

# Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Cowes to Stony Point Vehicle Ferry Business Case

## Will there be a 200m “exclusion zone” around the proposed Cowes vehicle ferry terminal and jetty?

A 200 metre exclusion zone on either side of a jetty is not common practice in Victoria. An exclusion zone is typically used for vessel safety (including all craft such as jet skis). If one is applied it is often, but not always, applied to the area of the jetty where the vessel docks for safety reasons, depending on the needs of the vessels using it. Similarly, an exclusion zone is typically only applied to the berth (i.e. at the end of the jetty to the seaward side) not the remainder of the jetty or the beach.

It is too soon to determine whether an exclusion zone will be needed for the berth, this would be decided in the approvals process and in consultation with the proponent ferry operator, if the project proceeds.

## Will pedestrians be able to walk along the beach under the Cowes terminal design being that is being considered?

The project team is conscious of the importance of the beach as both a community and tourism asset and has aimed to provide project options that minimise shoreline impact. For this reason, the current design being considered for Cowes does have capacity for pedestrian access underneath the jetty along the beach, however this will be looked at in more detail should the project proceed to the detailed design phase. Detailed Design as well as all future steps will mean that the community has an additional opportunity to have direct input.

## Will the public be able to use the jetty for recreational fishing?

If the project proceeds, the proposed terminal would be a community asset with the current design utilising a dedicated pedestrian walk way along the length of the jetty. So long as pedestrian use of the jetty is kept within vehicle safety parameters to maintain the highest levels of public safety, there is opportunity for recreational activities such as fishing to occur. Should the project proceed, this will be something to be considered during the detailed design phase.

## Will the community be able to provide input on the terminals aesthetic appeal?

Landscaping and other opportunities to contribute to the “look and feel” of the final Cowes and Stony Point terminals will make up part of the detailed design phase should the project proceed.

## The beach is a community asset, will this destroy the visual amenity and reduce access to the beaches on Phillip Island?

The project team is conscious of the importance of the beach as both a community and tourism asset and has aimed to provide project options that minimise shoreline impact. The design under consideration uses a pylon structure and extended jetty in order to minimise impact to natural vegetation and where possible avoid seagrass areas. This design aims to minimise the impact on tidal flows and erosion and avoids the need for operational dredging. Further design details can be found in the *Design Implications* section of the Discussion Paper, and has been expanded upon further in the draft Business Case, which was made available for download from the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018.

## I am concerned that a large section of beach will be unusable due to a rock wall and concrete pier about 30-50 meters wide

The suggested rock wall and concrete pier designs shown in community responses to the Discussion Paper are of a previous concept (from the 2010 report), which was dismissed by Council. This design was also only proposed for the Cowes Jetty Site and was dismissed by the Community and by Council. The current design being considered in the Business Case instead recommends a pylon jetty structure with dolphin berths that extends out into deep water. This design significantly reduces the need for concrete and is designed to avoid operational dredging, a rock wall or concrete barrier.

## I am concerned with erosion effects from dredging, ferry motion and the impact to sandy beaches with rock walls. e.g. Sorrento, Queenscliff and Portsea

The Draft Business Case has taken community feedback on the Discussion Paper into account and has designed a Business Case jetty that is a pylon design, 12.5 meters wide with dedicated pedestrian access and a length suitable to avoid operational dredging. If the project proceeds it would first progress to an environmental assessment and monitoring phase, as well as detailed design and then finally development approval – all of which would involve additional community consultation.

Preliminary environmental investigations have resulted in the current design having the benefit of not requiring dredging or impacting coastal flows, utilising existing deep water aims to reduce the impacts to the coastline and other recreational beach activity from vessel backwash.

## I am concerned about a possible negative impact on wildlife. Particularly the Hooded Plover nesting area, seals, dolphins and native birds.

As stated in the Visitor Economy Strategy for Phillip Island and San Remo, the environment of Phillip Island is the future of the economy. The project team is very aware of the need to ensure environmental issues are central to the consideration of the car ferry proposal. The environmental impact on native wildlife, particularly the hooded plover nesting area, will be explored in the draft Business Case. It will be an integral part of the Report's final recommendations outlining which site in Cowes would have the least impact to both the community and environment. For a current overview of the preliminary research please refer to the *Design Considerations* section of the Discussion Paper. The Draft Business Case released on Bass Coast Shire Council's website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February also contains a planning and environment report in Appendix C.

