

# Developing a new Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan – Discussion Paper

Seeking your input on key directions – January 2016





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# INTRODUCTION

Port Phillip Bay offers a vast array of social, economic and environmental benefits for both visitors and those who live and work in its surrounding regions.

With thousands flocking to the Bay to swim, paddle, dive, fish and sail, a coordinated and appropriate approach to managing the Bay is vital to ensure its ongoing health and capacity to support a diverse range of activities.

The Victorian Government is delivering on its commitment to protect and enhance the health of Victoria's marine and coastal environment by developing a new Environmental Management Plan for Port Phillip Bay.

The new Plan will outline a vision to help the Government manage the health of the Bay. The Plan is likely to focus on the waters of the Bay up to the high tide mark, relating to water quality, marine life and habitats.

This Discussion Paper aims to introduce the new Plan (Part A) and seek your input on the development of the vision, the values to be protected and the key challenges you would like to see addressed (Part B).

The first Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan (2001) resulted in significant investment to improve the health of the Bay. The new Plan will ensure the Bay is healthy and resilient as it responds to a growing population and the challenges associated with climate change.

The feedback received will inform the development of the draft plan which is scheduled to be released for public comment in mid 2016. The final Plan is due to be completed in late 2016.

The Victorian Government recognises that healthy coasts, marine areas and waterways are vital to the livelihood of Victorians as they support our health, business, tourism, recreation and biodiversity. The new Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan is part of a suite of actions being undertaken by the Government, including:

#### ***Creating a new Marine and Coastal Act***

The Victorian Government will establish a new Marine and Coastal Act which will see coastal and marine management integrated within the same system for the first time. The new Act will guide marine and coastal strategies and the reports that sit beneath it.

#### ***Reviewing the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters)***

State environment protection policies (SEPPs) are part of a legal framework to protect and improve Victoria's environmental, social and economic assets. The Victorian Government is reviewing its Water SEPPs to ensure Victoria's standards and legal obligations are in place to protect and improve the health of its water environments.

#### ***Establishing State of the Bays reporting***

In late 2016 the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria will deliver the first State of the Bays, a report about the health of Victoria's coast, bays and waterways. The report will provide transparency, monitoring and information to protect and enhance Victoria's coastal and marine environment.

#### ***Developing a new Water Plan for Victoria***

This new Water Plan will set the strategic direction for water in Victoria, to ensure the needs of the community, environment and economy are met, now and into the future.

# PART A: A NEW PLAN FOR MANAGING OUR BAY

## Port Phillip Bay

Port Phillip Bay is the largest marine embayment in Victoria and is relatively shallow for its size.

The current Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan (2001) covers “all the waters of Port Phillip Bay bounded by the high water mark, a line drawn between Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean and a line across the mouth of the Yarra River” (Environmental Protection Authority Victoria 1997). The new Environmental Management Plan is likely to have similar geographic boundaries; however this will be informed by current stakeholder and community consultation on the health and management of the Bay.

The Bay and its catchment are shown below (Figure 1). Water enters the Bay from the surrounding Port Phillip catchment via rivers, creeks and stormwater drains. Treated waste water from the Western Treatment Plant is also released into the Bay.

As water exchange with Bass Strait is limited, water entering the Bay from the surrounding catchment can take around a year to be flushed out.

