Submission

Select Committee Parliamentary Inquiry into Heritage Tourism and Ecotourism in Victoria

Thank you for allowing the Port Campbell Community Group Inc. (Group) to make a submission.

This submission to the inquiry is made on behalf of the Group into matters relating to heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria, and specifically on the Port Campbell coast, on behalf of the referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee in relation to its terms of reference:

1. The current scope of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria,
2. Best practice in ecotourism and heritage tourism;
3. The potential for the development of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria;
4. The environmental and heritage issues associated with large scale tourism; and
5. Problems associated with increased tourism.

The Group supports appropriate tourism which does not impact on the biodiversity or the natural heritage qualities of the coast. Many of our members have direct participation in tourism.

Port Campbell Coastline at Risk – Tourism Impacts Unsustainable

- The Port Campbell coastline has long been the focus of media campaigns which has concentrated tourism in this small stretch of coastline which will be ultimately to its own economic disadvantage, and is currently to the economic disadvantage of other areas of Victoria.
- While tourism is a major economic benefit to this area, the asset upon which it depends appears to have little protection and is at risk.
- The Port Campbell coastline has too many pressures on it, 2 million tourists a year and estimates suggest this number will increase.
- The coastal tourism and heritage assets are changing too fast which has both environmental and biodiversity impacts, visual and aesthetic impacts, and heritage and sustainability impacts for this 25 km stretch of coastline.
- Once the wild, isolated beauty of this coastline is lost the tourists will lose interest and move elsewhere. Dr Ray Green wrote in his book Coastal Towns in Transition that tourists go elsewhere – on to the next undeveloped spot – once an area is overdeveloped.
Tourism Victoria needs to advertise the Region, and greater Victoria, as a tourism product to both save the Port Campbell coastline from ruin and to create a better tourism product for Victoria.

Eco-tourism and heritage tourism still impact on the environment, and these businesses and their staff should undertake certification and licensing to ensure best practice, with their conformance reviewed regularly. This should improve the tourist experience and more importantly protect the assets that form the basis of their business and the reason for tourist patron age.

Each tourism proposal should be carefully considered with Environmental Impacts Statements required when in sensitive areas.

There should be no private sector development permitted on public land or in the national park.

Incremental eco and heritage tourism developments scattered along this short stretch of coastline will have a negative effect on long-term tourism sustainability.

**Corangamite Shire Council Amendment C30 & C29 – Rezoning for Tourism Developments, 2012**

- Corangamite Shire Council C30 proposed to rezone vast areas of private land adjoining the Port Campbell National Park and the Otway National Park between Moonlight Heads and Peterborough for tourism developments.

- The Group made a submission to the Amendment C30 Planning Panel stating the 10 sites, 1000 hectares on this 25 kms of national heritage listed significant coastline, should not be rezoned for tourism development.

- After an extensive submission process, the expert Panel reported that only 4 of the 10 sites be rezoned. This was a balanced approach. But the Corangamite Shire Council wanted all sites rezoned and the Minister for Planning supported Council.

- This decision went against the more than 80% of submissions and the Planning Panel Report.

- This amendment has the ability to destroy the tourism product of the Port Campbell coastline.

- Corangamite Shire Council Amendment C29 weakened protection for the heritage listed coast which will also ‘destroy the goose that lays the golden egg’.

**Corangamite Shire Council – Heritage Study, 2012-3**

- Corangamite Shire Council appears to be inconsistent in their approach to heritage and tourism.

- Corangamite Shire Council’s approval of a recent heritage planning scheme amendment to legislate heritage permit requirements on private properties is inconsistent with Corangamite Shire Council’s actions in Amendments C30 and C29 which opened up wide scale development opportunities and reduced red tape for private properties on a national-listed heritage coastline and other heritage places in the Shire.
The Shipwreck Coast Master Plan is again placing emphasis on development of the Port Campbell coast and has the potential to further undermine the tourism product. Most submissions suggest taking pressure off the coast and making a Regional product. The Moyne and Glenelg coastal areas and inland areas such as Camperdown, and Terang are calling out for a share in the tourism market; their heritage is not at risk.

The Port Campbell national park and the low lying vegetation of adjoining land is extremely sensitive to change; in some places the national park is only 100 meters wide and the limestone cliffs are fast eroding.

Climate change and ocean acidification will have a major impact on this coastline. As the sea Ph changes the limestone cliffs will dissolve.

The geography of the Port Campbell coast and adjoining area is vastly different to the rugged hilly valleys of New Zealand or the Bay of Fires in Tasmania, or other similar places where resorts can be screened.

