



**Bellarine  
Bayside**  
Coastal Management

Bellarine Bayside Foreshore  
Committee of Management

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Bellarine Bayside acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the Bellawiyin land, waterways and skies. We pay tribute to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and commit to walking alongside them to progress their aspirations.



# Who we are

Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management (Bellarine Bayside) is a not-for-profit, Category 1 coastal Committee of Management established in 1994 by the Victorian Government to manage coastal Crown land in accordance with the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (CLR Act) to provide environmental, social and economic benefits for the Victorian community.

We manage our Crown land reserve in accordance with the CLR Act, the Marine and Coastal Act 2018, the Statement of Expectation issued by the Minister responsible for the Environment (the Minister), and related subordinate legislation and policy set by the Victorian Government.

## THE COASTAL RESERVE

The coastal reserve managed by Bellarine Bayside is a 17-kilometre stretch of coastline on the northern Bellarine Peninsula, comprising approximately 200 hectares of coastal land of significant cultural, environmental and social importance.

## OUR VISION FOR THE COASTAL RESERVE

A protected and enhanced northern Bellarine foreshore which has highly valued cultural heritage, distinctive coastal character and environmental assets for the enjoyment of the community.

## OUR FUNDING

Bellarine Bayside currently generates around \$8 million in direct revenue annually, all of which is reinvested back into maintaining and improving coastal Crown land, public infrastructure and holiday park facilities. The majority of this revenue is derived through fees from the six Crown land holiday parks we manage. Other revenue is derived from a range of sources including lease, licence and permit fees, and supplemented by grants for specific projects.

No recurrent funding is received from commonwealth, state or local government.

# What we do

## PLANNING

We work collaboratively with Traditional Owners, government departments, partner organisations, key stakeholders and industry experts to deliver projects and programs that:

- protect cultural heritage;
- focus on meeting the highest environmental management and sustainability standards;
- result in mutually beneficial outcomes; and
- are supported by evidence-based decision making.

## PROTECT THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and cultural heritage on the northern Bellarine coastal reserve are our highest priorities. We have a comprehensive native vegetation rehabilitation program and incorporate community education and involvement opportunities to encourage appreciation of natural and cultural values.

## PUBLIC ACCESS, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

We take pride in, and place high value on providing and maintaining appealing, accessible and safe spaces and amenities for community and visitor involvement, enjoyment and recreation. This includes playgrounds, car parks, a community hall, amenity blocks, boat ramps and jetties.

## HOLIDAY PARKS

We operate six holiday parks and camping reserves in Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards, facilitating over 136,000 visitor nights annually. Situated in absolute beachfront locations, our holiday parks offer a range of

accommodation options to more than 22,000 guests each year who contribute significantly to the region's economy

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A diverse approach to engagement and communication with coastal users enables us to understand use of the coastal reserve and local values. We focus on positive relationships, building mutual trust and collaboration, allowing us to realise a high level of customer service and ensure sustainable and shared use of the coast.

## CORPORATE

We ensure good governance and aim for excellence in core business delivery and customer service through robust planning and by fostering and enhancing existing partnerships, investigating business growth opportunities and supporting tenant business to realise financial stability. We issue and manage leases, licences and permits to provide benefits to the public and ensure use of the coastal reserve is sustainable, equitable and safe.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS	SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM
In 2022/23 the Bellarine Bayside Committee consisted of ten Committee members:	Bruce Elliot Chief Executive Officer
Melanie Rogers Chair	Justin Smith Planning and Environment Manager
John Hartigan Deputy Chair	David Goldie Operations Manager
Dr Sandra Brizga	Wayne Coots Finance and Business Manager
Helene Cameron	Paul McConachy Holiday Parks Manager
Richard Davies	
Dr Kenneth Latta PSM (outgoing as of Sept 2022)	
Gregory Lewis	
Nicole Newman	
Cameron Quinten	
Sheena Walters	

Further information on the Committee and Senior Management Team can be found on our website at [www.bellarinebayside.com.au/about-us/our-people](http://www.bellarinebayside.com.au/about-us/our-people)

# Chair and CEO's Report

**The past twelve months have seen steady progress towards achieving our priority goals and actions for the coast. We are pleased to present our Annual Report for the 2022-23 financial year, reflecting on and celebrating our achievements.**

In 2022-23 we continued to make excellent progress in achieving our priority goals and actions for the coast as guided by the Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP). We were extremely pleased that the CMMP was gazetted this year, officially receiving the final approvals pursuant to section 61 of the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*. While progress has felt slow and steady, upon reflection we can see the acceleration in our work this past year. We showcase a number of the most notable achievements in this report.

A major project that we worked hard to break ground on was the complete upgrade of the main public and camper amenities in Batman Park at Indented Head. This was flagged as a key outcome of the Indented Head Master Plan and onsite works finally kicked off in June 2023 following a lengthy design, approvals and tender process. It is a credit to both current and previous members of our senior management team, with guidance and support from the Committee, that we are well-placed to fund upgrades such as this to ageing infrastructure along the coast. We have been carefully managing our cash flows over previous years and Batman Park is the first of these upgrades, worth over \$1 million. We look forward to seeing the new amenities at Batman Park as well as planning and delivering more along the coast in the coming years.

Another highlight of the year was making significant steps towards realising our objective of improving accessibility along the coast. We were among those awarded Victorian Government's Changing Places funding, to construct a changing places facility at the amenity building on the main Portarlington Beach. As a complement to this, we will fund redevelopment of the existing aging public toilet block to provide a modern, integrated facility catering to all visitors. We are also looking at improvements for the surrounding area to ensure there is also accessible parking, beach access and picnic facilities. Works are due to start in 2024, following the busy summer season. Meanwhile, we have been ensuring that other works and upgrades keep accessibility at the forefront, and we also engaged a disability access consultant to provide expert advice on creating an 'accessible precinct' on the coast that we manage.

Our commitment to reducing our environmental footprint and improving our sustainability remains firm. This year, the Committee adopted the Bellarine Bayside Sustainability Policies. The policies will ensure sustainable operations by embedding sustainability into procurement and project management, as well as informing energy, water and waste management initiatives. The application of these policies will drive sustainable improvements in our energy use, equipment procurement, buildings, supplier and material selection, water efficiency, and reduction and management of waste. They will work in conjunction with other organisational policies to ensure the most sustainable outcomes possible for Bellarine Bayside are achieved.

