Wider GSC Land Management

Industrial Land Planning
The GSC has initiated many studies and strategies since 2005, and many are valuable. One of them, *Glenelg Shire Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP) 2010* (Buchan Consulting), is very comprehensive in its analysis. It states

The MSS has a focus on: development built on natural assets and land use; continuing to expand the Port; focusing urban growth in and around the existing towns; supporting the tourism sector; managing the environment; improving all transport links; and protecting natural resources and biodiversity (p. 9).

This study reveals the shire’s remarkable total of 1340 hectares of land zoned for industry –
A measure of the extent of this stock of industrial land is that the amount of industrial zoned land in Glenelg Shire is almost half the Greater Geelong LGA’s industrial land supply (p.122)

and the consultants also note

.... the extent of supply of industrial land in Portland is quite significant for a community the size of Portland. For example, the City of Greater Geelong, with a population almost 10 times the size of Glenelg, a larger port and a significant manufacturing sector employing over 12,000 people (Glenelg 1,481) in 2001, has a total of 2,700 hectares of which 940 hectares is vacant.

But the Glenelg Council appears keen to augment its industrial land, as evidenced in its three-year Review of its Council Plan 2009 -12 (council meeting minutes, 24/7/2012). One Council Plan action drawn up in 2009 states:-

Plans for the development of new industrial precincts will be adopted and initiated.

The Year 3 report (2011 – 12) states –

*Whilst considered important by Council, funding was not provided because of competing priorities, the project remains in Council’s Ten Most Important Projects and the Glenelg Sustainable Settlement Strategy will assist to identify possible sites* (my Italics).

So the Council continues support for unsustainable actions despite strong advice and funding not being provided, and will even rely on its sustainable Settlement Strategy to help implement the action.

At the same time the BREP refers to the Shire’s “underdeveloped” tourism sector (p.9). I consider that it will remain so while Council invests in chasing “big business” opportunities at the expense of home-grown ones based on the natural and environmental strengths listed in the MSS above and in the attachment given, a SWOT analysis from consultation with the Shire’s tourism industry (*GS Tourism Marketing Plan 2001*, p. 49 - 52).

Conclusion
My concerns are based on experience of the Glenelg Shire Council's operation of its Planning Scheme over many years, and my perception based on the evidence above that imbalance between conservation and development in land use planning continues.

The Shire has an MSS, Council Plan, Strategic Futures Plan and many other strategies and plans which align with the State Planning Provisions and are worthy of Government funding support.

But in practice, strategic plans for natural and built assets can be rapidly superseded by others – in Glenelg’s case, by a Sustainable Settlement Strategy 2012 where the definition of “sustainable” appears to align better with “able to be developed”; it will even be used to help identify industrial land. It is being fast-tracked while investment in conservation is being deferred, only taken up in part or hamstrung by lack of resources.

If this can happen in one Shire, is it occurring elsewhere? What damage is still being done to the futures of Glenelg and other places through inadequate application of (or understanding of) sustainable principles in land use planning?

I trust that the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee can help to resolve conflicts between development and conservation inherent in planning scheme management, a vital element in regional economic development, for the benefit of future citizens of Victoria.

A.L.Chalmers OAM,
23/8/2012