

An aerial photograph of Inverloch Surf Beach. A large, multi-story building with a blue roof is situated on a grassy area. To its right, a yellow excavator is working on a sandy area. The beach is bordered by a line of concrete armor units (tetrapods) and a wooden groynes. The ocean waves are breaking on the right side of the image. The text "Inverloch Surf Beach Erosion" is overlaid in white.

# Inverloch Surf Beach Erosion

Background, reporting, plans, opinions August 2024 – January 2025



## What's the plan for beach safety?

THE start of volunteer surf lifesaving patrols on our beaches at the weekend, and temperatures above the 35-degree mark on Saturday were a sure sign that summer is already here.

And, after the disastrous experiences of last summer, when there were six drownings between Kilocunda and Smiths Beach, you'd hope the authorities have their messaging clear and are already rolling out their warnings, signs and education programs.

But it's a campaign to keep everyone safe this summer which we can all participate in, and pleasing then to overhear staff members at the Visitor Information Centre at Newhaven during the week issuing a clear warning about hazards that exist at our surf beaches, to go into the water only at patrolled beaches and only between the flags, or better still, head to the Cowes side of Phillip Island for the safest family swimming.

At Inverloch this summer, there are some additional hazards, including the cliff drops where beach access tracks have been dangerously undermined, especially between Ozone Street and the surf lifesaving clubhouse.

As well as closing these access points, the community is calling on the council and other authorities to provide signs and other awareness programs so that visitors and locals alike know what's going on.

They've also called on the council to approach the government about providing a community bus service so that people can 'park and ride' or in other ways seek to take the pressure off Surf Parade.

The other pressing issue we have to turn our minds to is what to do about the beach erosion problem at Inverloch Surf Beach after another round of serious damage a week and a half ago.

Plans for the replacement of sand, along the lines we have already seen, is simply not going to work and some 'hard engineering' solutions need to be trialled, if not rock walls, then wet-sand fencing and other methods for taking the power out of wave action during storm surges.

Because the reality is, the authorities will not stand by and watch the surf club building or Cape Paterson-Inverloch Road tumble into the sea during the next storm or king tide without some engineering response being taken.

So, do it now!

The other response the community is calling for is better communication. Tell us what action is planned and when.

To date, the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan process has failed to bring forth any sort of plan of action. If revegetation and sand renourishment is the plan - what plants, where and when? After more than four years, and with access to all the coastal research and management, why don't we have a plan?

And which 'hard engineering' options have been trialled and researched under the unique Inverloch conditions?

The time for action is now. Not as an emergency response when infrastructure is directly impacted.

# Editorials

**Sentinel-Times**

COMMENT

## Think again about fire and climate change

WE'VE been hearing some pretty outlandish claims being made about the causes of the devastating Los Angeles' fires.

Climate change is to blame, many say.

For others, it's down to a lack of management involving empty reservoirs, fire-fighting capacity, no water in the fire hydrants, lack of preparedness for fire, and a city council spending more money on its woke agenda than measures to address a foreseeable risk.

You couldn't help but reflect on the situation in Los Angeles when local residents, firefighters and woodlanders got together last Saturday at The Gurdies Nature Conservation Reserve for a ceremony "of loss and renewal" to mark the recent fire.

Certainly, it's a question of scale and impact when comparing and contrasting the two.

While The Gurdies' fire burnt around 192 hectares and impacted a handful of structures, also threatening dozens of homes, the Los Angeles' fire has so far extended

to more than 20,000 hectares, destroying or significantly damaging 9000 structures with 24 fatalities.

And while the recent Grampians' bushfire impacted 76,000 hectares, it's the location of the Los Angeles' fire in forested residential areas, and on the edge of the main built-up area, where there's a population of some 13 million people, that's the main issue.

But some of the same issues apply.

If indeed climate change is going to increase the risk of such events happening in the future, there needs to be a quantum shift in our thinking about bushfire, especially as they might impact residential areas, and our investment in mitigation and risk management.

And just as the authorities are already talking about "retreat" as the most viable option where infrastructure and homes are being impacted by coastal erosion, be warned, they're also going to start talking about "retreat" as the most feasible option for those living in or around bushland.

But it's time the authorities got serious about land management, about properly resourcing the response to fire and also keeping us informed about what they can do and just as importantly, what they can't do to keep us safe.

Those living in and around bushland can then make their own informed choice about what to do

feasible option for those living in or around bushland.

But it's time the authorities got serious about land management, about properly resourcing the response to fire and also keeping us informed about what they can do and just as importantly, what they can't do to keep us safe.

Those living in and around bushland can then make their own informed choice about what to do next.

The whole situation must also shed a new light on the appropriateness of the Bass Coast Shire Council's 'Urban Forest Strategy' and its target of a minimum of 25 per cent canopy coverage across all townships by 2040.

Sure, a modest selection of fire-resistant trees in urban areas would be welcomed by most but if you're looking to plant a significant number of natives in an offset program (including a target of 40 per cent canopy coverage across "all land tenures" in our townships by 2040), there's plenty of broadacre areas, well away from our settlements, that would be far more suitable... and safe!