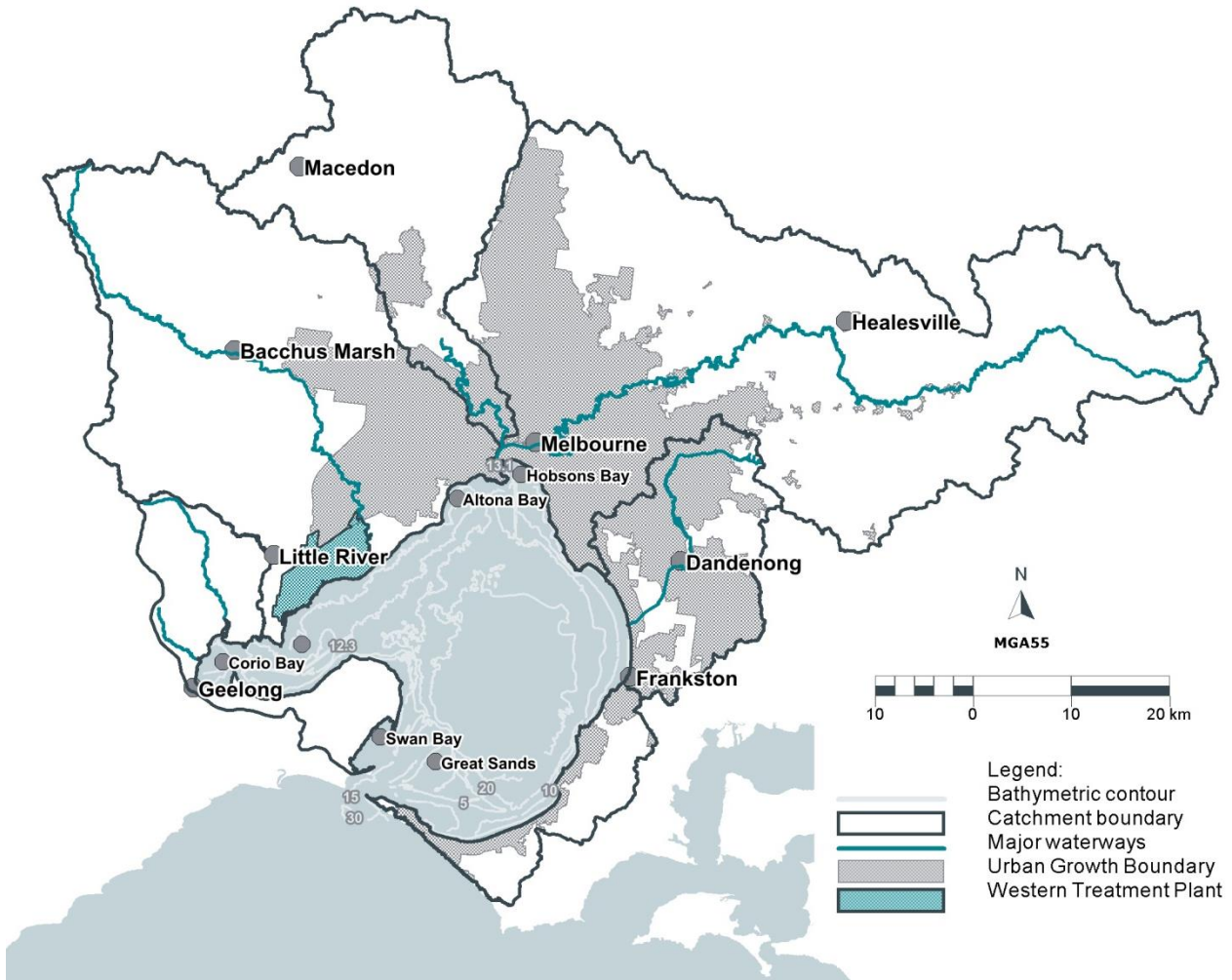


Figure 1 Port Phillip Bay and the Port Phillip region

Port Phillip Bay hosts a diversity of ecosystems and habitats including sandy beaches, rocky shores and mangroves, sand and seagrass beds, rocky reefs and open water. These habitats are home to thousands of marine animals and plants, from single-celled algae and microscopic animals (zooplankton) to seagrasses and seaweeds, penguins, seals, dolphins and visiting whales (Harris et al. 1996).

## Why do we need a new Environmental Management Plan?

A new Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan will set up-to-date targets and actions to manage the health of the Bay.

