

# Enjoyment of open space

## Environmental, social and economic benefits of open public land on town foreshores

### Coastal Management Fact Sheet 3.1

#### **Public open space, or green space, on foreshores adjoining coastal towns provides community and visitors with a range of environmental, social and economic benefits.**

The Victorian Coastal Council (VCC) survey of attitudes to the coast confirmed uncrowded and undeveloped coastal landscapes are highly valued by the Victorian community. Worldwide, its acknowledged the most desirable open space features is naturalness and trees. Foreshores at locations including Portarlington, Queenscliff, Torquay, Anglesea and Apollo Bay are fortunate to still have large areas of open space, that connects us to nature and each other whilst providing access to the coast.

#### **Freedom to Explore**

The freedom of open space evokes a variety of responses from all ages. Just as beaches offer greater variety and stimulation than a swimming pool, open space enables children to discover, learn and use their imagination through exploration and intuition. Playgrounds don't offer that complexity. Older children and adults seek out open space to immerse themselves in the peacefulness of the landscape, to escape the rigid formality of urban structures and pressures of our fast paced society.



The intangible values of public open space is at times lost by pressures to provide services for sole user groups or to introduce infrastructure such as playgrounds or local community services better off in urban centres. Well thought out foreshores with green spaces provide a happier environment for both users and visitors.

Open space is a non-market commodity, ensuring significant economic benefit to towns and regions by hosting international, national and regional tourism, recreational, and community events and intermittent commercial activity (markets and festivals). These 'non market' assets – public open space - contributed to the \$2.4 billion spent on coastal recreation in 2007/08 (*Assessing the Value of Coastal Resources in Victoria*, Worley Parsons, 2013).

#### **Environmental benefits**

The environmental benefits of open space contribute to the way we live our lives now and for future generations. Open space provides:

- **Resilience** - In conjunction with vegetated areas of the foreshore, open space provides storm protection, erosion buffering and flood control.
- **Protection** of geological formations and sensitive vegetation by controlling access, contributing to public safety and protecting cultural heritage sites.
- **Environmental quality and carbon storage** through the provision and enjoyment of fresh air, filtered water, shade trees and reduced reflective heat.

#### **Social benefits**

Open coastal environments provide a physical and visual connection between the township, the beach and the ocean and enhances our wellbeing.

- **Gathering space** - The unstructured nature of open space draws together families, friendship or interest groups and communities for their own intended purposes. This includes relaxation, celebrations, community markets, and music and art festivals.
- **Recreation and hobbies**- Provides space for recreation and hobbies as individuals, groups or for sporting events such as surf lifesaving carnivals, fun runs or cycling.
- **'Green' modes of transport** opportunities for self-propelled movement

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- **Enhancing mental health and wellbeing** - Whether it is the tranquillity of flowing water, the power of the ocean, the tactile response to touching nature or just being able to sit, reflect and relax, time spent in green open spaces is known to restore the mind and alleviate stresses. Community stewardship in caring for coastal spaces connects people to a positive cause.
- **Supporting education**- Various school groups and education activities are run on foreshores including the Summer by the Sea program.
- **Emergency Management**- Unobstructed ease of access in open space supports Neighbourhood Safer Places on foreshores, staging areas for emergency response or training areas for surf lifesaving.



## Economic benefits

Once the environment and social benefits of green open space are protected, opportunity is there for contributing to the local and regional economy.

- **Tourism**- Public open space is one of the drawcards for local and international visitors and enables townships to absorb and cater for dramatically increased populations in peak visitation periods.
- **Commercial use**- Activities and events such as tour operators, personal fitness groups, sporting carnivals and music festivals provide opportunities for commercial use of the foreshore.
- **Employment**- Public open space, as a part of the collective attraction for tourism and local services, directly and indirectly contributes to local and regional jobs.



## How is the value of public open space protected?

The amount of foreshore land available as green open space is limited, and not all foreshores are blessed to have open space. Management of activity and recreation nodes is described in the Victorian Coastal Strategy, and further detail will be found in Regional Coastal Action Plans and local Coastal Management Plans. The protection and value of public open space is recognised through:

- *Crown land (Reserves) Act 1978*- Crown land reserved for a particular public purpose is supported by relevant coastal recommendation for land use by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council. Most of the outer coast if not in National Parks is reserved for the 'protection of coastline' whereby informal recreation in a natural coastal environment is the primary management aim.
- *Coastal Management Act 1995*- The policies and strategies for coastal protection are implemented through the Victorian Coastal Strategy- including guidance and policy setting through *Coastal Spaces 2006*, *Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast 1998*, and local Coastal Management Plans.
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*- Provisions for open space protection and recommendations from Victorian Government initiatives are embedded with the planning scheme via appropriate zoning and overlays to reflect the permitted use of the land.

For further information on valuing coastal assets see the Victorian Coastal Council website [www.vcc.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au).

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