
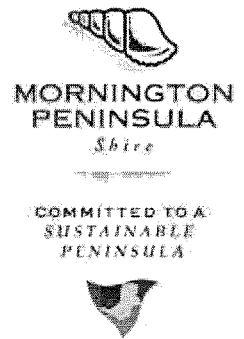


30th May 2008

Submission No:	36
Date Received:	30-5-08
Secretary:	



Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change,
Water, Environment and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam

Inquiry into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Coastal Communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission to the House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities.

With submissions required to be lodged by May 30th, it was not possible to formally present this submission to the Council of the Mornington Peninsula Shire however, the subject has been informally presented to Council at a recent policy and issues briefing session and this submission has been prepared by Officers at the Shire based on feedback from that session and is my view that it reasonably represents the views of Council and the community.

Mornington Peninsula Shire – an overview

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is a local government located one hour drive south east of Melbourne. The Shire covers 720 sq kms in area and has a baseline population of 145,000. This grows extensively when part time residents and holiday makers 'shift in' over the summer holiday period. In addition there are many thousands of daily visitors to the Peninsula during weekends and over the holiday periods whose interests are largely centred on coastal recreation and boating activities.

Of particular significance to this inquiry is that the Mornington Peninsula Shire has 10% of Victoria's coastline – the Shire abuts Port Phillip and Western Port Bays and Bass Strait, a coastline of some 195 kms.

This coastline abuttal is a major asset and attraction for the residents and visitors to the Shire. The majority of the population resides within 1 km of the coastline – particularly around Port Phillip Bay.

The Council and the Community of the Mornington Peninsula Shire therefore see climate change and its impact on coastal reserves and the adjacent communities as being one of critical importance. The Shire welcomes the opportunity to lodge a submission to this inquiry.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Submission:

Co-operative and Integrated Approach

Climate change is a global impact. Responding to it is about thinking globally but acting locally. To act locally there must be a co-operative, consistent, integrated and committed approach across all levels of Government. Sound policy and strategy, with strong scientific backing is a must to achieving this approach.

...2/

This should include clear definitions for each level of government to clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for the management of coastal zones and therefore response to climate change. The Shire's experience suggests there is uncertainty with current arrangements and would be supportive of a more clearly defined role for local government going forward in developing and implementing more suitable institutional changes across each level of government.

Regional Partnerships

Regional partnerships can provide opportunity and benefits in responding and adapting to climate change and should be encouraged. Partnerships can be area based across local governments, inter-governmental and potentially include the private sector. An example of a very successful ongoing partnership and regional approach that the Mornington Peninsula Shire is actively involved with is the Western Port Greenhouse Alliance (WPGA). The membership of the WPGA is made up of five local governments surrounding Western Port Bay.

The WPGA have been working on a number of regional projects including a significant project which is nearing completion and seeking to address the impacts of climate change on human settlements in the Western Port Region – an Integrated Assessment. This two year project is jointly funded by the Federal Government (Department of Climate Change) and Victorian Government and has involved extensive modelling (by the CSIRO), examining social, economic and environmental risk assessments and adaptation workshops across each member Council.

The final report is scheduled to be released to the public late June and is expected to identify those communities at greater risks, the nature of these risks in terms of probability and consequence and identify and recommend actions required to enhance our capacity to adapt to pressures due to the range of climate parameter change impacts. Working together under a regional approach has clearly provided much benefit.

Leadership

While local government is the vital link to the local community, and in the case of the Mornington Peninsula we believe this relationship with our community is strong, local government and the community seek committed and consistent leadership from both Federal and State Governments. As discussed above, this leadership must be cohesive, consistent and integrated between Governments, and also within and across departments at each level of government.

Good Science

Good and sound science must underpin the making of policy and strategy by each level of Government. A national approach to the science of climate change is a must. Given there is a level of uncertainty in the modelling of the impacts due to climate change, continued ongoing review of the science into the future, and adjustment to predictions as required, is essential.

Monitoring Response

As covered above, the ongoing monitoring and open accountability of the science and modelling of impacts must continue into the future. In addition to this, there must be an ongoing and co-ordinated approach to monitoring and review of coastal actions / adaptations to verify their effectiveness. In doing so it places Government and the community in a position to make changes or adjustments to coastal actions being taken in response to climate change.

Standardisation

Development of standard adaptation principles / responses / toolkits to assist local government on a range of matters associated with the impacts of climate change is essential. Such matters include the following:

- land use and planning
- coastal planning & management
- asset management
- emergency management
- drainage and catchment management
- transport planning
- community services
- public health
- education
- recreation planning
- biodiversity.

Funding

To assist local government with the implementation of climate change adaptation measures and responses adequate funding levels must be provided and maintained into the future. Federal and State Governments have a critical role in achieving this if a serious response to climate change is to happen. To expect local government to cover the cost through increased financial burden on the local community is not sustainable. Initiatives such as the Federal Government Infrastructure Fund are to be applauded and should include the opportunity for funding to be available to local government to respond to the impacts of climate change. Any potential role or opportunity for the private sector to partner with Governments should also be explored.

Development Pressures

Melbourne 2030, the Shire's Municipal Strategic Statement and the Shire's Planning Scheme limit urban development to 30% of the Shire (within existing well defined urban growth boundaries around each of the 40 townships in the Shire) with the 70% balance is to be retained as rural under green wedge areas. This split is strongly supported by the local community on the Mornington Peninsula. With the vast majority of the urban areas abutting the coastline this places increasing development, urban consolidation and redevelopment pressure along the coastal areas most exposed to the impacts of climate change. This pressure for higher density and infill development within the urban growth boundaries adds to concerns about the impact on coastal area infrastructure and communities due to climate change.

Community Engagement

Climate change will impact on the community and the community must respond through adaptation. A critical element in achieving this is successful and continued open engagement with the community. As the primary link with local communities, local government plays an important role in this community engagement and this council plans to include segments on climate change in each of its ongoing annual community meeting programs. The Federal and State Governments must provide integrated and consistent leadership and support to local government and the community.

Sustainable Approach

All planning and decision making by all levels of government must be sustainable. The longer term future must be fully considered in sustainable planning and decision making. There is a strong likelihood of unacceptable levels of economic, environmental and / or social risks if a long term sustainable approach is not taken.

Given the (hopefully) slow but relentless change processes, it is our expectation that measures will be cooperatively developed to educate and prepare for, then manage both the positive and negative impacts of these changes.

Conclusion

From the above, albeit brief submission, I hope you will gain an appreciation of the critical importance to the Council and the local community of the Mornington Peninsula Shire of climate change and the impacts on coastal communities.

A co-operative and integrated approach across all levels of government, with cohesive leadership is essential for strong engagement with the community for a sustainable response and adaptation to climate change.

The Shire would welcome the opportunity to present to the Committee in support of this submission should the Committee consider it appropriate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Douglas', written in a cursive style.

**BRUCE DOUGLAS
DIRECTOR – SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE
MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE**