

This article shows the instability of the cliffs at the 12 Apostles viewing platform, with photos of its construction and the finished result – loads of concrete and deep foundations and aesthetic incompatibility with a sensitive environment.



12 Apostles viewing platform 10 Jan 2024. A blight on the landscape - PCCG Inc. The Design is based on the Red-tailed Black cockatoo – which is not indigenous to this coast.



12 Apostles diving board viewing platform. Photo PCCG Inc. 16-5-2023

The 'diving board' style viewing platform at the 12 Apostles fails to take into account the nature of this coast. The limestone cliffs are riddled with lineations (sub-surface cracks), drainage channels, caverns, and sink holes. The image below shows the fragility of this narrow strip of cliff and 2 major surface drainage channels running alongside the east and west side of the development area.

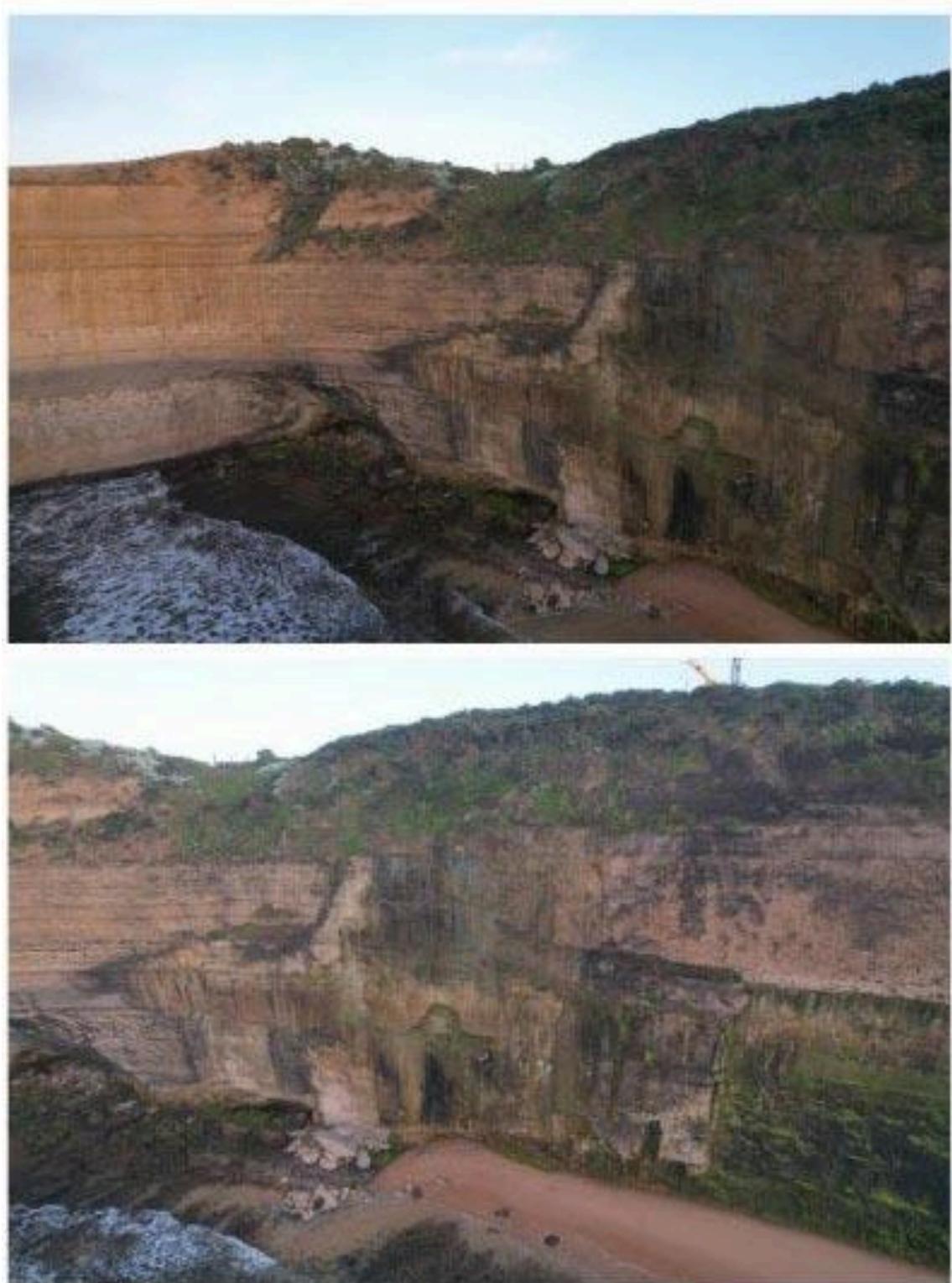


Photo: Google Earth. Red dots show drainage channels. The Saddle & the Castle Rock promontory is eroding

**It seems there was no Environmental Effects Statement for this viewing platform in a high risk area.**

The 'Saddle', which the viewing platform will straddle, is eroding and in the process of forming an 'apostle'. The viewing area at the southern-most end of the promontory was closed. It is an area of geomorphological instability.

Parks Vic photos (below) show a small cliff collapse on the eastern side while drilling, and there is undercutting (caverns and tunnel through to west side) beneath the viewing platform site.



*Photos above: Parks Victoria – Annual Compliance Report (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) p.15*

**There was a major cliff collapse on the west side of the 'Saddle' in 2011 - below. The diving board viewing platform sits above this collapse with a cantilever structure extending over the cliff edge.**



Photo PCCG Inc. 2011



Castle Rock and the Saddle were still open to tourists 14-1-2014 despite the 2011 cliff collapse beneath walking track. Photo: PCCG Inc.

