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Statement of Evidence

Re: 1920 Geelong Road Barwon Heads

Presented by: R W Mason

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

Amendment C-159

16 November 2009

Reference 43578-001

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1. Witness Statement

Name and address of expert presenting evidence

Ronald Walter Mason, 60 Albert Road, South Melbourne 3205

Planning Executive at Aurecon Pty Ltd.

Expert's qualifications and experience

I have the following qualifications, professional certification and association memberships:

- Bachelor Degree Town and Regional Planning, Melbourne University
- Member Planning Institute Australia (PIA)
- Certified Practising Planner (PIA)
- Member Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association

My experience includes:

- 6 years as a planner in state government undertaking environmental, strategic and statutory planning assignments
- 18 years as a planner in regional planning organisations undertaking strategic and environmental planning
- 13 years as a consultant undertaking statutory and strategic planning projects
- A curriculum vitae is included at Attachment 1.

Statement identifying the expert's area of expertise

I am a town planner and geographer with 35 years experience as a practising professional in environmental, development and strategic planning in Victoria and Tasmania. I am familiar with development in coastal environments having completed numerous projects for government agencies and private developers. This work has involved planning coastal towns and development in Victoria and Tasmania including:

- Preparation of structure plans for coastal towns and precincts at Warrnambool, Corio Bay, Venus Bay, Tarwin Lower, Waratah Bay and Sandy Point
- Preparation of a Land Use Framework for Tasmania's East Coast
- Preparation of a Land Use Framework for Tasmania's North West (Cradle Coast)

- Experience with the design and development approval for residential and tourist developments on the coast.

Statement identifying any other significant contributors to the report

I am the sole author of this evidence statement.

Instructions that define the scope of the report

This Statement of Evidence has been prepared at the request of Minter Ellison Lawyers on behalf of Macafee Investments Pty Ltd who own land located at 1920 Geelong Road, Barwon Heads. I was requested to provide an assessment of the policy, planning and land use context in relation to the proposed inclusion of 1920 Geelong Road (the subject land) within the settlement boundary for Barwon Heads and to analyse the planning and policy context that the resultant development of the land would have on the orderly planning of Barwon Heads.

The facts, matters and all assumptions upon which the report proceeds

I am aware that the owner of the land, Macafee Investments Pty Ltd, has long-term aspirations to develop approximately 50% of the subject land as an integrated extension of the Barwon Heads Township with substantial landscape and environmental buffers on the balance, which will result in some 250 additional residential allotments being available for development.

I have reviewed the following in the course of preparing this evidence statement:

- Victorian Coastal Strategy - 2008
- Coastal Spaces Recommendations Report - 2006
- DSE VPP Practice Note: Implementing a Coastal Settlement Boundary - October 2006
- DSE VPP Practice Note: Urban Growth Zone – June 2008
- The Barwon Heads Structure Plan, Public Discussion Draft - August 2007
- The Barwon Heads Structure Plan - Adopted December 2007
- Barwon Heads Urban Design Framework 2003
- ABS 2006 Census QuickStats: Barwon Heads
- Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan 2006-2016
- The Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

- Council reports dated 28 July 2009, 11 December 2007 and 24 July 2007

I am not aware of any assumptions that I have made in association with this evidence.

Documents and other materials the expert has been instructed to consider or take into account in preparing his or her report and the literature or other material used in making the report

Additional reports and information that have been relied upon in assembling this evidence include:

- Planning Scheme Amendment C. 159 City of Greater Geelong Planning Scheme Update of Land Assessment for Barwon Heads – Fadgyas Planning Associates Pty Ltd
- Drainage & Services Report - Peter Berry and Associates
- 1920 Barwon Heads Road Coastal Vulnerability, Flooding and Stormwater Assessment – BMT WBM Pty Ltd
- Flora and Fauna Assessment - Brett Lane and Associates
- Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils (CASS) Potential 1920 Barwon Heads Road, Barwon Heads

Identity of the person who carried out any tests or experiments upon which the expert relied in making the report and the qualifications of that person

No tests or experiments were conducted in association with this evidence statement or relied upon in the evidence statement.

Summary of the opinion or opinions of the expert

Refer to Section 4 of this statement.