Melbourne’s population is expected to almost double in the next 35 years. Significant growth is also predicted for regional centres around the Bay (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2015). This presents both challenges and opportunities, with more people likely to be using and enjoying the Bay in future. A population increase will also mean greater development of the catchment which could affect the quality of the water flowing into the Bay.

**FAST FACT**  
Port Phillip Bay is within the traditional country of the Kulin people. Kulin people have lived in the region for over 40,000 years.

It is vital the Bay is managed to be healthy and resilient in the face of emerging and existing pressures as our understanding of the impacts of climate change develops.



Figure 2 Spider crab at Rye Pier, David Reinhard

## The 2001 Environmental Management Plan

The purpose of the 2001 Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan (Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002) was “to facilitate, in a structured way, coordination among planning and resource management activities to target key desired environmental outcomes for the Bay”.

The 2001 Environmental Management Plan set the following desired outcomes for the environmental management of the Bay:

- To conserve biodiversity
- To protect recreation and tourism opportunities
- To secure production and sustainable use of wild fisheries
- To provide for aquaculture
- To provide for shipping and boating
- To protect cultural heritage
- To provide water for industrial purposes

Increased nutrients (specifically nitrogen) and exotic marine pests were identified as priority risks to the health of the Bay. Nutrient inputs can exacerbate algal blooms. Marine pests can compete with native species, alter habitats and disrupt nitrogen cycling processes. Both nutrients and marine pests can threaten the biodiversity and amenity of the Bay and its surrounds.

Significant effort has been invested in the health of the Bay as a result of the 2001 Plan with many of its actions achieved. The new Plan will build on this progress to refresh the long term vision for the health of the Bay and outline shorter term targets and actions for the next five to ten years.

The 2001 Plan can be found on the DELWP website at [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au)

## Developing the new Environmental Management Plan

The new Plan is being developed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in partnership with Melbourne Water and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA). During the development of the Plan, lead agencies will be seeking input from a range of organisations and the community.

Background investigations to inform the new Environmental Management Plan began in late 2014. These included a review of the latest science on key issues for the health of the Bay and what we already know about Port Phillip Bay's marine values.

Consultation with key stakeholders and the community will occur throughout January and February 2016 and inform the development of the draft Plan. Part B of this document outlines the content the Government is seeking feedback on.

A second phase of consultation on the draft Plan is planned for mid 2016. This input will be considered prior to finalising the Plan in late 2016.

