

THE NITTY GRITTY OF GORCAPA'S WEED MANAGEMENT. AND HABITAT RESTORATION PLANS IN LORNE 11.06.23



This document communicates how the weed removal and habitat restoration plans of GORCAPA's *Coastal Vegetation Strategy* (CVS ,2022) are to be implemented over time in Lorne. Lorne is divided into zones, each with different conservation and management objectives. We describe these. We end with some questions as a prelude to further community consultation to take place in mid-2023. This document is *not* a scientific commentary on the merit of the policy by Friends of Lorne. It simply details what is happening, place-by-place to enable further community consultation. It draws on observations and questions raised by the community on a "walk-and-talk" with GORCAPA staff in December 2022.

Lorne is managed as nine different areas:

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|----|--|----|-----------------------------------|
| D1 | Stony Creek to Armistead St (adjacent dog off-leash beach) | D6 | Lorne Back beaches (Shelly Beach) |
| D2 | Bert Alsop track (adjacent dog off-leash beach) | D7 | Queens Park Central |
| D3 | Erskine Estuary | D8 | Queens Park West |
| D4 | Lorne Foreshore | D9 | Queens Park Oceanside |
| D5 | Lorne Point (Surf club to the pier) | | |



The *Coastal Vegetation Strategy* is made up of two parts, an “overview and assessment” and “recommended management strategies.” Total length, 166 pages. The documents are located here <https://www.greatoceanroadauthority.vic.gov.au/About-the-Authority/Our-publications/Coastal-Vegetation-Strategy>). We have commented on the CVS as whole in the Newsletter of January 2023 (https://friendsoflorne.org.au/newsletter_january_2023/). GORCAPA will revisit the strategy annually to adapt and expand conservation activities.

To understand what the plan means for each of the nine Lorne management areas, we encourage you to consult the full documents. **Our aim here is only to provide details in relation to removing woody weeds such as *Leptospermum laevigatum* (Coast Tea Tree), and *Acacia longifolia* (Sallow wattle).** This is because the people who joined the GORCAPA walk-and-talk in December in 2022 asked for an “explainer” on this.

Most of the foreshore areas are managed by GORCAPA as ecosystems, made up of small remnant patches of indigenous vegetation and highly modified sites. Ideas about which species are best suited to the region have changed over time. Some species planted in the past, while being Australian natives are understood now as not indigenous to the area and are now classed as woody weeds. So, practices evolve with knowledge and experience.

At present, GORCAPA select species based of bioregions and ecological vegetation classes, some of these species include Coast Beard Heath, Seaberry Saltbush, Moonah, She-oak and Sea Box¹ plus grasses and gum trees. In some places these have been wholly or partially displaced by weeds some of which are woody plants – Sweet Pittosporum, Coast Tea Tree and Sallow Wattle.

Any change in vegetation, whether brought about by the forces of nature or the activities of humans, alters the environment in ways that will be to the advantage of some species and the disadvantage of others. The presence of the threatened Rufous Bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti*)² in Lorne on Crown Land has been noted by GORCAPA. The Rufous Bristlebird is now only found in this part of Australia (along the coast from Torquay to the mouth of the Murray River), having been declared extinct in Western Australia in 2000. Its habitat is coastal dune scrub. In one of our previous Newsletters (https://friendsoflorne.org.au/newsletter_january_2022/) we urged Lorne homeowners, at low coastal elevations, to think twice about eliminating dense shrubs in their yards, where the birds may be dwelling.

What’s happening in Lorne?

The Coastal Vegetation Strategy (CVS) does not recommend that all Coast Tea Tree be removed in Lorne. But it is classified as woody weed and GORCAPA intends to reduce most of it in the next five years.

Coast Tea Trees are southeastern Australian natives, but they are not indigenous to Lorne. They were commonly introduced to assist with dune stabilisation in areas of high erosion as noted in the CVS (p. 54, part 1). This likely accounts for their presence in Lorne.

