

Enhancing Victoria's Marine and Coastal Policy Settings: a five point plan based on the White Paper on 'Land and Biodiversity'.

*Dr Geoff Wescott. Endorsed as **Australian Coastal Society policy** by the Board (4 June 2010)*

Integrating catchment, coastal and marine policy in a time of climate change is the admirable objective of evolving Victorian government policy, including the White Paper on Land and Biodiversity. The Victorian coast specifically also faces the challenge of rapid sea change induced development pressures. The recommendations below respond to these challenges using, as a foundation, Victoria's highly praised current coastal planning and management system.

- 1.** The proposed Victorian Marine Plan and the Victorian Coastal Strategy are combined into a **Victorian Marine and Coastal Plan** which becomes the primary strategic planning document for Victorian marine and coastal environments. The Plan is prepared in the manner of the current Coastal Strategy with the implementation of the Plan being through the new Marine and Coastal Council which is attached to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- 2.** The **Marine and Coastal Council** is constituted of independent individuals with marine and/ or coastal expertise and is reduced in size from the previous Coastal Council to a Chair and 3 members only. The Council is responsible for the preparation of the Draft Victorian Marine and Coastal Plan and the monitoring of the implementation of the final plan - as well as advising the Premier on all marine and coastal matters. The Chair becomes a full member of the new Natural Resources Catchment Management Council.
- 3.** All coastally based **Natural Resources and Catchment Authorities** are chaired by a person with marine or coastal expertise and at least half of their members (including the Chair) are to have coastal or marine expertise.
- 4.** Coastal Action Plans are re-vamped as marine and coastal chapters of the **Regional Catchment and Coastal Strategies** with their method of production and implementation as for Coastal Action Plans in the existing Coastal Management Act.
- 5.** A new **Marine and Coastal Act** is introduced (based on the Coastal Management Act 1995) which maintains all the critical elements of the current Coastal Management Act including the objectives. The new Act places greater emphasis on the marine environment and on integration with catchment management. The Act establishes the new Marine and Coastal Council and also defines the Victorian Coastal Zone (land and sea) using the work of the Coastal Spaces program and taking into account the current review of planning responses to the impacts of climate change on the coast.