I have made all the enquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and no matters of significance, which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the Panel.

Ron Mason

Planning Executive

Aurecon Pty Ltd

16th November 2009

2. Background Information

2.1 Site Analysis

The subject land is located to the south of Geelong Road immediately west of Barwon Heads Township. The site has a frontage of 550 metres to Geelong Road and is bound by residential land to the east, a natural drainage line (former river channel) connecting the Barwon River and Murtnaghurt Lagoon to the west and the Barwon Heads Golf Club to the south. The land is gently undulating and rises to a high point in the central eastern part of the site. The land immediately east and abutting the site is developed residential land forming part of Barwon Heads township and further south, below the golf course, there is a strip of residential land running parallel to the coast. (refer to photo map below)



PLAN 1 The Subject Land (source:Google)

The subject land is substantially cleared and has essentially been used as a residential allotment for the past ten years (approximately), with a small weatherboard house centrally located adjacent to Geelong Road. The land has been periodically slashed to minimise fire hazard and a range of public and private recreation activities, including a cricket pitch and oval, have been established on the balance of the land outside the home precinct. A small woodlot has been planted in the northeast

corner of the site and thicker windbreaks and ornamental plantings provide a visual screen along Geelong Road. An artificial wetland occupies a low-lying area of land in the north western corner of the site and apart from planted windbreaks and a small copse of Moonah trees, the site is generally clear of over-storey vegetation.

Brett Lane & Associates has conducted a Flora and Fauna Assessment of the site, which concludes that there are no constraints to the land being used for residential or similar purposes.

2.2 Service Infrastructure

I have been provided with a Drainage and Services Report prepared by Peter Berry and Associates for the subject land. This report assesses the capacity of potential to service the land for water, sewer and drainage. I have relied on the findings of this report to conclude that the land can be adequately serviced.

2.3 Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

The subject land is within the Farming Zone in the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme. The minimum subdivision size within the zone is 80 hectares (Coastal Sands and Estuaries – Area 13), which effectively prohibits the further subdivision or development of additional dwellings on the site. An amendment to the scheme would be required before any development could proceed. Any such amendment would provide an opportunity to implement appropriate controls to manage the release of the land for a future residential purpose.

A Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) applies to the artificial wetland in the north-west corner of the subject land. No other overlays apply to the land.

3. The Issue

The issue that I have been asked to advise on is whether extending the settlement boundary at Barwon Heads to include the subject land at 1920 Geelong Road is appropriate.

In my view the best way to respond to this issue is to answer the following questions:

1. What is the policy in relation to coastal settlements and defining a coastal settlement boundary?
2. Does the Barwon Heads Structure Plan adequately address these criteria?
3. Would a settlement boundary that allows additional residential land set an undesirable precedent for other land at Barwon Heads and/or other coastal towns in Victoria?
4. Is there a demand for new development at Barwon Heads?
5. Would the inclusion of the subject land be consistent with coastal settlement policy?
6. Is the use of the subject land for residential purposes consistent with the orderly planning for Barwon Heads?
7. Do the proposed land uses on the subject land respond to the site and local environmental constraints?
8. Would the proposed use of the subject land impact on the amenity and character of Barwon Heads Township?
9. What options are available to manage the staged release of any additional residential land contained within a revised settlement boundary?

My response to each of these questions is outlined below.

3.1 What is the policy in relation to coastal settlements and defining a coastal settlement boundary?

The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 together with the Coastal Spaces Recommendations, the VPP Practice Note – Implementing a Settlement Boundary and the Victorian Planning Provisions define coastal settlement policy in this state.

Coastal Spaces Recommendations Report (April 2006):

- The Coastal Spaces Recommendations Report (CSRR) was adopted by Government in 2006 and its main findings are now included in the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008. The CSRR:
 - defines the role and function of coastal towns,
 - specifies spatial growth management policy for coastal towns
 - clarifies the practice for defining coastal settlement boundaries and

- defines the significance of coastal landscapes.
- Barwon Heads is designated as a “Town” in the Coastal Settlement Framework. The key characteristics of a “town” under the framework are:
 - a population of 500-2000 people
 - “...moderate to high levels of holiday home ownership” and is
 - “...more popular retirement/lifestyle destinations”

It is interesting to note that Barwon Heads already has a population of 2,994 people (ABS 2006), that is expected to grow to 4,207 by 2016 (Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan). The population of Barwon Heads also swells to 10,172 in the peak holiday season according to Council's statistics (Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan).