In 2022-23, the Committee reaffirmed priorities identified in the strategic work of the previous year and built on them by identifying opportunities and commencing plans to establish a strong foundation for Bellarine Bayside in the coming years. We recognise that climate change and inundation are key future risks, and we must start preparing for their impacts now. This includes adaptation planning, and we are grateful to have received funding through Victoria's Resilient Coast Grants program to progress assessment and identification of adaptation strategies and provide a plan for their future implementation. Changes in economic circumstances may also bring challenges, and we must be prepared to adapt and innovate to continue to provide enjoyable and relevant holiday experiences.

Our holiday park operations again saw increased bookings on previous years, matching the growing visitor economy of the Geelong and Bellarine Peninsula region. Our Cabins and Beach Pods were especially popular accommodation choices, often booked out for many weekends in advance and realising exceptional occupancy figures. This is an incredible outcome for our Beach Pods as there is always a bit of nervousness when introducing a new product. We also kicked off a three-year trial of allowing individual campfires and dogs during the cooler months. We are excited to be the first holiday park providing these offerings to the tourist market on the Bellarine Peninsula and we look forward to evaluating the outcomes.

There is much to look forward to, including translating some of our strategic initiatives into implementable plans and outcomes to benefit the foreshore and our communities. The next twelve months will see completion of several major refurbishment projects, including the first stage of upgrades to St Leonards boat ramp by Better Boating Victoria. We will

continue to make progress through our ongoing programs which improve the coast year upon year. The tasks that seem mundane or business as usual, such as landscape upgrades, minor amenity improvements and our conservation programs, result in significant enhancement of the cultural, environmental, social and economic values of the northern Bellarine Peninsula.

We are grateful for the support from partner organisations throughout the year; the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Better Boating Victoria, Parks Victoria, the City of Greater Geelong, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), along with continued support from the new Member for the Bellarine. We value the strong working relationships we have with their staff and see partnerships as integral to management of our little patch of coastal Crown land reserve.

We thank all community members, groups and visitors who provided feedback, ideas and opportunities. The connection people have with the coast cannot be understated and hearing from the Victorian community enhances our outcomes.

None of our successes could happen without our staff, and we take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication and tenacity to keep moving forward. As a small organisation covering the large range of functions that come with public land management, our team are incredibly diverse and flexible, which presents some challenges but provides many more positives. They readily take on new projects, collaborating to share and advance ideas, resulting in the best possible outcomes for the organisation.

Last, but not least, a sincere thank you to each one of our volunteers and Committee members. Together, we have progressed a number of initiatives that would not have been possible without the collective contributions, ideas and passions of our people.



**MELANIE ROGERS**  
BELLARINE BAYSIDE CHAIR



**BRUCE ELLIOT**  
BELLARINE BAYSIDE CEO

## Caring for our coast

### ABOUT US

**27** permanent staff  
increasing to more than



**45**

during peak holiday season with the addition of short-term employees

Manage **17km**

(approximately 200 hectares)

of coastal Crown land reserve, including one of the largest areas of remnant bushland on the Bellarine Peninsula

### REVENUE

**\$9.64 million**

reinvested into the coastal reserve

(\$2.7m of funds was applied to project works, a decrease of \$300k on the previous year)

### LEASES AND LICENCES

**39** leases and licences

issued to community clubs, commercial venues and private boat sheds, allowing activities, goods and services to be delivered to an appreciative and engaged local community

### HOLIDAY PARKS

**484** year-round and **378** seasonal tourist sites

**20** tourist cabins



**412**

Twelve Month Permit sites

**3** beach pods

**136,000+** visitor nights provided accommodation for

**22,000+** visitors to the northern Bellarine Peninsula

who added approximately

**\$15 million**

to the local economy

**13** large/group accommodation bookings

### PUBLIC ACCESS, FACILITIES AN INFRASTRUCTURE

More than **1300 hours** spent mowing maintaining



**57,600,000**

square metre (5760 hectares) of turf

**410**  
Bins

Emptied approximately **35,000** times

**27** amenity blocks (public and holiday park)



**14**

playgrounds including the largest public playground on the northern Bellarine Peninsula

**20**

public BBQs

**190**

picnic tables

**5**

Boat ramps



### COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

OVER **5,700**

native trees, shrubs and grasses and groundcovers planted



**413 hours**

of pest animal management

More than **2490 hours** of weed control including mulching, brush cutting, hand weeding and spraying.

Facilitated more than volunteer hours on the coastal reserve through our volunteer groups, community planting days and the support of external organisations

**1300**



**29** activities

were run throughout the year engaging more than

**730**

people in environmental and cultural activities

Supported **120** student learning hours through student placements with our Coastal Conservation Crew

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Key consultation topics:

- Initiated the first phase of consultation on the St Leonards Master Plan
- Held an inaugural Community Foreshore BBQ
- Released the new Camper Survey



**63 print media updates** discussed a range of topics and projects

**7177** Facebook followers

**1761** Insta followers

**134** LinkedIn followers



### EVENTS AND PERMITS

**31** vendor and activity services are facilitated through issuing permits and hall hire to commercial and community groups who provide services to the local community and visitors

**32** public events including large annual events and regular markets on the coastal reserve

**6** weddings



**24** foreshore permits for private use of the coastal reserve other than personal recreation

# Planning

We work collaboratively with Traditional Owners, government departments, partner organisations, key stakeholders and industry experts to deliver projects and programs that:

- protect cultural heritage;
- focus on meeting the highest environmental management and sustainability standards;
- result in mutually beneficial outcomes; and
- are supported by evidence-based decision making.

## INDENTED HEAD MASTER PLAN

The final Indented Head Master Plan was approved by the Bellarine Bayside Committee and published on our website in July 2022. The master plan aims to address coastal management issues and user aspirations for the specified area in Indented Head, while ensuring cultural values are protected and sufficient area is set aside for conservation and rehabilitation of the natural coastal and marine environment. It provides strategic direction for the next 10-15 years and we will continue to implement to objectives of the plan in years to come.

