



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY

CLIFF TRAIL SAFETY

JAN JUC SURF LIFESAVING CLUB TO ROCKY PT, TORQUAY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the separate and distinct Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the Great Ocean Road's land, waters, seas and skies and acknowledge their cultural knowledge that has led to sustainable practices and has cared for Country over tens of thousands of years.

We honour Elders past and present and express gratitude for their sharing of wisdom that has ensured the continuation of Culture and Traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner and meaningfully build relationships that reflect self-determination and enable us to work together with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices, and together deliver on their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

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This project is on Wadawurrung Country.

We work closely with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation to conserve and protect Cultural values along the coast at Jan Juc and Torquay.



INTRODUCTION

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITMENT

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority) is in an incredibly privileged position to be tasked with protecting and enhancing the Great Ocean Road's coast and parks on behalf of the community.

The Authority is committed to engaging, listening, respecting and reflecting community and stakeholder views in everything we do, as guided by our [Community Engagement Strategy](#).

We are committed to being transparent and open with our communities and building and deepening relationships grounded in reciprocity and trust. Through various channels, mediums and engagement spaces, we will invite feedback, robust discussion and reflection to strengthen our connections and common purpose.

THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD COAST AND OUR APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

Our coast is diverse, dynamic and always changing. Coastal hazards are a reality for Great Ocean Road communities. This requires us to start planning for the future and consider how to manage both short and long-term impacts. The frequency and magnitude of these coastal hazards are expected to rise with climate change. The Authority is taking a partnership approach to plan for and manage coastal hazards along our beloved coastline, now and into the future. [Our approach](#) is following the direction of the [Marine and Coastal Policy 2020](#) and [Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+ framework and guidelines](#).

PROJECT OUTLINE

We are working with the community to share information on the safety of the cliff trail between the Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club and Rocky Point in Torquay. Coastal hazards such as waves and storm surges are impacting the cliff and, as a result, the cliff trail may become unsafe at any point within the next few years and sections of trail will need to be permanently closed. Our 2023 trail user data shows that approximately 4,300 people use the trail each month, so we know how important it is to the community. We are undertaking several management actions to enable trail users to continue to travel safely between the Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club and Rocky Point and to access the beach.

We undertook a community engagement process with the purpose of sharing knowledge on the cliff trail safety issues and our management approach.

This report summarises what we heard from the community through the engagement process and what we will be doing with this feedback.

[Further information on the project can be found here.](#)

HOW WE ENGAGED...

Engagement was conducted between 3 January 2024 and 2 February 2024.



16

attendees at four
Walk and Talk
Events



27

online surveys
submitted



2

email submissions



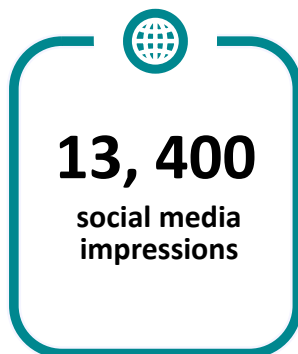
10

stakeholder groups
briefed



300

project webpage
visits



13, 400

social media
impressions



178

views of
engagement video



- In January 2024 we launched a Have Your Say webpage, alongside a video to share information on cliff trail safety and the community engagement process.
- We advertised the engagement process via signage posted at various points along the cliff trail, fact sheets handed out at the Torquay Foreshore Caravan Park, a summer camper newsletter distributed to over 1100 campers, at Walk and Talk Events, four social media posts, newspaper adverts and emails to key stakeholder and community groups.
- We hosted a series of four Walk and Talk Sessions where we shared information about coastal erosion, cliff trail safety and our management actions. These sessions were also a valuable chance for our team to hear from community members about their values and concerns regarding the cliff trail and the way it is managed.
- An online community survey was open from January 3rd to 2nd February 2024. This survey gathered information on how community members use and value the cliff trail and communication preferences going forward.
- We received 27 online survey responses and had 16 attendees across four Walk and Talk Sessions. Our educational video received 178 views, and we had 117 interactions across 4 social media posts.
- 82% of survey respondents are residents of towns along the Great Ocean Road.