## Will the Business Case take into account traffic and parking implications for beach users including, existing boat trailer parking for boat ramp users, access to private moorings and to the Anderson boat ramp?

Traffic Management is considered as part of the draft Business Case, with consideration of additional parking needs and congestion impacts. A vehicle ferry has the potential to provide an alternative access option for those visiting Cowes and the Summerland Peninsula and the inclusion of coaches on the ferry may reduce the number of vehicles visiting the island in peak periods due to the time saved using the service. The traffic queuing area will also be considered in detail, with the current designs exploring the utilisation of an extended jetty that can be used for vehicle queuing. This would likely have the effect of minimising the impact to the streets surrounding the terminal site.

Further design details make up part of the Draft Business Case which was made available for download from the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018. For a current overview of research already conducted please refer to the *Traffic Considerations* section of the Discussion Paper.

## I am concerned that this is a commercial activity in a residential area and I feel this is not an efficient use of public funding.

The Vehicle Ferry Business Case was commissioned in order to address the need for critical public infrastructure to help manage the regions increased popularity as a tourism destination. The intent of the Business Case is to look at the most suitable locations, but it also looks at the overall cost / benefit of the project for the community.

Economic analysis available in the Draft Business Case suggests that the tourism benefit of creating an iconic touring route linking the Great Ocean Road, Mornington Peninsula, Phillip Island and Gippsland could generate an additional \$152.2M in direct visitor expenditure supporting up to 278 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in the first year of operation.

The Draft Business Case which was made available for download from the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, contains a detailed benefits cost analysis (BCA) in order to accurately highlight the economic impact to the community.

## I feel that Anderson Boat Ramp is a recreational boating, fishing, sailing area and not suitable for a large commercial vessel

You may have already seen Councils press release stating that the preliminary Business Case has indicated Anderson Boat Ramp is **not** the preferred location and that the area near the Yacht Club is more suitable. It is important to stress that a final site selection has not yet been determined, and this is one of the roles of the final Business Case.

The current design being considered involves a long pier structure that extends out into the deep water of bay. Aside from this design having the benefit of not requiring dredging or impacting coastal flows, utilising existing deep water helps prevent impacts to the coastline and other recreational beach activity due to backwash. Further information can be found in the Draft Business Case which was released the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.

I am concerned that up to 40 cars every hour as well as buses will be coming off and on the vehicle ferry, and that an even larger ferry may be considered.

Only a moderate sized ferry (36 car) is viable for the service. This is half the size of the Portsea - Sorrento Ferry and could reduce travel times between the destinations by 20 minutes (on a journey between Cowes and Sorrento) at current levels of congestion.

Our demand modeling suggests that on average a 36 vehicle ferry would initially sit at around 45-50% capacity per trip and continue to meet demand over our 30 year projections. Also, while the current ferry design does have capacity for 30 cars and 1 bus, it could also carry 2 buses and fewer cars should this be required, or even emergency vehicles, so long as it only carries a maximum of 300 passengers per trip (including walk on passengers).

One of the benefits of utilising a vehicle ferry is to help divert tourist traffic away from the San Remo Bridge in order to reduce congestion and not impede access for emergency vehicles. It is anticipated that the primary market for the vehicle ferry would be tourists thus helping alleviate traffic congestion for locals on Phillip Island or those visiting friends and family.

For a detailed explanation of the demand modeling you can refer to the *Demand Model* section of the Discussion Paper. Further Economic Analysis can be found in the Draft Business Case which was made available on the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.

I'm concerned about the potential impact of light and noise pollution for the residents surrounding the ferry terminal site.