## GAZETAL OF THE COASTAL AND MARINE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020-25 (the CMMP) received approval pursuant to section 61 of the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 on 11 May 2023. The CMMP establishes an agreement between the Victorian Government, Bellarine Bayside and the community as to how the coastal Crown land on the northern Bellarine Peninsula will be managed. It does so by setting a vision, goals and strategic actions that ensure Traditional Owner aspirations, community values and partner agency views are reflected alongside legislative requirements and state government policy framework.



## CHANGING PLACES AND ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

We were pleased to be among the recipients of the Victorian Government's Changing Places funding. This funding will contribute to upgrade our coastal amenity building adjacent to Portarlington's main beach to incorporate a new Changing Places facility along with new public amenities.

Changing Places are a toilet facility with extra features and more space to allow people with high support needs to enjoy day-to-day activities that many of us take for granted, without having to limit their time out due to concerns about being able to access a suitable toilet or changing space.

The new facility in Portarlington will allow everyone the opportunity to experience the beautiful and calm waters of the northern Bellarine Peninsula. Planning, design and approval works commenced shortly

after receiving the funding, with construction due to commence in 2024.

In January 2023, we engaged Equal Access to undertake disability access consulting reviews of multiple precincts around Portarlington after it was determined to be the most suitable location to establish all abilities access to a range of facilities on our 17km of coastline. The reports examined the Portarlington main beach, the trail network, car parking, and the playground, BBQ and picnic areas, providing valuable insight and recommendations on improvements that could be made to provide an accessible precinct encompassing the new Changing Places facility.



## ST LEONARDS MASTER PLAN

We initiated development of a master plan for approximately 2.9 hectares of the St Leonards foreshore in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong. Through the process we can explore opportunities to enhance the area while addressing safety concerns and management issues. We will also gain insight into user aspirations and aim to balance community needs with cultural asset protection while ensuring sufficient area is set aside for conservation and rehabilitation of the natural coastal and marine environment.

Community consultation was held during January-February 2023, along with consultation with Traditional Owners, coastal users, partner agencies and stakeholders to identify aspirations, opportunities and actions for inclusion in the draft master plan. Development of the plan will continue into the 2023-24 financial year.

## SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Continuing to implement our sustainability program, a waste audit was undertaken to understand current practices, assess contamination and explore options for improvement.

The audit included physically documenting contents of a selection of landfill and comingled recycling bins from the holiday parks and observing operational practices in staff areas. Both these processes gave insight into current practices, identified areas for improvement and provided suggestions to help reduce total waste to landfill and environmental impact.

Key report insights:

- Comingled recycling bins had between 20-40% contamination due to people putting general waste in them.
- Approximately 20% of waste collected in landfill bins could be recycled.
- Organics (food and green waste) make up the largest portion of landfill waste at between 30-50%.

Using the results of the audit alongside our Sustainability Policies, which were adopted in 2022-23, we will explore and implement a range of initiatives in the coming years to improve our waste management practices and encourage sustainability in our communities.



## KEY PARTNERSHIPS IN 2022-23

### Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)

- Coastal infrastructure development and maintenance projects, ensuring protection of cultural assets.
- Incorporation of WTOAC input into plans for the coastal reserve.
- Cultural education programs.

### DEECA (formerly DELWP)

- Portarlington Bluestone Seawall repair program.
- Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program.

### Better Boating Victoria

- Point Richards boating facility protection rock wall project.
- Point Richards boating facility floating pontoon.
- St Leonards boating facility upgrade.
- Northern Bellarine boat ramp maintenance program.

### City of Greater Geelong

- St Leonards Master Plan
- (City of Greater Geelong) Ramblers Road Foreshore Master Plan update



# Protect the coastal environment

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and cultural heritage on the northern Bellarine coastal reserve are among our highest priorities. We have a comprehensive native vegetation rehabilitation program and incorporate community education and involvement opportunities to encourage appreciation of natural and cultural values.

## PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE

We are privileged to manage coastal Crown land that forms part of Wadawurrung Country and are committed to protecting, restoring and promoting traditional cultural values in collaboration with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) to achieve effective management of our coastal regions.

In 2022-23, our partnership with WTOAC included obtaining Cultural Heritage Permits and Cultural Heritage Management Plans for discrete works on the coast, undertaking staff, volunteer and contractor cultural heritage inductions and training, and providing community cultural education programs. We also held regular meetings with WTOAC representatives about specific infrastructure projects and day-to-day works to progress our ability to better protect, manage and recognise cultural heritage on the coastal reserve.



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND HABITAT PROTECTION

The natural environment of the northern Bellarine Peninsula coast has been significantly degraded over the many years since European settlement, primarily due to developments, agriculture and recreational activities. In more recent times, knowledge and awareness of ecological values, including an understanding that native fauna is dependent on diverse native flora habitats, has influenced government policy and the community to manage impacts and restore the natural environment.

We continued our focus on conservation and restoration of the coast with revegetation, fencing and weed control undertaken to improve vegetation quality and habitat values. This is in line with our commitment in the CMMP to 'Identify sensitive and valuable environmental areas and prioritise on-ground works to enhance ecosystems and natural values'. Our Vegetation Management Plan, prepared by a local ecological consultancy and local vegetation propagation expert, guides these works and provides detail on indigenous plant species to include within revegetation programs (dependant on the Ecological Vegetation Class of the revegetation site).

This year we sought to expand on the Vegetation Management Plan and have re-engaged the local ecological consultancy to develop a 5-year rehabilitation plan. The rehabilitation plan will define and provide priorities for rehabilitation works, and include further detail on tree species and other landscape type of native vegetation (not necessarily indigenous) for consideration in holiday parks, playgrounds and open space areas, with a focus of providing a safer shade canopy as well as habitat for native fauna.

## PEST MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, landowners and land managers have a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of – and as far as possible eradicate – established pest animals from their land. In addition to protecting native flora and fauna, pest animal management preserves

cultural heritage, sustains ecosystems by supporting natural ecological processes, reduces hazards and protects assets.

In 2022-23, we continued our integrated rabbit control regime with management activities within Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve and the adjacent holiday park in Portarlington. Preliminary surveys and results of removal showed an approximately 50% lower population in the holiday parks than the previous year. We hope that continued integrated management, including improving prevention methods, in the coming years will see much reduced activity.

