

# **Skenes Creek Master Plan Report**

**Prepared for Colac Otway Shire Council**

**Reviewed by DHT Consulting March 2014**

**Reviewed by Colac Otway Shire May 2014**



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## Document History and Status

Reference number	Rev #	Status	Date	Project Manager
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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DHT Consulting Pty. Ltd. were engaged to prepare a Township Master Plan for Skenes Creek.

## **Revisions**

### **March 2014**

The project commenced in August 2010 and a draft plan was submitted to Council and others for consideration. Due to unforeseen circumstances the document was not finalised. Therefore some items in the draft report have altered. The document has been reviewed and feedback from Council Officers, Otway Coast Committee (OCC) and Skenes Creek Advancement Association (SCAA) has been included in this version

Reviewed by DHT Consulting March 2014

Reviewed by Colac Otway Shire May 2014

### **Site Meet 31082010**

- Michael Cosgriff (COS)
- Syd Caddy (Pres SCAA)
- Murray Champion (Sec SCAA)
- Gary McPike (Otway Coast Committee)
- David Turley (DHT)

### **Project Objectives (generally as per brief):**

- Township assessment re urban fabric and township setting and the natural environment, heritage issues, streetscape and public land issues, infrastructure improvements/needs, opportunities and constraints. Note: assessment of infrastructure needs is provided with limitation.
- Establish an appropriate framework and strategy for the urban design development that is in accordance with community desire and relevant strategies. Designs to be innovative, cost effective, efficient and sustainable in the construction and maintenance. Built form elements are to be sympathetic to the natural and cultural context of Skenes Creek.
- Comply with legislation ensuring access for all abilities.
- Provide advice on staging and prepare estimates of probable cost to inform decision making.
- The Master Plan is to provide for future township expansion to the north.

- Review of relevant reports including Apollo Bay Structure Plan 2007 Vol 1 & 2, Skenes Creek Neighbourhood Character Study 2005.
- Engagement strategy not included. Consultation based on community survey responses by Skenes Creek Advancement Association Inc. (09/10).
- All outcomes to be reflective of community desire and acceptable to Colac Otway Shire Council.
- Consideration of passive treatment of stormwater flows within public land.
- Utilization of local native species subject to community desire and fire risk management.

## **2. RESIDENT SURVEY**

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### **2.1 Skenes Creek Advancement Association 2010**

Summary of issues of relevance from the Resident Survey undertaken by the Skenes Creek Advancement Association during 2010. Noting that not all issues raised in the response sheets are matters that can be dealt within the Township Master plan. Additionally many of the issues raised in respect of development have been dealt with in the Apollo Bay Structure Plan (2004) and the Neighbourhood Character Study. There was some overlap between the responses for the categories vision and hopes, concerns, projects and other. The responses have been rationalised and arranged to best fit the key themes.

There were 35 responses which is a very good rate of return.

### **2.2 Summary of Responses**

Summary of response: Most respondents described a vision for Skenes Creek that included its natural setting, close community, proximity to open paddocks, bushland and the coast. Respondents clearly articulated a desire to leave Skenes Creek as it is and were not supportive of development. This is best described by R & C Lyons who wrote of their vision and hopes for the future character of Skenes Creek as:

*“A family safe [destination] that allows local residents and holiday makers to easily enjoy and experience the natural environment that is Skenes Creek including but not restricted to the beach, the ocean, the rocks, the Skenes Creek waterway, the Otway’s and the local native flora and fauna and the vast array of views that are on offer.”*

Quote K & J Demetriuos paints a beautiful image:

*“Skenes Creek is a beautiful place – glimpsing the green / blue ocean through the native trees and listening to the call of Black Cockatoos in the distance.”*

## 2.3 A - Vision / Hopes for Future Character of Skenes Creek

Theme	Priorities	Assessment
<b>Township Vision</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain quiet hamlet/village character</li> <li>2. Maintain coastal, 'bush-like' feel</li> <li>3. Preserve/enhance Skenes Creek</li> <li>4. Vibrant small town safe for children &amp; elderly</li> <li>5. Settlement (not town) integrated with the natural environment</li> <li>6. Retain low density non-commercial coastal /bushland setting</li> <li>7. Maintain independence for elderly</li> </ol>	The community clearly wants to retain the existing character of the township. The relationship to the natural environment, farmland and the coast is very important. A sense of community inclusiveness and regard for families, the young and the elderly is also evident.
<b>Community</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foster better Community involvement.</li> <li>2. Communication &amp; education to keep stakeholders up to date and involved.</li> </ol>	Reinforce sense of community. Community is robust and healthy.
<b>Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain town boundaries, no re-zoning of residential land.</li> <li>2. No undesirable development (ie resorts, commercial etc)</li> <li>3. Development should be 'green' - new homes + water tanks.</li> <li>4. Low level housing – 2 storey max.</li> <li>5. Single dwelling per lot.</li> <li>6. Fill empty blocks.</li> <li>7. Improve ratio of permanent residents</li> <li>8. View sharing</li> </ol>	Concern about insensitive development that overwhelms the village character is of great concern. A preference to limit expansion of the township boundaries (note: project brief requires consideration of extension of the town to the north). Respect for others' views and privacy regarding new developments. The argument for and against a shop is balanced.
<b>Corner store</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a corner store / café</li> </ol>	There is now a seasonal store/coffee outlet in place at the caravan park. It is a good amenity well supported by residents and visitors.
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preserve flora, fauna &amp; habitat</li> <li>2. Encourage native/tree plantings</li> <li>3. Nurture Otway forest/ocean relationship.</li> <li>4. Wildlife reserve for preservation</li> <li>5. No hasty tree removal</li> </ol>	Very strong comments regarding preservation of bush land and natural character. Need to balance these interests with fire risk issues.
<b>Roads</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain semi-rural environment. (ie gravel roads, trees etc)</li> </ol>	There is a preference to retain gravel roads. This view maybe contrary to a solution to many of the other concerns relating to dust, drainage and road safety. Whilst it is not likely that all roads could be sealed, it is probable that the best long term solution involves sealing some internal roads.

