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Solid rock Rosebud Secondary College last week unveiled a commemorative rock acknowledging the Bunurong people as the area's traditional landowners. The ceremony was held as part of the school's NAIDOC Week celebrations, which were delayed due to the official event falling in the mid-year school holidays. The event, which was attended by Bunurong elders, featured a performance by the Ibijerri Theatre Company, the longest-running indigenous theatre group in Australia. *Picture: Yanni*

Call to guard beach dogs

By Keith Platt

PARKS Victoria is being urged to hire private guards to police beaches with dog restrictions.

Nepean Conservation Group says Parks does not have enough staff to force compliance with new regulations that require dogs to be leashed on national park beaches, where they are banned from 9am.

"Even local dog owners are appalled at the blatant disregard of the regulations," the group's president Ursula de Jong said.

"We walk regularly and extensively in Mornington Peninsula National park and have not once walked there without meeting dogs on the loose.

"Large ones, small ones, friendly ones, annoying ones, with and without owners, at any time of the day."

Dr de Jong said the 40-year-old environment group feared delays in a promised review of the new regulations.

"When the original regulations were put in place in the 1990s, a review period of one year was mandated," she said.

"It took Parks 14 years to undertake that review. Now with a two-year review mandated, can we expect to wait 28 years?"

Parks Victoria ranger-in-charge Kris Rowe has previously told *The News* the new dog restrictions

had been adopted after public consultation and were "an important step in helping to protect the endangered hooded plover and other vulnerable species and their breeding habitats".

There are 32 fauna species listed as endangered, vulnerable or near threatened living in Mornington Peninsula National Park.

Few national parks in Victoria allow dogs. They are permitted in the peninsula's national park due to a historical anomaly. The area was controlled by the former Shire of Flinders before being declared a national park in 1988.



On the loose: Dogs are not allowed off the leash within national parks on the Mornington Peninsula.

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Cameras snap into action

PENINSULA Link freeway speed cameras were turned on for the first time last Friday morning, four days later than originally scheduled, but just in time for the school holidays.

Speed cameras have been installed at six sites, with two point-to-point sections and three instantaneous detection points in either direction at each.

Messages on so-called variable message signs along the freeway changed to "Cameras enforcing now" in the early hours of Friday morning.

The warning will stay in place for the next month.

Road Policing Command Superintendent Dean McWhirter said drivers needed to take extra care over the busy school holiday period on the Mornington Peninsula.

"This is a timely reminder to everyone to obey the speed limit and ensure you arrive at your holiday destination safely," he said.

"We are giving the public plenty of warning that the cameras will be activated and enforcing from midnight. If you are heading down to the Mornington Peninsula for the holidays with your family, take care on the roads, drive within the signed speed limit and you won't get fined."

A recent test of the cameras detected more than 7500 motorists exceeding the speed limit over a 14-day period. Of those, more than 500 motorists were exceeding the limit by 15km/h or more and 66 of those would have lost their licences for excessive speeding.

Guard against dogs

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Ms de Jong said the latest restrictions applied in areas of the park adjacent to rural areas as well as areas with minimal public access to beaches, including London Bridge to Sorrento Ocean Beach (excluding the Portsea surf beach visitor site), a section of Rye Ocean Beach, a section of St Andrews Beach, Gunnamatta and a section of the Flinders coastline.

"Nepean Conservation Group has expressed its concerns to Parks Victoria at these less than satisfactory outcomes for Mornington Peninsula National Park," she said.

"Although some responsible dog owners do the right thing, the evidence of non-compliance with regulations is already overwhelming.

"NCG believes that regulations are only as good as the ability of the responsible authority to monitor them and enforce them.

"Parks does not have the staff or the resources to follow up on the new guidelines so why not outsource this task and earn an income to undertake much-needed work on the ground in our national parks?"

Ms de Jong said unleashed dogs "regularly harassed" cormorants, oyster catchers, gulls, herons, hooded plovers and terns, birds that inhabit the marine intertidal zone and coastal dune formations.

Last summer, just nine endangered hooded plovers survived the breeding season on the national park's beaches, the highest for some years but a small percentage of total eggs hatched.

Ms de Jong said members of NCG Bird Watchers and the Friends of the Hooded Plover were monitoring ocean beaches.