You will see, as you read through, that zones are ranked as high, medium or low priority. GORCAPA uses a method derived from Nillumbik Shire Council’s *Environmental Works. Bushland & Wetland Reserves Prioritisation & Planning Guidelines* (Nillumbik Shire Council 2013). The purpose is to allocate more resources towards assets with the highest value environmentally. Highest value means **greatest biodiversity and community values** and the best long-term chance of **retaining high biodiversity**. Management zones are ranked by using a prioritisation matrix which allocated scores based on ecological values, the width of the zone and the level of community input. Conservation

¹ *Leucopogon parvifolius*, *Rhagodia candolleana*, *Melaleuca lanceolata*, *Allocasuarina verticillata*, *Alyxia buxifolia* respectively

² Listed as critically endangered by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy and the Environment and Water under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC), and as vulnerable by the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action under the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act (FFA)

zones, (the zone adjacent the off-leash dog beach from Stony Creek to Armitage St) are managed differently to modified zones (the foreshore).

Our purpose is simply to communicate what is planned, as a Friends of Lorne service to the Lorne community. It was not clear to us exactly what was happening over time inside the smaller parts that make up each zone. So, we took photos, wrote our understandings beside them, and asked GORCAPA to correct and supplement that information as needed. Community values are taken into account in the *Coastal Vegetation Strategy*. But the community can't express their values usefully if they can't figure out what stays, and what goes, where and why. So that's the gap this document sets out to fill.

We thank GORCAPA for fact checking this document. On the last page, Friends of Lorne lists out some of the questions we would like GORCAPA to consider in discussing their strategy with the Lorne community.³



Rufous Bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti*). They are listed as critically endangered by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy and the Environment and Water under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, and as vulnerable by the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action under the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act. They live in thick undergrowth at low coastal elevations. They are only found on the coast between Torquay and the mouth of the Murray River. A colony in Western Australia is now extinct and there are none elsewhere in Australia.

³ Errors may remain in this document, despite diligence by Friends of Lorne and GORCAPA. We'll keep track of errors or any changes in the interpretation of the policy implementation. We will correct and post an updated version on our website. We encourage you to use the upcoming meetings with GORCAPA to raise your queries. You can also email haveyoursay@greatoceanroadauthority.vic.gov.au

Zone D1 Stony Creek to Armistead Street.

This is the off-leash dog walking beach, starting at Stony Creek and running south to where the Bert Alsop Track ends. "Significant ecological values" listed in the CVS are the Otway Grey Gum (endangered, FFG Act) and the Rufous Bristlebird.

The plan for this area is to remove every third Coast Tea Tree (and sallow wattle) in 5 years, to reduce cover by 40%. Coast Tea Tree was mapped in 2021 and found to be at the same levels as it was in 2014, that is, it had not spread. In 2018 a small amount of coast tea tree was removed. Priority is listed as low.



1 D1 Long view towards Stony Creek of the vegetation adjacent the D1 area dog-off leash area. The vegetation is mixed, including both Prickly and Coast Tea Tree. Prickly Tea Tree is not a weed. Coast Tea Tree has not been thinned as yet.



2 D1 Close to the Stony Creek end. There was some selective removal of Coast Tea Tree 5+ years ago, bringing houses and traffic into view. This was followed by removals of other species (Kikuyu and fleabane) 3 years ago. These works are ongoing. GORCAPA advises that they try to take view lines into account when removing weeds. But this is not always possible. At a recent site (Eastern View) they left a 3m wide strip of woody weeds to screen view until indigenous vegetation is established.



3 D1 Looking south, one in three tea trees in this mixed vegetation will be progressively removed.



4 D1 Coast Tea Tree removal carried out on small patches of land in 2018. The immediate effect is to open views of traffic and also escape routes for dogs. Of course, off lead dogs are expected to be under effective control. But it can be hard with pups.