- The Coastal Settlement Framework assigns three growth management scenarios to coastal settlements. These are high, moderate and low spatial growth capacity. Barwon Heads is assigned a “Low Spatial Growth Capacity”. The remaining coastal settlements fall within a fourth category; “other coastal settlements”, which are the “no growth” areas on the coast. Within these no growth areas “*The objective is to manage these in relation to environmental impacts within existing limits of current development.*” (underline added).
- It is clear from the hierarchy of settlements in the Coastal Settlement Framework that the CSRR intends that there should be some growth within coastal towns that have a “Low Spatial Growth Capacity”.
- The subject land is contained within a landscape of “Local Significance” in the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study. This study was undertaken as part of the CSRR and identifies landscape types in all coastal regions of the state. It is important to note that all areas on the Victorian coast, which are shown as a state or regionally significant landscape, are also described as a landscape of Local Significance.
- The CSRR recommends a Practice Note for defining settlement boundaries and states that:
“The process of determining a settlement boundary should start with a strategic overview of a settlement's role, function and capacity at a regional level to understand the parameters within which more detailed planning is needed at the local level.” (p.23)

VPP Practice Note – Implementing a Coastal Settlement Boundary (October 2006)

The VPP Practice Note clarifies the purpose of a coastal settlement boundary when it states that:

“A coastal settlement boundary defines the allowable extent of urban use and development for a settlement. It is a fixed outer boundary of urban development and represents the future growth expectations for a settlement.”

It also states that a coastal settlement boundary should be “...clear and easy to justify”. I consider that the boundary proposed for the western limit of Barwon Heads is clear, but is not “easy to justify”. The fact that the boundary sandwiches the subject land between a cadastral boundary made up of more

than 30 small residential allotments and a more clearly defined, geographic limit to urban growth provided by the natural drainage channel connecting Murnaghurt Lagoon to the Barwon River, challenges the validity of the process that led to its delineation. The VPP Practice Note states:

"The location of a coastal settlement boundary should be established through a strategic planning process with a 10 year planning horizon. This process should identify the:

- *desired future vision for a settlement*
- *role and function of the settlement in comparison with other settlements within the region*
- *constraints on development such as topography, native vegetation, rural land-use activity and areas of environmental or landscape significance and sensitivity*
- *areas with susceptibility to flooding (both river and coastal inundation), landslip, erosion, coastal acid sulfate soils, salinity, wildfire or geotechnical risk*
- *supply/demand of land within a 10 year planning horizon and opportunities for future growth (if any).'*

I will address each of these issues later in this statement of evidence.

Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008

The Victorian Government's overall vision for the strategic planning and management of the coast is clearly stated in the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 (VCS). This document sets out the strategy for the coast in four parts based on a hierarchy of principles and states:

Decision-making should be consistent with the hierarchy of principles, which are:

1. *Provide for the protection of significant environmental and cultural values.*
2. *Undertake integrated planning and provide clear direction for the future.*
3. *Ensure the sustainable use of natural coastal resources.*

When the above principles have been considered and addressed:

4. *Ensure development on the coast is located within existing modified and resilient environments where the demand for development is evident and the impact can be managed.*

Part 4 of the Strategy defines the parameters for "Suitable Development on the Coast". This part of the Strategy also relies on the Coastal Spaces Report 2006 and incorporates the Settlement Framework from the Coastal Spaces Report. *Part 4 – Coastal Settlements and Communities* states that it is policy to:

1. *Identify a clear settlement boundary around coastal settlements to ensure that growth in coastal areas is planned and coastal values protected. Where no settlement boundary is identified, the extent of a settlement is defined by the extent of existing urban zoned land and any land identified on a plan in the planning scheme for future urban settlement*
2. *Ensure coastal settlements and growth are appropriately planned and managed by:*

