

Our wild places and old trees need saving, not destroying

This is our precious, living heritage and you, Warrnambool City Council, are trashing it.

Does horse racing rule our town?

Proud to sponsor a race on Koroit Cup day



Carol Altmann – The Terrier

One of the many things that struck me while working through the plan to allow commercial racehorse training on our wild beaches is that all three of our local MPs – Dan Tehan, James Purcell and Roma Britnell – have strong ties to horse racing.

Federal MP Dan Tehan, although his office was oddly reluctant to make this clear, shares a very successful racehorse with the CEO of the Warrnambool Racing Club, Nick Rule, among others.

Independent MP James Purcell has an interest in numerous racehorses and his son is a professional trainer.

State Liberal MP Roma Britnell, who as far as I know doesn't own a racehorse, has a horse race named in her honour and holds a Warrnambool Racing Club membership.

Which of our local MPs, then, will argue that our beaches should not be used for racehorse training on an industrial scale?

Which of them will lobby to instead increase protection of the Belfast Coastal Reserve?

None of them.

Instead, all three of our local MPs have started from the point that we need to reach a "compromise", a "balance", a "give-and-take" on having thoroughbred racehorses pounding along sections of beach between Killarney and Warrnambool and up and down the dunes at Levy's Point.

Not one of them has said that large numbers of racehorses should not be in a coastal reserve in the first place.

At least Roma Britnell, in an email to me via her media advisor Jarrod Woolley, said she had "a number of concerns" about the draft management plan for the reserve.

When I asked what those concerns actually were, however, there was no more information forthcoming.

This is why documents released to the Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group under Freedom of Information make for such a revealing – and depressing – read.

They spell out that commercial, large-scale racehorse training in the Belfast Coastal Reserve is virtually a fait accompli.

The correspondence between the various bodies involved in the draft plan never questions why racehorse training should be allowed, but how it will be managed.

At first I felt like giving up and not even bothering to write a submission. What was the point, the cards were already stacked, right?

But then it occurred to me that this is the very reason why other voices need to be heard, or those with the most power, the most access, and the most influence will simply roll right over the top with impunity.

We elect people to represent our views because we don't have the time to wade through reports, but this time, I am sorry to say, those of us who want to see this reserve preserved are on our own.

So please make the effort, either by filling out the online survey or emailing a submission, via this link:
www.engage.vic.gov.au/belfast

James Purcell's potential conflict of interest

Opinion: MLC James Purcell's potential conflict of interest.
(Image: Enjoy Racing)

Purcell on racing industry: Hansard

Hansard:

15 September 2016

COUNCIL

Adjournment

JAMES PURCELL

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) – The adjournment matter I raise tonight is for the Minister for Racing, Mr Pakula. As members know, I am a dedicated supporter of horseracing and not shy of showing my support in this chamber. I have continually raised the importance of the racing industry to Victoria and particularly to my part of Victoria, western Victoria, in the Warrnambool area. I will continue to use my position in this place to support the racing industry, including getting the dunes at Levy's Point reopened for training. It has been used for the training of many racehorses, including last year's Melbourne Cup winner, Prince of Penzance. I will work to get these reopened; they were closed this week. But I cannot support the most stupid idea of using the East Beach in Port Fairy as a training track.

If the proposal to build a horse truck park at the foot of the dunes near the Port Fairy golf course came to fruition, we would see the visitors and local residents of Port Fairy excluded from using this section of the beach, as up to 120 horses per day would be using East Beach. My community and the tourism industry are too important to allow this to happen to Port Fairy East Beach, which is one of the loveliest beaches in this country.

With the promise to have the Killarney Beach closed during Christmas – it is halfway between Warrnambool and Port Fairy – and with the Warrnambool beach also closed during that summer period we could see over 200 horses per day on East Beach, with many members of the public not happy to share the space with galloping horses. What happens to the people fishing or taking their dogs for a walk?

For too long the Warrnambool Racing Club has been too easy a ride, with so many of the horses being trained off the racecourse. To solve this problem and keep the industry alive the Warrnambool racetrack must provide the facilities, including a usable synthetic training track and an uphill gallop. If the Warrnambool Racing Club had provided the necessary training facilities in the beginning, we would not be facing these problems.

I therefore urge the minister to intervene in this issue and work with the Warrnambool Racing Club to fund the upgrading of the synthetic training track and to provide an uphill gallop at the Warrnambool racecourse.

Ends