December 2022

GREAT OCEAN ROAD COASTAL TRAIL

Master Plan

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

GREAT OCEAN ROAD COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY

Parks VICTORIA

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

Ngatanwarr djaambi

(Greetings to our Friends)

We, the Eastern Maar, are the Traditional Owners of Country that includes the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail. We are the eastern landholding group of a larger Aboriginal nation - the Maar Nation - that includes the Gadubanud language group.

Our story extends for thousands of years before the arrival of the tall ships. Along this 'Otway Coast', our heritage can be seen in the form of coastal shell middens, stone artefacts and locality names given by our Ancestors.

Our biocultural landscapes include both the land and sea. The Sea Country is a very important ecosystem within our traditional territory and has served to inspire, influence and determine our relationship with the land and water, our language, diet, Dreaming Stories, economy and social constructs.

Today we continue to possess a diverse, rich and strong living cultural heritage and take this opportunity to share our Values with you through this Master Plan. From the responsibility inherited through our Ancestral birthright as Custodians and Stewards of Country we have an integral role in the sustainability of our biocultural landscapes. We welcome this Master Plan and the opportunity it provides for a holistic approach to Caring For Country for the benefit of all.

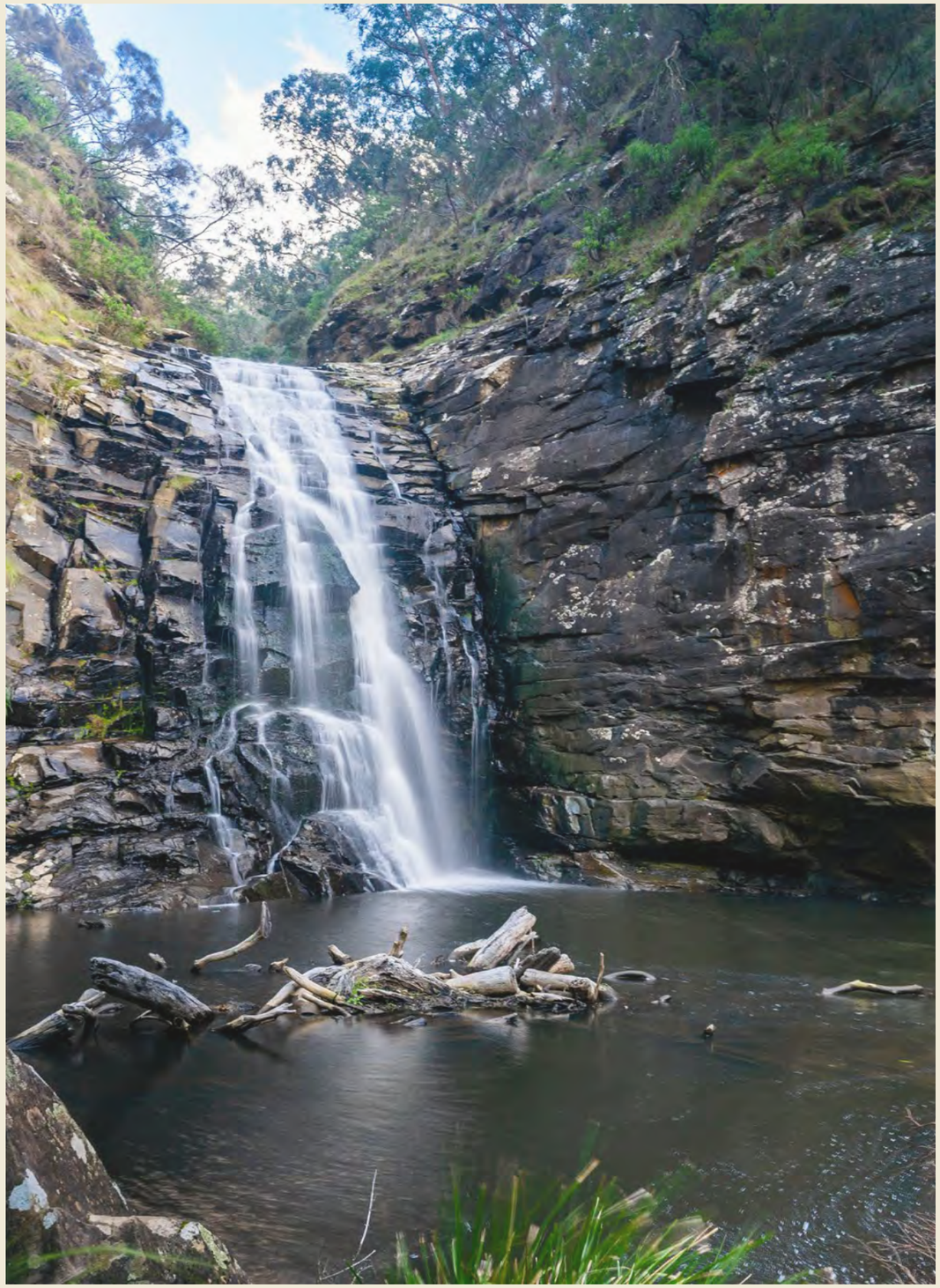
We welcome you all to be part of this conversation and to be part of that discussion as we are.

To care for Country. To think about Country.
To love Country. To protect Country.

We invite all that choose to live on or visit our Country to slow down. To tread softly and listen to Country Speak.

Ngootjoon Ngootjoon

(All is Good, All is Healthy)



Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail
Master Plan

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Disclaimer

This document, Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan, has been prepared by World Trail Pty Ltd for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. This document is the work of World Trail and its project partners and does not necessarily reflect the final views or opinions of all stakeholders. It has been prepared in accordance with the relevant federal, state and local legislation and current industry best practice. World Trail accepts no liability for any damages or loss incurred as a result of reliance placed upon the report content or for any purpose other than that for which it was intended.

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- Andy Forssman
- Cormac Hanrahan
- Gerard McHugh
- Hamish McCallum
- Melinda Blunt
- Sam Otto

Artwork Acknowledgment

'Coastal Connection 4' by Sherry Johnstone

GLOSSARY

Australian Walking Track Grading System
The Australian Walking Track Grading System is a primary means of informing land managers and users about the features of walking tracks and trails. By providing a standardised level of difficulty or grading, trail users are able to gauge whether a particular track is suitable for them.

DDA or Disability Discrimination Act
The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 is a Federal legislative act which provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability.

Eastern Maar
The Eastern Maar are the Traditional Owners of south-western Victoria. Their land extends as far north as Ararat and encompasses Warrnambool, Port Fairy and the Great Ocean Road areas and stretches 100m out to sea from low tide.

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation is the professional organisation that represents the Eastern Maar ('Maar' meaning people) of south-western Victoria and manages their Native Title rights and interests. It is the Registered Aboriginal Party for Eastern Maar Country.

ESTA or Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
The Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority has legislative authority for handling Triple Zero (000) calls and providing and managing the provision of emergency and operational communications for dispatching police, fire and ambulance in Victoria. It has developed a signage system for emergency markers.

Gadubanud
Gadubanud is the name of the Traditional Owners of the area within which most of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is situated.

GORR or Great Ocean Road Region
The Great Ocean Road Region stretches from Torquay to Warrnambool.

Great Ocean Walk
The Great Ocean Walk is an iconic and popular multi-day walking track, starting in Apollo Bay and finishing to the west at the Twelve Apostles.

Ground-truthing
Ground-truthing is the name of the process of determining the exact location of a proposed new trail in the field.

PC or Phytophthora cinnamomi
Phytophthora cinnamomi is a soil-borne fungus which causes the disease Die-back in susceptible Australian plant species.

Surf Coast Walk
The Surf Coast Walk is a shared-use walking track that starts at Point Impossible, just to the east of Torquay and goes all the way to Fairhaven.

Suspension bridge
A suspension bridge is a type of bridge in which the deck is hung below suspension cables with vertical suspenders. They are often used for crossing waterways on walking tracks in remote areas.

Trailhead
A trailhead is the point at which a track or trail begins. Trailheads may include toilets, maps and car parking, but can include other facilities too.

Project Partners

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan has been prepared by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority and Parks Victoria.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Project Partner

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Project Partner

Parks Victoria
Project Partner

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
Project Partner

Project Team

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning engaged World Trail to lead a multidisciplinary team to develop the Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail. The multidisciplinary team comprises World Trail, Biosis, Bligh Tanner, Golder, Tract and Zinc Cost Management.

World Trail
Lead Consultant
Trail Design

Biosis
Flora & Fauna
Cultural Heritage
Planning

Golder
Geotechnical Engineer

Tract
Landscape Architect
Landscape Visual Assessment
Media Production

Bligh Tanner
Structural Engineer
Environmental Engineer

Zinc Cost Management
Quantity Surveyor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Replicating the regular trade routes and traditional walks of the Gadabanud people, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will allow visitors to experience this cultural legacy and explore the Great Ocean Road and surrounding landscape in new ways. Prompting increased visitation and longer stays, it will become become one of Australia's most renowned multi-day walks.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will be a world-class hiking trail, providing visitors with a range of experiences to appreciate and enjoy the diverse biocultural landscapes of this iconic region. Consisting of seven segments with a mixture of new and existing trails, the 90km route is proposed as a seven day walk which connects coastal towns from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is on Gadubanud Country, within Eastern Maar Nation. Much of the trail replicates the regular trade routes and traditional walks of the Gadubanud people and provides an important opportunity to educate the broader community about Gadubanud Country, culture and the biocultural landscape of the region. This Master Plan represents the starting point for Eastern Maar's involvement in this project, which will be integral in all future stages of the project.

The trail showcases iconic coastal cliffs, lush forest environments, deep freshwater streams and rivers as well as popular seaside towns and villages. Lookouts and suspension bridges spanning wide valleys will provide iconic views of the Gadubanud Sky, Forest and Sea Country, and shorter loop walks will expand on the diverse range of walk experiences, to encourage visitors to stop, explore further, and stay longer.

By the tenth year of operation, the trail is predicted to attract 75,000 visitors annually which will provide significant economic benefit to the region as well as important, wide spread education of Gadubanud stories.

This Master Plan is the culmination of years of work to design a walking trail from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek, thereby establishing a connection between the Surf Coast Walk and Great Ocean Walk. This document outlines the project background, guiding principles, design approach, chosen alignment and product, as well as construction and operational recommendations.

By drawing on previous work and undertaking a range of new assessments, the Master Plan provides:

- Guiding principles for the development of the trail;
- A finalised trail alignment that has been developed incorporating community and stakeholder input, as well as assessment of the natural values, cultural values and risk;
- The location and type of trail infrastructure and functional design elements to support the trail experience;
- Suitable locations for iconic suspension bridges, that consider visual impact, geotechnical conditions, feasible engineering requirements, user experience and cultural and environmental values;

- Discussion of construction and operational recommendations, such as maintenance considerations and business activation opportunities.

The Master Plan does not include detailed design and construction documentation for trail infrastructure elements, nor does it provide a business case for how the trail will be activated and managed in the future.

Further investigations are required to identify the route from Grey River to Skenes Creek. This section has not yet been funded for construction but is an essential part of the final Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail product.

Based on cost estimates produced by EY in the 2019 Fairhaven to Skenes Creek Coastal Trail Feasibility Study, the Victorian Government announced two rounds of funding for the design and construction of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail:

- $1.43m over 2020/21 and 2021/22 from the 'Building Works - Public Land Economic Stimulus' funding program via the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; and
- $23.8m over 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 from the 'Tourism Infrastructure Program' (TIP) funding via Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

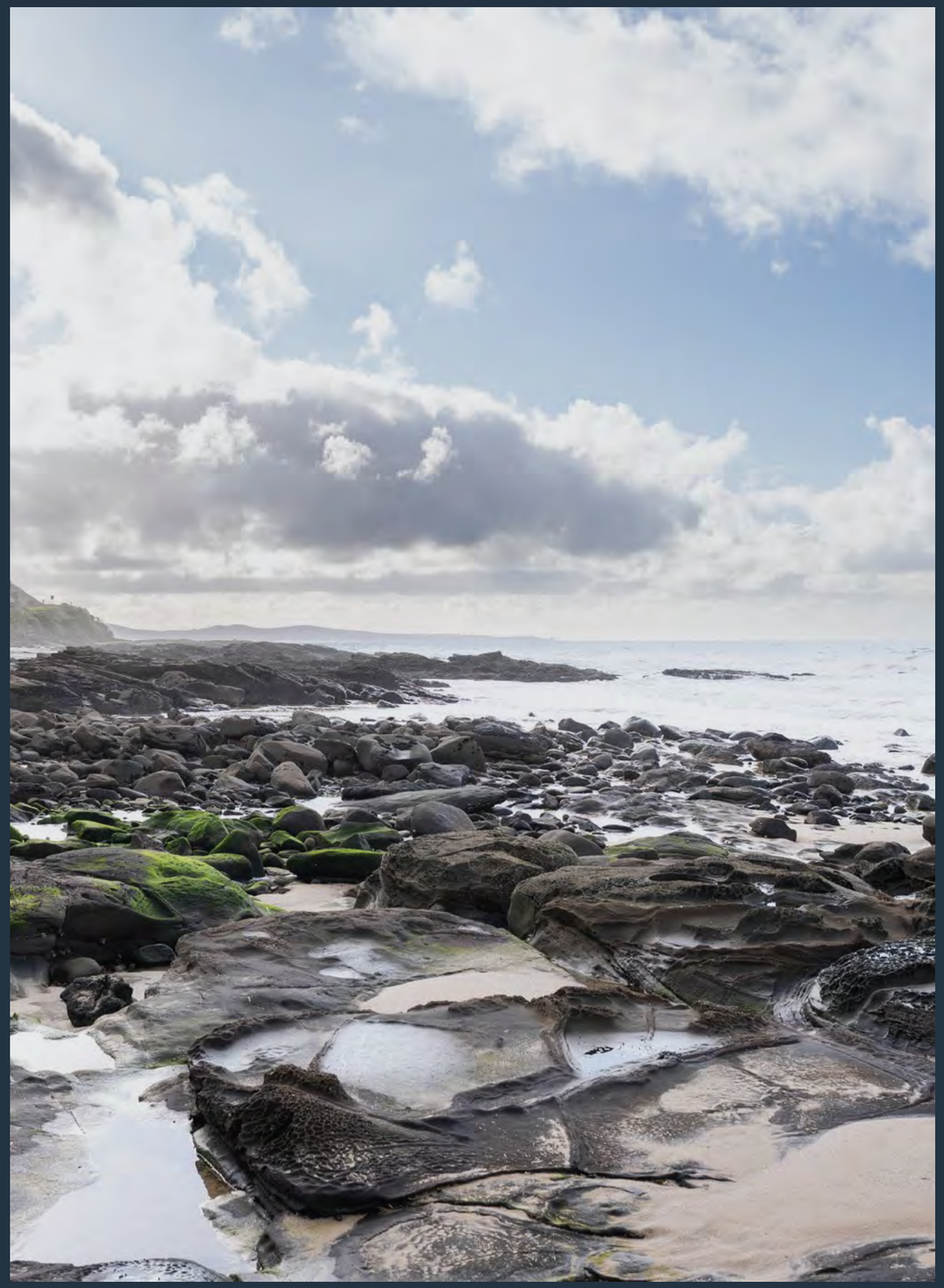
The funding provided acknowledged the uncertainties and challenges which were present at the time for the section of trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek, defining the funding objectives as:

- The design and construction of the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River;
- The design of the trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek.

In the same feasibility study, an estimated annual maintenance cost based off staffing costs on similar walking trails, material costs and suspension bridge maintenance costs, was valued at $962,790 per year for the trail between Fairhaven to Skenes Creek.

01

INTRODUCTION.



With sweeping ocean views from high above the Great Ocean Road, hidden gorges, crystal clear streams, gushing waterfalls and towering Eucalypt forests, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will be like no other experience in Australia.

The project to date has used the title "Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail". This is just a working title. It is envisaged that, when complete, the trail will have a name that reflects or references the Gadubanud culture and history of the area.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The dramatic limestone cliffs, valleys of dense rainforest, charming beachside towns, shipwreck history and world-class surf makes the Great Ocean Road one of Australia's most popular visitor destinations, and Victoria's most significant natural tourism asset. Located on the lands of the Gadubanud people of the Eastern Maar Nation, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail passes through a biocultural landscape of great beauty, resources and rich history.

The Great Ocean Road Region (GORR) is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring regions, and Victoria's premier tourism attraction outside Melbourne. It attracts more than 6 million people annually, almost double that of the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru combined, with visitation projected to increase to over 8.6 million by 2027.

Despite attracting strong visitation, there is a trend for people to experience the GORR from their vehicle, with many driving through the small towns without stopping as they make their way to the Twelve Apostles. This visitor behaviour reduces the length of stay in the region to below the regional Victorian average, which impacts the benefits to the local visitor economy.

The resulting lack of spend in local towns has prompted the region to investigate and invest in products that will enhance the visitor offering and encourage visitors to stop, explore, and stay longer.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is proposed to link the Surf Coast Walk to the Great Ocean Walk, leveraging on the natural assets of the GORR and significantly enhance the visitor offering. By delivering a variety of iconic experiences that cater to a broad range of visitors, the walk will increase length of stay of existing visitors, and also attract new visitors to the region to experience the walk and other surrounding attractions, all year round. It will incorporate many of the existing walking tracks in the region, linking them together to create a more cohesive and functional walking track network.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

This Master Plan is the culmination of years of work to design a walking trail from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek, with a future vision of establishing a connection between the Surf Coast Walk and Great Ocean Walk to provide one of the longest iconic walking trails in Australia.

The Master Plan brings together the work of many disciplines, working collaboratively to create a long-distance walking trail on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation, that will bring people to experience the beauty of the Great Ocean Road landscape.

The intent of this Master Plan is to develop and finalise the trail alignment and locations of recommended trail infrastructure to support the trail experience. Infrastructure elements include lookouts, iconic suspension bridges, low-level bridges, boardwalks, carparks, toilet facilities, campgrounds, and the trail itself.

This Master Plan will form the foundation for the future design, planning and construction phases of the project. By drawing on previous work and undertaking a range of new assessments, the Master Plan provides:

- Guiding principles for the development of the trail;
- A finalised trail alignment that has been developed incorporating community and stakeholder input, as well as assessment of the natural values, cultural values and risk;
- The location and type of trail infrastructure and functional design elements to support the trail experience;
- Suitable locations for iconic suspension bridges, that consider visual impact, geotechnical conditions, feasible engineering requirements, user experience and cultural and environmental values;
- Discussion of construction and operational recommendations, such as maintenance considerations and business activation opportunities.

The Master Plan presents a detailed and comprehensive vision of the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River, that has been carefully investigated on the ground and is feasible for construction. This section of the trail has been funded for construction by the Victorian Government. Further investigations are required to identify a route that is feasible for construction from Grey River to Skenes Creek.

The Master Plan does not include detailed design and construction documentation for trail infrastructure elements such as suspension bridges, carparks or signage, nor does it provide a business case for how the trail will be activated and managed in the future.

1.3 PREVIOUS WORKS

The idea of a long-distance walking trail from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek has been in the making since 2015.

Following the 2015 Christmas Day bushfires, the Wye River, Separation Creek and Kennett River community advocated for a walkable trail to improve linkages between communities by connecting the Surf Coast and Great Ocean Walks.

In September 2018, the Victorian Government announced funding of $300,000 to investigate the feasibility of a walking trail from Apollo Bay to Torquay as part of its strategic plan to improve connectivity and boost economic activity along the Great Ocean Road. The Commonwealth Government also committed $350,000 to undertake detailed planning, engineering, and geotechnical investigations necessary to further develop the proposal.

The study area for the project was changed to Fairhaven to Skenes Creek, as there was already a trail between Torquay and Fairhaven (Surf Coast Walk), and the Apollo Bay to Skenes Creek Discovery Trail had received funding through the Geelong City Deal.

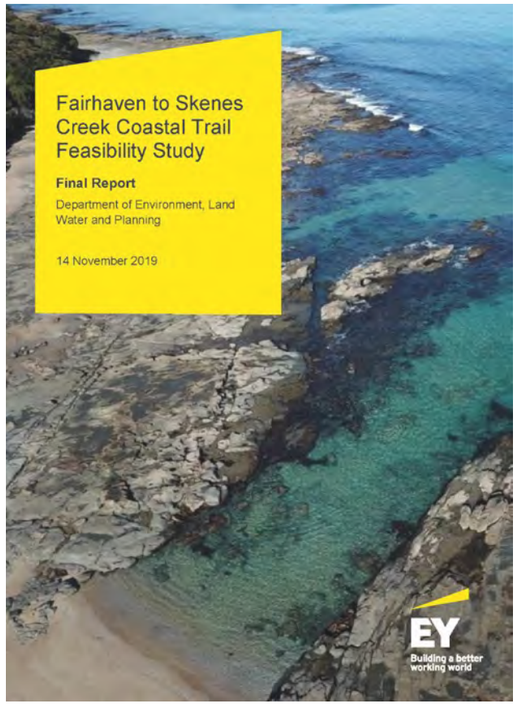
In 2019, EY and World Trail were engaged to undertake the feasibility study, named the 'Fairhaven to Skenes Creek Coastal Trail Feasibility Study'. The aims of the study were to explore the various trail designs and concepts, and determine the viability of implementing each trail concept by assessing the anticipated costs and benefits.

