# ***Changing the face of Victoria’s birthplace and reducing energy costs for ratepayers***



Glenelg Shire Council

Federal Budget Submission 2019-20

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## Introduction

The Glenelg Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide this pre-Budget submission to the Treasurer. We understand that in sensitive economic times, it is essential to ensure taxpayers are receiving value for money from every dollar spent by the Australian Government.

The following two proposals and subsequent funding recommendations have been made with this principle at front of mind.

We commend the Treasurer and his Government in striving to get the balance right between being fiscally smart and encouraging growth and investment without hurting everyday Australians.

We believe that investing in Australia’s regions and rural areas is due recognition of the hard work and contribution to the national economy these places – and the people who live and work in them – represent.

In this forthcoming budget, the Treasurer has a wonderful opportunity to deliver the best outcome for all Australians, regardless of where they work and live.

We commit this pre-budget submission for your consideration and adoption.



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## *Changing the face of Victoria’s birthplace*

Tucked in the far south-west of Victoria, along rugged coastline and among lush volcanic farmland, the Glenelg Shire is blessed with abundant natural beauty, is a testament to human industry – the Shire is home to the Port of Portland, the deepest natural port in Victoria, Alcoa, Keppel Prince Steel and a host of many other key agricultural Australian businesses – and boasts a growing number of small and medium businesses, capitalising on entrepreneurial spirit and a rapidly growing tourism industry.

Above all, Portland, the Glenelg Shire’s largest town, is the birthplace of Victoria - as recognised in European settlement. Glenelg recognises, and is a proud supporter of, the Gunditjmara people, the traditional custodians of the land.

Portland Foreshore is the natural focal point for Portland and one of the region’s most popular visitor destinations. Less than 250 metres from the central shopping precinct in Percy Street, the foreshore offers open lawns and park space, beaches, boat ramps, play equipment and a skate park. The foreshore is home to the Portland Visitor Information Centre and Maritime Discovery Centre and is serviced by the Portland Cable Tram, which travels through the foreshore lawns.

While the precinct is an extremely popular recreational space for local families and visitors, access to many parts of the foreshore is poor. Currently beach and playground is accessed by uneven informal tracks worn across grass areas by pedestrian traffic; play equipment is inaccessible to children, parents and grandparents using a wheelchair, pram or other mobility aid; there is a lack of properly constructed disabled parking places; and park furniture, picnic tables and barbecues are not wheelchair-friendly.

In 2016, Council received a petition bearing 2,240 signatures calling for the installation of an all-abilities playground and wheelchair accessible features at the Portland Foreshore under the Master Plan. In response, Council committed to the inclusion of an all-abilities adventure playground and accessible elements in the Master Plan.

Council has committed $1.252 million through its 2018/19 budget to allow the construction of the all-abilities playground. Funds of $1.7 million were sought initially through the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF), and now are requested in the 2019-2020 Federal Budget. This will enable the construction of wheelchair friendly hard pathways to link the new playground to disabled parking spaces, accessible changing place toilets and other foreshore amenities; boardwalks to provide all-abilities waterside access while protecting the shoreline from further degradation; and properly constructed car parking and vehicle access points that afford easy access to the foreshore.

An extensive independent economic impact and cost benefit analysis has been undertaken for the entire Portland Foreshore Precinct Master Plan. This analysis has been adapted to provide an estimate of the economic benefits the current project will deliver to the region. These are laid out in detail within the costs table in the supporting document. In brief, the benefits to the economy are manifest: Forecasts show an additional forty cents in economic activity for every dollar spent on construction of community infrastructure along the Portland Foreshore. The application of this multiplier to the current $2.7 million project shows an expected increase in economic activity of around $3.8 million. For every $1 million spent building community infrastructure in Glenelg Shire, 2.07 job are created. It is estimated that the current project will generate an additional 5.6 jobs during the construction phase.

The project submission has undergone extraordinary consultation and subsequently garnered huge support among the community. It provides critical disability services, recognises and includes indigenous relationships to traditional waters and lands. Colourful bathing boxes will return once more to the foreshore – a fond memory for many Glenelg families.

The development of the foreshore, and the ongoing commitment to realise the Master Plan, will provide a great boost to the tourism industry, currently underpinned by the nation’s best recreational sportfishing.

We commit this pre-budget submission for your consideration and adoption. We believe these recommendations, if adopted, will provide a much needed economic, cultural and community benefits for all those who live in, or visit, our wonderful part of this country.

