

WALKERVILLE FORESHORE RESERVE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT



Summary of Walkerville South Traffic Safety Audit

Traffix Group Report dated May 2019 #G26088R-01

Background

The Walkerville Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management undertook a recreational vehicle safety trial at Walkerville South during 26th December 2018 to 31st January 2019. The trial involved closing beach access to recreational vehicles during this time as a preventative measure to separate vehicles from pedestrians and users of the beach.

Two consultants were engaged to assess the trial from a community safety and access perspective including feedback from beach goers, commercial and domestic boat users, road users, the general public and other stakeholders.

The issue of safety at Walkerville South has been a concern for many years to both the Committee and the public. The risk is identified in the Walkerville Foreshore Reserve Coastal Management Plan (CMP) dated April 2014, which outlined undertaking a Safety Audit at Walkerville South as a high priority. Below is an extract from the Priority Action Plan contained in the CMP:

Swimming, boating: Continue to provide for off the beach launching at North. At South, undertake a safety audit and, if appropriate, prohibit the launching of motorised craft in the Summer and Easter holidays to minimise risk.

Report Summary

Traffix Group was engaged to under a Traffic Safety Audit at Walkerville South during the period of temporary closure 26th December 2018 to 31st January 2019 and when the boat ramp was open on 9 March 2019. The report provides a detailed review of the existing conditions, summary of observations during the trial, risk assessment and recommendations.

South Gippsland Shire Council is the responsible road authority for Walkerville South Road and Bayside Drive.

Three site inspections were undertaken at Walkerville South and Walkerville North. One when the beach access was closed to vehicles and two when the beach access was open to vehicles. This was to assess the risks of potential incidents between vehicles and pedestrians.

Site inspection no.1 – Beach access ramp closed

Friday 28th December 2018. Weather was clear and sunny with a minimum temperature of 17 degrees and a maximum temperature of 35 degrees.

Site inspection no. 2 – Beach access ramp open

Sunday 3rd February 2019. The weather was clear and sunny with a minimum of 16 degrees and a maximum of 28 degrees.

Site inspection no. 3 – Beach access ramp open

Saturday 9th March 2019 (Labour Day long weekend). The weather was clear and sunny with minimum of 13 degrees and a maximum of 25 degrees.

Risk Assessment

Beach Access Ramp Closed

When the beach access ramp was closed, one situation was identified as being an Intolerable risk. This being:

Vehicle – Pedestrian/Cyclist Collision

Collision between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists on Walkerville South Rd between the top car park and the beach access ramp.

The likelihood was identified as **Probable** and the risk was identified as **Intolerable**.

Mitigation recommendations (to reduce risk to High):

1. Create regular passing bays along north eastern side (beach side) of Walkerville South Rd by installing No Stopping zones.
2. Install signage to encourage pedestrians to utilise the South Walkerville walking track, when possible, to access the beach or vehicles.
3. Provide additional access points between the South Walkerville walking track and Walkerville South Rd.
4. The closure of the vehicle access ramp would also reduce the volume of vehicles with boat trailers using Walkerville South Road.

Beach Access Ramp Open

When the beach access ramp was open, three situations were identified as being a High to an Intolerable risk. These being:

Vehicle – Pedestrian/Cyclist Collision

Collision between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists on Walkerville South Rd between the top car park and the beach access ramp.

The likelihood was identified as **Probable** and the risk was identified as **Intolerable**.

Mitigation recommendations (to reduce risk to High):

1. Create regular passing bays along north eastern side (beach side) of Walkerville South Rd by installing No Stopping zones.
2. Install signage to encourage pedestrians to utilise the South Walkerville walking track when possible to access the beach or vehicles.
3. Provide additional access points between the South Walkerville walking track and Walkerville South Rd.
4. The closure of the vehicle access ramp would also reduce the volume of vehicles with boat trailers using Walkerville South Road.

Vehicle – Vehicle Collision

Collision between vehicles on Walkerville South Beach.

The likelihood was identified as **Probable** and the risk was identified as **High**.

The top of the beach access ramp (and the ramp itself) was used as a loading/unloading area. Due to the location of the beach access ramp and the stairs from the toilet block, vehicles using the beach access ramp to perform a three point turn would reverse back towards the stairs.