## 7-point plan for Inverloch's summer

Erecting the flags ahead of the first volunteer patrol at Inverloch Surf Beach on Saturday were surf lifesaving club members Sam Dimopoulos and Lucy Tate in a sure sign that summer is here. But a coalition of local community groups fears problems are looming without immediate action at Inverloch.

# 7-point plan for Inverloch's summer

THERE may be differing views on how best to tackle the erosion problems at the Inverloch Surf Beach and the threat it poses to infrastructure, including the surf lifesaving club, roads and houses.

But ahead of a busy summer, common ground has been reached on safety.

Community groups, including the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club, the Inverloch Tourism Association and the South Gippsland Conservation Society, all members of an inter-agency working group which includes representatives of DEECA (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) and the Bass Coast Shire Council, have put their names to a plan to improve beach safety.

"The extensive coastal erosion now affecting Inverloch Beach is receiving constant media attention," they say.

"We are aware that a \$3.2M funds package has been assigned by the Federal Government for DEECA to implement a Dune Renourishment



Members of an Inverloch beach erosion coalition, including Ed Thexton president of the South Gippsland Conservation Society, Glen Morris president of the Inverloch Tourism Association and Steve Duncan treasurer of the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club have backed a plan to make access to the beach safer this summer.

ment a Dune Renourishment program starting around Spring 2025.

"The immediate and concerning issue is safe beach access and use this summer starting in a few weeks. An Inter-Agency Working Group is already set up to take responsibility for beach management but the pressing matter of beach safety/operation this summer must be addressed.

"A community group comprising Inverloch Tourism Association (ITA), Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club and South Gippsland Conservation Society has developed an Outline Plan for safe beach operation throughout this summer and wish to see this implemented in time for the upcoming holidays."

"We appreciate that the Council alone is trying its best in reacting to sand erosion events such as last (previous) Sunday night. We as a community group are offering to help quickly implement a broad-scale plan that addresses our prime concern of public safety/safe beach," according to ITA President Glen Morris.

"And if ever this needed demonstrating then one only has to inspect the beach access point at the end of Wave Street. This access point is washed away leaving a five-metre drop from the access path to the beach below - a major hazard and risk to public safety related to sand dune collapse."

Mr Morris has since advised that work has been done to make several of the main access points safe however, he has stressed, that while access tracks on the town side of Ozone Street can be made safe, access points between Ozone and the surf club need to be closed and fenced off.

The community group proposal for safe use of Inverloch beach this summer involves a seven-point plan:

1. Close off all beach access tracks between Ozone Street and the surf lifesaving clubhouse by installing temporary barrier fencing across, five metres either side of the entrance pathway. (The existing small warning signs are not a sufficient barrier to public use of the tracks). In addition,

consider the installation of continuous barrier fencing along the base of the dune to prevent members of the public from attempting to climb the dunes.

2. Commence enhanced dune management work in these closed-off areas.

3. Establish a Community Bus system for beach users to be transported from vantage points in town and near the beach to/from the surf lifesaving club.

4. Install effective terminal protection works for the surf lifesaving club area by establishing suitable/effective protection works 20-25 metres on each side of the existing sandbag barrier which prevents further dune loss.

5. Re-establish effective protected beach access at the surf club for members of the public and for lifesavers and their equipment.

6. Implement a comprehensive ongoing communications plan to ensure visitors to the beach are aware of how to access the beach during the summer and respect these

guidelines.

7. Incorporate activities that encourage the community to embrace the restrictions on places of access.

The group has suggested that community groups and volunteers from the general community be invited to help install the temporary fencing and to act as 'Beach Ambassadors' over the summer. Community buses could be hired now from private contractors.

They believe the increased interaction with visitors and locals alike could have a beneficial effect.

What next?

Mr Morris said: "We are keen to work with Council and DEECA on this outline proposal before putting together a joint plan for the summer in time for the tourist season. We have opened up dialogue with Council and DEECA on our initiative and are encouraged by Council's willingness to meet and discuss our concerns and the plan. Hopefully, we can work constructively with them in the next few weeks."



# Council supports call for 'urgent' report

THE environmental and financial cost of not protecting Inverloch from coastal erosion "is far greater than the cost of protecting it" and that cost extends to the mental health of residents in the firing line.

That's the view of new Bass Coast Shire Councillor Meg Edwards who took the opportunity of her first council meeting last Wednesday to raise a matter of Urgent Business relating to the "immediate protection of key assets at Inverloch in response to coastal erosion".

Cr Edwards moved the following motion, seconded by Cr Ron Bauer:

That officers prepare a report to be presented to the December 2024 Council meeting addressing the following matters:

- Options other than sand renourishment for medium-term solutions (three-four years) including type of mitigation (i.e. extending the length of the geotextile sandbags), time to implement and indicative costings;
- Ensure safe access to the beach is maintained;
- Ensure safety measures are put in place whilst works are undertaken to ensure the safety of those enjoying the Inverloch Surf Beach.

Cr Edwards spoke to her motion:

"During the campaign period recently, I committed to our community that if elected I would advocate for protecting Inverloch and our broader region. I will not fail our community. Over the last week, there has been significant further erosion to the



**New Bass Coast Councillor Meg Edwards moved an urgent motion at her first council meeting last Wednesday, calling for a report to the December meeting about the options, other than sand renourishment, for addressing Inverloch's erosion problems.**

Inverloch foreshore, negating all the sand replenishment works that were carried out in September 2024."