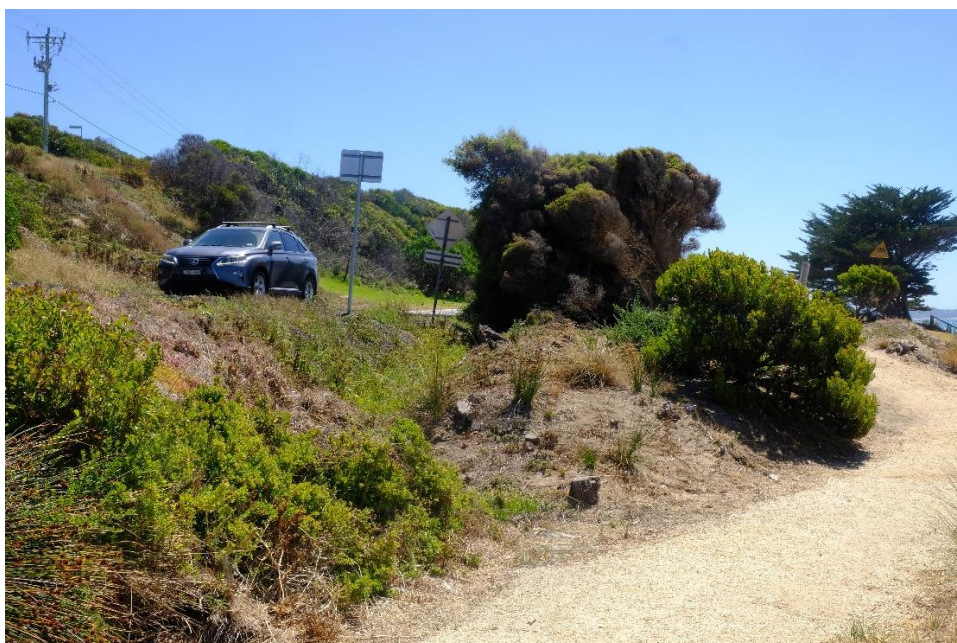
(Full disclosure: this text was written by the owner of a young exuberant labrador!)



5 D1 Coast Tea Tree removal on patches of land carried out both at road height and at beach level. GOR comes into view from the beach. On the other hand, some houses get larger ocean views.

Zone D2 Bert Alsop Track

“Significant ecological values” listed in the CVS include the Rufous Bristlebird *Dasyornis broadbenti caryochrous* (vulnerable, FFG Act). All Coast Tea Tree will be eradicated in 5 years. Priority is listed as medium.



6 D2 A closer look of where a small amount of Coast Tea Tree has been removed at the end of the Bert Alsop track, approaching the car park, looking north. The GOR has come into view.



7 D2 Coast Tea Tree removal adjacent to steps to Hall St, above and below the Bert Alsop track.



8 D2 A closer look at area beside the Hall St steps. This quite sizable area is being allowed to naturally regenerate. GORCAPA advise that they are moving towards a system where they allow natural seed banks to germinate prior to ordering plants. This allows the site to 'naturally' form. After 12 months they review if revegetation is required to fill in gaps.



9 D2. Regeneration and replanting on the Bert Alsop was completed 5 years ago following Coast Tea Tree and other weed removal.



10 D2 A Coast Tea Tree has been removed which may have previously had a role holding together the sand bank. GORCAPA advise that, in the past, Coast Tea Tree has in the past was widely planted to stabilise sand dunes. "Unfortunately, tea tree and other invasive species like marram grass do not trap the sand in a natural way like other indigenous dune species do. This changes the way a dune system may respond to wave driven erosion events."



11 D2 Pruning and track maintenance (rather than woody weed removal per se) at the Lions Car Park picnic area has exposed the toilet block. Growth of Boobiallas at road height may restore screening.



12 D2 This area of the beach, beside part of the Bert Alsop, is dominated by Marram Grass (introduced) which GORCAPA plans to eradicate at some point. They will revegetate with incipient dune species, *Carpobrotus rosii* - Pigface, *Ficinia nodosa* - knobby clubbrush, and *Spinifex sericeus* - Hairy spinifex



13 D2 Dense mixed vegetation looking south on the Bert Alsop adjacent the GOR. This area will remain as is.

Zone D3 Erskine River Estuary

No “significant ecological values” are listed.

GORCAPA advises that different areas within Zone D3 have different objectives. All Coast Tea Tree is to be removed in 5 years “outside core infestation.” An area dominated by Coast Tea Tree is called a core infestation. As GORCAPA removes species from the edges of the infestation, the “core” area can change. When Coast tea Tree dies in the core infestation it will be replaced with similar species that are indigenous to the area, like Moonah, Silver Banksia, Sheoak. The GORCAPA goal isn't to denude these areas, but there is a period after the removal of woody weeds that a site can be quite denuded. In conservation areas (ie., D1 dog beach) they then leave the site to naturally regenerate. In highly modified sites (like D3 the River Estuary Zone) they plant after removals. Priority is low.



