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## **SUBMISSION TO THE PHILLIP ISLAND SPEED REVIEW**

Dear Councillors

Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS) was formed in 1968—one of the first grass-roots conservation societies in the nation—with the mantra “save wildlife today for tomorrow.” PICS guiding principles have ensured that we continue to be a voice for the preservation and enhancement of the terrestrial and marine environments of Phillip Island.

PICS members and specialist transport team have prepared a balanced submission to the Phillip Island speed review that is focused on wildlife protection, enhancement of our natural attractions and understanding of commuter travel expectations. Our recommendations add less than 15 seconds of travel time to the San Remo to Cowes road corridor.

PICS firmly believes our recommended speed limits should be strongly supported with creative signage that includes a very prominent gateway sign in Newhaven, and elsewhere on high-risk corridors, with bold symbolic legends depicting wildlife and a simple message to Drive Carefully for Wildlife. Key wildlife corridor roads should have dynamic speed signs, sunset to sunrise speed differentials and well-maintained roadsides to reduce grazing adjacent to roads. Temporary speed limits should operate during Shearwater migration.

We believe Council needs to fund ongoing monitoring and data collection of wildlife impacts. This will enable ongoing enhancements to policies and measures to protect wildlife that makes the Island a special place to live and an important and unique holiday and tourism destination.

Jeff Nottle

President



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## **SUBMISSION TO THE PHILLIP ISLAND SPEED REVIEW**

### **Background**

The Bass Coast Shire Council established a Community Reference Group (CRG), chaired by Councilor David Rooks, to provide feedback to Council on Phillip Island transport issues. Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc. (PICS) has a representative on the CRG.

A briefing on a Phillip Island Speed Review undertaken jointly by Regional Roads Victoria and Bass Coast Shire Council was provided to representatives on the CRG on 31 March 2021.

The stated vision for the review is “A safer road environment for the Phillip Island community, visitors and wildlife.”

The review covers all existing sealed rural roads on Phillip Island including arterial roads managed by RRV and other sealed roads managed by the Council. This first stage of the review does not include unsealed roads. These will be included in a second stage.

### **PICS Response to the Stage 1 Review**

PICS has canvassed the views of its members and transport team in relation to the review principles and speed limit proposals provided to CRG representatives on 31 March 2021. Our response on these matters is summarized below.

#### **Review Principles (Refer Attachment A)**

Subject to the amendment to Principle 7 noted in Attachment A, PICS endorses the stated vision for the review, and the review principles presented by Cr Rooks at the CRG briefing.

We consider that the proposed amendment in Principle 7 is significant because references to laid back lifestyle trivialize the importance of the need to recognize the unique natural attributes that make Phillip Island such an attractive holiday and tourist destination and such a successful tourism economy.

## Speed limit proposals (Refer Map in Attachment B)

We strongly endorse the maximum speed limit of 80kmh on the Island and we agree generally with the proposals subject to the amendments noted on the feedback spreadsheet. Our comments in support of the amendments are:

- a. The primary focus in our response has been the terrible wildlife injury and fatality rate on island roads, and the need to reduce speed limits as far as practicable, recognizing that for such limits to be effective (i.e. complied with) there must be a reasonable level of community acceptance.
- b. The additional travel time when speed limits are reduced from 80 to 60 kmh is only 15 seconds per km which is a powerful argument for reducing limits in high risk areas. However, we acknowledge that this argument may not be sufficient to convince the community if the limits are seen to be inconsistent with the abutting roadside conditions or their perception of the risk of errant wildlife.
- c. In the case of the Cowes-Rhyll Road, which is one of the most notorious road-kill routes on the island, we acknowledge that a 60kmh limit during daylight hours is unlikely to be observed, given the traffic volumes and length of the link. However, it is clear that the current 80kmh limit is not reducing kills. We have therefore proposed a limit of 70kmh in daylight hours and 50kmh during the period of highest risk to wildlife, between sunset and sunrise. We strongly recommend that dynamic speed signs be used on this road to highlight the high risk and the time dependent nature of that risk.
- d. We have also proposed a limit of 70kmh for Ventnor Road between Thompson Avenue and Grossard Point Road because of the nature of abutting vegetation and high wildlife risk.
- e. We have recommended that the coast access roads south of Back Beach Road (Gap Road, Berrys Beach Road, Kitty Miller Bay Road) have a 60kmh limit because they are not high volume through routes and because of the nature of the abutting wildlife precincts
- f. The Phillip Island Road between Newhaven and Cape Woolamai roundabout should be included in the review and should have a consistent speed limit of 60kmh to eliminate the current short sections with differing limits. Reduction of the 80 kmh speed limit over the short length between the Information Centre and the roundabout would add less than 15 seconds to travel time.
- g. We have recommended that the section of Ventnor Beach Road west of Lyall Street be included in the review and that the speed limit be reduced to 40kmh.

