



Media Release

From the Victorian Coastal Council

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“CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL AND WILL AFFECT SOUTH-WEST COAST”

Chair of the Victorian Coastal Council Libby Mears says she was impressed with the way Councils in South-West Victoria are getting on with the job of planning for the impacts of climate change on their coastal areas.

Speaking after two days of discussions with Councillors and staff in Portland, Port Fairy, Warrnambool and Port Campbell, Ms Mears said Councils were already dealing with serious beach erosion and land slips impacting on existing houses and coastal infrastructure.

“Climate change is real and communities need to plan for the impacts of sea level rise and an increasing intensity of storm events” said Ms Mears

“Careful thought will need to be given to the location and design of new housing and coastal infrastructure such as jetties and boat launching ramps.

“Fortunately Victoria is well placed with good scientific data and planning tools which will identify areas of the coast particularly vulnerable to the impact of sea level rise and storm surges.”

Ms Mears said she was encouraged by the way Councils were involving their local communities in coastal planning.

“The active involvement of a well informed community will be essential as we learn to plan and adapt to climate change.”

Media contact: VCC Chair Libby Mears, 0400 570 287

Alternate: VCC Executive Officer David Harper, 9637 9456

The Victorian Coastal Council, which is the peak advisory body on coastal issues in Victoria, assisted the State Government in the preparation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008. The Strategy is significant as for the first time ever, the Strategy addresses the problem of climate change and the need to plan for sea level rise of no less than 0.8 metres by the end of the century. All planning in coastal areas in Victoria must give regard to this sea level rise figure.

The Victorian Coastal Council conducted a tour of the south-west of Victoria last week visiting towns and sites between Portland and the 12 Apostles. The Council met with key authorities to hold discussions including the Shires of Glenelg and Moyne, Warrnambool City Council, the Corangamite and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities, Wannon Water, South-west Sustainability Partnerships group and Parks Victoria.

“All of these Authorities have to actively address the challenge of climate change,” said Ms Mears. “We sat in session as part of our trip last week and there was unanimous agreement amongst the bodies that climate change impacts along the coast are no longer disputed and moving to action on adaptation is now critical.”

During the visit to the south-west, Victorian Coastal Council Member Rob Gell, a trained coastal geomorphologist and part time weather presenter, illustrated in the sand on the beach the impact of the sea on the coastline. He highlighted that increasing sea levels and storm effects would scour away even more significantly the soft sand beaches and dunes of the south-west coast changing the landscape as we know it.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 presents a long-term vision to ensure appropriate planning decisions are made which protect the aesthetic, cultural and environmental values of the coast.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy can be found at www.vcc.vic.gov.au

Additional supporting comments:

Cr Ken Gale, Mayor Moyne Shire Council (Ph: 5568 0555)

Brett Stonestreet, CEO Moyne Shire Council (Ph: 5568 0555)

Peter Greig, Chair Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (Ph: 5232 9100)

Mark Wooton, Chair Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (Ph: 5571 2526)

Barrie Baker, Executive Officer South West Sustainability Partnerships (Ph: 5562 6484)

Lynette Skilbeck, Chair Western Coastal Board (Ph: 0439 502 574)

Media contact: VCC Chair Libby Mears, 0400 570 287

Alternate: VCC Executive Officer David Harper, 9637 9456