



MEDIA RELEASE

23 March 2015

Collaborative commitment to a better future for the Victorian coast

A better future for the Victorian coast is on the cards, with a number of key leaders in coastal management sharing their vision at the Australian Coastal Councils 2015 Conference (convened by the National Sea Change Task Force) at Cape Schanck in early March.

Leading the way was Victoria's Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water the Hon. Lisa Neville, who outlined her government's commitment to a better future for the Victorian coast.

Ms Neville said that the Government was honouring its election commitments to Victoria's coast.

"Our commitment to the coast was a prominent part of our election platform, and we have put climate change back on the agenda," Ms Neville said.

"Climate change will have a real impact on our coastal environment with rising sea levels resulting in more flooding, increasing storms and consequent damage, and increasing water temperatures impacting marine biodiversity."

"We recognise with projected increases in population there will be significant extra pressure on the coast in the future. We intend to create a new Marine and Coastal Act. Whilst we have all been working in the best interests of the coast there is currently an extraordinary array of managers and responsibilities, and by reviewing this we aim to ensure we optimise our capacity, and the social benefit all Victorians get from the coast," Ms Neville said.

Ms Neville said the Government is aware of inequities in funding of the coast, and recognised that local government had been doing a lot of the 'heavy lifting'.

"Victoria has been a leader in coastal management and planning and we want to ensure that continues through extensive community conversations to develop the new act," Ms Neville said.

Following the Minister at the conference, Victorian Coastal Council Member, Geoff Wescott outlined the successful development of Victoria's coastal policy and management systems and structures. Like the Minister, he commended the Victorian Coastal Strategy for its bipartisan approach and longevity, over four iterations, in guiding coastal management in 23 councils.

Associate Professor Wescott also commended the current structure of Regional Coastal Boards and plans, and their connection between the Victorian Coastal Strategy and local Coastal Management Plans .

“This structure allows local managers to address local issues in a way that is practical, and consistent with the Victorian Coastal Strategy,” he said. The three draft regional coastal plans are currently on display for community feedback and consultation.

Victorian Coastal Council Chair, Jon Hickman concluded the session’s addresses, with a presentation that examined a number of the challenges and opportunities that the Government’s proposed new Marine and Coastal Act could address. In particular, Mr Hickman outlined some current inequities in funding the coast and valuing the natural environment, and shared some thought provoking ideas in response.

Mr Hickman reinforced that the Victorian Coastal Council is committed to contributing to the development of the new Marine and Coastal Act to ensure the Council’s vision for a healthy coast for all future Victorians is delivered, and the issues and actions in the Victorian Coastal Strategy are addressed”.

For more information

Australian Coastal Councils Conference <http://seachangetaskforce.org.au/>

Victorian Coastal Council www.vcc.vic.gov.au

Central Coast Board www.ccb.vic.gov.au

Gippsland Coastal Board www.gcb.vic.gov.au

Western Coastal Board www.wcb.vic.gov.au

The Conference saw over 150 of local government representatives from coastal areas around Australia gather over 3 days to discuss coastal management and the challenges to coasts in the future.

A full transcript of Minister Neville’s speech is available from the Conference website:

<https://stokes2013.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/minister-lisa-nevilles-speech-at-australian-coastal-councils-conference.pdf>