LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
59th Parliament
INQUIRY INTO ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GROWING POPULATIONS

SUBMISSION INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is presented by the Frankton Beach Association, a not for profit organisation, which has worked in conjunction with local government for over 37 years for the protection and enhancement of the marine, coastal and recreational values of local beaches and foreshores.

2. The focuses of this submission are on the Mornington Peninsula (Peninsula) in general and more specifically on the township of Mount Eliza which adjoins the City of Frankston, both of which are within the Federal Seat of Dunkley.

3. In the face of a growing population, and with climate change threats to key environmental values, this submission posits that there is a need for new and safe public open spaces to meet the needs of the communities of the Peninsula while also safeguarding the natural, landscape, cultural and historical assets of the region which are among its greatest attractions.

ABOUT THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA

4. The Peninsula is one of Melbourne’s greatest assets. Located just over 40 kilometres south east of Melbourne, it is a boot-shaped promontory separating the Port Phillip and Western Port bays. It covers 723 km² of land and encompasses 10% of Victoria’s coastline, spanning 192 kilometres.

5. The Peninsula is characterised by some 44 townships and villages stretching from Mount Eliza in the north to Portsea in the south west to Crib Point in the east. The majority of the population lives in the townships bordering the coastline. Around 70% of the Peninsula is designated Green Wedge.

6. Plan Melbourne 2017-50 recognises that Melbourne is experiencing the greatest population boom since the post-War era. This is reflected on the Peninsula where the current estimated population of 166,922 in 2020 is forecast to grow to 181,097
by 2036. This represents a growth rate of around 8.5%. The incremental increase in population numbers (after births, deaths, natural increase and decrease) is forecast as follows 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>2017 to 2021</th>
<th>2022 to 2026</th>
<th>2027 to 2031</th>
<th>2032 to 2036</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population change</td>
<td>7,272</td>
<td>3,902</td>
<td>4,194</td>
<td>4,867</td>
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</table>

7. The Mornington Peninsula is also critical to the future liveability, sustainability and prosperity of the wider Melbourne metropolitan region. Its importance in providing new residential opportunities for suburban expansion in the southern suburbs of Melbourne, and as a retirement destination for Melbournians, continues. Over 24% of the Peninsula’s population is now aged over 65, the highest proportion in Greater Melbourne. The flow of empty-nesters and retirees from Greater Melbourne is expected to continue as the population of Melbourne ages. 2

8. The natural and recreational attractions, the food and wine industries, educational facilities, employment opportunities, health services and unique character and charm make the Peninsula’s townships sought after places to live and visit.

9. There are approximately 83,620 dwellings on the Peninsula with an average household size of 2.42 persons. 3 The Peninsula is also a premier holiday destination, with tourism being a critical component of the local economy. Many beach holiday houses and camping grounds are based along the Port Phillip coastline with the population swelling by up to 30% in the summer months. 4 While patronage of the foreshore areas increases dramatically over the summer, the coastal area is utilised by residents all year round.

Open Space

10. The Mornington municipality does not have a conservation reserve (the adjoining smaller Frankston municipality has 108ha of conservation reserve, by comparison) despite the recognition of its unique natural environments and outstanding biological diversity: significant, rare native plants and vegetation; wetlands; sites of geomorphological significance; remnant indigenous vegetation; highly scenic landscape values; and sites of historic importance. It is of paramount importance to the Council that places of natural significance and beauty are identified and protected.

11. Climate change will exacerbate the key threats, such as from developments, to the Peninsula’s biodiversity. In line with Clause 13.01-2S of the Planning Scheme, the

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1 Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by id consulting demographic profiles November 2017.
2 Plan Melbourne 2017-50 states that by 2051, the percentage of Melbourne’s population aged over 65 is projected to increase from 13.8 per cent to 20.5 per cent.
3 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Plan 2017-21, p 6
4 Above No 3, p 6
Council does not propose to focus increased housing density in areas at risk from coastal hazards such as at Mount Eliza. The Shire sees that strategically placed extensions of bushland footprint, combined with a combination of improved bushland vegetation quality and habitat complexity, will provide the potential for future-proofing the Peninsula’s biodiversity. Additional areas with remnant bushland need to be conserved without delay.

12. On 12 July 2020, Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley announced that National Parks were to receive a $223 million funding boost intended for “creating jobs and attracting tourists back to Australia’s natural landmarks as the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.” The Peninsula has a mainland Mornington Peninsula National Park managed by Parks Victoria at the southernmost extremity of the promontory which attracts significant numbers of active visitors and is important for the local economy. The northern end of the Peninsula has no areas reserved as national or state park.