Fox control activities within Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve were expanded following several community reports of fox sightings. Activity observed included hunting native waterbirds and we acted swiftly with the aim to reduce fox numbers prior to breeding season to offer better protection for the native wildlife. Methods were selected to complement and be varied from those already in use, as foxes learn to avoid control methods they have been exposed to previously.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Nurturing an appreciation for the marine and coastal environments encourages community support for its protection and is fundamental to achieve our ongoing coastal conservation goals and objectives. We deliver fun and accessible activities through our Bayside Alive! program to inspire awareness and respect of cultural heritage and the natural coastal environment.

## BELLARINE NATURE CADETS

The Bellarine Nature Cadets program continues to be a popular activity for families to learn together about the coastal environment through fun sessions that encourage kids to explore their surroundings. 55 people were engaged across the two programs held in 2022-23, which was the most participants engaged since the program's inception.

## NEST BOX MONITORING PROGRAM

As part of the Victorian Government's Community Volunteer Action Grant program, we added to the number of nest boxes already installed on the coastal reserve, improving habitat opportunities for local hollow-dependant wildlife species.

The project was a wonderful example of a community partnership with the Bellarine Landcare Group, community members, the St Leonards Men's Shed, the Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, and students from Portarlington Primary School all participating in various stages of constructing and painting the nest boxes. Following installation, we launched the Bellarine Nest Box Monitoring Program, whereby everyone can report their sightings of animals using the nest boxes, allowing us to capture data and build knowledge about how they are being used locally.







## COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER ACTION GRANT

We were recipients of a Victorian Government Community Volunteer Action Grant in 2021, aimed at promoting Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve through inclusive community engagement and supporting protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

We concluded all activities in 2022-23, with the final deliverables being:

- 10 workshops to engage people with the environment in new ways, including art in nature, haiku poem discoveries, and weekend working bees with a guided walk and native pollinator hotels.
- Production of two calendars and six postcards for promotional purposes.
- Engagement and inclusion of people from WTOAC, The Gordon, Deakin University, bushwalking groups, primary schools and Gen-U.
- Cultural Awareness Training for volunteers.
- Production of five video clips, promoting the Friends Group and values of the flora and fauna reserve.
- Nest box improvement, including installing additional boxes and developing a monitoring program.
- An Open Day was held to celebrate the grant program and showcase the flora and fauna reserve.

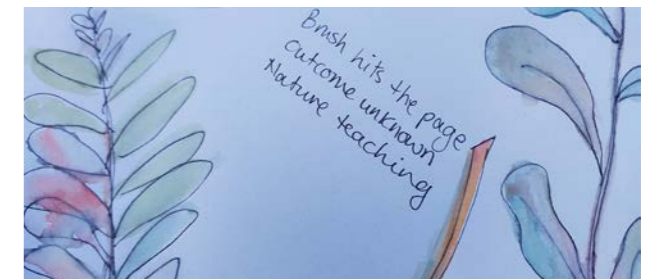
Most significantly, the project resulted in new volunteers joining the Friends Group as well as greater recognition of what the Friends Group does within the community.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

We delivered 29 community education sessions to more than 730 individuals during 2022-23. The sessions included Wadawurrung cultural awareness, summer beachcombs with Bellarine Catchment Network, making native pollinator hotels, guided bushwalks, and exploring nature through alternative forms such as art and journalling with the Port Arts Network. WildlifeXposure was engaged for the first time to run several very popular interactive native animal presentations in the holiday parks over summer and Easter, inspiring a greater understanding and appreciation of native wildlife.

### SCHOOLS

The senior leadership students at Portarlington Primary School (made up of 30 students in the Grade 6 cohort) joined us as part of their inaugural Community Connections program. The students brainstormed ideas for how they could contribute to their community, and we were thrilled to have them help us. They collected a large amount of litter that had been left on the beach inside Portarlington Harbour, and alongside the Bellarine Catchment Network we provided the class information about the importance of sea grass to the marine ecosystem.



# Public access, facilities and infrastructure

We take pride in, and place high value on providing and maintaining appealing, accessible and safe spaces and amenities for community and visitor involvement, enjoyment and recreation. This includes playgrounds, car parks, a community hall, amenity blocks, boat ramps and jetties.

## BELLARINE COASTAL TRAIL

Meandering along the edge of Port Phillip Bay, the Bellarine Coastal Trail provides a popular connection for walkers and cyclists between Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards.

Significant upgrades continued in Portarlington where aggregate concrete was completed along the front of the main beach in Portarlington to improve accessibility and safety, and reduce maintenance requirements. We installed a new beach shower unit as part of the upgrades, designed and built inhouse by our talented staff. It features two shower heads to rinse off under, a low shower head to rinse sandy feet and two benches to place belongings. Completed just in time for summer, these upgrades were supported by the Victorian Government through the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes program and proved to be very popular.

Trail improvements also occurred near Salt Lagoon in St Leonards, to one of the most fragile and vulnerable sections of our coast (due to being narrow and low-lying). The major beach renourishment project last year in this area has significantly improved the width of the beach, enabling us to rehabilitate the frontal dune. We raised the level of the trail, allowing it to be widened, and planted indigenous tube stock along the edge, further contributing to stabilising the frontal dune and protecting the area from future storm events and king tides.



## INDENTED HEAD BOARDWALKS

We were pleased to secure funding through the Victorian Government's Coastal Public Access and Risk (CPAR) Grants program to install boardwalks through the Coastal Saltmarsh at Indented Head.

In addition to offering an accessible, safe and defined connection between the Bellarine Coastal Trail and the beach, the boardwalks protect a remnant area of Coastal Saltmarsh, an ecological vegetation class (EVC) identified as being Endangered on the Bellarine Peninsula, from being trampled and compacted. Coastal Saltmarsh is important habitat for the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot and we have been protecting and enhancing the environmental values of this area for a number of years. The result is that many Coastal Saltmarsh plant species are now present, along with a notable return of wetland and shore birds to the area.

