

**Batesford, Fyansford, Stonehaven Landcare Group Response to CoGG Amendment C 395 –  
Western Growth Area Framework Plan Summary – March 2019**

- **Preamble**

While we have accepted the inevitable need for additional residential growth, the Western Geelong Growth Area Framework Plan Summary, March 2019, continues to be a work in progress, appearing to be generally a well-researched, if somewhat idealistic, document.

The purpose of this submission is to reinforce our concerns about the protection of the natural environmental assets in the region, an aspiration which would appear impossible to achieve on 5331 hectares with more than 40,000 anticipated dwellings and an anticipated population of 112,000.

What immediately comes to mind is 15,000 or thereabouts extra cats and dogs, a number of new roads bordering green corridors, lots of native animal road kill, the whittling away of habitat for flora and fauna and the diminution of the very biodiversity the document claims it is protecting and enhancing.

Even if there are enough green areas to support public health and recreation, we must all realise that the proposed development will diminish the already fragile remnants of grassy woodland in the area and the life it supports. It also intrudes into valuable agricultural land, part of the vital food bowl for Geelong and Melbourne.

See <https://phys.org › Biology › Ecology>

See <https://blog.csiro.au/invasive-species-are-australias-number-one-extinction-threat/>

**In Batesford there are six areas of environmental significance** - the Moorabool River itself, the Dog Rocks Flora and Fauna Sanctuary, (privately owned and covenanted with Trust for Nature), The Dog Rocks Reserve, (owned by Trust for Nature), the adjacent Honey Woodland, (privately owned), and the Moorabool River Reserve and Red Gum Reserve, (managed by BFS Landcare and local councils). We hope in the future to see a walking track and a protected riparian zone along the Moorabool River from the Brisbane Ranges to the Barwon River in Geelong .

- **Environment – Biodiversity - Biolinks**

These are regarded as valuable natural assets in the area. **The Geelong Landcare Network and its member groups, including BFS Landcare, are engaging in large scale biodiversity plantings across the Geelong regions rural landscapes, linking and bridging remnant grassy woodlands to areas of high conservation.** In 2018 with assistance from the Geelong Landcare Network, BFS Landcare, together with Maude Landcare, received a three year Biodiversity On-ground Action Grant from DELWP. This aims to support the management of the Dog Rocks Flora and Fauna Sanctuary, an extensive bird survey and the extension of the Honey Woodland biolink along the eastern edge of Dog Rocks Rd. at Batesford.

**Currently 4000 hectares of land are being lost every year to development in Victoria.** The protection of the integrity of the Moorabool River and these Reserves, recognised for their diverse

and numerous birdlife and old growth nesting trees, is of vital importance to the protection of biodiversity and the survival and sustainability of native flora and fauna in the South West Victorian region. Whilst it is positive that offsets will be within the growth area the old growth trees must be retained. In the future due to climate change offset trees may never reach this size . Wallabies, Koalas, Brushtail Possums, Black Wallabies, Gould’s Wattled Bat, Lesser Long-eared Bat, Large Forest Bat, Little Forest Bat must be added to the range of locally common species found within the six areas of environmental significance in Batesford.

These biolink corridors provide more robust and resilient environments which assist flora and fauna to adapt to climate change while providing alternate routes for wildlife movement and wider seed dispersal. **Physically connected bio-links are intended to bridge local, regional and State reserves and are being preserved and enhanced to maximise future biodiversity and to prevent habitat from becoming unviable through fragmentation.**

See [https://www.swift.net.au/cb\\_pages/biodiversity\\_habitat\\_projects.php](https://www.swift.net.au/cb_pages/biodiversity_habitat_projects.php)

See <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/.../8cbc8661b5926ee-BiodiversityStrategy.pdf>

**Fragmentation of habitat is recognized globally as one of the main causes of loss of biodiversity,** causing not only physical separation of plant populations, but also the decline in fauna (particularly birds and insects), which pollinate flowers and disperse seeds .

See <https://www.smh.com.au › Environment › Conservation › Wildlife>

See <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/koalas/koala-threats.html>

- **Map 1 from W. G. Framework Plan Summary – March 2019 - Employment corridor on east side of Friend in Hand Road - W3.2.4 and W1.3.2 and W 1.3.3..**

**Biolink Corridor - Connecting to the Barwon River.** In the Western Geelong Growth Area we would like to see roadside land set aside for wildlife-biodiversity corridors from the DRFF Sanctuary’s southern boundary extending south along Dog Rocks Road, then further south along Friend In Hand Road to the Hamilton Highway, then south, or south west or east, to the Barwon River. Corridors are already being planted by landowners on the eastern side of Dog Rocks Road and the western side of Friend in Hand Road. Currently this area harbours abundant wildlife. These corridors should be on both sides of the roads and extend 70 m. or more from the edges of the roads to the development boundary where fencing can occur.

