

Penny Gillespie
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
By email: penny.a.gillespie@delwp.vic.gov.au

DRAFT PATTERSON RIVER CONCEPT PLAN (PHASE 2)

Dear Penny,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the *Draft Patterson River Concept Plan*.

Anyone reading the draft concept plan for the lower precinct could be forgiven if it were understood that Launching Way is a park that has a boat ramp attached to it. For the record, some facts about Launching Way that must be reflected in the Concept Plan are as follows:

- Launching Way is the largest capacity and most efficient boat launching facility in Victoria and arguably Australia.
- It provides Port Phillip Bay access to many hundreds of thousands of people every year
- It has been progressively built and upgraded over many decades using funding almost exclusively from the Boating Safety and Facility Program
- The efficiency of the operation and management of the traffic at Launching Way is the envy of all other facilities and is the result of decades of development and implementation of operating protocols that are dynamic and adjust to changing conditions.
- It is home to the largest charter fleet in Australia during the snapper season. There are more than two dozen charter vessels operating up to three charters a day with many thousands of customers each season

**Let's make fishing
better, for everyone.**

- The facility is a hive of activity from all elements of the community during peak season. Many are drawn to this activity even though they may not be engaged in boating.

The *Launching Way Precinct Master Plan* of March 2017 is referred to only in passing in the *Draft Patterson River Concept Plan*. This needs to be corrected to ensure that where the Concept Plan is silent, the 2017 Master Plan remains current. Anything less would be unacceptable to the hundreds of participants who spent several years developing and subsequently implementing the Master Plan of 2017.

We do not agree with the lower precinct aims as presented in the draft. In particular the dot points following:

- **Create greater amenity for passive land-based recreation**

This is quite simply unacceptable to the largest user groups at Launching Way. The aims must also incorporate the “elephant in the room” which is dealing with peak demand congestion and parking.

We propose the following amended aims for the Concept plan:

1. Continue to deliver the premium recreational boating access service in Victoria
2. Ensure that the precinct provides the infrastructure and delivers the services required to manage peak demands of usage
3. Create greater amenity for all users
4. Ensure the asset is fully, fairly and safely utilised by the public, and
5. Ensure its sustainability, both environmentally and commercially

We do not agree with the heading ‘Improve amenity for broader community’. Launching Way is and will remain the premium boat launching facility in Victoria. Its capacity and efficiency are unparalleled and therefore changing the amenity to suit minor users that can be accommodated elsewhere is against the best interests of the main users. We suggest the following heading. “Options to improve amenity”

The paragraph below is inaccurate and in part inflammatory.

“A variety of suggestions have been made as to how to address the problem. For boaters it’s about increasing the amount of parking, adding more ramps, and providing alternatives to non-powered craft. For others, the solution lies with improved communication and management and an acceptance by boaters that there are limits to how many people and boats can converge at any given point (just as there are limits as to how many people can attend a football match).”

The Launching Way Precinct Master Plan of March 2017 does not even contemplate adding more ramps. The very efficient operating protocols in place at Launching Way mean that no further ramps are required for the facility to operate at capacity. The capacity constraint at peak times is car trailer parking and much detailed planning and effort has been developed over decades of operation to optimise this under multiple demand scenarios.

To compare the operation of Launching Way with a football match is ludicrous and underlines the lack of understanding of the complexity of the operation of the facility. Unlike a football match, the facility must cope with users coming and going 24/7. Demand is influenced on a minute by minute basis by weather conditions and forecasts as well as fishing reports. Forecasting this demand accurately and then mobilising the resources required to manage it is a difficult task that when done well is unnoticeable to users. If and when a large number of users arrive at Launching Way at the same time and congestions is caused, who is empowered to stop these users from launching? Under what legislation is anyone going to prevent a registered and licenced boat owner from launching?

We suggest deletion of the foregoing paragraph as the solutions for congestion are clearly articulated in the Master Plan.

- **L1. Fenced playground and picnic area west of Launching Way**

There is simply no need for a playground to be added to the precinct. There are already a number in close proximity. Why go to the extent of additional cost to place a playground in a more congested and less safe area? The picnic area already exists. Delete L1.

- **L6. Protect visual amenity and native vegetation from further development**

This is not a broad public benefit that matches the potential amenity of possible alternative public uses for this land. Delete L6.

- **L7. Non-powered only boating zone at the eastern end of the lower precinct**

While this is not an area which sees significant boating activity, there are seasonal fishing activities in this area. What is the reason that this access cannot be preserved except during events? Delete L7

- **L15. Undertake a detailed management plan to investigate ways of improving access, ticketing and turnaround for vehicles and boat trailers**

There have been many years of development and improvements rolled out that have optimised the ability of the precinct to manage more traffic than any other in the State. This has been largely funded by grants from the Boating Safety and Facilities program which in accordance with legislation applies these funds for the purpose of boating infrastructure.

In parallel, the current operator/manager has developed world class skills in forecasting, planning and implementing management that optimises the functionality of the facility.

Investigation of either of these aspects of Launching Way will not result in any benefit to users as this has already been the subject of much study and learnings for decades. We suggest that L15 is replaced by:

L15 Ensure that the operational skills and management protocols developed by the current operator are retained into the future to ensure that the facility continues to operate optimally.

- **L19. Bury power lines along eastern boundary of Launching Way to remove hazard for CFA**

While there is no doubt a benefit for the CFA to have underground cables instead of overhead, we question why it is this plan. Surely this is a matter

for the CFA to undertake with the relevant electricity distributor directly as there is little or no benefit for other users? Delete L19.

- **L21. Revegetate edge to improve amenity and provide screening**

Provided that screening does not reduce overflow parking capacity.

- **L26. Local community events held on overflow car park a few times per year (not in peak season)**

Why set this up as a target in the plan? It can happen anyway if there is demand and permits are obtained from Manager. Delete L26.

- **L27. New toilet block at the eastern end of the car park**

This is shown in the wrong place. It is to be located near ramp 4. Refer Master Plan.

- **L28. Larger picnic area at the eastern end of the carpark**

This is shown in the wrong place. It is to be located near ramp 4. Refer Master Plan.

- **L29. Develop a detailed plan that addresses the development of a modern formalised car park entry with upgrades to ticketing and vehicle access.**

How is this different to L15? Delete L29.

- **L30. Consider co-located multipurpose facility incorporating coastguard/Paddle clubs/Parks Victoria/Commercial space (eg, Bait and Tackle, Café)**

Why be so prescriptive about which parties should or could co-locate? Different combinations of operator/manager, commercial and retail interests may be able to provide the investment needed to deliver required services and the needed upgrade to the amenity of the precinct. In any case the prime service that must be maintained is that of the operator. This must be at the heart of any consideration of co-location.

The foregoing submission does not cover all issues that are in the draft Concept Plan. There are many other inaccuracies and themes that do not align with the precinct's primary role as a boating precinct. For instance there is almost no attention in the Concept Plan to the issue of parking which is and will remain the critical point that allows the precinct to deliver the desired services. The plan is also far too wordy and difficult to read and should be revised to simplify it.

Yours sincerely,

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

Rob Loats
Chair
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

27 May 2018