

# BUSINESS PLAN

## 2024 – 2026



The Victorian Marine and Coastal Council's **vision** is a healthy marine and coastal environment, now and in the future. The Council's **purpose** is to provide evidence and stakeholder-informed advice to enable leadership in the adaptive planning and management of Victoria's marine waters and coastal areas.



**The time is now – to speak, listen and act with courage; to make decisions together and transparently that are in the interests of our oceans, coastlines, connected landscapes and waterways for generations to follow."**

**A message from Traditional Owners in the Victorian Marine and Coastal Strategy (2022)**

Ever since First Nations settlement of the Australian land mass, there has been a strong human connection with the Victorian coastline. Today around 80% of Victoria's growing population visit the coast each year. They value the clean beaches and coastal life alongside the profound natural and often rugged beauty, rich with unique marine life and diverse ecosystems. Our marine waters and coast provide social, cultural, economic and environment benefits that are important for supporting biodiversity, business, tourism, recreation, and wellbeing.

The Victorian Government is committed to protecting and enhancing these values by improving management and oversight arrangements for the state's marine and coastal environment as set out in the **Marine and Coastal Act (2018)**, **Marine and Coastal Policy (2020)** and **Marine and Coastal Strategy (2022)**. These instruments have been created to improve planning, protection, management, and sustainable use of our marine and coastal environments, in the context of population growth, competing demands, ageing coastal structures and the enormous challenge of climate change. The Act requires local and regional partners to work together to achieve the best outcomes for Victoria, while the policy and strategy provide detail to guide collaboration.

The **Victorian Marine and Coastal Council** (VMaCC) was established under the Act to provide independent stakeholder informed, evidence-based advice to the government on a range of matters including the implementation of statewide policy and strategy; significant decisions relating to the marine and coastal environment; and matters requiring scientific research. The **VMaCC Business Plan for 2024-26** documents the priorities of the Council and aims to inform marine and coastal stakeholders about the actions it will take to deliver its functions under the Act.

# Introduction

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The Victorian Marine and Coastal Council consists of eight members who have networks from across Victoria and expertise spanning marine environments, coasts, planning, law, physical sciences, cultural heritage, policy, engagement, state and local Government, ecological sciences, catchment management, fisheries and more.

With the release of the Victorian Marine and Coastal Policy (2020) and Strategy (2022), Council's focus shifts to supporting and monitoring effective application and implementation. Our priority is to continue seeking stakeholder feedback on issues (both ongoing and emerging) and the evolving use of tools and processes including Marine Spatial Plans, Regional and Strategic Partnerships and Coastal and Marine Management Plans. Adaptation to the new climate realities, future sea level rise, and coastal erosion will be a growing focus.

We will honour the objectives of the Marine and Coastal Act in a tangible way, with focus on the rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners and Custodians, embedding climate action into planning and management, and integrating how we plan and manage the conflicting uses of our marine environment, and their links with our catchments and coasts.

Throughout our advice and advocacy, we aim to build capability and capacity in the Victorian community, and the marine and coastal sector for leadership and stewardship of our precious marine and coastal assets. We look forward to celebrating and honouring the many Victorian coastal and marine champions at the 2024 Victorian Marine and Coastal Awards.

With the trusted support of our Expert Advisory Panel, we will consolidate the latest science, stakeholder-informed evidence and other knowledge needed to support better decision-making and advise the Ministers responsible for our marine and coastal environments.

We will be accountable, transparent and open, and listen actively to the views and ideas from across Victoria and the wider sector. We are always looking for innovative and practical ideas from all Victorian stakeholders and rights holders. We encourage constructive frankness in all our dealings to help us improve and better integrate the planning and management of our wonderful and special Victorian marine and coastal environments.