Cr Edwards expressed concern that public tracks to the beach had been washed away, that access for surf club patrollers and their equipment had to be maintained and the beachgoers kept safe while longer-term plans were being implemented.

"Why is this important? Because everybody is impacted. The environmental and financial cost of not protecting Inverloch is far greater than the cost of protecting it.

Every person in Inverloch, and more broadly, all of Bass Coast, will be adversely impacted if no action is taken to protect it.

"It is not just the surf club or the houses in the nearby vicinity, if water breaks through, it goes to the lowest point, and that would extend far beyond the area close to the beach.

"People work hard for their homes, have built where permits have been granted by council, and therefore Council has an obligation to do whatever possible to protect both public and private assets."

Cr Edwards claimed the threat to property was already having a severe impact on mental health.

"The sewerage system will be compromised and with the RACV cut off from Inverloch and less tourists in general, every business in Inverloch, many of which are still trying to recover from the lockdown years and now hit with cost-of-living and reduced spending, will be further impacted in trade."

Several councillors made comment and asked questions but ultimately voted to support Cr Edwards' motion.

Cr Ron Bauer asked if officers would have time to produce a meaningful report by next month's council meeting and he received a favourable response from the shire's General Manager Community and Culture Jodi Kennedy who said council officers were members of several of the stakeholder committees and were already in possession of much of the information needed.

Cr Tim O'Brien noted that similar feelings of anguish and fear were being experienced by affected residents at Silverleaves on Phillip Island.

Cr Brett Tessari wanted it clarified that the motion didn't commit council to funding any additional programs or would stop any of the works presently underway.

"These works won't stop. We'll be able to pull together some of the research work that's already been done. There is a lot of information that we can bring to that report," Ms Kennedy said.



# SAVE INVERLOCH FORESHORE

MAJOR PUBLIC RALLY, SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025.

ON THE BEACH, IN FRONT OF  
INVERLOCH SURF LIFESAVING CLUBHOUSE.

In the past eight years, 70 metres of foreshore in the locality near the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Clubhouse has been lost due to erosion. After 4 years of operation, a Victorian Government Committee has not made one recommendation to address what is now a Crisis situation. The Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Clubhouse and a section of the coast road between Inverloch and Cape Paterson are both in imminent danger of being lost as well as what is left of the sand dunes.

If the road is lost, hundreds of homes are also at risk in the long term.

## A PUBLIC RALLY ON JANUARY 5, 2025 AT 2.00PM

has been called to demand the State Government acts as a matter of urgency and put in place permanent protective measures to save these vital assets as they have recently done at Apollo Bay and in other coastal locations.

We need your help by attending the Public Rally so that the Government gets a clear message that we require action now to save and protect the Inverloch Foreshore. People power is needed as the Government is considering an adapt and retreat policy which would decimate Inverloch and must opposed.

Come and hear prominent guest speakers including triple Olympic Gold Medalist, Drew Ginn address the Crisis which now exists in Inverloch and why it is critical the Victorian State Government acts immediately.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP BY ATTENDING THE RALLY.**

For more information and updates, Facebook-Inverloch Foreshore Action Group.





Some of Sunday's attendees and speakers unite in a powerful statement at the rally's conclusion, as they demand decisive action. A15\_0125

# ACTION NOW

## Inverloch community demands coastal action

INVERLOCH'S community is up for a fight to get real solutions to tackle coastal erosion and the threat of inundation, turning out in force at a rally near the town's surf life saving club despite Sunday's blistering conditions, attendees hearing support for the cause from speakers including new State opposition leader Brad Battin.

The inundation threat to the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club, houses and the road to Cape Paterson were the key concerns raised, with the message delivered loud and clear that those present do not accept the approach of adaptation and

**By Andrew Palocz**

retreat and want decisive action from the State Government.

Hard engineering solutions are being called for, with speakers urging the required funding to be made available and driving home the message that to do nothing or take ineffective and financially wasteful measures will ultimately cost more than investing in what is needed.

Mr Battin argued that the local surf life saving club could be saved from the threat of inundation for just a few million dollars, declaring the building

would cost \$10 to \$15 million to replace if action isn't taken, leading to its loss.

He urged the State Government to put in place a long-term solution, questioning why such action has occurred in Apollo Bay but not Inverloch.

"We have said to the government, 'We can't wait for the next election', Mr Battin declared, saying the threat is too great and adding that if action isn't taken, the opposition will ensure the Inverloch situation is an issue at the next State election, promising to keep visiting the town and demanding action on behalf of its community.

Earlier in the rally, chairman of the Inverloch Foreshore Action Group Paul Cross was adamant the community won't accept a retreat and adapt approach to erosion and inundation, noting there have been four years of talk and no result.

He said 120 metres of foreshore has been lost over 12 years and nothing has been done, with the tide coming in and washing away replacement sand.

"We're just throwing money away," he said of that approach, stressing hard engineering is required.

Continued page 3

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Gaynor Cross and Kevin Griffin make their point in Inverloch. A02\_0125



Ray and Glenys Edwards of the Inverloch Foreshore Action Group have no intention of running away from a challenge. A03\_0125

## Inverloch community demands coastal action

**From page 1**

Bass Coast Shire Mayor Rochelle Halstead urged the State Government to come to the party and do something on the ground to keep the life saving club operational, while locally raised Olympian Drew Ginn described the situation as "a crisis".

