21.02

PROFILE OF BASS COAST SHIRE

21.02-1 Location

Bass Coast Shire is located in the West and South Gippsland region of Victoria, 52 kilometres south east of Dandenong and an hour and a half drive from central Melbourne.

Bass Coast Shire covers approximately 800 square kilometres. It is predominantly a coastal municipality defined by the unique foreshore habitats of Bass Strait, the Bunurong Coast, Western Port and Anderson Inlet. The coastal areas are complemented by rural hinterland, river flats, and the Strzelecki Foothills.

The Bass Coast Shire was created on 2 December 1994 by the amalgamation of the former municipalities of Bass, Phillip Island and Wonthaggi, as well as including parts of the former municipalities of Cranbourne, Korumburra and Woorayl.

The region

The Bass Coast Shire is part of (or near to) a number of significant regions including:

- Adjacent to the Melbourne South-East growth corridor.
- Gippsland, and more specifically West and South Gippsland.
- Western Port.
- Bass Coast.
- Strzelecki Ranges (foothills).
- Marine National Parks.

21.02-2 History

The traditional landowners of Bass Coast are the Bunurong and Boonwerung people and have occupied the area for in excess of 35,000 years. Aboriginal archaeological sites are known to be located around Western Port and Bass Strait. Aboriginal shell midden sites in the Coronet Bay area and on the western and southern foreshores of Phillip Island are on the Register of the National Estate.

Bass Coast Shire also has a richly layered post European settlement history. The Shire takes its name from George Bass who sighted the area during an expedition to prove the existence of Bass Strait in 1798.

European history in Bass Coast Shire dates back to some of the earliest settlement activity in Victoria. The material remains of European cultural heritage are located in towns and settlement, along the coast and in rural landscapes. Cultural heritage sites are located on both public and private land throughout the Shire. Many post European settlement heritage places are popular tourist attractions, including the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi and Churchill Island.

21.02-3 Settlement pattern

The major population centres are Wonthaggi, Cowes, San Remo and Inverloch. Aside from Wonthaggi the larger centres are coastal communities with large population fluctuations during holiday and summer periods. Wonthaggi is located inland from the coast. It has a predominately permanent population, and has traditionally provided a link with the agricultural and rural communities.

There are a number of other towns and villages in the Shire. These range from small rural communities and small coastal hamlets, to developing activity centres such as Grantville.
Over recent years, Council has been developing structure plans and design frameworks for a number of towns and will continue to develop these plans for the main residential areas across the Shire. The purpose of these plans is to define settlement boundaries for urban areas, provide strategic direction for managing population growth and to ensure sustainable land use practices.

The majority of the future urban growth within the municipality will be concentrated in Wonthaggi, in particular in the north east growth area. The growth area will accommodate approximately 8,000 people in a high amenity residential area. Council is also planning for significant residential expansion of San Remo, and the development of Grantville as a service centre for the northern part of the Shire.

21.02-4 Land uses

Population and housing

Permanent residents

Bass Coast had an estimated resident population of 27,524 at 30 June 2006 and has experienced a population growth rate of 1.4 percent over a five-year period, from 2001 to 2006.

Wonthaggi, Inverloch, and Cowes are the major towns within Bass Coast Shire. Other urban settlements are at San Remo, Grantville, Cape Paterson, Dalyston, Kilcunda, Corinella, Coronet Bay, Bass, Newhaven, Rhyll and Ventnor. Small residential estates are scattered throughout the municipality, particularly on Phillip Island and on the Western Port coastline.

The estimated populations of the townships throughout the municipality are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWNSHIP</th>
<th>2006 CENSUS POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cowes</td>
<td>4,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhyll</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbledon Heights</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Strip</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiths Beach</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newhaven</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Woolamai</td>
<td>1,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf Beach – Sunderland Bay</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural balance for Phillip Island</td>
<td>2,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronet Bay</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Paterson</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonthaggi</td>
<td>6,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantville</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverloch</td>
<td>3,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Remo</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visitor population

Bass Coast has the second highest proportion of vacant dwellings relative to housing numbers in Victoria. Data from the 2006 Census indicates that approximately 38 percent of dwellings are vacant.

