

28 January 2021

Standing Advisory Committee  
Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Program  
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
8 Nicholson Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email: [planning.panels@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:planning.panels@delwp.vic.gov.au)

Dear Standing Advisory Committee,

### **UDIA Victoria Submission: Draft Surf Coast Statement of Planning Policy**

The Urban Development Industry of Australia, Victoria Division (UDIA Victoria) is a non-profit advocacy, research and educational organisation supported by a membership of land use and property development organisations, across the private sector and Victoria's public service. We are committed to working with both industry and Government to deliver housing, infrastructure, and liveable communities for all Victorians.

The challenge facing the Victorian Government around the appropriate management of Victoria's growth, in context of conserving and enhancing our significant landscapes, has been highlighted by COVID-19, which has increased demand for regional housing. Many of our members consider that this may be a structural shift that will increase regional growth over the medium- to long-term.

We commend the State Government on the work it has done to provide the Draft Surf Coast Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) documents, including a draft Statement of Planning Policy (SPP), draft landscape controls, a number of technical reports, and establishment of an Advisory Committee to consider submissions. Independent review of submissions is a feature of Victoria's planning system that ensures its integrity and support.

However, as previously communicated in our submissions in relation to the DAL process, our members have several concerns that the program has very real potential to undermine the integrity of Victoria's planning system. Please refer to our Policy Position – *Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Program: Threatening the Integrity of Victoria's Planning System* – [by clicking here to access it on the UDIA Victoria website](#).

### **Key issues: Draft Surf Coast SPP**

With specific regard to the draft SPP, UDIA Victoria urges the Minister for Planning and the Distinctive Area and Landscapes Standing Advisory Committee to consider the following issues and recommendations to the Surf Coast SPP document before it is finalised.

#### **1. Municipal Boundaries**

- The draft SPP crosses several municipal boundaries and it is inferred that changes to localised planning schemes will be the responsibility of the relevant Councils.
- UDIA Victoria recommends that changes to each planning scheme should be managed by the State Government through the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) or the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and be concurrently considered. This will

ensure issues are treated in a timely and consistent manner throughout the DAL region.

- As the Surf Coast and Bellarine DALs are contiguous and their timeframes are closely aligned, the Bellarine DAL process should also be finalised through the same planning scheme amendment process. This will ensure an integrated and strategic approach is taken across the wider region.

## **2. 10-Yearly Review**

- UDIA Victoria welcomes a 10-yearly review of the SPP and recommend this review should be clearly written into both planning schemes. It is desirable that the SPP and the planning scheme also articulate what actions meet the test that would bring forward a 10-year review of the SPP.

## **3. Economic Development**

- UDIA Victoria is concerned that there is insufficient clarity in relation to economic development for the region. There is a paucity of discussion and focus on regional economic development in a 50-year visionary document.

## **4. Settlement Boundary South of Armstrong Creek Growth Area**

- The draft SPP indicates that the resolution of the Settlement Boundary south of Armstrong Creek is to be resolved following further strategic work to be led by Greater Geelong.
- When Council originally conceived the logical inclusion process, it was for a different purpose – a strategy that was initiated a long time before the DAL process emerged with potentially far greater long-term consequences for managing growth in southern Geelong. It is worth noting that Victoria's urban development industry was surprised that the Surf Coast DAL intruded into southern Geelong. We question the merits of the spatial boundary of the DAL and recommend that it should only affect land in the Surf Coast municipality. We have not yet seen a sound basis for its impact into Greater Geelong, or for how that impact might be properly managed.
- UDIA Victoria considers that the SPP should clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term processes for managing Geelong's southern urban boundary. A logical inclusions process on its own would, by definition, be inadequate.
- There are a broad range of issues inherent in planning for long-term growth such as: major physical opportunities and constraints, landscape and inter-urban breaks, transport networks, open space and community infrastructure networks as well as extractive industry interest areas. These decisions are appropriately led and made by the State Government through DELWP and the VPA working in concert with the Council.
- There are two potential strategic pathways for managing the long-term growth of southern Geelong. One is a minor change process akin to logical inclusions. Another is a longer-term, more strategic assessment of securing and providing certainty to the outer boundaries of urban growth. UDIA Victoria is concerned that without State Government leadership, a Council led process will take a narrower and more short-term view of growth capacity and benefits.
- The G21 Plan and the Northern and Western growth Area Framework plan preparation processes occurred over many years and were based on extensive technical review and

investigation. There needs to be flexibility for similar processes to occur in southern and south western Geelong over time to ensure the most appropriate strategic outcomes.

## 5. Investigation Area North-East of Torquay

- Whilst UDIA Victoria welcomes the ability for additional land to be considered for strategically based growth, it is unclear from the draft SPP when, how and by whom this review process will occur.
- Further details should therefore be clearly articulated within the SPP around the process, responsibility and timing of this review.

## 6. Torquay Transit Corridor

- UDIA Victoria supports timely resolution of the Torquay Transit Corridor. There is a lack of public information around the location and details of the corridor that must be addressed.
- The Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Plan and the Armstrong Creek East PSP provides for this transit corridor to enter the DAL area from the north, about 400m east of the Surf Coast Highway. The DAL plan shows the corridor being located on the Surf Coast Highway. This appears to be an error and should be adjusted or clarified for the sake of consistency.