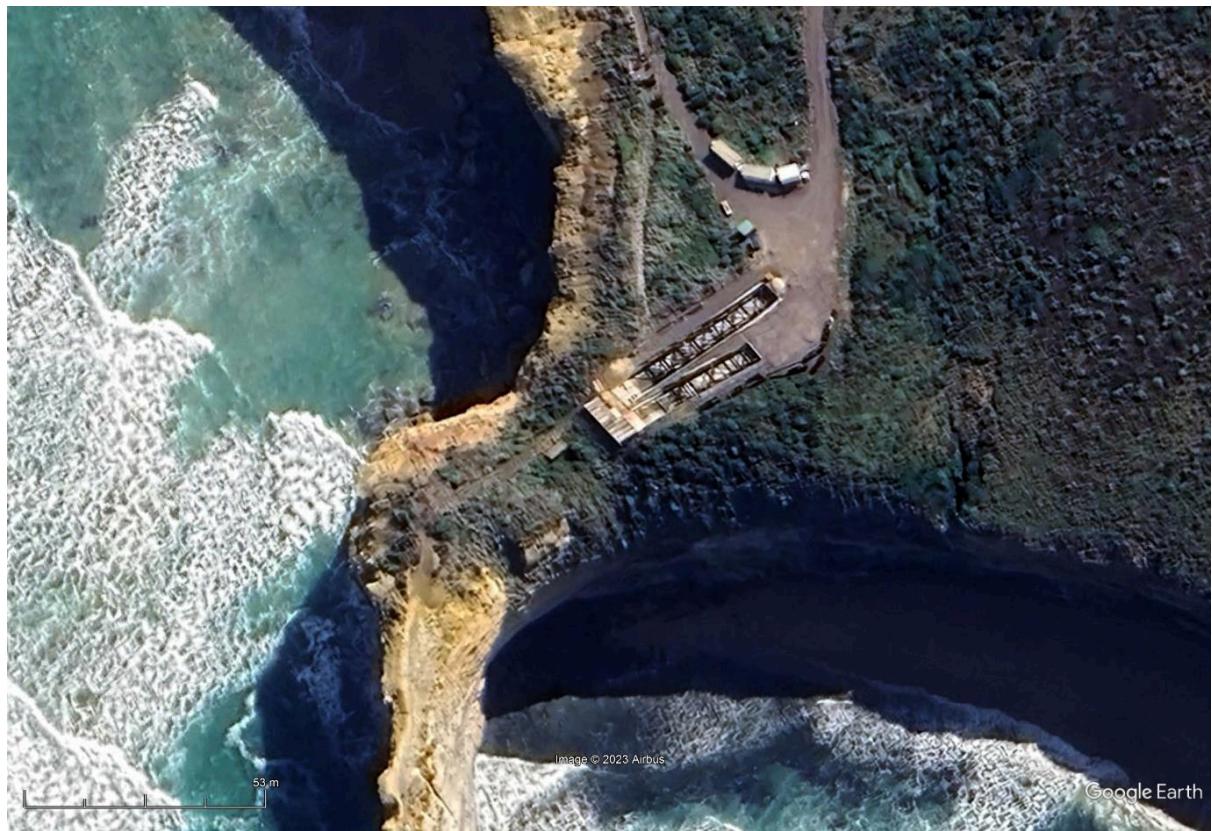


20-4-2023 – the base of the viewing platform is in place adjoining cliff collapses on both sides. Photo PCCG Inc

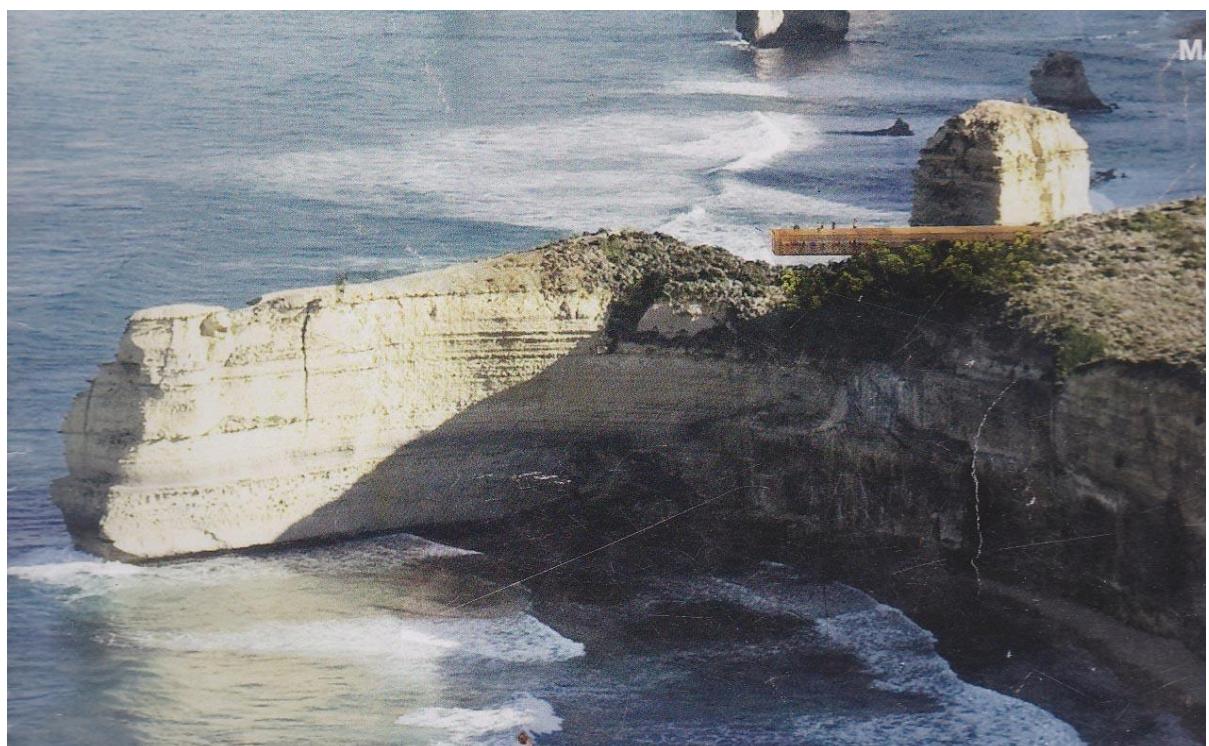
**Geotechnical experts recommend not siting any major infrastructure near the fragile cliffs.**



Parks Victoria sign warns the cliffs are unstable, yet the government continued building the viewing platform. Photo: PCCG Inc May 2023



Google Earth 7/8/2023 – shows the start of foundations next to the 2011 cliff collapse and prior to the diving board being added.