- *supporting a network of diverse settlements as outlined within the Coastal Settlement Framework to provide for a broad range of opportunities and diversity*
 - *implementing and reviewing coastal settlement boundaries as part of the settlement planning process, consistent with the Coastal Settlement Boundaries Planning Practice Note, and having regard to the best available information on sea-level rise and climate change risks and impacts*
 - *implementing the Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study, State Overview Report, 2006 into relevant planning schemes.*
 - *directing residential, other urban development and infrastructure within defined settlement boundaries of existing settlements that are capable of accommodating growth*
 - *encouraging urban renewal and redevelopment opportunities within existing settlements to reduce the demand for urban sprawl.*
3. *Maintain existing non-urban breaks between all coastal settlements to support community identity, sense of place and limit urban sprawl.*
 4. *Avoid linear development along the coastal edge and major transport routes and within rural landscapes to preserve areas between settlements for non-urban use.*
 5. *Retain non-urban uses between settlements and protect visually significant landscapes, views and vistas.*
 6. *Ensure development is sensitively sited and designed and respects the character of coastal settlements.*
 7. *Ensure a sustainable water supply and storm water and sewerage treatment for all development.*
 8. *Promote the incorporation of ecological sustainable design techniques in developments, such as energy and materials efficiency and water sensitive urban design*
 9. *Target priorities for infrastructure and innovative solutions in environmental hotspots where the provisions for potable water and reticulated sewerage services are not present or limited.*
 10. *Promote on-going regional coordination and communication mechanisms to maximise knowledge transfer and practice around coastal change management and planning.*

The Strategy is implemented through Clause 15.08 of the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme and relates to the general state wide policies of the Victorian Planning Provisions, which are referenced below.

VPP State Planning Policy Framework

Clause 14 of the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme establishes the planning framework for future urban settlement and seeks:

- *To ensure a sufficient supply of land is available for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, institutional and other public uses.*
- *To facilitate the orderly development of urban areas.*

The way any future residential use of the subject land is able to satisfy these requirements is discussed in section 4.6 of this statement of evidence.

As highlighted above, Clause 15.08 sets out the State Planning Policy Framework for Coastal Areas in Victoria. The policy seeks:

- *To protect and enhance the natural ecosystems and landscapes of the coastal estuarine and marine environment.*
- *To ensure sustainable use of natural coastal resources.*
- *To achieve development that provides an environmental, social and economic balance.*
- *To recognise and enhance the community's value of the coast. To plan for and manage the potential coastal impacts of climate change.*

Decision-making by planning authorities and responsible authorities should apply the hierarchy of principles for coastal planning and management as set out in the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 and highlighted above, which are:

Decision-making should be consistent with the hierarchy of principles, which are:

1. *Provide for the protection of significant environmental and cultural values.*
2. *Undertake integrated planning and provide clear direction for the future.*
3. *Ensure the sustainable use of natural coastal resources.*

When the above principles have been considered and addressed:

4. *Ensure development on the coast is located within existing modified and resilient environments where the demand for development is evident and the impact can be managed.*

Clause 15.08 – Coastal Areas confirms the directions of the adopted state policies (referenced above) under clause 15.08-2 Strategies - Population growth and sustainable development in relation to the definition of a settlement boundary. The policy states:

“Planning for population growth and sustainable development should:

- *Identify a clear settlement boundary around coastal settlements to ensure that growth in coastal areas is planned and coastal values protected.*
- *Direct residential and other urban development and infrastructure within defined settlement boundaries of existing settlements that are capable of accommodating growth.*
- *Support a network of diverse coastal settlements which provides for a broad range of housing types, economic opportunities and services.”*

Clause 15.08-3 is also relevant as it requires

“Decision making by planning and responsible authorities should be consistent with... The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008.”

The policy direction of the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 is outlined above and discussed in Section 3.3 of this statement of evidence.

3.2 Does the Barwon Heads Structure Plan adequately address these criteria?

The Barwon Heads Structure Plan fails to properly analyse the justification and location for a settlement boundary in the context provided by the previously referenced policy documents and in particular, in accordance with the prescriptions of the VPP Practice Note. The plan assumes that “low spatial growth” means “no growth” and proceeds to rely on community attitudes gathered during the preparation of the UDF, pre 2003, to justify retention of the existing urban edge as the settlement boundary. Adjusting the settlement boundary to include the subject land would, in my view be consistent with both the vision expressed in the Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan (BPSP) and the UDF, which are adopted by the Structure Plan.

