

Water-based Activities Licences 2018



Consultation Summary Report

1. Introduction

The Barwon Coast Committee of Management (BCCM) is responsible for the management of the coastal Crown land reserves from beach access 7W at Collendina on the eastern boundary of Ocean Grove, through to 42W at the western end of 13th Beach, Connewarre. The BCCM is also responsible for the management of the Riverview Family Caravan Park, Riverside Camp Ground, Barwon Heads Caravan Park and the Local Port of Barwon Heads.

In 2012, BCCM granted licences to a total of eight operators for surf schools or similar water based activities. These have been extended until December 2018. Two of these were allocated on a competitive basis for operating surf schools at Ocean Grove Main Beach during the peak season. A further 2 peak period licences were subsequently allocated on the Ocean Grove Spit. Other licences were not competitively allocated for the peak or off-peak period.

Government recently released revised *Competitive Allocation of Tour Operator Licences Guidelines* (the Guidelines) and a *Policy Update - Licensing System for Tour Operators and Activity Providers on Public Land in Victoria* in late May 2018, which has enabled BCCM to progress the licence renewal process.

In June 2018, BCCM initiated the development of an Expression of Interest (EOI) process intended to deliver new licences to run water-based activities (human powered) within designated zones on the Barwon Coast from late 2018.

To assist in scoping the new licences, BCCM sought feedback from the community and stakeholders in July and August 2018. This included:

- An online survey;
- An offer for interested members of the community to provide more detailed feedback by email; and
- A meeting of existing licensees and other key stakeholders on 23 July 2018 (see our website for a Summary Report on this Workshop).

2. Method

The community engagement approach was designed to be simple and to allow people to determine their own level of input.

Before consultation commenced, we did a number of things to ensure a basic level of information was publicly available on the project, including:

- Notification of the EOI process through email to known groups and key stakeholders;
- Advice on the project through our regular column in the Bellarine Times newspaper and social media; and
- Publishing information on our webpage, including a detailed set of Frequently Asked Questions.

An on-line survey was then made available for a 3-week period until the 10th of August 2018. It was developed through Survey Monkey and made available through links within the BCCM website and Water-based Licences EOI page. It asked potential respondents four simple questions:

1. What do you **LIKE** about current arrangements with commercial water-based activities on the Barwon Coast?
2. What do you **NOT LIKE** about current arrangements with commercial water-based activities on the Barwon Coast?
3. How can we **IMPROVE** arrangements for commercial water-based activities on the Barwon Coast?
4. Is there **ANYTHING ELSE** you'd like to tell us that is relevant to commercial water-based activities on the Barwon Coast?

The responses to the surveys were collated onto an Exel spreadsheet and a simple analysis was undertaken using key words to highlight areas of consistent feedback and overlap. This Summary Report has been developed through an analysis of the feedback to the surveys.

3. Responses

A total of 26 responses were received to the survey. There were no detailed submissions provided by email.

4. Key issues

A number of key issues were evident in submissions. Several issues were reflected in a significant number of survey responses, while others were limited to the individual.

The following summary table seeks to illustrate how these issues were responded to within the development of the EOI.

Issue	Response within EOI
<p>Broad support for the opportunities available through current providers.</p> <p>Strong support for businesses run by local people, with respondents wanting to encourage local businesses in future.</p> <p>Other aspects which are valued include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to learn in a fun and safe environment. • The diversity and variety of opportunities, with the beach becoming a vibrant place with lots of activity. • The provision of a surf school catering to the needs of women and providing a different learning environment. There was strong support for this to be available in future. • The ability to hire a board at the beach. • The relatively uncrowded nature of the beaches, with several respondents feeling that surf school numbers were about right. 	<p>BCCM is aware of the level of support for the activities provided through current licences and is looking to have the continue where possible. While there will be limits to the number of peak season licences on the Ocean Grove Main Beach for sites 15W, 19W and 20W, all other areas within the EOI process are available for water-based activities.</p> <p>The BCCM places a high value on providing access to opportunities for local businesses. However, it is not able to preference local businesses directly. This EOI has weighted criteria which ask potential licensees to articulate their understanding of the local area and the degree to which their activities will be tailored to the local area. It also asks them to state how their business will provide economic benefits in the local area and wider Geelong region. It is important to note that the land managed by BCCM and subject to the EOI process are Crown lands, which are subject to arrangements which apply to the whole of Victoria. The intent of the EOI process is to provide opportunities for businesses to offer services for a broad range of participants. We specifically require a focus on safety as part of the application process.</p>

<p>A significant number of respondents were concerned with the issue of congestion and competition for limited space. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impacts of surf schools on other users • dominance of surf school operations at certain times • operations limiting access for others • apparent lack of coordination between beach activities such as SLSC and surf schools • impacts of other commercial activity providers who do not appear to be managed <p>Suggested improvements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placing limits on operations (class size, number of licences) • opening up additional beach space for activities • Go to other locations, spread out, vary location based on conditions 	<p>BCCM has been observing coastal use patterns change for many years. A key concern is that use is increasing due to a range of factors, including the growing popularity of the coast as a place to visit and reside, and this will impact on coastal values. Maintaining the amenity and environmental values of the coast is a priority for BCCM.</p> <p>BCCM has considered the potential need to limit the number of commercial licences for water-based activities. However, the 2018 Guidelines stipulate that any restriction will require a competitive licence allocation process, which in turn requires a range of actions and assessments to be undertaken to establish a need for that restriction. The EOI process therefore includes different options for the duration of licence terms depending on the level of demand for licences shown through the EOI process. If the level of demand does not warrant change, it is BCCM's intention to undertake assessment work in time for the next licence process which is expected in mid-2023. Further information on this system is provided in our Summary Advice and EOI documentation on our website.</p>
<p>Concern that businesses were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to adapt to conditions and opportunities • Unable to offer different opportunities and to operate in peak times • Limited in locations available • Providing inadequate opportunities for juniors to participate in more advanced opportunities and progress • Able to be more environmentally aware 	<p>As noted above, BCCM is concerned about the impacts of increasing demand on the coast. In seeking to manage congestion and high use impacts, it is prudent to not open up other areas for commercial use or increase the numbers of operators at high use locations in peak times until the impacts of such changes is understood. With the new 2018 Guidelines available, BCCM intends to undertake the required assessments to ensure licences are managed sustainably into the future.</p> <p>The licensing of water-based activities is a market-driven process. As such, any opportunities targeted at specific groups or demographics, such as the development of junior surfers, will be up to operators to provide.</p> <p>BCCM requires all applicants to demonstrate their awareness of and commitment to environmental issues and practice. This will also be discussed through the Induction process for successful licensees.</p>