

# PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC



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Incorporation No: A 11396

ABN: 48 392 256 921

31 March 2022

Bass Coast Shire CEO and Councillors

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Dear Ali and Councillors

## **Re: Dog off-leash beach changes and community engagement**

We write concerning Council's decision to extend dog-off-leash beach areas and times via council resolutions of 15 December 2021 and 16 February 2022.

PICS is concerned that this decision circumvented the Council Community Engagement Policy and pre-empted the process of consultation and methodical review that Council committed to undertake when it approved the Bass Coast Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2021-2025 in October 2021.

Objective 9 of the DAMP is to "provide a consistent approach to management of dogs in public spaces across the shire". Under this objective, Council committed to undertaking significant engagement with the community, key stakeholders, and land managers:

Action 9.1 "Review the current management of dogs off leash and dogs on leash on shire-managed beaches and commit to engage with the community and key stakeholders as part of this review."

Action 9.2 "Work with land managers, Phillip Island Nature Parks and Parks Victoria to investigate opportunities to create consistent rules regarding off leash times on beaches."

Action 9.6 "Develop a dog off leash working group to provide guidance and recommendations on improving dog off leash areas."

The council resolutions of 15 December and 16 February extended off-leash areas and times prior to undertaking this DAMP community engagement and review process.

This lack of engagement is regrettable and of great concern. It is inconsistent with the objectives and principles of the Bass Coast Shire Community Engagement Policy, which council adopted in February 2021, and is likely to result in continued community conflict around Council engagement processes and outcomes as well as poor environmental outcomes.

PICS requests Council's commitment to return to the process of engagement and review outlined in the DAMP and an explanation of the steps that will be taken to achieve this. We consider that the resolution to extend off-leash areas and times prior to DAMP engagement and methodical review should be rescinded.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Nottle", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Nottle

President