The full Portland All-Abilities Foreshore Development application is attached, labelled Appendix A.

**Recommendation: That the Federal Government demonstrate its commitment to Victoria’s birthplace. and to building stronger regional centres, by allocating $1.7 towards the Portland Foreshore Development6**

## *Delivering better financial outcomes for ratepayers through a new and innovative energy project*

The Glenelg Shire has a proud agricultural, transport and primary production history, and is home to Alcoa – which is the largest consumer of brown coal energy in Victoria. It is also the home of Port of Portland, an extremely busy port which is the largest exporter of woodchips in the world, and Keppel Prince Steel, among many other key Australian agribusiness companies.

As the nature of work changes, global markets tighten and industries move to a more competitive footing, the Glenelg Shire is always looking for ways to diversify and ensure the future economic stability of the region. This includes pathways to reducing the energy cost burden on ratepayers, business and the operation of council assets.

The Glenelg Shire has long been recognised as an ideal region for renewable energy investment. Portland and its surrounds host multiple successful wind farms, and local industries have thrived under this investment.

Glenelg also has a large and thriving sustainable logging industry – including the nation’s largest continuous forest plantation, and through this industry a unique opportunity arises.

In order to meet key objectives of the Portland Renewable Energy Project, a strategy for attracting renewable investment has been developed and the GSC has focussed on bioenergy - the production of energy using biomass materials, which are the by-products of agricultural, food and forestry industries. Portland has abundant waste material, primarily wood waste from the forestry industry.

According to the CSIRO, bioenergy currently accounts for just 0.9 per cent of Australia's electricity output — much lower than the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country average of 2.4 per cent. Australia is the only OECD country that has not implemented a large-scale waste-to-energy scheme to manage its waste.

There is compelling supporting evidence for biomass energy. The CEC Bioenergy Roadmap states bioenergy could provide 4 per cent by 2020 and between 19.8 – 30.7 per cent of Australia’s electricity needs by 2050. The Federal government itself mandated 20 per cent renewable energy by 2020. Strong policy and leadership, and commitment of funds, is needed to leverage this exciting energy innovation.

The use of biomass, or a waste-to-commodity exchange, to solve energy puzzles also has the backing of the the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) which has encouraged all government agencies and political leaders to actively consider using organic matter as fuel as an option to bolster the baseload energy supply. Early consultations with ARENA and the

CFEC have indicated they support this proposal. The GSC is open to, and would welcome, funding pathways provided by these agencies.

The Portland Renewable Energy Project (Appendix B) is a sophisticated and pragmatic solution to self-managing rising energy costs.

The project also has enormous regional employment opportunities, along with the eventual reducing of rates for constituents via the reduction of energy burden on council assets and business.

The project proposes to use this innovative bioenergy facility to heat and power many popular facilities such as the Portland Leisure and Aquatic Centre, Portland Arts Centre and the Portland Library. The Civic Centre is currently serviced through an out of date and inefficient energy system and is in need of replacement.

Once underway, the pilot biomass energy project is proposed to be extended across Australia to councils and local governments, via an education, training and scoping fund, referred to in budget table as Stage 2.

We commit this pre-budget submission for your consideration and adoption. We believe this recommendation, if adopted, will provide a much needed economic boost for our region, and empower the GSC in managing its own energy costs and needs.

**Recommendation: 1 That the Federal Government provide funding and/or partnership for the Portland Civic Precinct Renewable Energy project to allow the GSC to manage its own energy costs and assets.**

**Recommendation 2: That the Federal Government support the Portland Renewable Energy Project as a pilot program and provide funding for education, training and scoping so that other LGAs may access and set up similar biomass energy programs.**

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# Cost:

Table 1: Budget overview

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | TOTAL |
| Foreshore Development | $1.7m |  |  |  |
| Biomass Stage 1 | $8m |  |  |  |
| Biomass Stage 2 – education, training and project scoping to LGAs |  | $2.5m | $2.5m |  |
| TOTAL | $9.7m | $2.5m | $2.5m | $14.7m |

## Attachments (electronically attached, appended to hardcopy)

Appendix A - Portland All-Abilities Foreshore Development

Appendix B – Portland Renewable Energy Project

## Conclusion

The Glenelg Shire Council commits this submission to the Treasurer for consideration and we look forward to working with you to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes in the development and opened accessibility of Victoria’s birthplace, and a pilot energy program that can be eventually delivered to councils and local municipal areas across Australia, to lower rates and better manage the costs of council owned assets.