Conceding the ocean and beach are always changing, he added "To not do something about something so important to us all as a community is a travesty."

Mr Ginn noted the surf life saving club building was completed in 2011, reflecting on all the club offers through its training, Nippers program and other initiatives, and raising the prospect of fatalities without lifesavers to watch over people.



New Victorian opposition leader Brad Battin demands the State Government implements a solution to the inundation threat facing Inverloch. A14\_0125



Chairman of the Inverloch Foreshore Action Group Paul Cross makes his point. A08\_0125

He also spoke of the threat to houses and the coastal road to Cape Paterson, questioning why anyone would allow that to happen and imploring the government to do something about it, then leading a "Save the beach" chant.

Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club president Glenn Arnold confirmed the immediate risk to the facility from inundation, stressing the extensive community involvement the club has and the fact its building is used by a range of other organisations.

Glenn Morris of Inverloch Tourism Association, who is also a civil engineer, along with other speakers noted the \$3.3 million of funding provided by the Federal Government towards addressing the Inverloch situation, declaring it is less than half of what is needed and asking all levels of government to commit

to adequate funding.

He spoke of the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan and the pathway it presents for the future of Inverloch.

"The key pathway they talk about is to protect Inverloch Surf Beach by dune reconstruction before inevitable retreat," he said.

"We have real concerns about that approach that we've already expressed collectively with our community groups," Mr Morris said.

He stressed an engineering review needs to be undertaken to consider all hard engineering options, not just seawalls, with options such as a groynes or a submerged artificial reef. Mr Morris highlighting successful approaches taken elsewhere.

"The report says that the economic loss to the State and the

community if nothing is done on the beach is \$7.2 million per annum," Mr Morris said, adding "That justifies a significant amount of money being spent to deal with the problem at Inverloch (with) a long-term solution."

Speakers were introduced by former State opposition leader Alan Brown who demanded immediate action.

"That \$3.3 million (Federal funding) should be used now, starting next month, February, to put up a proper permanent protective barrier around this clubhouse and put (in place) a protective rock wall to stop that road being lost," he said, adding "The time for action is now!"

Mr Brown earlier explained that should houses be lost to inundation, insurance won't cover them.

Unsurprisingly, those present

unanimously backed his call for immediate action.

After the addresses, Mr Brown put forward the following motion which was carried unanimously by the remaining near 700 attendees on the beach.

Attendees at the public rally held on the Inverloch foreshore on Sunday, January 5, 2025, call on the Victorian State Government to reject any policy of retreat and as a matter of extreme urgency put in place permanent protective measures to,

- 1) permanently protect the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Clubhouse
- 2) permanently protect the Inverloch road known as Surf Parade and the coastal road between Inverloch and Cape Paterson
- 3) restore, permanently protect and replant the dune for-

mation in the locality of the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Clubhouse and shoreline where necessary, to permanently protect the roads.

Mr Brown called the result stunning and said it reflected the view of the wider community as well and he thanked the crowd for their support.

"This outcome ends for all time, any suggestion that the local community is prepared to support any policy of retreat," he said.

"The community have now made their view known loud and clear and they want immediate action to permanently protect the Inverloch foreshore, the Surf Lifesaving Clubhouse and the abutting roads and they want works commenced next month. After the coming winter's high tides and violent storms, when even more severe damage will be done, is too late" he said.

"The time for action is now. No more committees, no reference groups, no more kicking the can down the road" he said.

Mr Brown said that if the temperature on the day had not been 38 degrees, many more people would have turned out to support their community.

"Without doubt, had the day not been excessively hot, well over 1000 people would have attended the rally.

"The will of the people is now crystal clear, they want the erosion crisis permanently addressed and they want immediate action now."

He said people should follow the Inverloch Action Group Facebook page to be kept informed of developments.



## Save your coast Inverloch, it's been done before

I WAS on the San Remo foreshore committee of management for 29 years. The San Remo Back Beach was eroding away and got to the point of threatening the foreshore caravan park and the huge power line tower at the end of Marine Parade.

The committee convinced the authorities to do something about it and fast. A rock wall and groynes were constructed,

a magnificent job was done. Up to one tonne boulders with matting layered behind them, each boulder locked into the other like a jigsaw puzzle and the angle of repose creating a slope on the wall so the wave action would roll up and not smash into it, fantastic. Then a concrete walkway placed on top.

East Cowes has had similar works.

The erosion at San Remo was caused by man. The building of the bridge e.g. the abutment leading up altered the tidal movements; unlike Inverloch yours is nature, storms, and strong tides.

Inverloch, you have to get funding to save your coast, you have no other option, it is a complete waste of money bringing in sand to just washaway again. You might as well give it to charity. Go over to San Remo and Cowes and see for yourselves – it works.

All the planting and rehabilitation will do nothing until you rock wall it.

**Geoff Lee, Longwarry**

## Letters to Editor

LETTER EDITOR NOT PUBLISHED 26 Nov

Geoff Lee's letter 'Save your coast Inverloch, it's been done before' describes work done at San Remo Back Beach 29 years ago to manage erosion caused by impacts on the channel from nearby bridge works.

