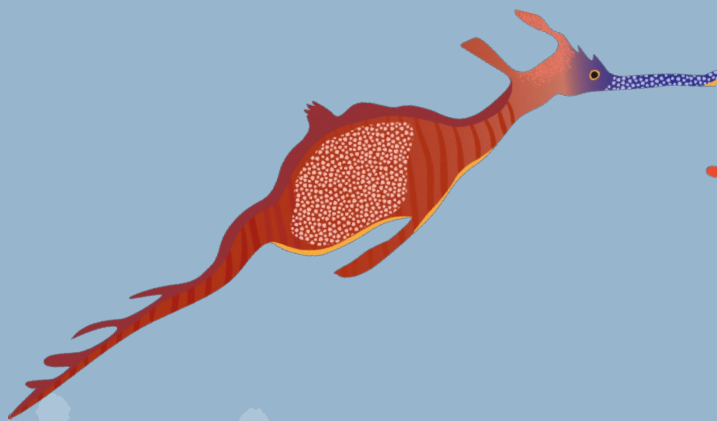
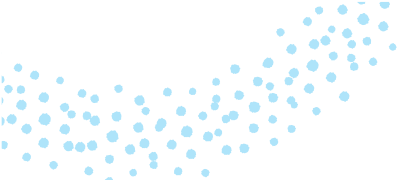




Closing the Loop report: Barwon Coast Caravan Parks Dogs and Campfires Trial 2025

December 2025





1. Acknowledgment

Barwon Coast acknowledges and respects the Wadawurrung People as the original custodians of the marine and coastal environment of the southern Bellarine Peninsula and their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Wadawurrung Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to working with the Wadawurrung People to care for the coast.

2. Background

Following a considerable amount of community and camper feedback, Barwon Coast conducted a trial allowing dogs and campfires at selected caravan park campsites during the winter low season, from Thursday 12 June to Friday 12 September 2025.

About the 2025 Dogs and Campfires Trial

The initiative responded to consistent feedback from caravan park visitors and community members requesting greater flexibility for dog ownership and campfire use.

The trial was designed to be low risk, with strict limitations on where dogs and campfires were permitted and with rules in place to protect campers, wildlife and the surrounding environment. Sites that allowed dogs and sites that allowed campfires were limited in number and clearly designated at each park.

The trial applied only to select campsites (not cabins or twelve-month permit sites) and was available at Barwon Heads Caravan Park, Riverview Family Caravan Park and Breamlea Caravan Park, with campfires excluded from Breamlea.

Campfires were not permitted at Breamlea Caravan Park as part of the trial. This decision reflected the unique environmental sensitivities and site constraints at Breamlea.

Communications and engagement objectives

- Educate campers and the community about the dog and campfires trial
- Encourage campers and the community to provide feedback on the trial to inform future decision making.

Level of influence and promise

Level of influence: Consult

Promise: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."

3. Community Engagement Summary Report

The trial ran from Thursday 12 June to Friday 12 September 2025, with the community consultation period starting on 12 June and finishing on 30 September, to allow people who had stayed to complete the survey.

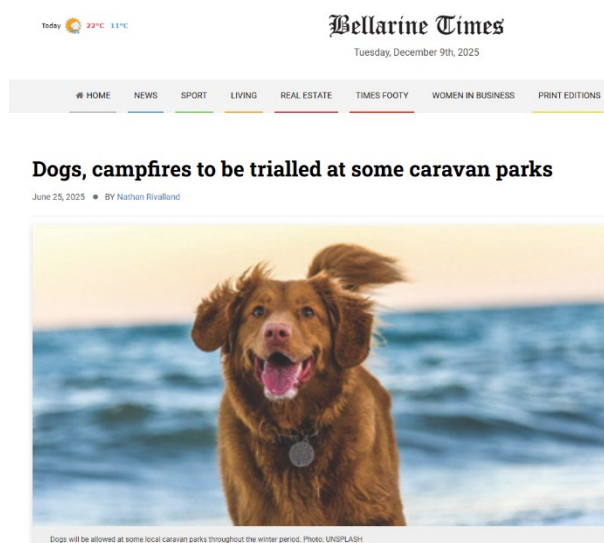
Camper and community views were gathered via an online survey (available in hard copy upon request), submissions via email, phone conversations and social media comments.