PROJECT ENGAGEMENT PLAN





WHAT WE HEARD

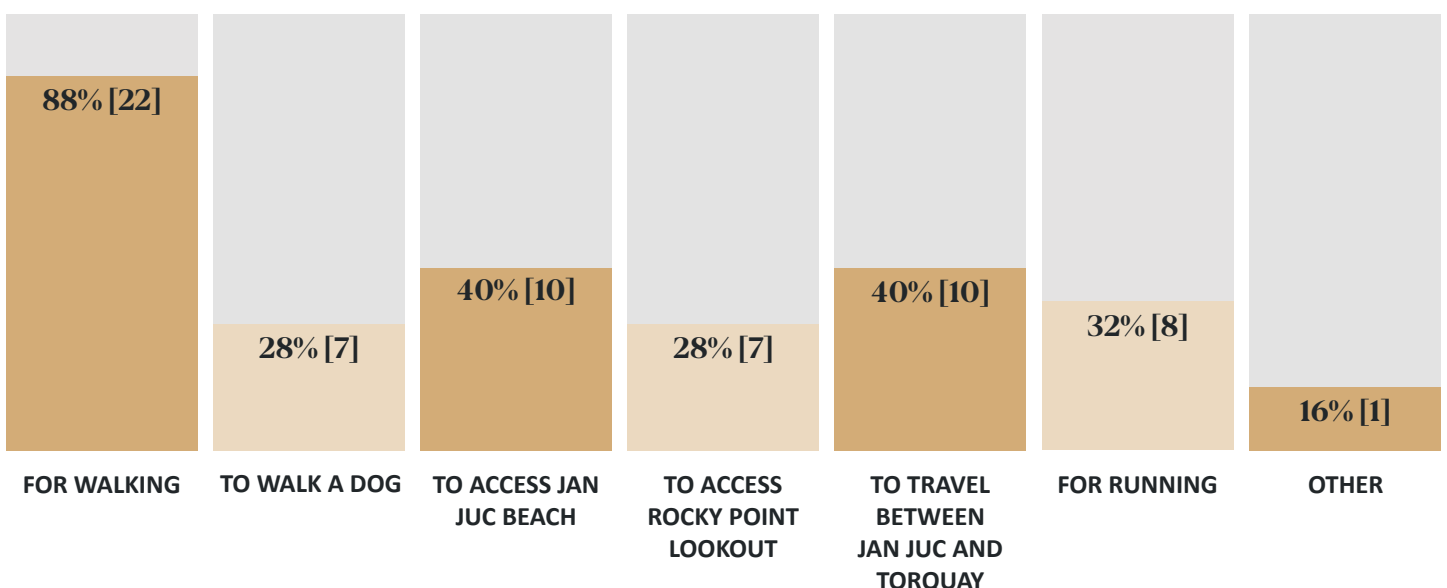
Throughout the engagement process the Authority team shared knowledge on the safety of the Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club to Rocky Point Cliff Trail and in turn, the community also generously shared a wealth of knowledge, experience and views on coastal erosion and trail impacts between Jan Juc and Torquay.

We heard that respondents have experienced collapsing cliffs, erosion from rain, land slips, changes to beach sand levels and resulting rock exposure in the Torquay and Jan Juc area over time. Another general concern highlighted was the erosion impacts from people and dogs using the dunes as an informal through-way.

Most respondents told us that they have sentimental and emotional attachment to the cliff trail and use it most frequently for walking.

Survey response to the question ‘How do you use the cliff trail?’

Responses provided in the ‘other’ category included photography, to see the beautiful view, to avoid e-bikes and for educational walks. The numbers in brackets refer to the total number of respondents for that category.



70% of survey respondents were supportive of the management actions we are taking to ensure trail user safety, including trail closures. The reasoning for this support was largely due to recognising that coastal erosion is leading to safety issues, and the importance of conservation efforts for the area. Respondents who were unsupportive of the trail closures indicated that they would prefer the path to be reinstated in the same location (using engineering solutions such as boardwalks), to preserve the existing trail experience inclusive of coastal views.

64% of survey respondents told us that they understand the reasoning behind closing sections of the trail and 52% of people will use the alternative inland trail alongside the golf course when sections of the cliff trail must close. 16% said they will not use the alternate trail when the cliff trail closes as the views are nicer from the cliff and this is their main reason for walking the cliff trail. 32% of respondents were undecided and said they might use the inland trail when the cliff trail closes.

When the cliff trail is closed, do you think you will use the alternate inland trail alongside the golfcourse?



KEY THEMES

Following is a summary of the key themes we heard in community feedback and, where appropriate, the Authority's response to the issues and opportunities raised.

