BELLARINE PENINSULA

Localised Planning Statement

SEPTEMBER 2015

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

BOROUGH OF QUEENSCLIFFE
STATIO TUTISSIMA NAUTIS

VICTORIA State Government

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INTRODUCTION

Identify the key valued attributes of these areas and put in place objectives and strategies to ensure that they are preserved and enhanced for ongoing use by present and future generations.

The Victorian Government, in partnership with local government, is establishing Localised Planning Statements for four key areas; the Bellarine Peninsula, Macedon Ranges, Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges.

These highly valued areas have significant geographic and physical features which contribute to the quality of life for Victorians and are a distinctive part of our state. They play an important role in the state as tourist destinations and have strong economic bases driven by tourism, agribusiness and lifestyle, with all areas linking strongly to Melbourne.

The attractiveness, accessibility and proximity of these areas to metropolitan Melbourne mean that they are increasingly coming under pressure for growth and change. This could potentially undermine the long-term natural or non-urban uses of land in these areas and needs to be carefully managed. Because of this there is a need to identify the key valued attributes and activities important to these areas and put in place objectives and strategies to ensure that they are preserved and enhanced for ongoing use by present and future generations.

OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

The Bellarine Peninsula is located approximately 90 kilometres from Melbourne and approximately 12 kilometres to the east of the urban area of Geelong. It features significant wetland areas and open farmed landscapes with the distinct townships of Barwon Heads, Drysdale/Clifton Springs, Indented Head, Leopold, Ocean Grove, Point Lonsdale, Portarlington, Queenscliff, St Leonards and the rural living area around Wallington. Most townships are located along the coast, are popular with holiday makers, and in recent years have attracted increased numbers of permanent residents.

The Bellarine Peninsula is surrounded by Port Phillip Bay to the east, Corio Bay to the north and Bass Strait to the south. The western boundary of the Bellarine Peninsula follows an irregular alignment running generally north-south along the suburban boundary of Leopold, west of Reedy Lake and to the coast at Breamlea.

The Bellarine Peninsula has a rich history of Aboriginal and European activity and settlement which contributes to the cultural and historical significance of the broader region.

The Bellarine Peninsula falls within the known traditional boundaries of the Bengalut Balug Clan of the Wadawurrung people. The territory of the Wadawurrung people included the coastline from the Werribee River to Painkalac Creek at Aireys Inlet. To date over 2000 archaeological sites have been found in the region that the Wadawurrung people occupied.

Escaped convict William Buckley is the first known European to have lived around the area with the Wadawurrung for more than 30 years. In 1835 John Batman established a camp on the northern shores before continuing on to Melbourne. By the 1840's a number of settlements began to grow across the Bellarine Peninsula. By the late 1800's the Bellarine Peninsula was playing a tourism role with Drysdale, Clifton Springs and Queenscliff accessible from Melbourne by rail or steamer.

ABS Census data indicates that in 2001 the population of the Bellarine Peninsula was just over 40,100. This increased to just under 51,700 by 2011 representing a 28% growth rate over a 10 year period, or 2.8% per year. The key areas where population increases occurred were Ocean Grove and Leopold, which aligns with their designation as growth locations within the City of Greater Geelong. This contrasts with the Borough of Queenscliffe which has a relatively stable permanent resident population of approximately 3100 with a slight growth in housing and a significant non-resident population. However, significant growth in tourism increases its population to around 17,100 people over the summer period. The Bellarine Peninsula is one of the fastest growing areas within the City of Greater Geelong with people attracted to the area for its beautiful landscapes, relaxed lifestyle and close proximity to the coast and to Melbourne.

The Bellarine Peninsula retains unique, high quality rural landscapes associated with extensive areas of cropping and grazing, viticulture and horticulture. The area plays an

important role, being highly valued for its scenic attributes, open rural landscapes, proximity to the coast and surf beaches, tourism role and lifestyle appeal. It has key relationships with Central Geelong, the Surfcoast and Great Ocean Road, as well as providing an important ferry link to the Mornington Peninsula from Queenscliff.

