

## MEDIA RELEASE

9 January 2020

### 33% reduction in destructive and dangerous activity in Barwon Coast sand dunes

**In 2018 Barwon Coast launched the ‘How Deep Are Your Pockets?’ campaign. This campaign aims to educate the community on the fines they may be hit with if they cause damage to sand dunes across the Barwon coastline.**

**Data collected by campaign partners shows that dangerous and destructive activity in the sand dunes reduced significantly in 2019 compared to 2018. The number of reported grass and scrub fires in Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove is down by one third (33%) according to CFA’s Fire Incident Reporting System.**

Bellarine Police data further reinforces the positive outcome with only two parties occurring in the sand dunes, well down on previous years.

Barwon Coast Manager Community Liaison & Education, Maddie Glynn said these results were encouraging and are likely to be as a direct result of the ‘How Deep Are Your Pockets?’ campaign.

“The *How Deep Are Your Pockets?* campaign aims to educate residents and visitors alike on the responsible use of our sand dunes. Inappropriate activities such as playing in the dunes, climbing the face of the dunes or simply allowing your dog to roam through the sand dunes not only leads to significant environmental damage, but pose risks to your own safety,” Ms Glynn said.

Victoria Police Sergeant Shane Connolly said the cross-services collaboration between Barwon Coast, City of Greater Geelong, CFA, DELWP and Victoria Police on the campaign had proven extremely effective, combined with the fines system that was put in place to deter poor behaviour.

“We are all committed to keeping our dunes safe and pristine – that is why you can be fined for a range of misdemeanours including lighting fires, littering, deliberately destroying vegetation and disturbing wildlife. We will not hesitate to issue a fine if we determine an illegal activity has occurred,” Sergeant Connolly said.

CFA Acting Operations Manager, Commander Ian Beswicke said it was especially important for people visiting the region to be aware of their obligations in looking after their local environment.

“Our CFA members are committed to keeping their communities safe, however it is important that residents and visitors to these beautiful coastal areas also do their bit. Tourist numbers swell in the summer and our small towns and local areas require even more vigilance than usual. Lighting fires in the dunes or on the beach is never OK,” Commander Beswicke said.

The ‘How Deep Are Your Pockets?’ campaign is running across the summer in the Barwon Coast region once again, reinforcing the importance of not lighting fires, littering or creating disturbances in the sand dunes. The fines system is in place and anyone caught disobeying the law will be at risk of the following penalties:

- Lighting fires - \$19,000
- Littering - \$9,500
- Vegetation destruction - \$3,170



- Disturbing wildlife - \$3,170
- Drunk and disorderly - \$800
- Illegal fireworks - \$500
- Consuming alcohol in a public place - \$300

Fine amounts can change without notice.

Ms Glynn said campaign information has once again been disseminated throughout all schools across the Geelong and Bellarine regions, Surfing Victoria clubs, Life Saving Victoria clubs, CFA youth groups and youth centres and posters have been erected in Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove.

“Agencies will continue to collectively work towards ensuring the welfare of beach users as a priority which will also lead to protection of an ecosystem already facing natural threats,” Ms Glynn said.

Should you see inappropriate activities taking place, please notify one of the project partners. Together we can make a difference.”

-ENDS-

## Images: How Deep Are Your Pockets penalty poster

[https://barwoncoast-my.sharepoint.com/:i/g/person/kate\\_barwoncoast\\_com\\_au/EYrMKocUrR1Gs8r6WpJr5E4BFkXEGftwt0jnBzRwwP5uGQ?e=cm0WRV](https://barwoncoast-my.sharepoint.com/:i/g/person/kate_barwoncoast_com_au/EYrMKocUrR1Gs8r6WpJr5E4BFkXEGftwt0jnBzRwwP5uGQ?e=cm0WRV)

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### **Notes for Editors:**

Barwon Coast Committee of Management Inc. (Barwon Coast) is appointed by the Victorian State Government to manage 15km of coastal Crown land through the Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads townships, along the Bass Strait coast of the Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria, Australia. Our vision is that the natural environment of our coastline will flourish whilst meeting the needs of our engaged communities. A major local employer in Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove, we have more than 50 skilled employees from a diverse range of backgrounds working across the coastal reserve.

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