In the Amendment the area bordering the eastern side of Friend in Hand Road is set aside on the edge of the housing estates, more or less as an appendage, for Employment, so as not to intrude into the ambiance of the future housing estate. Little thought seems to have been given to this road’s proximity and access to the Barwon River as a biolink corridor, connecting to the southern side of the Hamilton Highway, and Merrawarp Rd with an animal bridge or underpass.

- **Movement - Transport**

Native animals using these corridors require consideration for movement across country at points where these biolink corridors cross roads. Nowhere it seems is there mention of **under or over passes accessible for wildlife** moving across country and over the numerous roads which appear in the design maps, The Midland Highway the Hamilton Highway and the Fyansford-Gheringhap Road should be areas of consideration if the Council truly is serious about nurturing biodiverse flora and fauna, green spaces, parks or corridors stated as beneficial for human health.

Coupled with this, the use of Dog Rocks Road as a link between the Western growth area and the proposed employment hub to the Midland Highway, straight through the middle of two Trust for Nature covenanted properties, and the most environmentally sensitive areas in the area, would necessitate wide tree corridors and up to date protective fencing or virtual fencing for wildlife.

See <https://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/roadkill.php>

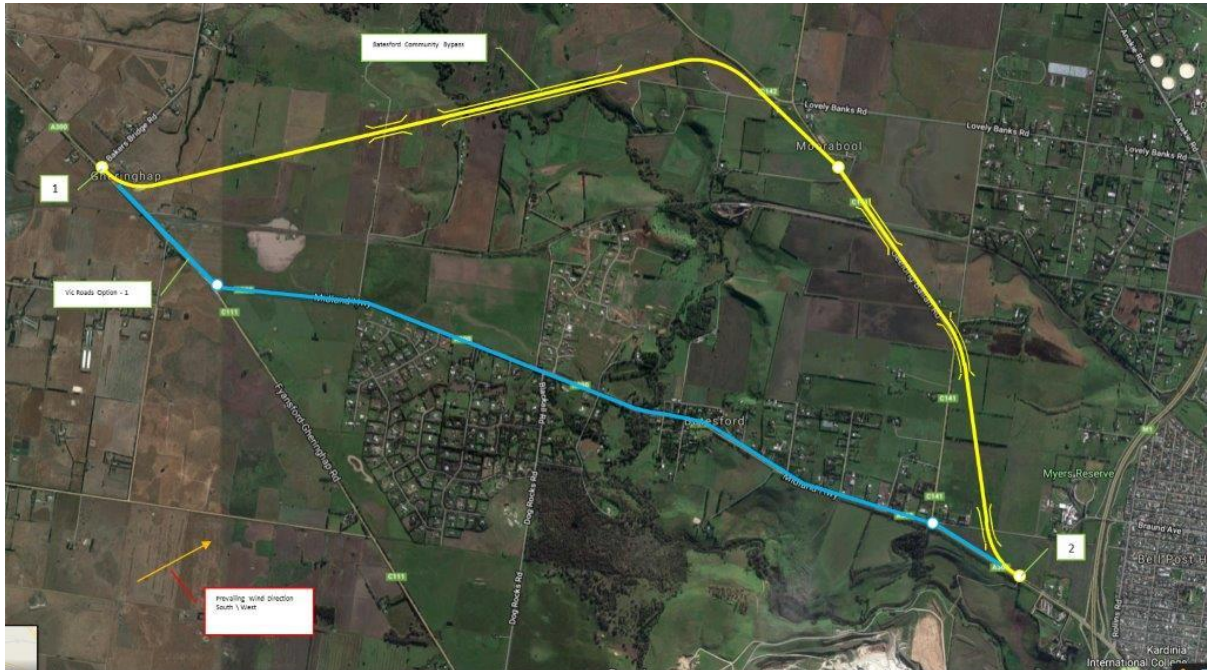
See <https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/...brisbane/wildlife-brisbane/wildlife-movement-solutio...>

See <https://dpiwve.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/save...tasmanian.../roadkill-project>

**W4.3.5 and 6 and 7** Coupled with this the Batesford Community and the Batesford Highway Action Group have been negotiating with VicRoads for 2 years to retain **the Midland Highway through Batesford** as an upgraded, (in terms of surface and safety), 2 lane 60kph highway in the township precinct. We have suggested an alternative **Batesford Community Bypass option**, which we believe is a better longer term plan and a much more viable alternative for future traffic projections. (An engineer's plan is available if you wish to view it). This would enable the Batesford Community and its valued natural environmental assets to be preserved intact. With this in mind it would be encouraging to see consideration given to the quality of existing communities in the region while CoGG is planning and promoting future ones.

**A PDF of the Batesford Community Bypass prepared by the Batesford Highway Action group is available on request.** It is currently being considered by engineers from VicRoads as a future option.

**See map of BCP on following page.**



Map of Batesford Community Bypass

- **Environment – Built Environment – Surrounding Areas - Neighbourhood**

**W2.1.4 and W2.2.1** Significant 200 m. buffer zones from the banks of the River to the boundary of any subdivision/development should undergo weed and pest eradication and be revegetated with local provenance indigenous species .