The boardwalks have been designed to keep ground disturbance to a minimum and are of a low-lying design to ensure minimal impact on the coastal amenity and views. The locations for installation were chosen where informal access through the Coastal Saltmarsh had become a persistent issue.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Throughout the year we deliver a range of projects aimed at supporting safe, accessible and enjoyable coastal experiences for all. Our team maintain and upgrade existing facilities such as boat ramps, seawalls, playgrounds, the Bellarine Coastal Trail, buildings, roads and car parking. We also seek to implement new facilities where possible that both benefit our coastal user groups and protect the fragile natural environment.

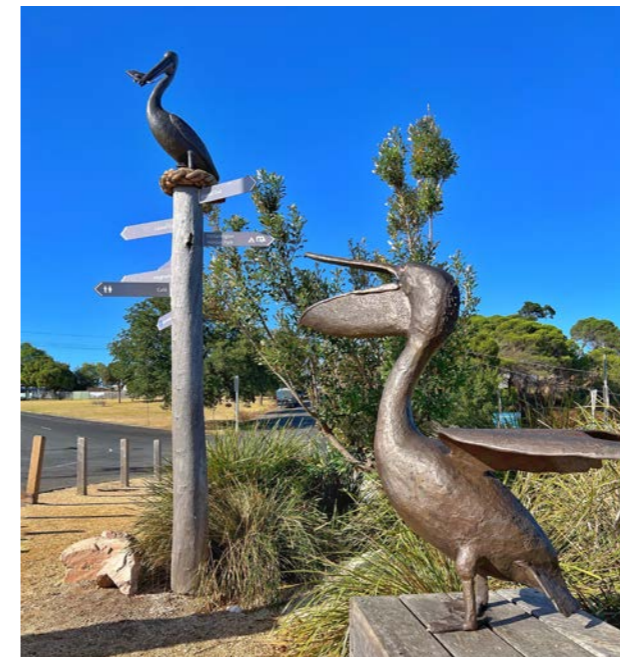
We undertook a number of improvement projects during 2022-23, consulting with foreshore users where possible. Utilising local knowledge helps us to reach the best possible outcome when balancing community need with protection of the coastal reserve.

Projects undertaken (some of which will continue into 2023-24) include:

- Conversion of part of Lower Bluff Rd to asphalt.
- Finalised \$1.5 million of upgrades to marine-

side infrastructure at Point Richards boat ramp in partnership with Better Boating Victoria.

- Renewed the Lions Club BBQ rotunda at Wrathall Reserve, Indented Head.
- Undertook a comprehensive audit of public space power infrastructure.
- Worked with the Portarlington Community Association to install the bronze pelican statues on the Portarlington foreshore.
- Continued works programs along the length of the coast including road repairs, Bellarine Coastal Trail improvements, rubbish bin surround renewal, low voltage power upgrades and sewer system upgrades.



## BOAT RAMP UPGRADES

The second stage of works at Point Richards boating facility to improve vessel access and egress was completed. A new rock groyne has been constructed to minimise the impact of seagrass at the ramp and make maintenance dredging easier. A new navigation channel has also been marked by floating buoys and piles to guide boaters. These works are thanks to a State Government investment via Better Boating Victoria (BBV) to deliver upgrades to boat ramps that were determined as priority recreational boating facilities requiring improvement.

We also partnered further with BBV to renew the St Leonards boating facility after it was identified as high priority for upgrades in the Victorian Recreational Boating Strategy. Following an initial survey that sought insight from facility users regarding issues with the existing facility and what could be changed to improve its functionality, BBV commissioned coastal and civil engineers to develop a concept design that took into consideration the feedback alongside coastal processes modelling.



## PUBLIC FURNITURE UPGRADES

We began to upgrade public furniture along the coast, prioritising settings that were nearing the end of their useful life and of a dated design requiring users to step over the seat or a timber bracket. The new furniture has kept accessibility at the forefront, allowing users to walk in with no obstacles and for wheelchairs to be comfortably parked at either end.

In addition to a strategic focus on accessibility, we have considered sustainability improvements and installed a trial of recycled plastic furniture at Taylor Reserve. The products are made from 100% recycled plastics that are resistant to rot, sun damage and termites, and there is no need to paint the product, reducing maintenance requirements from that of timber furniture. We are looking forward to monitoring how durable this furniture is in response to the coastal weather, to ensure that it does not break down and become another form of litter on the coast.

Extensive consultation was held throughout 2022-23 with boat ramp users, local community members, local fishing groups and partner agencies to test a number of concept designs and further explore options. A final concept design has been released and the upgrades are due to be staged over coming years. The first stage, to replace the jetty and T head with wave baffles installed, is planned for delivery in 2023-24.



# Holiday parks management

We operate six holiday parks and camping reserves in Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards, facilitating over 136,000 visitor nights annually. Situated in absolute beachfront locations, our holiday parks offer a range of accommodation options to more than 22,000 guests each year who contribute significantly to the region's economy.

## BATMAN PARK AMENITY UPGRADE

In June, following a tender and design process that considered community and camper feedback, we commenced onsite works to upgrade the main public and camper amenities in Batman Park at Indented Head.

As one of the oldest amenity buildings on the coast, the upgrade will vastly improve the experience for both the general public and campers alike. Upgrades will include new camper toilets, showers, laundry and kitchen, as well as public toilets, outdoor showers and an undercover BBQ area. The new facilities have been designed to meet modern standards, with accessibility, sustainability and use of materials that will withstand the marine environment at the forefront.

The new amenities are expected to be complete and functioning by end of November 2023.

## SUPPORTING WILL'S WISH

For many, our holiday parks are more than just a beachside holiday, they are about community.

For the last seven years, the 'Will's Wish' fundraiser has been held on Good Friday by a family who have camped at Portarlington for more than two decades. Hosted on their campsite, raffles, games and the sale of donated items and merchandise has raised funds that are donated to the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's

Hospital to support children with neurological conditions.

Beyond the support from fellow campers in the holiday park, local community members join the fun in the holiday park, and local businesses and clubs provide support through donations and hosting collection tins. We are pleased to support 'Will's Wish', and other community fundraising opportunities, each year.

## CAMPFIRE AND DOG-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION TRIAL

At our holiday park in Portarlington, we launched a three-year trial to allow individual campfires and dog-friendly accommodation options.