The Structure Plan focuses on arguments for and against the development/expansion of residential uses on selected parcels of land, including the subject land, without analysing the consequences of leaving the boundary along the existing urban edge. By adopting this approach, the Structure Plan fails to assess the visual and physical impact of the existing urban area on the viability of adjoining land uses and ignores the benefits of using permanent terrain and physical features to define the town's outer boundary in accordance with the VPP Practice Note.

The Structure Plan (p.8) actually acknowledges that the land between the drainage channel and the existing subdivided land *“appears physically capable of providing an expansion to the township”* but fails to identify that there are no impediments to this development proceeding as outlined in the Practice Note. That is to say, the land is not:

- flood prone
- affected by acid sulfate soils (refer report by Environmental Earth Sciences)
- subject to inundation under the 2008 VCS climate change prediction of a 0.8 metre rise in sea level by 2100
- a site of cultural significance
- a significant coastal landscape

I am of the view that the Structure Plan also fails to satisfy the policy directives in clause 15.08, which are derived from the Victorian Coastal Strategy and does not address key issues associated with the coast as outlined in the VCS, including climate change and consequent sea level rise.

3.3 Would a settlement boundary that allows additional residential land set an undesirable precedent for other land at Barwon Heads and/or other coastal towns in Victoria?

Barwon Heads has limited growth opportunities, being surrounded on three sides by water and the Murtnaghurt Swamp and drain to the west. This ensures that infill development between the drain and the urban edge is the only viable option for additional development in the town and does not create a precedent for further expansion beyond the subject land. The opportunity presented by including the subject land in the Settlement Boundary is modest in terms of the total land supply and available lots in Barwon Heads and will not change the character, hierarchical status or sense of place of Barwon Heads as a Township, which are important considerations in determining the growth needs of a township. Inclusion of the subject land in the Settlement Boundary will not impact on the outcomes for Geelong's major regional growth areas at Armstrong Creek and Horseshoe Bend because both these growth areas are separated from Barwon Heads by the adjoining golf developments and significant tracts of rural land that form part of the Connewarre wetlands.

The modest expansion of Barwon Heads that would result from the inclusion of the subject land is consistent with the approach taken in other coastal towns in Victoria that have Low Spatial Growth Capacity in the CSRR-Coastal Settlement Framework. These towns have proposed new residential areas beyond their existing residential zone as part of a Structure planning process. Included in this category are towns like Venus Bay, Tarwin Lower, Waratah Bay, Lake Tyers, Marlo, Indented Head and Point Lonsdale

3.4 Is there a demand for new development at Barwon Heads?

There is no question Barwon Heads is a popular choice for permanent and holiday living, which is evidenced by both a strong demand for new development in Barwon Heads and the low permanent occupancy rates for existing dwellings in the town.

In responding to this issue I have reviewed ABS statistics for 2001 and 2006 and also an assessment of the supply and demand for land at Barwon Heads prepared by Fadgyas Planning Associates Pty Ltd that was supplied by Minter Ellison Lawyers. Historic development and growth statistics show that on average, 45 dwellings have been constructed annually between 1996 and 2009. At this rate of

development Barwon Heads has only 5.5 years supply of land available for development. Once the available land is fully developed there will be pressure for redevelopment and increased density within traditional low density areas of the town, which will impact on the character and “village atmosphere” of Barwon Heads.

ABS statistics (2006) show that approximately 60% of dwellings in Barwon Heads were occupied on census night (5 August 2006), which confirms that a significant proportion of all dwellings are for holiday and non-permanent accommodation.

Barwon Heads had a population of 2,994 people at the last census with a total 1,820 dwellings, giving a permanent resident population density of 1.65 persons per dwelling. Since 2006 a further 152 dwellings have been constructed, which at the 2006 occupancy rate would add 250 people taking the permanent population to 3,244. The estimated additional land available for subdivision within the existing zoned township precinct is 215 allotments, which when developed will take the total dwellings in Barwon Heads to 2,187.

