



Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change  
Minister for Solar Homes

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Ref: MBR046280



Dear Ms Mears

## GREAT OCEAN ROAD COAST AND PARKS AUTHORITY STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

I am pleased to provide you with this Statement of Expectations (SOE) for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority). To help achieve the management reforms outlined in the Great Ocean Road Action Plan, this SOE outlines my expectation that the Authority focuses on six priority areas in the performance of its functions:

1. Cultural competency and self-determination
2. Transformation and transition of the Authority to its end state
3. Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks protection
4. Community engagement
5. Visitor experience
6. Financial sustainability.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, this SOE should be made publicly available on the Authority's website within fourteen days.

### Ministerial Expectations

This SOE applies from the date of issue and remains in effect until 31 December 2024, or until otherwise amended. I expect you to apply these priorities in the performance of your role as Chair of the Authority's Board.

As the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I am responsible for administering the *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020* (the Act), *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Act 2021* (Amendment Act), *Crown Land Reserves Act 1978* (CLR Act), the *Conservation Forest and Lands Act 1987*, the *National Parks Act 1975* and other public land legislation. This SOE should be read within the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in those Acts, together with the Victorian Government's commitment to protect the iconic coast and parks as the one integrated and living entity by establishing the Authority as the dedicated parks manager.

By establishing the Authority in its current form as outlined in the Act, it is the Victorian Government's intention that Amendment Act will enable the Authority's transformation into a dedicated parks and public land manager for the iconic Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks. I expect the Authority to reach its end-state by 1 November 2025.

I expect you to remain focused on this core task of the Board, to transform the Authority's functions and capabilities, and to transition the Authority to its (ongoing) end-state as a park management authority. I expect the Authority to provide me with a written report of your performance against this SOE every two months.

## **1. Cultural competency and advancing Aboriginal self-determination**

Building the cultural competence of all board members and staff is fundamental to the care and management of public land, and a priority for the Board. It is my expectation that the Authority will engage the recognised Traditional Owner groups for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC), to advise it, and to support development of the Authority's cultural competency. This includes, but is not limited to:

- building the cultural competency of board members and staff including both cultural awareness and cultural safety training;
- providing a culturally safe workplace; and
- supporting Aboriginal staff to advance and develop in their roles and as leaders both within the Authority and the broader community.

I expect Authority Board members and staff to work with the EMAC and WTOAC in a respectful and meaningful way to:

- advance timely, respectful, and culturally sensitive collaboration with their communities;
- acknowledge and protect Aboriginal tangible and intangible cultural values;
- involve the Traditional Owners in the integration of their traditional ecological knowledge and land management practices into the management of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks;
- realise opportunities to develop shared economic benefits;
- provide quarterly updates to the EMAC and WTOAC Boards on activities that impact on their stewardship of Country and decisions that have been made with the appropriate Registered Aboriginal Party involvement and consent;
- 'rewire' systems, processes and practices that create barriers to the self-determination of the Traditional Owners; and
- advance Aboriginal self-determination consistent with the whole-of-government commitments set out in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework.

I also expect Authority Board members and staff to properly acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country in all internal and external forums and communications.

## **2. Transformation and transition of the Authority to its end-state**

Transforming the Authority's functions and capabilities to enable it to transition to its (ongoing) end state by 1 November 2025 is a core priority for the Authority. This is a significant and complex change management process that requires dedicated focus and expert support over several years. The success of the Great Ocean Road management reforms are dependent on this work being done well.

I expect you to work collaboratively with DELWP and Parks Victoria to develop a transformation plan and transition the Authority to its end-state by 1 November 2025. I request that you provide me with a draft of this transformation plan by 30 May 2022, complete with the interim milestones that you will report progress against as part of your bimonthly report.

Your transformation and transition will be overseen by an Executive Steering Group (with membership including DELWP executives, the Authority CEO and Parks Victoria CEO) as part of the Great Ocean Road Management Reform program governance arrangements, which reports to me.

DELWP will lead the transfer of public land management responsibility to the Authority in collaboration with the Authority and current land managers. The Authority will need to build the capability and capacity to take on the broader range of public land types, including land managed under the *National Parks Act 1975*.