Yes, people working to manage erosion at Inverloch surf beach can learn from this example and from many others. Clearly the boulder jigsaw puzzle succeeded in preventing further erosion in that situation.

However, not wishing to sound like a broken record, build a rock structure and you will lose the beach. Waves crashing into the rocks drag the sand away. Sand is scoured away at each end – as evidenced along Wreck Creek when the rock wall was installed at the Bunurong Road corner. The slope on the wall described by Geoff does reduce wave impact – the geotextile sand bags in front of the lifesaving club were designed this way and were successful until the recent extreme event.

So, is there a way to construct a rock 'wall' that doesn't mean the beach will be lost, and erosion continues at each end? Show me. Otherwise, what is the point of a lifesaving clubhouse if there's no beach? 'Soft engineering' – ongoing replenishment of sand at scale – is a more effective, cost effective and visually pleasing short/medium term strategy.

Geoff downplays the impact climate change is having on our coastline. It is 'nature, storms and strong tides' but in our warming world sea level is rising and storms carry a far greater punch – we recently learned that from first-hand experience.

Aileen Vening, Wonthaggi



## **Long term, non-politically motivated solution needed**

I ATTENDED the rally held by the Inverloch foreshore protection group on Sunday.

While I agree that it is of the utmost importance to save the Surf Life Saving Club from the long-term coastal erosion which has occurred in Inverloch, I found that the rally was very one solution focused and politically motivated.

There was no scientific based evidence offered that would convince me that "hard engineering", rock walls, groynes and the like are going to solve the problem.

The majority of the speakers were from the Liberal party who seemed more interested in scoring political points rather than solving the problem. There was a lot of emotive language used, misinformation and a lack of diversity of opinions.

If this was a truly a balanced presentation, there were other "uninvited attendees" present with a strong interest. I would like to have heard from Deb Leonard (Federal Independent candidate in the upcoming election) and

---

Mat Morgan (local councillor).

It is worth looking at the Loch Sport (also fronting Bass Strait) experience over the last 30 years where over 70 engineering structures mostly groynes were installed with limited success. These structures require ongoing and expensive management.

Who will pay for this? As a resident living close to the surf club, I am concerned that we get a well-researched, long-term solution and not an emotive, political, waste of money band aid fix.

**Julianne King, Inverloch**

## **Positive steps forward**

LAST Sunday's Inverloch foreshore rally was a great success. Hats off to the organisers.

The quality and calibre of the guest speakers, along with the sheer number of community members in attendance, must surely leave the State Government in no doubt that the community wants an end to the ineffective, expensive, and wasteful actions

conducted over the past decade.

It was especially pleasing to see our new Mayor Cr. Rochelle Halstead attend the rally and address the concerned community members. As MC Alan Brown pointed out this new council, under Cr. Halstead's leadership, has started well on this urgent issue.

And a big shout out in particular to Councillors Meg Edwards and Tim O'Brien.

It was Cr. Edwards representing Bunurong Ward who wasted no time and raised this matter as urgent business at the first Council meeting last November.

And at the December Council meeting Cr. O'Brien showed great initiative in putting his alternative motion which added far more presence and action to what was in my view an insipid recommendation put to Council by officers.

I have no doubt that we would not have seen this type of response from the immediate past Councils.

This new Council has indeed started moving the dial in the right direction. But that dial needs to be moved much further and much faster.

The urgent action proposed by the new Council is still limited to dune replenishment. This action will simply waste even more taxpayer monies and will not protect so much as one centimetre of foreshore from tidal or storm surges, as has been manifestly demonstrated over the past decade.

Nonetheless, I am hopeful that, under Cr. Halstead's stewardship, the community might be able to look forward to Bass Coast Shire Council formally rejecting DEECA's retreat strategy and instead supporting the community's clearly expressed desire for permanent solutions to protect the surf life-saving clubhouse and the other assets across the precinct.

**Kevin Griffin, Inverloch**



## **Between a rock wall and a hard place**

BE CAREFUL what you wish for Inverloch! Yes, a rock wall at the surf beach can save the clubhouse and other structures from the erosion but it comes at a cost; the beach itself will be lost.

Measurements in the Cape-to-Cape Resilience project report show that longshore drift has been moving sand eastwards away from the surf beach at thousands of cubic metres per year for the last several years.

The construction of a rock wall would cut off any supply of sand for replenishment, leading to an inevitable lowering of the beach surface until it becomes a rock platform, or just deep water.

It doesn't seem to make sense to use a rock wall to protect a surf lifesaving clubhouse when it will result in the loss of the actual surf beach!

That's why DEECA has decided to commence beach renourishment in 2025. If enough sand can be brought back to the beach, we'll all be able to continue to enjoy it into the future. Happy New Year.

**Mike Cleeland, Surf Beach**



Cape to Cape Resilience Project

The exhibition period of the draft Resilience Plan of the Victorian Government's Cape to Cape Resilience Project (C2CRP) closed on 13 October. 18 submissions were received and 139 surveys completed. At a stakeholder briefing attended by representatives of SGCS, ISLSC and the ITA on 11 November, DEECA explained that feedback was being reviewed in November, with a 'what we heard' engagement summary and the Resilience Plan to be completed in December.