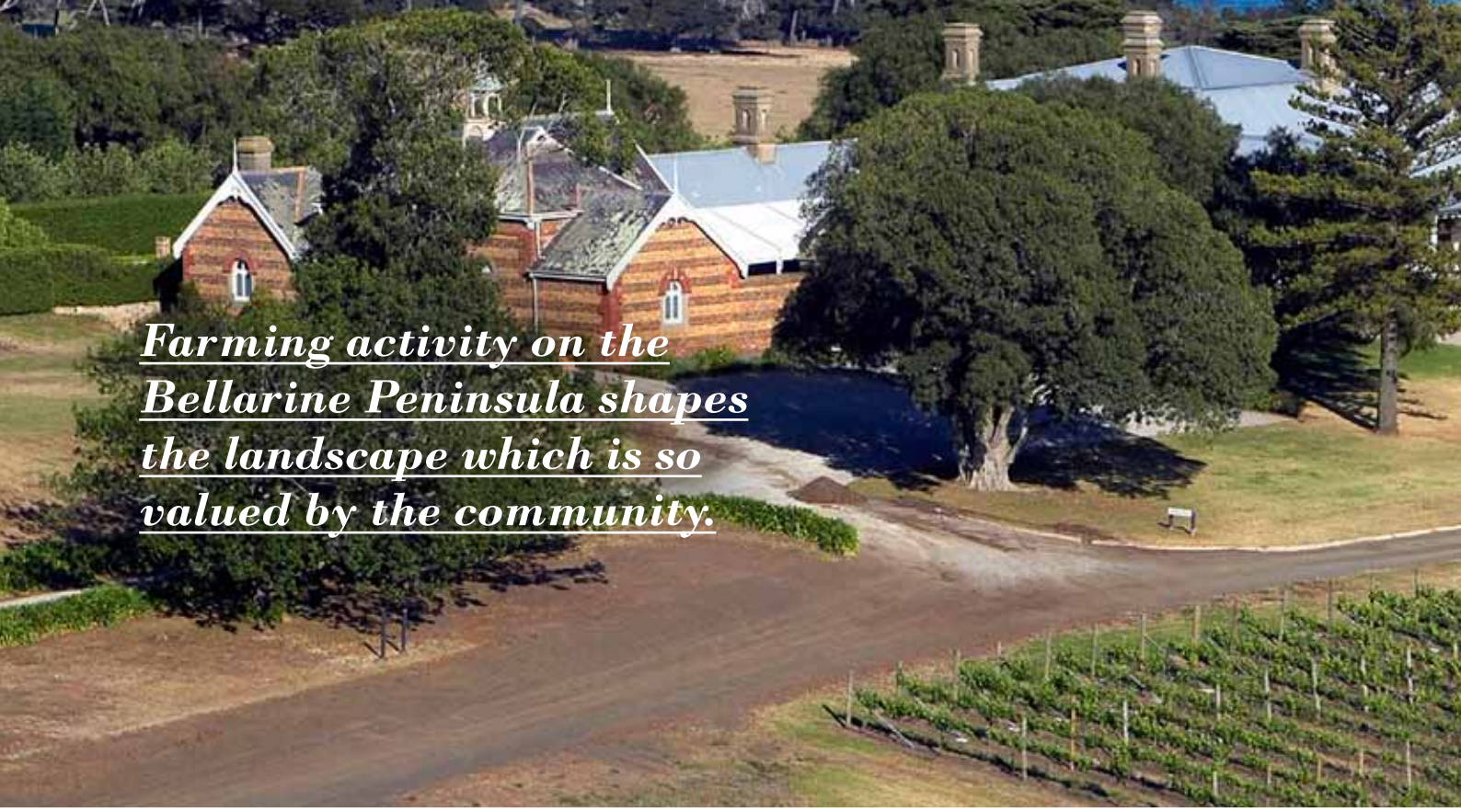
The environment on the Bellarine Peninsula is one of the key reasons people are attracted to it, with its strong farmed landscape character between settlements. It also includes significant coasts and environmental landscapes, beaches and waterways, some of international significance. This character is extremely important and highly valued by the local community.