Recommendations:

- The tourism pressure needs to be taken off the Port Campbell coastline before the heritage and the product that people come to see is irrevocably destroyed; this can only be done by a media campaign advertising the beauty and heritage of other areas. This will increase overnight stays for Victorian tourism rather than have the Great Ocean Road to Port Campbell being just a one day trip.
- No development of public land or national park and no large developments adjoining the national park or near the cliffs.
- The Group recommends the inquiry consider the Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, 2004 which advocates larger tourism resorts be placed in larger towns and the small towns such as Port Campbell retain their village character. This will do more for tourism and heritage than trying to put large resorts in or near small coastal towns.
- The Port Campbell coastline is too sensitive to have large resorts near its cliffs. The Southern Ocean Beach House which has had a long list of specialists and community groups recommend against it due to unacceptable impacts – that it will collapse the Port Campbell headland and that it will make the heritage port unviable – see attached appendix. The proposal was to be a 4 storey, 97 apartments, 10 shops and 200 seat restaurant on the Port Campbell headland near 4 major sea caverns.
- Ecotourism needs stricter guidelines and needs to be aware that it cannot damage the product that it seeks to sell. It would be appropriate for ecotourism ventures to return funding into biodiversity
- The Group supports appropriately designed walking tracks and a bicycle path to the north of the Great Ocean Road.
• Heritage and Eco tourist business and their staff should undertake certification and licensing to ensure best practice, with their conformance reviewed regularly. This should improve the tourist experience and more importantly protect the assets that form the basis of their business and the reason for tourist patronage.

Dr Marion Manifold
Secretary, Port Campbell Community Group Inc. A0051688U

• **Finalist Award – Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence 2011 – Community Actions & Partnerships**
• **Finalist Certificate – Regional Achievement and Community Awards 2011 - Parks Victoria Award**
• **Finalist Award – Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence 2013 – Community Actions & Partnerships**

**Appendix:**

**Written concerns regarding environmental, infrastructure &/or social impacts on surrounding public land from the proposed Southern Ocean Beach House on Port Campbell headland raised by:**

- Dr Eric Bird - world renown coastal geomorphologist
- Dr Susan White – karst specialist
- Prof Brian Finlayson - geomorphologist & hydrogeologist
- Neville Rosengren. Senior Lecturer: Environmental Geosciences Department of Civil Engineering & Physical Science La Trobe University
- Russell Brown - geotechnical engineer who has mapped sea caverns and closed Great Ocean Road on headland for VicRoads
- Mark Stuckey – hydrologist, Environmental & Earth Sciences
- Damien Kenneally - Civil Engineer with specialist karst qualifications
- National Trust
- Western Coastal Board
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Environment Victoria
- Friends of the Earth
- Protectors of Public Lands Inc
- Allan Willingham - Heritage Architect
- Heytesbury Historical Society
- RSL
- Mike Scott - Town Planner, Planisphere
- Allan Wyatt - Environmental Resources Management
- John Slykhuis – Landscape Consultant
- Bill O’Shea - Landscaping and Revegetation Specialist
- Port Campbell Community Group
- Port Campbell Environment Group
- Port Campbell Professional Fishermen’s Association
- Port Campbell Boat Club
- Seafood Industry Victoria
- VRFish
- Boating Industry of Victoria Association
- Victorian Coastal Alliance Inc
- Ms Nina Hall - PhD Marine Protected Area Researcher
- Mr Peter Kavanagh, Member for Western Province - questions to Minister for Planning
- Mr Terry Mulder, State Member for Polwarth, has written to Hon Mr Thwaites requesting investigation on environmental, cultural and infrastructure grounds. Written to Min Madden requesting onsite meeting which was refused.
- Ms Jennie George, Federal MP - encouraged thorough environmental assessment.
- Hon David Hawker, Federal Member for Wannon
- Ms Colleen Hartland Greens MP – questions to Minister for Planning
- Mr Matthew Guy Shadow Minister for Planning
- Mr Peter Ryan MLA, Nationals Leader
- Parliamentary Select Committee First Interim Report, December 2007
- Parliamentary Select Committee Interim Report, July 2008
- Parliamentary Select Committee Report, September 2008
- 2004 Petition to Council (approx 890 signatures) requesting to refuse permit to SOBH.
- 20 June 2007 Petition to Legislative Assembly (685 signatures) requesting no Crown land be given to SOBH.
- Corangamite Shire – 19 October 2005 VCAT submission:
  - “The intensity of use and development of the land is too great and will have a negative impact on the amenity of the surrounding area and the low scale, coastal character of the township of Port Campbell’ (143.3).
  - “The Proposal does not adequately address and mitigate the impact it will have on the character and amenity of the Port Campbell township” (142).
  - ‘The land use proposed for the site provides inadequate car parking especially for staff, on the land and will put an unreasonable burden on the public car parking provided close to the development site’ (143.2).
  - Re ‘Parking provision’: ‘Council does not believe this issue can be overcome to Council’s satisfaction through the use of a parking management plan’ (162).