<b>Paths</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pedestrian + bike link to Apollo Bay</li> <li>2. Encourage walking &amp; riding, shared paths.</li> <li>3. Walk-able township/Pedestrian friendly (traffic calming)</li> <li>4. No footpaths</li> </ol>	<p>The concept of improving the walk-ability of Skenes Creek, improved pedestrian access across Great Ocean Road (GOR), and a shared link to Apollo Bay have great merit. These should be pursued as a matter of priority.</p> <p>SCAA strongly supports the link to Apollo Bay.</p>
<b>Camp ground</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain unique character of beach side camping area</li> </ol>	<p>Given its premium location close to the beach investigate maximizing the benefits of this asset. The campground is now open all year round. The campground is a DEPI asset managed by Otway Coastal Committee (OCC).</p>
<b>Speed Limits</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Max speed 30kmh</li> </ol>	<p>Speed limit 30km/hr expressed as a vision by a respondent. This was also expressed by several respondents as a concern. Reduced speeds through the residential areas should be pursued to improve safety and encourage pedestrian activity. Council advised that 20kmh is preferred for shared zones.</p>
<b>Power lines</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Underground power lines</li> </ol>	<p>The vision of Skenes Creek without power lines is an attractive one. The retrofitting of power lines (underground and/or bundled) reduces aerial clutter, reduces need to prune for clearance and reduces fire risk. Funding for retrofitting is available on a cost share basis. This should be pursued as a long term goal. Council investigated the project and did not support it at the time.</p>
<b>Other</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organic farming.</li> <li>2. New township signage.</li> <li>3. Playground</li> </ol>	<p>Organic farming is a matter for local farmers but the principle goes hand in hand with a community desire to live in bush land setting and reduce impacts on the natural environment.</p>

## 2.4 B - Biggest Concerns about the Town as it Exists

Summary of response:

Respondents expressed strong concerns about over development and expansion of the town boundaries. Concerns regarding large houses, view sharing, privacy etc were common. Concern regarding traffic speeds, pedestrian safety and condition of the drainage system were also prominent issues.

Theme	Comments	Assessment
<b>Over Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Over development – no infrastructure.</li> <li>2. New suburban-type houses.</li> <li>3. Small lot development.</li> <li>4. Commercial development.</li> <li>5. Development pressure.</li> <li>6. New developments out of character with village.</li> </ol>	<p>Concerns about improper development were very strongly represented. The desire to live in Skenes Creek is strong because of its coastal location. The limited supply and strong demand for property ensures prices are high. It is understandable therefore that new purchasers and developers need to get a good return for their dollar. This is one of the reasons development pressure is high. The community recently fought against a development proposal with some success. It is likely that more community action will be required to protect the local interest. The planning scheme provides limits and allowances for development but rarely do these ensure outcomes that are acceptable to everyone.</p>
<b>House Size</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Large houses (&gt;2 storey).</li> <li>2. Height limits + view protection (think of others).</li> <li>3. Lack of open space on blocks.</li> </ol>	<p>Refer provisions of planning scheme.</p>
<b>Sewerage</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Septic tanks flow into street.</li> </ol>	<p>Colac Otway Shire (COS) to monitor.</p>
<b>Views</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New houses should respect privacy and views of others.</li> <li>2. A desire for views overrides other concerns.</li> <li>3. View protection.</li> </ol>	<p>Refer provisions of planning scheme.</p>
<b>Roads</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unmade streets (dust).</li> <li>2. Overgrown nature strips &amp; weedy gutters (sight distance).</li> <li>3. Poor condition of some local roads</li> </ol>	<p>Roads within Skenes Creek are typically narrow. Most are unsealed. High rainfall patterns continually erode unsealed roads and dry summers create dust problems. Maintenance of nature strips is the responsibility of land holders. Local example is best method (if most people maintain their nature strips others will follow). COS could develop a tidy allotment and nature strip policy and send notices to landholders. Council issues notices to reduce fire hazards.</p>

<b>Traffic</b>	<p>Speed limits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 60kmh speed limit GOR.</li> <li>2. 40kmh limit local roads.</li> <li>3. Vehicle speeds Old Coach Rd.</li> <li>4. 30kmh limit local roads.</li> <li>5. 50kmh speed limit GOR.</li> </ol>	
<b>Beach</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unsafe beach access east of Skenes Creek.</li> <li>2. Car park poor.</li> </ol>	<p>Improved beach access (re safety and equality) is desirable. Note that it is likely that fewer designated access points are a likely outcome.</p> <p>Upgrade of the beach car park is under consideration.</p>
<b>Drainage</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open storm water drains (health &amp; safety issues).</li> <li>2. Deep gutters.</li> </ol>	<p>Roadside drainage issues are a strong concern. There are a number of alternative solutions that involve hard and soft engineering solutions.</p>
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coastal erosion</li> <li>2. Vegetation loss.</li> <li>3. Restrain dogs for wildlife protection</li> <li>4. Police "NO DOG" policy.</li> </ol>	<p>Preservation of local flora and fauna is of concern to many residents. Need to engage community on responsible dog &amp; cat control. COS local laws. Coastal erosion issues cannot be considered in this project (refer Otway Coast Committee).</p>
<b>Weeds</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proliferation of environmental weeds (Pittosporum, Watsonia, Cotoneaster, Agapanthus, Broom)</li> </ol>	<p>Weed control on public land should be a matter of course. Control on private land is difficult. Options include community engagement and awareness programs. Recommend development of a local plants, animals and weeds brochure for landholders. Enforcement in respect of declared noxious weeds is available under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1992 (Vic).</p>
<b>Fire Risk</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Fire risk and preparedness. Trees close to powerlines.</li> <li>3. Overhead power lines – bushfire hazard.</li> </ol>	<p>Fire risk management and community preparedness is essential. Community engagement and involvement in a community fire plan is a must.</p>
<b>Pedestrian Safety</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No safe beach access – elderly and impaired.</li> <li>2. Pedestrian crossing on GOR.</li> <li>3. Lack of safe link to Apollo Bay.</li> <li>4. Bridge access (GOR) unsafe</li> <li>5. Footpath Old Coach Rd.</li> <li>6. Poor pedestrian access on GOR bridge.</li> </ol>	<p>Very important to maximise opportunities for walking and riding within the township and surrounding areas. Link to Apollo Bay is on the cards (Otway Coastal Committee).</p>

