

President's Report 2016

Presented to the AIDA AGM on Saturday 8th April 2017:

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people and pay my respects to their elders both past and present.

Welcome to our ward councillors, Libby Coker and Margot Smith, and the shire's CEO Keith Baillie. Thank you for giving us your Saturday afternoon. We are fortunate to have councillors and a CEO with your commitment and we appreciate your interest in AIDA. The mayor and Cr Clive Goldsworthy were also invited but are apologies.

Welcome to all AIDA members – particularly new members and those who haven't come to the AGM before.

Once again the Painkalac Valley has been a focus of our attention for much of the year. AIDA's newsletters tell us that development or subdivision proposals for the valley tend to come up about every five years and every time AIDA gears up to protect the valley, the community mobilises and gets anxious, divisions emerge, AIDA's membership goes up and we all – the community, councillors and council staff – spend many hours, and money, coming to a resolution.

We had hoped that the specific community consultation during 2015 about the valley for the new structure plan had finally resolved the concept of an oval on the river flats. It is unfortunate that the issue was raised again last year and we hope this is the final time the sensitivities around the issue divide our community.

As everyone is aware, there are currently applications to change the protections over the valley with council.

The recent growth in AIDA's membership reflects the community's concern about these applications and it is not just AIDA members who are worried. Two-thirds of the objectors to the two applications are not AIDA members. There have been many proposals for the valley for half a century, and many from the current landowner over the past 30 years. While our council has been consistent

in its decisions to protect the valley, we wait for its decision with some nervousness.

Council will be considering the applications at its meeting on 26 April and I hope many of you will be able to attend the meeting to hear council's decision.

One of the committee's priorities is to keep an eye on any proposed changes to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme. This, and related policies such as the Neighbourhood Character Overlay, provide the framework for the shire's planning decisions. It is important that the community's view and agreed neighbourhood character are reflected in all planning policies.

There have been three proposals to amend the Planning Scheme this year and the complexities and an outline of the amendments have been in AIDA's recent newsletters.

Two amendments relate to biodiversity. One covers lower density settlement areas such as Aireys Inlet's larger bush blocks and the Painkalac Valley, and the other deals with the shire's urban areas, including much of Aireys Inlet to Moggs Creek.

The third amendment was to bring the changes in the new Structure Plan into the framework of the Planning Scheme. AIDA suggested many changes to the draft amendments, most of which were accepted. Our thanks go to the shire planners for their cooperation, assistance and willingness to go through the detail in the amendments with us.

At the last AGM, I mentioned our disappointment about the visual intrusion of the Fairhaven underpass. It is frustrating that a year later the landscaping, re-painting and improvements to the lighting are still not complete. VicRoads has had multiple delays to finalising the works.

However, there was a meeting recently that reached agreement about what needs to be done and most of the landscaping and painting should be completed by the end of June. Further work to reduce the light glare will be done and the dune replanting should happen by the end of winter.

Another issue I mentioned last year is the pedestrian refuge at the Bottom Shops and concerns over the extent of the planned works. Our thanks go to the shire for its willingness to incorporate the feedback from its community consultation into the final plan for the refuge.

Changes to the plans for the crossing will minimise its footprint, and reduce the impact of the new light. Plans to widen the entrance to Inlet Crescent have been dropped. These would have removed most of the screening vegetation and significantly increased the expanse of sealed roadway and they didn't conform to the Structure Plan's intent for Aireys to have a non-suburban and coastal village character.

A constructive relationship between the council and the community invariably leads to a better outcome. We appreciate the opportunity for the community to be heard and for the willingness of council to respond to our requests. Just wonder what might have been if the surf club and VicRoads had followed a similar process when the underpass was being planned.

AIDA's committee has also represented members on both the group set up by Barwon Water to establish an environmental flows regime for the Painkalac Creek now the reservoir has been decommissioned, and on the community group that explored the recreational opportunities at the reservoir.

AIDA was also on the group set up by GORRC to look at the options to resolve the issues created by the increasing numbers of tourists, cars, mini-vans and buses stopping at the memorial arch where there is limited space, no public toilets and significant safety concerns.

I suspect the overcrowding at the memorial arch is the 'canary in the coalmine' and this is just the beginning of the problems created by the increasing number of tourists wanting to experience the beauty of the Great Ocean Road and its coastal communities.

The road is already one of Australia's top tourist attractions and the pressure will only increase with publicity like that of late last year when a travel magazine wrote about the ten most charming beach towns in Australia. Four on the list are along the Great Ocean Road – Aireys Inlet, Lorne, Wye River and Apollo Bay.

Tourism along the road needs to be sustainable. It is recognised as a growing business in the shire but it seems to me that actions will need to be taken to make sure the Great Ocean Road experience, and our environment, aren't overwhelmed and degraded by the sheer number of people and vehicles wanting to travel the road.

It's a challenge that shouldn't be ignored and communities like ours need to be in the conversation in the interests of combining the community's values with sustainable tourism and support for our traders and tourist operators.

I will finish with thanks on your behalf to the AIDA committee members. This has been a particularly busy and challenging year and everyone on the committee has been committed to looking after what is special about our part of the coast. This community is fortunate to have them.

Charlotte Allen

President