

# President's Report for 2011

**Presented by Barbara Fletcher at the AGM on January 13th 2012**

I would like to start by reading the first sentence of AIDA's mission statement:

'The Aireys Inlet and District Association Inc (AIDA) seeks to ensure environmentally sensitive use of the area as a coastal and rural resort or haven that retains its unique charm.'

Each year, much of AIDA's energy is spent trying to educate local government and state bureaucracies about the critical importance of this mission within the local community. In this we are fortunate to be able to rely on the thoughts and comments of our membership to reinforce that commitment. So, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all our members for their involvement and support, and to encourage each of you to continue to spread the word about AIDA and its activities, because our strength is only in your support.

It is now again my pleasure to review the year that was, and report on the activities and achievements of the AIDA committee, and in doing so, to broadly outline some of the variety of issues which confronted us during 2011.

I will start with the committee. New members who joined us following last year's AGM have added a new dimension to the executive, bringing multiple viewpoints and ideas that have made it a very positive year for AIDA. We have confronted technology by initiating an AIDA website, and for this we must extend our grateful thanks to Perry Gaylard for hosting us on his site. We now send a majority of our newsletters by email and are able to contact our members quickly and to send information of any contentious matters. We have also introduced pictorial content into the newsletter and will soon be contributing a regular feature to one of our community papers with a column outlining local historical stories, which will be published with the AIDA logo. The AIDA lapel pins are an innovative idea and have come up really well, and we are working towards car stickers with the AIDA logo for distribution to our membership.

As reported last year, AIDA is no longer able to distribute questionnaires throughout the community due to the application of the Privacy Act by Surf Coast Shire. (And it is understood that they are not the only council to have done so.) This has impacted on our ability to continue to collect and collate linear data from residents and therefore to be able to assess how stable local viewpoints

are over time, thus strengthening argument on certain issues. It has also impacted on other local agencies in their capacity to either fundraise or gather information – for example Lorne Hospital and the Aireys CFA. At the last AGM, Mark Dreyfus, the federal member for Isaacs, promised to seek advice on this issue, and did so, coming back with an opinion from the Privacy Commissioner that gave hope of a way around the Act. AIDA wrote to the CEO of the Surf Coast Shire with this advice, and after meeting with the CEO of the Lorne Hospital, has been joined in this action by the Hospital. We are hopeful of a positive response from the shire and thank Mark Dreyfus most sincerely for his time and advice on this issue.

As also outlined in last year's president's report, the State Government Panel Report on implementation of the Aireys Inlet Commercial Areas Urban Design Guidelines was at that stage before council. AIDA was concerned that if the panel's recommendations were put into practice it would be to the detriment of the commercial areas of Aireys Inlet and against the outcomes of the extensive community consultation which had taken place. In April 2011 council submitted their response to the minister, which did not accept all of the panel's recommendations and retained the integrity of their original proposal. AIDA has been disappointed to find that the submission is still before the state government awaiting approval, some nine months after being sent. We were additionally concerned to hear at the VCAT hearing on the supermarket proposal, that counsel for the supermarket had made direct representation to the planning minister to reject the council's proposal on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the panel recommendations. Recent correspondence with council shows no clear knowledge as to when the final decision is to be made, but their officers share our concern at the delay. They have asked that a decision be made as soon as possible due to the length of time between submission and now.

In the last issue of the AIDA newsletter, you may have read an article outlining our concerns about parking issues in the top and bottom shops area, which have been compounded by applications for retail development within the bottom shops, which sought and were granted parking waivers. Parking will also be an issue in the top shops area when the apartments/offices planned for behind the general store are built, when the land to the left of the general store is developed, and when potentially the empty commercial land beside the post office is developed. From a meeting with council officers, it would appear that there can be no real planning as to possible acquisition of land for parking or even payment for waivers of retail parking spaces until a traffic management plan is undertaken by council. Following several submissions and meetings with council, we understand that a proposal for allocation of funds for such a plan

has been put down for the next budget. So, in an effort to get some accurate figures on the number of parked cars, AIDA has undertaken traffic counts of all car parks in Aireys Inlet on a Thursday and following Saturday between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm now on three occasions, covering both the off season and more recently in the busy January period, and will continue these at regular intervals over the next 12 months. These figures will be helpful to us to use in considerations of any future commercial applications, and indeed show that all parking areas are under stress at certain times, that parking is occurring outside designated areas, and that both top and bottom shop areas can be full, not necessarily in peak periods. And this is before the wine bar opens, before any possible reapplication from the supermarket, and before the aforementioned development at the top shops. We will continue to share these results with council and push for a well-thought out approach to a problem that will only worsen over time.