DEECA's focus now is detailed planning of the proposed dune reconstruction at Inverloch Surf Beach, with a sand sourcing study having been completed and consultants appointed for the design of the dune reconstruction. With the currently available funding of \$3.3M, it is anticipated that 100,000- 150,000 m3 of

sand will be dredged from offshore, and placed at the back of the beach in accordance with the design, to provide protection of the remaining dunes. The dune reconstruction will be supported by revegetation to increase dune resilience.

Community consultation activities planned for the dune reconstruction work include a Project Update (December 2024), a pop-up at the Inverloch Farmers Market at the Glade on 26 January and further community engagement in February 2025. Finalisation of the design of the dune reconstruction is scheduled for April 2025, followed by:

- Approvals for dune reconstruction: March - August 2025
- Appointment of construction team: June 2025
- Undertake dune reconstruction: August - November 2025.

At the November stakeholder briefing, DEECA flagged the possibility of the formation of a Community Advisory Group to advise on plan implementation and assist with community engagement over the next 12 months and beyond. The community group (I\*CAN), comprising representatives of SGCS, ITA and ISLSC, has since submitted a suggested Terms of Reference. This has been favourably received by DEECA and will be finalised in the coming week. The next meeting with DEECA is scheduled for 17 December.

The community group has also developed a 7 Point Plan to promote safe use of the beach and enhanced dune management over the busy summer period. The Plan has been submitted to Bass Coast Shire Council and an on-site inspection was held on 26 November. We are now waiting on Council's response.

Inverloch Surf Beach Erosion

Between 25 August and 3 September 24, significant coastline erosion occurred as a result of a combination of low barometric pressure in Bass Strait, high WSW/WNW swells and strong to gale force WSW/WNW winds that continued for an extended period. Analysis of drone and laser level beach monitoring surveys undertaken on 4-5 September revealed that:

- sand levels on the beach dropped by up to 1.8m
- between 5-14m of dune recession occurred and there was a net sand loss of approx. 40,000 cubic metres east of the Surf Club, with total sand loss from the Surf Beach of around 60,000m3.

Our beach monitoring team completed a follow-up Laser Level Survey on 22 September 24. A drone survey was also completed on 21 October 24. These surveys recorded additional dune recession adjacent to both the Wave Street (2m) and Ozone Street (10m) access tracks east of the Surf Club. Further sand loss occurred on 18 November 24 following a 2.9m high tide and 4m westerly swell, washing away recently-placed sand adjacent to the Surf Club sand bag wall.

As well as the threat to the Surf Club and vulnerability of the Wreck Creek/Surf Parade zone, there is now only a very thin width of vegetated dune left adjacent to the Wave Street access track area. The coastline has now receded by between 50-85 metres over the past 11 years, with close to 80% of the vegetated dunes (more than 10 hectares) that existed in 2013 having been swept away. The shoreline is now 40 metres on the landward side of where the shoreline was in 1950, the worse previously-recorded shoreline position.

These results have been forwarded to DEECA to reinforce the urgency of significant action to protect the remaining dunes.

**Inverloch Coastal Restoration Project (ICRP 2.0)** Discussions are underway with DEECA and Bass Coast Shire Council on the first phase of ICRP 2.0, to comprise a pre-emptive multi-specie weed control program in the coastal reserve behind the Surf Beach. The aim of this work is to maximize planting conditions on the planned reconstructed dunes. Weed vegetation suppression will help create conditions for the vigorous growth of indigenous species and reduce the seed load dispersing into the plantings on the reconstructed dunes. SGCS will commence this work in early 2025.

SGCS ICRP Team | 7 December 2024



## Jordan Crugnale MP

STATE MEMBER FOR BASS



### Inverloch beach Update

Dear Inverloch residents,

This spring will see the start of a massive dune reconstruction project to protect our beautiful beach. This is the first of a series of regular newsletters to update you on the project.

#### Background

We have all watched with alarm the changes to the Inverloch surf beach over the past 10 years. The problem of coastal erosion is not peculiar to Inverloch. All around the world, coastal communities are confronting the same challenges.

Inverloch is a particularly complex coastal environment. A dynamic estuary system, changed wave patterns in Bass Strait and climate change have combined to cause the most severe beach erosion in the state.

Inverloch is also the most studied part of the entire 2500km Victorian coastline, thanks to the Victorian Government's Cape to Cape Resilience Project involving multiple government agencies and the Bass Coast Shire Council.

In 2022 we secured \$3.3 million from the Federal Government's Coastal and Erosion Mitigation Program to address coastal erosion.

Coastal erosion management is a growing discipline with thousands of case studies to draw on from around the world. Our researchers have looked at global best practice to determine the best solution for our beach.

While some communities have opted for hard engineering solutions such as rock walls and groynes to protect houses and infrastructure, the results are clear: if we put in a rock wall at Inverloch it will lower the sand level and we will lose our beach. It will also create scouring at each end of the wall.

#### Dune reconstruction

The Inverloch community has stated overwhelmingly that the sandy beach and coastal landscape are what we value most. It's why most of us live here, it's why thousands of people visit Inverloch.

In Australia more and more councils and state governments are turning to dune reconstruction and vegetation as the best way to preserve beaches while protecting homes and other buildings. The advantage of sand is that it absorbs and dissipates the force of the sea rather than transferring it, and it restores the natural contours of the beach rather than destroying them.