The report divided the concept trail alignment into four specific sections. The fourth section from Grey River to Skenes Creek presented significant challenges for trail design and construction and it was recommended that further investigation be undertaken to better understand the full range of possible alignments. The report also recommended that a 'Trails Master Plan' be completed for the proposed trail route.

An addendum to the 2019 Feasibility Study was released by EY in March 2022 with revised projected visitation numbers for the trail. The findings of the new report stated that by the tenth year of operation, the trail would attract 75,000 visitors annually. Made up of 49,000 daytrip visitors and 26,000 overnight visitors, this will provide significant economic benefit to the region.

In the second half of 2020, World Trail was engaged to undertake the further investigation for the section of proposed trail between Grey River and Skenes Creek, in particular the area around Cape Patton. This investigation found that a coastal route below Cape Patton was not feasible. It identified that the trail would need to go inland around Cape Patton and proposed a number of inland route options.

In November 2020, The Victorian Government announced two further rounds of funding based on the cost estimates from the 2019 feasibility study; being $1.43 and $23.8 million, to plan and deliver the trail. This Master Plan is a key output from this funding. The construction funding provided is for the trail between Fairhaven and Grey River, with further works to be undertaken to identify an inland route beyond Grey River.



1.4 PROJECT POSITIONING

One of the key principles of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is to provide an iconic walk with a range of walk experiences that showcase the grandeur and diversity of the Great Ocean Road's natural and cultural landscapes.

The trail examples shown on these pages from Australia and around the world set the benchmark for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail. These examples have been chosen because they share similar characteristics in terms of setting or length or are iconic tourist attractions in their own right.

02

BIOCULTURAL LANDSCAPE.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is located on the land of the Gadubanud people of the Eastern Maar Nation. Gadubanud lands include the rugged coastline, dense rainforests, Eucalypt woodlands, wetlands and river estuaries of the Otway Ranges, providing ecosystems rich in food sources across the six seasons recognised by Eastern Maar:

Kooyang	Season for eels – late January to late March
Gwangal moronn	Honeybee season – late March to the end of May
Chinnup	Season of cockatoos – June to late July
Larneuk	Season for nesting birds – late July and August
Petyan	Wildflower season – late August to mid-November
Ballambar	Butterfly season – mid-November to late January

'Coastal Connection 4' by Sherry Johnstone

The Great Ocean Road region has been a focus of continued habitation for hundreds and thousands of years. Within the project area, locations of high cultural and archaeological sensitivity are commonly found in connection to sources of water, both as coastal and inland settings alongside creeks, rivers and their associated floodplains, levees and inlets. Major waterways for the area include Coalmine Creek, Moggs Creek, Cumberland River, Stony Creek, Wye River and Kennett River. Stone artefact scatters, shell middens and earth features are among some of the unique Aboriginal places identified within the project area.

With much of the trail replicating the regular trade routes and traditional walks of the Gadubanud people, the trail provides an important opportunity for Eastern Maar to maximise economic and employment opportunities and to educate the broader community about Gadubanud Country and history. This Master Plan represents the starting point for Eastern Maar's involvement in this project, who will be integral in all future stages of the project.

The majority of the trail is located within the boundaries of the Great Otway National Park, with smaller portions being located on a variety of public land tenures, including reserves managed by Surf Coast Council, Colac Otway Shire Council and the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

2.1 LOCATION

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is situated on the south coast of Victoria, and follows the coastline from Fairhaven through the towns of Lorne, Wye River and Kennett River, through to Skenes Creek.

The eastern end of the trail is approximately 50mins from Geelong or 1hr 45 from Melbourne, by car.

The trail is located on Gadubanud Country, which is part of the Eastern Maar Nation.

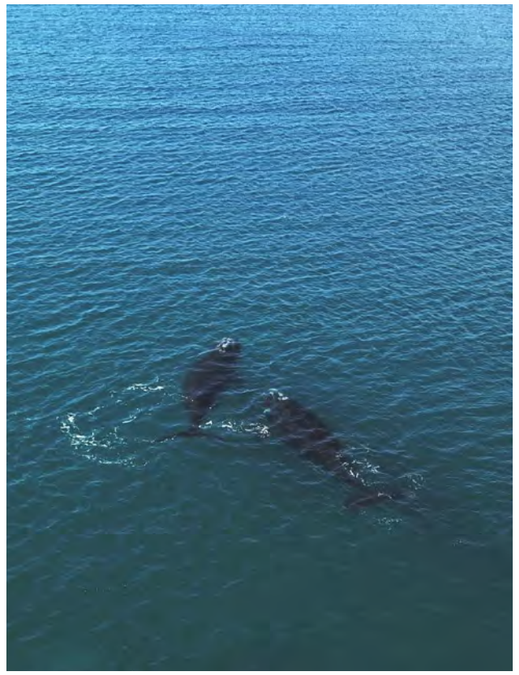
Note that the borders between groups have been intentionally blurred and should be considered indicative only

2.2 SEA COUNTRY

Eastern Maar have always had a close relationship with the sea and its resources, which are central to their culture, economy and survival. The ocean has provided nourishment for thousands of generations of our people and continues to do so today. Abundant middens along the coastline tell a rich story of the past.

Sea Country extends well beyond the current shoreline to the edge of the continental shelf. While this area is under the sea today, it was occupied for thousands of years when sea levels were lower.

Sea Country is the habitat for an incredible diversity of plants, fish and mammals, including the the threatened Hooded Plover Thinornis cacullatus and the Souther Right Whale Eubalaena australis. Finely attuned to their Sea Country home, the wellbeing of the Ocean as a habitat and a living relation is a foremost concern to Eastern Maar.



2.3 HEATHLANDS

Heathlands occur in specific locations between the Otways forest and the coast. They occur mostly on deep infertile sands, and are home to a diverse array of plants and animals, many of which are rare or threatened. Natural and cultural values in the heathlands are threatened by grazing, weeds and urban development.

Many of the heathlands are found towards the eastern end of the project area (east of Eastern View), within the Otway Plain bioregion which is characterised by a flat to gently undulating landscape. Coastal Moonah Woodlands as well as dry sclerophyll forests occur within this bioregion, where Eucalypt forests and woodlands are dominated by a heathy understorey.

The highest biodiversity values are concentrated within the heathlands, where a diversity of Orchid species including Dense Leek-orchid *Prasophyllum spicatum*, Leafy Greenhood *Pterostylis chlorogramma* and Spiral Sun-orchid *Thelymitra matthewsii* have been recorded. The Austral Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea australis* and a range of Hibbertias are also found in this bioregion. These heathlands also provide habitat for many threatened fauna such as Broad-toothed Rat *Mastacomys fuscus mordicus*, Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isoodon obesulus obesulus* and Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus trisulcatus*.

2.4 HINTERLAND FORESTS

The dry forests that line the rugged cliffs are highly fertile and supported Gadubanud people with abundant food, water and materials. As access points to Sea Country, they are areas where Eastern Maar have lived and travelled for thousands of years.

The majority of the project area to the west of Eastern View can be categorised as hinterland forests, and lies within the Otway Ranges bioregion. The coastal hinterland is characteristically steep and dissected by steep ravines, cliffs and river systems. The vegetation is comprised primarily of tall Eucalypt forests with a dense shrubby understorey. The dense canopy hosts threatened forest fauna including Barking Owl Ninox connivens, Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* and Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*.

Threatened flora have been recorded regularly through this landscape including Wrinkled Buttons *Leiocarpa gatesii*.

At higher elevations, along southern aspects and in the wetter gullies along streams and rivers, forests are wetter, often including tree ferns and tree species typically found in cool temperate rainforests. These wet forests of the Otways are a rich cultural landscape that the Gadubanud occupied for thousands of years.

The hinterland forests contain many rare and threatened species, including the carnivorous Otway Black Snail *Victaphanta compacta*, which is only found in the wet forests and cool temperate rainforests of the Otway Ranges, Victoria.

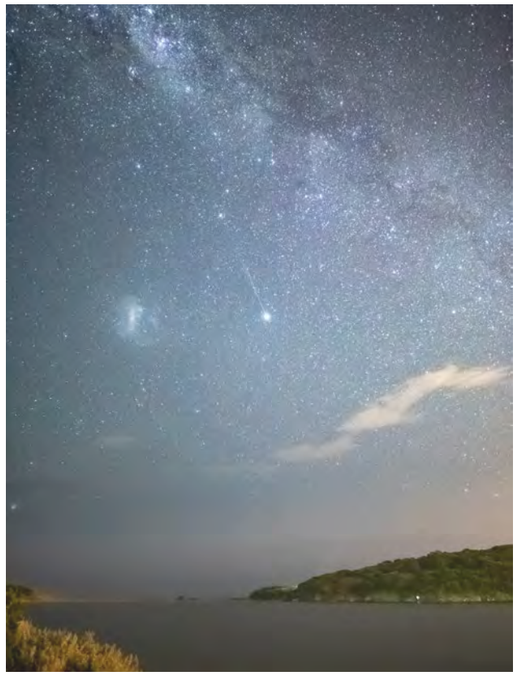
2.5 SKY COUNTRY

The notion of Sky Country extends to the stars that light the night skies – the land is regarded as a reflection of the sky and the sky a reflection of the land. Aboriginal astronomical knowledge is integral to a holistic understanding of Country including the weather patterns and seasonal changes around which revolved many social events, trade, food availability and ceremony.

The design and construction of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail, and in particular, elements such as campgrounds and lookouts, should consider the importance of night skies for Eastern Maar and maintain the visibility of Sky Country as much as possible.

Sky Country above 400m elevation has important cultural significance to Eastern Maar with protocols for the safety of women and children who are not encouraged to travel or stay in these areas.

The trail and its infrastructure should minimise light pollution and provide opportunities for trail users to learn about Eastern Maar's environmental and cultural practices.



2.6 EUROPEAN HISTORY IN THE OTWAYS

The arrival of Europeans in Australia marks the start of social upheaval and strain on the independence of Australia's Traditional Owners, and the beginning of their struggle. For the Gadubanud people, the story is similar to other parts of Victoria and Australia, where Traditional Owners were forced off their land.

Europeans first settled in large numbers along the Otway Coast around the mid 1800's, primarily for purposes of timber harvesting and farming. Timber harvesting and sawmilling was a major industry in the Otways, with the quality of timber regarded as the best in Australia.

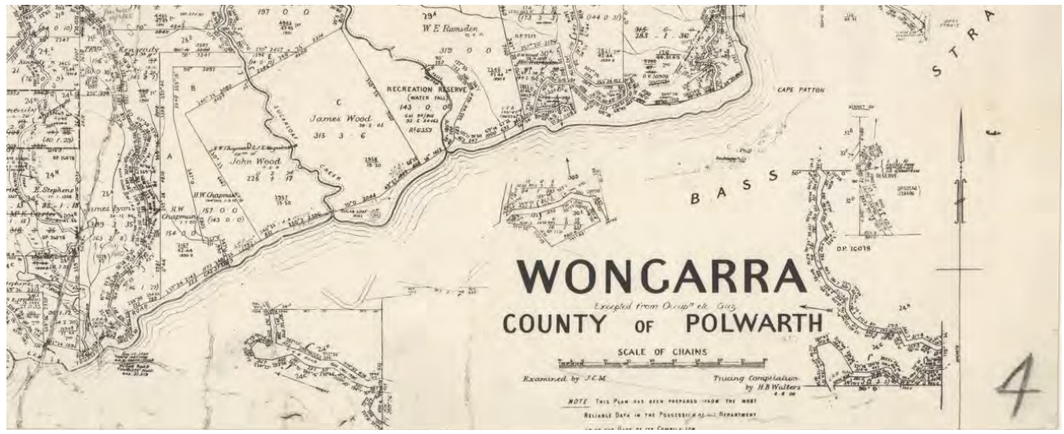
The Great Ocean Road itself is a memorial to those who died in World War I. It was conceived as a way of employing returned soldiers but also of creating a lasting monument to those who had died in the war. Prior to being built, it's value as a tourist attraction was already understood, with outstanding ocean, mountain and river scenery.

Work began on the construction of the Great Ocean Road in August 1918 with thousands of returned soldiers employed. It was hard and dangerous manual labour, with no heavy machinery to assist. The first stage linking Lorne and Eastern View was completed in early 1922. Work on the Great Ocean Road continued for an entire decade, with the full route to Apollo Bay officially opened on 26th November 1932.

The Great Ocean Road was a huge engineering feat, ending decades of isolation for Lorne and other coastal communities. Before the road, travel between the coastal settlements was difficult - small coastal towns such as Wye River and Kennett River were accessible only by sea or by rough bridle tracks along the Otway coast and over the Otway Ranges from Forrest.. A trip from Lorne to Geelong was long and arduous, via a rough coach track through dense bush to the railway at Winchelsea.

As well as the Great Ocean Road, which is on the National Heritage List, there are 17 other registered historic heritage places and sites located within the project study area, which are listed on both state and national databases. Historic heritage values include local and state infrastructure, largely associated with forestry (sawmills and logging), historic residences and memorials which are mostly situated at and around Lorne.

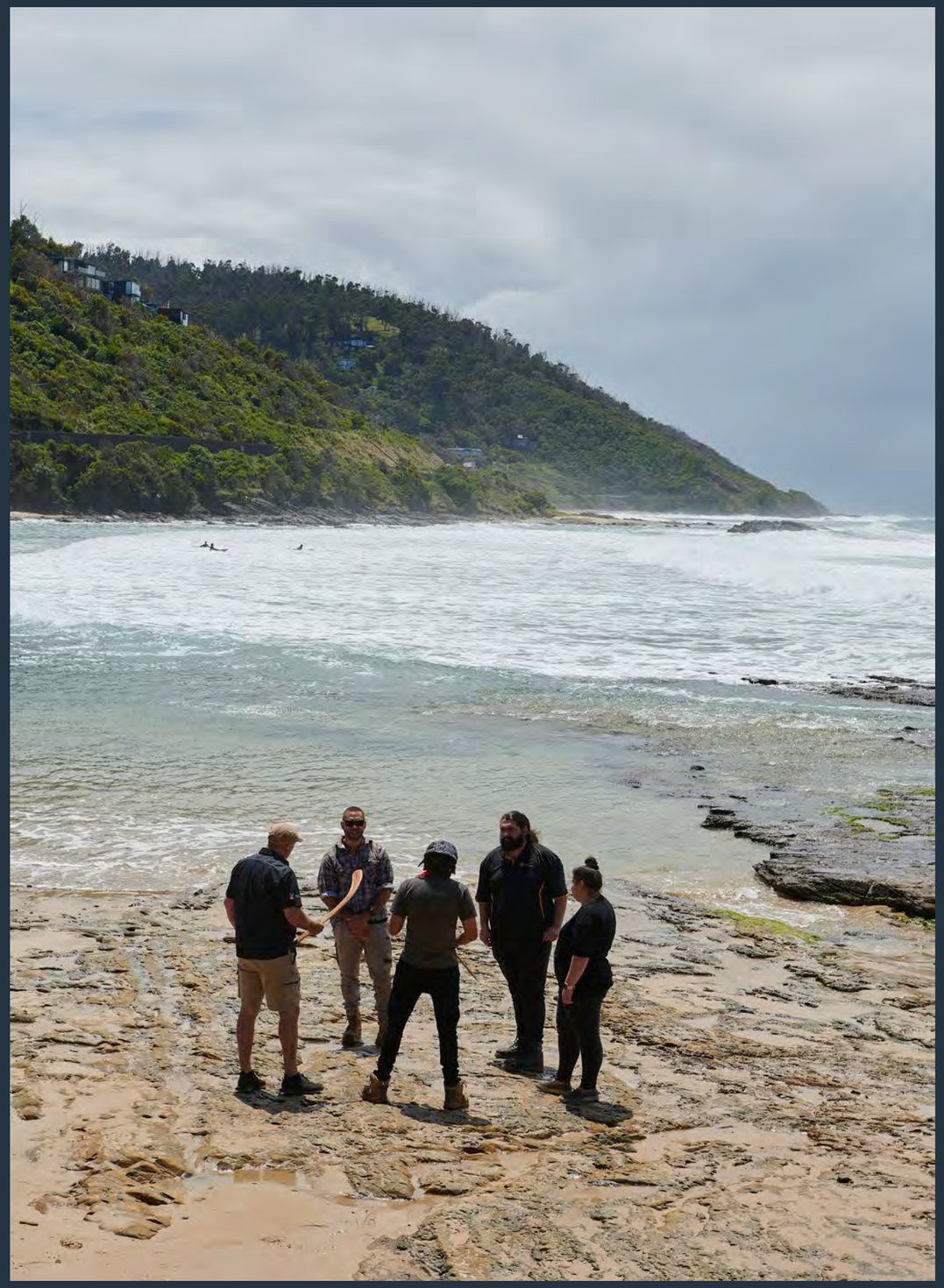
Although it is unlikely additional unrecorded built heritage from these industries and the construction of the road remains today, the Great Ocean Road carries these community, social and cultural themes to the present day. The Great Ocean Road continues to provide access to a rich experience of natural, historical and cultural landscapes and values that are significant to local communities and tourists from afar alike.



03

GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

The Vision for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail forms the foundation for the project. The Objectives and Guiding Principles provide the criteria which the project will need to meet in order to be considered truly successful.



3.1 VISION

To create a series of memorable walking trails on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation, stretching along the iconic Great Ocean Road from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek.

These trails will link the Surf Coast Walk and the Great Ocean Walk.

Objectives

Walking on Gadubanud Country, Eastern Maar Nation

The ancient and dynamic landscapes of the Otway Coast are rich in Maar Story. The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will recognise and acknowledge past harms and assert the Eastern Maar's Relationship to Country, providing an opportunity for constructive reconciliation for the whole community.

Guiding Principles

- Maar knowledge will inform the design and construction of the trail.
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will respect and celebrate the deep relationships between the Eastern Maar and the landscape.
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will respect and acknowledge the rights of Eastern Maar and create opportunities to advance self-determination.

Conserving and protecting the Otway Coast

The trail will pass through a Maar biocultural landscape filled with flora, fauna, geology and cultural and historic heritage. Through a careful and considerate landscape led design approach, we will ensure the values of the landscape are protected and any environmental impacts are minimised using best-practice protocols.

Guiding Principles

- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will take a landscape led design approach and be constructed in a manner that is sympathetic to and respectful of the landscape.
- It will be managed to the highest level of environmental stewardship, protecting the environment for future generations to enjoy.

Encouraging All to be Active

Creating opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and spend time in the natural environment promotes increased participation. The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will encourage people to stop, go for a walk and immerse themselves in the landscape.

Guiding Principles

- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide a wide range of user experiences, levels of difficulty and accessibility, with the aim of increasing participation, promoting healthier lifestyles for locals and visitors, and encouraging longer stays in the region.
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide opportunities for people to enhance their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through. A strong focus will be on Country and wellness.

Showcasing the Landscape

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide opportunities to experience and immerse themselves in the landscape in a way not experienced by many people before.

Guiding Principles

- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide iconic walking experiences, showcasing the grandeur and diversity of the Great Ocean Road's natural and cultural landscapes.
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide an opportunity for short walks or to be undertaken as a long-distance walk linking the Surf Coast Walk and Great Ocean Walk.

Providing Economic Benefits

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide an opportunity to improve the benefits, both direct and indirect, associated with tourism for local communities, the Otway region and the state.

Guiding Principles

- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide tangible economic benefits by cementing the Great Ocean Road region as a leader in the nature-based tourism sector.
- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will strengthen the social wellbeing of the local community.

Creating a Unique Visitor Experience

Walking along the rugged coastline and into the tall Otway forests, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will provide a continuous walking trail experience that changes with the seasons and landscape.

Guiding Principles

- The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will create lifelong memories, through a walking experience that captures the essence of the Great Ocean Road through the seasons – the solitude, amazing views and scenery, Relationship to cultural heritage, varied flora and fauna and the breathtaking wildness of the Southern Ocean.

04

DESIGN APPROACH.

The design approach for this trail alignment and infrastructure is based on the key design principles with meaningful community engagement embedded into the iterative design process.