Climate change presents challenges for the Bellarine Peninsula. Erosion, inundation and storm surge are already impacting low lying coastlines around the Bellarine Peninsula. These impacts are projected to increase and combined with other projected changes like increases in average temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns, will have implications for agriculture and land use in the area. To help address this, councils, state government and other land management partners are working to ensure better understanding of climate change risks and impacts, such as sea level rise, for the Bellarine Peninsula.

The Borough of Queenscliffe is an important area of high conservation value both for its historical built form and environmental significance. Waters around Point Lonsdale and Swan Bay form part of the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park. In addition to this, Swan Bay is protected by international migratory bird treaties and identified as part of the broader Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site. The conservation of these attributes are important, particularly in relation to the Borough's significance as a major tourist attraction and its proximity to the Great Ocean Road tourist route.

The townships of Drysdale/Clifton Springs, Leopold and Ocean Grove are identified in the G21 Regional Growth Plan as designated growth areas and play a key role as district towns providing services and facilities to the growing population and surrounding rural areas. Many of the towns offer coastal recreation, food and wine experiences and holiday accommodation. Typically they experience significant population peaks and pressure on infrastructure over key holiday periods. Retail and hospitality businesses generate significant employment on the Bellarine Peninsula and rely heavily on tourism and dual residents to survive. Structure Plans have defined clear settlement boundaries for townships which enable protection of the rural and coastal landscapes.

Forecast growth in the region, its adjoining regions and Melbourne, when combined with increased tourism and recreational visitation, will place additional pressure on the natural assets of the Bellarine Peninsula. As the area grows it is important that these characteristics are upheld by continuing to maintain key coastal landscapes and agricultural production in rural areas.



Farming activity on the Bellarine Peninsula shapes the landscape which is so valued by the community.

LAND USE IN RURAL AREAS

Pastoral land holdings and grazing dominate the land use at the hinterland and inland areas of the Bellarine Peninsula, while at the coastal edge, settlements and nature conservation reserves form the major land uses. Small buildings and structures are also scattered throughout the entire area. In the north east, vineyards and homesteads are frequent. Lake Victoria forms a major land use at the south-eastern part of the Bellarine Peninsula.

The *City of Greater Geelong Rural Land Use Strategy*, recommended that *"the unique, high quality rural landscapes of the Bellarine Peninsula be maintained through the ongoing support for agriculture in the rural areas. This rural character of the Bellarine Peninsula is highly valued by local residents and visitors, and is a fundamental part of the liveability and identity of Geelong."* (page ix).

Considerable strategic planning has been undertaken to provide for the managed expansion of urban areas on the Bellarine Peninsula, and townships have been planned on the basis of clear settlement boundaries. Ongoing population and employment growth within the Greater Geelong area, combined with the unique and high quality rural and coastal landscapes is contributing to increasing development pressures in rural areas of the Bellarine Peninsula. Managing growth and development is therefore critical to protecting and enhancing the significant values of the Bellarine Peninsula.

Farming activity on the Bellarine Peninsula shapes the landscape which is so valued by the community. Elements such as the agricultural use of rural land, the layout of properties, fences, rural road patterns including that most buildings are well setback from roads, tree planting on rural properties in rows or clumps are all important because of their high form and visibility. These landscape elements should be retained.

The vision for the rural areas of the Bellarine Peninsula is for the continuation of a working farmed landscape where the "right to farm" is respected and the key features of this open farmed landscape and values of the environmental assets are retained. This Statement supports the continuing use of the area for agriculture, in particular viticulture, horticulture, cropping and grazing as the main land use in rural areas on the Bellarine Peninsula and as an integral part of the rural economy and character of the area and the region. Intensive agricultural activities which could change the appearance of this open farmed landscape are encouraged to locate in other more suitable rural areas beyond the Bellarine Peninsula.

The Bellarine Peninsula is also home to a growing aquaculture industry. The main forms are mussel aquaculture and spat collection. There are opportunities to consolidate and expand aquaculture activities at Portarlington, Queenscliff and St Leonards, coupled with opportunities to utilise Avalon Airport for export to international markets. These can make a significant contribution to the local economy and should be supported to provide employment opportunities. Siting of sheds for aquaculture should be carefully considered to ensure they do not compromise local landscape characteristics.

