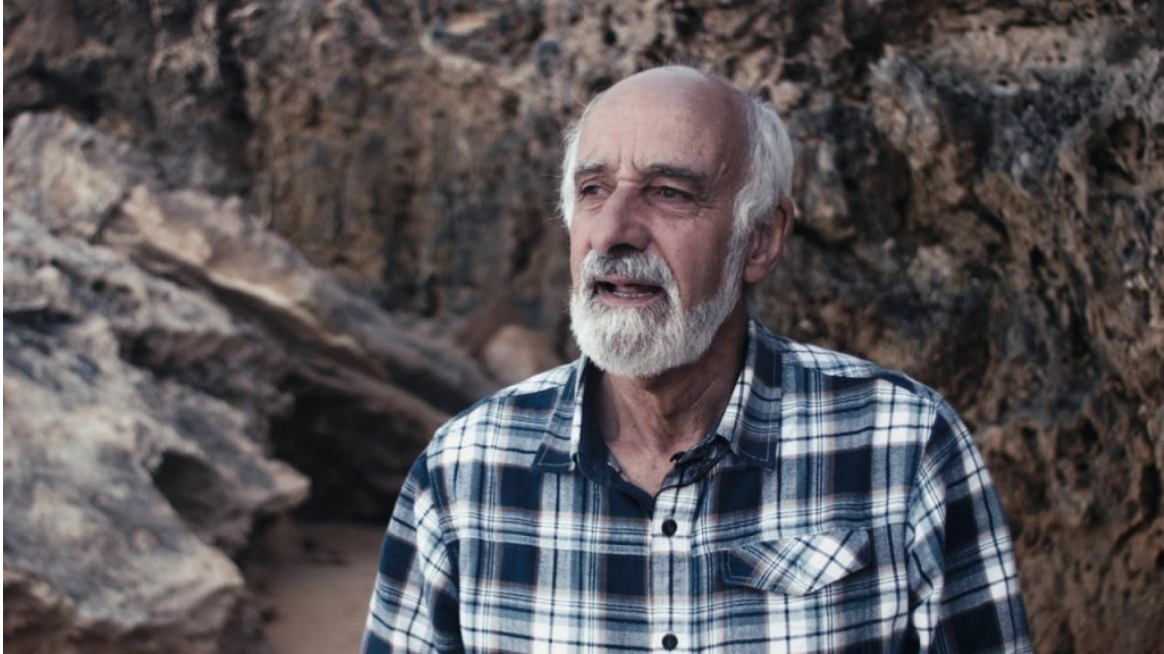


Highly respected researcher wades into racehorse debate



Highly respected environmentalist and academic Dr John Sherwood is preparing a report on the area of Levy's Point designated for large-scale racehorse training .
Image: Deakin University Research.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Now this is some serious clout: top-gun academic Dr John Sherwood, from Deakin University, is preparing a report on the Levy's Beach area which has been earmarked for large-scale racehorse training.

Dr Sherwood, a member of the State Government's new Marine and Coastal Council and the 2017 Warrnambool City Council Citizen of the Year, has been keeping a quiet eye on the plan to allow up to 160 racehorses a day into what is part of the Belfast Coastal Reserve.

Dr Sherwood is now looking closely into the so-called "Hoon Hill" area, which has been woefully under-researched in terms

of its potential environmental and cultural importance.

Respected local ecologist Jodie Honan is also preparing a report on the plants and animals in the area, because – once again – we don't really know what is there.

Despite this gaping hole in the data, the Warrnambool City Council and State Government intend to allow up to 120 racehorses a day on the beach and 40 a day on the dunes, five days a week, from November.

As you do...in a coastal reserve.

Both reports have been commissioned by the Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group which, as we know, has been fighting commercial racehorse training on beaches for almost four years now.

Dr Sherwood entering this issue is, to me, monumental because he comes with decades of experience and a tonne of respect.

His most recent work, in case you have been hiding in a cupboard, gained international attention after it raised the possibility of humans living at Moyjil/Point Richie in Warrnambool up to 120,000 years ago – 50,000 years longer than previously thought.

I will be fascinated to see his and Jodie's reports.