The historic rate of growth at Barwon Heads does not by itself justify the expansion of the township boundary. However, it does demonstrate that there is a demand for new development that is consistent with the VPP Practice Note. It also indicates that provision of additional development opportunities in the future may slow the rate of change within the township leading to a more acceptable transition of the town to higher density development forms that could impact on the village character valued by the local community.

3.5 Would the inclusion of the subject land be consistent with coastal settlement policy?

The inclusion of the subject land within the settlement boundary of Barwon Heads conforms with coastal policy because:

- It is consistent with the vision for Barwon Heads as expressed in both the Urban Design Framework and the Bellarine Peninsula Strategic Plan and does not alter the urban character of Barwon Heads as a “coastal village”.
- The growth opportunity presented by the additional land is modest in the context of the existing population and number of dwellings in Barwon Heads.
- The land available for development is strategically located in relation to existing schools, retail and commercial facilities and service infrastructure and is closer to the town centre than approximately 40% of the existing subdivided area of the town (refer plan 2).

- The settlement boundary would adopt a defined physical feature rather than untidy and unsightly rear boundaries of the small residential lots fronting Thompson Drive and Mooroopna Court.
- Additional land could be permanently reserved for conservation and buffer purposes adjacent to significant environmental features strengthening the environmental green break bordering the town precinct.
- The proposed development area is located in the coastal hinterland and is well buffered from the important coastal activity precinct.
- Development of the subject land would not constitute linear coastal development and in fact would complete the development of Barwon Heads up to its logical geographic limit, reinforcing the “island community” expressed through public consultation.



PLAN 2 Location of 1920 in relation to Barwon Heads Township (source:Google)

3.6 Is the use of the subject land for residential purposes consistent with the orderly planning for Barwon Heads?

Barwon Heads is well serviced with existing retail and community facilities. Planning has focussed on retaining a vibrant town centre and improving parking and access (UDF). The subject land is strategically located in relation to the primary school, town centre, arterial roads and other major infrastructure. Development of the land would not require additional facilities in the town and would strengthen the ability to develop an environmental green break and entrance to the town along Geelong Road. The marginal increase in dwellings in Barwon Heads (approximately 11%) if the subject land were included in the settlement boundary, will help improve the viability of local schools and retail and commercial businesses.

The long term impact of sea level rise and climate change will not affect the subject land and the availability of this land for new development and relocation of existing facilities provides opportunities to off-set potential impacts in the old town and riverside precincts.

3.7 Do the proposed land uses on the subject land respond to the site and local environmental constraints?

The subject land is an isolated rural allotment that has limited potential for agriculture because of its small size, proximity to urban areas and poor soils. The land was previously used for horticulture before land abutting the site was converted to residential. The impact of noise, sprays and dust would prohibit this use now that houses have been developed on the adjacent land. Grazing or animal husbandry would suffer the same impacts and would be further compounded by domestic pets (dogs in particular) straying onto the land.

The alternative, to use the land for future residential purposes:

- Removes the potential loss of amenity for adjoining residents due to agricultural activities on the land
- Provides residential development opportunities that can be serviced and screened from view by existing and proposed vegetation
- Creates substantial buffers to adjoining wetland and environmental precincts
- Provides a connection to complete the Round the Heads Trail proposed in the UDF
- Provides the opportunity to create a safe pedestrian access for residential areas north of Geelong Road to access the primary school on Golf Links Road.

The location of the subject land adjacent to the drainage channel connecting the Barwon Estuary and the Murtnaghurt Lagoon is an important environmental issue that will require special attention in any proposal to develop the land. The Brett Lane and Associates assessment of the site confirms the significance of this precinct and concludes that the maintenance of a significant buffer around the perimeter of the drainage line and wetlands will provide on-going mitigation to the development impacts, many of which are already present due to the close proximity of existing residential precincts. Appropriate mechanisms are available through subsequent development approval processes to ensure adequate buffers are maintained and development impacts are minimised.

I have reviewed the environmental reports prepared by Dr Mark Jempson (BMT WBM Pty Ltd) on the climate change and flooding impacts on the site and the report by Environmental Earth Sciences on Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils. These reports conclude that the subject land is not at risk from either inundation from rising sea levels or storm surge nor acid sulfate soils present on the site. Both these environmental issues are key considerations in the assessment of coastal land for development in the VCS and clause 15.08 of the planning scheme.

