

'What We Heard' Dog Beach Community Consultation

Community Feedback from a listening post that was held at
Dog Beach on 27 March 2022



Borough of Queenscliffe
Queenscliff & Point Lonsdale, Victoria, Australia

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This Listening Post was the first of several engagement activities to be conducted as part of the Dog Beach, Queenscliff coastal adaptation plan. The objective was to introduce the project to the community, gain input on site history of erosion, and understand what the community values about the site.

Participants were asked:

- why they came to the beach
- how they used it,
- what they valued about the area,
- about their knowledge of coastal process, and
- what they perceived as issues at the beach.

This is what we heard:

- Many people understand the history of erosion and are concerned about the steep erosion escarpment in the dune at Dog Beach. The primary concern was safety, especially for children.

"Danger with kids climbing overhangs, no matter how many signs are erected."

- Off-leash dog walking is the main reason people come to the beach. The wide, open, and unobstructed character of the beach is highly valued as it allows dogs to spread out and reduces conflicts.

"Suitability for dogs off leash area needs to be maintained. This includes reducing hazardous erosion."

Who we heard from:

The majority of the people we heard from were locals, or people who lived in the Bellarine Peninsula, and visited the beach regularly to walk their dogs. Only a small number were holiday makers. Most visited the beach at least weekly, and the majority were over 50 years old.

Uses and values:

Dog walking was the most common use (more than two thirds), followed by exercise, swimming, and family recreation (sunbathing, building sandcastles etc). The people we spoke to nominated the 'wide and open nature' of the beach, the 'natural vegetation and character' and the 'access along the beach from Queenscliff to Point Lonsdale' as the key values of the area.

Awareness of coastal hazards:

All the beach users we spoke to had either a good understanding or general awareness of coastal hazards. Of particular concern was the erosion of the sand dune and the resulting high unstable dune escarpment which may be a hazard to people or animals that try to climb it, in particular children.

"Safety issues resulting from eroded dunes"

There was also concern about how far the erosion could extend in future and whether it could impact houses, the road or even sever The Neck connecting Point Lonsdale to Queenscliff.

Additionally, awareness was shown that intervention could damage the character of the beach and/or cause problems elsewhere.

Participants were invited to complete a survey which was available at the listening post and online. The following summarises the 83 responses received.

Q1 - How would you describe your connection to Dog Beach?

The majority of respondents described themselves as local residents or frequent visitors. Only a few people identified as holiday makers.

Q2 - How often do you use Dog Beach?

Most respondents were regular beach users, with two thirds visiting daily or several times a week. About one third visited a few times a month and only three visited annually.

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Q3 – Please specify your age range?

Around 80% of respondents were over 50, the rest were between 18 and 50.

Q4 - What do you value about the Dog Beach area?

The survey responses, in order of popularity, were:

1. Wide sandy beach at all tides
2. Native vegetation and natural landscape
3. Access along the beach between Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale
4. Car parking and access over the dune to the beach
5. Walking path in dunes between Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale (Lovers Walk)
6. All of the above
7. Dog friendly and off-lead area

Q5 How do you use Dog Beach?

Dog walking was the most common use nominated (more than two thirds), followed by exercise, swimming, and family recreation (sunbathing, building castles etc).

Q6 How would you rate your current understanding of the potential for coastal hazards in the area?

The majority of respondents had either a good understanding or a general awareness of the coastal hazards in the area.

Q7 How severe do you think coastal hazards impacts (e.g., erosion, long term recession) are at Dog Beach currently?

Over half of the respondents rated the severity of coastal hazards as 'severe'.

Next steps:

The next steps in the Coastal Adaptation Plan are to develop and assess a range of options to manage the coastal hazards at Dog Beach. This assessment will include a technical feasibility assessment of a proposal submitted by some members of the community. Once the technical assessment has been undertaken a second round of community engagement will be conducted to seek feedback on the options.

All potential options will be prepared in line with the *Marine and Coastal Policy 2020* that aims to reduce environmental impacts through an adaptive approach over new and existing physical infrastructure where possible.

Only options that are technically feasible and in line with relevant legislation will be considered for further engagement and assessment.

DELWP and Borough of Queenscliffe wish to thank the participants who provided valuable feedback which will be used into future planning decisions

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