## 7. Spring Creek

- UDIA Victoria submits that the PSP for the Spring Creek area should be approved. The PSP is appropriate, as supported by an independent planning panel. The Draft SPP should have included this as the preferred outcome, or else at least as an option. No valid arguments have been made in the documents to support or counter the findings of the planning panel for Amendment C114 to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme.
- In addition, Option 1 suggests that an ecologically sustainable development option is being considered. However, there are no details as to what this means.
- We highlight that the SPP cannot ignore a fully transparent process that critically analysed the appropriateness of the development of the Spring Creek Corridor, and having weighed up all factors (including community views), chose to support its full redevelopment.
- Torquay/Jan Juc is identified as a District Town within the Regional Growth Plan and it goes on to describe its planned growth in the following manner:

*“Torquay/Jan Juc is the largest coastal centre in the region, acting as the gateway to the Great Ocean Road and home to an international surf industry. It has a strong relationship with Geelong, and provides services to smaller coastal and hinterland towns. Residential growth will occur in existing areas identified in council’s planning strategies. Community infrastructure and educational facilities will be provided to support planned growth. Transport infrastructure will be improved, with a connection to the Geelong Ring Road and long-term plans to upgrade the transit link from Geelong/Armstrong Creek to Torquay.”*

- The panel for Amendment C66 to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme notes that (see page 74):  
*“... it was not put to the Panel that there are environmental values of State or National significance that would preclude carefully planned development of the Spring Creek Valley west of Duffields Road. The existing environmental values consist primarily of the creek environs and some areas of remnant vegetation.*

*These values are similar to those already widespread in rural coastal areas of the Surf Coast. Other areas of development around Torquay will impact on similar values (and no doubt have already as Torquay has grown over the past forty years).*

*The Panel is satisfied that these values can be managed through development by careful design and open space planning. The opportunities for reinforcing environmental values through creek planting for wildlife corridors and creating open space linkages should be crystallised if development occurs."*

Moreover, it states that:

*"There is no doubt that the Spring Creek Valley is an attractive landscape. This was put by submitters as either supportive of a development form that will be marketable and pleasant to live in; or as a precious local resource that should be protected from development.*

*The Panel has considered the submissions and evidence on this issue in relation to:*

- *Inherent values of the landscape*
- *Views down the Valley from Bellbrae*
- *Views of the Valley from the Great Ocean Road.*

*The Panel considers that whilst attractive, the landscape of the Valley is not of such significance to prevent development, but rather is a significant input to the design of any eventual development. It is not recognised in national, state or local (such as a Significant Landscape Overlay in the planning scheme) planning controls as having particular significance. It can be considered to be similar in many ways to already developed areas such as Jan Juc or the Spring Creek Valley east of Duffields Road."*

- The Spring Creek PSP has been more than a decade in the making. The Panel considered all views and evidence put, for and against, and recommended that the development proceed. There is nothing within the exhibited materials that would rule out development of the site. This is evidenced by the Draft SPP itself in its content and in the proposal to allow ecologically sustainable development in that same area.

## **8. Tourism and the Visitor Economy**

- Objectives 6A and 6B outline a "sustainable" and "strong" visitor economy compatible with environmental values, and Map 8 outlines large areas well suited to tourism activities. The draft SPP refers to the established need to increase length of stay (instead of day trips).
- UDIA Victoria submits that there is a material and well understood undersupply of visitor related accommodation in the region. For example, as set out in the strategic master plan for G21 Region visitor economy 2015-25.
- We therefore recommend that tourism elements referred to as being encouraged in the specified rural areas should be clearly defined to include accommodation. Accommodation is essential to the long-term health and wellbeing of the visitor economy.

## **9. Strategic Infrastructure Assets**

- UDIA Victoria submits that relevant maps within the SPP should be amended to show the specific location of strategic infrastructure assets (such as recycled water pipes) to ensure there is a relationship between objectives such as "support recycled water use" and the

declared area. Greater clarity is sought around the role of key infrastructure assets and the timing of their extension to service relevant parts of the region. It would be instructive of the plans indicated, for example, the areas that are able to be irrigated within the next 10 years based on the current plans of the service authority. The mere fact that land could theoretically be serviced in the long-term is not sufficient to include in the strategy plans. This could be misleading to planners who refer to the document.

#### 10. Landscape Controls Impact on Rural Operations or Intensive Agriculture

- UDIA Victoria highlights the need for careful consideration around the unintended consequences of the proposed landscape controls. More specifically, to ensure they do not detrimentally inhibit the existing operation of strategic infrastructure assets or their ongoing maintenance or potential augmentation.
- This will ensure that that assets can continue to be utilised for existing and future urban development and rural operations (e.g. for intensive agriculture).

#### 11. Great Ocean Road Authority

- UDIA Victoria is concerned that there is minimal reference to the role of the Great Ocean Road Authority and its statutory role.

In addition to the aforementioned key issues, UDIA Victoria is concerned that insufficient time is available for industry and community stakeholders to adequately prepare for the hearing scheduled to occur from March 2021.

Given the importance of upholding the integrity of the Victorian Planning System, UDIA Victoria **requests that that the proposed Advisory Committee hearing be postponed 1-2 months to allow sufficient preparation time for stakeholders.** As it stands, the proposed hearing dates will make it difficult for affected parties to produce the level of evidence they wish to present. Deferring the hearing start date would encourage a more rigorous process that can enable optimal long-term outcomes for the Surf Coast region.

We thank you for the opportunity to engage in this important consultation process and look forward to discussing the matters raised in this submission with your Department and the Advisory Committee. Please contact Dr Caroline Speed, UDIA Victoria Policy and Research Director by emailing [caroline@udiavic.com.au](mailto:caroline@udiavic.com.au) to arrange a suitable time to do so.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Gaedke'.

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