Mitigation recommendation (to reduce the risk to Low):

1. Closure of the beach access ramp to vehicles during peak times.

Vehicle – Pedestrian Collision

Collision between vehicles and pedestrians on Walkerville South Beach.

The likelihood was identified as **Probable** and the risk level as **Intolerable**.

Some beach goers set up directly in front of the boat trailer parking area. When a vehicle was retrieving a boat, it had to drive around the beach goers. The majority of the pedestrians were observed to use the beach access ramp rather than the adjacent pedestrian stairs, especially if carrying equipment. There were also swimmers and body boarders observed in the water very close to boats, trailers and vehicles.

Mitigation recommendations (to reduce the risk to Low):

1. Closure of vehicle access to the beach during peak times.

Mitigation recommendations (to reduce the risk to Medium):

2. Upgrading signage to advise 'pedestrians' to only use beach area to the south of the beach access ramp.
3. Delineate the boat launching and trailer parking area by the installation of bollards or similar. This may only be required during peak times.

Recommendations:

The Committee acknowledges the recommendations in the report.

Recommendations that relate directly to the Walkerville South Rd:

- **No Stopping areas for passing bays and pedestrian crossover etc.**
These are out of the Committee's area of responsibility. South Gippsland Shire Council has the responsibility for managing the road.
However, the Committee commits to working with Council to implement, where agreeable, measures to improve safety as recommended by the Traffic Group report.
- **Dividing the beach with bollards.**
The Committee considers that dividing the beach with bollards is not an appropriate response given the small scale of the beach as it would effectively reduce the area available to all other users of the beach. Bollards across the beach would also reduce the general amenity and experience of the beach and be visually intrusive within a sensitive natural environment.

The Committee can commit to adopting the following recommendations:

1. Installing signage to encourage pedestrians to use appropriate tracks where possible to access the beach or vehicles.
2. Create a separated pedestrian access ramp to and from the beach and work with Council to connect the access ramp via a road crossing to the pedestrian footpath to the toilet block.
3. Closure of the beach access ramp to vehicles during the summer period (25th December to the end of the Australia Day long weekend) and monitor at other peak times.
4. Provide a key safe with code access that could be used in an emergency.
5. Signage to encourage beach users to use the beach located on the south side of the ramp where possible.

When implemented, these recommendations will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ascertain if further safety improvements could be made at Walkerville South.

2019 Walkerville South Safety Trial Stakeholder and Community Evaluation Survey

Background

The Rokc Group was engaged to gain feedback and canvas public opinion across all stakeholders and community groups to ensure feedback from all interested parties was taken into account in evaluating the trial.

A sign was placed at the site and around the local area alerting the public to the closure and calling for email feedback to the admin@walkervilleforeshore.com.au address. Emails were received from individuals, community groups/associations including VR Fish, Boating Industry Association of Victoria (BIAV) and Walkerville Campers Association. Additional to this, 30 on site beach interviews were undertaken in early January 2019. Telephone interviews with key stakeholder groups, local residents and holiday home owners were conducted (approximately 39 interviews in total). Car park attendants were also interviewed.

Summary

Of those surveyed, 89% believed that Walkerville South beach was much safer during the period of the trial. 64% of individuals providing email feedback were supportive of the initiative.

Conclusion and Considerations

The report made the following conclusion and considerations:

Having fully considered all the feedback it can be concluded that there is strong endorsement and support for the closure of the Walkerville South Boat ramp, in the peak summer holiday period, to improve the safety of the beach. There was a very widely held view that the beach was safer for beach goers this summer compared to previous years.

The Committee acknowledges the findings of the report and the widespread community support for a closure of the beach access ramp over the summer period. There was more mixed feedback regarding the closure extending into other peak times such as Easter and other long weekend public holidays.

The Committee accepts the need to improve signage for any future beach access ramp closure before and at the site so that boat owners are fully aware of the closure before arriving at Walkerville South beach. The Committee believes the emergency access plan put in place adequately addresses the concerns regarding reduced safety for boaters.

The Committee acknowledges and welcomes other comments received relating to foreshore management issues. These will form part of the Committee's ongoing review of management practices relating to the foreshore.