<b>Public Transport</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited public transport to Apollo Bay.</li> </ol>	Public transport is available. It is always limited by demand. If demand were to increase then an application to the relevant authority would be required. Transport Connections is considered to meet demand. Shuttle bus service operates over summer.
<b>Other</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor reception (TV &amp; radio).</li> <li>Lack of public infrastructure compared with other towns.</li> <li>Overlooked by the Shire.</li> <li>No BBQ's or additional picnic tables please (go to Apollo Bay)</li> </ol>	This report cannot respond to issues relating to TV reception. Matters of public infrastructure will hopefully be addressed through this project. Some are against providing seating and BBQ facilities and would prefer the natural environment to remain unspoilt and to encourage visitors to go into Apollo Bay. SCAA supports this.

## 2.5 C - Projects to Improve Skenes Creek as a Place to Live

Summary of response: Respondents described many improvement projects including beach erosion, pedestrian links, Skenes Creek and the reserve, speed limits, fire risk issues, natural environment and drainage.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Beach</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beachfront car park is a mess (pot holes) – improve seal.</li> <li>Improve beach front erosion.</li> <li>Child safe beach and life guard.</li> <li>Maintain sea wall and veg at Skenes Creek beach.</li> <li>Boardwalk and dune protection.</li> </ol>	<p>Matters of coastal erosion cannot be considered in this project (refer Otway Coast Committee). Life guards are a matter for Life Saving Victoria. This project will provide recommendations on the upgrade of the car park.</p> <p>Car park will be the responsibility of VicRoads.</p>
<b>Pedestrian Access</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe pedestrian/bike access to Apollo Bay. High priority.</li> </ol> <p>Footpaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Old Coach Rd.</li> <li>Footpaths Ozone St &amp; Bass Cres</li> <li>Widen footpath on GOR bridge</li> <li>Footpath west end Vista Ave to Muller St – improved beach access.</li> <li>Pedestrian crossing GOR.</li> </ul> <p>Walking tracks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking track linkages (along beach, public land and private land via easements).</li> <li>All abilities link to Apollo Bay</li> <li>Walking track to Wild Dog Creek.</li> </ul>	<p>Pedestrian link to Apollo Bay is the number one priority and is strongly supported by the community, OCC and SCAA. Otway Coastal Committee is currently considering this.</p> <p>Walking and riding opportunities within the township, surrounding areas are to be considered as part of this project. Preference for off-road access where possible. Activation of local streets for pedestrian activity desirable. Safe crossing of GOR is essential.</p> <p>Improved beach access (re safety and equality) is desirable. Note that it is likely that fewer designated access points are a likely outcome (re dune and foreshore protection).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SC to AB bike link incorporating Tiger Lane / Wild Dog Road – tourism potential.</li> <li>- Shared trail to Wild Dog Creek (off-road safety).</li> <li>- Walking track through bush beachside from Bass Cres to Petticoat Beach car park.</li> <li>- Safe walking track along GOR west from bottom of Muller Rd, along service road to Bass Cres</li> </ul> <p>Safe beach access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pedestrian link to beach at Old Coach Rd &amp; Bass Cres.</li> <li>- Beach access/steps Bass Cres.</li> <li>- Safe access and improved steps at Shelly Beach &amp; Snapper Rocks.</li> <li>- Steps to beach at Bass Cres.</li> <li>- Under road beach access.</li> <li>- Steps to beach between Petticoat Creek &amp; Skenes Creek.</li> <li>- Upgrade coast access east of Skenes Creek beach.</li> </ul> <p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safe separation of walkers/vehicles on local roads during peak times.</li> <li>- Encourage riding &amp; walking for community health.</li> </ul>	<p>Comments OCC: The pathway/link appears to be on the hinterland side of the GOR. Previous community consultation indicated a community preference for it to be on the ocean side of the road. All planning done by OCC has been based on the path starting at the beach car park and remaining on the beach side of the GOR</p>
<p><b>Beach Car park</b></p>	<p>Extra bins at car park. BBQ pavilions &amp; tables. Seating in beach area.</p>	<p>Car park upgrade to be considered as part of this project. OCC supports upgrade to formalise the beach car park. SCAA does not support an upgrade</p>