Only available at designated areas and times of the year, these two trials are linked to initiatives in our Camping and Accommodation Strategy and the CMMP, which recommended investigating methods to improve camper experience in shoulder and off-peak periods. Prior to initiating the trials, we undertook thorough planning in conjunction with the CFA, the City of Greater Geelong and DEECA to ensure the conditions of each trial would provide for a safe and enjoyable experience for all holidaymakers.

To date, both options have been well received and we are pleased to introduce these options to the tourist market for those looking to camp on the Bellarine Peninsula.



## UPGRADES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Each year, we are busy behind the scenes delivering upgrades and improvements throughout the holiday parks. While seemingly quite minor, they lead to significant improvements in the holiday experience for many who visit our holiday parks each year.

### Portarlington Holiday Park 2022–23 initiatives included:

- New clearer road safety signage added across all parks and reserves.
- Engagement of First Nations Traffic Management to assist our guests with easier and safer queuing on arrival on the two busiest days of the year.
- Electrical overload works completed for substation five affecting 18 Twelve Month Permit (TMP) sites.
- Refurbishment of all 16 ensuites, including re-enforcing the flooring, door frames, weatherproofing and re-applying silicone to all showers to prevent water damage.
- Interactive map updated as an operational improvement to accommodate online bookings.
- 15 firepits designed and purchased for the campfire trial in line with recommendations from CFA.
- Two family cabins retro-fitted to be dog friendly.
- Established pedestrian crossing signage to accompany existing white road lines.
- New 10ft chemical storage facility installed in PHP in line with OH&S requirements.

### Seasonal campground 2022–23 initiatives included:

- Undertook a major power upgrade in Taylor Reserve.
- Amenity building in Karrong Reserve painted in 'All taupe' to match other buildings painted in recent years.
- Road maintenance across all parks.
- Turf replacement at Anderson Reserve including detailed clean by Steamatic of all underground services and amenity buildings.
- New furniture installed surrounding the BBQ area at Taylor Reserve.



# Community connections

A diverse approach to engagement and communication with coastal users enables us to understand use of the coastal reserve and local values. We focus on positive relationships, building mutual trust and collaboration, allowing us to realise a high level of customer service and ensure sustainable and shared use of the coast.

## CONSULTATION

We recognise the importance of meaningful community input and local knowledge in decision making and project development. Consistent with our Community Engagement Charter, we undertook targeted consultation for a range of project on the coastal reserve.

We kicked off the St Leonards Master Plan with the 1st phase of consultation held during January – February 2023 through an online survey and an onsite information session at the St Leonards Foreshore Market (with the stall staffed in partnership with a representative from the City of Greater Geelong) and meetings with local community groups and partner agencies.

Another major project with consultation on the coast was Better Boating Victoria's upgrade of the St Leonards boating facility. Primarily hosted by Better Boating Victoria, we provided support at consultation sessions to ensure we also understood the needs and aspirations of our community when using the coast and this facility.

An inaugural Community Foreshore BBQ was held one evening in February, an informal opportunity for the community and Committee of Management members to meet. The event was well received with around 50 people attending with much discussion and celebration of the years' successes together. We look forward to continuing this annual event in the coming years.

A new Camper Survey was launched in early December 2022 that will continue all year round allowing us to gather guest feedback about their recent camping experiences. The survey is automatically distributed to all campers in all holiday parks via a text message and email on checkout, as well as being emailed to all TMP holders following the Australia Day weekend when many depart after visiting their sites for long periods over summer. We will regularly check-in with responses and assess our progress to provide high-quality holiday experiences.

## COMMUNICATIONS

We regularly communicate about the work we do, the natural and cultural values of the coastal reserve, our holiday parks and our engagement activities through:

- Newsletters.
- Social media.
- Media releases.
- Our website.
- Monthly local newspaper columns.
- Signage on the coastal reserve.
- Meetings and liaison with the community, including facilitating a yearly engagement with Committee members of Bellarine Bayside present.



## FRIENDS OF POINT RICHARDS FLORA AND FAUNA RESERVE

The Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve have been actively protecting and restoring the biodiversity of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve since 2001. In 2022-23 they dedicated approximately 740 volunteer hours to help protect and improve the environment values in the Flora and Fauna Reserve. They are passionate about the work they do and joined alongside our staff at community events and festivals to share their knowledge and inspire others to help protect the local environment.

Supported by the Victorian Government through the 2021 Community Volunteer Actions Grants, the group created a second round of free promotional materials (a 2023 calendar and postcard series) and enthusiastically showed off the flora and fauna reserve in video and social media shorts to help promote the values with the wider community.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers make an integral contribution every year towards our strategic goal to protect and enhance the natural environment along the coast. We thank all the volunteers who joined us through our facilitated volunteer groups (the Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve and BeachWatch), at Bellarine Bayside hosted community environment days and through other programs on our coast run by Birdlife Australia, Bellarine Landcare Group, St Leonards Men's Shed and the Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program.

St Leonards Community Care Group and Bellarine North Rotary are two groups who began to provide volunteer support on the coastal reserve this year. Each group has adopted an area that they assist to rehabilitate through removing weeds, collecting litter and planting indigenous species, and both groups also assist more broadly at coastal community events. We are very appreciative to have these two new groups join us during the last year, helping to work towards our goal to protect and enhance the natural environment, and providing greater community insight into what we do.

This year, there were two clean-up activities in our area on Sunday, 5 March for Clean Up Australia Day. Woofers and Walkers with support from Bellarine North Rotary held their 11th annual Clean Up event in Portarlington, with 23 volunteers collecting five bags of landfill and 11 bags of recycling, plus numerous pieces of larger hard waste. The Indented Head Community Association hosted a Clean Up event with approximately 10 volunteers collecting rubbish along approximately 1.5km of coast between Taylor Reserve and Wrathall Reserve.



## BEACHWATCH

Our BeachWatch teams continued to undertake surveys to measure sand losses and gains at set marker points along the coast. The data is collated and contributes to building a bigger picture of where, when and how our coastal environment changes as a result of coastal processes. Through monitoring the coast in several ways, we and other responsible agencies can make more informed management decisions when planning approaches to mitigate the impacts of erosion.

## COMMUNITY PLANTING DAYS

We hosted one community planting day in the 2022-23 financial year, with 19 people joining us helping to plant, stake and guard 600 indigenous trees, grasses, shrubs and groundcovers.