## Other matters

### Next Steps

The Phillip Island community has for many years been pressing the State Government and the Bass Coast Shire Council to really listen to community

concerns about the need to address the issue of speeding vehicles and wildlife destruction in this unique environment.

PICS welcomes the current review but we remain concerned about the commitment to implement meaningful and effective changes. We therefore request a clear response from RRV and Council about the timeframe for implementation of the proposed changes, and a commitment to a timeframe for the second stage of the review – the speed limits on unsealed major roads.

### **Shearwater Zones**

The high shearwater fatality rate on the Phillip Island Road between San Remo and Surf Beach for a period of around 2 weeks in April needs to be addressed by imposing temporary speed limits of 60 kmh at night using dynamic speed signs. Research has demonstrated significant reductions in fatality rates of grounded birds with speed reductions from 80 to 60kmh.

### **Education and Signage**

PICS strongly recommends that more effective signage be developed and installed as part of the speed review implementation. This should include a very prominent gateway sign in Newhaven with bold symbolic legends depicting wildlife and the simple message along the lines of: Drive Carefully for Wildlife. The symbolic signage should then be repeated on the high-risk corridors.

We urge Council and RRV to be creative in developing a wildlife signage strategy, and not bound by current policy guidelines that don't address the situation we have on this island.

### **Ongoing monitoring and data collection**

It is essential that quantified, evidence based monitoring continue after implementation of the speed review so that speed limits and other measures to protect wildlife continue to be refined and developed.

For its part, PICS will be applying for a Council Community Grant to offset the costs of current volunteer monitoring surveys.

### **Maintenance of roadsides**

The risk of wildlife collisions increases significantly if grass verges and vegetation are not maintained to reduce grazing immediately adjacent to roads. PICS is concerned that this is not receiving sufficient attention as can be seen by the current roadside condition abutting the Rhyll Newhaven Road.

## REVIEW PRINCIPLES PRESENTED AT THE CRG BRIEFING

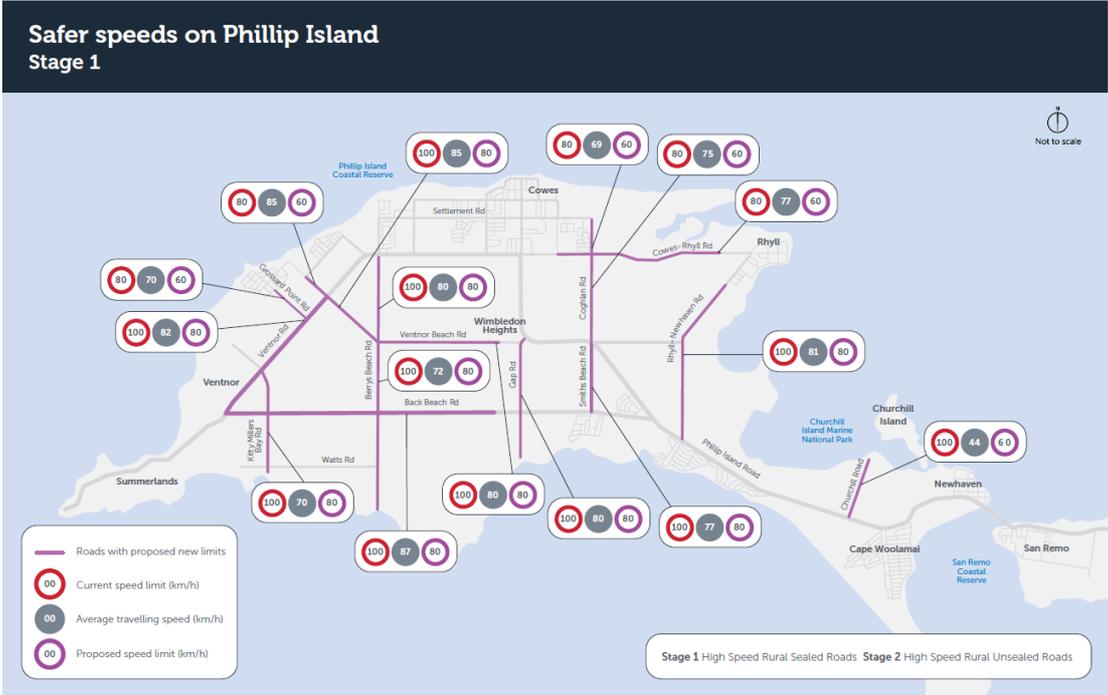
### **Principles from the 2014 Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study:**