14 D3 Coast Tea Tree will be completely removed, cypress will remain. Part of the caravan park is behind this vegetation. The plan is to remove in a staged approach, river side followed by caravan park side. this will minimise how much of the caravan park will come into view.



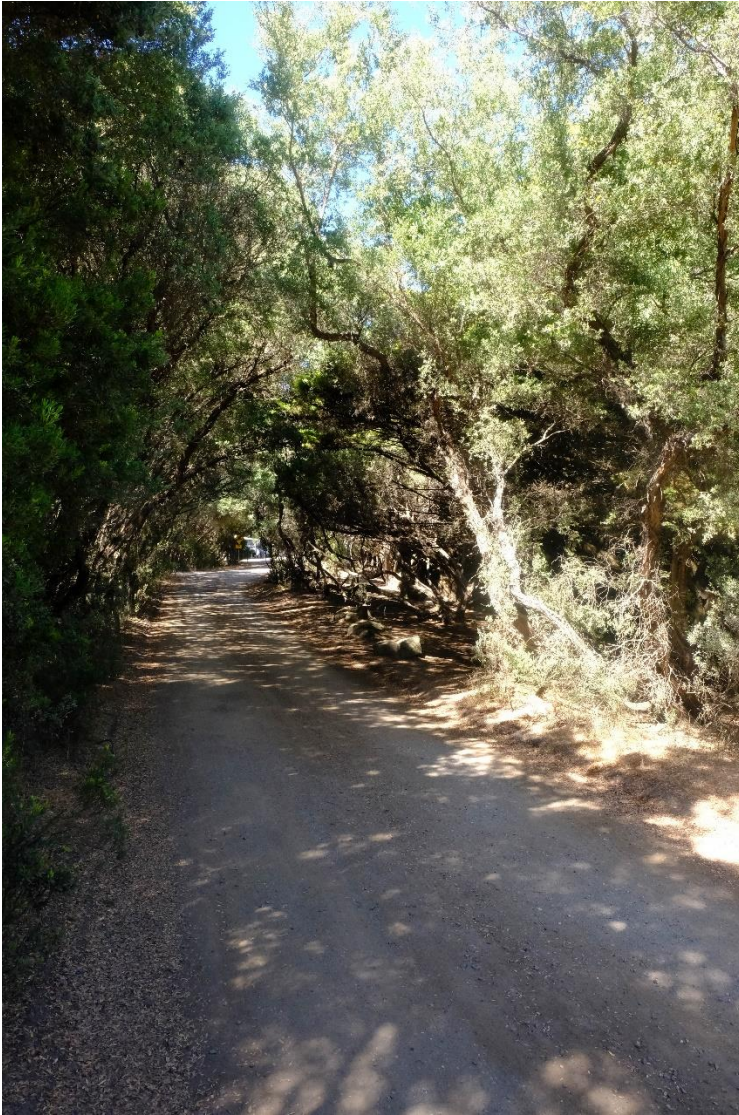
15 D3 Coast Tea Tree will be removed but not within the next 2 years. Consultation will occur. GORCAPA is aware that there is community concern that the beach could come into view from the road. As well, the car park and road could come into view from the beach.



16 D3 Coast Tea tree removal here would introduce a view of the caravan park and toilet/shower block from the playground. So, the plan is not to do this. GORCAPA classifies the area as highly modified, and this justifies non-intervention with the Coast Tea Tree.



17 D3 Coast Tea tree removal would expose the cars and utility/waste area behind the Swing Bridge café to view. It is marked for removal, either this coming winter or next as a staged removal.



18 D3 Coast Tea Tree will be removed on both sides of this road from the caravan park to the Swing Bridge café over the next 2 years. A fenced-off area means it is designated as conservation. So there is a higher priority to remove weeds.