Byron Bay was facing similar problems to Inverloch when they began their dune restoration project in 2022. Since then, erosion has been significantly reduced, beach amenity has been restored and environmental values continue to improve.

The South Australian Government has carried out a number of projects to stabilise and replant dunes, including at West Beach near Adelaide.

Dune reconstruction is not a permanent solution to rising seas, however it is the first step in the adaptation plan recommendations that goes towards building back the beach, raising its level, protecting threatened assets like the Surf Club and the dune vegetation for potentially the next 10 years.



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9 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi VIC 3995 f JordanCrugnaleMP

### The Timing

Large-scale dune reconstruction of the Inverloch surf beach will begin in early spring, using a large barge to pump up to 200,000 tonnes of sand onto the beach to recreate the dune.

Make no mistake, this dune will be as highly engineered as any other coastal protection measure but designed to protect the beach using a local material that's cheap and plentiful.

The dune needs time to stabilise over the spring and summer before the south-westerly storm surges begin in autumn. Planting of the dunes with suitable species including coastal native grasses is a crucial part of the project and is best done in spring.

In the meantime, the Inverloch Interagency Working Group will continue to monitor the coastline to determine whether emergency sand renourishment works are needed to protect the existing dunes in response to the expected autumn and winter storms.

### Timeline for 2025

|          |                                |
|----------|--------------------------------|
| January  | Dune draft designs due         |
| February | Community engagement           |
| March    | Finalise designs               |
| April    | Tender for construction        |
| Aug-Nov  | Dune construction and planting |

Below are some great QR direct links to more information. Please sing out if I can be of further assistance, my team and I are here to help.

Jordan



#### Explainer Video

Coastal Management 101 - A presentation from Bass Coast Shire Council  
Includes: Policy Context, C2C Plan, Inverloch Surf Beach, Current and Next Steps

#### FAQ's



#### Resilience Plan FAQ's

Includes: Engineering options, Recommendations, Monitoring activities, organisations collecting data and what is being measured.

#### Project FAQ's

Includes: Study Area, Coastal Hazards, Partner Agencies

### How you can help

- Use beach access tracks that are open
- Please keep off eroding, fragile dunes
- Keep away from the sand cliffs
- Take part in dune planting days - more news in a future newsletter



# 'Retreat' won't save the surf club

A POLITICAL stoush has been joined between Bass MP Jordan Crugnale and Eastern Victoria MP Melina Bath about what should happen next in response to the erosion crisis at the Inverloch Surf Beach.

While Ms Crugnale has ruled out "hard engineering" options in favour of dune renourishment and retreat as the best solutions for Inverloch in a recent letter to the town's residents, Ms Bath has accused the State Government and Ms Crugnale of being "solely focused on a retreat".

But, as much as it's been getting good publicity, it's not helping the good folk at the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club.

Once located 70 metres from the shoreline, the surf lifesaving clubrooms, opened in January 2011 at a cost of \$1.5 million, is now teetering on the brink, with only a failing barrier of geotextile bags between the facility and the crashing waves.

Asked what the club would like to see in the next three to four months, surf lifesaving club president Glenn Arnold said a solid defence, like the rock structure at Apollo Bay, was what was needed in front of the clubhouse, while a longer-term solution was found.

"The textile bags have done their job over the past four years but as you can see, they've started sagging in the middle and there's been issues around the edges," said Mr Arnold.

"What we'd like to see is a proper structure, not just sand, that could be removed when a more permanent solution is found.

"The one we are looking at is similar to what the government has put in at Apollo Bay. It's a rock structure but not a rock wall. The rocks go in and then it's backfilled and covered with sand."

The club is firmly of the belief that sand replacement and dune renourishment on their own will not save the clubhouse from the next storm surge and high tide event, like the one in August last year.

Asked for her response, Ms Crugnale said she was authorised to make the statement that the sandbag wall would continue to do its job.

"The existing sandbag seawall in front of the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club will prevent erosion from encroaching on the club while we continue

to work on the final adaptation model," Ms Crugnale told the Sentinel-Times this week.

"We understand from our consultation the importance of the natural beach setting to the community for recreation, tourism and the town's livability and that will be a factor for future adaptations.

"I know the Inverloch community is very acute to the approaching Easter King Tides and potential coupling of a storm and how this may affect the surf beach, and this goes also for the Silverleaves community as well.

"DEECA have a package of works currently with the Treasurer seeking immediate funding for projects across the coast of Victoria including for Silverleaves and Inverloch and I continue to voice the urgency with both the Environment Minister and the Treasurer and their respective offices.

"I want to thank Council for being very active in this space and endorsing DEECA's package of works by making representations to the Minister with myself also present last week on behalf of both communities and as per their resolution.



In 2021, the State Government invested \$7.6 million to address erosion problems at Apollo Bay, with works including sand-covered rock reinforcement on the foreshore. Why not at Inverloch?

"The key stakeholder community organisations ITA, SGCS and the ISLSC will be meeting for the fourth time with DEECA in February and I hope that as a collective we are able to provide an update on the dune reconstruction project and the survey results from the C2C engage.vic consultation as well.