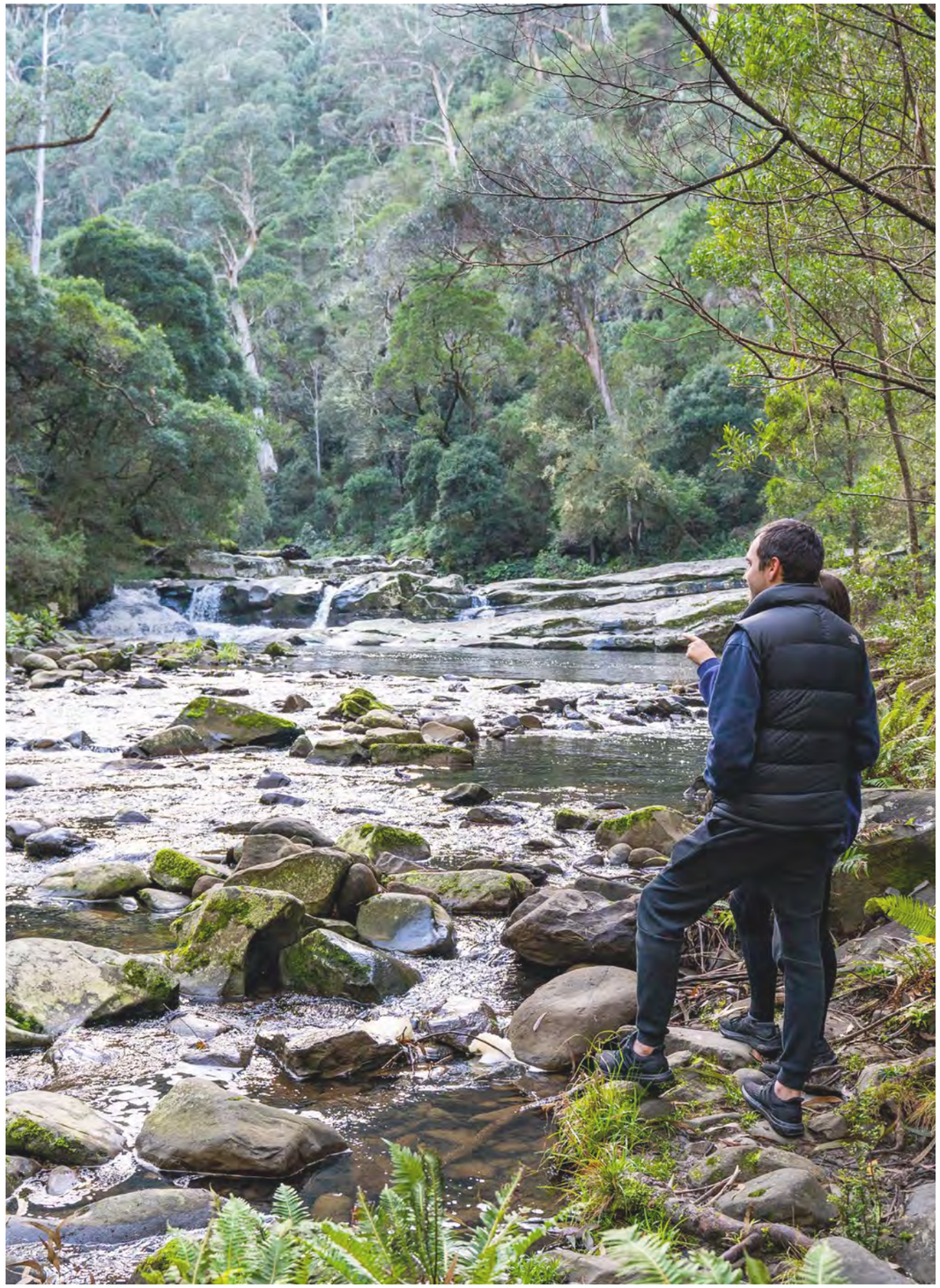
4.1 THE DESIGN PROCESS

The first step in designing the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail was to develop the guiding principles to assist decision making process and ensure that the walk delivers on its intended purpose. These are valuable in making decisions and assist in providing a balance between creating the desired experience, meeting the expectations of community and stakeholders, and protecting and enhancing the values.

The design process for the walk has been an iterative process to advance from a proposed alignment (2019 feasibility study) to the final trail alignment and design that can be fully costed ready for construction.

This iterative process included establishing guiding principles, desktop assessments, on-ground observations, technical insights from a range of specialists, and engagement with stakeholders and community. All these steps are essential in the planning process, each offering insights and information that inform refinements to the proposed trail alignment. These inputs are planned in a logical sequence and each step of new information can influence a refinement.

The trail design uses the Australian Walking Track Grading System (AWTGS) to assign a difficulty grade for each section of trail. An extract from the AWTGS is provided in Appendices A1 which differentiates the different trail classes. A detailed description of the desktop assessments, ground truthing process and detailed assessments are outlined respectively in Appendices A2, A3 and A4. A summary of engagement activities is provided in Appendices A5



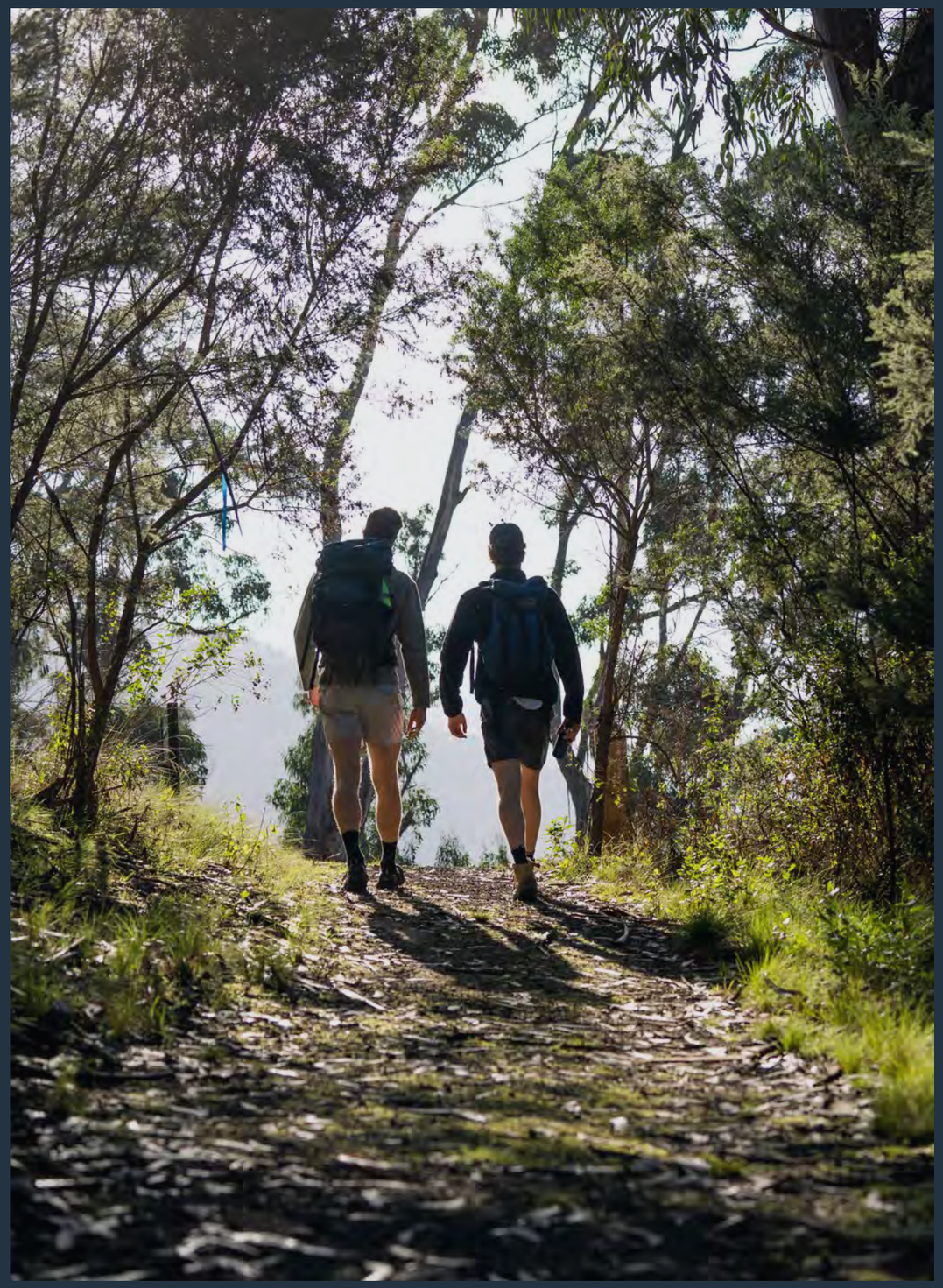
	Concept Route 1	Concept Route 2	Concept Route 3	Ground Truth Route 1	Ground Truth Route 2
Design	Review of previous reports. Review of routes from 2019 feasibility study. Initial Site analysis & inspections. Guiding principles established.	Community Engagement Stage 1 feedback incorporated. Desktop assessments: geotechnical, flora & fauna, cultural heritage values.	Community Engagement Stage 2 feedback incorporated. Fieldwork geotechnical, flora & fauna, cultural heritage values & infrastructure siting. Route ground truthed/walked.	Community Engagement Stage 3 feedback incorporated. 'Ground truthed' alignment completed on ground. Geotech, flora & fauna and cultural heritage assessments finalised and incorporated into this Master Plan.	Final ground truthed alignment. Represented in this Master Plan.
	2019 – 2021	January – March 2021	May – June 2022	July – August 2022	August 2022
Engagement	Over 3200 people visited the website, collectively providing 1864 responses, comments and suggestions. Additional feedback received from over 70 participants through eight drop-in sessions, a listening post at the Apollo Bay Community Market. Providing a total of 2450 responses.	1370 people visited the website, completing 87 surveys and providing 483 responses, comments and suggestions. Additional feedback received from 151 participants through two online drop-in sessions, two community workshops, three separate listening posts at Wye River, Lorne & Apollo Bay and email.	Community informed about the alignment changes and the confirmed location of suspension bridges and significant trail infrastructure elements, which were determined during the on-ground investigations, resulting in Ground-truthed Route 1.	Community was informed via the Engage Vic website with a series of day segment maps, spatial data and a summary of the changes between Concept Route 3 and Ground Truthed Route 1 with justification as to the changes in alignment.	Feedback from the community on Ground Truthed Route 1 informed alignment changes that are reflected in Ground Truthed Route 2. The community has been informed of these changes via the Engage Vic website. Listening posts were held in Lorne, Wye and Apollo Bay in August.
	October – November 2021	March – April 2022	June – July 2022	August 2022	

05

THE WALK.

Running roughly parallel to the coast, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail has an alternating rhythm of valleys and ridges – crossing over meandering waterways before climbing up and over exposed ridgetops with sweeping ocean views.

The trail crosses through two distinct bioregions – Otway Plain and Otway Ranges.



5.1 OVERVIEW

Most of the trail is located on the inland side of the Great Ocean Road, high up on the hillsides overlooking the ocean. The blue horizon and the booming sound of the surf are a constant reminder that the ocean is never far away.

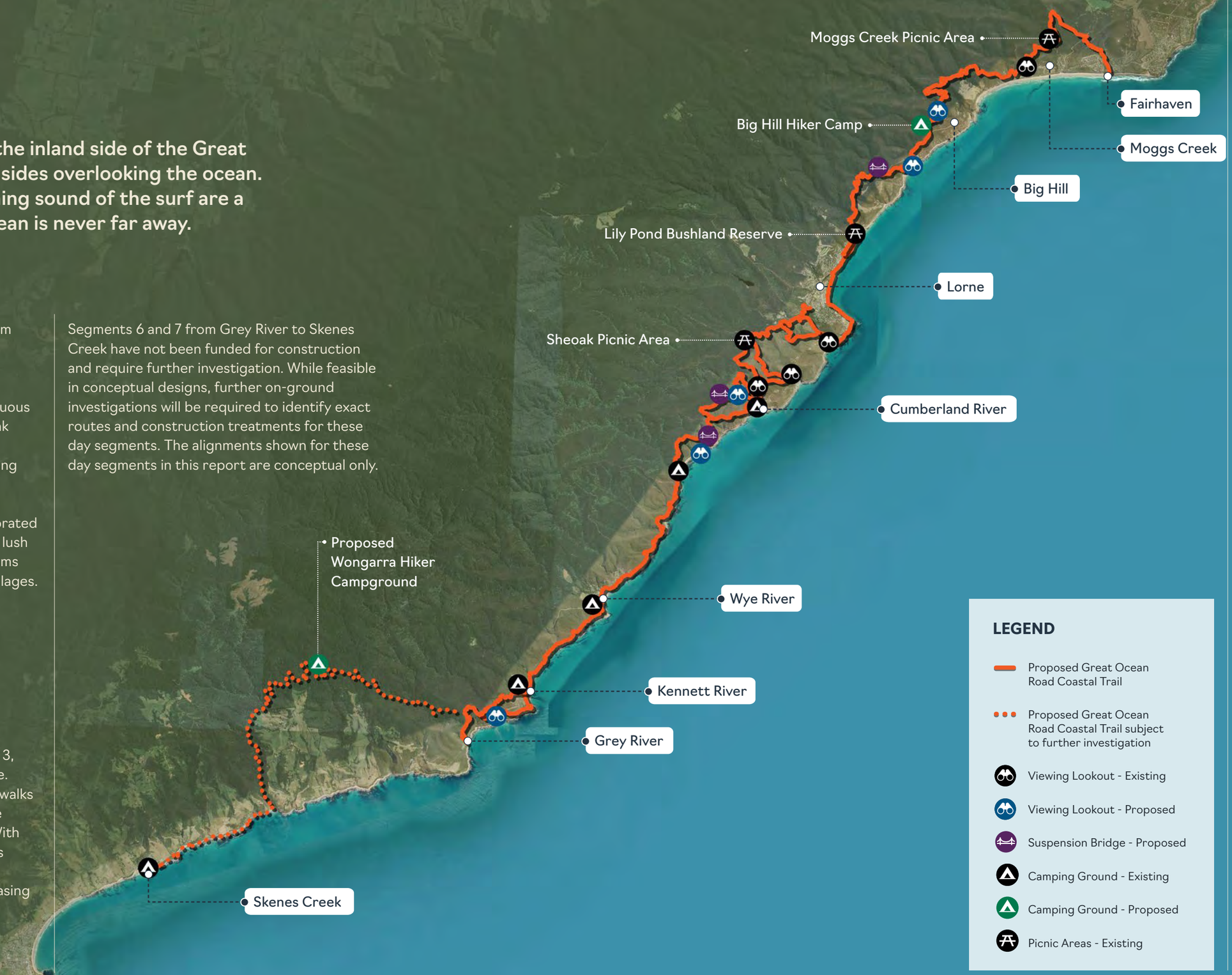
The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is a 90km walk connecting the coastal towns from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek. Sections of new trail will connect with existing walking and management vehicle tracks to form a continuous walking trail. When complete, the trail will link the Surf Coast Walk with the Great Ocean Walk, effectively creating a continuous walking track from Torquay to the Twelve Apostles.

The trail will pass through the region's celebrated landscapes, showcasing iconic coastal cliffs, lush forest environments, deep freshwater streams and rivers and popular seaside towns and villages.

Lookouts and suspension bridges spanning wide valleys will provide iconic views of the Great Ocean Road, and shorter loop walks will expand on the diverse range of walk experiences to encourage visitors to stop, explore further, and stay longer.

With a consistent trail grade between 2 and 3, the walk will provide something for everyone. Visitors will be able to choose from shorter walks within close proximity to townships, to more remote multi-day wilderness experiences. With many sections of the trail to explore, visitors will be encouraged to come back again to experience other sections of the trail, increasing the benefits to the local visitor economy.

Segments 6 and 7 from Grey River to Skenes Creek have not been funded for construction and require further investigation. While feasible in conceptual designs, further on-ground investigations will be required to identify exact routes and construction treatments for these day segments. The alignments shown for these day segments in this report are conceptual only.



5.2 WALK SEGMENTS

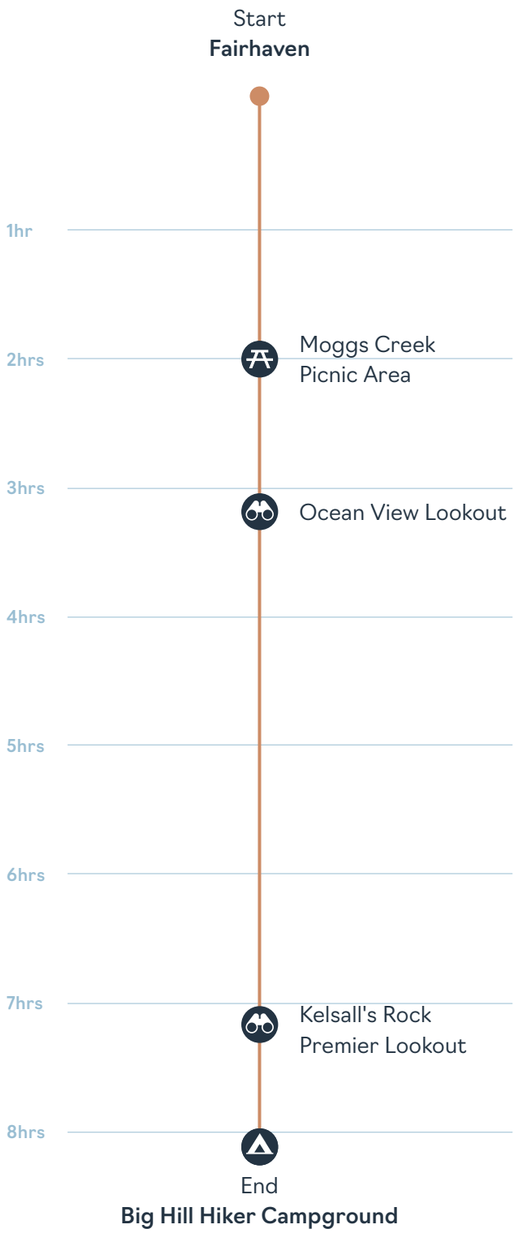
The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is divided into seven day segments, between 9 and 15km in length. This distance is considered achievable for most experienced hikers in one day, while still allowing time in the afternoon for relaxing, other activities, or travelling to accommodation.

While the walk is described from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek, it can be walked in either direction.

Segment	Location	Lenght (km)	Approx. time
1	Fairhaven to Big Hill	17.0	**6-8 hrs**
2	Big Hill to Lorne	12.8	**4-6 hrs**
3	Lorne to Cumberland River	11.6	**6-7 hrs**
4	Cumberland River to Jamieson Creek	9.4	**5-7 hrs**
	(or Wye River)	*(6.5)*	*(1-2 hrs)*
5	Jamieson Creek to Kennett River	12.5	**4-6 hrs**
6	Kennett River to Wongarra	10.7	**5-7 hrs**
7	Wongarra to Skenes Creek	16.3	**5-7 hrs**

1

FAIRHAVEN TO BIG HILL



Length	Approx. Time	Walking Difficulty
16,994 m	6-8 hours	Grade 3

Segment 1 delivers a diverse walker experience and a perfect introduction into what is to come over the following days.

Starting in Fairhaven, the alignment follows a variety of new and existing trails through a range of landscapes including coastal heathland, deep valleys, high ridgelines and eucalypt forests.

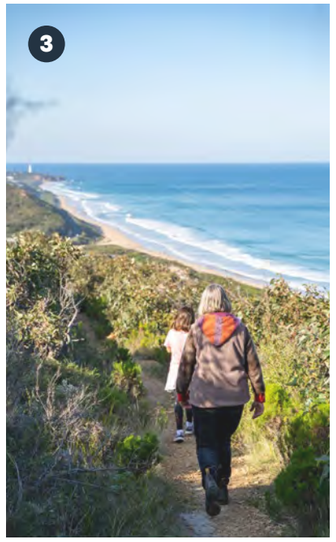
On the final section of the day, through hikers are rewarded with a spectacular premier lookout at Kelsall's Rock, which looks inland over Grassy Creek and the eastern end of the Great Otway National Park.

Segment 1 concludes at Big Hill, at the proposed Big Hill Hiker Campground which will feature hiker only tent sites, elevated off the forest floor in the hills to the north of Big Hill.

An optional walk can be undertaken from Distillery Creek picnic area located near Airey's Inlet, via Painkalac Dam and the Dam Walk, to Moggs Creek picnic area.