13. The Shire intends a dedicated campaign to provide more opportunities for the community to connect with and spend time in nature locally. Opportunities exist at smaller parks and reserves, foreshore areas, wetlands, and in utilising a network of bay walking trails. However, just 5.4% of the municipality is public or semi-public open space.

14. The Peninsula has just 68.8 hectares of natural and semi-natural open space compared with 285 ha in Frankston, 459 ha in Whittlesea, 775 ha in Wyndham and 805 ha in Casey by way of comparison (see attached Table: distribution of open space by municipality). Designated public open space on the Peninsula averages out at 48 m² per person. The Peninsula is clearly undersupplied.

15. The Victorian State Government budget, handed down on Monday 27th May 2020, honoured the Government’s commitment to provide $150 million to be directed to improvements at fourteen existing parks, the creation of 6,500 hectares of new parks, and to new walking and cycling trails across Greater Melbourne. Regrettably, State Government funds for existing or new parks on the Peninsula were not allocated in this budget.

16. This submission considers that the quota of public and semi-public open space on the Peninsula is inadequate to provide for the lifestyle needs of the current and future population, to meet the community’s key values, and to ensure the protection of the many localised natural and other assets and values that draw people to live in Mornington Peninsula Shire, Climate Change Community Engagement Strategy, p 48.

6 French Island is also a National Park.
7 Above No 5, p 50
8 Victorian Planning Authority: Metropolitan Open Space Network Distribution - June 2017, p11
9 Above No 8, p 8
10 Ibid., p 13
11 To develop new parks, park plans and improving existing parks including: Cardinia Creek South Parklands, Clyde Regional Park, Frankston Greenbelt, Jackson Creek Park, Kororoit Creek Park, Quarry Hills Parklands, Sandbelt Parklands, Seaford Wetlands, Toolern Regional Park, Upper Merri Park, Wallan Regional Park, Werribee River Regional Park, Werribee Township Regional Park and William Ruthven Reserve.
the region. **Mount Eliza presents an ideal location and opportunity to redress this undersupply and the oversights in funding.**

**MOUNT ELIZA**

17. Mount Eliza is one of 44 Peninsula townships but, with the expansion of the Melbourne metropolitan area into the northern areas of the Mornington Peninsula, this interface area has now developed the characteristics of a suburban area. By 2036, the growth rate in **dwelling numbers** in Mount Eliza is forecast to be 11.5%.

The need for added public open spaces will correspondingly grow.

18. Separating the urban growth boundaries of townships of Mount Eliza and Mornington is an existing ‘green’ coastal buffer zone which is characteristic of the contained townships on the Peninsula. This idea of establishing set boundaries within which to contain urban sprawl and to safeguard intervening open rural spaces was first introduced by the Hamer State Government in the 1960s and later codified as Green Wedge by the Bracks’ Government.

19. The Council’s intent is that there will be no linear development between towns and, by maintaining the Urban Growth boundary, to avoid the expansion and coalescence of townships into the Green Wedge. However, the Mount Eliza coastal strip at the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary that currently provides a ‘green wedge’ between the urban areas of Mount Eliza and Mornington is facing development pressures from an increase in population that threatens the continuing existence of this green ‘interlude’ and the sustainability of the local environmental values and the landscape character.

20. This submission proposes that there is an ideal opportunity for the creation of a new **Coastal Park**, comprising a suggested 157.7 hectares of land along the Mount Eliza foreshore, to permanently preserve the existing green belt between these two townships in order to safeguard its biodiversity and cultural, historical and landscape values, and to meet many of the physical, social and health needs of the community.

21. The land parcels under consideration fall within UNESCO’s **Westernport Biosphere Reserve** established in 2003. Biospheres encourage the community to develop better ways to meet social and economic needs while conserving natural processes and biodiversity. The creation of a **Coastal Park inclusive of the identified land parcels** as shown in Figure 1 meets both Biosphere aims.

22. The identified properties are located outside the Urban Growth Boundary and are currently subject to planning controls as indicated below:

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13 MPS Housing and Settlement Strategy: Refresh 2020-2036, p 19
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPERTY</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>ZONE</th>
<th>OVERLAYS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pinecliff (55-75 Sunnyside Rd, Mount Eliza)</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>GWZ</td>
<td>ESO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Star Estate (2 Sunnyside Rd, Mount Eliza)</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>GWZ</td>
<td>ESO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ansett Estate comprising (Norman Lodge - 11.7 ha) and (90 Kunyung Rd, Mount Eliza - 22.3 ha)</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>GWZ</td>
<td>ESO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryman Healthcare (60-70 Kunyung Rd, Mount Eliza)</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>SUZ14</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decommissioned South East Water Reservoir (57 Kunyung Rd, Mount Eliza)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>PUZ</td>
<td>VPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>157.7</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1  Properties proposed for inclusion in a new Coastal Park.*

**HOW WILL A NEW COASTAL PARK MEET THE KEY VALUES AND NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY?**

23. The creation of a new Coastal Park at Mount Eliza will boost the current meagre quota of public and semi-public open spaces on the Peninsula, protect and enhance local natural features, vegetation, ecological diversity, landscape quality and heritage values, and meet the recreation, health and well-being needs of a growing number of residents and visitors.