1. *Transport Network Improvements:* Create a transport system that provides real alternatives to private vehicle travel. A focus on improvements to the walking, cycling and public transport networks is required, while balancing the ability of private vehicles and freight to more efficiently access the Island and the townships within it.
2. *Creating a vibrant and safe pedestrian and cycling network:* Implement pedestrian priority along and across streets in the townships supported by other measures such as a comprehensive cycle network.
3. *Better connections and integration across modes:* Overcome the significant barriers to the walking and cycling networks imposed by major roads and associated infrastructure, including improvements to the public transport network.
4. *Development of the transport network as an attractor:* Capitalise on the unique natural attributes of the Island through creation of a recreational network that becomes an attractor in its own right.
5. *Partnership with Victorian Government.* Develop an integrated transport system by working in close partnership with the Victorian Government, particularly for public transport and arterial road improvements, which they control.

### **and the two additional principles presented to the CRG**

6. *Importance of Wildlife:* Develop a transport system that recognizes the value of wildlife, minimizes the impact to wildlife and adapts itself to respond to the needs of wildlife.
7. *Balanced approach:* Create an all access transport network that balances the needs of all users whilst recognizing the ~~Island's beauty and more relaxed pace of life.~~ natural attributes that make the island an important and unique holiday and tourism destination.

# RRV SPEED REVIEW PROPOSALS



ATTACHMENT C

Road Name	Current Speed	Average Operating Speed*	Proposed Speed	Support Yes = 1 No = 0	Comments (evidence based preferred)
Ventnor Road	100kmh	82kmh	80kmh	1	
Back Beach Road	100kmh	88kmh	80kmh	1	
Berrys Beach Road (North of Ventnor Beach Rd)	100kmh	80kmh	80kmh	1	
Berrys Beach Road (South of Ventnor Beach Rd)	100kmh	72kmh	80kmh	0	South of Back Beach Road should be 60
Ventnor Beach Road (West of Berrys Beach Rd)	100kmh	85kmh	80kmh	1	
Ventnor Beach Road (East of Berrys Beach Rd)	100kmh	80kmh	80kmh	1	
Ventnor Beach Road (West of Ventnor Rd)	80kmh	85kmh	60kmh	1	
Rhyll Newhaven Road	100kmh	81kmh	80kmh	1	
Churchill Road	100kmh	44kmh	60kmh	1	
Grossard Point Road	80kmh	70kmh	60kmh	1	
Coghlan Road (North of Cowes Rhyll Rd)	80kmh	69kmh	60kmh	1	
Coghlan Road (South of Cowes Rhyll Rd)	80kmh	75kmh	60kmh	1	
Smiths Beach Road	100kmh	77kmh	80kmh	1	
Kitty Millers Bay Road	100kmh	70kmh	80kmh	0	South of Back Beach Road should be 60
Cowes-Rhyll Road	80kmh	77kmh	60kmh	0	Should be 70 KPH with 50 kph Sunset to Sunrise
Gap Road	100kmh	79kmh	80kmh	0	South of Back Beach Road should be 60

Other comments outside the scope

Road name	Current Speed	Proposed Speed	Comments (evidence based preferred)
Ventnor Road (Thompson Ave to Grossard Point Rd)	60/80kmh	70kmh	70kmh because of abutting vegetation and wildlife
Ventnor Beach Road (West of Lyaall Street)	60kmh	40kmh	40 kmh because of alignment, grade and abutting Ventnor Common bushland reserve
Phillip Island Road (Cape Woolamai Roundabout to Newhaven)	60/80kmh	60kmh	Wildlife area with abutting development and short sections with differing speed limits