



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014?

The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 (VCS) is the State Government's policy commitment for coastal, estuarine and marine environments in Victoria. The VCS:

- provides a long-term vision for the planning, management and sustainable use of our coast, and the policies and actions Victorians will need to implement over the next five years to help achieve that vision
- provides a framework to assist in the development and implementation of other regionally and locally specific strategies and plans such as the three Regional Coastal Plans (RCPs), coastal management plans and planning schemes
- provides guidance for agencies and statutory decision-making along the coast and in marine and estuarine environments
- engages the community to continue to value the coast and marine environment and to participate in its planning and management.

The VCS also provides guidance for planning and management frameworks where these exist outside the *Coastal Management Act 1995*. Where decisions are made outside the framework of the Act, project sponsors and decision makers are to take into account the Hierarchy of Principles and the policies set out in the VCS.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy is established under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*, and is the fourth VCS to be produced since 1997 – they are reviewed every five years.

2. What is the role of the Victorian Coastal Council?

The Victorian Coastal Council (VCC) is appointed under the *Coastal Management Act 1995* as the peak body for the strategic planning and management of the Victorian coast. It advises the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Developing the Victorian Coastal Strategy is a key VCC responsibility. Under the Act Council reviews the strategy every five years or at the Minister's request.

3. Who will use the Victorian Coastal Strategy?

A range of people and agencies will be involved in the implementation of the VCS:

- **Community** - the VCS will only be effective if there is widespread community support, ownership and involvement
- **Regional Coastal Boards** - will have a major role in co-ordinating and facilitating implementation of the VCS at a regional level

- **Agencies with responsibility under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*** must take the VCS into account in carrying out a function involving land and water management. This includes Catchment Management Authorities.
- **People who operate or propose to establish activities on coastal Crown land** will find that the VCS provides clear direction on appropriate use and development of the coast.
- **Committees of management** - who have responsibilities in managing activities along the coast within Crown land reserves
- **Local government** has a pivotal role in planning and managing activities along the coast and within areas abutting the coast (e.g. coastal hinterland)
- **Business and industry** –conducting activities, or planning to conduct activities in coastal areas.

4. What does the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 define as ‘the coast’?

For the purposes of the VCS, references to ‘the coast’ encompass coastal, estuarine and marine environments on both public and private land. This applies to:

- the marine environment – nearshore marine environment, the seabed, and waters out to the State limit of three nautical miles (5.5 kilometres)
- foreshores – or coastal Crown land up to 200 metres from the high water mark
- coastal hinterland – land directly influenced by the sea or directly influencing the coastline, and with critical impacts on the foreshore and nearshore environment (these influences range from visual to drainage impacts)
- catchments – rivers and drainage systems that affect the coastal zone, including estuaries
- atmosphere – near, around and over the coast as defined above

5. What are the main new policies and actions emerging from this Victorian Coastal Strategy?

The main new policies and actions emerging from this VCS include:

- clarity about obligations for protection of private property and use of coastal Crown land in relation to coastal hazards
- avoid new structures on coastal Crown land that do not provide public benefit
- steps to ensure ongoing public access to beaches
- develop & implement environmental value measurement systems
- decision making for coastal & marine natural resources take into account the full value of ecosystem goods & services provided by these resources
- use of market based instruments to protect existing habitats & establish habitat linkages
- using the RCPs to establish a strategic planning framework for local ports
- use of citizen science programs
- develop a marine energy atlas

6. What other differences are there between this new Victorian Coastal Strategy and the previous Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008?

The VCS 2008 addressed three significant coastal issues: climate change, population growth & marine ecological integrity. It was also divided into four sections to mirror the four principles in Section 15 of the *Coastal Management Act 1995* (the Act).

The VCS 2014 addresses five key issues: managing population growth, adapting to a changing climate, managing coastal land & infrastructure, valuing the natural environment and integrating marine planning. It has been divided into three sections to acknowledge the similarities between

principles three and four in the Act. Desired outcomes have also been introduced to each chapter within the document.

The VCS 2014 focuses on integrating the five key issues through a set of desired outcomes and actions. Steps to address the five key issues will be made by implementing the actions contained in VCS 2014. Actions include:

- analysis of options for improved governance & funding arrangements for coastal Crown land and integrated marine planning & improved governance of coastal waters
- review & update sea level rise benchmarks every 5 years
- identify & initiate action where needed for coastal locations where visitor impacts may exceed carrying capacity
- adapt decision making guidelines for project approvals as necessary to ensure the full value of environmental coastal & marine resources are considered
- investigate legislative changes to ensure ongoing access to beaches and/or coastal Crown land.

The VCS 2014 has also made steps to improve monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) on the VCS through the provision of an initial MER framework. The prohibition on canal estate developments in the previous VCS has been removed. Any such proposals would still be assessed against the other policies contained within the VCS.

7. What has remained the same?

The following directions remain the same in the VCS 2014:

- sea level rise planning benchmarks of not less than 0.8 m by 2100
- avoid development in low lying areas and sand dunes
- avoid linear growth along the coastal edge
- maintain non-urban breaks between settlements
- involve Traditional Owners to integrate traditional knowledge into coastal planning & management
- focus recreation and development in coastal areas around activity and recreational nodes
- support coastal volunteers and community participation
- criteria to guide use and development on coastal Crown land
- protect significant environmental and cultural features
- Hierarchy of Principles - maintained and strengthened.

8. How will the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 be implemented?

The VCS is the result of a positive collaboration with many groups and individuals. Coastal sustainability requires a long-term commitment and vision, as well as strong partnerships, involving all levels of government, communities and businesses. This VCS will be most effective where it is translated and given effect at regional and local scales through RCPs, regional catchment strategies, local planning policies and management plans.

As a priority, a co-ordinating committee will be established with interdepartmental and lead agency representation to provide for a cross government approach to the implementation of the

VCS. Within the first year of the release of this Strategy, the committee will develop an implementation plan. The implementation plan will prioritise and set out timeframes for actions in the VCS, as well as identify where business cases need to be prepared to fund specific actions.

9. How does the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 link with the three Regional Coastal Plans?

RCPs will identify challenges at a regional level and provide direction on how our coasts will be managed into the future. Under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*, the three Regional Coastal Boards (RCBs): Western, Central and Gippsland are each responsible for the preparation of their RCP. The VCC has responsibility for approving draft RCPs prior to Ministerial consideration.

Consultation is a key priority for RCBs to identify important values, existing and emerging issues, and potential solutions. The success of coastal planning relies on linking the state-regional-local context by taking into account the values of different community groups and a path on how to work together toward a common goal.

RCPs will:

- identify and articulate key regional values, issues and priorities
- set the regional vision, guiding principles and strategic directions to guide local management
- build on existing regional and local plans and strategies, make linkages, and identify and address gaps
- clarify and confirm the roles and responsibilities of agencies and stakeholders
- include effective regional coordination and implementation arrangements including monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- provide a framework to build local level planning

10. The implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 relies in part on the delivery of the Regional Coastal Plans. What will apply in the interim?

In the interim, the current Coastal Action Plans will apply. Please refer to the section called *Working with Regional Coastal Boards* in the VCS for more information.

11. How do Regional Coastal Plans link with Coastal Management Plans?

Coastal Management Plans (CMPs) are local operational plans. CMPs are developed by coastal Crown land managers (including Parks Victoria, local municipalities and community committees of management). CMPs provide a vision for local coastal reserves and outline the land manager's directions for the reserve. Regional Coastal Plans provide the regional context for CMPs.

12. How was the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 developed?

The development of this VCS has been informed by:

1. a comprehensive review of relevant documentation, in particular the previous Victorian coastal strategies published in 1997, 2002 and 2008 and the mid-term review completed in 2012.

2. the best scientific information and technical reports. Examples include: *Derivation of Victorian Sea Level Planning Allowances: IPCC AR5 Update* and *Coastal and Marine Attitudes and Behaviours Report: Wave 4*. The range of material reflects the complexity of coastal issues and the challenge of integration across different planning and management sectors. For further information please refer to the VCS 2014.
3. substantial community and stakeholder feedback to the draft Victorian Coastal Strategy 2013, obtained through various consultation methods. The draft VCS 2013 was released for public consultation on 11 September 2013 until 5 December 2013. Six formal public consultation sessions were held at locations across the Victorian coast as well as many more informal consultation sessions and 113 written submissions were received in response to the draft VCS 2013.

13. When will the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 be reviewed?

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* directs the VCC to review the VCS at the end of five years following the endorsement of the Strategy, or any time at the direction of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

14. Where can I get a copy?

The VCS is available to view online or download as a pdf version at www.vcc.vic.gov.au
A limited number of hardcopies are available by contacting the Victorian Coastal Council at vcc@depi.vic.gov.au or (03) 9637 8893.