



MEDIA BACKGROUND BRIEFING NOTES

WHY BAN CANAL ESTATES? THE KINGBOROUGH, NSW AND VICTORIAN CANAL ESTATE BANS AND RELEVANT EXCERPTS FROM THE VICTORIAN COASTAL STRATEGY 2008

February 16 2009

1. Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000

5.2.1.8 Canal Estates: Canal estates are not permitted.

2. NSW State Environmental Planning Policy No 50—Canal Estate Development

5 Canal estate development prohibited

A person must not carry out canal estate development.

3. The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 prohibits the development of housing estates around man-made canals in a bid to protect estuarine environments.

Relevant quote:

Policy

8 Prohibit the development of new residential canal estates to ensure the protection of coastal and estuarine environments.

4. Excerpts from the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008

p.39

In particular, it is policy in this strategy to identify and avoid development in areas susceptible to flooding, landslip, erosion, bush fire or geotechnical risk and avoid disturbing coastal acid sulfate soils (CASS). It is also policy to prohibit the development of new residential canal estates to ensure the protection of coastal and estuarine environments. Canal estates can have major adverse impacts on the host estuary, causing loss of habitat, polluting estuarine waters by urban runoff and boating activities and disturbing coastal acid sulfate soils.

Future canal housing estates will be banned and development in low-lying coastal areas avoided as Victorians are warned to expect a sea-level rise of at least 80 centimetres by 2100.

The strategy comes after years of controversy in Victoria over developments close to sea-level

The vision and core principles used in previous strategies – that the conservation of the coast is central to our economic and social needs – are as important to this strategy as they have been in the past.

The coastal ecosystems provide numerous intangible values to the Victorian community by offering environmental goods and services that are essential for human well-being. Some of these goods and services include biodiversity, water purification, climate regulation, nutrient cycling and the stabilization of shorelines, which often protects built infrastructure. These in turn support the maintenance of life, the pursuit of a variety of lifestyles, and the ability to undertake a range of commercial activities within the coastal area.

Table 1: Examples of ecosystem goods and services

Provisioning

Goods produced or provided by ecosystems:

- Food
-
- Genetic resources
-

Regulating

Benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes:

- Climate regulation
- Flood regulation
- Erosion regulation and shoreline stabilisation
- Disease regulation
- Water purification

Cultural

Non-material benefits from ecosystems:

- Recreational
- Aesthetic
- Educational
- Inspirational
- Spiritual

Supporting

Services necessary for production of other ecosystem services:

- Sand and soil formation
- Primary production
- Waste treatment and nutrient cycling
- Water cycling

Adapted from the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis* (World Resources Institute, 2005).

The coast provides significant social and cultural values for Victorians. The coast's natural aesthetics, heritage, and the diverse range of recreational pursuits it provides make it attractive and valuable for residents, visitors and tourists. Coastal heritage values play an important role in creating our sense of place and defining who we are. Coastal heritage comprises many different layers of history and meaning, from areas of natural significance to past and present Aboriginal traditions. Coastal heritage encompasses places created by early and recent settlers; and includes customs, celebrations and special characteristics that build community pride and enhance social cohesion.

Research has demonstrated that there is a strong and important link between the quality of the coastal environment and the quality of life for many Victorians. Access to healthy natural environments is good for mental and physical health and wellbeing.

In its *Fourth Assessment Report* the IPCC projected sea level rise of between 0.18–0.59 metres by 2090–2099 using a hierarchy of models plus additional ice sheet melt of 0.1–0.2 metres. However, the upper values of sea level rise (e.g. 0.59 metres) projected by the models were not considered to be the upper bounds of possible sea level rise by 2099. While there is uncertainty about the quantum of the sea level rise, data provided in the IPCC report shows that the sea level is rising and will continue to rise in the 21st century and in all likelihood beyond.

On the basis of the IPCC report and until national benchmarks for coastal vulnerability are established, **a policy of planning for sea level rise of not less than 0.8 metres by 2100 should be implemented. In this context, it is useful to recognise that sea level rise will create a spectrum of risk, with the highest likelihood of impacts in the lowest lying areas.**

Policy

1 Plan for sea level rise of not less than 0.8 metres by 2100, and allow for the combined effects of tides, storm surges, coastal processes and local conditions, such as topography and geology when assessing risks and impacts associated with climate change. ...

