

## Media Statement

### Time for government to properly protect Belfast Coastal Reserve

Local community groups, along with Birdlife Australia and the Victorian National Parks Association, are calling on the Victorian government to protect the Belfast Coastal Reserve from the damage being caused by commercial horse training.

Bill Yates of the Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group said that the reserve was set up to protect the area's wildlife and coastal values, and support low-intensity recreational activities such as swimming, walking, picnicking, fishing and boating.

“Commercial horse trainers are using the public reserve as their private training ground, damaging sand dunes, disturbing the critically endangered hooded plovers and discouraging recreational users from visiting. It's unsustainable and unsafe.

“We are aware that DELWP and Parks Victoria have been holding discussions with the South West Owners, Trainers and Riders Association. In those discussions, DELWP and Parks Victoria should advise the association that their use is inappropriate for the Belfast Coastal Reserve.

“It is time that the horseracing industry in Warrnambool established its own purpose-built sand training track that could be used by trainers from around the region and generate income for the city.”

Toni Ryan of the Far West Friends of the Hooded Plover said that the Belfast Coastal Reserve has the highest concentration of Hooded Plovers in the state and its protection is vital to their future.

“Their breeding season is just beginning and horses and hooded plovers just do not mix. Nesting birds will be disturbed and eggs crushed if commercial horse training continues.

“The Victorian Government should create new regulations to properly manage the Belfast Coastal Reserve and, in the longer term, establish a coastal park under one manager, Parks Victoria.

The local community groups that have signed this statement are:

Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Groups  
Killarney Coastcare  
Far West Friends of the Hooded Plover  
Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network  
Friends of Tower Hill

They are joined by:

Birdlife Australia  
Victorian National Parks Association

Media inquiries

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