Noise and light pollution was one of the main points brought up during the initial community consultation. The draft Business Case has taken this into account and adapt the design of the terminals with this in mind. By utilising an extended pylon jetty structure that runs perpendicular to the beach, this significantly reduces the impact of vehicle and vessel noise along the shoreline. The traffic queuing area will also be considered in detail, with the current designs exploring the utilisation of an extended jetty that can be used for vehicle queuing. This would likely have the effect of minimising the impact to the streets surrounding the terminal site. During construction, as with any construction project, there is a potential for disruption however this will be closely monitored to minimise any disruption to residents.

Further design details make part of the draft Business Case which was released on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February as well as in the *Traffic Considerations* section of the Discussion Paper released in November 2017.

How will the impact to native vegetation around the shoreline be minimised?

The project team is very aware of the need to reduce the impact on native vegetation and is therefore seeking to avoid locations without an existing development footprint. The Draft Business Case will take into account community feedback that shoreline impact be minimised. Environmental sustainability is one of the corner stones of EarthCheck's business and as a result, the current design being considered uses a pylon structure with an extended jetty in order to minimise impact to native flora and fauna. This design will aim to reduce the impact on tidal flows and mitigates the need for operational dredging. Further details can be found in the *Design Implications* section of the Discussion Paper, as well as the Draft Business Case which was made available on the Bass Coast Shire Council website on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.

## Why don't we just extend the bridge?

The Business Case explores a range of alternative solutions to a car ferry, including road improvements.

The Emergency Management Commissioner (December 2017) has stated that access to Phillip Island via the existing bridge remains a significant vulnerability during congestion events, and that from an emergency management perspective the ferry proposal provides a significant alternative for both residents and emergency services. Phillip Island Road has been closed nine times since 2012 causing severe delays or road closures of up to 5 hours.

A ferry is also a more sustainable option for the community than widening the bridge as the capacity can be managed at peak times, reducing the negative effects of crowding and bottle-necks in summer and other times of increased demand.

## I feel as though I was not consulted, when was the public notified of this project?

We apologise for any perceived lack of transparency during the initial stages of this project. EarthCheck employed a number of methods aimed at notifying the community from September 2017. Our goal was, and still is to collect the widest possible snapshot of the views and opinions of residents and business owners from the Bass Coast Shire, Mornington Peninsula Shire and surrounds. A full list of the engagement methods utilised can be found in the *Stage One Consultation* section of the Discussion Paper.

One of the benefits of the recent increase in media attention is that community awareness has begun to snowball independently which helps ensure even more residents, businesses and non-resident homeowners are *Joining the Conversation*. Now that the Draft Business Case has been released, we encourage further feedback and will be holding another round of in region community consultation. The details of these are on both Bass Coast Shire Council and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council websites.

## What further environmental studies will be conducted?

The Business Case is designed to assess if the project is feasible, this is followed by an extended environmental monitoring phase which will likely include a comprehensive hydrographic sand movement and updated coastal process assessment as well as environmental assessments. Should the project proceed beyond this stage, it will then go into detailed design as well as seeking a commercial partner so that it can be assessed under Development Application (DA). The DA process is a public process, with consultation and that is where final details are agreed - if the project proceeds.

## Do I still have an opportunity to have my say?

While the extension of Stage One feedback on the Discussion Paper finishes on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, there is still another community consultation sessions scheduled from the 16<sup>th</sup> of February until the 13<sup>th</sup> of April. EarthCheck will be conducting a number of open house information sessions in Bass Coast Shire and Mornington Peninsula Shire and if requested, French Island. The details of these have been released and can be found on both Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast Shire Council websites.

The aim of the draft Business Case is not develop a car ferry terminal, but to test the viability of the proposal before any further work is done. This includes examination of the economic costs and benefits, the potential environmental effects and the social impacts including traffic, noise and visual amenity. Your inputs highlight important concerns not only in assessing the viability of the proposal but also considerations for any future studies should the project proceed.

On completion of the final Business Case, both Councils and the State Government need to assess whether the project should proceed. If the project proceeds it would progress to an environmental assessment and monitoring phase, as well as detailed design and then finally development approval – all of which would involve additional community consultation.

Information on these sessions has been released to coincide to the release of the draft Business Case which was made available online on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018. You can also email in your feedback at any time to [Consulting@EarthCheck.org](mailto:Consulting@EarthCheck.org) and one of our consulting team will respond.