Emotional and recreational value of the coastal trail

Many people expressed emotional attachment to the cliff top trail, highlighting its significance as a cherished recreational space. Community members also shared that they prefer coastal scenic routes to inland tracks and expressed disappointment at the prospect of losing sections of the trail and their associated views.

Example feedback:



Our response to what we heard

We know that the cliff trail is much loved. We acknowledge that when sections of the trail must be closed for safety reasons this will be difficult for many current trail users. However, we are committed to providing safe access for everyone who visits the coast. We are engaging early with the community to share information about the need for closure, which will likely provide increased understanding and rationale to counterbalance the emotional feelings attached to the loss of the coastal trail.

We intend to build a new linking trail from the coastal trail to the inland trail that runs alongside the Torquay Golf Course. This will enable the western section of the cliff trail to remain in use once the eastern section must be closed. This linking trail will enable the retention of some of the coastal views and coastal experiences that trail users so highly value. It will also maintain beach access to the eastern end of Jan Juc Beach, which is important for beach user safety at high tide.



Cliff trail safety and Rocky Point stairs

Some survey responses questioned whether there really was a significant risk to safety that needed to be addressed by our proposed management actions, including closing sections of the trail when safety triggers are met.

Feedback also expressed an acknowledgement of the safety risk and the management actions that must be taken; however they were unwelcome. There was some support to rebuild the Rocky Point stairs.

Example feedback:



“Why take notice from a report that might happen over the next twenty years. Just make it safe for the next ten years rather than closing the track down.”

“You could 100% reinstate the path in the same location. It would just cost millions of dollars. I would suggest this money would be a wise investment in walking trails and sustainable tourism in the region.”

“I understand why (the coastal trail must close) but would like the trail to remain open for as long as possible.”

Our response to what we heard

We are taking a partnership approach to managing coastal hazard risk and proactively adapt, both now and in the long-term. Our approach follows the direction of the [Marine and Coastal Policy 2020](#) and [Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+ Framework and Guidelines](#).

We value evidence-based decision making and have had an independent geotechnical assessment of the cliff trail conducted. This assessment identified that the safety of the cliff trail will become compromised due to impacts from waves and storm surges within the near future. This creates safety concerns for both the trail and beach users because of the risk of cliff falls and land slips.

The cliff is being eroded and the trail along the top of the cliff is at risk from further erosion. This is significantly impacting the safety of the cliff trail and the beach beneath the cliff.

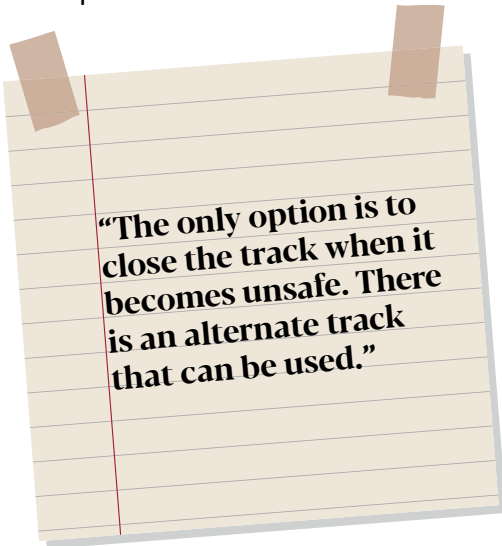
We acknowledge that some trail users may wonder why we do not just move the trail inland. We cannot move the cliff trail as it would not provide a long-term solution, would impact coastal vegetation and does not align with the principles of the [Victorian Marine and Coastal Policy 2020](#).

There are other tracks along the Great Ocean Road coast and parks that we are also monitoring for safety. We have previously retreated sections of the Surf Coast Walk at Anglesea and Aireys Inlet in response to similar cliff and landslip risks. We take the same risk-based approach to management of all cliff and landslip hazards and align any adaptation planning with the principles of the [Victorian Marine and Coastal Policy](#) and the [Marine and Coastal Act 2018](#). [Our website](#) has more information on this risk-based approach.

Alternative inland trail use

Feedback showed that trail users were relieved they would still be able to walk between Jan Juc and Torquay via the inland trail, however, there was significant concern with the different experience the inland trail offers. The lack of views would be lamented, and it was also highlighted that the inland trail would be subject to much higher use than it is currently, and that bikes and e-scooters often share the inland trail with walkers which can create safety issues.

