



Media release

From the Minister for Environment and Climate Change &
the Minister for Planning

10 December 2008

VICTORIA'S LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE COAST

The Victorian Government has unveiled a landmark strategy to manage and protect Victoria's coastal and marine environments for the next 100 years and beyond.

Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings and Planning Minister Justin Madden today jointly launched the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008.

Mr Jennings said the Government welcomed the strategy, which presented a long-term integrated planning and management framework for the Victorian coast.

"The strategy is a key document for our coastal Committees of Management, Local Government, State Government departments, agencies and advisory bodies on the coast. It will help to shape regional and local plans for coastal environments and address potential impacts on coastal and marine areas," Mr Jennings said.

"This strategy directly responds to the challenges of climate change, coastal population and growth, and marine ecological integrity," Mr Jennings said.

"Climate change poses a significant challenge to our coast."

The Victorian Government is tackling climate change through a range of policy initiatives including the Land and Biodiversity White Paper, the Climate Change Green Paper and the Future Coasts Program.

"Most compelling is the scientific evidence which shows that sea-level rises is occurring faster than earlier projected."

"Based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projections, the strategy recommends we plan for a sea level rise of not less than 0.8 metres by 2100," Mr Jennings said.

The Strategy was produced by the Victorian Coastal Council, which is the state's peak body for coastal planning and management. This is the third strategy to be produced and they are reviewed every five years.

Planning Minister Justin Madden said he welcomed the Strategy.

"The Strategy builds on the Coastal Spaces Recommendations Report 2006, to plan and manage coastal population and growth by consolidating urban development to existing settlements and urban areas; and protecting non-urban landscapes between settlements.

"As coastal planners and managers, we deal with coastal hazards such as erosion and flooding regularly and in a variety of ways. Climate change is likely to increase the frequency, intensity and exposure and make them less predictable to manage," Mr Madden said.

"The Strategy provides policies and actions to plan for and address issues associated with climate change impacts on coastal hazards, such as erosion, storm surges and inundation.

"We will need to work towards understanding what these changes will mean and begin to plan for and build capacity within our coastal communities and environs to adapt and manage change over time." Mr Madden said.

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Mr Jennings said the current strategy builds on climate change policy and identifies actions to undertake a coastal vulnerability study to inform future policy, planning and management plans.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) will assess the potential impact of a 0.8m sea-level rise on Victoria's coastline, through its Future Coasts Program.

The Future Coasts Program will reduce uncertainty in decision making, by providing accurate data to inform how Victoria can respond to sea-level rises. Minister Jennings said he would be releasing new digital elevation modelling (DEM) early next year. For an update on the Future Coasts program visit www.climatechange.vic.gov.au.

The Future Coasts Program will also work with coastal stakeholders to identify and develop planning and management tools to guide decision making. The project is expected to be completed in 2010, however it is anticipated that interim guidance will be developed early in 2009.

"Victorians rightly expect to be informed of how we're responding to anticipated sea level rises — Future Coasts and the Victorian Coastal Strategy do just that," Mr Jennings said.

"Victoria has also experienced unprecedented population growth along the coast which, combined with tourism, is placing pressure on many coastal communities and environments."

The Strategy is supported by significant social and economic research, substantial community and stakeholder consultation, and feedback to the 2007 draft Strategy.

"I'm heartened by the community's concern and enthusiasm for coastal issues," Mr Jennings said.

"At the same time, we need to manage and protect Victoria's marine and coastal ecosystems which are home to an abundance of unique flora and fauna.

"Victorians are well-aware of the importance of protecting the coast, and can help us manage and conserve our precious marine and coastal environments for generations to come."

Victorian Coastal Council Chair Libby Mears said volunteers were making a valuable contribution.

"In Victoria we are privileged that, in addition to the many passionate professionals who spend their working life managing the coast, hours upon hours of volunteer time contributes to significant environmental outcomes and to building a sense of community. This important work is all about connecting people with place," Ms Mears said.

"Victorians love their coast. We visit the coast every year, holiday at a favourite beach and in increasing numbers we are choosing to live near the coast.

"The very essence of who we are as Victorians is connected to the coastline. We value spending time and relaxing in such a clean, healthy and peaceful environment. Let's use this strategy to ensure a sustainable future for our invaluable coastal and marine environments."

The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 is available from the Victorian Coastal Council website www.vcc.vic.gov.au and Department of Sustainability and Environment offices, or by emailing the Victorian Coastal Council at enquiries@vcc.vic.gov.au or phoning (03) 9637 9456.

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