

Media release

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VICTORIANS LOVE THEIR COAST: SURVEY

A recent survey of Victorians and the coast commissioned by the Victorian Coastal Council (VCC) found that almost nine out of 10 Victorians visited the coast in the last 12 months.

The survey shows Victorians consider the most important aspects of visiting the coast are experiencing a clean, healthy environment and the chance to relax.

Visitor numbers have increased in all seasons, highlighting extended use of the coast, and more people have an opinion on the management of the coast, demonstrating increasing interest in the coastal environment.

Libby Mears, Chair of the Victorian Coastal Council, said, "This level of interest demonstrates just how important the coast is to us in our daily lives; Victorians identify with it; it's part of who we are"

Key results of the survey showed that 74 per cent agree the coast is well-managed and 92 per cent support the network of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries that have been created in Victoria. However, the survey also showed that the public continue to be concerned over rubbish and litter, water quality and development along the coast.

The survey, conducted every five years, tracks and monitors public perceptions of the coast. The information is then used to inform the Victorian Coastal Strategy.

Ms Mears said the results of this survey bring these matters clearly to the attention of the Victorian Coastal Council:

- 83 per cent of respondents agreed that marine flora and fauna are important to all Victorians, but not a lot is known about them and what threats they might be under.
- Half of Victorians want more to be done to protect the character of coastal towns
- 69 per cent agree that more research into the likely impacts of climate change on the coast is needed.

Ms Mears said, "We have heard these issues and we are addressing them in the new draft of the Victorian Coastal Strategy. We develop the Strategy to provide improved direction for the management of the coast now, but also so that our kids and the generations after can enjoy what we have, like we have."

The new themes in the third generation of the strategy focus on preparing for climate change, building our knowledge of the marine environment so that we can manage it better, and improved application of planning to better protect coastal towns and coastal landscapes.

“This is the third Victorian Coastal Strategy we have developed, and each one began with a survey of community attitudes and led to stronger measures to protect our coastal environment and lifestyle,” Ms Mears said.

The survey used interviews, public forums and a telephone questionnaire to study Victorians’ attitudes and their behaviour, and was conducted by Ipsos Australia.

Developed as a draft for Government by the VCC under the *Coastal Management Act* 1995, the Victorian Coastal Strategy provides the framework for planning and management of Victoria’s coastal and marine environment.

The 2007 draft strategy outlines a five year plan for the management of the coastal environment.

The draft strategy has been on public exhibition for public submissions, and closes on 31 January 2008.

The draft strategy is available to the public on the VCC’s website www.vcc.vic.gov.au.

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VCC’s website www.vcc.vic.gov.au