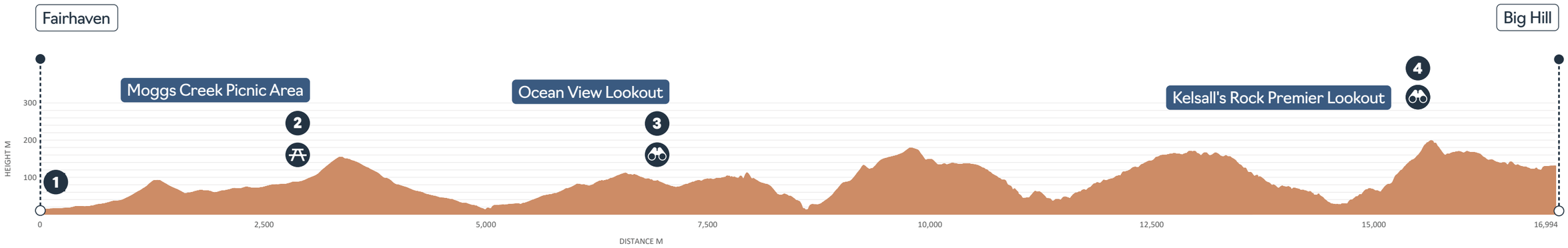
1

2


3

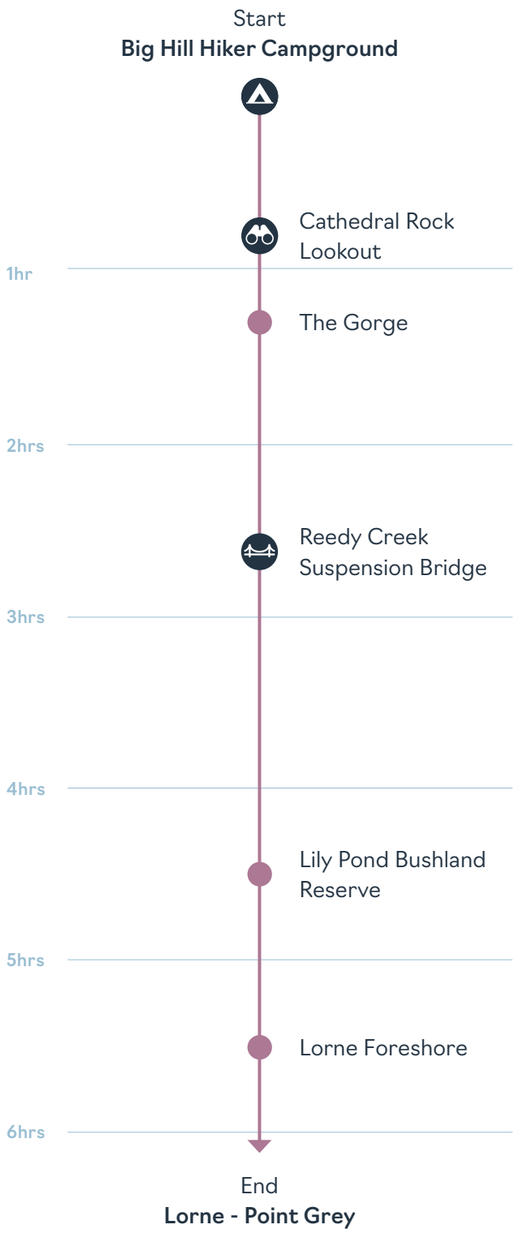
3

4


Fairhaven
Big Hill
Moggs Creek Picnic Area
Ocean View Lookout
Kelsall's Rock Premier Lookout
1
2
3
4
HEIGHT M
300
200
100
0
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
12,500
15,000
16,994
DISTANCE M

2

BIG HILL TO LORNE



Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
12,758 m	4-6 hours	Grade 3

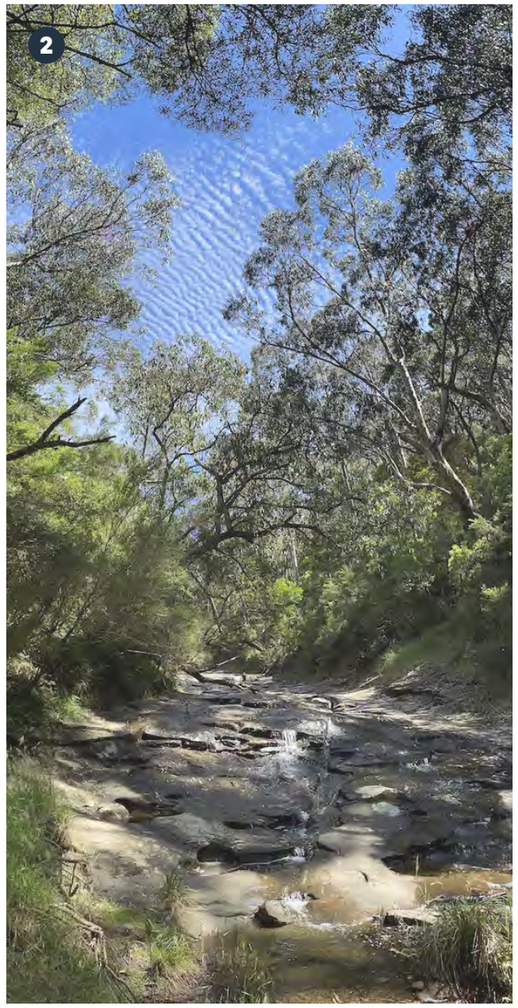
Departing from the proposed Big Hill Campground, segment 2 provides a handful of sensational attractions, views and walker experiences.

After crossing over Big Hill Creek, hikers climb upwards and traverse back towards the coast, coming out at the first major coastal lookout, Cathedral Rock. Perched high above the Great Ocean Road, this lookout provides 180 degree views over the coast and is the perfect viewing spot to watch surfers at the famous Cathedral Rock surf break.

Further along this segment, walkers will experience some of the Otway's most interesting places, including a sunken gorge and the deep, lush valley of Reedy Creek, crossed via a 70m long and 20m high suspension bridge. The segment then takes hikers to Lily Ponds Reserve and through to Lorne along the beach, where they can choose from a variety of accommodation services.

With further investigation, sections of trail along the Lorne foreshore could be upgraded to a Grade 1 walking track to become universally accessible.

1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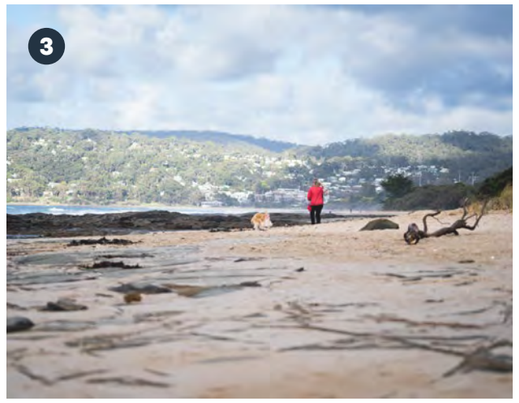
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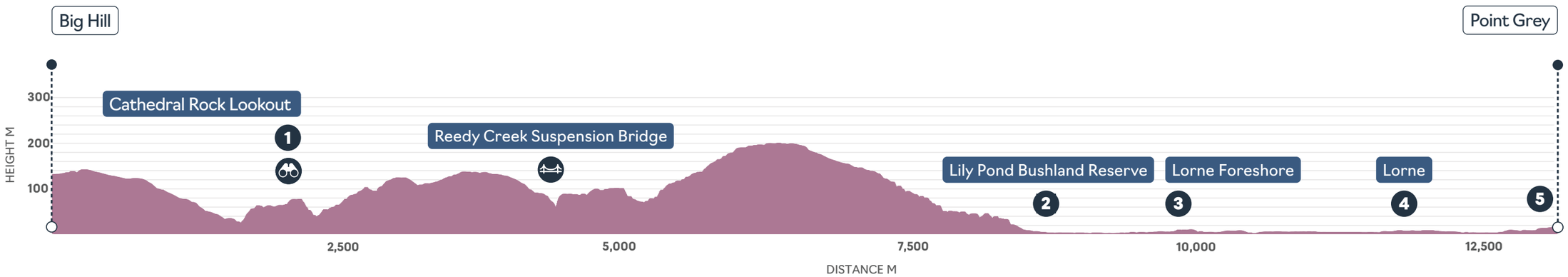
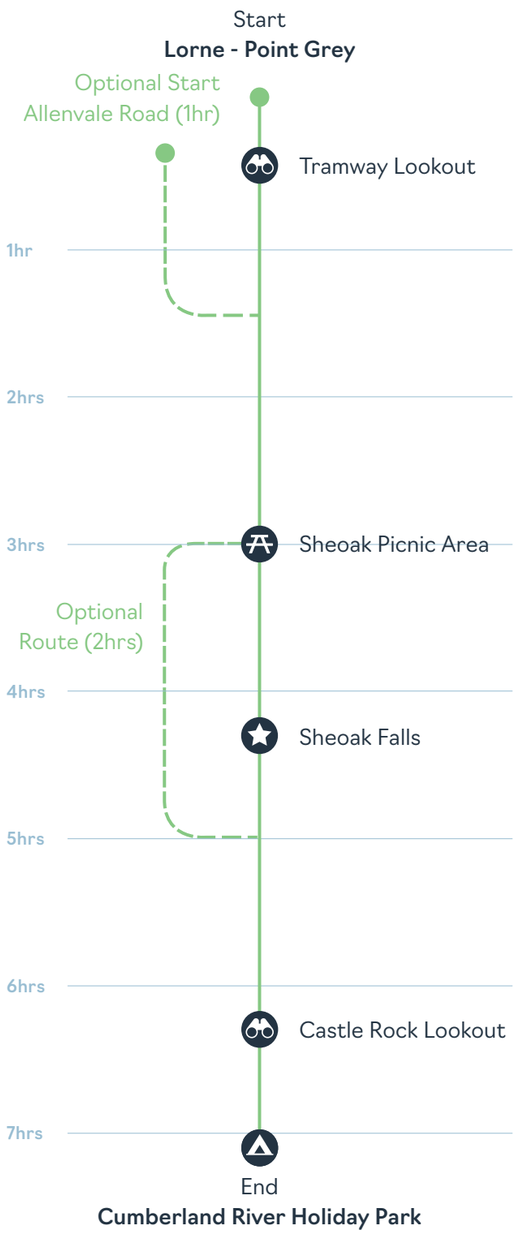

Big Hill
Point Grey
Cathedral Rock Lookout
1
Reedy Creek Suspension Bridge
Lily Pond Bushland Reserve
2
Lorne Foreshore
3
Lorne
4
5
HEIGHT M
300
200
100
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
12,500
DISTANCE M

3

LORNE TO CUMBERLAND RIVER



Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
11,633 m	6-7 hours	Grade 3

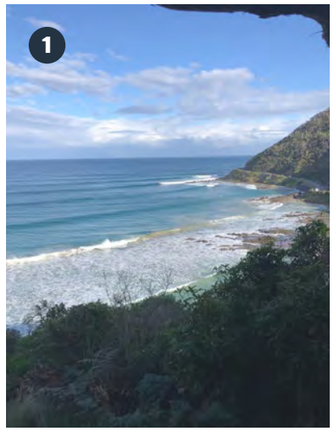
The main route for segment 3 departs from Lorne, heads around Point Grey and then onto historic routes along the existing Tramway Track and St George River Walk to Allenvale.

Alternatively, walkers may choose to take an optional and more direct route from the eastern end of Allenvale Road to Allenvale Road carpark.

From Allenvale Road Carpark, the trail runs parallel to Allenvale Road all the way to Sheoak picnic area, before descending downstream to Sheoak Falls. From Sheoak Falls, the trail then climbs back up to Castle Rock, before the final descent into Cumberland River at the end of Segment 3.

Accommodation is conveniently located at the Cumberland River Holiday Park, where cabins and camp sites are available. Kangaroos and ducks are often seen in the park, which also offers freshwater swimming in the Cumberland River, beach access and purpose-built facilities for users. Numerous optional loop walks are available from the Allenvale Road Carpark and Sheoak picnic area, such as the Canyon, Phantom Falls, Kalimna Falls and more.

With further investigation, sections of the Tramway Track, or other tracks in this area, could be upgraded to a Grade 1 walking track to increase the offering of accessible trails as well as providing all abilities access to the proposed major lookout upgrade.

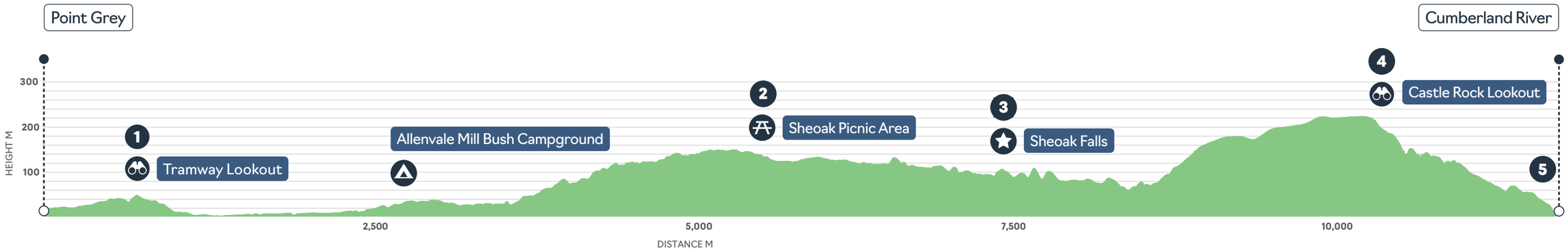

1

2

3

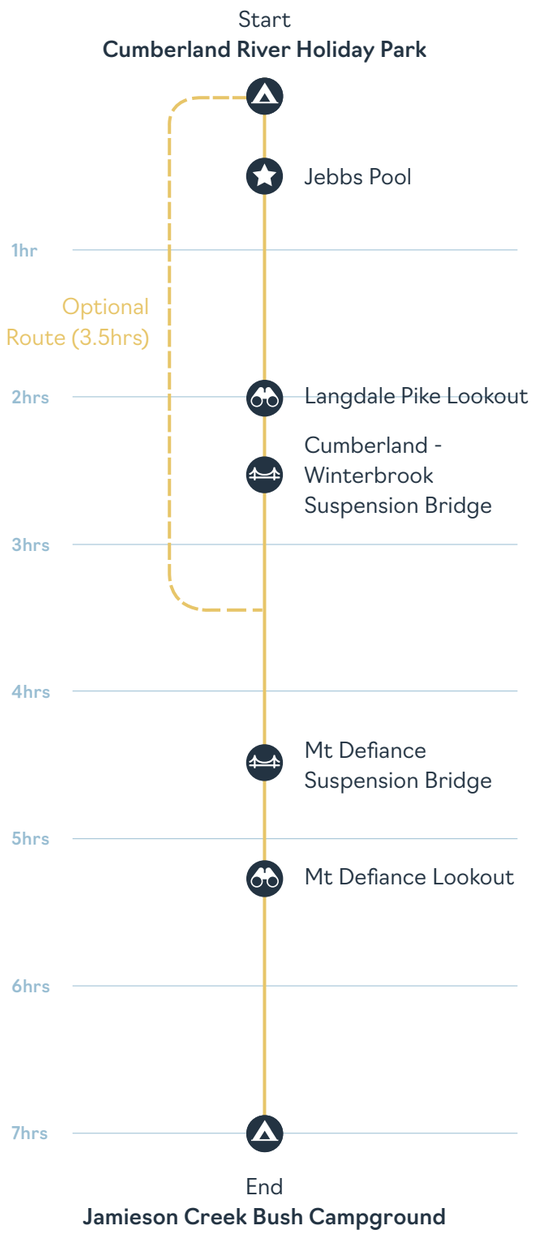
4

5


Point Grey
Cumberland River
HEIGHT M
300
200
100
1
Tramway Lookout
Allenvale Mill Bush Campground
2
Sheoak Picnic Area
3
Sheoak Falls
4
Castle Rock Lookout
5
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
DISTANCE M

4

CUMBERLAND RIVER TO JAMIESON CREEK



Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
9,420 m	5-7 hours	Grade 3

Segment 4 offers exciting and unique features and landscapes.

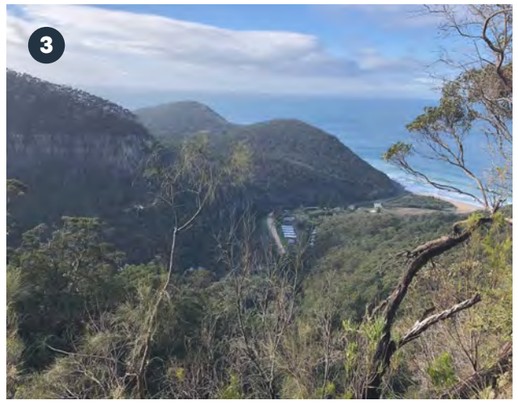
The main route follows the Cumberland River Track upstream via two stepping stone river crossings to Jebbs Pool, before climbing to Langdale Pike lookout with views over the ocean and a glimpse of the Cumberland – Winterbrook Suspension Bridge. At 164m long and 75m high, it will be one of the most spectacular pedestrian bridges in Australia.

Shortly after, walkers have the option of a return loop back to Cumberland River or continuing onwards to the Mt Defiance Suspension Bridge, offering views over the ocean and Great Ocean Road. After crossing the bridge, the trail traverses around the southern side of Mt Defiance before descending a steep ridgeline down to Jamieson Creek.

While Day 4 finishes at Jamieson Creek Campground, some hikers may choose to carry on a further 6.5km to Wye River. Wye River offers a wide range of supporting infrastructure and public facilities including off-trail accommodation, a general store, café and pub.

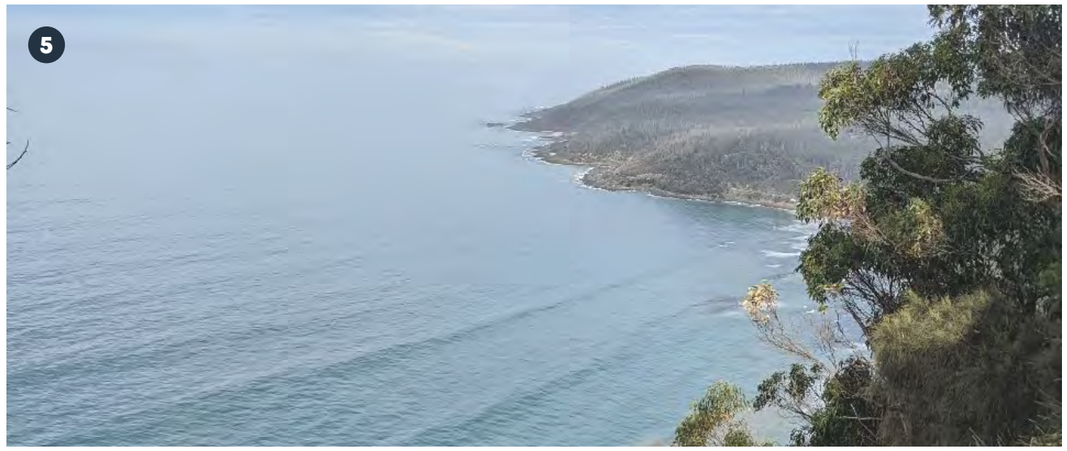
The optional route back to Cumberland River provides a 7km day loop option or an alternative primary route if Cumberland River crossings are flooded.

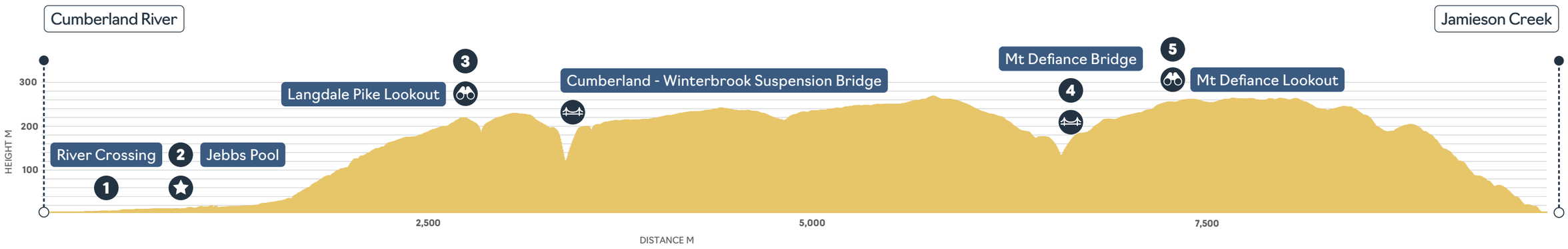
1


3

2

4


5


Cumberland River
Jamieson Creek
HEIGHT M
300
200
100
River Crossing
1
2
Jebbs Pool
Langdale Pike Lookout
3
Cumberland - Winterbrook Suspension Bridge
Mt Defiance Bridge
4
5
Mt Defiance Lookout
2,500
5,000
7,500
DISTANCE M

5

JAMIESON CREEK TO KENNETT RIVER

Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
12,522 m	4-6 hours	Grade 3

From Jamieson Creek Campground, Segment 5 heads south following an existing coastal walking track that features glimpses of the Great Ocean Road and beaches before reaching Separation Creek.

Much of this segment follows the old Telegraph Track, which was built initially for access to the telegraph line connecting mainland Australia and Tasmania, via an undersea telegraph cable. The telegraph line went from Geelong to Cape Otway, via Lorne, Apollo Bay and Cape Otway and was completed in 1859.

From Separation Creek hikers follow Paddy's Path through to Wye River. With an extremely popular beach and supporting facilities, it is anticipated that many hikers will stop in Wye River to rest, top up supplies or enjoy the beach. From Wye River, hikers follow Morley Avenue to an existing walking track that extends all the way to Kennett River, offering frequent ocean views along the route. At Kennett River visitors may be lucky enough to view koalas in the surrounding trees above the campsite.

An optional short walk is available from Kennett River. This loop walk follows the Kennett River Nature Walk, before climbing up to Mt Meuron. A premier lookout located at the top of the escarpment, will provide expansive views from Cape Patton back towards Lorne. The loop then descending down along the ridge to Kennett River.