This data reflects the high proportion of holiday homes in coastal communities. It also reflects the trend across Victoria towards smaller household sizes, and the rate of increase in dwelling numbers.

During summer and the school holidays in particular, the Shire is a popular destination for day-trippers and holiday makers. A recent study of coastal population fluctuations undertaken by the State Government (SGS, 2007; Urban Enterprise, 2007) concluded that for Phillip Island the increase in population on a summer weekend was almost fourfold (resident population 8,904, peak population 34,235 (2005 data)).

Socio economic status

Historically the municipality has had a low socio-economic base. Incomes in the municipality continue to be relatively low in comparison with Victoria, with 40 percent of households in the lowest income quartile. However, the socio-economic profile of the population is becoming more diverse, in part due to the sea change phenomenon. The associated growth in the local economy is reflected in the growth of the service and development industries.

Second home owners and the large non-resident population have also influenced the growing diversification of the municipality’s population.

Aging population

The permanent population of the Bass Coast Shire is characterised by a high proportion of residents over the age of 60. This group currently accounts for 28 percent of the population. This is significantly above the Victorian average of 18.4 percent.

Between 2001-2031 it is projected that the proportion of population aged over 60 will increase from 28 percent to 41 percent. This projected demographic profile will influence the settlement types, housing demands and the level of services and facilities required, throughout the municipality.

Bass Coast Shire is experiencing a decline in both the 20 to 24 and the 25 to 39 age brackets (which accounts for 18 percent of the population). The State average for the proportion of population in these age groups is 28 percent.

The current and projected age structure of the Shire is detailed in Table One. The population projection is based upon an annual population increase rate of 1.9 percent for the period 2001 to 2031.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWNSHIP</th>
<th>2006 CENSUS POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural balance</td>
<td>3,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27,012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The projected population growth rate allows for fluctuations that may occur over an extended period of time. The population growth rate for Bass Coast Shire is currently higher than the State average, and for other regional areas in the State.

Household Structure

Nearly a third (29 percent) of non-vacant dwellings are lone person households. The number of households in the municipality is projected to increase from 11,330 in 2001 to 22,787 in 2031.

This rate of growth is based upon the data in Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population in Private Dwellings</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>11,330</td>
<td>2.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>29,408</td>
<td>13,192</td>
<td>2.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>32,380</td>
<td>15,077</td>
<td>2.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>35,374</td>
<td>17,090</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>38,558</td>
<td>19,171</td>
<td>1.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>45,379</td>
<td>22,787</td>
<td>1.957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Sustainability and Environment, ABS, Census of Population and Housing 2001 (Now Department of Planning & Community Development).

Economic development

Wonthaggi is the region’s main centre for administrative, retail, commercial, industrial and community facilities, serving communities as far away as Grantville and Phillip Island. It provides for a range of health practitioners, retail and office services, schools, community facilities (library, court house) and municipal offices.

Other business centres include Cowes, San Remo, Grantville and Inverloch. These centres provide retailing and community facilities for the local and wider population. The role and function of these commercial areas are changing in line with increased population and visitation rates. Smaller centres provide the day to day needs of the local community as well as acting as a social gathering point.
There are smaller industrial estates located in Cowes, Inverloch, Newhaven, and Grantville. These generally provide a local service industry function.

Dairy and beef cattle farming are a significant contributor to both the local and regional economies, and a major source of local employment.

Tourism is a major contributor to the local, regional and State economies. The coastlines of Western Port and Bass Strait, as well as Phillip Island, are major tourist destinations. People visit the Shire because of the unique natural attributes, complemented with built attractions, such as the Phillip Island Motor Racing Track.

The construction industry is another significant contributor to the local economy. This reflects the growth in the municipality. Many other local businesses are aligned with the construction industry and provide local employment opportunities. It is anticipated that there will be a number of major developments in the municipality in the next ten years; this will consolidate the importance of the construction industry in the municipality.

