



**Mornington
Peninsula Shire**

DRAFT SUBMISSION FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

XXXX 2026

Department of Finance
Australian Government

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Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Position on the Proposed Partial Divestment of HMAS Cerberus, South Beach Road, Crib Point, Victoria

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed partial divestment of land at HMAS Cerberus, Crib Point as outlined in the Department of Defence's 'HMAS Cerberus, VIC (Golf Course and Off Base Land) – Partial Divestment of Vacant Site' fact sheet ([HMAS Cerberus | Defence](#)).

Council's advocacy position regarding the preferred future use of the land is:

- *That the future use of the land should be primarily for conservation purposes with limited recreation, tourism and aquaculture uses that protect and enhance the special ecological values of the site.*
- *That at least 5% of the divestment proceeds be used to deliver increased social housing stock on the Mornington Peninsula, within the Urban Growth Boundary.*

This submission outlines the reasons for Council's advocacy position.

The Site

HMAS Cerberus is located in South Beach Road, Crib Point. The site contains a golf course which is licensed to the Cerberus Golf Club and is publicly accessible. Figure 1 is an aerial image of the site showing the central base, the golf course and surrounding vegetated land.

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Figure 1: Aerial image of HMAS Cerberus
(source: Google maps)

The site is located outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and adjacent to land in Somers to the west, zoned Green Wedge. The site also abuts the urban areas of the townships of Crib Point, Bittern and Somers (all within the UGB). To the east, the land forms part of the coastal interface to the internationally significant Western Port Ramsar site, shown in green in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Extent of the Western Port Ramsar Site

(source: Western Port Ramsar Site Map, Australian Government, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2009)

The Department of Defence is the planning authority for the HMAS Cerberus site. As with all Commonwealth owned land, the site is exempt from the entire Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme, as shown by the white shaded area in the zoning map in Figure 3. This means the land is not subject to any of the local planning policies, zones, overlays or other controls of the planning scheme.

