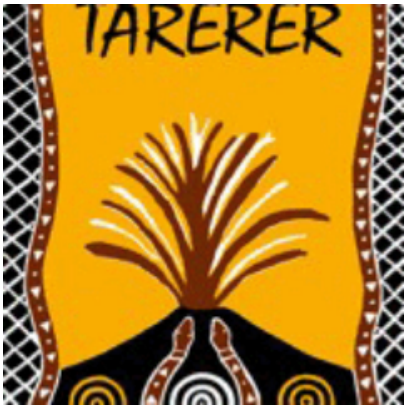

Traditional Owners lift their voices, but will we ever listen?

Description

The section of Tarerer coast (Belfast Coastal Reserve) and large dune that will be opened up to commercial racehorse training under plans still before the W'bool City Council. Image: Chris Farrell

Letter to Warrnambool City Councillors 2 Feb 2020

By Lee-Anne Clarke and on behalf of Elder Aunty Julie Jose and Tom Clarke

Today we are writing to you, as we are aware that there is a Warrnambool Council Meeting on the 3 February 2020. On your Agenda for this meeting, you have listed 5.2 Horses on Beach – Land Manager Consent Spookys.

Our interest in the Agenda Item stipulated is to add our Cultural lens and views as Traditional Owners of the Kirrae Whurrong/Peek Wurrung people. Our view on our Cultural Landscape; our Traditional Lands of Eastern Maar people.

We do not want commercial horses on the BCR – Peek Wurrung Dune Country.

BCR – Peek Wurrung Dune Country:

Along this Coastline beginning around Port Campbell, The Twelve Apostles (Kirrae Whurrong) and Point Ritchie – Moyjil (Peek Wurrung), Hopkins River, Thunder Point, Peek Wurrung Dune Country, further down Tarerer, right through to Gunditjmara Budj Bim Cultural Landscape (Now on the World Heritage Listing), we have thousands of years of scientific evidence of First Nations occupation.

This part of our Country in which we as Eastern Maar call our Ancestral and Spiritual Homelands. This area in which has been
recorded where our people were quite heavily populated and utilizing this are for Traditional Customs, enjoyment, economy and environment, Ceremony and trade over many, many thousands of years. In fact Moyjil being investigated and dated as old as 80,000 to 120,000 thousand years. Moyjil is around 5 kms from our Dune Country.

Does this not tell you something?

In the Reserve, it has been well known that firstly the commercial horse training has begun and continued illegally for years and never reprimanded or picked up as an Illegal activity on the Reserve within your Council.

During this time, there has been unsurmountable damage that has occurred that is irreparable within the HH Track area. Ancient sands damage and artefacts damaged with riders and their horses.

Within these Dunes, we have Burial sites, artefacts, shell middens, hearth ovens and ceremonial sites.

We also hold Dreaming Stories. Dreaming Stories are Creation stories of the Cultural Landscape. Dreaming Stories are treasured and held in high regard across the whole of Australia.

We also have a healthy native wildlife and birdlife there who consider this place their home. These animals and birds whom we are connected to via our Totems and incorporates our Ceremonial dance, our way of working in synchronicity with Country; to sustain healthy country.

We would like you to consider Peek Wurrung Dune Country to be delicately nurtured in way of supporting Traditional Custodians and wider Community to care for Country.

Protection of Cultural Heritage:

In caring for Country, we would envisage, seeking governmental support, and funding for this area. We would expect there to be a demand of Tourism in the area as there are rising interests in Aboriginal Culture as is well received across other places of interests regarding Aboriginal Culture.

We would believe the protection of Cultural Heritage needs to be recognized in this area, for First Nations, and be given the opportunity to create an infallible foundation in looking after this amazing reserve, and give the respect it deserves.

For the Protection of Cultural Heritage versus commercial horse training on sand dunes and beaches these two are in direct conflict. There is greater support for the protection of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

We believe in investing in long term Cultural Heritage, as tourism is the future.

As to the industrialization of horses, training on our highly sensitive Dune Country and highly concentrated Aboriginal Cultural Heritage our artefacts submerged within the ever so sensitive BCR – Peek Wurrung Dune Country, would implicate further destruction through this type of abuse within this area.

We are extremely concerned about the irresponsible destruction, damage and interference the proposed activity will undoubtedly bring to our little and remaining Cultural Heritage.

We consider this our natural environment our Cathedral, our Church.

Our unyielding love for this Country has our Elders terribly upset, concerned, and have cried openly for Country
such is the love and raw emotion that genuinely attaches us to Dune Country.
It would be irresponsible for us not to speak out as next of kin of our Ancestral and Spiritual homelands.

As a lure from the Gambling Industry, a consideration of a yes vote, would invoke serious implications of the whole of the reserve as time goes on.
Please shut the gate on this now and save the little remaining pristine area that we have left, the Belfast Coastal Reserve – Peek Wurrung Dune Country.

The statistics show the horses do not need this Reserve to use for their personal gain in the racing industry.

As Traditional Custodians, in dignity, we would like to ask you to, please do not allow commercial racehorses on Belfast Coastal Reserve – Peek Wurrung Dune Country.

Wurruk.

Category

1. Opinion

Tags

1. commercial racehorse training
2. elders.
3. Josie Clarke
4. LeeAnne Clarke
5. letter
6. Levy's Beach
7. racehorse
8. racehorses
9. traditional owners.
10. training
11. Warrnambool City Council

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