### **3. Great Ocean Road coast and parks protection**

The Authority's primary purpose as a parks and public land manager is enshrined in the Act. Whilst the Act currently provides only for the Authority's appointment as a committee of management for Crown land reserves, the enabling Amendment Act significantly broadens the Authority's role to include public land of all types within the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks including National Parks.

I expect the Authority will protect, conserve, enhance and manage the public land and assets that it manages, consistent with the obligations and intent of the underlying legislation that provides the legal basis for the control and management, and for the benefit of future generations. This includes all Victorian Environmental Advisory Council recommendations that have been accepted by the Victorian Government, even if the public land administrative details have not been updated.

I expect you to develop a plan for the management and enhancement of the parks and public land that is to be transferred to you to manage under the Amendment Act. This is to include developing a coordinated approach to environmentally sustainable visitation of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

I expect you to work in partnership with the Traditional Owners of Country as they take control of their own destiny, providing meaningful, tangible, opportunities for the Traditional Owners to implement their Country Plans and to heal country.

To ensure accountability and transparency in the Authority's performance in protecting the iconic coast and parks, the Act requires the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability to periodically review and report publicly on the condition of the natural environment of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

### **4. Community engagement**

It is a requirement of the Act, and Great Ocean Road Action Plan, for the Authority to engage with local communities. I expect the Authority to establish and maintain formal structures for regular and ongoing dialogue with local resident and visitor communities, and to enable their input into decision making. It is important that these structures provide for the involvement of all members of local communities, and includes a community consultative model as a key foundation for the way the Authority operates. By 15 April 2022, the Authority is to articulate and publish on its website a Statement of Commitment to the community, and a draft community engagement framework/strategy.

To provide transparency on all discussions with communities, the Act requires the Authority to publish on its website a report on the outcome of each engagement with the local community. I ask that the Authority publish a forward program of regular engagement with local communities, and any planned engagement activities associated with particular projects on your website.

### **5. Visitor experience**

Tourism is a significant employer and visitor expenditure is a key contributor to the local economy. Providing a world-class visitor experience is a key priority for the Authority. Improving the visitor experience will encourage visitors to stay longer and increase their expenditure in the region, improving the prosperity of local businesses and communities. I expect the Authority to measure and monitor the experience of visitors to land that it manages, to regularly report on the feedback, and to have regard to that feedback in planning to improve the visitor experience and public open spaces. To provide transparency and accountability I would like to see visitor feedback regularly reported on the Authority website, commencing 1 July 2022.

## **6. Financial sustainability**

The Authority has a self-funded operating and asset renewals budget. This provides the Authority with autonomy of its operations and the ability to plan strategically to optimise investment across the life cycle of assets.

The Victorian Government is committed to a sustainable funding model for the Authority. I request you work in collaboration with my department to achieve this.

Funding for major new capital works projects may be sought from Government through the annual State Budget appropriation processes and funding grants programs.

### **Relationship with DELWP**

I expect the Authority to have a productive and collaborative relationship with DELWP so it can properly support me to perform my functions, including in the administration of the Act and Amendment Act, the various public land Acts, and the governance and oversight of the performance of the Authority.

The *Public Administration Act 2004* (the PAA) outlines the respective responsibilities of public entities. I expect you to familiarise yourself with the responsibilities of a public entity board, with particular reference to sections 13A and 81 of the PAA.

I expect the Authority to have a development program in place to build individual Director's contribution to the Board, and to ensure the collective accountability of board members for the performance of the Authority. To compliment this, I have asked DELWP to provide your Board members with a briefing on the additional obligations of public sector boards.

DELWP is leading the development of the Great Ocean Road regional strategic framework plan (SFP) in partnership with EMAC, WTOAC, and the responsible entities listed in the Act, including the Authority. I expect the Authority to support DELWP in the development of the SFP, to work collaboratively with the other partners, and to provide thought leadership in the protection and sustainable visitation of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks.

### **Your response**

I trust that this SOE assists in focusing your efforts in the coming years whilst undergoing considerable change in your functions, powers, and scale of operations. I expect that the performance evaluation of board members will include the extent to which they have contributed to the fulfilment of the expectations outlined above.

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this SOE on its receipt, and bimonthly written reports of your progress in meeting the expectations outlined.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lily D'Ambrosio', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

**Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP**  
**Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change**  
**Minister for Solar Homes**

28 / 02 / 2022

cc. Ms Jodie Sizer, CEO, Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority