

MORNINGTON PENINSULA and WESTERN PORT BIOSPHERE RESERVE FOUNDATION LTD

CHARTER

The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd (**Foundation**) adopts the following Charter. This Charter is not only a statement of the vision, mission and values of the Foundation, but an articulation of the principle functions of the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere reserve (**Biosphere reserve**). This Charter will guide the management of the Biosphere reserve and the observance of the Foundation's international obligations under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (**MAB**).

1. **Our Vision**

The Biosphere reserve will be a place where people attain an enduring relationship with the natural world, and contribute to the needs of society as a whole by showing a way to a more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable future.

2. **Our Mission**

It is our mission to lead the community to engage in sustainable practice. We are committed to:

- conserving and improving biological diversity;
- building and sharing knowledge by facilitating, monitoring and utilising research;
- fostering, encouraging and facilitating project partnerships; and
- engaging with, and providing education for, all elements of the Biosphere community.

Community empowerment and the linking of social, environmental and economic elements of sustainability will be at the core of our approach.

3. **Our Values**

We value:

- the intrinsic worth of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and acknowledge the need to protect and restore them;
- sustainable outcomes, intergenerational, cultural, economic and political equity;
- empowering people and fostering participation;
- individuality and diversity of opinion across all ages;
- co-operative networks and partnerships;

- promotion of sustainable production and consumption, using appropriate demand management and environmentally sound technologies; and
- open and transparent processes of accountability to the community.

4. **Our Functions**

As required by MAB, we will fulfil the following complementary and mutually reinforcing functions:

4.1 Our Conservation Function

4.1.1 Our conservation function is to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.

4.1.2 The Biosphere reserve contains biological values of international, national, state and regional significance. In terms of major ecosystem categories currently recognised by MAB, the Biosphere reserve includes:

- sub-tropical and temperate rainforests;
- evergreen sclerophyllous forests;
- woodlands or scrub;
- temperate grasslands;
- wetlands;
- mangroves; and
- marine ecosystems.

4.1.3 We will enhance the conservation of these biological resources by further integrating the management of the core areas*, where many of the high biological values are located with the protection provided by the buffer areas*.

4.1.4 We will encourage sustainable development and use practices in the transition zone*, which is experiencing enormous pressures from urban growth and industrial expansion, in order to further facilitate conservation.

4.2 Our Development Function

4.2.1 Our development function is to foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.

4.2.2 We believe that the promotion of sustainability in the Biosphere reserve is critical to future economic, social and ecological

* As identified in the *Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve (Stage 1 Nomination) Submission to UNESCO*, Paris, May 2002

continuity. We believe the region has enormous potential for fostering economic and human development, which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.

4.2.3 We will foster economic and human development that is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable by:

- creating partnerships with government, industry and the community;
- developing social capital involving information exchange, education, research, evaluation, communication and monitoring of the environment;
- supporting ecotourism, renewable resource development, sustainable agriculture, biodynamic farms, mixed forest plantations and bioceutical products;
- recognising that a single planning process cannot provide solutions to all of the pressures that human development places on the Biosphere reserve's ecosystems upon which people's wealth and lifestyles depend; and
- recognising that that Biosphere reserve programs will be used to achieve synergies and greater integration of data collection and dissemination, development of responses and promotion of a stronger commitment to pursuing sustainable outcomes through establishing a regional framework supported directly by the community. This community support is expected to enhance the numerous Commonwealth, State and local government programs already in place.

4.2.4 Our development function will more specifically be realised by facilitating and promoting the following proposed Biosphere programs:

- recognition of existing environmental programs (eg Landcare, Land for Wildlife, Port Environmental Management Plan preparation, planning schemes, National Park Management Plans, Seagrass Partnership) and recognition of the integrated nature of the Biosphere reserve in those programs as they develop and are reviewed;
- identification of opportunities for sectoral environmental management/improvement initiatives (eg Navy, BHP, Lysaghts, golf courses, boat clubs, fishing clubs, boat tours, caravan parks);
- identification and development of responses to geographical environmental problems (eg salinity, weeds, pest animal species, exotic marine organisms, mangrove/saltmarsh decline, sustainable fisheries, native vegetation - in the context of the 'net gain' principle);

- identification and development of research programs responding to gaps in scientific knowledge of environmental systems in the Peninsula/Western Port area, including post-graduate thesis topics with partner support;
- identification and development of programs responding to cultural and demographic needs and resources in the community (eg indigenous, aged, unemployed, underemployed, vigorous retired, departing youth);
- identification of 'Biosphere marketing' opportunities (eg wine, ecotourism, port; unique logo, with the name and logo to be the intellectual property of the Foundation, with use permitted under licence, subject to appropriate environmental commitments);
- identification of process for monitoring/auditing Biosphere behavioural commitments to maintain integrity of program;
- identification of benchmark/monitoring opportunities (eg enhancement of existing programs, integration of existing separate programs, state of environment reporting);
- establishment/enhancement of programs for individual/householder environmental improvement and management (eg responsible stewardship, recycling, energy efficiency, water efficiency through information, brochures, incentives, accreditation);
- promotion of environmental awareness through a website, signage (including prominent signage on major approach routes – 'Welcome to the Biosphere reserve'), partnering with biosphere reserves overseas with which common features/attributes are shared (eg elsewhere on the East Asian Flyway); and
- promotion of greater awareness and understanding of the history of the area, the traditional owners of the land and the impacts of European settlement of the area.

4.3 Our Logistical Support Function

- 4.3.1 Our logistical support function is to provide support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.
- 4.3.2 We are committed to supporting demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to regional, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.
- 4.3.3 Whilst acknowledging the value of the numerous existing facilities and services which support the values of the Biosphere reserve, we will work towards the development of additional logistical

infrastructure by facilitating and promoting the following proposed Biosphere programs:

- promoting the creation of a regional research institute, which investigates local, national and global issues of sustainability;
- networking of information via existing information centres, such as tourism information kiosks, libraries, community networks, newsletters, email and web sites with interactive access;
- accrediting programs under which land and water uses, which meet specified criteria for sustainability. This accreditation will be promoted for its marketing value in sales of products and services;
- establishing a public fund committee to attract significant funding to the reserve through grants, sponsorship and other mechanisms;
- investigating and promoting the use of energy conservation measures to enhance sustainable use of resources;
- facilitating demonstration projects and the encouragement of education programs that promote the benefits of the sustainable use of natural resources;
- encouraging the introduction of new clean and green industries that are consistent with sustainable use of natural resources;
- encouraging sustainable development of ecotourism opportunities as a means of increasing awareness of the synergies between tourism and the environment while expanding regional employment;
- developing a comprehensive set of regional environmental performance indicators, which allow measurement of improvements to the environment the Biosphere reserve and achieving widespread public appreciation of the significance of these indicators;
- developing voluntary partnerships with industry sectors to identify and promote research, develop performance measures and improve information dissemination, which enhances community knowledge and support for preserving important sources necessary for underpinning the economic development of the area and contributing to the State's economy;
- developing simple codes of practice covering recreation use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems;

- forging a close working arrangement with a 'sister' biosphere reserve overseas which has similar challenges. This arrangement would include exchange of expertise, development of training opportunities, and enhancing ecotourism (nature based) activities;
- establishing a global monitoring station, which forms part of an international network, and include climate change impacts;
- developing a comprehensive communication strategy to build and maintain community interest;
- establishing 'biological filters' and environmental safeguards to reduce the impact of pollution on core areas;
- promoting sustainable land use practices within industry, agriculture and tourism, leading to models of sustainable practice within the Biosphere reserve;
- creating a library to reference and house ongoing data collected in the Biosphere program. This material will be readily accessible to the public;
- identifying key factors contributing to environmental degradation and unsustainability; and
- operating a Biosphere awards program for business and community with a focus on promoting and enhancing the functions of the Biosphere reserve.

5. **Operational Principles of the Board of the Foundation**

The mission of the Foundation is, as stated above, 'to *lead the community* to engage in sustainable practice'. It is further stated that '*community empowerment* and the linking of social, environmental and economic elements of sustainability will be at the core of our approach'.

In striving to achieve this mission it is, then, the intention of all stakeholders in the creation of the Biosphere reserve that the Foundation will, as far as possible, be 'community driven' and be organic rather than hierarchical in its structure and culture. Whilst it is acknowledged that the directors comprising the Board must and will undertake a range of functions necessary to comply with their obligations under the Foundation's governing legislation (the *Corporations Act 2001*), it is intended that the Board will be facilitative in its approach rather than directive, except where necessary to ensure that the Foundation meets its obligations under the law, its Constitution and the MAB. The Board will seek to guide, support and resource the activities of the Roundtables which will be the driving force of the Biosphere. The primary resource of the Foundation will be the commitment of time, energy and knowledge of its members.

It is intended that the members of each Roundtable will largely determine that group's focus and priorities, according to their judgment about how they can best contribute to the achievement of the Foundation's mission.

6. **State Government Endorsement**

The Victorian Government is the state administration responsible for the management of the core areas and buffer zones of the Biosphere reserve. The Victorian Government endorsement of the nomination submission to UNESCO, through the State Minister responsible for the environment, was integral to obtaining approval for the designation of the Biosphere reserve under the MAB.

In accordance with the conditions of that endorsement by the Victorian Government, the Foundation:

- 6.1 undertakes to cooperate with the Victorian Government in monitoring the effectiveness of the Biosphere reserve in its first 18 months of operations (deemed to be 18 months after incorporation of the Foundation) and at 2 yearly intervals thereafter, using performance indicators agreed to by the Minister for Environment;
- 6.2 undertakes that designation and operation of the Biosphere reserve will not lead to State planning and environmental approval processes being overridden or constrained now or in the future;
- 6.3 makes a commitment that it will submit any substantial changes to the administrative arrangements to the Minister for Environment for further consideration.