1

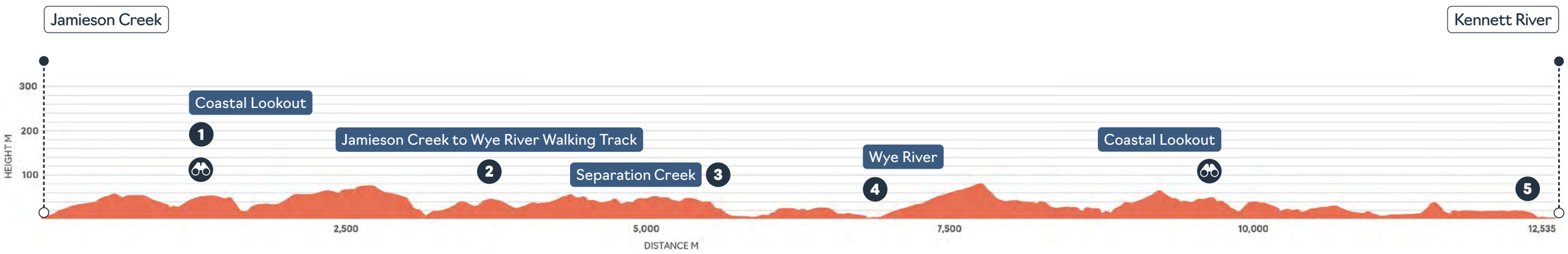
2

3

4

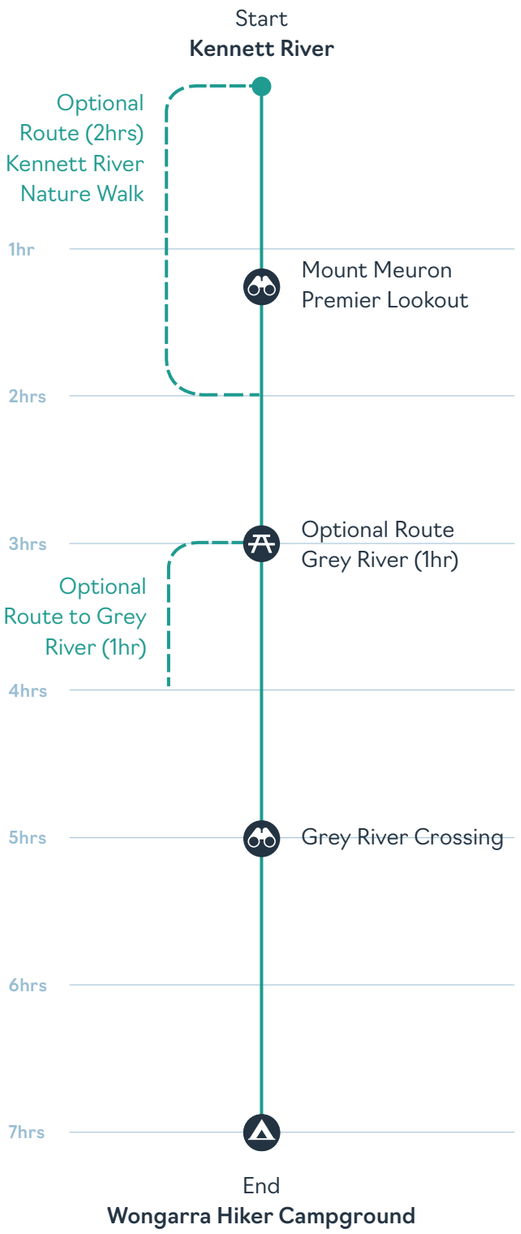
5

5


Jamieson Creek
Kennett River
300
200
100
HEIGHT M
Coastal Lookout
1
Jamieson Creek to Wye River Walking Track
2
Separation Creek
3
Wye River
4
Coastal Lookout
5
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
12,535
DISTANCE M

6

KENNETT RIVER TO WONGARRA



Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
10,685 m	5-6 hours	Grade 3

Beginning at Kennett River, the main route closely follows the coast above the Great Ocean Road, following a steep ridgeline with views back over Kennett River and its rolling surf and out towards Grey River and Cape Patton.

One of these views at the top of Mount Meuron will accommodate a premier lookout, which will be cantilevered out over the steep topography above the Great Ocean Road.

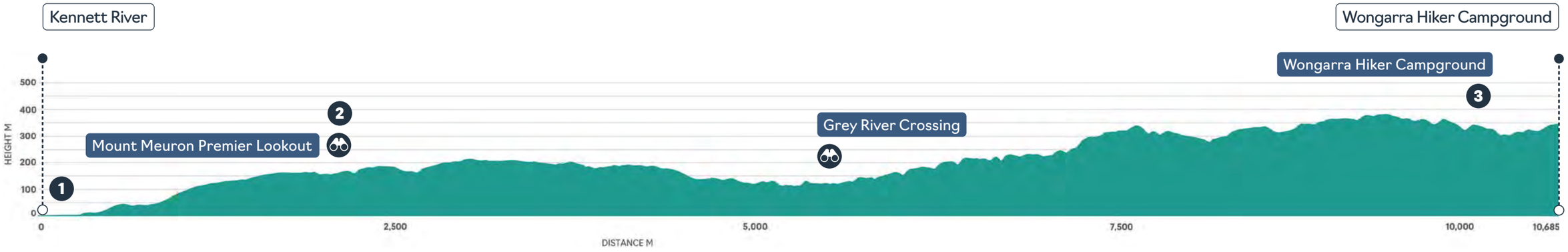
From the Mount Meuron lookout, walkers may choose to take the optional detour to the Grey River coastal community or continue inland along the main route towards the upstream headwaters of Grey River. Day 6 ends at the proposed Wongarra Hiker Campground.

While the alignment for segment 6 and the exact location of the Wongarra Hiker Campground is yet to be confirmed, it is likely to be one of the highest points reached by the trail. Eastern Maar cultural beliefs relating to Sky Country suggest that the Hiker Campground should be located below 400m above sea level. The approximate location indicated is located at about 340m above sea level.

1
Koalas
KOALAS

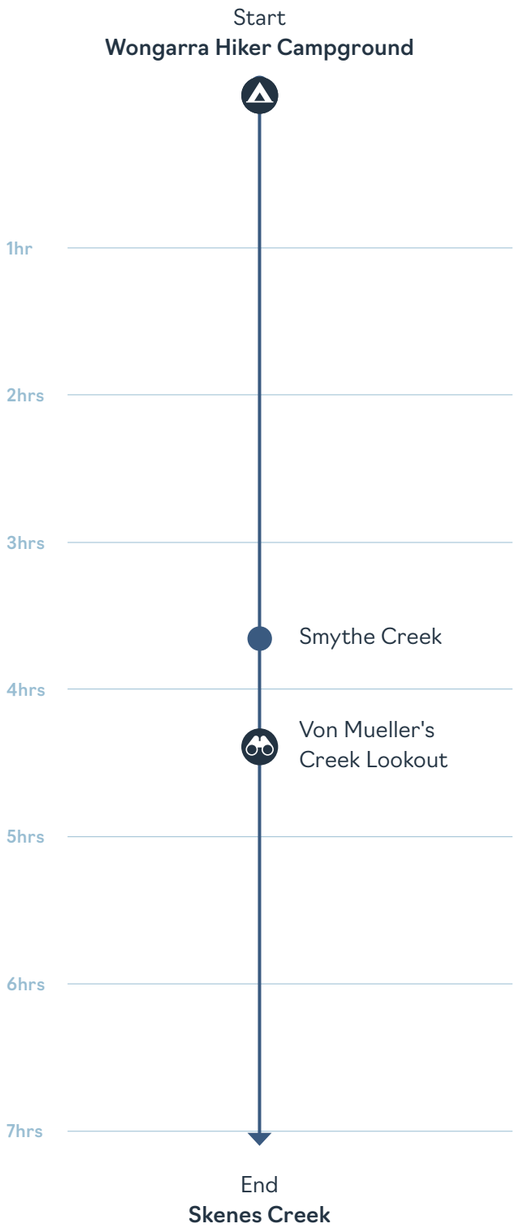
2

3


Kennett River
Wongarra Hiker Campground
Wongarra Hiker Campground
Mount Meuron Premier Lookout
Grey River Crossing
1
2
3
HEIGHT M
500
400
300
200
100
0
0
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
10,685
DISTANCE M

7

WONGARRA TO SKENES CREEK



Length	Approximate Time	Walking Difficulty
16,337 m	**5-7 hours**	**Grade 3**

The final day of the walk commences from the proposed Wongarra Hike Campground, and heads west, descending down through giant eucalypt forests towards the upper headwaters of Smythe Creek.

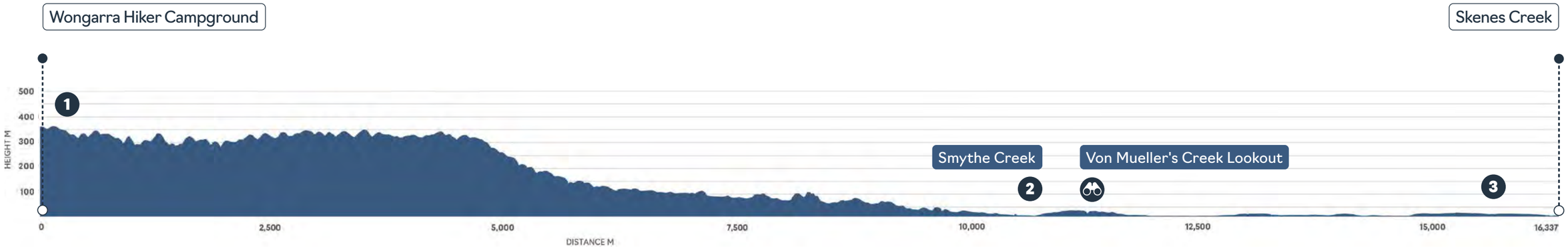
The trail then follows the creek downstream, eventually reaching and crossing the Great Ocean Rd.

From Smythe Creek to Skenes Creek, the trail includes a mix of different walking experiences, including sections of existing walking tracks, new walking tracks, beaches and rock shelves and some sections on the southern shoulder of the Great Ocean Road, separated by a suitable barrier.

1

2

3


Wongarra Hiker Campground
Skenes Creek
Smythe Creek
Von Mueller's Creek Lookout
1
2
3
HEIGHT M
500
400
300
200
100
0
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
12,500
15,000
16,337
DISTANCE M

5.3 WALK EXPERIENCES

Types of walks

While the walk is linear in nature and presented in day sections, the many access points along its length, links to existing short walks, and variety of landscapes provide a diversity of walk types. Ranging from shorter circuit walks to multi-day adventures, the trail will cater for different abilities, interests, and time commitments, thus attracting a broader range of visitors.

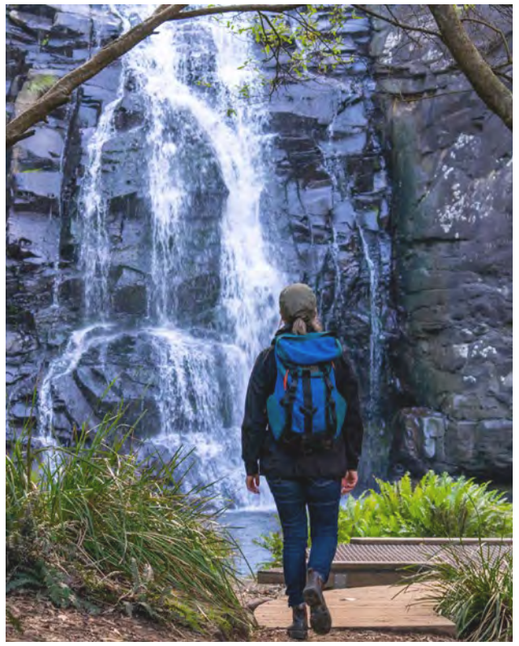
The suspension bridges and 'premier' lookouts will act as a drawcard for visitors, who can choose to access these drawcard items as a short return walk, or as part of a longer walk.

The proximity to the Great Ocean Road and the easy access from towns, makes the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail an inviting, hop-on, hop-off walking prospect that will appeal to many visitors who may not necessarily identify as serious hikers or bushwalkers.

The Full Walk (7 days/6 nights)

While the trail has been designed to accommodate hikers seeking to walk end-to-end in one long continuous journey over seven days, it is anticipated that this walker segment is smaller than those seeking shorter experiences.

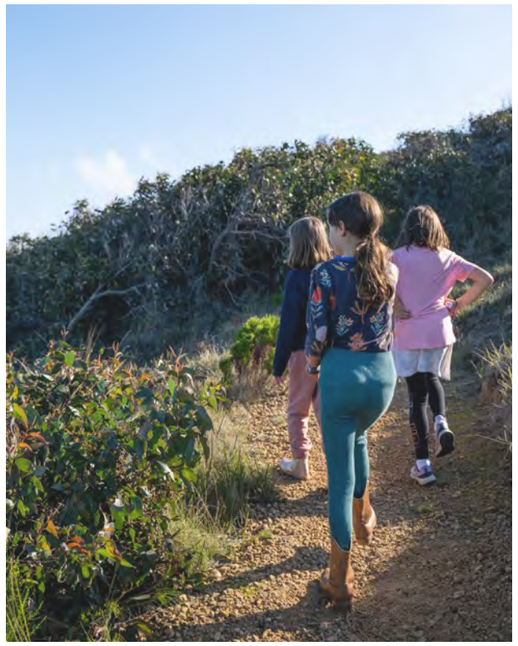
Ultimately, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will form a continuous route between the Surf Coast Walk and the Great Ocean Walk. This entire journey will be about 250km in length, taking hikers from Torquay at the eastern end to the Twelve Apostles at the western end. While the length of this journey may be beyond most hikers, it is also likely to attract the most dedicated and serious outdoor adventurers.



Whole Day Walks

Each day of the trail offers a compelling and interesting walk in its own right. These walks may appeal to visitors with limited time or to holiday makers looking for some exercise, solitude and nature.

Walkers travelling in groups will be able to arrange independent car-shuttles between start-end points, but visitors travelling in one vehicle will rely on a shuttle service.



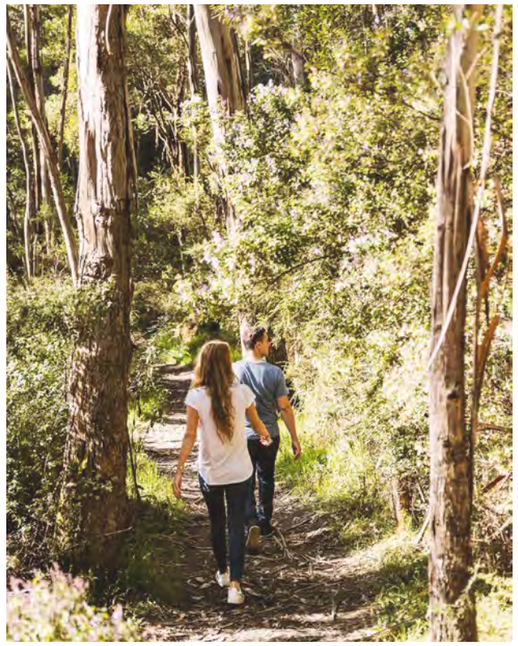
Short Circuit Walks

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail has been designed to fill some known gaps in the local walking track networks, thus creating a number of new short circuit walks, while also providing access to many popular existing walks. These walks provide an achievable 'soft' adventure option and start and finish at the same location. The suspension bridges and lookouts are likely to be a significant drawcard for visitors, with the section around Cumberland River likely to be amongst the most popular.
New short circuit walk options are as follows:

- Allenvale – St Georges River – Cherry Tree Creek (4.3km)
- Cumberland – Sheoak Falls – Sheoak Picnic Area circuit (9.5km)
- Cumberland – Winterbrook Bridge circuit (7km)
- Kennet River Nature Walk circuit (5km)

Walking products

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will appeal to a broad range of users due to its accessibility and broad offering of trails and experiences. This presents opportunities for the development of commercial services, such as accommodation, transport and guiding services, to meet the needs of high and low yield visitor markets.



Independent walks

Likely to make up a large percentage of visitors, this segment will choose to undertake self-guided day or overnight walks. They will be self-sufficient for all transport, accommodation, and food needs.

Supported, self-guided walks

For those wanting to walk independently, but needing assistance with transport, accommodation, and/or food.

Guided walks

Small group-based walking tours guided by a licenced tour operator. Tours ranging from short day-walks to overnight and multi-day. Opportunities for accommodation include on-walk hiker camps or off-track accommodation depending on the desired experience.

Multi-activity packages

The Great Ocean Road region offers a multitude of different nature and adventure based tourism products that would complement the experiences offered by the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail.

Multi-activity packages developed by commercial operators could include active pursuits such as mountain biking at the Forest Mountain Bike Trails, surfing and kayaking, or more relaxing activities such as photography, creative workshops, and wellness activities. Furthermore, the trail provides many opportunities to educate trail users about Gadubanud culture, which would be delivered through commercial operations run by Eastern Maar.

Licenced commercial operators will play an important role in delivering products and experiences to meet the needs of different market segments, especially high-yield visitors seeking higher levels of service. Some of these commercial opportunities could be run directly by the land manager or Eastern Maar, retaining any commercial benefits directly within the community.

Connections

The development of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will add a new world-class, multi-day, coastal walking experience to the nature and adventure-based tourism products available along the Great Ocean Road, offering further incentive for visitors to extend their stay in the area.

Two existing and nearby multi-day hikes that are currently operational in the region include:

- **The Great Ocean Walk** – a 110km hike from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles; and
- **The Surf Coast Walk** – a 44km hike from Point Impossible to Fairhaven.

Apart from hiking, there are many other nature and adventure-based tourism attractions nearby:

- One of Victoria's most successful mountain biking destinations is located at Forrest, just 32km from Skenes Creek. A smaller network of mountain bike trails is also available just east of Anglesea. Both locations include a range of trails for different abilities;
- The Otways is known for its many waterfalls, including Triplet Falls, Beauchamp Falls, Hopetoun Falls and Erskine Falls and many more;
- Learn to surf schools;
- Berry and lavender farms;
- Redwood forests;
- Treetop attractions such as Treetops Adventure Yeodene Park, Livewire Park and Otway Fly Treetop Adventure.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail provides an opportunity to attract new visitors to the region and encourage longer stays and visitation to existing tourism attractions.

5.4 ACCOMMODATION

A key guiding principle for the walk is to prioritise the use of existing accommodation and hospitality facilities.

Where possible, the trail has been designed so each day starts and/or finishes in a town. Where the distance between towns is too long to be completed comfortably in a day, an on-track hiker camp is proposed. Alternatively, these locations could also offer on-track roofed-accommodation, which is becoming increasingly more popular on these types of trails.

The accommodation and hospitality services that exist within the towns along the trail varies. Lorne is the only town on the trail that currently offers a large and diverse range of accommodation and dining options. The offer in the other towns along route is more limited. This presents an opportunity for private sector investment in new accommodation, shuttle services, and food and beverage offerings.

Off-trail Accommodation

Apart from Day 1 and Day 6, all days finish in towns offering some accommodation. With the exception of Lorne, which offers a full suite of accommodation, the primary accommodation offered at each of the towns along the route is in public or private caravan park/campground. During the peak summer months, these caravan park/campgrounds can be booked out and may have a minimum booking of multiple nights. Conversely, some of these caravan park/campgrounds currently close during the quieter winter months. While this will impact the ability of trail walkers to access accommodation, it presents a good opportunity for private investment in hiker accommodation, and specific hiker campsites at existing campgrounds.

On-walk Hiker Camps

On-walk hiker camps are proposed in two locations where the day's walk ends away from towns – end of Day 1 at Big Hill and end of Day 6 at Sunnyside Road.

Each hiker camp is proposed to offer eight elevated three-person platforms, a communal shelter and toilets. The hiker camps will be available to both independent hikers and guided walkers.

On-walk Roofed Accommodation

While not included in the design guidelines of this master plan, there is a future opportunity to explore the potential for sensitive, ecologically sustainable on-walk hiker cabins as an alternative accommodation option to the on-walk hiker camps. Hiker cabins offer a higher level of convenience and comfort and will cater to segment of the visitor market that might otherwise not walk this section of trail.

The exact location and design of hiker cabins would be subject to detailed planning processes to ensure the protection of natural and cultural values.

Hiker cabins could either be provided and managed by the land manager or as a private venture.

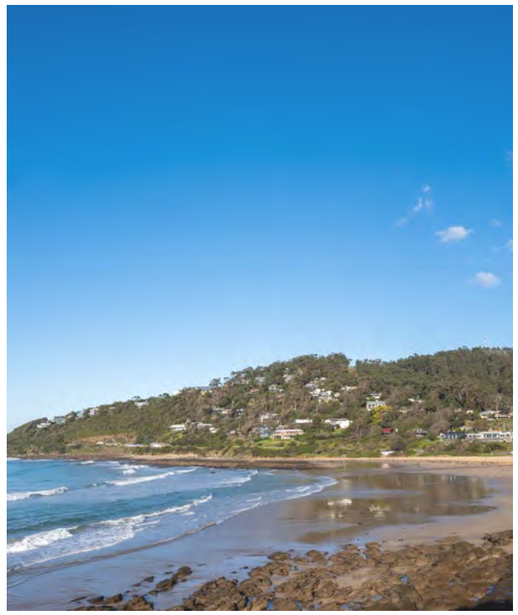
Accommodation Options

The table below outlines the accommodation options for each of the proposed overnight stops. Visitors will be able to chose where they wish to stay based on the type of walking experience they want to complete.

It is anticipated that most walkers will stay in private accommodation and walk the segments that don't require carrying camping equipment.

Conversely, the trail design still allows for those who want to walk the full length of the route carrying their own equipment and utilising camping facilities every night.