Redevelopment of the Skate Park car park has been budgeted for implementation in 2012/13, with planning occurring in this financial year. As you are aware, parking in this area has been poorly planned and to an extent ad hoc, and so the proposal to redevelop the area was very welcome. AIDA had submitted a response to the Split Point Masterplan and had asked to be kept informed of the design process to allow us to be sure of continued community involvement. I would like to give some background to this, as this issue has become contentious. In late October the shire's infrastructure officers invited AIDA to send representatives to a meeting at the Aireys Reserve to review the preliminary plans for redevelopment. On seeing plans for two related options involving car and long vehicle parking in the car park itself, it became clear to the AIDA committee members that they were unacceptable because they required a long exit sweep which would have resulted in a significant loss of the grassy area of the Reserve. Recent community action had led to the rerouting of the Surf Coast Walk when it threatened open space, so AIDA was pretty clear as to likely reaction to this loss. AIDA's suggestion at this point was that long vehicles should be parked on the Great Ocean Road, perhaps adjacent to the V-line bus stop opposite the eastern end of the bottom shops, where already established vegetation would screen vehicles from the houses, and alighting passengers would be given the opportunity to contribute economically to the community by visiting the bottom shops as well as the Lighthouse. The shire representatives then suggested a lay-by on the Great Ocean Road adjacent to the Skate Park car park, but the VicRoads representative appeared concerned at the placement near the curve of the road and suggested movement of the lay by a bit (to use his words) westward. The meeting then concluded with agreement that the two lay-by options would be considered and a revised plan prepared for further consultation. AIDA received the revised plan and notice of the community

consultation only shortly before the date of the consultation. Our enquiries to councillors and local residents' raised concern that very few members of the public had actually been contacted and so we used our mailing list to alert members of the meeting and sent out a short summary of the state of play. AIDA was shocked when study of the proposal showed how far 'westward' the lay-by, now lay-byes, had been moved and how much this location would impact on views to the valley. Community feedback has confirmed the lack of support and anger at the thought of buses and other long vehicles parked along the GOR at that point. Other suggestions for large vehicle parking have been put forward by residents and sent to council. In discussion yesterday with local councillors, the current positioning for the lay-byes was unacceptable to all, and this opinion will be relayed by them to council officers. The potential to extend the consultation time was discussed, but members should be aware that the closing date for feedback is currently due on 31<sup>st</sup> January. Any comment should be addressed to the council email site or post office box.

Public submissions for the Surf Coast Pathways Strategy Review closed in August 2011. AIDA was active in the formulation of the 2006 Pathways Strategy and welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the review. It was of concern that although meetings were held in June and July and advertisements placed in the newspapers, individual ratepayers were not notified thus limiting community input. AIDA has always supported the current Pathways Strategy because it included only gravel pathways throughout Aireys Inlet and to Eastern View. Our 2011 submission again set this as a priority, and, amongst other things, emphasised the need for an informal curved design to paths, retention of shared roadways where practicable, completion of pathway links throughout the district and establishment of additional pedestrian crossings over the Great Ocean Road. It has been disappointing to us that there has been no outcome from this review, and that the Council website still says that 'a report recommending a revised strategy will be made to Council in November 2011.' It is easy to be cynical, but our apprehension is that this revised strategy will be released quietly and that the review will contain the need for concrete paths in Aireys. This desire for concrete has been signalled in meetings with council officers. A concrete aggregate is to be the surface for the pathway along the Great Ocean Road from the bottom shops to Fairhaven, and has been proposed for some paths in Precinct 2. Our view remains that these paths are not wanted by the community, are not necessary, and will forever change the natural environment which is Aireys Inlet.

Most of the planning issues have been outlined in our newsletters, and again we have to report the continuing pressure for development which is outside the provisions of the Surfcoast Planning Scheme – usually very large houses on

smallish blocks. We remain concerned at the variance of decisions between different planning officers within the shire and the precedent that is being set by this variance. We have participated in on-site meetings where agreement has been reached, and have gone to VCAT to oppose some more outrageous proposals. Each month we are sent a list of new applications, and each month we must decide the good from the bad.

One decision which must be acknowledged was the VCAT decision to disallow the application for the development of the supermarket. As you are aware, AIDA supported council in its opposition to this proposal, in that it failed to abide by the planning provisions. Despite counsel for the supermarket seeking to exclude AIDA from the proceedings based on our being a "third party" applicant, we were able to speak on the issue of parking and obviously did so with great clarity as the basis of rejection was to be that 'on balance the reduction of parking sought was too great in this constrained location, that the interface with the Painkalac Creek corridor could be improved, and other design details require resolution'. We understand that the applicant will be resubmitting the proposal for a supermarket in this location, and hope this time for adherence to the planning scheme and a sensible and intelligent response to parking issues.

In conclusion, I would like to express the Executive's thanks to our councillors, especially our three local representatives. Their support and interest can always be counted on, and their tireless work on behalf of the Aireys community has to be recognised.

I would also like to thank the members of the AIDA committee. I started by identifying the input of the new members, but the enthusiasm and hard work of the entire committee is something special, and the expertise, knowledge and good humour of committee members makes it such a pleasure (and I might say, a major learning curve) to be a member and chair of this committee.

I would also like to extend thanks to Nan McNab for her very professional editing of our newsletters. This involves a lot of work and we are indebted to her for her input.

And many thanks also to Lecki Ord who took over managing our membership, and has probably bitten off more than she expected, but has done an excellent job. We are now completely organised in this area.

And again, thank you to you, our members, for your support, input and encouragement during 2011. We couldn't have done it without you.