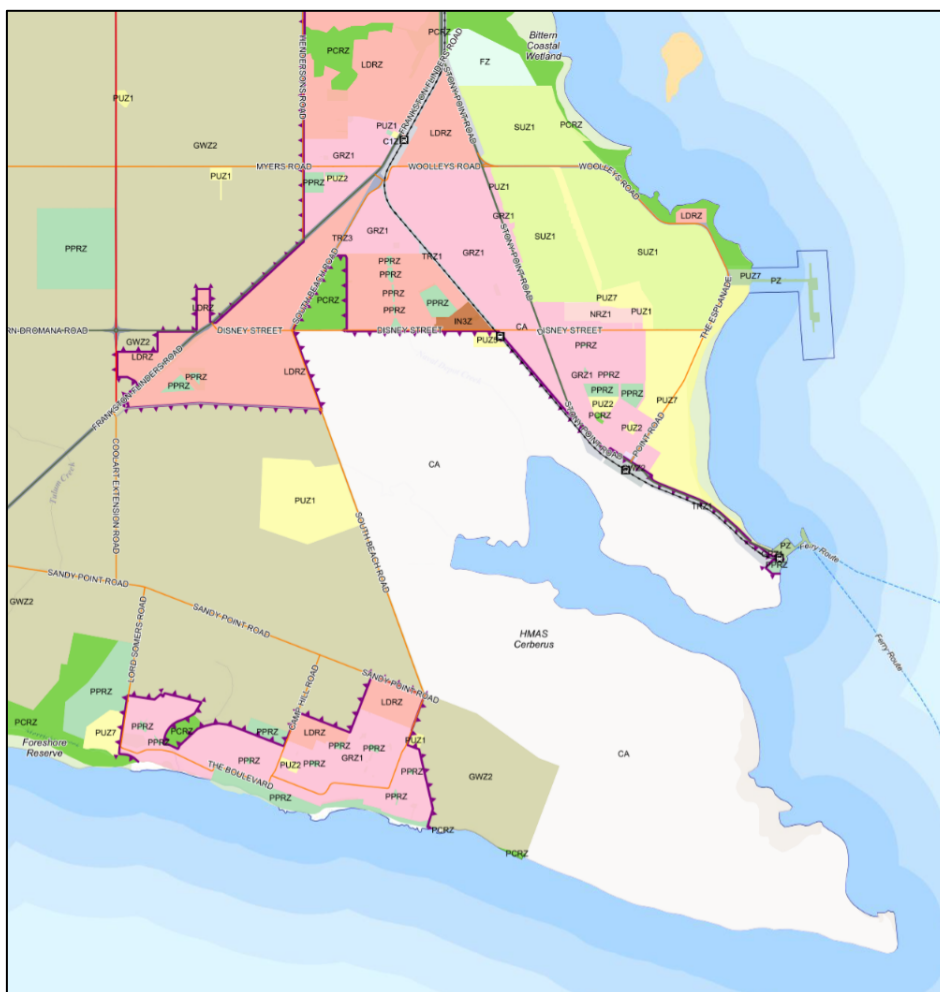


Figure 3: Zoning map of Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme
(excluding HMAS Cerberus)

Proposed Divestment Area

Council understands that the Department of Defence is proposing a partial divestment of the HMAS Cerberus site, as outlined in the Defence fact sheet ([HMAS Cerberus | Defence](#)). The divestment area covers a large area of 1,164 hectares comprising the golf course and vacant land, as shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4: Partial divestment area of HMAS Cerberus
(source: Department of Defence fact sheet)*

Council understands that the main base will be retained for Defence purposes, as will the access road to South Beach Road. The base includes Defence Housing Australia homes, service residences, childcare centre, military cemetery, training range and facilities, and access roads.

Preferred Future Uses

Theoretically, the divestment of such a large area of land in Western Port raises the opportunity for the creation of a new precinct that could have various urban, recreational, conservation, agricultural and tourism land uses, as canvassed by internal stakeholders. However, the site presents many challenges for these proposed uses, primarily due to its location outside the UGB and physical characteristics.

On balance, Council's advocacy position focuses on long term conservation with the potential for some managed recreation and limited tourism. The reasons for this position are outlined below.

Maintenance of the Urban Growth Boundary

- Council's long held policy position of maintaining the existing UGB and the extent of the Mornington Peninsula Green Wedge as reflected in Council's adopted [Housing and Settlement Strategy Refresh 2020-2036 \(2020\)](#) (HSS), [Green Wedge Management Plan \(2019\)](#) and the [Mornington Peninsula Localised Planning Statement \(Victorian Government, 2014\)](#).
- State, and local, planning objectives which identify that the Peninsula is not a growth area and will only accommodate moderate to low levels of population and housing growth.

Preference for a dedicated conservation area

- The proposed divestment land is one of the largest areas of remnant bushland on the Peninsula. The size of land to be divested is 1,164 hectares (by comparison, Point Nepean National Park is 560 hectares, and the entire Mornington Peninsula National Park is 2,686 hectares).
- Protection of the HMAS Cerberus land is important in protecting the internationally significant Ramsar Wetland site.

- A conservation area would align with Commonwealth obligations associated with the Western Port Ramsar Wetland and other Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) protected under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- The land could be appropriately secured within the State's protected area network, particularly as a National Park.

Potential for low intensity and informal recreation uses

- If the area is protected for conservation, the areas of cleared land and adjacent to the areas of the naval base could potentially be used for recreational and tourism uses, including informal uses, subject to protections of identified ecological values.