19 D3 Coast Tea Tree is currently providing shade and wind protection to picnic areas will not be removed yet. Timing not yet determined. There will be additional community consultation (it is the same area as photo 15 D3)



20 D3 Tea tree adjacent to road to caravan park from Cypress Ave currently provides shade to pedestrians and screens the utilities block from the road. It will be removed in stages over 2 years, allowing year 1 species to establish, followed by the next stage of Coast Tea Tree removal.



21 D3 Coast Tea Tree dominates on both sides of the road lies within fenced off areas. All Coast Tea Tree is to be removed in two stages.

Zone D4 Lorne Foreshore

“Significant ecological values” listed in the CVS include the Rufous Bristlebird *Dasyornis broadbenti caryochrous* (vulnerable, FFG Act).⁴

The plan for this area is remove every third Coast Tea Tree (and Sallow Wattle) in 5 years, to reduce cover by 40%. Priority is low.

⁴ FFG is Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act (Victoria, 1988). The listing was updated in September 2022.



22 D4 Coast Tea tree immediately adjacent the beach opposite Erskine Paddock and the Mantra will remain for the next 5 years. This area has been untouched for 10 years but was highly modified in the past.



23 D4 These are not Coast Tea Tree. They are NZ Christmas Bush and will remain.



24 D4 Mixed vegetation including tea tree adjacent the seafront fenced off vegetation area provides shade and windbreak to picnickers and pedestrians. This is classed as highly modified and will be left as is.



25 D4 Tea tree has been thinned and all dense lower storey scrub removed within the fenced off area beside the boardwalk on the seaward side. It will be left as is now.



26 D4 The Coast Tea Tree around the dog sculptures will remain.

Zone D5 Lorne Point (from surf club to the pier)

“Significant ecological values” listed include the Rufous Bristlebird *Dasyornis broadbenti caryochrous* (vulnerable, FFG Act).

No mention is made about the Coast Tea Tree, but large sections have been removed already in accordance with previous policy of the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee. Priority is medium.



27 D5 Coast Tea Tree was removed near the water pump on the Doug Stirling track.



28 D5 Tea tree has been removed from a large beachside area.



29 D5 Same patch of land as 28, viewed from the west. As a result of public complaints, a notice now explains that dead wood from the Coast Tea Tree removal has been left to provide habitat and encourage natural processes of decay and regeneration.



30 D5 Immediate seaside edge of the land patch in seen in 28 and 29.



31 D5 These tree stumps close to Doug Stirling track are of removed Boobiallas, not Coast Tea Tree.



32 D5 Coast Tea Tree remnant close to Doug Stirling track. Dead wood is left to provide habitat.

D6 Lorne back beaches (Shelly Beach)

“Significant ecological values” listed the CVS include the Rufous Bristlebird *Dasyornis broadbenti caryochrous* (vulnerable, FFG Act). No mention is made of the policy with regard to Coast Tea Tree (note, some are present) but GORCAPA advise that is not a priority site, so Coast Tea Tree will likely remain.



33 D6 End of Shelly Beach looking south.



34 D6 Entrance to Shelly Beach. Will remain as is.



35 D6 Upper west side of road to Shelly Beach. Coast wattle will not be removed as it is not a priority site.



36 D6 Entrance to tramway track. Will remain as is.



37 D6 Beachside scrub, Shelly Beach. It will remain as is at present.



38 D6 There is Coast Tea Tree mixed in with coastal health at entrance to boat ramp. It will remain for the foreseeable future.



39 D6 Large tea trees at bank's edge near boat ramp entrance. This will be left untouched while Pt Grey redevelopment plans take place.



40 D6 Coast Tea Tree adjacent picnic area. This will remain at present.



41 D6 Mixed species and large boobiallas on west side of fishing co-op forecourt car park. No tea tree. Will remain as is.

The remaining three management areas for Lorne in the CVS are listed below. None mention of Coast Tea Tree. All weeds, woody and non weedy are being managed

Zone D7 Queens Park Central

“Significant ecological values” Potential habitat for Swift Parrot - *Lathamus discolor* (EPBC Act *critically endangered*, FFG Act *critically endangered*), Swamp Antechinus - *Antechinus minimus maritimus* (FFG Act *vulnerable*, EPBC Act *vulnerable*) Grey Goshawk - *Accipiter novaehollandiae* (FFG Act *endangered*) Long Nosed Potoroo - *Potorous tridactylus trisulcatus* (EPBC Act *vulnerable*, FFG Act *vulnerable*)

No Coast Tea Tree is listed for management.

Zone D8 Queens Park West

“Significant ecological values” Potential habitat for Swift Parrot - *Lathamus discolor* (EPBC Act *critically endangered*, FFG Act *critically endangered*), Swamp Antechinus - *Antechinus minimus maritimus* (FFG Act *vulnerable*, EPBC Act *vulnerable*) Grey Goshawk - *Accipiter novaehollandiae* (FFG Act *endangered*) Long Nosed Potoroo - *Potorous tridactylus trisulcatus* (EPBC Act *vulnerable*, FFG Act *vulnerable*)

No Coast Tea Tree is listed for management.

Zone D8 Queens Park Oceanside

“Significant ecological values” “Significant ecological values” Potential habitat for Swift Parrot - *Lathamus discolor* (EPBC Act *critically endangered*, FFG Act *critically endangered*), Swamp Antechinus - *Antechinus minimus maritimus* (FFG Act *vulnerable*, EPBC Act *vulnerable*) Grey Goshawk - *Accipiter novaehollandiae* (FFG Act *endangered*) Long Nosed Potoroo - *Potorous tridactylus trisulcatus* (EPBC Act *vulnerable*, FFG Act *vulnerable*)

No Coast Tea Tree is listed for management.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. GORCAPA is committed to evidence-based decision making. So how is the impact on Rufous Bristle birds being accommodated? Research shows that, like many species, Rufous Bristle birds prefer older vegetation.⁵ Isn't that an argument for a 10+ year gradual reduction strategy, instead of changing things entirely across the four kilometres of their Lorne coastal habitat in just five years? How are you going to evaluate the impact on these birds?
2. Would Zone D1 ever become potential habitat for additional threatened species (hooded plovers?) Or is Zone D1 too close to an off-leash dog area?
3. In addition to habitat, the Coast Tea Trees provide shade, screening from traffic, a windbreak etc. It can take years for alternative species to provide the same function, so can GORCAPA clarify why a 5-year staged removal is proposed. Wouldn't a 10+ year strategy reduce the disruption to amenity?
4. What species of plants self-seed (volunteer) and how is this taken into account in managing the ecosystem over time in the different zones?
5. How does a one-in-three elimination strategy actually work? Is it one-in-three Coast Tea Trees? Or is it all Coast Tea Treeed in one-in-three land parcels? What is the size of the land parcel? How many land parcels would be selected in year 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5?
6. Given how thick the scrub is, how can GORCAPA be confident that it is possible to execute a one-in-three strategy without a lot of collateral removal of other vegetation anyway?
7. Can you tell us more about the commitment to replacement trees to serve the screening, windbreak and shade functions of the Coast Tea Tree provides right now? This seems especially important in the Estuary Zone (D3) and Foreshore Zone (D4) where people congregate and seek protection from strong easterly winds.
8. Similarly, for the dog beach areas D1 and D2, can GORCAPA describe how traffic screening and scrub/habitat will be maintained over time and what replacement strategy will be put in place when Coastal Wattle and Coast Tea Tree are removed? Natural regeneration would lead to plants of low height, wouldn't it? Will we ever see replacement plantings in the sections already made bare and open to the road?
9. Can you explain why there is a Coast tea Tree eradication plan in some Zones, but a one-in-three removal plan in other Zones?
10. Coast Tea Tree used to be planted for dune stabilisation. Why have views on the role of these plants in erosion control changed over time? You intend to plant incipient dune species. What are they and what function to they play?

⁵ Wilson BA, Aberton JG, Reilly P, McDonald M. The distribution and ecology of the Rufous Bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti*) at Aireys inlet, Victoria. *Emu* 2001; 101:341-347 and also Gizzard T, Walshe T, Galvin P, Salkin O, Baker M, Cross B, Ashton P. What is the 'appropriate' fuel management regime for the Otway Ranges, Victoria, Australia? Developing a long-term fuel management strategy using the structured decision-making framework. *International Journal of Wildfire* 2020;29:354-370