<b>Caravan park</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace Cypress (not necessarily natives) on foreshore &amp; caravan park.</li> <li>2. Improve caravan park facilities (Shire should operate it).</li> </ol>	DEPI owned and managed by OCC. Cypress have been and will be removed over time. Improvements will be undertaken by the tenant with approval from DEPI and OCC.
<b>Skenes Creek</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pedestrian link across creek.</li> <li>2. Improve maintenance of picnic area.</li> <li>3. Creek preservation/restoration. Sustainable water plan &amp; community involvement.</li> <li>4. Continue upgrade of Creek Reserve/beautify creek with planting.</li> <li>5. Cattle fence along creek.</li> <li>6. BBQ's both sides GOR.</li> </ol>	Upgrade of the Skenes Creek Reserve to be considered as part of this project.  <b>Strongly supported by OCC</b>
<b>Signage</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Town notice board.</li> <li>2. Information sign (wildlife, beach access).</li> <li>3. Interpretation acknowledging Aboriginal history.</li> <li>4. Minimise advertising signs.</li> </ol>	Township signage to be considered generally as part of this project. Rationalisation of directional signs and Vicroads signs has been undertaken in the region. Entry signs are now in place
<b>Community</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include non-residents in discussions.</li> <li>2. Community education and communication plan (articulate vision)</li> </ol>	Community engagement to be encouraged. Ongoing.
<b>Fire risk</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Fire Planning &amp; Evacuation Plan.</li> <li>2. Reduce fire risk on roadsides (dead wood) &amp; power lines.</li> <li>3. Council enforce clearance for fire risk management.</li> <li>4. Maintain upper Old Coach Rd as fire track</li> </ol>	Fire risk management and community preparedness is essential. Community engagement and involvement in a community fire plan is a must.
<b>Drainage</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Swale drains ecological cleansing.</li> <li>2. Storm water drainage – no kerb &amp; channel.</li> <li>3. Storm water improvement (line t/drains with rock &amp; geofabric). Drains too deep. Underground storm water.</li> </ol>	Roadside drainage issues are a strong concern. There are a number of alternative solutions that involve hard and soft engineering solutions.
<b>Roads</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dust reduction (spray retardant).</li> <li>2. Improve roads but don't seal/unmade roads with dust-free surface.</li> <li>3. Seal all roads (dust).</li> </ol>	This project will consider options for the improvement to the roads within Skenes Creek including roadside treatments and drainage issues.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Improve nature strips.</li> <li>5. 40km/hr local roads.</li> <li>6. 60km/hr G/O Rd all year &amp; 50km/hr holidays.</li> <li>7. Limit speed local roads.</li> <li>8. Speed humps Old Coach Rd.</li> <li>9. Traffic calming (speed humps, roundabouts, one-way streets).</li> <li>10. Widen Bass Cres north.</li> </ol>	GOR speed limit is 60km/h
<b>Weeds</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Weed control.</li> </ol>	Recommend development of a local plants, animals and weeds brochure for landholders. Check with Shire re proposed weed brochure. Liaise with relevant authority if weeds are on government managed land.
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Re-vegetation / encourage native vegetation.</li> <li>2. Protect flora &amp; fauna.</li> <li>3. Street re-vegetation.</li> <li>4. Koala signs.</li> <li>5. Landscape water tanks.</li> <li>6. Provide residents with free native plants.</li> <li>7. Improve garden maintenance.</li> </ol>	Enhance local bush land character by reinforcing the use of local plants where possible. Indigenous plant list is on the Colac Otway Shire website.
<b>Power Lines</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Underground power lines.</li> </ol>	Undergrounding power lines is to be encouraged (aesthetic, vegetation preservation, fire risk mitigation).
<b>Playground</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Playground</li> <li>2. Playground at estuary</li> </ol>	This project will consider a suitable site for a community play ground.
<b>Other</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repeater tower for improved reception.</li> <li>2. Heritage preservation (Old Log Cottage – Old Coach Rd).</li> <li>3. Holiday rubbish bins.</li> </ol>	TV reception not to be considered in this project. Heritage issues and rubbish bins are matters for COS.

## 2.6 D – Any Other Comments / Suggestions

Summary of response: Respondents mentioned a small range of other issues that are outside the scope of this study. These are listed below.

Theme	Comments	Response
<b>General</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep it simple.</li> <li>2. Hard rubbish collection.</li> <li>3. Hope that some things can be done sooner rather than later.</li> <li>4. Poor planning has led to inappropriate development.</li> </ol>	Endorse the notion of keeping it simple.

### 3. KEY ISSUES: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS SKENES CREEK TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

ISSUE	Assessment + Recommendations
<p><b>Township Vision</b></p>	<p>The community clearly wants to retain the existing character of the township. The township is beautifully located. It adjoins the coast line, it abuts farmland and bush land areas and is set at the foot of the Otway Ranges. The location, setting and character are desirable and appealing. Preservation of all these characteristics will be difficult under the weight of development pressure.</p> <p>A sense of community inclusiveness and regard for families, the young and the elderly is also evident. This is a good foundation for development of a “community cares” type approach to community building, community education and awareness and co-opting input from community members to help with projects. Ongoing community development is to be encouraged.</p> <p>The vision for Skenes Creek is supported by previous statements in the Neighbourhood Character Study (Precinct 1 &amp; 2) (Planisphere) which were based on Community questionnaires and Forums in 2002 &amp; 2004.</p> <p><i>Vision for Skenes Creek</i>  <i>Skenes Creek is a coastal hamlet set on rolling topography at the base of the Otway Ranges within a broader, highly significant coastal landscape setting. There is a sense of openness to the town created by the spacious siting of buildings and expansive views to the coast and hillsides. A green wedge corridor through the centre of the township links the town with a vegetated hillside backdrop and is enhanced by regeneration of indigenous and appropriate coastal shrubs around dwellings and public areas.</i></p>
<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p>	<p>Reinforce sense of community through ongoing engagement. The Skenes Creek Advancement Association Inc. is active and robust. This organisation would seem the best vehicle to engage the community. Consider Council funding to support ongoing community engagement programs. Need to engage permanent residents and absentee landholders as well as seasonal visitors.</p> <p>Consider Christmas community festival (or other). Ultimately the bulk of the effort is left to a few. Volunteer burn out is an issue – set realistic targets, be happy with small achievements. Rule: ‘keep it simple’.</p>
<p><b>Development</b></p>	<p>The concerns about development pressure need to acknowledge that whilst Skenes Creek remains a desirable place to live and retains fantastic visual (and physical) access to the beach it will be subject to a high level of interest and development pressure. Planning requirements provide some constraint but rarely do the provisions of the planning scheme provide entirely for outcomes that are sympathetic to the site and meet the expectations of the community. Development pressure and high cost tend to drive outcomes that push the boundaries. The Apollo Bay Structure Plan (ABSP) and Skenes Creek Neighbourhood Character Study provide specific well founded recommendations to minimize development impacts. It is beyond the scope of this study to add to these. This report endorses them and reinforces them in summary below.</p>

The concern about expansion of the township boundaries may be misguided. Some expansion may alleviate some of the development pressure within the existing residential foot print. A new development may be able to achieve sustainability goals articulated by the community in the ABSP, Neighbourhood Character Study and the SCAA community survey.