**Public Health and Wellbeing**

24. The function of a council under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 is to seek to protect, improve and promote public health and well-being within the municipal district. Positive health and well-being outcomes are fundamentally important for the Peninsula community and a key success factor for the Mornington Peninsula Shire. It is the Council’s stated intention to provide the wider community with more opportunities and facilities for recreation in open and passive reserves across the Peninsula. **A Coastal Park at Mount Eliza fits the bill.**

25. Only 18% of the Peninsula is serviced by public transport with limited and infrequent bus services and no train connections between major Peninsula activity centres. The current Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions on attendance at workplaces and on movements have led to a huge surge in demand for the use of local public parks and outdoor spaces. Principle 7 of Plan Melbourne 2017-50 is to ensure neighbourhoods and suburbs are safe and walkable. **A local Coastal Park will provide for recreation within a ‘20-minute walkable neighbourhood’ and assist in encouraging a shift away from car use and help reduce vehicle emissions for cleaner air.**

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14 Amendment C270morn currently proposes to rezone this property to GWZ.  
15 The former Ansett Land includes the original 1854 mansion and represents one of the earliest phases of Victoria’s pastoral history.  
16 Above No 13, p 23
26. As urban development intensifies with associated traffic and noise, people may suffer ill health effects from air and noise pollution. Air pollution is detrimental to human health causing respiratory and cardiovascular disease and mortality, bronchitis, asthma, and exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It is estimated to account for more deaths than the nation’s road toll. A Coastal Park will result in cleaner air.

Human interventions

27. Coastal processes have clearly been exacerbated by various human activities including residential drainage discharge, stormwater overflows, litter and pollution, and land use and development. Runoff from residential areas and roads which picks up pollutants has long been identified in Mount Eliza as posing a threat to receiving environments such as Port Phillip Bay. Currently, stormwater outfalls and private drainage outlets outfalling onto steep slopes at times of high rainfall are causing local erosion along the Mount Eliza coastline, polluting the bay water and foreshore.

28. Strategies to minimise run-off and improve discharged storm water quality are listed as a high priority in Mount Eliza. Planning will play an important role by focusing development in areas already developed, or in areas with high resilience that can tolerate more intensive use and then ensuring development effectively manages stormwater. A Coastal Park will ensure minimal future change to the natural environment bordering the bay from discharge.

Natural impacts

29. The Mount Eliza coastline is also subject to natural impacts including from wind, waves and sea level. The importance of conservation of existing flora and fauna and archaeological sites, in addition to revegetation works, is stressed in numerous Shire studies and management documents. With the assured retention of native vegetation and the minimal intervention and intrusion occasioned by the creation of a coastal park, the highly dynamic nature of the coast, and the interdependency between catchments and coastal systems will be respected and the natural coastal and cultural values will neither be degraded nor compromised.

Biodiversity

30. “Protecting Melbourne’s biodiversity and natural assets is essential for remaining a productive and healthy city.” (Principle 4 ‘Environmental resilience and sustainability’, Plan Melbourne 2017-50). Conserving existing flora and fauna values and maintaining diversity and remnant vegetation is listed as a high priority in Mount Eliza. The Mount Eliza foreshore area supports a diverse range of coastal

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17 Plan Melbourne 2017-50, p 141
19 For example, Mount Eliza Foreshore Reserve Draft Management Plan (1988)
20 Above No 19, 6-1
vegetation, reflecting a range of landform and habitat features from cliffs to beaches to creeks. The establishment of a coastal park connecting to the foreshore expands the opportunities for a sustainable, healthy environment.

31. Biosis Research undertaken in 1995 indicates that the Mount Eliza foreshore has a high significance for nature conservation with the most intact native coastal vegetation on the Port Phillip Bay coastline. A park / buffer zone will bolster the possibilities and likelihood of keeping this remnant vegetation intact so future generations will also be able to enjoy the benefits of the naturalistic coastal environment.

32. A search of the EPBC online database reveals the presence of 23 threatened species, 21 migratory species and 18 marine protected species that may occur within the area of the Mount Eliza foreshore. In addition to resident species, a number of migratory species such as birds are likely to reside in the coastal bluffs and cliffs. A quiet and peaceful adjoining area will encourage their return visits and aid their survival.