Segment	Accommodation Location	Accommodation Offer
1	Proposed Big Hill Hiker Campground	Eight tent platforms. Up to three people each.
2	Lorne	Full range of accommodation options.
3	Cumberland River Holiday Park	Tent sites and cabins.
4	Jamieson Creek Bush Campground	24 campsites. (maximum six people each site)
5	Kennett River Family Caravan Park	Camping and private accomodation options.
6	Proposed Wongarra Hiker Campground	Eight tent platforms. Up to three people each.
7	Skenes Creek	Camping and private accomodation options.

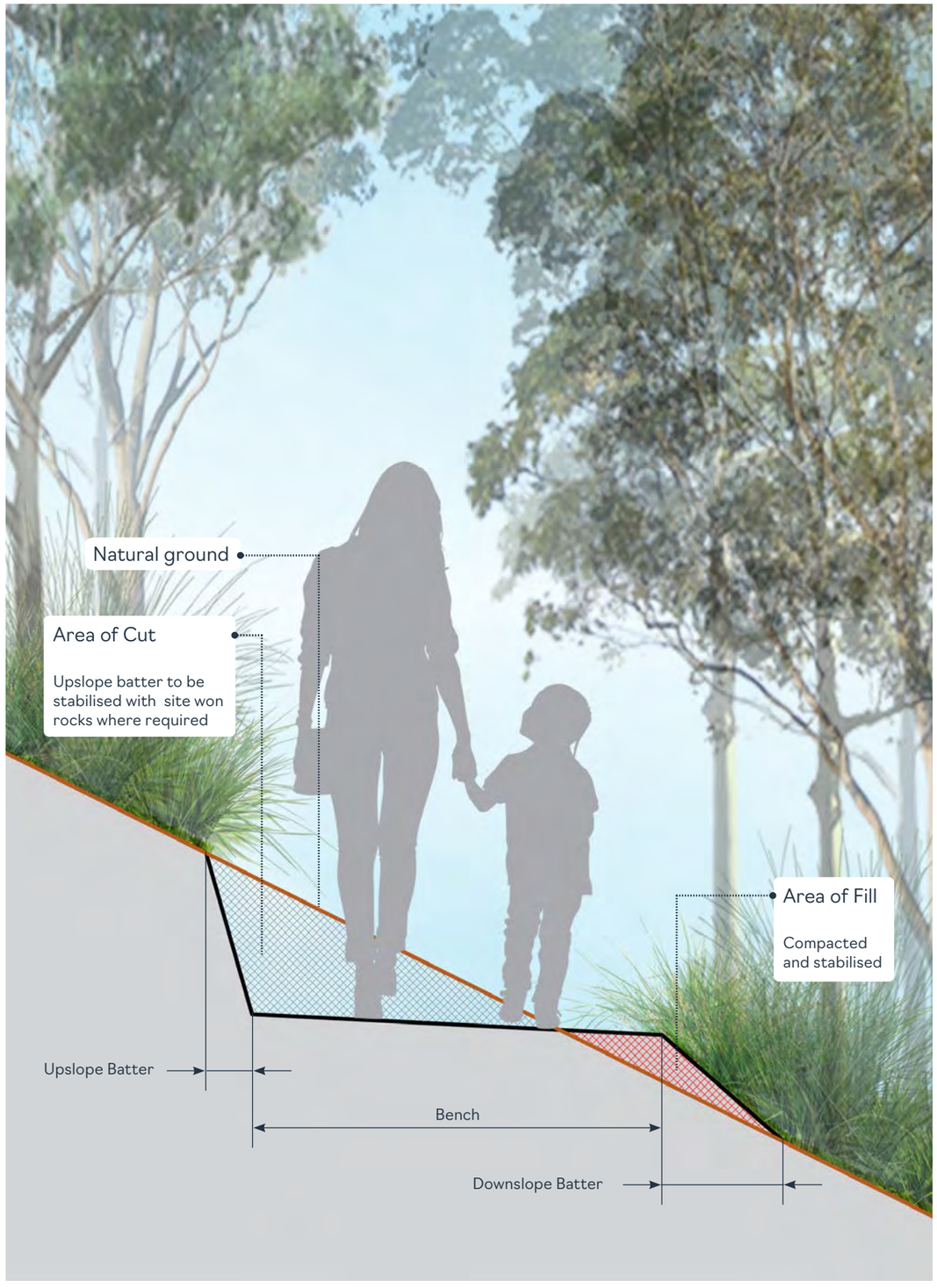


5.5 TRAIL BUILD + SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The construction of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail shall align with the guiding principles, and represent best practice for sustainable trail construction and inline with the expectations of a world class trail.

Relevant design standards/guidelines include:

- AS2156.1-Walking Tracks Classification and Signage
- AS2156.2-2001 Walking Tracks Part 2: Infrastructure Design
- AS1428.1-2009 Design for Access and Mobility
- Australian Walking Track Grading System
- Austroads technical standards
- Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast, DELWP, 2020



Typical trail section

New Trails

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail has been designed to use existing trails wherever possible and where they can provide a suitable high-quality walking experience.

New trails have been designed in locations where existing trails are not available or aren't of a suitable quality.

All new trails will be constructed to meet best practise standards for trail sustainability. In practice this means minimising steep gradients, integrating frequent grade reversals to ensure good drainage, avoiding areas of high ecological or cultural heritage values and ensuring high standards of machinery and worker hygiene to minimise the spread of soil borne pathogens such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

Generally speaking, all new trails, unless specified otherwise for worker safety or other reasons, have been designed to be built by rubber-tracked mini-excavator at a 1m bench width. No imported surfacing materials or wearing course have been specified, but could be required on high traffic areas closer to towns. The in-situ soils appear to offer a good blend of walker comfort, plasticity and drainage and are easily workable.

In some areas, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will follow sections of old logging roads, old bridle trails or even informal walking and motorbike trails that were discovered during fieldwork. These trails, while technically already in existence, are treated as new trails for the purposes of permits and approvals and calculating native vegetation offsets. Many of the motorbike trails in particular were in very bad condition, deeply eroded and rutted, and will require extensive work to bring them up to a suitable standard for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail.

The majority of new trails are proposed to be constructed to meet Grade 3, under the Australian Walking Track Grading System, with a smaller number of trails proposed as Grade 2.

Existing Trails

The use of existing walking trails is a key element of this project. By using existing trails, the project meets many environmental outcomes:

- It minimises native vegetation removal;
- It minimises further fragmentation of native bushland areas;
- It reduces opportunities for the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

It also makes good practical and fiscal sense to re-use and if necessary, upgrade existing assets, in an economic climate where land managers are being stretched to maintain existing assets as it is.

An initial piece of work for the project team was to identify existing trails within the project area that provided a suitable world-class experience and that could be incorporated into the route. In some cases, the trail even follows existing management vehicle tracks (also called fire roads or four-wheel drive tracks). While it is acknowledged that such management vehicle tracks don't provide the intimate experience of a typical narrow walking track, they can be suitable for short distances.

In total, 42.7 km of the total 90.3 km distance is comprised of existing trails, a percentage of 47%.

Many of these existing trails do require upgrading to improve the walking experience, condition and ongoing sustainability of the trail. Typical upgrades include surfacing, drainage and re-profiling or re-grading to fill in puddles, ruts or erosion channels.

All existing trails that are proposed to be used by the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail have been assessed by the project team for any potential upgrade works and included in cost estimates for construction moving forward.

Level of Service

Level of service is a term that broadly indicates key performance measures in the design and development of infrastructure items.

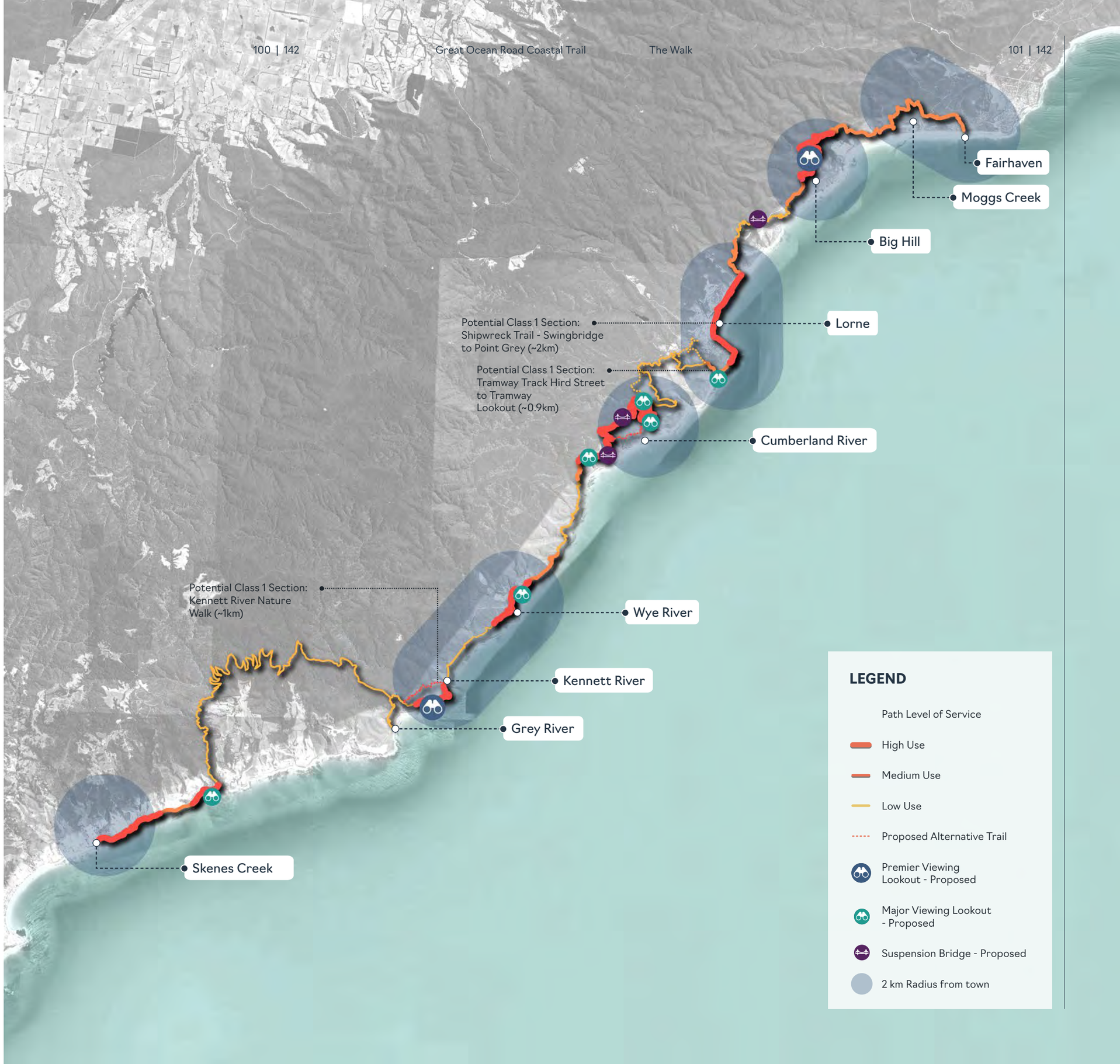
The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will be supported by a suite of infrastructure to enhance the experience of all users and ensure the practicality and longevity of the trail. The proposed infrastructure shall be designed in accordance with the guiding principles of the project and include practical and functional elements such as trailheads, signage and carparks as well as infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience of the landscape.

The size, quality and overall design of any proposed infrastructure utilised along each section of trail will be determined by a variety of factors including the location, anticipated visitor numbers, visitor expectations and accessibility. These factors combine to create a level of service requirement for a specific location. For example, parts of the trail that are near a town, permit easy pedestrian access and that showcase an amazing view requires a high level of service whereas a small creek crossing in a remote part of the trail only needs to be functional. The trail's key attractions proposed to showcase the landscape and attract visitors to the area are:

- Suspension Bridges
- Premier Lookouts
- Major Lookouts

These will provide world class views and experiences. Where possible, these attractors have been spread out across the length of the trail to spread out visitors and encourage the full length of the trail to be utilised.

Maintenance and durability is also a key component in determining the infrastructure type and materiality. Materials need to be suitable for a corrosive coastal location, long lifespan and reflect a world class experience.



Suspension Bridges

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will feature several suspension bridges, which will enhance the walker experience by providing spectacular views and a thrilling, unique experience. Currently three suspension bridges are proposed, subject to further Geotechical, Environmental, Cultural Heritage and Landscape Visual Impact Assessments.

Suspension bridges are one of the most cost-effective ways to create a long-span bridge to cross a large area without intermediate supports.

The suspension bridges will be designed to Australian Standard 2156.2-2001 Walking Tracks Part 2: Infrastructure Design, as they are classified as walking track structures. A geotechnical review of the proposed bridge locations guided the siting locations for bridge abutments, based on a geohazard assessment of slope stability/ landslide potential and erosion potential. The preferred abutment locations define the span of the bridge and height above valley.

The suspension bridges will be designed to achieve a minimum expected working life of 50 years without major structural repair or replacement of the foundations, towers or cables being necessary. Hangers, deck bearers, joists and decking are more easily replaced and may have a lower design life.

The choice of materials is governed by local availability, the cost and ease of transportation to the site, the degree of workmanship to be employed, the degree of supervision (quality control) available, safety, durability (maintenance), and funding available.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail bridge locations are within 1 km of the shoreline where the rate of corrosion is increased by the presence of soluble chlorides in the atmosphere. The bridges are also subject to extremes of weather and UV.

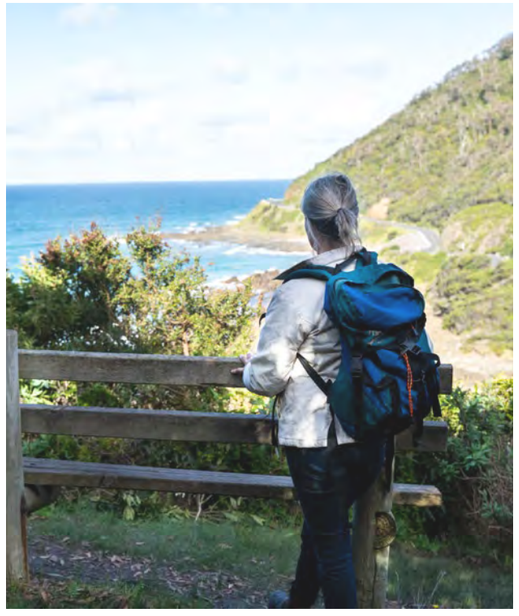
Bridge	Span	Height above valley (approx)
Reedy Creek	71m	20m
Cumberland Winterbrook	164m	75m
Mount Defiance	165m	45m

Table 3. Proposed Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Suspension Bridges

Lookouts

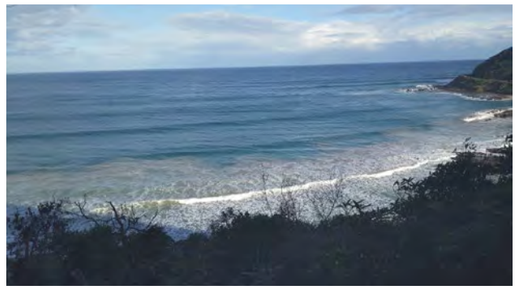
The Great Ocean Road region is known for its dramatic views of the Otway Ranges descending into Bass Straight. In support of the proposed world-class walking trail a series of lookouts are proposed to improve the nature-based experience and assist in attracting visitors to the region in line with the guiding principles of the Master Plan.

The lookouts will be developed using a landscape led design approach that ensures a sympathetic integration with the natural environment.



Lookouts will cater for locals, day walkers and multi-day hikers depending on the proposed location, the ease of accessibility and the anticipated visitors. In locations where high numbers of visitors are anticipated, the lookouts will be designed and engineered for higher capacity. Where the lookout is proposed on a remote part of the trail, only accessible by foot, then only a modest intervention will be proposed.

There are three types of lookouts proposed:

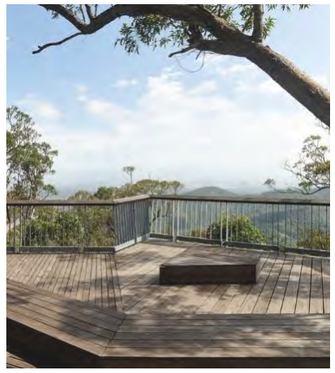


Premier

Mount Meuron

Kelsall's Rock

- Iconic and dramatic locations which showcase world class views that are distinctive to the Otway Coast
- Will add to the walking experience and will likely become a destination for visitors to the region
- To be located in areas close to towns and carparks which will allow easy access for visitors and therefore require a high level of service
- Very likely to be visited by day walkers
- Location able to provide supporting infrastructure



Major

Langdale Pike

Cathedral Rock

Castle Rock

Ocean View Lookout

Tramway Lookout

Mount Defiance

- Iconic and dramatic landscape location
- Will add to the walking experience
- Moderate proximity to a town and/or other key walk attractions, likely access by day walkers
- Located on areas of trail that are likely to attract a high number of visitors and require moderate level of service
- Location able to provide some supporting infrastructure

Minor

Various Locations

- Located away from major town or other key trail attractions
- Walking access only and unlikely to be visited by day walkers
- Natural rest stop for walkers
- Moderate level of service requirements
- Moderately dramatic landscape location

Environmental Controls

There is evidence of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Cinnamon Fungus) present along the trail and footwear cleaning wash stations have been recommended to help control the spread of soil pathogens and diseases.

The trail design includes minimal new trails within rare, endangered or vulnerable Ecological Vegetation Classes and minimises native vegetation clearing by maximising the use of existing trails. Where new trail is proposed through any sensitive ecosystems, low impact/low soil disturbance construction techniques and/or raised walkways or boardwalks will be used.

Prior to trail construction, a Construction Environmental Management Plan will be produced, listing a range of measures to minimise environmental impacts during construction, including machinery and equipment hygiene protocols to limit the introduction or spread of Phytophthora. The Construction Environmental Management Plan would be noted within relevant permits and approvals and would be strictly enforced.

Universal Access

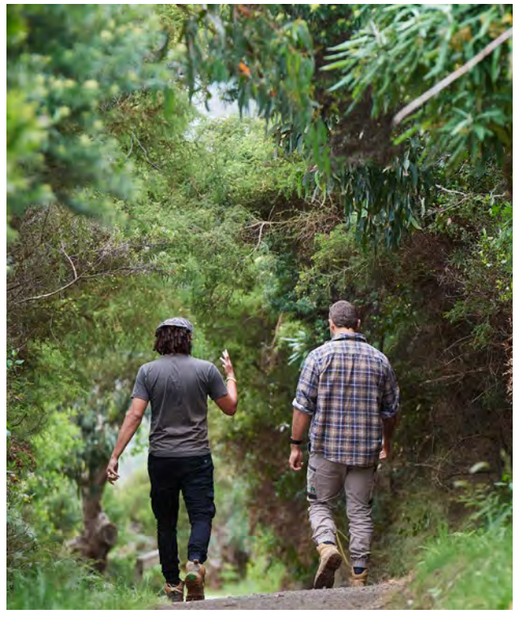
The Master Plan seeks to encourage all to be active, regardless of age and ability. However, the nature of hiking in steep and remote terrain does exclude a certain part of the population as it requires a certain level of fitness, ability and experience.

To balance this conflict, the project has investigated whether any sections of the trail could be made more accessible to members of the community. Some sections of trail have been identified along the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail that could be upgraded or constructed to Grade 1 (which is suitable for wheelchairs and compliant under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)) or improved from a Grade 3 to a Grade 2 for accessibility purposes.

Sections of trail that have been identified with potential to be upgraded to a Grade 1 trail include:

- Kennett River Nature Walk (~1km);
- Shipwreck Trail – Lorne Swing bridge to Point Grey (~2km); and
- Tramway Track Hird Street to Tramway Lookout (~0.9km).

Specialist DDA accessibility consultants would need to be engaged to investigate each of these identified opportunities.



Carparks

Carparking is already an issue with lack of supply at peak periods along the Great Ocean Road. The majority of visitors to the area travel by car with the drive along the Great Ocean Road being a major tourist drawcard. There is a need for carparking to service both multi-day walkers at the start of the trail and for day visitors to park safely close to the trail drawcards (e.g. suspension bridges).

Carpark design should be site-specific, considering the individual site layout and environment (drainage, vegetation, earthworks requirements) in accordance with the following standards and guidelines where applicable:

- Australian Standards
  - AS/NZS 2890.1 – Parking Facilities – Off-street Parking
  - AS/NZS 2890.6 – Parking Facilities – Off-street Parking for People with Disabilities
  - AS1742 - Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (and VicRoads supplements)
- Austroads Guide to Road Design (and VicRoads supplements)
- VicRoads design guidelines, technical publications and design and construction specifications
- Council infrastructure planning instruments and design and construction specifications
- Parks Victoria infrastructure design standards

The following standards and guidelines may apply to carpark pavements where applicable:

- VicRoads design guidelines, technical publications and design and construction specifications
- Council infrastructure planning instruments and design and construction specifications
- Austroads Technical Report – Pavement Design for Light Traffic: a supplement to Austroads Pavement Design Guideline
- Parks Victoria infrastructure design standards

Site-specific assessment of existing pavements should be undertaken to determine whether upgrades are required, or whether existing pavements can be retained. Where existing carparks are to be formalised, additional line-marking or delineation of carparks through bollards, wheel stops or retro-reflective pavement markers may improve functionality and safety.