The Apollo Bay Structure Plan (ABSP) (p43) identifies that residential areas are generally established in the lower foothills where slopes are less of an incline. The structure plan notes that natural hill backdrop needs to be protected by limited development. The structure plan identifies the open farmland east and west of Skenes Creek as having similar characteristics, few trees and manageable slopes to the township. These areas are the most suitable for future residential areas subject to servicing requirements for sewerage etc. The ABSP slope analysis ascribes slopes of 10-20% for much of Skenes Creek residential area and to the land to the east. It is likely that should development occur it will occur to the east. This is a long term view and subject to a rezoning application, other investigations and a demonstrated need. *Note: The Structure Plan does not map future expansion options for Skenes Creek.*

The ABSP (p 43) defines development objectives for township expansion:

- *Utilise natural boundaries, where appropriate, to define settlement edges and set limits to urban expansion.*
- *Protect the steeper part of the Otway foothills to the north [Skenes Creek].*
- *Utilise policy to define settlement edges where a clear and suitably located natural boundary is not available.*
- *Protection of the Otway foothills as a scenic, undeveloped backdrop to Skenes Creek (p 112).*
- Limit urban expansion to below the 40-50 metre contour line or 'break of slope' where the urban areas adjoin the foothills (p 112).

The ABSP (p 112) defines objective and guidelines for housing:

Objective - Minimise the visibility of any development in the foothills and ensure that the built form is recessive in the landscape context when viewed from the Great Ocean Road and other public viewpoints by ensuring that it:

- Is sited within the landform, follows the slope of the site, minimal excavation, limited elevation.
- Minimises vegetation loss.
- Is limited to below the height of existing canopy trees, if present.
- Utilises informal landscaping and new canopy trees for screening.
- Minimises the impacts of fences, property boundaries and driveways, integrate with informal planting rather than formal tree rows.
- Uses muted tones and colours and non reflective materials.
- Align driveways to follow the contours to minimise cut and fill.
- Minimises the use of paving or other hard surfaces.
- Places restrictions on the construction of tennis courts, swimming pools and other buildings and works that would require substantial excavation and use of retaining walls.

The ABSP (p 80) rationalises that given the existing low numbers of dwellings, the lack of substantial future residential growth potential in Skenes Creek and the close proximity of

	<p>the Apollo Bay centre would limit the potential for new retail or commercial activities to a convenience shop or local café (maybe seasonal).</p> <p>ABSP recommendations regarding rezoning (p 104):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rezone Skenes Creek to Residential 1 (from Township zone) when the sewer is connected.</li> <li>• The area is primarily residential and there appears to be no reason to allow a wider variety of uses as enabled in the Township zone.</li> <li>• No business zoning is required in Skenes Creek.</li> <li>• A Convenience shop or food and drink premises are allowable within the Residential and Township zones.</li> <li>• These are the likely and suitable commercial activities for Skenes Creek.</li> <li>• Introduce a Design and Development Overlay for the Residential 1 zoned land in Skenes Creek (when rezoned from Township) to contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Mandatory 9 metre and preferred maximum 8 metre height limit for residential development.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Exemplary design requirements for applications to exceed the 8 metre limit.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Minimum subdivision area to reflect the objectives of the ABSP in relation to medium and high density housing.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>ABSP (p 125) recommends promotion of Skenes Creek as a leader in environmental sustainability within the Great Ocean Road Region. There is opportunity to promote and incorporate Environmentally Sustainable Development practises into new developments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation of allotments and buildings.</li> <li>• Thermal mass.</li> <li>• Shading of buildings and outdoor spaces.</li> <li>• Maximise retention of existing vegetation.</li> <li>• Renewable energy sources such as solar power.</li> <li>• Energy efficient appliances, solar hot water etc.</li> <li>• Storm water capture, re-use, permeation.</li> <li>• Use plants which have a low demand for water.</li> <li>• Site management: erosion control, retention of vegetation, waste management, noise control, and sediment control.</li> </ul>
<b>Corner store</b>	<p>A small convenience store/coffee outlet operates in peak season from the caravan park and is well supported by locals and visitors. Ultimately commercial realities and planning permit approval processes will determine this outcome.</p>
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<p>Community responses indicated a strong preference for preservation of bush land and natural character. Additionally new plantings on public land are likely to be indigenous species because they are well adapted to the local conditions and will maximise habitat opportunities for local fauna. This is entirely consistent with the work already undertaken by Landcare along Skenes Creek and is consistent with Council policy.</p> <p>Colac Otway Shire provides the following information (refer website):</p>

