

President's Report for 2001

Tim Gibson's President's Report for 2001 – from April 2002 AIDA Newsletter

On behalf of the AIDA Committee for 2002, may I extend a warm welcome to you all. It is reassuring to see that so many AIDA members take the trouble to turn out for our Annual General Meeting.

Last year was a particularly busy one for the committee – there seemed to be no end to the meetings to attend, reports and submissions to prepare, presentations to be made at hearings, and all the day-to-day activities that keep AIDA functioning effectively. However the committee members continued working cheerfully and cooperatively throughout the year, and I believe that much real progress was achieved. We look forward to a new set of challenges in 2002.

In my report to last year's Annual General Meeting, I had to record the departure from the committee of three long-serving committee members. This year, another three members are leaving the committee, and, though, in two cases, their terms of office have been relatively short, they have given very good service to the membership. Craig Cunningham's energy and enthusiasm have been infectious, and Rod Reed's knowledge of planning processes has been invaluable (and we hope to be able to continue to draw upon his expertise). Lay McCrindle has served on the committee for three years now, and has helped out in many ways. Lay has indicated that it is likely that she will re-nominate for the committee in a year or two – we certainly hope that she does so.

On a sad note, I must mention the passing of Ted Faggetter last year – Ted of course was a long-time Aireys resident and AIDA member, while his daughter Rachel has been a strong AIDA supporter, and was indeed our President in past years.

During 2001 planning issues have been at the forefront of your committee's activities, culminating in the release in December of an AIDA Discussion Paper on possible changes to the Surf Coast Shire's planning policies and processes. This was circulated to all councillors, and to many of the administrators and planning officers, and has already prompted some vigorous discussion. The production of this Paper was very largely the result of some hard work by Robin Inglis, ably assisted by Rod Reed, and we are indebted to them for their contribution to this project.

Of the particular planning issues affecting the Aireys Inlet district in 2001, the most important was undoubtedly that concerning the planned development of the block at 52-54 Great Ocean Road. AIDA joined forces with a group of concerned nearby residents – the Local Action Group – to strongly oppose the character of this proposed development. The Shire Council, to their great credit, voted to disallow the proposal, even though their own planning officers (somewhat surprisingly) had approved it. The developer appealed to VCAT and a hearing on the matter was held in Torquay in August. Unfortunately the Tribunal representative appointed for this hearing was a man with a record of giving decisions favouring developers, and he certainly lived up to this reputation. The Shire, AIDA, the Local Action Group and several concerned individuals all made strong representations opposing the nature of the development, and barrister Robert Heath gave his support – free of charge! But it was all to no avail, and the Tribunal's decision gave the developer almost everything he asked for – the only concession to the community opposition was a reduction in the number of proposed dwellings from ten to nine. The high-density nature of this development is quite out of keeping with the 'neighbourhood character' of Aireys Inlet, and, worst of all, it sets a very bad precedent – future developers of large blocks in the township will be able to point to it, and use it to justify their own high-density proposals. I fear that this decision may mark the beginning of the end of the 'coastal village' character of our community, which we all set great store by. But perhaps our worst fears may not be realised – and, in any case, AIDA shall certainly continue to 'fight the good fight'.

In this coming year there will be some more very important planning issues to be tackled. The first of these will be the VCAT hearing relating to a proposed nine-apartment development at 2 Yandanah Road – on the ridge-line above the Great Ocean Road, adjacent to 'Timbara', at the western end of Fairhaven. AIDA is again strongly opposed to the nature of this development, and will be representing the local community at the VCAT hearing. ANGAIR, the Shire and (again) concerned neighbours will all be represented at the hearing, and will be joining AIDA in opposition to the proposed development. We are hopeful of a more sympathetic hearing from the Tribunal this time.

The Shire has made good progress with finalising the roadworks in the Lighthouse precinct in recent months, with only the all-important signage still to be put in place – we hope this happens soon. AIDA continues to press for more regular maintenance on some of the gravel roads in our area – the condition of Distillery Creek Road is of particular concern. In the event of another major bushfire in the area, this road would be the only escape route for quite a number of residents, and, in its present state, it represents a major hazard for these people.

Another worthwhile development in 2001 has been the construction of the new skateboard facility, across the Great Ocean Road from the lower shops. AIDA commends the initiative and hard work of the group of board-riders and their parents who made this possible; AIDA made a significant contribution toward the costs involved.

An AIDA initiative in 2001 was our participation in the VicRoads 'Adopt a Highway' programme, with a commitment from us to clean up the verges of the Great Ocean Road between Boundary Road and the Painkalac Creek bridge. Russ Hansen initiated and then organised this project, and, despite disappointingly small turn-outs of members so far, large amounts of rubbish have been collected, with a noticeable impact on the appearance of our town. The next clean-up will be held next Friday (11 January) – we hope that more members will attend this time. If you would like to lend a hand, please be at the Aireys store at 10 a.m.

There have been many other matters that have come before your committee in 2001. We have up-dated and reprinted the leaflet that sets out AIDA's aims and policies (copies of the new version are available at the door). We have been to meetings, and made written submissions, concerning the Aireys Inlet Reserve Master Plan, the Barwon Water Resource Development Plan, the Victorian Coastal Council's Draft Strategy, the Corangamite Catchment Authorities Draft Waterway Health Strategy, and Marine National Parks. We have also had input to planning of the Yarringa Road reserve and the Painkalac Wetlands Walking Trail, and to the Shire's decisions relating to street lighting in Pear:se Road and to proposed alterations in Sandy Gully. As a result of AIDA's representations, the Shire is to introduce a one-way scheme for traffic movement at the top shops next month.

Among the issues that have come up at committee meetings over the last year, perhaps the most time-consuming has been the creation of a new constitution for AIDA, as required by new legislation. With the assistance of expert legal advice from local resident, Amanda George, we believe we have, after much discussion, come up with a proposed constitution that is appropriate to the special character of AIDA. You will be asked to approve this new constitution later in this meeting.

Finally, I must pay tribute to the untiring efforts of our secretary, Jane Grant, our assistant secretary, Barbara Leavesley, and our Treasurer, Russell Hansen. Each of these three people has put in a tremendous amount of work on our behalf

during the past year, and I'm sure you will all join with me in showing your appreciation of their efforts.