



Victorian National Parks Association

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 July 2010

Media inquiries: Simon Branigan 0409 087 278

www.vnpa.org.au

VNPA Nature Conservation Review: Marine Conservation Priorities and Issues for Victoria

VNPA carries out detailed nature conservation reviews every five to ten years, to inform our conservation work and set priorities for government and community. The *VNPA Nature Conservation Review: Marine Conservation Priorities and Issues for Victoria* is the latest in this series. Previous reviews were carried out in 1971, 1987 and 2001.

Our 2001 review contributed to the Environment Conservation Council (the VEAC equivalent) Marine and Coastal Investigation and the establishment of the current Marine National Parks and sanctuaries.

Who funded it?

The review was commissioned and paid for by VNPA, with financial support from private donors.

Who conducted the review?

Australian Marine Ecology conducted the review. Australian Marine Ecology Pty Ltd is a scientific organisation specialising in marine ecological research and consulting. The Australian Marine Ecology team is comprised of highly trained scientists with expertise encompassing: population and community ecology; natural resources and habitats; biodiversity and conservation; fisheries and aquaculture; and environmental impact assessment. Australian Marine Ecology provides objective scientific services to governments, non-government organisations, institutions, industries and the public.

Methodology

The Nature Conservation Review and the method used to identify priority areas for conservation is based on a robust and innovative scientific process which has been subject to expert scientific review through a workshop with leading marine experts and scientists in Victoria.

The review is a detailed look at Victoria's marine environment, incorporating all available information and studies on Victoria's marine environment, including recent mapping and systematic investigations of marine habitats and biodiversity along the Victorian coast, in order to:

- Analyse significant threats to Victoria's marine and coastal environment region by region;
- Identify priority high conservation value marine habitats across Victoria marine waters;
- Investigate the state's current marine reserve system and make regional and site specific recommendations for improvements and expansion of the existing marine national parks & sanctuaries.

A team of marine biologists spent two years completing the review.

Key Results

A total of 28 threats and 16 threatening processes were considered, including climate change, coastal development, shipping, marine pests, unsustainable fishing, coastal erosion, pollution and aquaculture.

The authors used a relational database to compare habitats within regions along the coast and the threats facing them, to identify priority areas for conservation. These priority areas are places with habitats which are:

- critical ecosystems vital for building resilience in the marine environment to other threats, including climate change;
- susceptible/vulnerable to threats; and
- already subject to active threatening processes.

The Victorian National Parks Association is located at Level 3, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton Vic 3053.
Phone: 03 9347 5188 | Fax: 03 9347 5199 | Web: www.vnpa.org.au

As Victoria's leading nature conservation organisation we seek to protect the natural environment through national parks, conservation, land reserves, and better protection and management across the landscape.

For more information visit www.vnpa.org.au



Victorian National Parks Association

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 July 2010

Media inquiries: Simon Branigan 0409 087 278

www.vnpa.org.au

While the review identifies important habitats for conservation, it does not set spatial boundaries for new marine national parks. See *Protecting our Seas and Shores* p14-15 for the details of the priority areas and Chapter 4 of the Nature Conservation Review.

The review authors also carried out a Gap analysis to review the current system of marine national parks and sanctuaries against the CAR principal (comprehensive, adequate, representative) to see whether these parks, as they currently stand, will achieve what they were designed to achieve. The CAR principle is enshrined in both international and national policies for the protection of nature. As part of the gap analysis findings from the 2000 Environment Conservation Council (ECC), Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation were also assessed against current marine park boundaries.

Gap analysis of existing parks

The review identified significant gaps in Victoria's current system of marine national parks and sanctuaries and found considerable scope for greatly improving the conservation status of marine natural values through adjustments of existing marine protected areas. There are many cases where the current park boundaries exclude habitats intended to be protect by the MPA. For example:

- The Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park does not include low profile reef habitat even though it was clearly an important natural value of that bioregion. The subtidal sand community along this beach is one of the most species-rich of its type in the world. An unusual coral species *Pseudogorgia godeffroyi* is found only in this region, and a rare crab *Halicarcus* sp also exists here, and threatened shorebirds such as the pied-oyster catcher, the crested tern, Caspian tern and sanderling feed and nest in the coastal area.
- The French Island Marine National Park was designed to protect one of Victoria's major saltmarsh and mangroves habitats, however, the saltmarsh habitat sits entirely outside the park boundaries and most of the mangrove habitat is also outside of the boundary.

See pages 16-17 of *Protecting our Seas and Shores*, and Chapter 5 of the Nature Conservation Review for more information on gaps in the existing marine park system. Copies of these documents are available on the VNPA website www.vnpa.org.au

Further investigation needed

This review is a starting point. There is a need for more information on Victoria's unique habitats. Only 11 per cent of our marine waters have been properly mapped. There needs to be a comprehensive state-wide, independent, science-based investigation of Victoria's marine habitats, values and threats.

Five Point Action Plan for marine environment protection

Even without new parks there is an urgent need for more action on Victoria's diverse, beautiful and threatened marine environment. It deserves a high level of policy recognition and commitments for a comprehensive marine strategy in the next term of government.

VNPA has produced a detailed action plan and a comprehensive strategy for marine areas including commitments in the next term of government to:

1. A commitment to protect an additional 20% of Victoria's marine and coastal areas through the creation of new marine national parks by 2012.
2. Commit to a new and independent inquiry by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) or similar into marine and coastal biodiversity and the establishment of new marine parks to be completed by 2012.

The Victorian National Parks Association is located at Level 3, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton Vic 3053.
Phone: 03 9347 5188 | Fax: 03 9347 5199 | Web: www.vnpa.org.au

As Victoria's leading nature conservation organisation we seek to protect the natural environment through national parks, conservation, land reserves, and better protection and management across the landscape.

For more information visit www.vnpa.org.au



Victorian National Parks Association

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 July 2010

Media inquiries: Simon Branigan 0409 087 278

www.vnpa.org.au

3. Complete a Victorian Marine Plan by 2012 that includes:

- Tighter planning regulations to protect marine and coastal habitats.
- A comprehensive plan to deal with coastal pests and other threats.
- Ensuring that bay and estuary water quality levels are improved and monitored.
- Building climate change resilience in marine and coastal communities by improving levels of resources for management.

4. Develop an ecosystem-based marine planning framework and new marine protection legislation that better manages and protects the marine environment, by 2014.

5. Expand the role of the Victorian Coastal Council and boards to become responsible for management of marine and coastal areas.

Please contact: Simon Branigan, VNPA Marine and Coastal Project Officer on 0409 087 278. To download the full summary report or full report visit www.marinereport.vnpa.org.au

The Victorian National Parks Association is located at Level 3, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton Vic 3053.
Phone: 03 9347 5188 | Fax: 03 9347 5199 | Web: www.vnpa.org.au

As Victoria's leading nature conservation organisation we seek to protect the natural environment through national parks, conservation, land reserves, and better protection and management across the landscape.

For more information visit www.vnpa.org.au