	<p><b>Landscaping with Native Plants</b></p> <p>Colac Otway Shire is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful areas in Australia. It comprises of a wide variety of vegetation communities ranging from coastal scrub to rainforest and areas of native grasslands. It is important that with our expanding growth, we retain the natural values and landscape character of each area. It is therefore critical that Council, private developers and individual landowners give species selection careful attention.</p> <p>We encourage indigenous species to be planted throughout our Shire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By selecting local species you will assist the environment in the following ways:</li> <li>• Creating habitats for local birds, animals and insects</li> <li>• Retaining integrity of local plant species</li> <li>• Maintaining a natural balance in ecosystems and reducing pest plant and animal densities</li> <li>• Indigenous species are also adapted to local soils and climate conditions therefore reducing maintenance, including fertilising and watering, and they will grow at a much quicker rate than species that are not from the area</li> <li>• It should also be noted that there are many garden plants that have the ability to spread and will invade surrounding bush land and through competition for resources may cause a decline in native vegetation and native animal habitat. Refer to our environmental weeds brochure.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally the Apollo Bay Structure Plan nominated the following planting schemes for Skenes Creek:</p> <p>Informal planting in clumps and groups of a full range of indigenous species including canopy trees or large shrubs and under storey to reflect the original vegetation of the areas. This would range from typical 'coastal scrub' forms adjacent to the coast to the wetter forest of the inner sheltered areas of the urban settlements.</p> <p>Planting on private land is the domain of the land holder. It is recommended that the SCAA encourage planting of native species through community action and leading by example.</p> <p>Planting options need to balance these interests with fire risk issues in sensible and carefully planned ways.</p> <p>For information on indigenous planting and weeds refer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Apollo Bay Skenes Creek Indigenous Plant List Colac Otway Shire.</li> <li>2. Colac Otway Shire Weeds Brochure.</li> </ol>
<b>Roads</b>	<p>There is a preference to retain gravel roads. This view may be contrary to a solution to many of the other concerns relating to dust, drainage and road safety. Whilst it is not likely that all roads could be sealed it is probable that the best long term solution involves sealing some internal roads.</p> <p>ABSP (p 122) Reinforce and improve the informal character, accessibility and amenity of streetscapes in the residential areas of Skenes Creek, reflecting the distinct existing and preferred future character of the settlement in new improvements.</p>

<b>Streetscape</b>	<p>Design Guidelines - Neighbourhood Character Study Precinct 1</p> <p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To maintain the informal, semi-rural feel of streetscapes.</li> </ul> <p>Design Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the area between the building and the front property boundary is mostly permeable and able to support vegetation, including canopy trees.</li> <li>Provide no front fence, post and wire fencing, or planting instead of a front fence.</li> <li>Where side and rear fencing is required, use post and wire type fencing, less than 1.2m in height on the front boundary and less than 1.5m in height on the side and rear boundaries.</li> <li>Use indigenous species for planting in the public domain.</li> </ul> <p>Avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of vegetation within the front setback.</li> <li>Solid fences on the front boundary.</li> <li>Solid side and rear fencing.</li> </ul> <p>These guidelines are supported.</p>
<b>Paths</b>	<p>Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay off-road shared linkage is necessary. It is understood that the link is in development. The ABSP (p 129) recommended a feasibility investigation into a shared path to complete linkage from Apollo Bay to Skenes Creek.</p> <p>The concept of improving the walk-ability of Skenes Creek, improved pedestrian access across GOR, and a shared link to Apollo Bay have great merit. Refer Otway Coast Committee.</p> <p>Key principle: provide off-road linkages where possible.</p>
<b>Campground</b>	<p>The campground is now open all year round. Following suggestions that improvements to the campground focus on a multipurpose outcome for use by community and campers, OCC has advised that a lease over the park limits any multi-purpose use as it is dependent on the tenant's consent as well as consent from DEPI and OCC.</p>
<b>Speed Limits</b>	<p>Reduced speeds through the residential areas should be pursued to improve safety and encourage pedestrian activity. There is merit in reducing speeds on local roads and the township section of Great Ocean Road on the basis of safety and liveability. Traffic speeds cannot be determined by this study and are a matter for COS (local roads) and VicRoads (GOR). It is recommended that speed limits be addressed as part of a traffic engineering study.</p>
<b>Power lines</b>	<p>There is great merit in developing a program of power line replacement (known as retrofitting). The retrofitting of power lines (underground and/or aerial bundling) reduces aerial clutter, reduces need to prune for clearance, allows trees to grow and establish full canopies and reduces fire risk. Retrofitting of power lines (especially undergrounding) is expensive. It is necessary to implement a long term program and for Council to apply for funding for retrofitting is available on a cost share basis. Works are often undertaken in stages and as part of broader civil projects. Therefore it is necessary for Council to implement a power line retrofitting policy to ensure new works capture retrofitting opportunities. This should be pursued as a long term goal. Council has investigated this and did not support the project (at that time).</p>

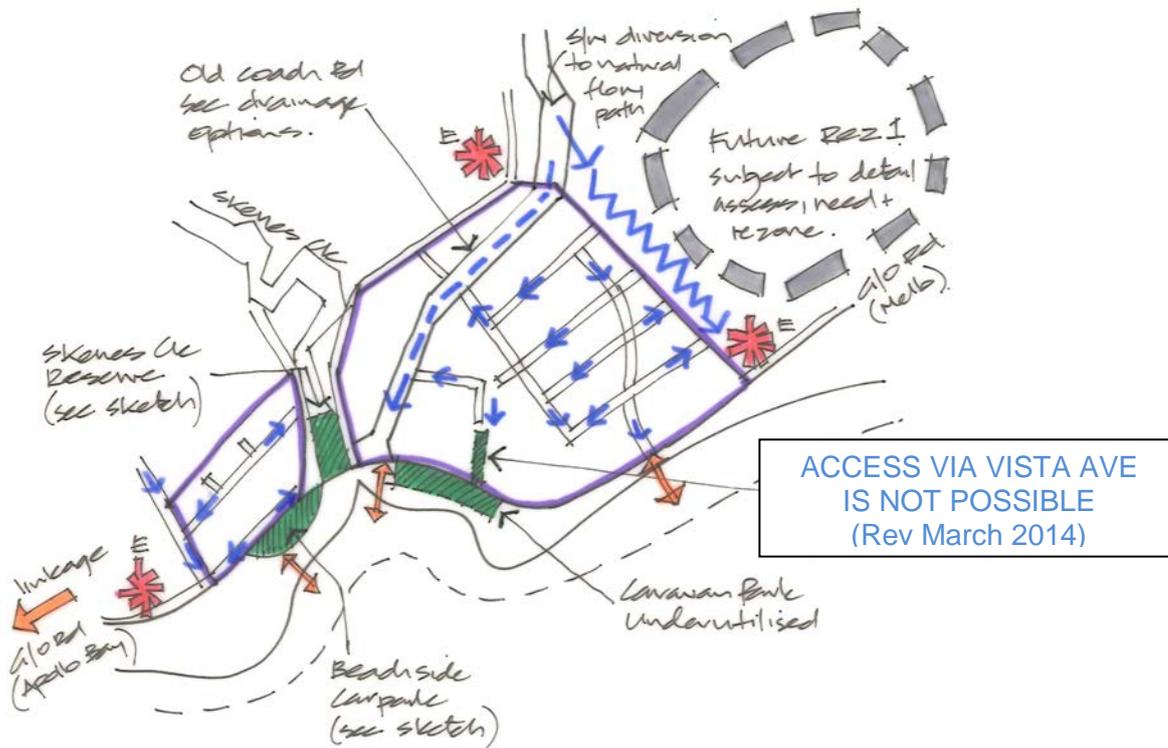
<p><b>Signage</b></p>	<p>Entry signs at 3 key entries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Great Ocean Road (east entry) - completed</li> <li>2. Great Ocean Road (west entry) - completed</li> <li>3. Skenes Creek Road - completed</li> </ol> <p>Community Information sign and interpretative panels to be located at beach side car park.</p> <p>ABSP Signage Strategy (p 115).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise signage and landscape techniques to signify the entry points along the Great Ocean Road and Skenes Creek Road.</li> <li>• Rationalise and coordinate the use of signage at entry points to reduce clutter.</li> <li>• Use a single sign only for each entry point.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fire risk</b></p>	<p>Engage community in preparation of a community fire plan which must include fire risk management, fire season preparation and actions for safe retreat. Prepare in consultation with CFA Community Liaison and Councils Fire Prevention Officer.</p>