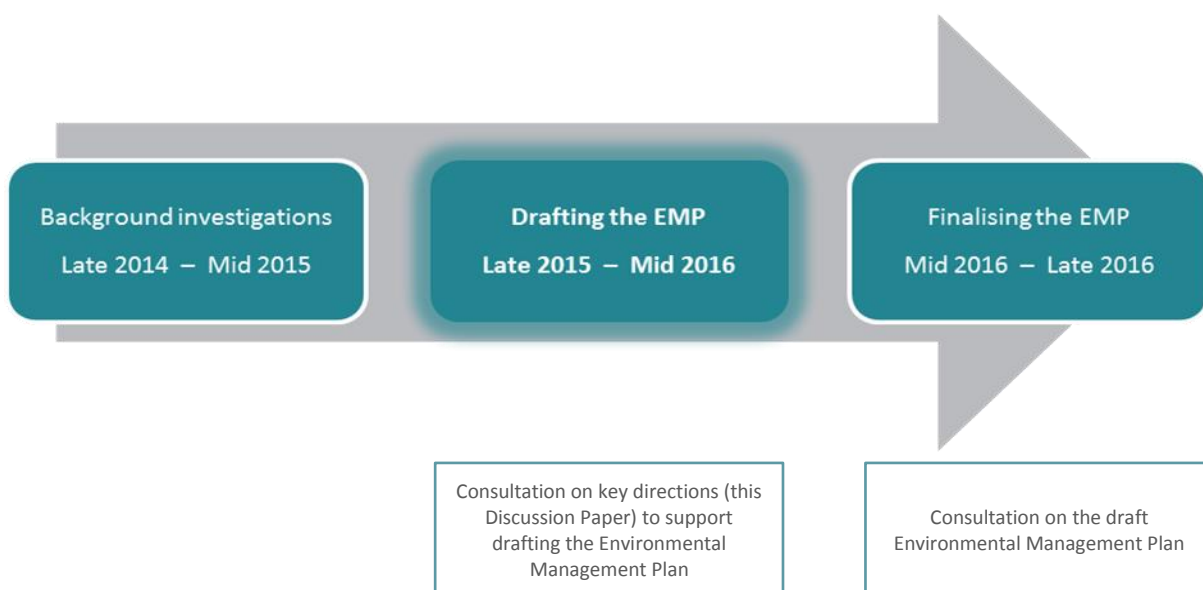


Figure 3 Timeline for the development of the new Environmental Management Plan

## PART B: HAVE YOUR SAY

We are seeking your feedback to help shape the new Environmental Management Plan.

We would like to hear your views about the following:

1. What is your vision for a healthy Port Phillip Bay?
2. What do you value most about the Bay?
3. What do you think are the key challenges for the Bay?

DELWP will be holding several pop-up events around Port Phillip Bay in January and February 2016 to capture the community's input.

You can provide your feedback by attending an event, completing a short online survey or making a formal submission in response to the prompts in this discussion paper.

For more information about the locations of the events or to complete the survey visit:

[portphillip.delwp.vic.gov.au/healthofthebay](http://portphillip.delwp.vic.gov.au/healthofthebay)  
or [www.delwp.vic.gov.au/health-of-the-bay](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/health-of-the-bay)



Figure 4 Rosebud Pier, David Reinhard



## 1. What is your vision for a healthy Port Phillip Bay?

We are interested in what you think the future health and management of Port Phillip Bay should look like, for instance over the next 10 to 20 years.

A vision will be developed, using community and stakeholder input, to guide the management of Port Phillip Bay over the life of the Environmental Management Plan and beyond.

Below are some of the things that may be considered important to the future of the Bay. Use them to help you think about what a healthy and well managed Port Phillip Bay means to you.



Figure 5 What does a healthy Port Phillip Bay mean to you?

### **Feedback prompts**

1. What does a healthy Port Phillip Bay mean to you? Why is the Bay important to you?
2. What would you like the Bay to look like in the future (e.g. in 10-20 years' time)?