Sharing the trial with our campers and community

The trial was shared far and wide across the Barwon Coast and Barwon Coast Caravan Park platforms, including:

- Barwon Coast and Barwon Coast Caravan Park website content
- Barwon Coast and Barwon Coast Caravan Park social media platforms
- Posters around the caravan parks
- Booking emails and text messages
- Emails to twelve-month permit holders
- Email newsletters
- Social media advertising
- Inclusion in our Barwon Coast Update advertising in local newspapers

The trial was also covered in the Bellarine Times online on 25 July, 2025.



Community and Camper Survey feedback

Overview

In total, we received 167 responses to the survey.

- Barwon Heads Caravan had the most responses (60%), followed by Riverview (34%) and Breamlea (5%), with almost half respondents who participated staying at a campsite with both a dog and campfire
- The majority of campers reported being satisfied (76%) or very satisfied (17%) with their experience.
- 56% of respondents said the inclusion of dogs and/or campfires positively impacted their stay.
- Strong support for campfires, with many visitors saying they enhanced winter stays, encouraged outdoor time, created social opportunities and contributed to family memories.
- Strong appreciation for being able to bring dogs, with many stating this made their stay possible or more enjoyable and encouraged them to return more often.

86% said they would stay again in winter if staying with dogs/campfires was available.

Other feedback

**Please tell us more about your experience with dogs and/or campfires during your stay.
(question 7)**

Themes

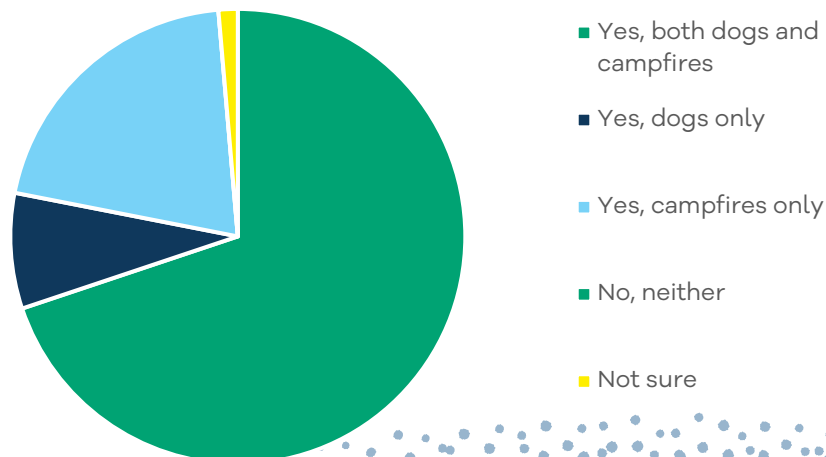
- Campfires were highly valued, enhancing winter stays, encouraging outdoor activity, socialising and family experiences.
- Allowing dogs was appreciated, making stays possible or more enjoyable and encouraging return visits.
- Most dogs and owners were well behaved, though occasional barking and off-leash issues were noted.
- Clearer information on dog-friendly areas and site arrangements, plus requests for dog-friendly cabins and on-site firewood, were suggested.
- A few comments related to site location, shade, tree works or smoke, not directly to the trial.

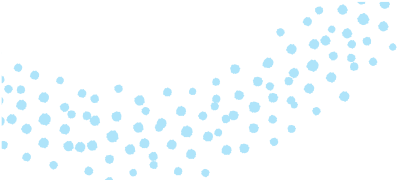
Additional feedback (question 9)

Themes:

- Staff were consistently praised as friendly, helpful and supportive.
- Amenities and facilities were generally well received, though some issues were noted with hot water and site conditions (e.g., mud on non-grassed sites).
- Many visitors strongly supported continuing dogs and campfires, highlighting that these features influence their choice to return.
- Suggestions included providing dog bags, maps of off-leash areas, better storage for firewood/deadwood, and options for grassed sites.
- A few cautioned that allowing dogs requires careful management to avoid issues with other campers or children.
- One response expressed strong opposition to the project at Breamlea, citing environmental, heritage, and facility management concerns.