## **4. SKETCH PLANS**

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- **Township Plan Skenes**
- **Creek Reserve**
- **Beachside Car Park**
- **Shelter Options**
- **Drainage Options**

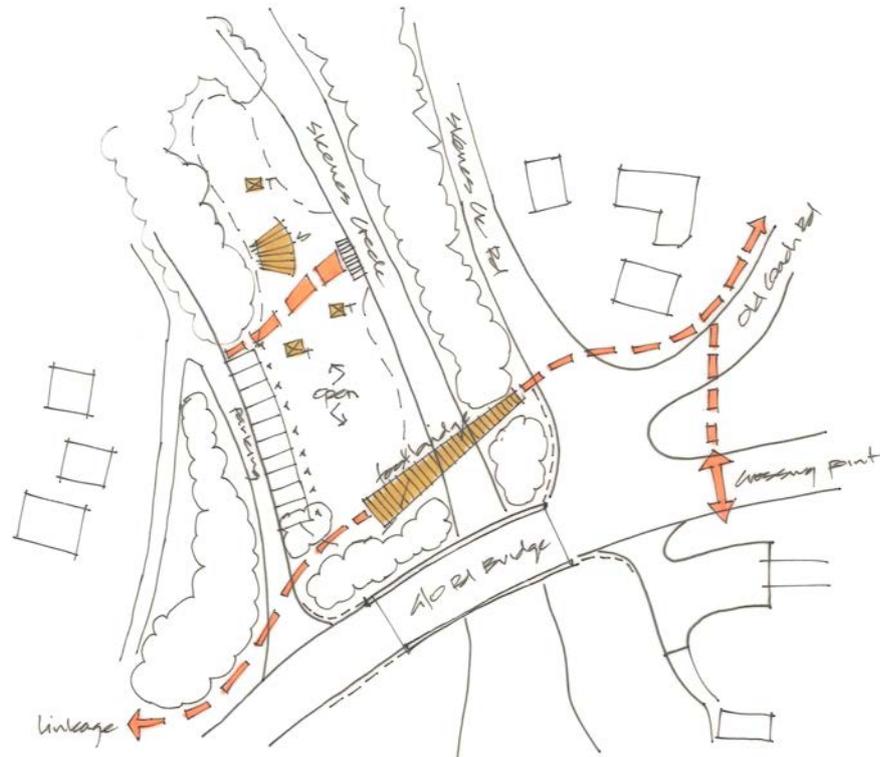
## 4.1 Township Plan



### Notes

- Drainage. Undertake township drainage assessment. Focus on soft engineering solutions. Divert overland flow clear of Old Coach Rd to natural drainage line on adjoining property – subject to landholder negotiation. Sealing of key roads may be an outcome of a township drainage strategy. Refer drainage sketch plans.
- Future township expansion shown indicatively and subject to detailed assessment and proven need for additional residential land.
- Town entries (E) shown indicatively.
- Key crossing points (Great Ocean Road) shown indicatively.
- Key public land: Skenes Creek Reserve (refer sketch)
- Beachside car park (refer sketch).
- Caravan park.

## 4.2 Skenes Creek Reserve



### Notes

- Safe pedestrian link across creek.
- Remove vehicle access from reserve and maximise open space.
- Provide roadside parking & bollards.
- Shelter and tables (refer shelter sketches).
- Barbeque optional.

Comments OCC: The pathway/link appears to be on the hinterland side of the GOR. Previous community consultation indicated a community preference for it to be on the ocean side of the road. All planning done by OCC has been based on the path starting at the beach car park and remaining on the beach side of the GOR