Figure 6 Weedy Seadragon, David Reinhard

## 2. What do you value most about the Bay?

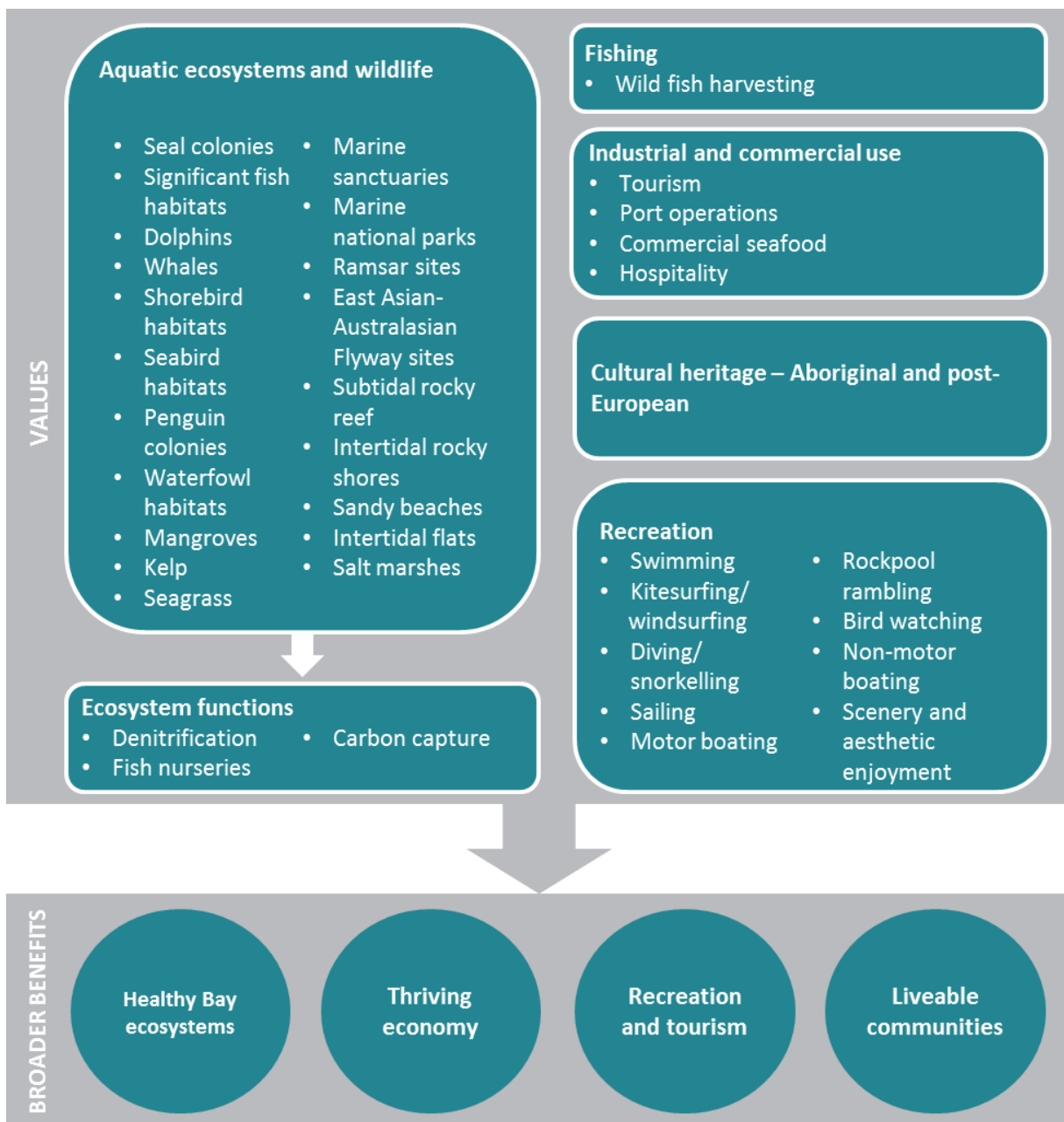
We are interested to know what you value most about the bay and what you believe should be protected.

**FAST FACT**  
Port Phillip Bay is 36 times larger than Sydney Harbour.

Port Phillip Bay supports a wide range of social, economic and environmental uses and benefits. We refer to these as *Bay values*.

Specific Bay values have been documented in a number of studies, surveys and reports relating to Victorian coastal and marine areas. These are listed below in Figure 4.

3. Which values are most important to you and why?
4. Are there any values that you disagree with or that are missing from Figure 4?



