



July 10, 2010

Russell Worland
Executive Officer
Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan

Dear Russell,

The Committee for Portland is grateful for the opportunity to be actively involved in the development of the Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan).

The Committee operates under two key platforms, building sustainable community foundations and building economic prosperity. These themes are strongly articulated throughout the Strategic Plan and therefore should be the focus of a visionary document that leads us into the future.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on big ticket items that will make significant improvements in our ability to attract people to the region. This is why it is essential that tourism has a greater focus in the Plan. If we can encourage people to visit the region and provide them with a positive experience then they may be encouraged to relocate to the area. The Portland Bay Coastal Infrastructure Plan will free up the Port of Portland to develop wood chip facilities, relocate one of the States important fishing fleets and provide recreation and tourism boating facilities. This will result in visiting cruise ships attracted by the world class tourism facilities such as the Grampians, Lake Condah and Twelve Apostles, all within two hours of Portland. Portland Bay is referenced by the Victorian Coastal Strategy and the Western Victoria Coastal Action Plan as a state marine precinct of international, national, state and regional significance. An independent economic analysis of the benefits of implementing the Portland Bay Coastal Infrastructure Plan conclude that it will deliver 159 direct and 38 indirect jobs and provide an annual economic benefit totaling \$20.7 million per annum. This is a significant tourism project that should be supported through the Strategic Plan.

Industry appears to have been overlooked and the regions infrastructure deserves greater emphasis. The Glenelg Shire Council has identified an industrial corridor from Portland through to Heywood. The Port of Portland is a major deep sea trading port. Export volumes are expected to double over the next few years and the Port will become Australia's largest wood chip exporting port. Portland Aluminum, with its sister plant in Point Henry is Victoria's largest exporter. A number of niche engineering companies have established in Portland around the smelter and this has further translated into companies such as Keppel Prince who play a lead role in metal fabrication for the renewable energy sector (wind farm towers and wave energy buoys). The Strategic Plan needs to acknowledge the important role that Portland plays as the industrial hub of the Great South Coast and ensure that the necessary hard infrastructure required to support efficient freight movement within the region and to value add to the existing primary resource base is provided.

The Plan must acknowledge Portland's regional significance to exports and industry alongside the regional roles identified for Warrnambool and Hamilton. Portland has significant infrastructure capabilities such as the Port of Portland and the existing 550kv power line that was established in 1986 when Portland Aluminum was first constructed. These benefits provide greater leverage for State & Local Government to attract new businesses to the region.

As identified in the Strategic Plan, **Regional Focus One: Agriculture 1.5** (p.g. 15) Upgrading transport infrastructure is crucial in order to meet the projected agricultural freight volume demands. The partnership established between industry, Councils and the Victorian and South Australian Government to develop the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan needs the highest priority in this document in order to attract crucial Federal Government funding. The Green Triangle Freight Action Plan plays such an important role in linking major developments and growth areas across the region that it has been identified as one of the 28 priority projects by Infrastructure Australia (refer National Infrastructure Priorities, Infrastructure for an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future. May 2009).

These growth areas include Blue Gum Harvesting, Agricultural (including forestry and fishing) Manufacturing, Mineral Sands and Renewable Energy Projects and should not be underestimated both at a regional level and as a contributor to the State economy. The provision of supporting economic data is essential to 'tell our story'. We already have this data available to us from the region's industries and the Workforce Development Strategy conducted by SED Consultants (March 2010). It is vital that this information is included either in this report or as a separately endorsed study.

The Committee for Portland's vision for **Regional Focus Three: New Energy and Transition to a low Carbon Economy** is for this plan to provide the base load activities that ignite a new and large regional industry that will then provide product and support services beyond our region and state. The Committee for Portland has been actively lobbying for the region to become known as the Renewable Energy Hub of Australia. We have met with Minister Jacinta Allen and Regional Development Victoria's Regional Manager, Andrew Wear who were supportive of this concept. We therefore recommend the creation of an industrial cluster(s) centered on Portland be established to focus on Renewable Energy.

We have proposed the appointment of a Renewable Energy expert for the region to support implementation of a number of local, state and federal government strategies i.e. mapping knowledge and skills required to make the shift to a low carbon or 'environmentally friendly' economy (Strategic Goal 3.3 p.g. 19). This person can also assist not only "the small business sector and primary producers" (Strategic Goal 3.2 p.g. 19) but major players affected by greenhouse gas emission legislation. The region has industries with high greenhouse gas emissions and a loss or curtailment of these industries will have a material impact on the regions prosperity.

Strategic Goal 6.4 Skills, Jobs and Education is important and is consistent with our own gap analysis. Through community consultation conducted in 2008 by the Committee for Portland we identified the need to develop skilled people. In conjunction with South West Tafe the Committee has implemented a Diploma of Management to address deficiencies in middle management training.

With the work already conducted by SED consulting in The Workforce Development Strategy the skills shortage identified in this report needs to be addressed by service providers. The opportunity for South West Tafe and/or Deakin University to address skill shortages in areas of need such as 'Green Jobs", Agriculture, Logistics and Manufacturing needs the support of this Plan.

The Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan needs to inspire people to locate to the area, to invest in business opportunities, to raise children and build prosperity. This Integrated Plan needs to be visionary in its outlook and have clearer outcomes that Government can identify as funding opportunities.

The Committee for Portland is happy to discuss in detail our vision for the region and ways that we can work together to achieve greater outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,

Anita Rank

Anita Rank
Executive Director

Scott Paterson

Scott Paterson
Chairperson