Significant areas of the site are impacted by coastal hazards

- The [Westernport Local Coastal Hazard Assessment \(2014\)](#) identifies that large parts of the site are at risk of coastal inundation and/or erosion due to predicted sea level rise of 0.8 metres by the year 2100, as shown in red in Figure 6:



Figure 6: Areas at risk of coastal hazards
(source: Westernport Local Coastal Hazard Assessment)

The land is not located in a preferred area for urban settlement

- The overarching local settlement policy is not to accommodate major population expansion. Council's adopted HSS sets out strategies for the right locations for increased residential development (near services, shops and employment areas within the UGB).
- Mornington Peninsula's housing target has been determined to be 24,000 net new dwellings by 2051. The State's Housing Capacity Assessment Platform identifies a notional shortfall of 1,700 dwellings. Shire officers disagree with this finding given Council's own detailed Housing Capacity Analysis found that there is capacity for about 25,000 dwellings within 15 years, exceeding the State target. Future supply can be delivered within the UGB by rezoning 'Investigation Areas' identified in the HSS and, in the longer term, reviewing some of the restrictive planning controls in existing zones and overlays in established townships (such as mandatory single dwelling requirements).

The land is not suitable for social housing, however, proceeds of its sale should contribute towards the delivery of more social housing stock on the Peninsula

- Council continues to advocate for the provision of more social and affordable housing (i.e. government subsidised housing) and is active in seeking developer contributions for this purpose.
- The land is not suitable for affordable or social housing stock for vulnerable populations because it is outside the UGB and is not located close to necessary services, shops, employment areas or reliable and regular public transport (despite being close to the Stony Point railway line).
- However, selling such a sizeable area of publicly-owned land presents a significant opportunity to deliver net community benefit by contributing a percentage of the sale revenue towards the delivery of affordable and/or social housing elsewhere on the Peninsula, within the UGB, such as on surplus Port of Hastings land, or other nearby established township areas. The contribution should be at least 5%. Providing such a contribution is consistent with and helps deliver on the aspirational targets of the [National Housing Accord](#) which commits the Commonwealth government, states and territories to accelerating delivery of more affordable and social housing by 2028.

Zoning

- While the land could arguably be zoned Green Wedge as it is outside the UGB, it is not suitable for broad agricultural use given its significant remnant vegetation and biodiversity values. Similarly, it is not suitable for some of the other major uses permissible within the Green Wedge (including discretionary uses), such as schools, exhibition centres, hotels, function centres, places of assembly, etc. A more appropriate zone would be the Public Conservation and Resource Zone which reflects Council's preferred land use outcomes.

Consistency with Shire advocacy

- The [Mornington Peninsula Shire Advocacy Strategy 2022](#) outlines why and how the Shire advocates on behalf of the community. The recommendation to focus on a conservation area and to use a percentage of the divestment proceeds for the delivery of social housing on the Mornington Peninsula is consistent with the Shires advocacy focus for 2025–2026 which includes:
 - Urgent investment in social and affordable housing on the Mornington Peninsula.

- Adequate government funding to better manage our coastlines and build resilience for erosion and sea level rise.
- Ongoing investment to support Victoria's tourism economy.
- Management and protection of the Green Wedge.

As the Audit factsheet does not contain detailed information about the divestment, Council submits that the following matters should also be addressed as part of the divestment process:

- The process should include early and meaningful engagement with relevant Traditional Owner groups as the site is located on Country with enduring Aboriginal cultural, historical and spiritual significance.
- The site's identified environmental hazards, such as coastal erosion, inundation and bushfire risk, should be clearly recognised and managed.
- Preferred future zones and overlays of the Victorian Planning Provisions should be identified, reflecting Council's preferred land use outcomes (such as Public Conservation and Resource Zone, Vegetation Protection Overlays, Significant Landscape Overlays, Environmental Significance Overlays, Bushfire Management Overlay, and any overlays required to address flooding or erosion, including in response to coastal hazards from predicted sea level rise).
- Subdivision controls should be applied to prevent any further fragmentation of the land and its highly sensitive ecological systems.
- Any need to buffer existing remaining areas of the naval base from any new uses should be clearly identified.
- An assessment of any potential contaminated land because of Defence activities and the proposed mitigation measures required for future uses.
- An assessment of, and public statement about the presence of unexploded ordnances resulting from Defence activities, and proposed remediation measures.
- Finally, confirmation should be provided as to whether:
 - The access road to the naval base from South Beach Road needs upgrading.
 - Any other infrastructure or service upgrades are required to the site and how these will be funded and delivered.

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