

## MARINE AND COASTAL PROTECTION

# THE GREENS' PLAN TO PROTECT OUR PRECIOUS COASTAL AND MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Victoria's coasts and marine waters are precious and iconic, but they are under threat from plastic pollution, unchecked development and climate change. Our coasts and oceans need protection now, to ensure they are here for the future.

Victoria's beaches and oceans are special, and Victorians love to visit them. But because of poor planning, confusion about who manages what, climate change and over-development, our coasts and marine areas are under threat.

As much as 80 per cent of the marine life found in Victorian waters is found nowhere else in the world, but our unique marine environment is being destroyed by plastic pollution, invasive pests, offshore gas exploration and climate change.

## OUR PLAN

Unlike the major parties, the Greens have a plan to protect our iconic beaches and oceans for the threatened plants and animals that live in them, for regional communities who depend on them, and for current and future Victorians.

The Greens' plan:

- Create and resource a comprehensive Marine and Coastal Authority, to provide coordinated oversight for coastal and marine protection in Victoria
- Create a continuous coastal reserve by buying key missing land to protect coastal habitat
- Create the Moolap coastal park, to protect the area's unique ecology and provide green space for Geelong's growing population
- Start the process to identify priority marine habitat and create new marine reserves where they're needed most
- Ban racehorse training on public beaches, especially in Belfast Coastal Reserve
- Rebuild fish habitat and numbers by building and restoring oyster reefs in Victorian waters.

## COASTAL AND MARINE AUTHORITY

There are lots of different authorities and organisations managing our coasts and marine environment across Victoria - but they don't always have the same goals or vision, or they don't work together enough. This puts our coasts at risk from bad developments, environmental destruction and poor planning for the future.

Management of our coastline, and especially our marine waters, is a mess. In March this year, the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) found that management of the coast and marine environment is fragmented, lacks cohesion and is not strategic. VAGO also found that our coasts are not adequately protected, particularly in the face of climate change and other risks.

The Greens will create a new Marine and Coastal Authority, an independent body to provide comprehensive management and protection of coastal land and marine waters.

This authority will coordinate all coastal and marine management, in consultation with communities and industry. It will replace the current failing system that gives shared responsibility to more than 60 separate organisations, and ranks the environment as the lowest priority.

The Greens' Marine and Coastal Authority is the body Labor should have made following the recent review of the Coastal Management Act 1995. Instead, the Andrews' government gave in to property developers and recreational fishers, leaving Victoria with a toothless and ineffective Marine and Coastal Council, and a future of coastal and marine management failure.

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## PUBLIC COASTAL LAND RESERVES

Our coasts are critical habitat for plants and animals, as well as a hugely popular destination for Victorians and visitors. Our coasts are also home to many Victorians, whose livelihoods are linked to coastal and marine activities including fishing and tourism.

While 96 per cent of the coastal strip is already state owned, the Greens have a plan to buy back remaining land to create a continuous coastal reserve for threatened species and all Victorians. This include creating the Moolap coastal park, to protect the area's unique ecology and provide green space for Geelong's growing population.

Our plan will ensure strong public management of Victoria's coastal fringe, which is more and more important as our coasts are increasingly affected by the impacts of climate change.

We will also ban inappropriate horse race training on Victorian beaches. This is a dangerous and destructive activity that destroys habitat for our precious native coastal species.

## PROTECTING MARINE WATERS

Only 5% of Victorian waters are in marine protected areas.

This is only **half** of what Australia has signed up to under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and **half** of what scientists say is necessary to safeguard our oceans.

Marine protected areas are essential for environmental health. They ensure fishers have healthy stocks, protect endangered species, make ecosystems resistant to climate change and maintain biodiversity.

The Greens will work to double Victorian waters in marine reserves to 10% by 2020, in line with Australia's international commitments. We will charge the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of Victorian waters, recommending areas that should be protected for their ecological significance.

The Greens also commit \$3 million to fund restoration of oyster reefs in Victoria's bays. This is a proven way to restore habitat to boost marine life and fish breeding and should be given financial support by governments.

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## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST

The Greens' plan to for marine and coastal protection includes:

- \$20 million for the new Marine and Coastal Authority
- \$30 million to buy coastal reserve land
- \$3 million to rebuild coastal reef habitat.