

9.5 SISTERS BEACH PUBLIC CAMPING

To: Council
Reporting Officer: Director Community and Engagement
Responsible Manager: General Manager
Report Date: 12 June 2020
File Reference: 02
Enclosures: 1. Sisters Beach Freedom Camping Responses 

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Note the feedback from the Sisters Beach public camping discussion paper
2. Commence an expression of interest process for an interested party to develop and operate a public camping site in Sisters Beach.

PURPOSE

To consider responses to the public camping in Sisters Beach discussion paper and determine further actions.

BACKGROUND

One of the key objectives of the Council formed Sisters Beach Working Group was to assist Council to progress community consultation on public camping at Sisters Beach. The Working Group agreed to provide input into the process however felt that the consultation needed to be driven by Council.

A public camping in Sisters Beach discussion paper was developed and distributed to the community for comment.

DETAILS

The public camping in Sisters Beach discussion paper was developed to enable broad comments rather than yes/no responses. The discussion paper provided background and general information about public camping and asked for feedback. The discussion paper was put on Council's website and promoted through social media, was on the Sisters Beach Community Association site and hard copies were available in the shop. Initially there was planned to be two community sessions at Sister Beach however these did not go ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions. A further offer to phone and be interviewed was provided.

The discussion paper consultation period was one month and closed on April 30. Council received ten written responses, one verbal response and 39 submissions through the website. Most respondents listed a Sisters Beach address.

The comments were constructive and provided details on why public camping at Sisters Beach was supported or not considered appropriate. A total of 66% of respondents supported the idea of public camping at Sisters Beach and 34% were not in favour of the idea.

Importantly the detail in the responses provided good insights into the concerns of the community and the matters that would need to be considered if any action to progress public camping in Sisters Beach were to be taken in the future.

Supporters noted the increase of vibrancy in the community and the economic value to the community as positives. In addition, there were many suggestions on the management of public camping and how to make it work in Sisters Beach.

Opponents sighted issues including traffic management and the impacts on the singular access road into Sisters Beach. Also, of concern was, the impact on wildlife from increase in vehicle movements and the location being close to the National Park. Rubbish and the risk of fire if the site was near bushland and the ability to regulate the area were other concerns raised.

Public camping has been considered as part of several reports relating to Sisters Beach

Sisters Beach Open Space Plan 2015 - recommended exploring options for freedom camping at Sisters Beach.

Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan 2015 – 2026 (Camping Issue Paper) - recommended to evaluate a site for freedom camping at Sisters Beach, along Honeysuckle Ave.

Freedom Camping Options Report 2019 - The report suggests consultation with community to determine need, identifying site requirements, determining the appropriate management model and preparing a budget for development of the site.

That report also proposed a ‘Balanced Welcoming’ approach to public camping which means as a community:

“We seek to be good hosts of our visitors and we seek them to be good guests when they come to our place. To achieve that we’ll give a high level of warm, welcoming support and embrace their cultures, but we will also put in place the measures to protect the values and environments important to us.”

The site identified in the discussion paper was a parcel of land off Honeysuckle Ave behind the fire station. There was investigation of this site several years ago and at the time most requirements could be met however there remains site study work to be completed before TasWater (adjacent property owner) will consider approval for the development. It would cost approximately \$10,000 to have the investigative study completed. This work was not under taken until community consultation was completed.

The public camping discussion paper highlighted that should there be support for public camping in Sisters Beach, Council would consider a proposal by a community group or other organisation to ‘manage’ a site however has not considered developing a site without a partnership such as this.

An expression of interest process would enable Council to consider the viability and public interest in establishing a site at Sisters Beach. A ‘balanced welcoming approach’ to delivery of public camping will enable proponents to develop a proposal that is feasible and meets community expectations. Applications could come from a private provider, a community

group or an individual. The purpose would be to develop a site for which Council has no management responsibility and can set the performance criteria for the operation.

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

Statutory Requirements

There are no statutory implications as a result of this report.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Plan Reference

GOAL 5: Economic Prosperity
Desired Outcomes
Tourists and residents visit and appreciate our natural environmental attractions and unique surroundings.
Our Priorities

Sustainable Murchison Community Plan 2040

Community Future Direction Theme	Key Challenges & Opportunities:
Tourism	Memorable visitor experiences all year round – The must see destination, quality product, easy access, popular events and festivals with coordinated marketing. A longer season with increasing yields.
Natural resource management	Managing abundant, natural and productive resources – Natural resource management is valued and development is environmentally sustainable. The environment is clean and healthy with unspoilt beauty and biodiversity.
Place making and liveability	Liveable places for all ages – Liveable attractive townships, relaxed lifestyles and community pride attract people to Murchison. Communities have history and character that drive their place-making strategies. Sport and recreation is widely supported especially by young people. Multi-purpose recreational and cultural facilities are well utilised.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Council has adopted the following documents in relation to public camping:

- Sisters Beach Open Space Plan 2015
- Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan 2015 – 2026
- Freedom Camping Options Report 2019

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of public camping would incur costs associated with any studies required for development of the land near the treatment plant. Some minor works to prepare the site for use will also be required.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

- **Reputational Risk**
Public camping has been a contentious issue and may draw criticism from the community, particularly in areas where public camping does not occur
- **Environmental Impact**
The site nominated borders on national park reserves, the risk to the area was raised by participants as part of the consultation
- **Community and Organisational Safety**
Additional concerns were raised during the consultation in relation to the risk of fire and singular access to Sisters Beach with increased vehicular movements

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The public camping in Sisters Beach discussion paper provided background and general information about public camping and asked for feedback. The discussion paper was put on Councils website and promoted through social media, was on the Sisters Beach Community Association site and hard copies were available in the shop. There were 50 responses received

CONCLUSION

There are a range of views about public camping some positive, some not. Even when there is ample supply in formal parks there is often still some demand for public areas to stay. The provision of a public camping site at Sisters Beach has been discussed for some years. The public camping discussion paper sort feedback from the community which was considered and insightful. Through an expression of interest process proposals to 'manage' a site will be considered.