.

Other concerns raised included litter and dogs on beaches, which, while valuable feedback are outside the scope of the NBCAP, which responds to coastal hazards.

"Peaceful and safe atmosphere free of noise pollution"

"Water quality - interconnection with land based littering and the health of the bay, may include drainage from land, invasive species and bay originating pollution"

"Regarding no dog beaches during holiday period. Consideration for the wellbeing of the dogs and the people walking them. Perhaps no dogs between 8 am to 6pm could be applied. Dogs should not be confined to yards or have to get driven to other beaches. Unfair"

"Definitely no kerbing and channeling for storm water runoff. Allow grasses and trees to slow and filter runoff into the bay.

Plant more trees on nature strips to absorb and slow water runoff as nature does.

Reverse concrete drains into the bay to their natural streams."

"Stormwater and erosion: How does the plan consider the current stormwater issues at Sprout Street and at the end of Stewart Grove? These appear to have a significant impact on foreshore erosion during storm events. The recent stormwater upgrades at the top of Stewart Grove also seem to direct additional overflow toward the foreshore, which may further affect the beach and dunes. "

Next steps

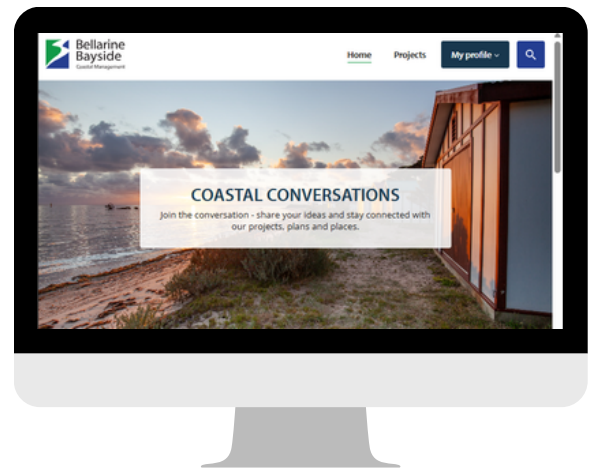
The feedback we heard from community during Phase 2 engagement has been highly valuable. It has been considered alongside Wadawurrung aspirations, partner and agency input, policy and legislative requirements, technical work and scientific studies when refining the Northern Bellarine Coastal Adaptation Plan.

The implementation plan in the final NBCAP outlines priority actions, funding sources, roles and responsibilities and timelines until 2040. It also sets out circumstances in which the implementation plan may need to be reviewed.

Certain high-risk areas will require more detailed planning, and community support for adaptation options to manage coastal hazards and increase resilience. This will be an ongoing conversation.

Other projects will continue Bellarine Bayside's ongoing work towards managing coastal hazard risk, including our:

- Ongoing revegetation program.
- Sand renourishment program.



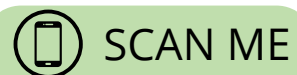
How can you be updated and get involved?

Visit Coastal Conversations, our online engagement platform, www.conversations.bellarinebayside.com.au, to:

- Find out what is happening and follow projects.
- Stay up to date with the progress of the NBCAP and participate in future feedback opportunities.

Other ways to participate in adaptation planning on our coast:

- Interested in joining a citizen science program? Check out our Volunteer page to learn more www.bellarinebayside.com.au/volunteer/
- Email us at: contactus@bellarinebayside.com.au



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