



**MORNINGTON  
PENINSULA**  
*Shire*

10 July 2020

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP  
Minister for Fishing and Boating  
Level 22, 1 Spring Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Minister

### **Annual Giant Spider Crab Migration**

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is seeking your assistance in protecting the annual giant spider crab moulting event in Port Phillip Bay from human interference.

This is an annual event of great significance both as a biological process and an environmental spectacle and is something that is cherished by locals and attracts enthusiasts from far and wide. Its increasing popularity over the past couple of years is highlighting the growing impact coastal users are having on the spider crab population.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council recently resolved "that urgent action be taken ... to help ensure that the seasonal congregation of Spider Crabs occurring now in the Rye area be protected from illegal poaching" (Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Meeting, 9 June 2020).

Over the recent Queen's Birthday long weekend many fishers, divers and other coastal users visited the Rye Pier; some specifically to witness the unique phenomenon of giant spider crab moulting. Although most visitors were respectful in observing this spectacular event, the high visitor numbers at and around Rye Pier did pose a threat to the moulting event, particularly by those participating in fishing and diving.

Large numbers of fishers were observed taking the maximum catch limit of the spider crabs, which has the potential to threaten the long-term viability of the crab population. Bait used to lure the crabs into nets is often chicken carcasses with the remnants found all over the pier, in the water and even in the car park. Another negative impact of this high volume of fishing activity is that the lines for the crab nets scrape against the pylons, impacting on the unique marine life under the pier.

#### **Contact the Mornington Peninsula Shire**

📞 1300 850 600

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The moulting event also drew large numbers of divers entering the water to observe the attraction, increasing human activity in the vicinity of the congregated crab population.

The increased visitation and fishing volumes highlighted above illustrates that collaborative management from all coastal managers is required to protect this unique phenomenon for all to enjoy.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire seeks your assistance to reduce the impact on the spider crab population by implementing a much reduced and exclusive bag limit of for this unique crab. Furthermore, to undertake an education campaign to inform coastal users and the broader public about the importance of this unique environmental event before next year's season. The campaign could include the use of interpretive signage at key locations where the crabs congregate, supported by a robust advertising and social media campaign in the lead up to the event. The Shire would be happy to work with you to deliver this.

On behalf of Council and the community we seek your assistance to ensure that greater education and information is made available to all users interfering with or witnessing the peak migration/moulting event alongside a focus on suitable bag limits and enforcement presence. We are open to any other measures, such as the appropriateness of a winter 'closed season', to secure the sustainability of this event. These coastal areas are for the enjoyment of all Victorians and unique events like this one require a greater level of management and protection for its sustainability into the future.

We would like to seek a meeting to discuss this matter further, please contact me

Yours sincerely

**John Baker**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

*A copy of this letter has been sent to the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP and the Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP regarding their portfolios, and local member Mr Chris Brayne MP.*