Cultural Heritage

33. The Boon Wurrung and Bunurong Aboriginal people are reported to be the original inhabitants of the Mount Eliza area. Evidence of aboriginal occupation along the Mount Eliza foreshore can be found in the form of middens in the eroding cliffs and bluffs. High priority is given in Mount Eliza to monitoring and protecting Aboriginal values and sites of significance. A coastal park will ensure the protection of a site-specific area of recognised cultural significance.

Green Wedge

34. Plan Melbourne 2017-50 acknowledges that Melbourne’s green wedges and peri-urban areas must be effectively managed so that valued features and attributes are protected. The vision of the Mornington Peninsula Shire is to value, protect and improve the unique characteristics and way of life on the Peninsula.

35. The Mornington Peninsula Green Wedge is crucial to the amenity, lifestyle and wellbeing of residents and visitors. The completion of the Green Wedge Management Plan has been one of Council’s highest strategic planning priorities to ensure that the Green Wedge is protected, planned and managed in the interests of both the current community and those living here in the future. A number of

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21 Above No 19, 6-4
22 Above No 3
23 MPSC 2018-19 Annual Report, p 14
properties earmarked for inclusion in a new Coastal Park are already zoned Green Wedge Zone.

Planning

36. Good planning provides for the fundamentals of strong and sustainable neighbourhoods. The 2017-50 Plan Melbourne ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ is all about ‘living locally’—giving people the ability to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or local public transport trip of their home. A new Coastal Park will be accessible within 20 minutes of the homes of all residents in Mount Eliza.

37. Amendment C270morn currently seeks ministerial approval for an amendment to rezone to the Green Wedge Zone the historic property at 60-70 Kunyung Road Mount Eliza that is identified for inclusion in a new Coastal Park (see Figure 1). If adopted, this change will help ensure its future protection from inappropriate development and the retention of its cultural heritage, historical and environmental values, a ‘living link’ with the past for those ‘living locally’ today.

SUMMARY

38. The creation of new Coastal Parkland at Mount Eliza will

- Meet the aims and objectives of many Council plans and strategies including the Green Wedge Management Plan, Community Plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan, Climate Change Community Engagement Strategy.
- Maintain a non-urban vegetated break and ‘breathing space’ between the urban areas of Mount Eliza and Mornington to contain urban sprawl as the population grows.
- Provide a ‘green’ space for enjoyable social interactions where people meet, exercise and relax within a natural environment.
- Bolster the current low level of public and semi-public natural open space on the Peninsula to help meet the health and well-being needs of the local community, a need that has become more urgent with the restrictions on movements during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provide a public benefit, including cleaner air, that derives from a healthy ecosystem.
- Foster the recreational, cultural and spiritual benefits that derive from personal connections with nature.
- Acknowledge and respect Aboriginal culture, values and practices and provide for the protection and management of local sites of Aboriginal and post-European settlement cultural heritage to ensure that links with the past are preserved.
- Conserve scenic landscapes, geological formations and archaeological sites of significance.
- Maintain and enhance the diversity of indigenous flora and fauna habitats and species and, over time, achieve a net gain in the quantity and quality of native vegetation.
• Provide opportunities for residents to be included in community revegetation projects to add to the qualities of public open space.
• Avoid some of the impacts of population increase and climate change that is causing habitat loss and biodiversity decline in urbanised areas.
• Preserve a green space with high quality landscape connectivity for wildlife to feed, shelter, move and disperse which will aid their survival in the locality.
• Reduce the level of exposure to natural hazards such as rising sea level and erosion of coastal cliff faces by ensuring developments are located away from risks.
• Provide cooling effects from increased greening to offset heat-island effects felt in urbanised areas.
• Enable an equitable use of a public open space that meets the passive recreation needs of community members regardless of age, gender or capability.
• Minimise negative impacts from sediment laden run-off and water pollution on the Port Phillip coastal ecosystems.
• Facilitate sustainable year-round visitation that maintains the integrity of the natural environment while boosting the local economy.

A Mount Eliza Coastal Park is long overdue!

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission.

Joan Cavanagh
Secretary
Frankston Beach Association Inc
PO Box 5092
South Frankston VIC 3199
E: fbainc2006@hotmail.com

22 September 2020
### 3.3 Data tables

#### Table 1: Distribution of public open space types per municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA (km²)</th>
<th>CMH SQUARES &amp; PROMENADES</th>
<th>CONSERVATION RESERVES</th>
<th>NATURAL &amp; SEMI-NATURAL OPEN SPACE</th>
<th>PARKS &amp; GARDENS</th>
<th>RECREATION CORRIDORS</th>
<th>SPORTSFIELDS &amp; ORGANISED RECREATION</th>
<th>TRANSPORT RESERVATIONS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>-</td>
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