Cantilever structure – photo: Shipwreck Coast Master Plan. Parks Victoria 2015

**Parks Victoria states: “The design aims to remove visitors from the cliff edges and avoid breaches over the barriers”, but the viewing platform actually places visitors over the cliff edge.**

**There are many examples of moving infrastructure back from the fragile cliffs for safety reasons:**

- The roadway to the Blow Hole and Thunder Cave was closed when it became apparent that caverns ran under the road.
- The 12 Apostles car park was moved to the north side of the Great Ocean Road due to the fragility of this site.
- When a major cavern and lineation system running from the Razorback cliff cavern under Loch Ard Gorge car park (where it intersects with other caverns and drainage lines) through to Sherbrooke River was raised with Parks Vic by the author, the government proposed moving the Loch Ard Gorge car park to the north side of the Great Ocean Road.  
(The author went into the Razorback cavern by boat. The cavern turns at a right angle towards Loch Ard Gorge. Aerial photos show the lineation runs through to Sherbrooke River. At Loch Ard Gorge there is another major cavern running north to south under the intersection road. Image below.)
- The Great Ocean Road was closed on Port Campbell headland due to cavern undermining.
- The Great Ocean Road was rerouted at the ‘Murphies’ – just west of London Bridge due to cavern undermining.
- Many sites have been closed due to cliff collapse, including The Arch and Loch Ard Gorge.
- Many catastrophic cliff collapses have occurred on this coastline.

Razorback Cavern to Loch Ard Gorge and Sherbrooke River lineations and caverns – below.



Photo: Google Earth – red dots show underground caverns and lineations which run through to Sherbrooke River under the Loch Ard Gorge car park.

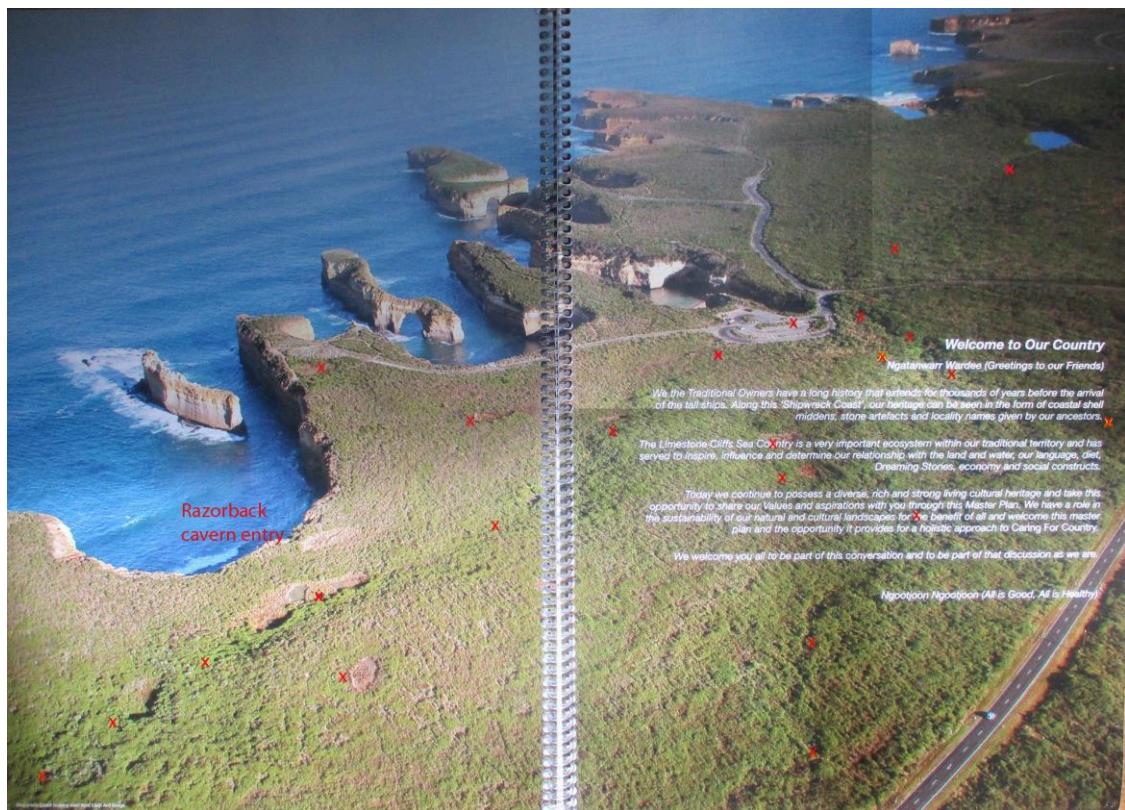


Photo: Shipwreck Coast Master Plan 2015 – red crosses added to show underground caverns and lineations



Photo: Google Earth – above – Loch Ard Gorge - red dots show lineations and drainage channels

The Great Ocean Road was moved inland at the 'Murphies' just west of London Bridge (below). Many tons of rock collapsed catastrophically and without warning. This scenario could happen to the narrow peninsula at the 12 Apostles where the platform is built.



The 'Murphies' cliff collapse. Photo: PCCG Inc. 2010. Recent collapses have occurred at the Murphies.



Cliff Collapse near Lace Curtains west of The Arch. Photo: PCCG Inc 2015

VicRoads withdrew its responsibility for the Great Ocean Road on the Port Campbell headland in 1991 due to cavern undermining and risk (although Council kept it open until 2002). The walking track was detoured in 2011 due to cavern collapse risk - below.

# Headlands closure

## An unacceptable risk to walkers

AN unacceptable risk to human life has forced the closure of a popular walking track along the cliff top at Sturgess Point, Port Campbell.

Corangamite Shire corporate services director David Anderson said the walking track was located on the former Great Ocean Road reserve and was managed by the council.

"In response to continued community concerns related to the stability of the entire headland in Port Campbell, the State Government commissioned geotechnical consultants to complete a detailed study into the stability of known sea caves in that area," Mr Anderson said.

"Unfortunately, while the comprehensive report found much of the headland was more stable than other studies had previously indicated, it also identified a high risk associated with the walking track."

According to Mr Anderson, the bitumen seal of the former Great Ocean Road has been retained as the walking track and a 20-metre section of it now bridged a large sea cave.

"It is that section of the walking track that has been identified in the report as posing a high risk of collapse, the consequences of which could be catastrophic," he said.

"The report has required us as the managers of that area to consider our options to address the identified liability issues."

Mr Anderson said a number of options had been considered.

"We considered three options including closing the walking track, accepting the liability and risk or spending significant funds during further detailed geotechnical investigation," he said.

"Our view is that it would be



Lives at risk: The Corangamite Shire has announced the closure of a popular walking track on Sturgess Point, Port Campbell. A large sea cavern beneath the path has forced the closure. 2011

irresponsible for Corangamite Shire to either accept the risk to public safety or commission consultants to challenge the findings of what we believe to be a credible and comprehensive report."

Mr Anderson said the council's insurers had been informed of the risk and were working closely with staff to manage the situation.

He said temporary signs would be erected this week, informing users of the track that it was now closed due to high risk of collapse.

"In the short term we ask people to

take personal responsibility for their safety, heed the warning signs and no longer use the walking track," Mr Anderson said.

"We will move as quickly as possible to close the track on a more permanent basis, which will include the delicate revegetation works and the construction of physical barriers.

"At this stage we plan to rehabilitate the at-risk section to discourage access."

Mr Anderson said once the closure

was completed, investigations would begin to identify viable options to re-route the track away from the sea cave and restore the popular walk.

"A range of detailed work will need to be done in order to see whether a new section of track can be created to provide a safe link through that area," he said.

