



# Frankston Beach Association Inc.

*Preserving the beach for all to use*

## FRANKSTON BEACH ASSOCIATION- FEEDBACK TO DRAFT BOARDWALK PLAN, KEAST PARK, SEAFORD

7 April 2021

Frankston Beach Association Inc. (FBA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the invitation of the Frankston Council to provide comment on a proposed new timber boardwalk with wingwalls at the Keast Park northern beach access, Seaford.

Our Association is one of 24 member groups of the Frankston Environmental Friends Network whose members work collectively to preserve and enhance the native flora and fauna assets of the coastal, urban and rural areas of our city.

FBA is now approaching its fortieth year of working jointly with Frankston City Council to protect the natural marine and coastal values of our wonderful beach. Throughout our history, our Association has strongly held to the ideal of a naturalistic foreshore with minimal infrastructure intrusions only where deemed necessary.

FBA's mission is entirely in keeping with the views of Victorian beachgoers who in successive IPSOS surveys conducted on behalf of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning state overwhelmingly that they '*...place a high value on local coast and marine environments, and natural features are the most highly valued aspects of the Victorian coast.*<sup>1</sup>

Frankston Council also recognises the value of a natural foreshore in many of its adopted documents, finding in the Frankston Coastal Management Plan June 2016, for example, that the Seaford foreshore reserve "*...makes a substantial contribution to the natural values of the south-eastern metropolitan area.*" We trust that the Council will continue to support the intent and purpose of its adopted plans.

The reason presented for a new timber boardwalk structure is that sand builds up on the surface of the existing low-key pathway somewhat restricting access to the rails of the existing open fencing. We note that the proposed new boardwalk design has no planned handrailing thereby indicating that access to handrails is not considered to be a priority or essential (See: Figure 1).



Existing walkway has a handrail and mid-rail, however sand covering walkway impedes accessibility through buildup on surface and preventing access to railing.

*Figure 1 Existing pathway and proposed winged boardwalk.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos Victorian Marine and Coastal Attitudes & Behaviours 2018 (Wave Five), p4

We find the existing, substantial constructed timber boardwalk with wingwalls at Keast Park to be both visually and physically intrusive and view blocking (See Figures1&2), a most undesirable outcome when sea views are so highly prized by the community and visitors.

However, we acknowledge that the existing timber boardwalk does provide a hard surface accessway to the beach for those with mobility issues and for those who find the experience of natural sand underfoot messy or unwelcome.

Walking on sand is a normal and anticipated experience at a beach. On the other hand, walking on built infrastructure introduces an urbanised element that is foreign to a natural coastal setting.

FBA recognises the need for the current modest fencing to direct foot traffic and to protect the all-important dunes and vegetation while allowing normal sand movement to occur. Any sand that has naturally moved onto the pathway (Figure1) can surely be removed periodically with a spade and broom. The addition of a kick board at the base of the fencing may reduce the frequency of this maintenance work.

We see no compelling need to alter the style of the current paving and open fencing, which is in keeping with traditional unobtrusive fencing utilised at many bay beaches, or a need for replacement with a solid and imposing new structure.

It is apparent that Frankston already has more than enough boardwalks, constructed pathways, toilet blocks, playgrounds, picnic areas, clubs, cafes and carparks on foreshore land which have grown significantly in number over the last two decades. What is becoming more rare and more sought after is the traditional, unstructured beach experience.

In all our endeavours, FBA seeks to preserve as much of the natural beach aesthetic as possible. To this end, our Association has contributed countless working hours to weeding out pest plant species on Frankston's foreshores, with supplementary plantings of over 300,000 indigenous plants to stabilise the foreshore dunes and maintain the habitat essential for the many sea and woodland birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates whose home is the coastal foreshore.

We are most alarmed by the projected damage to the dunes and coastal vegetation that would occur should this construction proceed.



*Figure 2 Underside of the boardwalk*

In summation, we find the boardwalk proposal to be unneeded on the basis of information provided and an unnecessary and expensive 'overkill solution' to a sand movement matter that might be fixed with some upgrade and maintenance works.

We urge the Council to adopt a much softer approach to help preserve Frankston's iconic beach in as natural a state as possible.