

Two years on, Levy's Beach dunes are still being trashed



The scars of illegal four-wheel drives across the landscape at Levy's Beach. Picture supplied.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

We call ourselves Australia's most liveable city, but this is still happening to our coast.

Two years after a long, expensive and detailed plan was put in place to look after the wild terrain of Levy's Beach, it's still being trashed.

The illegal four wheel-driving still goes on.

Illegal rubbish dumping still goes on.

The illegal trail bike riding still goes on.

And there is still no answer from the Warrnambool City Council as to whether racehorse training will be allowed, because most councillors are paralysed with fear of making this an issue at

the next election and more importantly, pissing off the powerful Warrnambool Racing Club.

Tip: it already is an election issue.

Another tip: with Weir and McLean now pre-occupied preparing their defence for serious charges of animal cruelty against racehorses, the other 99 per cent of the trainers have moved on and are content with Lady Bay.

When it comes to Levy's beach and our part of the Belfast Coastal Reserve, the council is incapable of making a decision and it is incapable of managing the area.

It has utterly failed and, this time, it cannot claim it didn't know what was happening "out there".

They know what is happening and the best they can do is launch yet another bloody survey.

Another survey, for another plan.



Illegal rubbish dumping and illegal four-wheel driving tracks at Levy's Beach. Image supplied.

Please, not another plan.

We already have a Warrnambool Coastal Management Plan 2013, a Green Warrnambool 2018 plan, a Warrnambool Coastal Vegetation Management Plan 2012, a Management Plan for the Levy's Point Coastal Reserve from 1998, a Marine and Coastal Policy 2020, and – as mentioned above – the Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan from just two years ago.

Now we are being asked to [fill out this new survey](#) by 10 July and say what you REALLY, REALLY, think should happen at Levy's Beach...

Bloody hell. It's exhausting, particularly when some of us are still putting our eyeballs back in from telling the EPA what we think about the Wannon Water treatment plant upgrade that will pour industrial effluent into this same stretch of coast.

I am starting to think the WCC is secretly developing a form of psychological torture where they survey citizens into submission, call it consultation, ignore the results, do nothing, and then survey us all over again.

It's called *surveyconsultationitis* and is designed to cause temporary insanity and physical exhaustion as we scroll through yet another Survey Monkey and click on the multiple choice.

By the end of it all, we will be gibbering like chimpanzees and that, I suspect, is the whole point.

While we are distracted by all of this "busy work" – as musician and activist John Schumann once described it – our coast continues to suffer.

It continues to be raped and pillaged by those who really don't give a stuff, and they do so with impunity.

They don't care: it's all a bit of a laugh to go up there in your Toyota Hilux and shred the dunes for half an hour, because nobody's watching and nobody is issuing any fines.

More people are fined for parking too long in Liebig St.



The Belfast Coastal Reserve is home to myriad bird species including the protected Hooded Plover. Image: Paddy Finnigan Photography.

The Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan promised this would change.

It promised that the council, Parks Victoria and various state bodies would all work together to protect this precious, wild coastline that is a victim of its isolation.

But the only thing that ever captured the immediate attention of all these bodies was the racehorse training: it was a top priority.

The council moved so fast in late 2018, it was almost as if it had a jigger on its arse: special meetings were held, Ministers were called, planning amendments were rushed through to make the illegal racehorse training that had been going on, legal...

Ah, the power of money.

We don't need to fill out another survey because we have already spoken, many times: protect this area from any more degradation.

The council knows what it has to do.

Just do it.