A proposed landscape that shows how the land could be developed in association with environmental buffers and associated community infrastructure is attached in Appendix 2.

3.8 Would the proposed use of the subject land impact on the amenity and character of Barwon Heads Township?

The subject land is located adjacent to the newest development precinct in Barwon Heads and has direct connection through existing road alignments for vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic into the town centre and other facilities. Principal access to the site would be from the Geelong Road, which provides opportunities for traffic calming measures on the approach to town. Restructuring the land as proposed to enable residential development on part of the site and the establishment of substantial buffers and open space on the balance, offers opportunities to:

- Consolidate and reinforce a green entry to town with substantial setbacks and landscape opportunities not available in the existing road reserve.
- Screen the ugly and untidy rear boundary presentation of allotments on the existing zoned limit
- Improve local facilities through the formalisation of the existing sports ground as a public facility and the provision of a possible site for a new kindergarten, easing access and parking issues at the existing site.

3.9 What options are available to manage the staged release of any additional residential land contained within a revised settlement boundary?

Before the subject land is released for development the suite of opportunities and buffers protecting the site and adjoining environmental precincts need to be progressed. In my view, the Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) is an ideal tool to hold the land for future use while issues such as the land available for development, the style of development to be allowed and the treatment and management of buffers are resolved. The UGZ was initially developed to apply to land ear-marked for future residential use within the metropolitan boundary. It has now been extended to apply *"to land adjacent to regional cities and towns where a strategy has been prepared that clearly identifies that the land is suitable for future urban development"*. (VPP Practice Note – Urban Growth Zone)

The Practice Note states that the UGZ has four purposes:

- *"to manage the transition of non-urban land into urban land*
- *to encourage the development of well-planned and well-serviced new urban communities in accordance with an overall plan*
- *to reduce the number of development approvals needed in areas where an agreed plan is in place*
- *to safeguard non-urban land from use and development that could prejudice its future urban development"*

The main attraction of the zone is that it allows land to be earmarked for future urban use and provides a mechanism through the Precinct Structure Plan, to manage transition from non urban to residential land uses. The precinct Structure Plan has a defined role in the UGZ. It is the key document that:

- *"allows the conversion of non-urban land to urban land to start*
- *sets out the vision for how land should be developed and the desired outcomes to be achieved*
- *determines the overall layout of future land use and development*
- *details the form and conditions that must be met by future land use and development*
- *determines the use and development controls that will apply in the schedule to the zone*
- *determines what permits may be granted under the zone."* (VPP Practice Note)

4. Conclusion

Inclusion of 1920 Geelong Road within the settlement boundary for Barwon Heads resolves many of the issues confronting the planning and development of the town and provides certainty for the long-term protection of assets that are valued by the town residents. Ultimately, the retention of the subject land as Farming Zone is not sustainable and the value of this land as a landscape and environmental buffer relies on the goodwill and future management capability of the landowner. I am of the view that future development of that part of the land shown on the proposed landscape plan presented in this evidence is consistent with the long term management and protection of the Murtnaghurt Lagoon and will enable greater public use and enjoyment of the lagoon and associated open space as a passive recreation precinct.

The western-edge of Barwon Heads presents as an ugly collection of back-fences and garden sheds and the proximity of dwellings and domestic pets detract from the long term use of the subject land for any viable form of agriculture. The alternative, to permanently reserve more than 50% of the site as open space with a carefully managed and integrated residential development on the balance, achieves the community's goals to provide a green edge to the town, to buffer the important wetland areas and provide opportunities for walking trails and passive and active recreation activities. This buffer will enhance views at the entry to Barwon Heads, along its interface with Geelong Road, protect environment of the drainage channel to the west and provide a significant permanent buffer to the portion of Murtnaghurt Lagoon on the golf course land to the south.

Importantly, designation of the settlement boundary along the drainage line to the west of 1920 Geelong Road provides a logical limit to the town's outer growth that is consistent with the policy directions of the Victorian Coastal Strategy and the VPP Practice Note – Defining a Coastal Settlement Boundary.