**Do you support allowing dogs and/or campfires at Barwon Coast Caravan Parks during winter?
(question 11)**





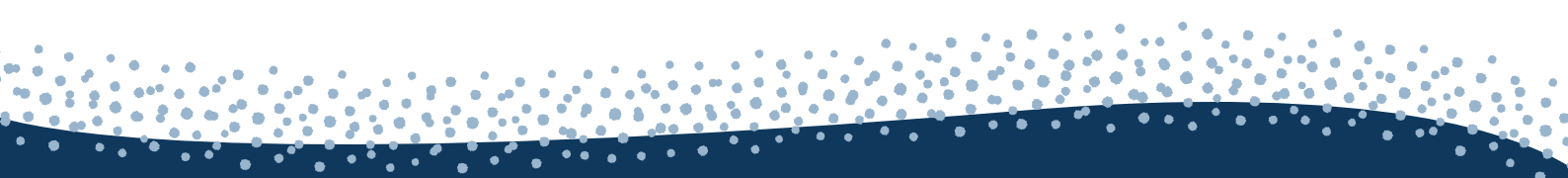
Please provide some detail around why you answered that way:

- Strong support for dogs being allowed – mentioned in ~28 comments
- Strong support for campfires – mentioned in ~20 comments
- Conditional support for dogs – ~6 comments noted rules around supervision, leads, containment, breed restrictions, or responsible ownership.
- Health and safety concerns – ~3 comments raised issues with campfire smoke affecting asthma or other health considerations, and some concern over barking dogs or uncollected waste.
- Community and social benefits – ~5 comments referenced bringing people together, increasing off-season visitation, or enhancing the sense of community.
- Preference for year-round access – ~4 comments suggested dogs and campfires should be available all year or not at all.
- Concerns about inconsistent access – ~2 comments noted potential exclusion of permit holders or specific groups.

Concerns about dogs or campfires in the parks (question 12)

- ‘No concerns’ if rules followed – ~35 comments.
- Concerns about dog management/responsibility – ~25 comments.
- Nuisance/safety concerns (barking, off-leash, interactions with children) – ~15 comments.
- Campfire management/smoke issues – ~12 comments.
- Health impacts of smoke – ~4 comments.
- Seasonal or peak-time restrictions – ~3 comments.
- Clear site rules needed – ~5 comments.

Suggestions on how Barwon Coast could manage these features better in the future? (question 13)

- Dogs on leads/supervised/pick up after dogs/dog behaviour rules – ~15
 - Campfire management/safety rules/use of fire pits/extinguishing fires – ~12
 - Allow dogs all year or outside peak fire season – ~8
 - Include permanent/12-month permit holders in the trial – ~7
 - Zoning/designated areas for dogs or fires – ~6
 - Other suggestions (bonds, Airbnb-style ratings, spread out sites, off-leash fenced area, local rules guidance) – ~5
 - No dogs or no changes/opposed to trial – ~5
 - Provide facilities: dog bins/poo bags/fire pits/firewood – ~5
 - Increase advertising/awareness of the trial – ~2
 - Security/park enforcement patrols – ~2
- 

Email submissions

During the trial period Barwon Coast received 13 emails specifically about Dogs and Fires at the caravan parks.

- 6 emails were **positive** and supportive of the trial overall, but disappointed that twelve-month permit holders were not included
- 2 emails were **neutral**, curious with questions about how the trial would be monitored and managed, impacts on amenity and safety
- 5 emails were **negative**/not supportive of the trial. Feedback in these emails was strong that dogs were not wanted, and concern about smoke from campfires.

Social media feedback

Social media posts garnered over 130 comments, most of which were positive and supportive of the trial. Some of the themes from the survey and emails, including wishing it was year-around, twelve-month permit holder sites not being included, and questions about rules/management.

Views	Interactions	Impressions	Comments
21,300	367	13,044	139

Some example comments include:

- *What a great idea! Good on the caravan park for being open to trialling new things. It'll be great for so many families & pets.*
- *This is the best news! Hopefully both pups and fire pit trials are successful and can be extended year round, nothing better then sitting outside by the fire with your best mate. Thank you for giving this a go.*
- *About time! I hope the trial goes well 🍷*
- *Are there rules around this? What if the dog barks during the night? Dog poo ? Ect?*
- *Why not accommodate this trial for the permanent families at Riverview too? 🙌🙌🙌*
- *That's great. Does this apply to any of the permanent sites or just casual?*

4. What we heard and what we'll do

What we heard	What we'll do
Strong support for dogs being allowed - Many respondents said allowing dogs made their camping experience complete, encouraged more frequent visits, and enabled families to include pets as part of their holiday. - Support was strongest for small/medium dogs, well-behaved and supervised, preferably on leads or contained at their site.	From 2026, we will offer select sites for dogs at Barwon Heads Caravan Park, Riverview Family Caravan Park and Breamlea Caravan Park between 1 May and the last day of Victorian School Term 3. The rules and site locations will be in line with what was offered during the trial, in order to continue to meet safety and management requirements.
Strong support for campfires - Visitors valued campfires for warmth, social connection, outdoor activity, and enhancing winter camping. - Many highlighted the enjoyment of sitting around a fire and the family/community benefits.	From 2026, we will offer select sites for campfires at Barwon Heads Caravan Park and Riverview Family Caravan Park between 1 May and the last day of Victorian Term 3. The rules and site locations will be in line with what was offered during the trial, in order to continue to meet safety and management requirements.
Rules and responsible management are critical - Dog owners should supervise pets, keep them on leads or contained, and pick up waste. - Campfires need to be contained, supervised, and follow safety rules. - Clear signage, zoning, and communication of rules were widely requested.	We agree that rules, responsible management and clear communications are a key part of the success of this project. We will increase our communication efforts around the rules, restrictions and expectations around dogs and campfires in the park.

Inclusion of permanent/12-month permit holders

- Many suggested that permanent site holders be included in the trial to allow their dogs and access to campfires.

The existing rule prohibiting dogs and campfires on twelve-month permit sites will remain in place, despite strong interest in allowing dogs.

TMP sites were considered for inclusion in the trial but were excluded due to operational and safety constraints. The year-round, unrestricted access of TMP holders makes dog numbers difficult to predict or manage, increasing the risk of high dog concentrations in confined areas and impacting safety and the experience of other park users, including TMP holders who prefer a pet-free environment.

This approach helps ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors, as it is difficult to manage where dogs are within these areas and to maintain appropriate noise levels.

Health, safety, and nuisance concerns

- Some respondents raised issues with barking dogs, off-leash dogs, or interactions with children.
- Concerns about campfire smoke affecting asthma or general health were noted.
- Seasonal considerations were suggested, such as restricting fires in summer or peak periods.

We will continue to review the trial and its rules, as the health and safety of all visitors is our highest priority.

Facilities and practical improvements

- Suggestions included providing dog bins/poo bags, fire pits, wood, fenced off-leash areas, and clear maps or guidance.
- Some proposed additional practical measures like monitoring, security patrols, or bonds for responsible behaviour.

All improvement suggestions will be considered.

However, the expectation remains that dogs will be walked on nearby foreshore reserves or beaches, in line with the relevant dog walking regulations.

Opposition to the trial A minority opposed dogs or campfires entirely, citing peace, safety, and family considerations, or preference for the park remaining dog-free.	All viewpoints were considered before the Committee made its decision. We acknowledge that this decision may not be welcomed by all campers and community members.
Communication and awareness Some respondents noted they were unaware of the trial or suggested better advertising and promotion of rules and options.	From 2026, we will share this opportunity more widely through our marketing and communications efforts, and will increase information about the rules, restrictions, and expectations for dogs and campfires in the park.

5. Next steps

We're looking forward to welcoming dogs and campfires back to our parks in 2026. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors, we will:

- Review and update the rules, and communications for dog-friendly and campfire sites.
- Promote the trial widely through marketing and communications, so visitors are aware of the opportunity and expectations.

Booking information

Sites that allow dogs and campfires are strictly limited and assigned by staff, so bookings are essential. You can reserve a site by contacting the park directly:

- Barwon Heads Caravan Park:** (03) 5254 1115 or bookings@barwonheadscaravanpark.com.au
- Riverview Family Caravan Park:** (03) 5256 1600 or riverview@barwoncoast.com.au
- Breamlea (dogs only):** (03) 5264 1352 or bookings@barwonheadscaravanpark.com.au

We encourage all visitors to plan ahead and book early to secure a dog- and/or campfire-friendly site.

Barwon Coast Committee of Management Inc.

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E: office@barwoncoast.com.au