

## **Balnarring Beach**

Mornington Peninsula , Victoria

It is located on the Westernport Bay side about 10 km from Hastings.

### **Community Action and Partnerships**

Balnarring Beach and Foreshore contains a camping ground and conservation area backed by the houses of the Balnarring Beach community. The Ranger has the responsibility of managing the camping ground and working in partnership with government and community to manage, preserve and enhance the beach and contiguous Merricks Creek.

The park ranger position is paid from camping fees and strongly supported by the local community that makes up a management committee. Strong aged community Group as partners to Ranger – dedicated to protecting their local beach and foreshore.

There is a somewhat unique partnership with the Mornington horse racing and stud industry. The beach is used each day for horses to exercise and swim. The partnership provides funds that helps support beach and foreshore restoration work.

Local schools use the beach and contiguous rocky outcrop and Merricks Creek.

Success in Clean Beach competitions has assisted development of a strong partnership with State Government funding bodies from whom over \$200,000 has been obtained in recent years.

ABC Radio and the local print media report well on activities at Balnarring.

The 2009 Green Corps activities resulted in much foreshore enhancement – and a volley ball court. The team supervisor was subsequently employed as a ranger at Balnarring Beach. While judging, two young women – former green corps workers – turned up looking to undertake paid or voluntary work with the Ranger's team. This clearly demonstrated the leadership and 'passion for environmental preservation' of the ranger and his assistant.

### **'Dame Phyllis Frost' Litter Prevention**

No litter observed on beach or access road before or during visit or after use by horse owners. Dedicated community members pick up litter during their walks each day or even twice a day.

A large '\$100 fine for Littering' sign seems an effective litter prevention tool in the sheltered visitor bar-b-q area.

### **Resource Recovery & Waste Management**

Partnership with local arborist allows dead trees and branches with hollows suitable for birds and animals to be safely left standing.

Trees cut down in from park are used to 'mark out' camp sites and to control traffic flow. Branches are chipped for mulch and weed management

Rangers and volunteers collect seeds for propagation in the park nursery of local flora. These plants are used for revegetation and for use local residents, businesses and road authorities to replace exotics.

Council provides kerbside recycling but has not yet agreed to provide recycling bins for the visitor areas of the foreshore.

## **Environment Innovation and Protection**

Programs in place to actively remove weeds and replace with own indigenous species in the foreshore area. Parallel focus on having local community replace exotics that spread seeds and grow rapidly at expense of native vegetation. Provide excess greenhouse stock to locals and other organisations. Fences and tracks located to restrict unwanted access by visitors to areas under revegetation or needing rehabilitation. Include shade cloth screening along fences to reduce spread of windblown weed seeds.

Utilise specialist tree lopping services to ensure limbs of trees with suitable nesting holes are retained while taking account of public safety and falling limbs. Specially designed chemical cleaning system for pots to kill residual weed seeds and plant pathogens before reuse.

Promote controlled activities eg canoeing to foster love and understanding of ecosystems among wider community. Limit numbers in camping area to manage impact.

Protection and documentation of grove of relatively rare local species of orchids.

Moving former groyne / rock structures to reduce tidal erosion. Recognise considerable inundation from climate change is likely. Suggest further planning based on Australian Government's Report *Climate Change Risks to Australia's Coast (2009)*.

## **Water Conservation**

Mulching and utilisation of local native plant species is main approach to conserving water. The nursery is fitted with automated watering and collection system to maximise water use efficiency with collected rainwater used.

## **Energy Innovation**

Program to replace electric hot water supply to campsites with natural gas heating. This is more greenhouse friendly than using electricity generated from brown coal. The camp shower and laundry facilities utilise high efficiency, demand heating in lieu of electrical storage systems.

## **Heritage & Culture**

Provides traditional Australian camping opportunity for families and allows youth to experience outdoor activities associated with a well preserved natural river / beach / bush environment.

## **Young Legends**

Green Corp Program very well supported and managed during 2009. Two very enthusiastic young women from Green Corp arrived unexpectedly to ask for further employment and / or additional voluntary work during Judge's visit. They acknowledged the training, employment opportunity and fun they had experienced.

Strong leadership shown in this program by young TAFE graduate who is now employed as assistant Park Ranger. He is very passionate about conservation of the environment and is keen to learn and develop new skills. Importantly, he showed a willingness to objectively measure, interpret and take practical advice in relation to improved planning and program management while also developing broad practical skills.