5.6 TRAIL SIGNAGE + WAYFINDING

A comprehensive signage and wayfinding package should be designed in future stages of the project that helps to create an identity for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail in keeping with the project principles. The package should provide signage design that considers universal design principles and provide trailhead signage, interpretive signage and wayfinding signage for the trail. New technologies for digital wayfinding should also be explored in the design process. This can include digital wayfinding for people with disabilities and incorporation of digital interpretive information.

Trail signage presents an excellent opportunity to incorporate Eastern Maar place names, language, art, culture and stories. Eastern Maar and the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority are currently undertaking a broad scale review of signage infrastructure along the coast.

Trailhead Signage

Informational Signage Shelters located at trailheads should include:

- 'Family' of signage elements with a hierarchy of size based on location and information requirements
- Ensure: clarity of information, a consistency of material/scale, appropriate scale based on location and function
- Trail name
- Length
- Duration
- Trail condition
- Trail difficulty - Australian Walking Track Grading System (ffm.vic.gov.au)

Wayfinding Signage + Markers

Wayfinding should be designed to comply with the Australian Walking Track Grading System and should include distance, time to complete, standard symbols for the trail grade and any other important and relevant information.

Triangular orange directional blazes, fixed to timber posts or another relevant site-specific location, should be used to indicate the trail direction where it is unclear or where standard wayfinding signs are not appropriate.

Interpretive Signage

Interpretive signage can be used to educate trail users about the biocultural landscape around them. In particular, it could be used as a key tool to educate trail users about the Gadubanud Bio-Culture, its people and their relationship with Country. Interpretive signage design should be undertaken in partnership with all project partners and include:

- A contemporary aesthetic; and
- High level of care and consideration in design, sensitive to the context to ensure the existing landscape is dominant.

Materials

- Steel, powdercoat, stone, timber, timber bollards; and
- Long design life, low maintenance, clear and legible

5.7 TRANSPORT

The Great Ocean Road is internationally renowned as one of the world's most iconic and scenic drives. While many visitors arrive by car, the intent of this Master Plan is to encourage people to explore and experience the landscapes of the Great Ocean Road on foot.

Alternative modes of transport, such as bicycles and public transport, including potentially a local shuttle bus service, will be critical as the trail popularity increases. The intent is to reduce the increasing pressure on road and parking infrastructure along the Great Ocean Road, particularly as visitor numbers increase.

The provision of such transport services presents an opportunitiy for tour and transport operators, and would go a long way to solving some of the traffic congestion issues that occur currently during busy holiday periods.

A similar service is currently available for hikers on the Great Ocean Walk, whereby a commercial operator offers pick-up and drop-off services to ferry hikers between the trail and their accommodation.

Getting There

Public Transport

The starting point for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail at Fairhaven can be reached by V Line bus service from the Geelong Railway Station.

Car

The starting point for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail at Fairhaven is approximately 2 hour's drive from Melbourne.

Other

Most sections of the trail can be accessed directly from towns, with only short walks. Bicycle parking will be incorporated into any trail access points for those trail users who wish to travel by bicycle.

Getting Around

It is expected that many whole day and short walk trail users will continue to use private vehicles to access trail heads and key features. With connections to all the main towns along the coast, private vehicle parking infrastructure can largely be accommodated by existing towns and visitor nodes. However, some new car parking infrastructure will need to be provided at key locations along the trail, especially areas with exciting new attractions away from the main towns.

A shuttle bus service to return walkers to their accommodation, vehicle or town transport hub would limit the requirement for new car parks outside of the main towns.

06

COST + ONGOING MANAGEMENT.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail will be designed and constructed to be one of Australia's most compelling and interesting multi-day walks. Effective and appropriately funded ongoing management and maintenance of the trail is essential to ensure that it remains a compelling attraction long into the future.

6.1 CONSTRUCTION COST CONSIDERATIONS

In 2019, EY completed the Fairhaven to Skenes Creek Feasibility Study. As part of the work, detailed cost estimates for the construction and maintenance of the trail were developed.

The construction of the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River only, was estimated to cost between $16.1m and $23.7m. The section of the trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek had a much higher cost estimate, due to technical and engineering challenges posed by coastal sections near Cape Patton.

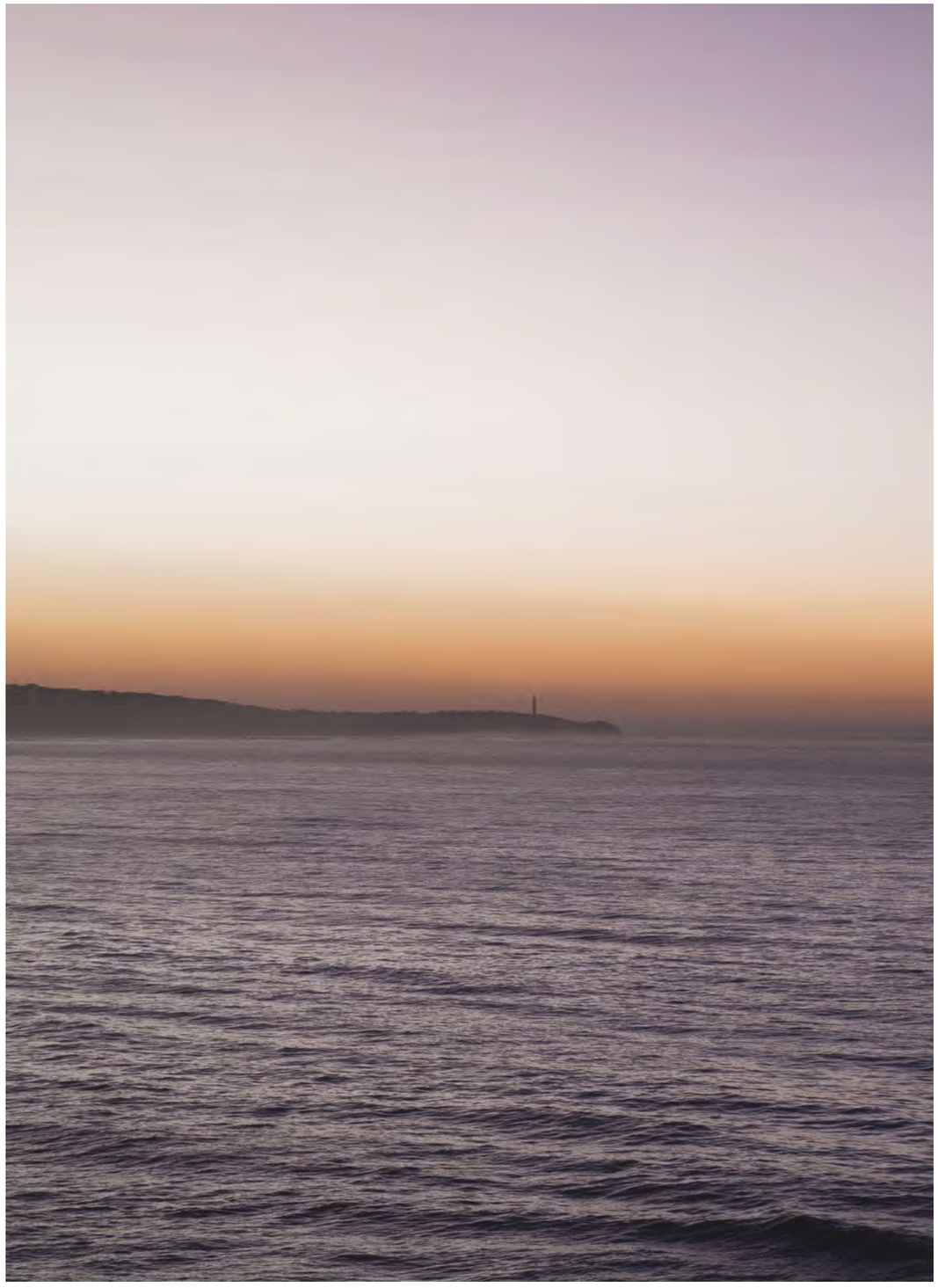
Based on the cost estimates from the 2019 Feasibility Study, the Victorian Government announced two rounds of funding for the design and construction of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail:

- $1.43m over 2020/21 and 2021/22 from the *'Building Works - Public Land Economic Stimulus'* funding program via the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; and
- $23.8m over 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 from the *'Tourism Infrastructure Program'* (TIP) funding via Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

The funding provided acknowledged the uncertainties and challenges which were present at the time for the section of trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek, defining the funding objectives as:

- The design and construction of the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River;
- The design of the trail from Grey River to Skenes Creek.

As a comparison, the Grampians Peaks Trail in Western Victoria, which was opened in November 2021, had an overall average cost of $340 per metre of trail. The Three Capes Track in Tasmania, which opened in 2015 was constructed for an overall average cost of $527 per metre of trail. The 2019 Feasibility Study estimated the length of the trail from Fairhaven to Grey River at 80km and the total cost of constructing this section as $16.1-$23.7m. This equates to a rate of $201 – $296 per metre of trail.



6.2 MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Once the construction of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is complete, a thorough trail maintenance plan will be implemented with sufficient resourcing to ensure trail safety, functionality and quality so that it remains a world class experience for decades.

This maintenance plan will outline inspection and maintenance requirements for the trail and the infrastructure elements of the trail, such as the suspensions bridges, lookout structures and campground facilities.

Trails that are designed and constructed to high standards for trail sustainability and user safety require less maintenance, however all trails require some maintenance over time. There are two main components of a thorough trail maintenance plan:

- Routine trail inspections; and
- Trail maintenance works.

The objective of routine trail inspections is to identify any trail defects that need to be repaired. During a routine trail inspection, whenever a trail defect is identified, it should be classified as either urgent or non-urgent. Urgent defects should be repaired immediately. Non-urgent defects can be undertaken on pre-determined, scheduled maintenance days.

User reporting provides an innovative opportunity for managing authorities to become aware of urgent defects outside of scheduled inspections, allowing for a more immediate response to safety risks on the trail. There are several ways user reporting systems can be setup. This could be through an online database, email address or a simple maintenance log book that is kept at trail access points at the end of each day segment.

In the absence of any reference to maintenance in the Australian Walking Track Grading System, it is recommended that inspections be undertaken in accordance with the Australian Standard for walking tracks, *Australian Standard 2156.1 Walking Tracks Part 1: Classification and Signage*.

This standard outlines the required inspection frequencies for each class (difficulty grade) of walking track. The minimum inspection interval for a Class 3 trail (which corresponds with Grade 3 under the Australian Walking Track Grading System) is 6 months – lower classes have more frequent inspections and higher classes have less frequent inspections. Note that these represent the minimum inspection frequencies required. More regular inspections may be appropriate for a world-class hiking trail such as the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail, particularly following extreme weather events.

A well thought out maintenance schedule works hand in hand with the routine trail inspection program to provide a strategic and targeted approach to ensure the trail is maintained in the best condition possible, providing the optimum user experience as well as reducing costs and risks for the managing authority.

The frequency of maintenance required on a particular section or segment of trail depends on several factors, including:

- The trail difficulty;
- The amount of use/level of service;
- Soil and vegetation types; and
- The frequency of extreme weather events that will necessitate unscheduled maintenance and hazard checks.

A proactive trail maintenance schedule is preferred to a reactive maintenance system as it allocates time and resources to trail maintenance on a regular basis, rather than on an 'as needs' basis. Maintenance schedules enable simple cost estimates to be produced, based off the data captured during routine trail inspections and/or via user reporting systems. Scheduled trail maintenance days will account for the majority of trail maintenance works required. Works should also be planned and conducted around any planned fuel reduction burns that are occurring along the alignment.

Maintenance considerations must also be made for trail related infrastructure such as suspension bridges, lookout platforms and campgrounds. All structures need to be subject to regular inspections with a maximum interval between assessments, as per the relevant Australian Standard. Each item should also be inspected after extreme weather events. It is recommended that maintenance manuals are developed for each infrastructure item that prescribe the nature of inspections, frequency and type of maintenance required to ensure the respective design life is achieved.

The ongoing management and maintenance of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail presents an opportunity for employment or commercial enterprise for Eastern Maar. In particular, maintenance activities provide opportunities for outdoor work, where workers can be connected to Country and act as custodians for the land.

Estimated Maintenance Budget

There are a number of methods that can be applied to estimate the annual maintenance budget. As outlined in the *Fairhaven to Skenes Creek Coastal Trail Feasibility Study* produced in 2019 by Ernst & Young, two common methods for estimating this are:

1. Percentage of capital cost

this method applies a percentage of the capital cost of the trail as an ongoing recurrent annual maintenance cost. Typically, the percentage applied is 5-10%. While this method is used within the trail building industry, it can be problematic as it doesn't consider local variability in climate or conditions or the initial build quality of the trail; and

2. Distance-based costing

this method applies a per metre cost based on actual trail maintenance costs (sourced from actual trail projects elsewhere in Australia) and multiplies the cost by the distance of the trail to be maintained. While this method is preferred, it can also be problematic as the maintenance requirements can differ from location to location and project to project, and real costs can be difficult to source.

Using the distance-based cosing method above, based on real-world staffing costs on similar walking trails and allowing for material costs and suspension bridge maintenance costs, the feasibility study estimated an annual minatenance cost of $962,790 per year for the trail between Fairhaven to Skenes Creek.

During the design of this project, the Great Ocean Road Coasts and Parks Authority obtained actual maintenance costs for the Grampians Peaks Trail and Great Ocean Walk. Keeping in mind that these trails both include a high number of remote hiker campgrounds and associated facilities, the annual maintenance budget for these walks equates to an average of approximately $5000 per km per year. This included costs for staff wages, vehicles, audits, infrastructure works and trail maintenance.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail is estimated to be 90.3 km long. Applying the $5000 per km per year rate outlined above, this would suggest an annual trail maintenance budget of $451,750. This does not include maintenance allowances for suspension bridges, lookout structures and other associated infrastructure.

6.3 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Getting people out into the environment provides many benefits, but also increases the likelihood of emergencies and subsequent rescue attempts. The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail has been designed to minimise unnecessary risks and to maximise accessibility for emergency responders.

The Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail passes through a range of public land tenures, including large areas of the Great Otway National Park. While sections of the trail may feel remote, the route has been designed to ensure vehicle access points are never too far away. The longest and most remote sections are found on day six and seven, where the trail heads inland around Cape Patton to Wongarra and then back to the coast.

The longest stretches between vehicle access points are around 6-7km long, meaning the furthest distance from either end is around 3-3.5km along the trail. Furthermore some of these sections run close to private property boundaries or other roads that could also be used for emergency access. Some roads would likely require upgrading to improve vehicle access for emergencies.

Other emergency management protocols that should be considered include:

- Having mandatory booking for those undertaking the full walk. This not only helps manage campground bookings, but also captures a record of those undertaking the full walk.
- Implementing the ESTA Emergency Marker system on the trail. This system allows the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) to direct an emergency response team to a precise emergency caller location, through the use of a unique six-character code placed on signage along the trail. Emergency markers would be located at trail junctions and significant features such as congregation points, shelters, lookouts etc.
- Identifying areas along the trail where mobile phone reception is poor or unavailable. Any areas of poor or zero reception could be notified to trail users through signage. In any significant long sections of limited reception, users could be encouraged to carry personal emergency beacons. Overall, mobile phone reception is quite good in most of the areas through which the trail passes. In some deep valleys, reception may be limited.
- Closing the trail in extreme weather conditions, especially extreme and catastrophic (code red) fire danger days. Public awareness and acceptance of extreme weather closures of trails and other outdoor facilities and activities is growing and is a valid tool to keep people out of the bush on high-risk days.
- General preparedness – any signage or collateral associated with the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail should encourage trail users to be responsible for their own safety. This means researching their route beforehand, notifying people of their route, carrying appropriate clothes, supplies and equipment, including first aid kits and other emergency gear. The use of digital resources and apps such as 'What Three Words' and 'Emergency Plus' could also be promoted to trail users.
- Sections of the trail may be closed periodically for emergency preparedness works such as planned burning.
- Where the walk is in close proximity to the coast, additional signage regarding beach safety may be required. Any additional signs will be consistent with relevant Australian standards and installed in consultation with Surf Life Saving Victoria.

07

APPENDICES.

A

DESIGN APPROACH.

A.1 AUSTRALIAN WALKING TRACK GRADING SYSTEM

Trail Grade	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Distance	Total distance must not exceed 5km.	Total distance must not exceed 10km.	Total distance must not exceed 20km.	Distance does not influence grading.	Distance does not influence grading.
Gradient	Grades in accordance with AS1428. Max slope is 1:14 (7.14%). (AS 2165.1)	Gradient is generally no steeper than 1:10 (10%). (AS 2165.1)	May exceed 1:10 (10%) for short sections but generally not steeper. (AS 2165.1)	May have arduous climbs and steep sections. May include long steep sections exceeding 1:10 (10%)	May have very arduous climbs and steep sections. May include long steep sections exceeding 1:10 (10%)
Quality of Path	Broad, hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchair use. Min Width: 1200mm (AS 2165.1)	Generally a modified or hardened surface. Min Width: 900mm Maintained with minimal intrusions. (AS 2165.1)	Formed track, few obstacles. Generally a modified surface, may be hardened. Width: Variable and less than 1200mm Kept mostly clear of intrusions and obstacles. (AS 2165.1)	Generally distinct without major modification to the ground. Encounters with fallen debris and obstacles are likely. Walkers may encounter natural obstacles. (AS 2165.1)	No modification of the natural environment. (AS 2165.1)
Quality of Markings	Steps do not influence grading. (AS 2165.1)	Track head signage and route markers at intersections.	Track head signage and route markers at intersections and where track is indistinct.	Track head signage and route markers.	Signage is generally not provided. (AS 2165.1)
Experience Required	Users need no previous experience and are expected to exercise normal care regarding personal safety. (AS 2165.1)	Suitable for most ages and fitness levels.	No bushwalking experience required, minimum level of specialised skills. User responsible for their own safety. (AS 2165.1)	Users require a moderate level of specialised skills and must be self-reliant, particularly in regard to emergency first and weather hazard. (AS 2165.1)	Users require a high level of specialised skills and must be self-reliant, particularly in regard to emergency first and weather hazard. (AS 2165.1)
Steps	Steps allowed only with alternate ramp access. (AS 2165.1)	Minimal use of steps. (AS 2165.1)	Steps may be common. (AS 2165.1)	Steps do not influence grading. (AS 2165.1)	Steps do not influence grading. (AS 2165.1)

A.2 DESKTOP ASSESSMENTS

Desktop assessments have been used throughout the development of this Master Plan as a quick method for investigating the project area using spatial data, LiDAR and other relevant data sets.

Using a range of mapping and data layers within spatial data software, trail planners made informed decisions throughout the design of the proposed trail alignment that considered user experience, impact to values, safety and feasibility. This process also allowed sections of existing trail (both formal and informal) to be identified, that were then incorporated into the alignment where possible.

As new information such as ecological values and geotechnical risk assessments became available throughout the project, adjustments to the trail alignment were made to ensure that risks were avoided or minimised.

This process continued until the proposed desktop trail alignment has been finalised to a point that was considered practically sufficient. The various iterations of the proposed desktop trail alignment were called, 'concept trail alignments', until they had undergone detailed assessments in the field. The revised alignments that were then identified in the field became known as 'ground-truthed' sections of trail.

A.3 GROUND TRUTHING

During ground-truthing, the trail planners also observed features in the landscape and environment and adjusted the trail alignment accordingly to minimise impact to vegetation, increase safety, ensure trail sustainability and to make for a more pleasant walking experience.

The locations for lookouts, bridges, proposed campgrounds campgrounds and relevant trail embellishments such as steps, rock armours, boardwalks and retaining walls were also assessed, confirmed and quantified during the ground truthing process. Landscape architects, structural engineers, ecologists and geotechnical engineers were then able to conduct relevant detailed assessments on the new alignment.

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A.4 DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Once the 'ground-truthed' alignment had been established, a series of detailed assessments were completed along the proposed trail corridor to gain an in-depth understanding of the ecological values, risks to safety and the requirements for proposed trail infrastructure.

Carried out by a diverse team of specialists, the detailed assessments undertaken for the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail has included:

Detailed Ecological Assessment - included ecologists walking the entire ground-truthed alignment. This was done to identify areas of high ecological value, threatened species, cinnamon fungus, and phytophthora as well as to provide recommendations for realignment or how to manage ecological risks during the construction and operational phase of the project. This assessment also enabled the native vegetation offset requirements to be calculated.

Detailed Geotechnical Risk Assessment - completed by geotechnical engineers and geologists to further assess where and the level of geotechnical risk present along the ground-truthed trail alignment. Recommendations were provided for realignment and how these risks could be mitigated.

Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment – completed by geotechnical engineers to identify the risks and hazards along the coastal sections of the proposed trail alignment.