Appendix 1

R W Mason Curriculum Vitae

Ron Mason



Ron is a Principal at Aurecon with more than 33 years experience in town planning, economic development, environmental management, and tourism development. He has managed major strategic studies and development projects for both Government and corporate clients. Ron is a skilled negotiator who is familiar with the processes of Government. He has managed high profile organisations and projects and is able to maximise the benefits of consultation in the planning process.

Position Executive

Qualifications and memberships

Bachelor Degree of Town and Regional Planning (Melbourne University) completed 1973.
Geography Major studies towards Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne University) completed 1975.
Secondary: Melbourne High School

Specialisation Planning and Environmental Science

Expertise

Town planning, industrial and commercial development facilitation, project management, project lobbyist/strategist, tourism and economic development, environmental planning and design, coastal planning and management, regional planning and major infrastructure provision.

Years in industry: 33

Key project experience

Ron's experience spans 33 years in planning and related disciplines and includes:

- public consultation
- regional/strategic planning
- statutory planning
- environmental and water industry planning
- master planning and design
- structure plans
- recreation planning and design
- coastal planning and management
- tourism design and assessments

June 1997 to present
Principal Aurecon Pty Ltd

Ron has been the Project Leader for a broad range of projects at Aurecon involving both public and private clients. Ron is a skilled presenter and has conducted numerous public workshops and community meetings and has the ability to define and analyse issues with outcomes in mind. During his time at Aurecon Ron has been the Discipline Leader for Planning and Environmental Services, a member of the Leadership Group for Victoria, a member of the Technical and Industry Board (for a period of six years) and Chairman of the Victorian Disciplines Group, which manages industry development in the region. Recently completed projects include:

- Consultation and Environmental Approvals for Wimmera Mallee Pipeline
- Urban Design Frameworks for numerous regional towns in Victoria and Tasmania
- Structure Plans for Opossum Bay, Bannockburn Town Centre, Warrnambool Growth Areas
- Subdivision layouts for residential and industrial developments in Mildura, Warrnambool, Dandenong, Geelong, Bendigo
- Tourism projects at Mt Arapiles, Neds Corner, Baw Baw Shire and the Otways
- Major Development Approvals at Warburton, Phillip Island, Rosebud, Yarra Valley, Mildura Marina
- Coastal Planning for St Kilda Harbour, Torquay Foreshore and Boat Ramp, Corio Bay

April 1989 to May 1997
Managing Director Western Port Development Corporation

In this position Ron was responsible for management of the business, financial and operational affairs of the Western Port Development Corporation (WPDC) which was an economic development organisation for the Western Port region. The WPDC actively pursued development of new enterprises in the region and the enhancement of export trades from the region's businesses.

Ron Mason

1986 to April 1989

Executive Officer Westernport Regional Planning and Co-ordination Committee

As Executive Officer, Ron managed the business, planning and administrative affairs of WRPCC, conducted public reviews of the Hastings Port Industrial Area, Poultry Farming in Western Port and French Island Access Strategy and managed a strategic assessment of the region and Commercial Centres Strategy study.

1979 to 1985

Regional Planner Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority

As a senior member of the UYVDRA Strategy Plan project team, Ron developed the regional policy for commercial centres, rural land areas and edited the strategy policy document. He also developed a model planning scheme ordinance for implementation of the Regional Strategy Plan and conducted numerous planning appeals on rural and commercial issues.

1975 to 1979

Planner National Parks Service, Victoria

Developed management plans for Warrandyte State Park, Discovery Bay Coastal Park, Melba Gully, Kinglake National Park and Cape Schanck Coastal Park. Prepared detailed facility and design layouts for recreation areas at Portsea Back Beach, Kinglake National Park, Cape Schanck, Pound Bend and Jumping Creek at Warrandyte. Also conducted numerous appeals as advocate for National Parks Service.

1974 to 1975

Planner Victorian Housing Commission

Prepared residential subdivision layouts for Sunbury (380 ha.), Pakenham (240 ha.), Wodonga (138 ha.), feasibility studies for commercial centres at Sunshine and Wodonga and conducted appeals and rezoning submissions.

Appendix 2

Landscape Development Plan 1920 Geelong Road Barwon Heads

1920 GEELONG ROAD BARWON HEADS



1920 Geelong Road, Barwon Heads