Horse breeding, raising and training is another significant emerging industry and is well suited to rural areas on the Bellarine Peninsula.

NON-URBAN BREAKS

There is a long history of planning policy maintaining non-urban breaks between settlements on the Bellarine Peninsula. Non-urban breaks foster a sense of identity for each township and protect the intrinsic qualities of the environs surrounding existing settlements. Urban consolidation is encouraged to enable the existing boundaries of urban townships to be maintained and provide for increased densities that will justify provisions of additional services and utilise surplus capacity in existing services.

The non-urban breaks between settlements include areas of environmental significance, areas with significant landscape value, sites with significant vegetation and some of the most productive rural land within the City of Greater Geelong. Work on the *City of Greater Geelong Rural Land Use Strategy* revealed that there was strong support for the protection of rural land on the Bellarine Peninsula and strong commitment by many interest groups in ensuring the protection and management of the landscape on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Community support for non-urban breaks between settlements was evident in the *Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan* and was raised in a number of consultations as a key issue.

TOWNSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Barwon Heads

Barwon Heads is located at the mouth of the Barwon River. With proximity to the Lake Connewarre Complex, Bass Strait and Murtnaghurt Lagoon the environment is a key influence. Its role is as a seaside resort and home to a growing population of permanent residents.

Drysdale/Clifton Springs

Drysdale/Clifton Springs is one of three designated growth locations on the Bellarine Peninsula. The historic town centre is the main commercial centre servicing the northern areas of the Bellarine Peninsula. The town also hosts significant school and arts facilities. Growth of the town is directed to the west in the Jetty Road Urban Growth Area. The community values the country town atmosphere of the township.

Indented Head

Indented Head is a smaller residential settlement which relies upon St Leonards and to a lesser degree Portarlington for most services and community infrastructure. A distinct non-urban break exists between Portarlington and Indented Head. It is not a designated growth location.

Leopold

Leopold is one of three designated growth locations on the Bellarine Peninsula. Predominantly a residential township the area is an "urban island" within the rural setting of the Bellarine Peninsula and is the gateway to the coast.

Ocean Grove

Ocean Grove is one of three designated growth locations on the Bellarine Peninsula. The town centre at The Terrace is the commercial heart, with the neighbourhood centre at Shell Road providing additional retail facilities. Ocean Grove is experiencing strong growth as a destination for both permanent residents and tourists. The major growth front is to the north with residential and commercial growth planned.

The surf beach at Ocean Grove is identified by the community as the most important natural asset and the need to enhance the coastal environment is important.

Point Lonsdale

The township of Point Lonsdale is a coastal seaside resort town characterised by twentieth century buildings and more contemporary architecture. The residential areas are set amongst significant stands of vegetation (including roadside vegetation), dunes and significant coastal and foreshore landscape features. The Point Lonsdale commercial centre provides core retail and service operations, with the commercially zoned area having a mixed use nature due to the existence of residential built form located amongst contemporary commercial development. Point Lonsdale has a significant maritime history and offers a range of sporting facilities and venues.

Portarlington

Portarlington is a smaller settlement with both a residential and tourism role. It is not a designated growth location. Portarlington is the northern most point on the Bellarine Peninsula and is an older settlement with strong links to its history as a fishing town and holiday resort.

Queenscliff

The urban and commercial areas of the township of Queenscliff are characterised by mainly Victorian and early twentieth century architecture of significant cultural and built heritage value, and the township's rich military and maritime history is also evident. The township is a key coastal seaside resort with foreshore reserves, parkland, sporting venues and coastal and wetland landscapes which have significant environmental and tourism values. It has a significant regional tourism role based not only on the built and natural environments but also the car and passenger ferry terminal providing a link to the Mornington Peninsula and the Queenscliff Harbour. The Queenscliff commercial area contains a number of core retail and service operations, as well as specialty shops reflecting tourist led demand.