Functional Infrastructure Design Assessment - Landscape architects and structural engineers completed an on-ground assessment of the high-level requirements for the proposed trail infrastructure such as trailheads, lookouts, carparks, low level bridges, road crossings and to also identify sections of trail which could be upgraded to achieve DDA compliance.

Following these detailed assessments, refinements were made to the ground-truthed trail alignment to further reduce the environmental impact and risk.

A.5 ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing stakeholder and community input has and will continue to play an important role as the project evolves. From the outset, the project partners of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail committed to providing meaningful opportunities for the community to have their say on the project.

The engagement process aimed to support the iterative development of the design by gathering feedback that reflected local knowledge, needs and aspirations. It built upon engagement activities during the 2019 development of the project's Feasibility Study. The earlier engagement presented an early draft concept to community members and asked about their vision for the trail, opportunities and challenges, priority design considerations, the idea of suspension bridges and how people might use the trail.

Community input resulted in over 70 revisions of the first alignment concept and, together with an additional round of community feedback, further investigation, agency input and ground-truthing, a further 40 changes to the revised alignment. This process was repeated as the project progressed through a further conceptual alignment before landing on a final 'ground-truthed' alignment.

At each stage, community and agency input and data/findings refined the alignment to ensure the best outcomes for the community, environment and trail walkers. In total over 3,000 responses were received during the Master Plan engagement process.

Input provided from community members and agencies included positive and negative alignment suggestions. Positive suggestions related to ideas or suggestions of alignments, views or landscape features to include on the final route. Negative suggestions related to aspects that the trail should avoid, for safety reasons, the protection of environmental or cultural heritage values, private amenity or even future agency management and maintenance. Both positive and negative feedback has been fundamental in determining the final alignment.

This section of the Master Plan outlines at a high level, the key engagement phases with a focus on the trail alignment and suspension bridges.

More detail regarding the consultation of this project has been documented in an independant consultation report, produced for the Great Ocean Road Coastal and Parks Authority and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and will be made available to the public in due time.

October – November 2021

Engagement Phase 1
Concept Route 1

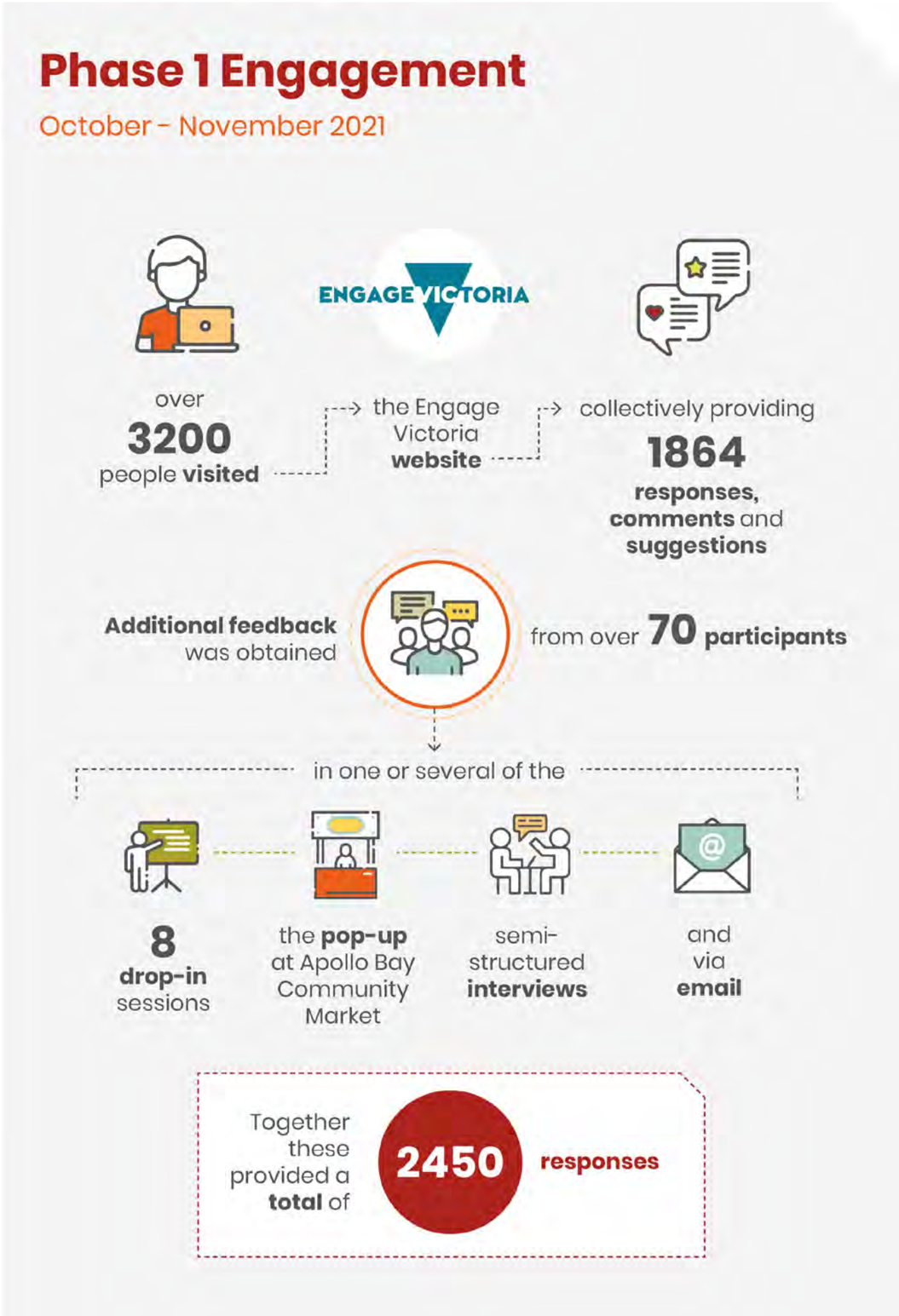
Comment was invited on Concept Route 1, including views about:

- The proposed trail alignment (including the use of existing tracks, new trail sections, alternative routes, and possible short loop walks);
- Existing and proposed features such as underpasses, road crossings, picnic grounds, toilets, lookouts, campgrounds, trailheads, car parks;
- Suspension bridges (5 options were presented).

Trail design responses to Phase 1 engagement comments

The Project Team discussed the above feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- A wide range of key trail user groups is being considered when developing the design: long-distance hikers, day-trippers/ tourists, people with limited mobility, families with young children, locals
- This will be a dedicated walking trail (not multi-use)
- The alignment will follow existing tracks and trails where possible
- A maintenance model must be developed
- Naming options for the trail will be considered
- Mapping was updated and further refined
- Another round of engagement was scheduled for March 2022 and June 2022.
- Over 70 revisions were made to the trail alignment (These are discussed further in the relevant sections of this report.)
- An online 'deliberative' workshop was planned for 29 March to build on the various community views regarding proposed bridges.



March – April 2022

Engagement Phase 2
Concept Route 2

Comment was invited on Concept Route 2, including views about:

- Guiding Design Principles;
- The revised trail alignment;
- Trail accessibility;
- Opportunities to get visitors to the trail;
- Suspension bridges (including a sixth option);
- Ensuring environmental excellence.

Feedback on the revised trail alignment focussed on Sections 1 through 4 (Fairhaven to Jamieson Creek) and Sections 7 and 8 (Kennett River to Skenes Creek). Sections 5 and 6 have recently been constructed from Jamieson Creek to Kennett River.

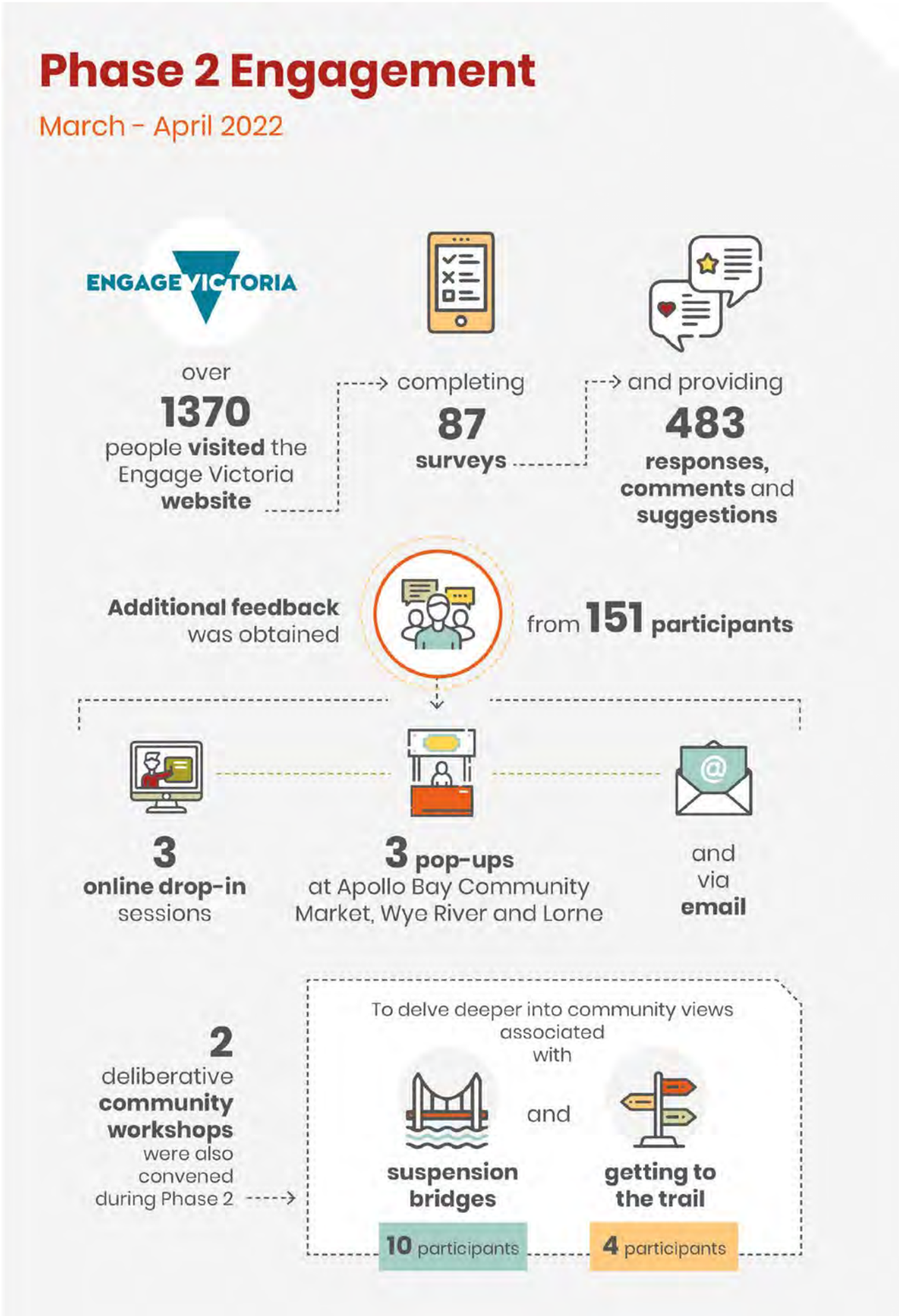
Trail design responses to Phase 2 engagement comments

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Following the input of community members and agencies, further investigation and ground-truthing, over 40 changes were made to the revised concept trail alignment. (These are discussed further within each trail section in the report)
- Alternative routes for suspension bridges were created

Other changes included:

- Several minor modifications were made to the previous concept route across all sections resulting from conditions identified during ground-truthing
- All bridges underwent preliminary assessments on geotechnical, environmental, engineering and cultural values. Further assessments will be undertaken during detailed design (later this year). This will refine the technical feasibility and design, cultural heritage and environmental considerations, and visual impact and precinct impacts. Three suspension bridges will be prioritised for inclusion in the Master Plan, these being the Cumberland-Winterbrook Bridge (Bridge #4), the Reedy Creek Bridge (Bridge #2) and the Mount Defiance Bridge (Bridge #5)
- A vital component of the ground-truthing exercise regarding lookouts included identifying various location options. Considerations included melding community feedback with distance from other trail features, e.g. bridges, car parks etc., servicing requirements, ease of service access, the capacity of the environment to support the features and visibility to the Great Ocean Road.



June – July 2022

Engagement Phase 3
The Ground-truthed Route

Comment was invited on decisions made by the PCB relating to the number and location of suspension bridges, trail route alignment and the Grey River to Skenes Creek section.

General feedback included comments regarding:

- Support for the reduction to 3 suspension bridges from 6;
- Carparking;
- Emergency management.

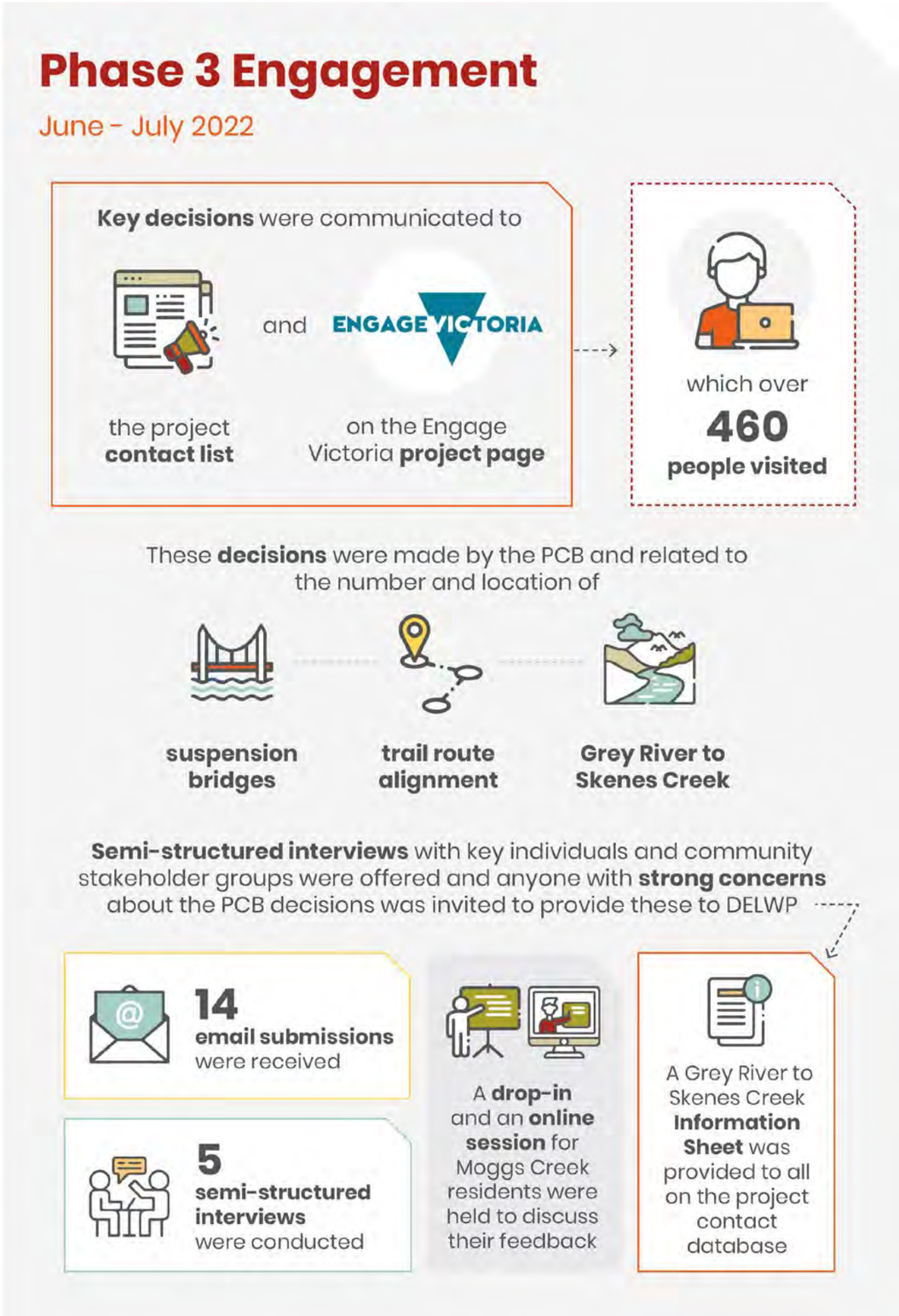
Trail design responses to Phase 3 engagement comments

The Project Team discussed the above community feedback with delivery partners and confirmed the following:

- Alternative routes for suspension bridges were ground-truthed and confirmed for the remaining x3 suspension bridges at Reedy Creek, Cumberland Winterbrook Falls and Mount Defiance.

Other changes included:

- Further discussion of required emergency management issues and the completion the emergency management section in the Master Plan



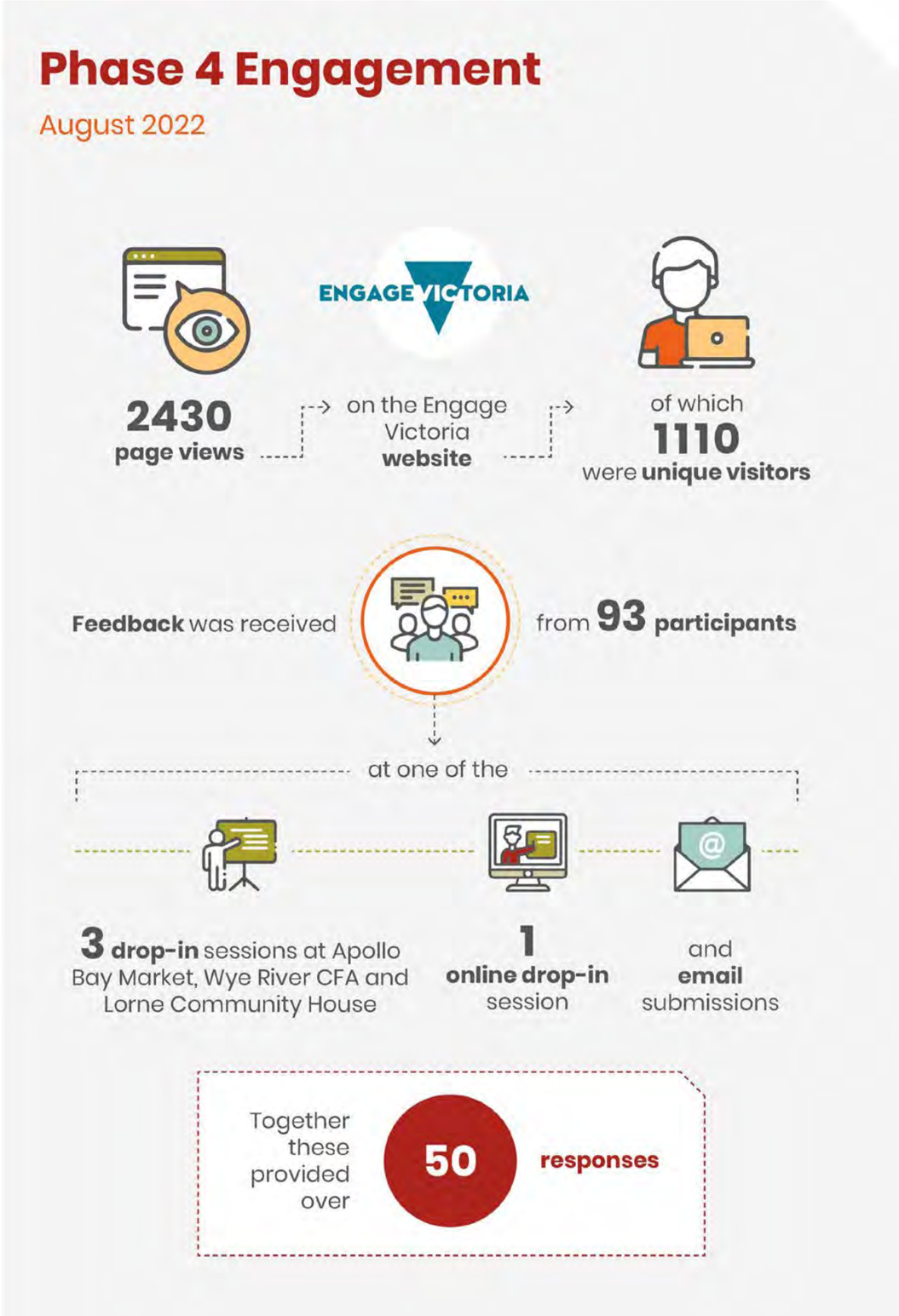
August 2022

Engagement Phase 4
The Draft Master Plan

The final Draft Master Plan was presented to the community to talk through the process, outcomes and how previous feedback shaped the Master Plan.

General feedback included:

- Positive sentiment and genuine excitement towards the project.
- The need for further consideration of toilets, parking and traffic issues as the project progresses.
- Ensuring campgrounds are well designed and maintained.
- Ensuring there is excellent hiker education and management of rubbish, campfires, safety etc.
- Management of the environment is critical as the project progresses, particularly around weeds, phytophthora and ensuring no inappropriate additional developments in National Park.

Response to Phase 4 engagement comments:

- The vast majority of comments received on the final Draft Master Plan were focussed on the subsequent stages of the project. These will be included as the project progresses.
- Changes were made to the Master Plan to provide clearer and more accurate wording.