

Herald Sun



📷 Gary Grant and Pam Dean with Jack, 8, Ben, 8 and Isabella, 9, at the eroded beach. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

— VIC News —

Portsea going under as sandbags fail to shore up seaside attraction

Tamsin Rose and Jayitri Smiles, Herald Sun

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POPULAR holiday hotspot Portsea beach is becoming a ghost town as visitors shun it and locals are forced to shut their businesses.

Unsightly sandbags and rocks now hold the beach together and make it a no-go zone for beachgoers.

Locals have accused the Andrews Government of mismanaging the beach, blaming the erosion on bay dredging that started in 2008.

They say Portsea front beach has receded up to 30m since the \$720 million channel deepening project in Port Phillip Bay.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will meet with lobby groups, businesses and locals next week to inform them of their plans.

“DELWP acknowledges that there are varying views in the community as to the preferred long-term solution,” the department’s Port Phillip director, Kelly Crosthwaite, said.

Portsea Hotel general manager Trent Smith said the iconic venue was at breaking point due to the impact of the environmental damage.

“You see people eat at the pub, walk around a bit and then they’re in the car and gone,” he said

“You can’t come to the beach and spend the time with kids any more because it’s just not a safe beach.”



 The beach before the dredging.

Mr Smith grew up in Portsea and has been shocked by the commercial closures.

“The west side of the town is completely empty apart from the pub, a hairdresser and general store ... the rest is a vacant strip of shops.”

As the government continues to deliberate, local business owners like Pam Dean at the Portsea Pier General Store and Cafe continue to struggle.

“All we hear is that they are looking into it,” she said. “They talk about it and nothing happens.”



📷 Gary Grant from Bayplay and Pam Dean from Portsea Pier General Store and Cafe are joined by kids Jack, 8, Ben, 8 and Isabella, 9 in the spot where the beach once was. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

Gary Grant, of Bay Play, a tourist diving and kayak operation, said the decision to relocate from Blairgowrie to Portsea front beach in 1999 had proved costly.

“We have to drive tourists (back) to Blairgowrie to dive ... it costs us more to operate.”

Since the project began, the state government has commissioned five separate reports to investigate changes since the dredging.

A damning CSIRO report pointed at current measures causing more harm than help.

“It is likely that the construction of the sandbag retaining wall is exacerbating the problem, further eroding the beach in front of the wall and preventing any natural recovery,” the report warned.

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