**Figure 7 Summary of recorded values in Port Phillip Bay and broader benefits that these contribute towards**

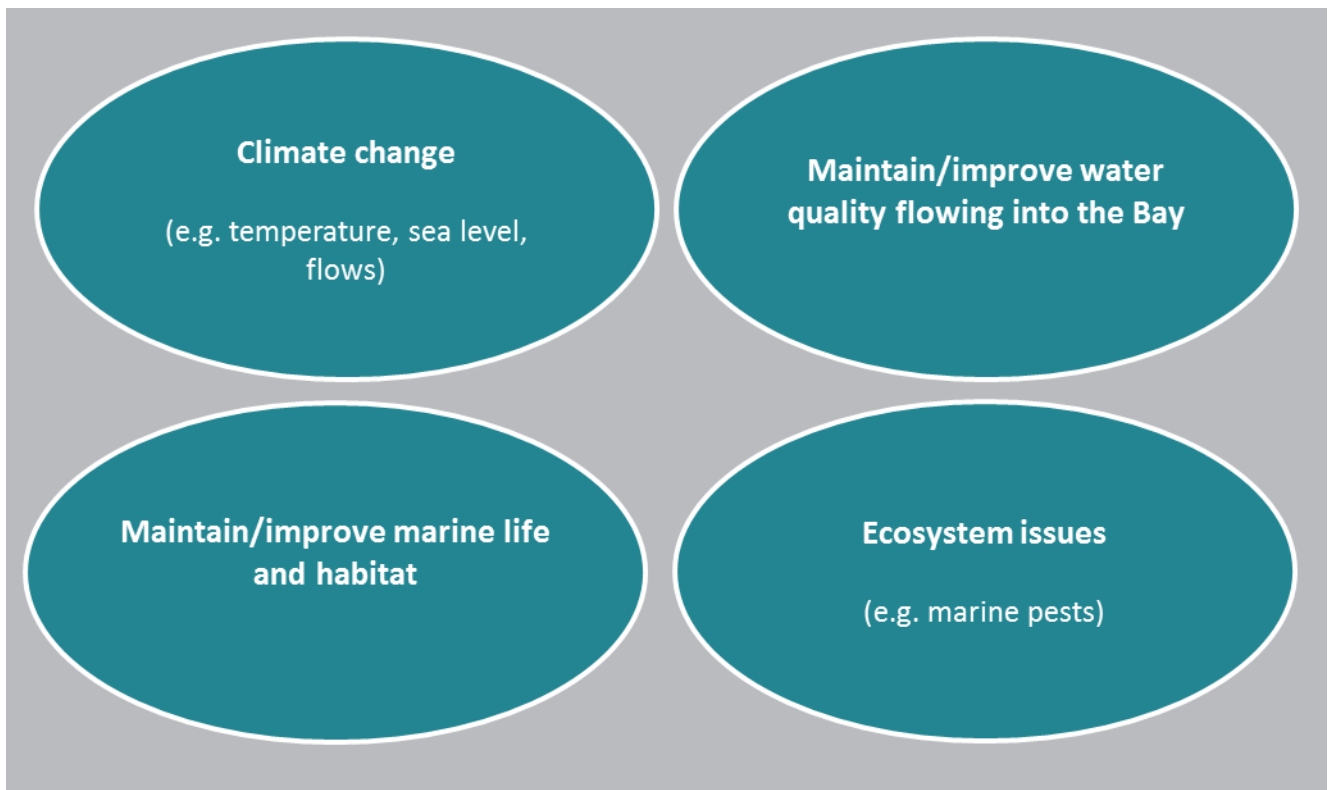
### 3. What do you think are the key challenges for the Bay?

There are a number of issues that, if not managed appropriately, could be detrimental to the health of the Bay and the activities it supports. These issues can arise from human activities within the Bay and on land in the surrounding catchment, and as a result of climate change.

The new Environmental Management Plan will develop targets and actions and focus on key challenges to the Bay's health.

A list of some of the current and possible future challenges for the health of the Bay is outlined in Figure 8.

5. *What do you think are the key challenges to the health of the Bay? Is there anything you don't like about the Bay?*
6. *Are there any key challenges missing from Figure 8?*
7. *What would you like to see improved or addressed as part of the Bay's future management?*



**Figure 8 Potential current and future challenges for the health of Port Phillip Bay**

#### What happens once we receive your input?

Your input will contribute to a new vision for Port Phillip Bay and help establish the values to be protected and challenges to be managed under the new Environmental Management Plan.

The draft Plan is scheduled to be released for public consultation in mid 2016. The final plan is due to be completed in late 2016.

Please email us with any questions at [Bay.Plan@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Bay.Plan@delwp.vic.gov.au)

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Department of Natural Resources and Environment. (2002). *Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan: Plan and Critical Program to 2003*. Melbourne.

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