

29 November 2012

Mr Ian Watkins
Coroner
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Ref: COR 2008 001386

Dear Mr Watkins,

Investigation into the deaths of Umer Habib and Waseem Akram

Thank you for sending Bass Coast Shire Council a copy of the findings and recommendation made by the Coroner on 20 June 2012, as follows:

The Investigating Member from Victoria Police has expressed an opinion that as a minimum, appropriate water safety warning signs should be erected at all major beach car parks and at all designated lookout point around the coastline of Phillip Island. I accept his opinion and make that recommendation. In particular, it would seem that there is a need to provide information to international visitors regarding water safety at dangerous points and popular tourist attractions around the island.

The recommendation has in part been implemented to date, and further work to be undertaken this year, will see the recommendation fully implemented.

Water safety signage

Bass Coast Shire Council has been working closely with the Phillip Island Nature Parks in response to your recommendation to undertake an assessment of all water safety signage across Phillip Island. This collaboration between the two predominant land managers was seen as desirable to ensure consistency in our approach to achieve the best outcome for water safety standards on Phillip Island.

For consistency, this assessment has been based on the 2002, Aquatic Safety Signage Audit Phillip Island, undertaken by Surf Life Saving Victoria.

Please find attached a map of Phillip Island, showing the location of water safety signage around Phillip Island, (attachment 1), such as:

- water safety signs
- individual hazard signs
- emergency beach access numbers
- areas where there are gaps in the signage.

Examples of the types of each sign are in attachment 2. I understand that Mr Matt Jackson, the Chief Executive Officer of PINP has sent through a map of the detailed signage of the Summerland peninsula, for which they are responsible.

Gaps in signage have been identified through this assessment process at Pyramid Rock, Newhaven, Churchill Island and Rhyll. BCSC and PINP are continuing to work together to address these gaps in the following way:

- further assessment of the hazards in and around the water across Phillip Island
- purchase and installation of appropriate signs to address all recognised gaps, following the form of the *National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual*.

While outside the scope of the recommendation, it has been further identified that the emergency beach access numbers (EBANs) located in Bass Coast Shire are ageing infrastructure. This has raised the question of whether the EBANs should be updated or replaced by a new Emergency Marker system being implemented the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA). The Marine Safety Subcommittee of the Local Safety and Events Committee will work with ESTA and other emergency services agencies on the best approach to renewal or replacement.

Water safety information to international visitors

In regards to providing information to international visitors, it should be noted that the *National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual* provides the Australian standards to be followed for safety and hazard signage. These are symbol based to ensure universal understanding of the warning being conveyed.

BCSC and PINP have also committed to providing a brochure about the importance of water safety, to be distributed on local websites and at tourist destinations in information centres on Phillip Island. It is intended that this be available in a range of languages, reflecting our knowledge of visitors or Phillip Island.

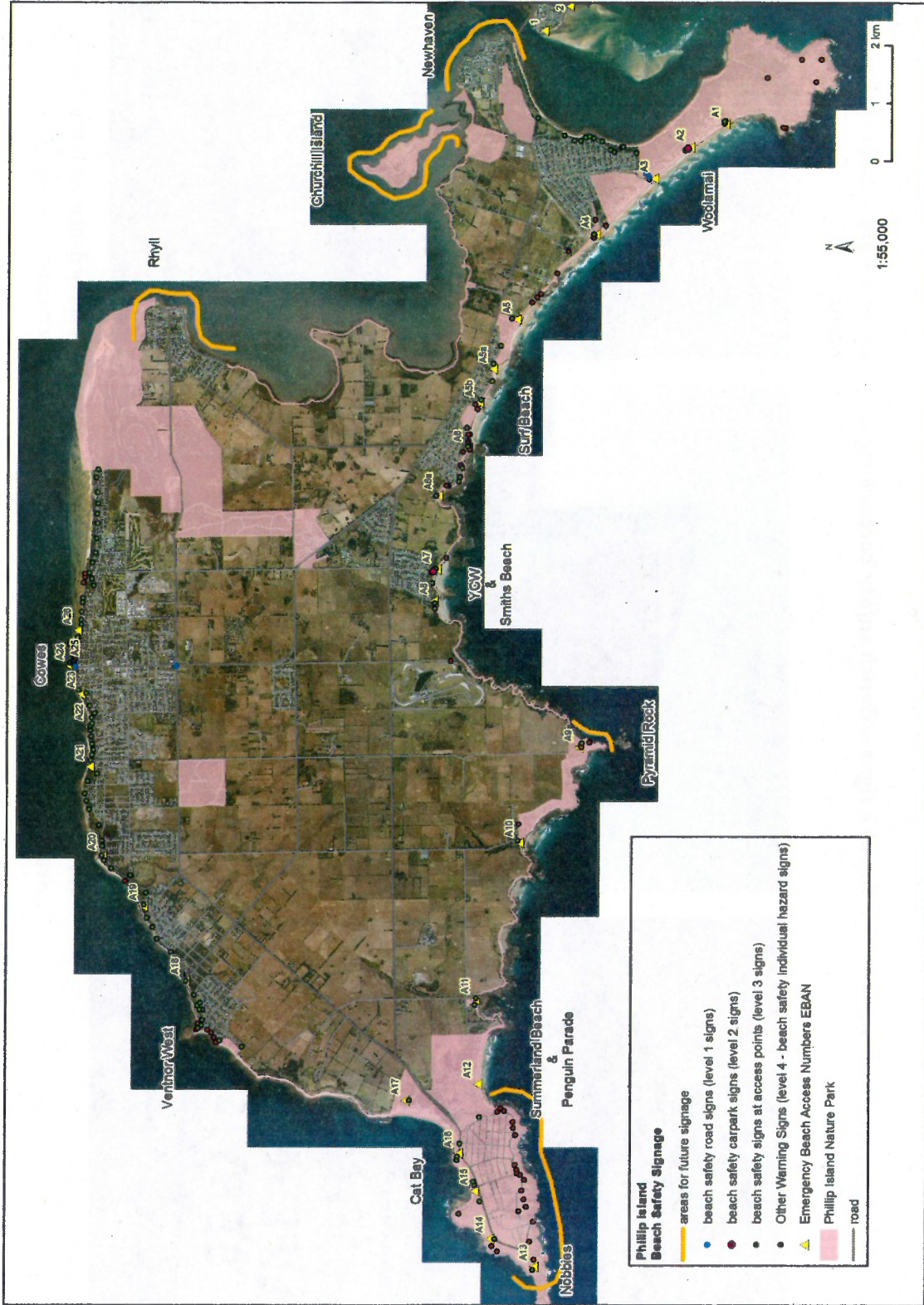
If you require further information about this response, or in relation to the further work we are undertaking, please contact Ms Alison Creighton on 03 5671 2217, who is our Environment Manager, and chair of the Marine Safety Subcommittee.

Yours sincerely,



Allan Bawden
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment I – Locations of water safety signage around Phillip Island



Attachment 2 – Types of water safety signage around Phillip Island

Level 1 signs – Beach safety roads signs



Level 2 signs – Beach safety carpark signs



(In accordance with the National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual)

Level 3 signs – Beach safety signs at access points



(In accordance with the National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual)

Level 4 signs – Other warning signs of individual hazards



(In accordance with the National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual)

(In accordance with the National Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual)