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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Five local councils renew support for UNESCO Western Port Biosphere Reserve**

The five local councils within the UNESCO-declared Western Port Biosphere Reserve have renewed their commitment to protecting its unique environment, by supporting the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation with core funding for a further four years.

Shires and cities signed to the agreement include Bass Coast, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula.

Biosphere Foundation CEO, Mel Barker, said the organisation had delivered important projects over its 18-year history and long-term partnerships with local government had been fundamental to its success.

“We have invested considerable time with our local councils to ensure our strategies and opportunities align with the aspirations of the communities they represent,” she said.

“There is no doubt in any of our minds that communities are wanting positive action on addressing the major challenges associated with climate change and biodiversity loss. This includes reducing our greenhouse gas emissions within the next decade, restoring habitat and planning to live more sustainably.

“The purpose of our Foundation is to deliver programs that ensure a better and sustainable future by helping people enjoy life in harmony with the environment,” Ms Barker said.

She added that partnerships with the local councils had not only been renewed but improved to allow exploration for broader collaboration with the Biosphere Foundation in the years ahead.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) follows the recent appointment of Mornington Peninsula Shire Councillor, Kerri McCafferty, to the Biosphere Foundation board and as Chair of its Council Liaison Committee on which the five councils have representatives.

“The Bass Coast, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula shires and cities are some of the most innovative in Victoria and invest in exciting environmental and community development programs in their own right.”

“However, the on-going partnership with the Biosphere Foundation enables us to extend the reach of our sustainable development and environmental restoration and protection work beyond our individual council boundaries”.

“Collectively, we can work on projects in Western Port and its marine parks, on our terrestrial parklands and within our communities to ensure that the Biosphere Reserve continues to thrive and contribute to the healthy and enviable lifestyles we enjoy across our region,” Ms McCafferty said.

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The Western Port Biosphere Reserve is one of 727 places in 131 countries recognised by the United Nations for the uniqueness and importance of its biodiversity. Biosphere reserves promote solutions to enable people to enjoy and live in harmony with the environment. They advocate for the protection of our most important environmental assets and for sustainable development through research, education, which informs discussion and solutions aligned with society’s ability to cope with change. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now form a centrepiece of the advocacy and programs undertaken for the Western Port Biosphere Reserve. These programs include partnering with industry and government on projects to achieve better environmental outcomes while maintaining or improving their performance.

For more information: [www.biosphere.org.au](http://www.biosphere.org.au)