Article: Cobden Times 10-12-2011

**It is amazing how governments seem to forget the fragility of the coast when 'tourism' is mentioned.**

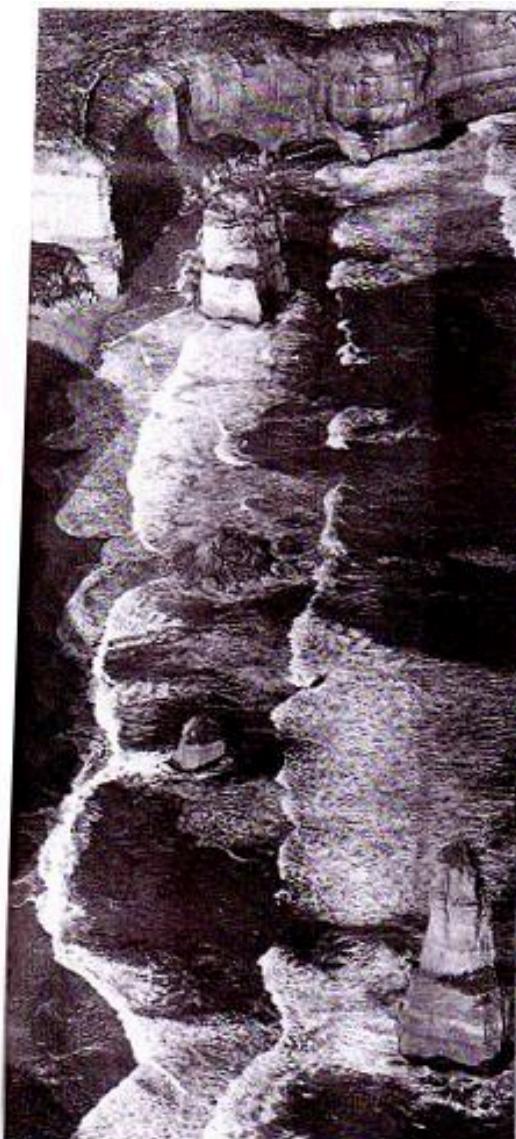
**World renowned coastal geomorphologist Dr Eric Bird wrote re earlier infrastructure on the coast:**

"Geomorphological and geotechnical evidence therefore indicates that it is hazardous to build structures (particularly large buildings) near these cliffs and caverns because of the risk of damage resulting from their collapse, and of consequent injuries or deaths. There is the question of legal responsibility if such structures are permitted (geotechnical advice having been ignored), and a collapse then occurs."

**Neville Rosengren, coastal geomorphologist wrote re another building which was to be set back much further than the Saddle lookout from the coast:**

"It is clear that coastal recession and surface subsidence along the limestone coast is an ongoing, although highly variable process. Approval for major building or other infrastructure installation in proximity to the coast and potential caverns is irresponsible".

Dr Eric Bird's diagram below demonstrates the process occurring on these headlands. It is also occurring at the 12 Apostles lookout.



### HOW THE APOSTLES WERE FORMED



**Prowntomy**  
Water erodes and undercutts less-resistant rock along the flanks.



**Prowntomy/Arch**  
Continued erosion eventually forms a natural arch under the prowntomy.



**Arch**  
Collapse of the inner arch separates the outer arch.



**Apostle**  
Further erosion of the formation causes the collapse of the arch into rockpools.

PETER J. MURKIN

SCOTT HORN

## Apostles face an unstable future

By STEPHEN CAUCHI  
SCIENCE REPORTER

IT MAY be just decades before Victoria loses more of its Twelve Apostles, say Melbourne geologists. But new ones will be carved out of the remaining stack.

Melbourne University geologist Bernard Joyce said while the limestone rock that formed the Apostles was millions of years old, the formations could be just centuries old.

Professor Joyce said that over the past 6000 years, the shoreline of limestone cliffs had been eroded by about a kilometre. Fellow Melbourne University geologist Eric Bird had extensively studied the limestone plain in the region, he said.

"You've got a platform of fairly shallow water extending out for about a kilometre," Professor Joyce said. "He thinks that's where the old shoreline was when the seabed rose to its present level about 6000 years ago. So in 6000 years it's come in about a kilometre, which is very fast. Something like 15-centimetres a year."

Professor Joyce said the fact the Apostles were so close to the present shoreline indicated they had been carved out of the cliffs' worth.

"There'd be some that would be hundreds of years old. At the most, you might say 1000 years," he said.

Professor Joyce said that until about 12,000 years ago, it was possible to walk from Victoria to Tasmania. As the ice age ended, sea levels gradually rose until they lapped at the old shoreline 6000 years ago.

Alex Gaven, the Parks Victoria manager in charge of the Shipwreck Coast, said Parks Victoria monitored eroding cliffs where



walkways, lookouts and car parks were located, but not the Apostles themselves.