"Council and DEECA continue to work together alongside other members of the Inverloch

Continued next slide



Interagency Working Group to plan and carry out maintenance work and interim nourishment activities for the protection of assets including the surf club and the road coming up to Easter and work that will be required following a storm event," Ms Crugnale said.

As well as the town-wide letterbox drop by Ms Crugnale over the Australia Day long weekend, and the critical response from Ms Bath, also noting official questions had been asked of the Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos, the Bass Coast Shire Council took a delegation to meet the Minister in Spring Street last Wednesday.

Speaking about the meeting, Bass Coast Mayor Cr Rochelle Halstead said she believed progress had been made in impressing on the Minister the need for urgent action.

## **Background**

According to details provided by Ms Crugnale, the sandbag seawall at the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club has a 10 to 20-year lifespan. She said relocating the clubhouse out of the hazard zone is identified as an option in the adaptation pathway. Relocating the clubhouse, she said, would allow the beach to be retained for use by the community and visitors in the longer term.

The Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club and public assets like roads are the most at risk from coastal erosion and inundation in the future.

Retreat of these assets has been identified as an adaptation pathway that may be

required to manage erosion and allow Inverloch to retain its natural beach in the future, so it can continue to thrive as a tourism destination.

Since 2014, the Labor Government has invested \$140 million into marine and coastal projects.

She said DEECA had received \$1.53 million from the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund (2) to develop Statewide policy guidance on ways to manage coastal erosion, including what transition and retreat adaptation options could look like for property and assets impacted by coastal hazards and sea level rise. This work is being undertaken now. Consultation for the project will take place later this year with Traditional Owners, Victorian coastal local government authorities, including Bass Coast and South Gippsland, and coastal land managers.

## **At Apollo Bay**

The Victorian Government invested \$7.6 million to address erosion problems at Apollo Bay. Stage 1 was delivered in June 2021. Stage 2 was delivered in December 2021. Works included three rock groynes and approximately 900 metres of rock wall.

"The groynes hold sand on the beach and the seawall protects the Great Ocean Road, foreshore path, cypress trees and other assets," according to DEECA (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action). More information at [marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/barwon-south-west](https://marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/barwon-south-west).



# Bath MP challenges 'sand and retreat' options

THE Nationals' Member for Eastern Victoria, Melina Bath, has accused the State Government of being "solely focused on a retreat" as the way to deal with Inverloch's beach erosion crisis.

That is, as storm surges and high tides batter the coast in the months ahead, assets and infrastructure, including the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club, should be allowed to fall into the sea and members "retreat" elsewhere. Homes on the other side of Surf Parade would be the next in the firing line.

In a statement released by Ms Bath on Friday, in response to an extensive letterbox drop by the Labor Member for Bass Jordan Crugnale over the Australia Day long weekend, Ms Bath said residents she had spoken to found the update by Ms Crugnale raised more questions than it answered. And she has promised to raise those questions with Labor's Minister for the Environment Steve Dimopoulos.

"The Allan Labor Government appears to be solely focused on a 'retreat' option despite the Cape-to-Cape Resilience draft plan being met with a tsunami of community opposition," said Ms Bath. "The letter confirms Labor is only planning for a dune renourishment strategy to tackle coastal erosion, with tenders going out late in 2025 – it dismisses other options including hard engineering without any transparent analysis."

Ms Bath claimed a \$3.3 million grant from the Federal Government in 2022 accounted for only one-third of the funds required to implement the whole Cape to Cape Resilience Plan which she said was estimated to cost over \$10 million.

"Labor needs to come clean on how much of the federal funding grant has been spent on external consultants and did the government's terms of reference consider all best practice options for coastal protection.

"Many locals are justifiably sceptical that a project that only replaces lost sand and begins late this year, is likely to be a waste of time.

"It is a temporary measure: the surf lifesaving club and other public and private infrastructure will remain vulnerable to erosion from tides and storm surges.



**The Nationals' Member for Eastern Victoria, Melina Bath, has slammed the State Government's focus on a "retreat" strategy for Inverloch's worsening beach erosion crisis.**

"The Allan Government has taken many years to author a draft report that makes recommendations which overwhelmingly do not reflect community sentiment.

"There is clearly a significant funding shortfall, and it appears the Allan Government is doing everything to avoid picking up the tab for coastal erosion mitigation works in Bass Coast."

## Jordan Crugnale's letter

Here is a copy of the letter Bass MP Jordan Crugnale delivered to letterboxes in Inverloch recently:

Dear Inverloch residents,

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changed wave patterns in Bass Strait and climate change have combined to cause the most severe beach erosion in the state.

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Dune reconstruction: The Inverloch community has stated overwhelmingly that the sandy beach and coastal landscape are what

we value most. It's why most of us live here, it's why thousands of people visit Inverloch.

In Australia, more and more councils and state governments are turning to dune reconstruction and vegetation as the best way to preserve beaches while protecting homes and other buildings. The advantage of sand is that it absorbs and dissipates the force of the sea rather than transferring it, and it restores the natural contours of the beach rather than destroying them. Byron Bay was facing similar problems to Inverloch when they began their dune restoration project in 2022. Since then, erosion has been significantly reduced, beach amenity has been restored and environmental values continue to improve. The South Australian Government has carried out a number of projects to stabilise and replant dunes, including at West Beach near Adelaide.

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