## CORPORATE GROUPS

Employees of the Melbourne branch of Vysus Group joined us for the second year running for their business volunteer day. They again assisted our Conservation Crew, helping to improve the coastal environment by removing weeds and planting indigenous seedlings.

14 staff from the Melbourne office of ERM travelled across Port Phillip Bay on the ferry and assisted with removing two trucks loads of invasive Flax-leaved Broom and Chilean Needle Grass infestations from the Portarlington foreshore.



## STUDENT PLACEMENTS

### Deakin University

- One student from Deakin University undertook 80 hours of student placement.

### Work Experience

- One environmental student undertook 40 hours of work placement.

# Corporate

We ensure good governance and aim for excellence in core business delivery and customer service through robust planning and by fostering and enhancing existing partnerships, investigating business growth opportunities and supporting tenant business to realise financial stability. We issue and manage leases, licences and permits to provide benefits to the public and ensure use of the coastal reserve is sustainable, equitable and safe.

## STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change issues a Statement of Expectations (SoE) to Category 1 Coastal Committees of Management in the Barwon South West Region. The SoE issued in January 2018 and the update issued in August 2019 are applicable to the year ended 30 June 2032.

Bellarine Bayside's progress against the eleven priority expectations in the SOE are detailed at page 3 in Appendix 1: Financial Report 2022.

## COASTAL EVENTS AND VENDORS

We permitted, sponsored and supported 38 coastal events this financial year including markets, festivals, health and wellbeing events, and private events such as weddings.

Whether large public events such as the Portarlington Mussel Festival, or small community events (such as free kids active living programs run by the local community health organisation), events on the Crown land are an important part of the social fabric for the community.

Additionally, we issued 31 permits in 2022-23 to vendors and activity service providers for use of the coastal reserve. These permits all aim to enhance the public experience on the coastal reserve and range from food vendors to fitness classes and kids' activities. We also administered a further 24 private permits to individuals and organisations to conduct activities on the coastal reserve other than personal recreation, including school groups, private parties, professional photographers and more.



## OUR PEOPLE

### Staff Development

Throughout the year, our staff undertake either one-off or refresher training to keep their skills, tickets and licences up to date as required for their roles. Courses this year included Provide First Aid and CPR refresher, Medium Rigid Licences, Front End Loader Operation and Emergency Warden Training. Beyond those required, we work with individual staff to identify opportunities for development, which may include training.

A number of staff were also supported to attend the 2023 VicParks Conference and joint National Coast to Coast & NSW Coastal Conference 2023.

### Clean Up Australia Day

On 28 February, we undertook our fourth Business Clean Up Day on the Portarlington foreshore, accompanied by staff from Parks Victoria who cleaned up along the Portarlington Pier. 14 people collected 13 large bags of litter, including more than 900 cigarette butts, over 40 plastic bottles and a large amount of fishing litter (fishing line, hooks, bait bags) from the pier.

While Clean Up Australia Day is a great opportunity for businesses and community to get together and take practical

action to conserve our environment, it doesn't replace simple actions everyone can take each day to put their rubbish in a bin or take it with them when they leave the coast.

### People Matters Survey

We encouraged all staff to undertake the People Matter Survey, conducted from 29 May – 30 June 2023, for the fourth year in a row. The People Matter Survey is the Victorian public sector's independent employee opinion survey that provides staff a safe and anonymous to have their say on their workplace experience.

We are committed to transparency and share the non-identifiable results with all staff so that together, we can celebrate the positives and work towards creating a safer, more supportive and increasingly effective workplace. We use the insights that the survey provides to plan and implement initiatives and changes aimed at improving our workplace and culture.

The results from 2022-23 show:

- Comparably lower workplace stress than the sector-wide results.
- That we foster strong alignment with the public sector values (Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Accountability, Respect, Leadership, and Human Rights).

- Fewer employees reported experiencing aggressive and/or bullying behaviours, whether by colleagues or customers. Despite this being positive, there is no acceptable level of workplace aggression or bullying and we continue to work towards a goal of zero.

Several results remain positive, but did decrease from the previous years' results, including workplace inclusion, employee engagement and staff satisfaction. This shows us that although still rated highly and above comparable organisations and sector-wide ratings, we can do better and return to higher levels of satisfaction in these areas.

#### Youth Activating Youth Internship

Thanks to the Youth Activating Youth (YAY) Internship Program, our conservation crew hosted an intern for 13 weeks. The YAY Internship Program was a partnership between Jobs Victoria, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and YAY, aiming to improve pathways for multicultural youth facing barriers to employment by delivering meaningful career opportunities through 120 hours of practical job placement that align with participants' qualifications and skills. Both the intern and our staff found the experience rewarding and we were pleased to retain them for longer than officially required. The intern will be a great asset to future employers, showing strong initiative and dedication to the role, and we wish them the best of luck with future opportunities.

#### LEASES AND LICENCES

We manage 39 leases and licences issued to community clubs, commercial venues and private boat sheds, allowing activities, goods and services to be delivered to visitors and the local community alike (see Appendix 2: Summary of Leases and Licences). These make up a small portion of our revenue that is reinvested back into maintaining and improving coastal Crown land, public infrastructure and holiday park facilities.

#### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Bellarine Bayside has completed another successful year and reports an operating surplus of \$848k, a decrease of \$893k on the previous year (FY2022: \$1.74m).

FY2023 operations generated revenues of \$9.64m, an increase of \$680k or 7.5% on the previous year's revenues of \$8.96m. The holiday parks contributed \$7.99m or 83% of total revenues (FY2022: \$7.06m). The increase in holiday park revenues can be attributed to increased bookings during the FY2023 camping season and the addition of new Twelve-Month Permit sites. Grants and subsidies from State Government and other sources totalled \$1.43m, 15% of total revenues (FY2022: \$1.77m) and revenues from other sources – foreshore leases, licence fees, permits and investments – was \$222k, 2% of total revenues (FY2022: \$129k).

Significant Grants in FY2023 included:

- \$1.13m from Better Boating Victoria towards the Point Richards boating facility rock groyne.
- \$124k from the Victorian Government towards the Indented Head Coastal Saltmarsh boardwalks project.
- \$58k from the Victorian Government towards Bellarine Coastal Trail upgrades.