# Our strategic focus

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## Our purpose

To provide evidence-based and stakeholder-informed advice for Ministers to enable leadership in the adaptive planning and management of Victoria's marine waters and coastal areas

## Our unique value

To use our influence, expertise and convening powers for a healthy, dynamic and biodiverse marine and coastal environment that is valued in its own right, and that benefits the Victorian community, now and in the future

## Our strategic focus:



**Improve the effectiveness and application of the Marine and Coastal Policy**



**Champion increased investment into marine and coastal management**



**Support land managers and decision-makers to respond to the issues, impacts, and implications of climate change**

## Enabled by:

- Clear and aligned processes that bring together good governance, policy and practice
- A commitment to create space for listening and continuous learning
- A focus on building collaborative and trusted relationships
- Best practice and emerging science and knowledge

## Supported by our culture of:

- Value and respect for the diversity and experience of our members, stakeholders and rights-holders
- Genuine passion for the Victorian marine and coastal environments and communities
- Constructive frankness and accountability
- Strong commitment to behave according to VPS Code of Conduct



# Marine and Coastal Act 2018

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The Marine and Coastal Act 2018 (the Act) sets out seven international principles of environmental law, used as a framework for decision making within the Victorian marine and coastal environment.

## The guiding principles are:

- 1. Integrated coastal zone management**
- 2. Ecosystem-based management**
- 3. Ecologically sustainable development**
- 4. Evidence-based decision-making**
- 5. Precautionary principle**
- 6. Proportionate and risk-based principle**
- 7. Adaptive management**

# Marine and Coastal Act objectives

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The Act further sets out objectives for the planning and management of the marine and coastal environment.

## The objectives are:

- (a)** to protect and enhance the marine and coastal environment;
- (b)** to promote the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems, communities and assets to climate change;
- (c)** to respect natural processes in planning for and managing current and future risks to people and assets from coastal hazards and climate change;
- (d)** to acknowledge traditional owner groups' knowledge, rights and aspirations for land and sea country;
- (e)** to promote a diversity of experiences in the marine and coastal environment;
- (f)** to promote the ecologically sustainable use and development of the marine and coastal environment and its resources in appropriate areas;
- (g)** to improve community, user group and industry stewardship and understanding of the marine and coastal environment;
- (h)** to engage with specified Aboriginal parties, the community, user groups and industry in marine and coastal planning, management and protection; and
- (i)** to build scientific understanding of the marine and coastal environment.

In performing its functions, Council has regard to the objectives and guiding principles set out in the Act. Council works collaboratively to bring evidence-based and stakeholder-informed advice to these functions.

# Key tools of the Marine and Coastal Act

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With the Marine and Coastal Policy and Strategy implementation well underway, VMaCC's focus shifts to influencing development and effective use of tools that support achievement of the objectives of the Act.

These tools include:

## Marine Spatial Planning

**Marine Spatial Planning** (MSP) is an integrative process that helps marine industry, government, and the community better plan and manage activities in the marine environment across a broad area, now and into the future. MSPs can also support sustainable growth of Victoria's blue economy and climate change adaptation. Required under the Act, a framework for MSP has been included in the Marine and Coastal Policy. MSP guidelines provide detailed instructions and guidance on how to undertake a marine spatial planning process in Victoria, which you can read more about here:

<https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/marine/marine-spatial-planning>

## Coastal and Marine Management Plans

**Coastal and Marine Management Plans** (CMMPs) are statutory public documents created under the Act. They are a tool to assist individual public land managers and the community to care for special coastal and marine environments and manage demand and conflicting uses now and in the future. A plan establishes an agreement between the Victorian Government, the land manager and the community as to how coastal areas of Victoria will be managed.

You can read more about CMMPs here: <https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/marine-coastal-management/coastal-management-plans>

## Regional and Strategic Partnerships

Regional and Strategic Partnerships (RaSPs) are continuing to be piloted under the Act. They are designed to bring multiple stakeholders together to tackle shared regionally or strategically significant issues, working across marine and/or coastal areas and land tenures. VMaCC and partner agencies have the ability to request the creation of RaSP, and VMaCC are also expected to advise parties of a RaSP on the products of the partnership. An example of a RaSP is the **Inverloch Regional and Strategic partnership**, which you can read more about here: <https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/cape-to-cape-resilience-project>

A RaSP may be a mechanism to undertake Marine Spatial Planning.