**W1.7.3** The management of fire risk is a reality which must be well planned in the design of roads, but denuding the landscape to alleviate the risk is not acceptable. Just as those who live along the Great Ocean Road need to understand the dangers of living in the forest, so must those living near bushland.

**W2.4.4 and 5** To reduce the threat of human habitation and housing developments abutting the Sanctuary , the Moorabool River and the other reserves should retain larger block sizes, perhaps 2 and more hectares, rather than the newly designated size block for ‘rural living’. Much of this land is floodplain and is subject to extreme flooding. Current ‘rural living’ beside the Moorabool River at Batesford in close proximity to the River should not be allowed to be subdivided into smaller blocks. In addition, specific regulations should apply to the purchasers of these properties regarding tree planting, housing envelopes, pet cat and dog and related matters, including mandated cat enclosures.

Due to the short distance between edge and centre in such the proposed developments, the naturalness of habitat in small and narrow fragments is also compromised by **‘edge effects’**. This results in the penetration of introduced plant species and weeds from surrounding land. A major concern is the impact of domestic animals on wildlife in the Sanctuary and Reserves, such as cats and

dogs, as well as the increase in rabbit harbour and consequently significant erosion and degradation to surrounding land.

See [https://www.researchgate.net/.../242075972\\_Habitat\\_fragmentation\\_edge\\_effects\\_and\\_b...](https://www.researchgate.net/.../242075972_Habitat_fragmentation_edge_effects_and_b...)

Newcomers to rural residential areas need to be educated about their responsibilities to ensure that their pets and their weeds are confined within the boundaries of their properties and laws devised and enforced for cat and dog management. Currently there is an enormous cost to native mammals from widespread domestic cats and feral cats in huge numbers, and problems with domestic dogs, either individually or in packs, killing both native and farm animals.

See <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/.../animal-management-plan.pdf>

- **Environment – Water W1.2. 8, 9, 10 and 11 and Aboriginal Cultural heritage W1.4.5**

**Quarry rehabilitation for a lake and the health and integrity of the Moorabool River.** We support plans for the rehabilitation of the Quarry with native vegetation, and passive recreation along walking tracks along the Moorabool from Batesford to Fyansford, and the identification and preservation of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. **However, the issue of water is becoming increasingly political as water resources become commodified and depleted. New ways of handling and delivering water are unfolding.**

We are concerned that the change in management of the water supply to the Quarry from the Moorabool River in order to create a huge lake will have serious repercussions for the health of the lower Moorabool. It is imperative that the issue of the bed repair of the Moorabool River is rectified. There is no guarantee the 'lake' will ever get to the level of the River. The extraction industry which has caused so much modification of the river must now ensure the lake is independent of the river flows. Work on this should be commenced now and not wait until the pumps are switched off.

There are significant issues to be dealt with in repairing or restoring the section of the River which has been diverted using artificial means. Speaking as a member of the Lower Moorabool Recovery Strategy Team, it seems problematic to expect a small and fragile river like the Moorabool to contribute in any significant way to increasing the water level in the Quarry to create a lake, especially with the unpredictability of climate change. Before this idea is further touted as a real attraction in CoGG's promotional material it needs to be further explored or redesigned with more realistic and frankly honest expectations in mind.

We are also concerned About the environmental damage to the River and the riparian zone which will occur with three proposed new bridges to be built over the Moorabool River within what appears to be about a range of 5 km. It is unclear whether the environmental impacts of these structures have been explored adequately.

See [www.ccma.vic.gov.au/admin/file/.../c7/Moorabool\\_SWP\\_2018-19\\_Final\\_signed.pdf](http://www.ccma.vic.gov.au/admin/file/.../c7/Moorabool_SWP_2018-19_Final_signed.pdf)

This link is the trailer of a small film being made about the Moorabool River by PALM – People for a Living Moorabool <https://vimeo.com/349830144>

- **Conclusion**

Balancing the needs of human habitation and the natural world which ultimately sustains us is becoming a significant challenge. The future of our native flora and fauna, and consequently the health of our country, depends on what we do in cities and on farms, as well as on the few remaining areas of land, like the Dog Rocks Flora and Fauna Sanctuary and the Moorabool River and surrounding Reserves, where the remains of our native flora and fauna survive and retain a complex biodiversity that is so important to our survival as a planet. . In the 2013 Dog Rocks Flora and Fauna Sanctuary Vegetation Management Plan prepared by Mark Trengove Ecological Services and Geoff Carr Ecology Australia 84 Indigenous vascular plant species were recorded – 56 of local significance, 24 of regional significance and 2 of state significance. The future doesn't look optimistic for the local native flora and fauna with 30 or 40 thousand households hard up against these environmental corridors, the last dwindling refuge for their survival in the area.

Felicity Spear – Secretary BFS Landcare.

July 2019.