Example feedback:



Our response to what we heard

We acknowledge the concerns about cliff trail users changing to using the inland trail. There have been minimal safety incidents reported on the inland trail to date, and we have assessed that it has the capacity to provide for a potential increase in use. However, in response to these community concerns, we will monitor the use of the inland trail before and after the closures of sections of the cliff trail. We will work with our safety team to complete a risk assessment on the inland trail and determine any measures needed to maintain safety standards with any increase in use. We will also consider the implementation of traffic calming, wayfinding signage and other infrastructure and educational solutions to positively influence user behaviour and maximise safety where necessary.

Environmental Impacts and Conservation

Some community feedback highlighted the conservation values of the dunes and the need to prioritise their protection over the need for trails.

Example feedback:

“Public safety is critical.... moving the main track away from the cliff top will protect people and provide opportunities for revegetation of the old clifftop track which I also support.”

“It will be more important one day to have a steady cliff face with lots of plants that keep it together than if we have an even further eroded cliff. I've seen what huge damage trails can do in terms of erosion.

People should really start thinking about the coming generations, the climate impact, the future erosion impact, the future need for coastal protection. Please don't all just think about where you want to walk your dog or go jogging tomorrow.”

“Need alternative cliff top trail section otherwise people will trample the fragile dunes to get through where they need. Not fair to the local environment.”

Our response to what we heard

Coastal sand dunes play a critical role in protecting coastal towns and are home to a wide variety of animals and plants who live on the coast. Ensuring sustainable trail provision in the area will maintain the conservation values of the sand dune system between the Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club and Rocky Point. The new linking trail will also maintain beach access to the eastern end of the Jan Juc Beach and help prevent the creation of informal pathways to the beach.

Communication preferences

We heard from some community members that the current educational signage along the coastal trail is dated and inadequate. Some community members would like updated educational signage on the conservation values of the dune system. Several responses also indicated that the signs used to share information on this project and the engagement process were too complex, with too much information on them. In terms of notification of cliff trail closures, survey respondents indicated their most preferred methods of communication would be signs at the trail and social media posts.

Example feedback:



Our response to what we heard

The Authority is currently developing Signage Guidelines which will apply to our entire area of management, including Jan Juc and Torquay. These guidelines will improve the design and information provided on signage. We will adapt signage about cliff trail safety to match community expectations.

When safety triggers are met, we will alert the community of cliff trail users that sections must close with signage, social media posts, advertisements in local newspapers and we will also email key stakeholders. The impacted sections will be blocked off with immediate effect with fencing.

NEXT STEPS

Your valuable input has helped us better understand the way the cliff trail between Jan Juc and Torquay is used and valued. This information will guide our management actions as outlined above and on [the project webpage](#). Our commitment to evidence-based decision-making means that we always consider community feedback alongside Aboriginal inclusion, environmental outcomes, social outcomes, and funding requirements to apply management solutions.

The independent geotechnical assessment of the cliff trail conducted identified that the safety of the cliff trail will become compromised due to impacts from coastal processes, waves and storm surges within the near future. This creates safety concerns for trail and beach users because of the cliff fall and land slip risk. Ensuring cliff trail user safety remains our top priority.

The next steps for this project will include ongoing monitoring of cliff trail safety and ensuring users are kept up to date on the safety status of the cliff trail. Users will be informed, as soon as possible, when the trail is no longer safe to use. Community preferences for communications identified through the engagement process will help guide the way we share this information.

Users will be informed prior to and during the construction of the new linking trail and consolidation of the existing beach access at the eastern end of Jan Juc Beach.

How did we do?

We are committed to engaging, listening, respecting, and reflecting community views in everything we do. Working with our community of coastal users to manage cliff trail safety is important to us. We received feedback about the way we engaged with you on this project which will help us continuously improve our public engagement activities.

What you said:

You appreciated that we were willing to listen to feedback and highly valued the opportunity to attend the Walk and Talk Sessions. You told us they were a good opportunity to access detailed knowledge about our work and to meet the Authority team in an informal setting. It was suggested that for future engagements the Authority should attend regional community run events also.

However, several community members expressed that they felt limited in the impact they could have on the future of the cliff trails, as the decision had been made prior to the engagement to close trail sections when they became unsafe.

Thank you for this feedback. We will consider it as a team and plan to avoid similar issues in future engagement projects.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have further questions about the project, please visit the [Have Your Say](#) webpage.

The project team can be contacted at: haveyoursay@GreatOceanRoadAuthority.vic.gov.au.