"The reason we don't is that they're removed from the public areas, they're out in the ocean. If they are unstable, there's very little we can do to actually stop them collapsing."

He said the number of Apostles was subjective. From the viewing platform, you could see nine (now eight following Sunday's surprise collapse), but in the immediate vicinity, there were 14 (now 13) and along the entire stretch of coastline, between 20 and 30. There was also debate as to whether the smaller rock outcrops counted as Apostles.

He dismissed rumours the collapse was caused by helicopters filming the next *Superman* movie on the weekend.

Professor Joyce said it was impossible to say how long the remaining Apostles would last.

"The first one to go might be next week or in 10 or more years. The last one to go might be many centuries in the future," he said.

He said the number of Apostles could increase as the ocean carved new ones out of the cliffs.

"In the next hundred years we might have two or three come down. Meanwhile, in other places they'll be forming."

## Tourism industry caught between a fallen rock and a hard place

By MEAGHAN SHAW

AS NEWS of the collapse of one of Victoria's famous Twelve Apostles came through on Sunday, the state's top tourism officials hit the phones.

First thing yesterday morning, bureaucrats from Tourism Victoria and the office of Tourism

Minister John Pandolfo met to discuss the fallout.

The giant rock stacks are the state's most popular tourist attraction outside Melbourne, attracting about 1.5 million visitors a year and generating millions for the local economy.

"We had to assess how bad is this in terms of the loss of one

stack," Tourism Victoria marketing director Don Richter said.

"What does it do to the visitor experience? We made the judgement that it's still going to be a tremendously strong attraction."

Most pundits predict an increase in visitors wanting to compare images before and after the collapse.

Parks Victoria ranger Alex Gaven, who is in charge of the Shipwreck Coast, said his predecessor reported a doubling of visitor numbers in the year after another rock formation, London Bridge, fell in 1990.

"It's undoubtedly going to become part of the story of the Twelve Apostles," he said. "I

really think it will add to the visitor's experience."

The Twelve Apostles image is plastered on 175 London cabs as part of Melbourne's Commonwealth Games marketing. British television yesterday carried reports of the stack's demise.

Mr Richter said the London taxi world had been alerted and

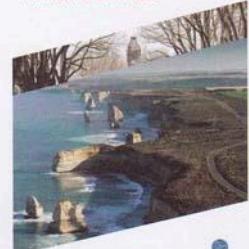
brochures featuring the attraction would not be withdrawn. However, new photographs would be taken and incorporated into new campaigns.

The State Government has rejected calls to attempt to preserve the remaining stacks, with Mr Pandolfo calling the collapse an act of nature.

**An aim of the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan was to spread tourism across the coast and hinterland which would pressure off the 12 Apostles. But the diving board viewing platform gimmick will attract more tourists to the site, and the geo-fragility may put them at risk.**



CORANGAMITE SHIRE  
PRIORITIES 2017-2018



Capacity and safety issues plague the existing  
Twelve Apostles visitor precinct

Photo above: Corangamite Shire



Photo: Great Ocean Road Action Plan

Guard rails could have been put in place to stop people climbing onto the cliff edge at the current viewing platform.

The Shipwreck Coast Master Plan shows images of Norway diving board style viewing platforms (p. 73, p.75, p.77 - below). But Port Campbell Limestone is not like Norway's granite and is not suitable for infrastructure close to the cliffs; it is not a responsible comparison.



Havøysund Tourist Route, Norway by Reiulf Ramstad Architects, photo by Reiulf Ramstad Architects

12 Apostles infrastructure works on the edge of the cliff - below



Photo 2021

**The extensive infrastructure being carried out at the 12 Apostles cliff edge – roadways, drilling or and anchoring foundations – will weaken an already fragile area and accelerate cliff collapse.**



The diving board May 2023. Note cliff undercutting and sea attack erosion.

**Infrastructure works should not have occurred:**

- Until an open and inclusive EES was conducted;
- Any geotechnical reports for the viewing platform must be made public to allow full scrutiny and risk assessment.







Photos PCCG Inc. September 2024



PCCG Inc members are concerned about the increase in tourism numbers and the major infrastructure works near the cliff edge and the effect on the fragile environment.

PCCG Inc. Oct 2025