21.02-6 Environment

The municipality contains a biologically diverse environment with numerous habitat types. Remnant habitat is found on both public and private property.

The coastline of Bass Coast Shire has renowned surf beaches, safe swimming beaches, distinctive coastal cliff formations, fossil sites, fragile mangrove ecosystems and significant aboriginal cultural heritage sites. The municipality is adjacent to several marine national parks.

The relationship between the coastal environment and land use planning highlights the need for effective catchment management strategies. Major catchment areas in the Bass Coast Shire include the Powlett and Bass River Catchments.

The municipality is subject to environmental hazards; they include erosion and landslip in Strzelecki foothills, and salinity and acid sulphate soils around waterways and in coastal areas.

Climate change is predicted to cause an increase in sea levels, a decrease in rainfall and more frequent and severe storm events. It is predicted that sea levels will rise by not less than 0.8 metre by the year 2050. As a result there is likely to be impacts on coastal settlements, biodiversity, infrastructure and agricultural production.

21.02-7 Landscape and Built Form

The coastal landscapes and hinterlands are highly valued by the community for their visual, environmental and cultural qualities, as well as being productive agricultural land. The landscapes in the Bass Coast Shire are also an important tourist feature. Many residents are attracted to this region by the rolling hills leading down to the coast. Building dwellings on ridgelines, to gain views over rural hills, to the water in the distance, has previously been a popular development trend. The municipality is host to several National Trust listed landscapes. The landscapes and views of the municipality need protection from inappropriate development.

The coastal landscapes of the Bass Coast Shire are identified by six ecologically distinct Character Areas, including:

- Westernport Lowlands
- Phillip Island Northern Coast
- Bunurong Coast and Hinterland
- Phillip Island Southern Coast
- Anderson Peninsula
- Bass Hills
In addition to these character areas, specific coastal landscapes within the Shire have been determined to have either state or regional significance. These include the landscapes of:

- The Phillip Island Western and Southern Coast – State Significance;
- The Phillip Island Eastern Coast – Regional Significance;
- The Kilcunda to Inverloch Coast - Regional Significance; and
- The Venus Bay Peninsula and Anderson Inlet (part) - Regional Significance.

Development within these significant coastal spaces must respond appropriately to the landscape setting, maintain existing views and vistas and be subordinate to the natural, visual and environmental landscape character. Specific objectives and strategies have been developed to retain the Bass Coast landscape character for each of these character areas.

Bass Coast Shire’s rural and coastal setting, historic development patterns, and residential architecture, combine to give the municipality its unique appearance and character.

The majority of new residential subdivision estates within the municipality occur on the periphery of existing urban centres and at the interface between urban and rural land. New residential subdivision design should be responsive to environmental issues and habitat values, and the maintenance and protection of viable agricultural land.

21.02-8 Infrastructure

The Bass Highway provides the major link between the Shire and metropolitan Melbourne. Other major roads include the South Gippsland Highway on the northern Shire boundary and the Phillip Island Road.

A public bus service runs from Cowes and Inverloch to Melbourne daily. The privately owned Phillip Island Airfield provides facilities for small charter and private aircraft including helicopters, and there is a helipad at Cowes and Wonthaggi.

There are several primary schools located in the Shire, with a secondary school at Newhaven, and secondary schools and a TAFE college at Wonthaggi. A public hospital exists at Wonthaggi. Pre-schools and infant welfare centres are situated in the major towns.

Physical infrastructure includes the provision of water supply and sewerage, drainage services and waste management. Reticulated water provided to most towns comes from either the Lance Creek or Candowie reservoirs located in the rural hinterland of the Shire.

Most towns are connected to a reticulated sewerage system, the exceptions being Jam Jerrup, Harmers Haven, Silverleaves and The Gurdies. Low density residential and rural living properties operate on-site effluent disposal systems. There is inadequate street drainage infrastructure in some urban areas. Council operates a landfill site at Grantville, with transfer stations located on Phillip Island, in Wonthaggi and Inverloch.

Telecommunications infrastructure, such as internet services to support business across the Shire, is limited to the major townships.