2 Apply the precautionary principle to planning and management decision-making when considering the risks associated with climate change.

....

7 New development that may be at risk from future sea level rise and storm surge events will not be protected by the expenditure of public funds.

Planning and management programs that can help vulnerable habitats to survive and improve the resilience of the coastal and marine environment are preferred.

The scale of pressure and intensity of impacts can create environmental, social and economic challenges. Our passion for the coast creates ongoing and increasing pressures on the very aesthetic, cultural and environmental values we love. Coastal growth can lead to biodiversity and habitat loss, water degradation in coastal waters, wetlands, lakes and rivers, coastal habitat loss, damage to wetlands, the introduction of pest plants and animals, coastal erosion, destruction of coastal ecosystems, loss of cultural heritage, conversion of productive agricultural land and impacts on scenic coastal landscapes, views and vistas. Socially, it can lead to pressures on the particular values and character of coastal areas and settlements – the very reason people choose to move to or visit a place. This pressure is particularly intense in coastal areas experiencing rapid growth and gentrification. It can also lead to community instability associated with a high turnover of residents. In settlements that experience high levels of tourism and high ratios of second home owners to permanent residents, these impacts can be more pronounced.

This principle recognises that coastal Crown land is a limited resource and must be used sparingly and wisely. This principle seeks to:

- **direct development away from sensitive coastal areas and significant landscapes**
- **enhance the community use, enjoyment and experience of the special coastal values**

....

- **preserve coastal Crown land as a primarily natural asset**

....

Wetlands are the interface between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. They are intrinsically different from terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, but are highly dependent on and influenced by both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Wetlands are sediment traps and filter nutrients from catchments, protecting rivers and marine areas from many potentially threatening processes. They protect our shores from wave action, and reduce the impacts of floods.

Estuaries connect rivers to the sea. In estuaries, salt water from the open sea mixes with freshwater draining from the land, creating unique and important ecosystems. Estuaries are important breeding and nursery grounds for aquatic fauna

Victoria's coastal wetlands and estuaries are noted for their habitat diversity and high biological productivity. They support abundant wildlife, such as resident and migrant shorebirds, waterbirds, and fish, and unique wetland vegetation communities, [including] saltmarsh,

Policy

1 Increase our understanding of onshore environments through research and monitoring programs to determine the impacts on wetlands and estuaries.

2 Protect and improve the ecological integrity of Ramsar sites, coastal wetlands and estuaries.

Policy

1 Understand and address gaps in expertise of onshore environments through research and monitoring programs.

2 Protect and improve the ecological integrity of onshore coastal environments.

....

4 Ensure a well-managed, comprehensive and representative system of coastal parks and reserves.

....

6 Increase the estate of coastal Crown land through land swaps, donations and purchases.

Policy

1 Ensure that planners and managers have regard to the following documents when preparing coastal planning schemes and Coastal Action Plans and management plans, where appropriate:

....

2 Ensure coastal planning schemes apply the appropriate provisions contained within the Victoria Planning Provisions to protect nonurban areas between settlements for their visual, environmental and biodiversity values.

3 **Protect visually significant landscapes, views and vistas in coastal areas** through the application of the recommendations of the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study 2006.

4 **Protect non-urban areas for their visual landscape, environmental, agricultural and recreational qualities.**

....

6 **Identify and avoid development in areas susceptible to flooding (both river and coastal inundation), landslip, erosion, coastal acid sulphate soils, bush fire or geotechnical risk.**

7 **Avoid disturbing coastal acid sulfate soils (CASS) and ensure any development proposed near or on CASS demonstrates that it will avoid any disturbance.**

8 **Prohibit the development of new residential canal estates to ensure the protection of coastal and estuarine environments.**

This strategy contains policies and actions to direct development away from sensitive coastal areas and significant landscapes

Save Ralphs Bay Inc.