



MEDIA RELEASE

KILLARNEY, THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016

The Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group has, on Thursday June 2nd, written to both the Minister for Environment and to the Mayor of Moyne Shire calling for them to step up to responsible management of commercial horse training on Killarney beaches.

Spokesperson Bill Yates said: “We are a community group made up of local residents, surfers, fishermen, beachgoers, dog walkers and wildlife lovers. Together, we want commercial horse trainers to stop forcing us off the beach and stop damaging the environment. We want the government to step in to give us our beaches back.”

“We are calling on the Moyne Shire Council, DELWP and Parks Victoria to consult with the community and create a management plan for the coast that sets out what activities are allowed on the beach and where, and then enforce it. Reams of government policy have been written to direct the authorities to make a management plan for sensible use of coastal areas, but now it’s time to see one.”

The *Coastal Management Act 1995*, the *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014* and the *Western Regional Coastal Plan 2015* all direct land management authorities to create Coastal Management Plans for effective management of coastal areas. Parks Victoria and Moyne Shire have not yet produced plans for the Killarney coast.

Bill continued: “We see the coast as a special place for recreation and enjoying the environment. Everything from kiteboarding to dog walking to recreational horse riding can be accommodated on the beach with appropriate rules. But at the moment, it’s Rafferty’s rules out there for commercial horse trainers, with people and endangered wildlife forced off, the beach churned up, car parks full of horse vans, piles of horse faeces and pools of urine. The beaches just can’t sustain domination by commercial enterprise.”

“It is incredible that daily, dozens of horses are worked at speed, up and down this coastal strip of Crown land completely without regard for safety: at times in complete darkness, completely without permits, without separation from the public, without warning signs, and presumably without insurance. Our members have witnessed several near misses. I can only imagine that anyone bowled over by a horse would pretty quickly sue both the horse trainer and the Shire, and could expect a pretty big win in court. Worksafe have been notified but have denied any responsibility, which is curious.”

“We understand the economic and social benefits that the racing industry brings to the area, but what price do you put on public safety and protection of the environment and wildlife. This is not right and it is not fair. Endangered bird species, like the Hooded Plover, are protected under State and Commonwealth law”.

“In the interests of public safety we have also written to the South West Horse Trainers Association requesting a voluntary moratorium on commercial horse training on the Killarney beaches, until a management plan and some local laws or regulations can be put in place”.

“Recreational horse riding, along with a whole range of other recreational activities, should be allowed to continue, if undertaken safely and regulated in a way that respects other beach users. The local community need some support and clear regulations”

“We understand a meeting is to take place between Moyne Shire, parks Victoria and DELWP on June 15 in regard to these issues and, as a community, we just want someone to stand up and take responsibility for sorting this out”

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