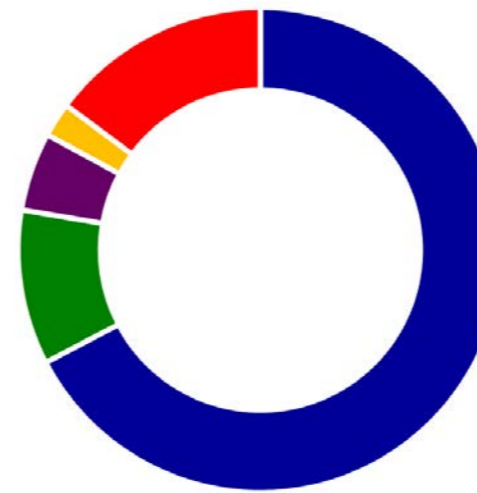
Operational expenditure for the year (excluding depreciation charges) was \$7.62m (2022: \$6.02m). This was an increase of \$1.6m or 26% on the previous year. The increase includes \$995k of losses on the disposal of property, plant and equipment, most of the losses (\$940k) relates to the transfer of Parks Hall, Portarlington, to the City of Greater Geelong in September 2022.

Cash flows from operations for the year were \$2.573m (2022: \$3.49m). The completion of the year's operations saw total cash and investments of \$8.7m held at 30 June 2023 compared to \$8.5m held at 30 June 2022, an increase of \$200k. The entity remains well placed to meet the funding demands of the new financial year.

During the year, \$2.7m of funds was applied to project works (both operating and capital) a decrease of \$300k on the previous year (FY2022: \$3m). Funding came from a combination of grants and the strong operating result. Significant works and outcomes include the completion of the Point Richards boating facility rock groyne (\$1.6m) and the completion of two Boardwalks at the Coastal Saltmarsh Indented Head (\$290k).

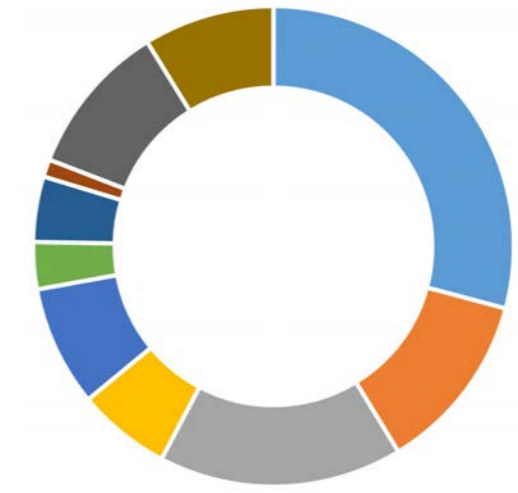
Please find our full financial statements in Appendix 1: Financial Report 2022-23 on: [www.bellarinebayside.com.au](http://www.bellarinebayside.com.au).

Revenues 2022-2023 – % of total \$9,639,164

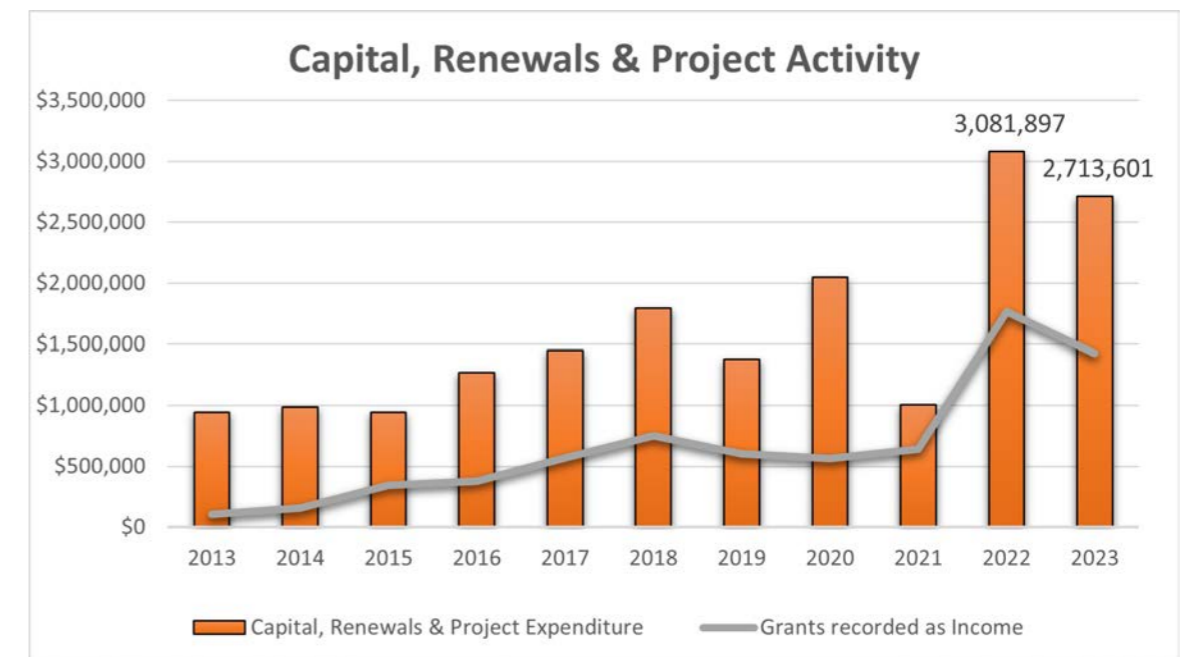


- Portarlington Holiday Park: 68%
- Indented Head Holiday Park: 10%
- St Leonards Holiday Park: 5%
- Foreshore Reserves & Assets: 2%
- Grants: 15%

2022-23 Revenue Distribution % of total \$9,639,164



- Staff employment costs: 29%
- Depreciation: 12%
- Repairs & maintenance: 17%
- Electricity, gas, water: 6%
- Coastal management (admin): 8%
- Waste, garbage: 3%
- Cleaning: 5%
- Motor vehicle operating: 1%
- Loss on disposal of PP&E: 10%
- Asset replacement funds: 9%





# Bellarine Bayside

Coastal Management

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