



National Surfing Reserve Annual Report 2025

Phillip Island (Milawul)

Overview

The Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve (NSR) recognises and protects areas of exceptional environmental, cultural, heritage and sporting significance. Phillip Island (Milawul) is Victoria's first and only National Surfing Reserve, and one of just 21 designated reserves across Australia.

The Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve Working Group continues to steward the Reserve in line with the National Surfing Reserves Australia philosophy to *care, share and preserve* these iconic coastal sites for current and future generations.

Background

The Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve Working Group was established in **December 2011**, with initial recruitment and ongoing support provided by Phillip Island Nature Parks.

The Working Group was formed to bring together representatives from:

- Land and waterway manager organisations
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community
- Surfing and surf lifesaving organisations on Phillip Island (Milawul).
- Community members with strong connections to surfing.

Following extensive collaboration and advocacy, the Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve was **formally dedicated in March 2013**.

The Reserve

The Reserve comprises **four designated sites** along Phillip Island's coastline, extending from the high-water mark to 500 metres offshore:

- Cape Woolamai
- Smiths Beach
- Summerland
- Cat Bay

These areas are recognised for their outstanding surf quality, natural values, and deep cultural connection to surfing communities.

We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuous connection to land, water, sea and sky on Milawul.



Find us on Facebook: Phillipislandnsr

PO Box 97 Cowes 3922



Governance and Membership

After the impacts of COVID-19, in early **2025**, the Working Group undertook a targeted recruitment drive to strengthen skills, diversity and organisational representation.



Membership recruitment advertisement

The Working Group includes a minimum of one representative from each of the following:

- Phillip Island Nature Parks
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Phillip Island Boardriders Club
- Woolamai Beach Surf Life Saving Club
- Phillip Island surfing community and wider community

As of January 2026, the Phillip Island NSR Working Group consists of **14 active members**, all contributing to meetings, project delivery, event coordination and community engagement including Traditional Owner, Steve Ulula Parker, who has been on the Committee since its inception.

In its over ten years, the Surfing Reserve has established and maintains a surfing history archive for the Island, put in monuments at each site and road signs to highlight the Reserves and held events and exhibitions of the history of surf culture.

We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuous connection to land, water, sea and sky on Milawul.

Community Engagement and Events

Bass Coast Surf Film Festival 2025

On Friday 14 March and Saturday 15 March 2025, the Phillip Island NSR Working Group supported the Bass Coast Surf Film Festival at Berninnet Cultural Centre, Cowes, by delivering a National Surfing Reserve Exhibition.

The exhibition promoted awareness of the Reserve and celebrated Phillip Island's surfing heritage through:

- Historic and contemporary surfboards
- Interpretive displays and information panels
- Historical photo albums and archival images
- A digital image reel displayed on a monitor
- Selected National Surfing Reserve merchandise

The Bass Coast Surf Film Festival featured a curated program of Australian and international surf films highlighting ocean culture, surf exploration and the stories of people connected through surfing.



National Surfing Reserve Exhibition

We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuous connection to land, water, sea and sky on Milawul.



Find us on Facebook: Phillipislandnsr

PO Box 97 Cowes 3922



Phillip Island Nature Parks Community Open Day

The Working Group also participated as a stallholder at the Phillip Island Nature Parks Community Open Day held at Churchill Island.

This provided valuable opportunities to:

- Engage directly with the local community
- Increase awareness of the National Surfing Reserve
- Promote stewardship of Phillip Island's coastal environments

The Community Open Day attracted 1,424 attendees, providing strong exposure for the Reserve and its values.



NSR Stall at Phillip Island Nature Parks – Community Open Day

Future Activities

The Working Group is currently preparing for the next Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve Surf Event, scheduled for:

Sunday 26 April 2026

The event will celebrate Phillip Island's National Surfing Reserve status and continue to build community connection, participation and awareness around surfing, coastal care and cultural heritage. The format encourages all ages and styles of surfers to participate and celebrate

We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuous connection to land, water, sea and sky on Milawul.



Find us on Facebook: Phillipislandnsr

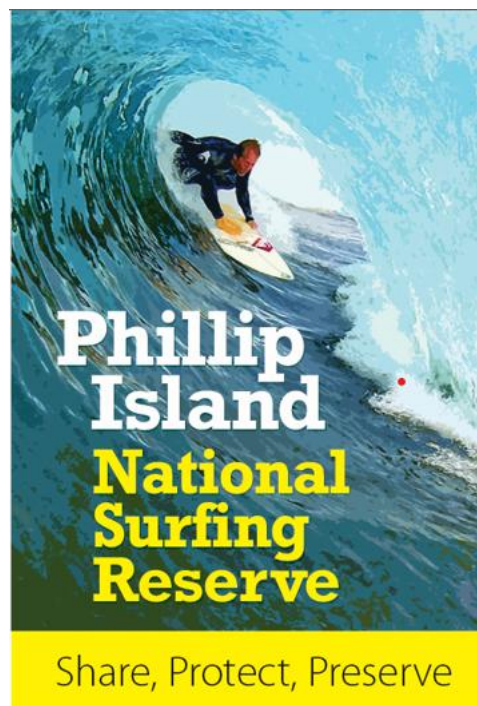
PO Box 97 Cowes 3922



these values and the Island's surfing culture. The last event was held in 2023 and was a celebration of ten years since the establishment of the Reserve.

Looking Ahead

The Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve Working Group remains committed to collaboration with Traditional Owners, land managers, surfing organisations and the broader community to ensure the ongoing protection, celebration and sustainable use of Phillip Island's iconic surf breaks.



We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuous connection to land, water, sea and sky on Milawul.