St Leonards

St Leonards is a small coastal settlement with both holiday homes and permanent residents and a focus on fishing and camping. It is not a designated growth location. Situated in a sensitive coastal environment close to the Salt Lagoon Wildlife Reserve and the Edwards Point Wildlife Reserve to the south, St Leonards includes a small existing commercial centre.

FRAMEWORK PLAN

Port Phillip Bay
Indentrin Head
St Leonards
Portarlington
Edwards Point
Swan Island
Ferry Link
Queenscliff
Borough of Queenscliffe
The Heads
Point Lonsdale
Lake Victoria
Mornington Peninsula Shire
Murradoc Hill
Murradoc Rd
Queenscliff - Portarlington Rd
Portarlington Rd
DRYSDALE/ CLIFTON SPRINGS
Grubb Rd
Bellarine Hwy
Shell Rd
OCEAN GROVE
Geelong - Portarlington Rd
Wallington Rd
Wallington
Barwon Heads
Barwon Heads Rd
LEOPOLD
Lake Connewarre
Reedy Lake
Moolap
To Geelong
City of Greater Geelong
Surf Coast Shire
Bass Strait
kilometres
Municipal boundary
Localised Planning Statement policy area boundary
Maintain non-urban breaks with open farmed landscapes between settlements
Identified urban growth area
Non-urban area
Significant landscapes
Urban area
Ramsar wetlands
State and Regionally significant coastlines
Lakes
Significant views
Aquaculture
Viticulture
Tourist railway
Sub regional centre
Sub regional theme park
Tourist route
Roads
River

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AREA

The Bellarine Peninsula is significant for its visual landscape characteristics, individually distinct coastal settlements in a rural setting, sweeping views across rolling hills, coastlines, wetlands and open farmed landscapes.

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It is a popular tourist destination with attractive beaches, quality golf courses, a regional scale water based theme park and significant sporting and camping facilities. Diverse cafes and restaurants in townships, in addition to a growing food-based tourism sector centred on wineries, aquaculture, olives, berries, cheeses and other local produce add to its appeal.

Queenscliff's well preserved heritage buildings are a key tourism asset and the car and passenger ferry service between Queenscliff and Sorrento provides a key link to the Mornington Peninsula and beyond. The Queenscliff Harbour provides for a range of marine activities and the township retains strong links to its rich maritime and military history.

Swan Bay and the Lake Connewarre Complex are identified as wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar convention. In addition, The Heads at Point Lonsdale are identified as being of State significance by the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study and form part of the broader Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park.

Significant indigenous vegetation is found throughout the Bellarine Peninsula including roadside vegetation many of which are subject to overlay controls. The Ocean Grove Nature Reserve is listed by the National Trust as a significant example of remnant flora of the Bellarine Peninsula.

Other key features of the Bellarine Peninsula include:

- Strong linear vegetation features including exotic windbreaks and significant indigenous roadside vegetation.
- Open and expansive views throughout.
- Large and significant water features including the Barwon River, Lake Connewarre Complex, Lake Victoria and Swan Bay.
- Sparse built elements and settlements, particularly in the western areas of the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Typically rugged surf coast with sweeping beaches, headlands and dunes with extensive and largely intact indigenous dune vegetation.
- Lookouts, walking trails, heavily used recreational locations and coastal settlements, often with expansive outviews.
- Steep, low cliffs and minor escarpment at the coastal and lake edges.

The *Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan* found that the communities on the Bellarine Peninsula place a strong emphasis on the retention of farming, retention of distinct rural breaks between townships, and protection of the environmental values of the Bellarine Peninsula. This Localised Planning Statement reinforces this emphasis.

POLICY OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

1 *To protect and enhance the rural and coastal environment on the Bellarine Peninsula and maintain non-urban breaks with open farmed landscapes between settlements.*

STRATEGIES

- Protect rural and coastal environments from inappropriate urban encroachment and development.
- Protect the scenic qualities of key landscape features.
- Ensure development outside of settlement boundaries (as shown in the Structure Plan maps) does not compromise the rural, environmental and landscape values of the non-urban breaks, significant views or longer term growth opportunities.