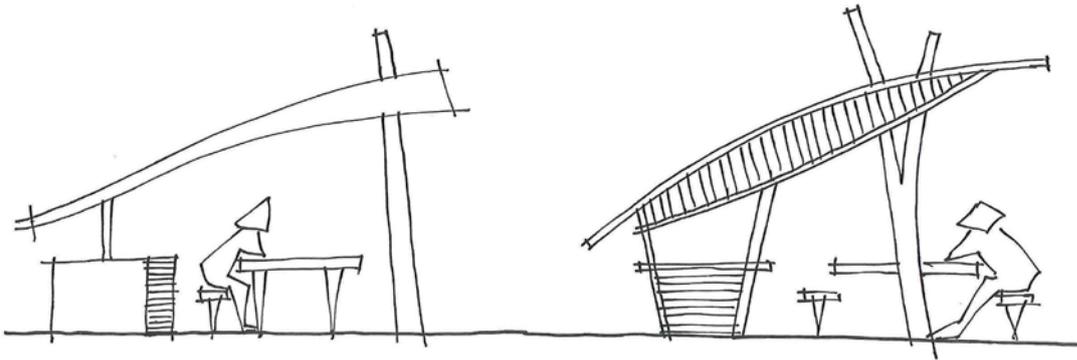
### 4.3 Beachside Car Park



#### Notes

- Define safe entry egress to sealed parking area.
- Define all abilities beach access.
- Linkage and landscaping to bus stop, phone and post box.
- Community notice board with interpretative information (local history, nature coastal geology etc.).
- Define grassed recreational areas to include shelters and tables. Refer sketches.
- Barbeques optional.
- Start point Apollo Bay shared trail.

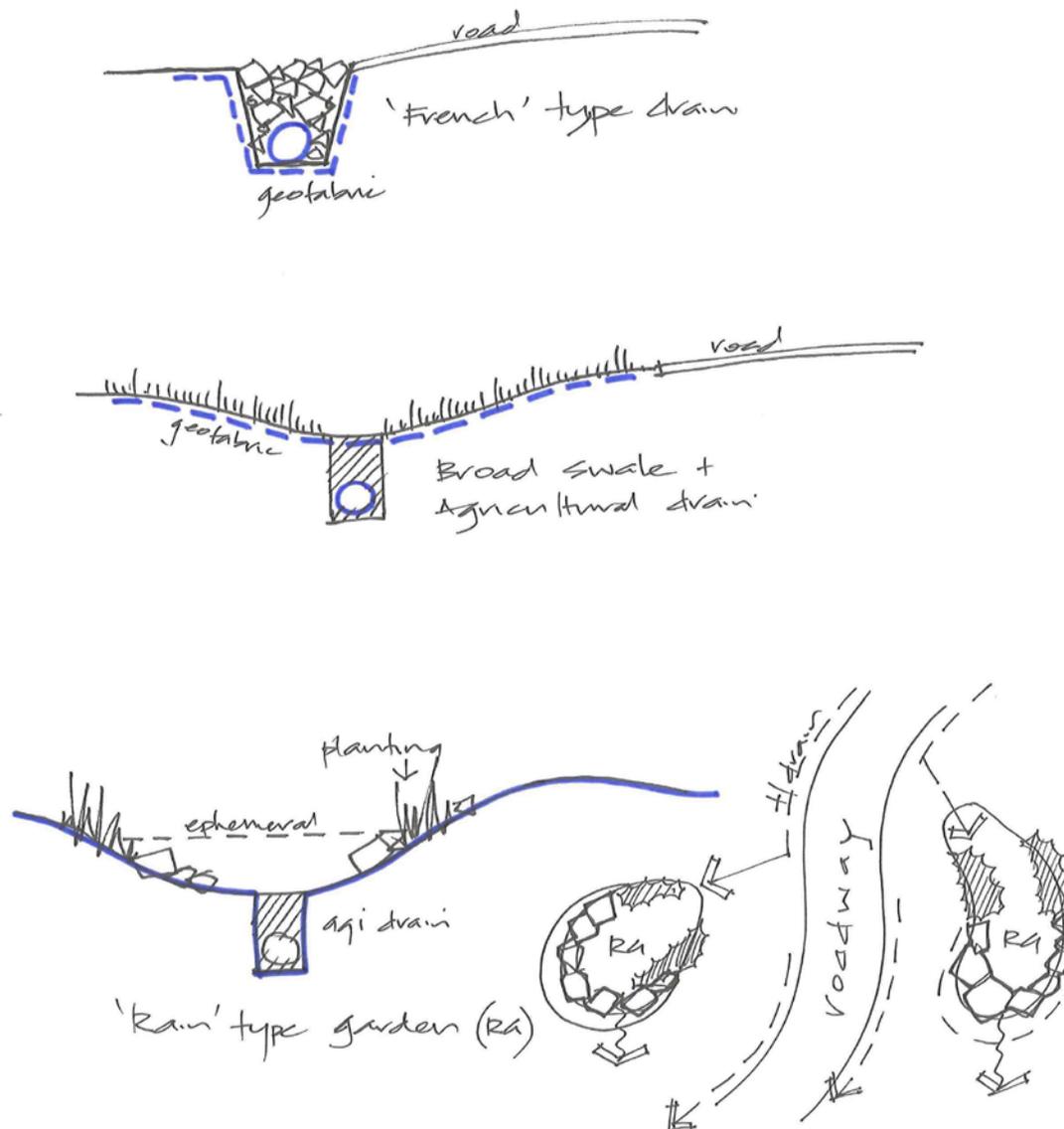
## 4.4 Shelter Options



### Notes

- Custom designed to reflect the natural environment (the coast and the bush land).
- Use vernacular materials (local stone, timber, galvanized steel).
- Picnic tables and barbeques.

## 4.5 Drainage Options



### Notes

- Soft Engineering solutions encompassing reduced storm water velocity, diversion to natural flow paths (if possible), rain gardens (or other), ground water permeation, swales and berms etc.
- Various solutions in combination (with some experimentation) is the likely outcome. Overall storm water strategy required.
- The idea of a storm water strategy has merit. Council has trialled a number of options and found that the French drain works well under normal circumstance but lacks capacity during storm events - COS.

## REFERENCES

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Structure Plan for Apollo Bay, Marengo and Skenes Creek (Volume 1 & 2).  
Planisphere. Adopted April 2007

Neighborhood Character Study Skenes Creek, Kennett River, Wye River, Separation  
Creek. Planisphere 2004/2005

Colac Otway Shire - Street Tree Management Policy. Rev 2006

Colac Otway Shire Website – Indigenous Plant List & Weeds Brochure