## VMaCC functions VMaCC Actions



Marine and Coastal Policy and Marine and Coastal Strategy development and **implementation**

*Functions: (a) and (b)*

To support implementation of the **Marine and Coastal Policy** and the **Marine and Coastal Strategy**, VMaCC will:

- engage with Traditional Owners, the community and other stakeholders to identify the opportunities and barriers to implementing the policy and strategy.
- jointly lead the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy with DEECA and Registered Aboriginal Parties (2024)
- build awareness of the coastal impacts of climate change and sea level rise.
- advocate for evidence-based decision making, that supports the Victorian community to prepare for and manage the impacts of sea level rise.
- work with the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability in supporting the preparation of the next **State of the Marine and Coastal Environment Report** due in 2025.
- explore options, provide advice and advocate for funding to achieve the objectives of the Marine and Coastal Policy and Strategy.



Significant **decisions** under the Act

*Function: (c)*

VMaCC will provide advice to the Minister, as requested, on significant decisions under the Act relating to or affecting the marine and coastal environment.



Matters requiring **scientific research**

*Function: (d)*

VMaCC will:

- convene an **Expert Advisory Panel**, drawing on a range of disciplines including physical, biological, chemical and social sciences along with experts in coastal planning and management. The Panel will bolster Council's capacity to provide leading advice on complex matters.
- provide evidence-based advice on matters relevant to the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Policy and Strategy
- identify and prioritise emerging issues, gaps and opportunities relating to implementation of the Marine and Coastal Policy and Strategy.
- collaborate with the State Government and other organisations to establish research and initiatives in areas such as:
  - Marine Spatial Planning
  - coastal adaptation to sea level rise
  - blue carbon restoration and protection, leading to legal and policy measures to enable a blue carbon market.
- collaborate with DEECA to share coastal and marine knowledge and expertise to build capability across the sectors, by encouraging incorporation of information in **Victoria's Marine and Coastal Knowledge Framework** and **Coast Kit**



Provide advice to the Secretary on preparation of **guidelines** under the Act

*Function: (e)*

VMaCC will:

- contribute to the implementation of **Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP) Guidelines**, identifying opportunities to recognise and share exemplary practice.
- champion the development of CMMPs across the Victorian coast that are consistent with the Act and Policy.
- advise on guidance for, and support the uptake of, **Marine Spatial Planning**.
- support the rollout of **Victoria's Resilient Coast** program, including the adaptation framework and guidelines.



Request the Minister establish **regional and strategic partnerships** and provide advice to participants

*Functions: (f) and (g)*

VMaCC will:

- contribute to the evaluation of insights from pilot RaSPs (in Port Phillip and at Inverloch) and support development of guidelines to inform future RaSPs (2024-25).
- review and provide advice on opportunities for RaSPs to be formed (2022-27)



Preparation of **Environmental Management Plans**

*Function: (h)*

VMaCC will:

- provide advice to the Minister on the preparation and review of **Environmental Management Plans** as required.



Advice on matters relating to or affecting the administration of the Act

*Function: (i)*

VMaCC will:

- collaborate with statutory organisations that deliver programs in marine and coastal environments, and provide advice to institutions and users to effectively and appropriately apply the policy and strategy.

As the new tools of the Act are developed and embedded, VMaCC will continue to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of marine and coastal planning and management in Victoria.



To carry out any other function conferred on the Council by or under the Act or any other Act – Peak advisory capability across *Marine and Coastal Sector*

*Function: (j)*

VMaCC will:

- continue to build capability in stakeholders and decision-makers to use the tools developed under the Act as intended to meet the objectives of the Act and the Policy.
- continue to recognise and celebrate the leaders in coastal and marine protection, planning and management through delivery of the next Victorian Marine and Coastal Awards (2024).
- support DEECA to host fora for marine and coastal practitioners and volunteers to share knowledge and information, and identify future risks, challenges and opportunities
- in partnership with DEECA, commission the next wave of **longitudinal social research** to understand what Victorians value about the marine and coastal environment (Wave 6) in 2024-25. This research is conducted every five to eight years and informs policy and strategy development.

**The Victorian Marine and Coastal Council members are:**



**Dr Anthony Boxshall** (Chair)



**Ms Jacquie White** (Dep. Chair)



**Ms Mikaela Power**



**Legend**  
Settlement role

- ★ Regional city
- Town
- Marine National Park
- Marine Sanctuary (1-11)
- Forest or Park
- Coastal park
- Coastal reserve
- Limit of Victorian water  
3 nautical miles



**Professor Gerry Quinn**



**Ms Kylie Steel**



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