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Phillip Island Conservation Society Submission re Cowes Streetscape Master Plan

Master plan principle 1—Connection of the town to the foreshore

PICS supports this principle, in particular the following elements:

- Emphasis on reserving the foreshore for people, not cars
- Provision of unimpeded pedestrian access to the foreshore
- Expansion of amenity by increasing street plantings
- Focus on ensuring that coastal views are not interrupted
- Encouragement of a deeper emotional connection to place through sensory stimulation

PICS recommendation 1—Incorporate environmentally sensitive lighting

It is important that lighting is adequate to create a safe and comfortable place to navigate at night. However, we also encourage Bass Coast Shire Council to contain light spill, minimise glare, and choose the appropriate light colour to reduce impacts on wildlife, including Western Port's most abundant seabird, the Short-tailed Shearwater.

Environmentally sensitive lighting also protects people's ability to enjoy the night sky, enhancing their sensory experience and connection to place. Over 80 percent of the world's population can no longer see stars due to artificial light pollution, which is growing at two percent per year. Dark skies are becoming increasingly important for tourism because they enable activities such as astronomy, reconnection with the natural environment, and health benefits.

The International Dark-Sky Association designates dark-sky places of various kinds around the world, ranging from remote Dark Sky Sanctuaries to urban areas such as Dark Sky Communities and Urban Night Sky Places¹. Dark Sky Communities are legally organised cities and towns that adopt quality outdoor lighting ordinances and undertake efforts to educate residents about the importance of dark skies. Urban Night Sky Places are sites surrounded by large urban environs whose planning and design

¹ [Dark Sky Places | ADSA \(australasiandarkskyalliance.org\)](https://www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org)

actively promote an authentic night-time experience in the midst of significant artificial light at night, and that otherwise do not qualify for designation within any other International Dark Sky Places category. A handful of local governments in Australia are now working towards adopting dark-sky-friendly light management strategies. The Australasian Dark Sky Alliance is hosting a webinar on this topic for local councils and policy makers on 20 October 2022². We also refer you to the National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife³.

PICS recommendation 2—Extend the master plan to cover foreshore landscaping between Mussel Rocks and Erehwon Point

As the streetscape master plan seeks to connect the town to its most important asset, the foreshore, we suggest planning foreshore landscaping concurrently for a holistic outcome.

Master plan principle 2—Reinvigorate the character of Cowes (allowing for and supporting commercial activity)

PICS supports this principle, in particular the objectives to protect and maintain the iconic and heritage-listed Golden Cypress avenue, supplement the avenue with low coastal plantings, and create a well-vegetated park at Olive Justice Place.

PICS recommendation 3—Consider waste management within the streetscape

We note that the only mention of bins in the master plan is in the design options for Olive Justice Place, so we question whether optimal waste management solutions have been considered as part of the streetscape master plan. The Cowes Activity Centre Plan noted that the location and frequency of collection of street bins was a significant concern. We understand that large, unsightly bins can disrupt coastal views and outdoor dining, and that some councils now consider bins to be a security risk. However, it is vital to ensure that plastic and other litter does not make its way into the marine environment.

Master plan principle 3— Connect the two ends of town (The Esplanade to Olive Justice Place to the future Cowes Cultural and Community Centre)

PICS supports this principle, in particular the objective to enhance seating, shelter, and vegetation to create a “linear town square” that offers physical and mental respite, and provision of clear and continuous paths of travel for pedestrians and all-abilities movement. We also support the provision of a daytime taxi rank near the Cowes Transit Centre and a bus/coach/ride-share and night-time taxi zone at the northern end of Bass Avenue to improve connections between various modes of transport. This will reduce dependence on private vehicles and improve traffic congestion.

Master plan principle 4—Flip the transport modal hierarchy in favour of the pedestrian and sustainable mobility

PICS commends this principle. We are pleased to see priority placed upon pedestrian and sustainable mobility, including improved connections with public transport.

² [Taking steps towards night environment conservation | ADSA \(australasiandarkskyalliance.org\)](https://www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/)

³ [National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife Including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds - DCCEEW](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/land/air-and-climate/air-quality/national-light-pollution-guidelines-for-wildlife-including-marine-turtles-seabirds-and-migratory-shorebirds)