2 *To support the ongoing use of rural land on the Bellarine Peninsula for agriculture and to preserve the open farmed landscape.*

STRATEGIES

- Support the establishment and ongoing use of rural areas on the Bellarine Peninsula for agricultural activities which do not impact upon the open farmed landscape including viticulture, horticulture and crop raising and grazing.
- Discourage intensive agricultural development or industrial development in rural areas on the Bellarine Peninsula that would have an adverse impact on the rural landscape.
- Ensure the development of dwellings and the excision of existing dwellings in rural areas on the Bellarine Peninsula is consistent with the use of the land for sustainable rural uses.
- Ensure new development is designed and sited to avoid compromising the open farmed landscape.

3 *To preserve and maintain the ecology of the Bellarine Peninsula's environmentally significant coastal, wetland and vegetated areas.*

STRATEGIES

- Protect cliff, dune and foreshore areas from inappropriate development and subdivision.
- Protect and restore significant and remnant native vegetation, particularly tea tree, moonah and coastal heath.
- Ensure that new development allows for the protection of significant vegetation and/or planting around buildings and has minimal impact on roadside vegetation.
- Ensure appropriate stormwater management measures are in place to avoid adverse impacts on marine waters, lakes, wetlands and waterways.

4 *To protect, preserve and enhance built heritage, cultural and urban character values and preserve the individual identity and role of townships.*

STRATEGIES

- Ensure that development responds to the identity and character of the individual township in which it is located.
- Protect the character of local conservation precincts, places, objects and sites and heritage areas on the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Encourage development which respects the setting of coastal settlements by providing reasonable sharing of views of the coast and foreshore and uses contemporary design that reflects existing built form.

5 ***To facilitate the planned residential growth of Drysdale/Clifton Springs, Leopold and Ocean Grove, consistent with adopted Structure Plans and as service hubs for the Bellarine Peninsula. In all other townships, provide retail, commercial and community uses and facilities that serve the daily needs of the community and encourage street based activity and local employment.***

STRATEGIES

- Ensure land use and development proceeds generally in accordance with the relevant Structure Plan maps.
- Provide for a range of retail, commercial, community uses in town centres to provide services for the community and local employment opportunities in accordance with Structure Plans.
- Direct the bulk of residential growth and retail development to the designated growth locations of Drysdale/Clifton Springs, Leopold and Ocean Grove consistent with the relevant Structure Plan maps.
- Direct bulky goods retailing and industrial development to existing and future areas identified in Structure Plans.

6 ***To support and encourage diverse and sustainable tourism as a key economic activity in townships and in rural areas where it complements and respects the farmed rural landscape of the area, does not impact upon existing farming activities and contributes to the local economy.***

STRATEGIES

- Support a range of appropriately scaled and located tourism accommodation and activities within township boundaries.
- Preserve and enhance key tourism assets, in particular the built and natural environments and sporting and tourist areas.
- Support the development of rural land for tourism where the development will not compromise the farmed rural landscape.
- Ensure that tourism uses in rural areas will not compromise agricultural activities on adjoining land.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- ABS Census data – Various
- *Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan 2006 – 2016* (City of Greater Geelong, 2006)
- *Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan – Five Year Progress Audit* (City of Greater Geelong , 2012)
- *Borough of Queenscliffe Urban Character Study* (Hansen Partnership and Context CMI, 2000)
- *City of Greater Geelong Rural Land Use Strategy* (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2007)
- *Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study – State Overview Report* (Department of Sustainability and Environment, September 2006)
- *G21 Regional Growth Plan* (G21 – Geelong Region Alliance, 2013)
- *G21 Regional Growth Plan Implementation Plan* (G21 – Geelong Region Alliance, 2013)
- *Queenscliffe Urban Conservation Study* (Allom, Lovell and Associates, 1984)
- Relevant township structure plans

The Bellarine Peninsula Localised Planning Statement has been developed collaboratively by the Borough of Queenscliffe and City of Greater Geelong with support from the Victorian Government. Each council was provided with funding to assist community engagement and consultation and support development of the statement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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