

# President's Report for 2012

**Presented by Barbara Fletcher at the AGM on January 25th 2013**

It is always a pleasure as President to present this report and highlight the year's critical points, because to do so recognises AIDA's achievements over that year. As always, the past year has seen a consolidation of some issues, extension of others and some issues have just come out of the blue and set us off in a whole new direction.

We have launched our new website and are very excited at the prospects it presents. It will allow rapid updating of information between the committee and community, will hold all newsletters past and present and will be able to give rapid alerts on local issues. We envision it carrying local information and importantly allowing for interaction with members. We also hope it will be a new way to gain membership for AIDA. Mary- Jane Gething has worked to bring this to life, and she is to be congratulated on her efforts.

Over 2012 we have updated our logo, revised our Aims and Policies brochure and printed car stickers with our new logo and a tag line of our philosophies to be displayed with pride by our members. We have joined external committees to ensure a local voice is heard, and put in over a dozen submissions on your behalf at both local and state government level. Our planning committee has scrutinised planning proposals to ensure they conform to the Planning Act and we have met with members to assist them with local issues. We have conducted a twelve-month survey on local parking areas to try to get council to act on parking issues, in which two committee members spent two days of the same week taking and recording traffic surveys over a six-hour period on each day – I will expand on this later – and are continuing to negotiate the Older Persons Housing Project with council officers. The committee has enjoyed an industrious and productive year.

I am pleased to report an increasing consultation process with Surf Coast Council officers. AIDA has always enjoyed open discussion with our councillors and their support has been invaluable, so the open and frank discussions with managers and their staff have been appreciated. Consultation with AIDA has been sought on a range of issues, and we have been able to put forward proposals and comments. We have welcomed council officers to our meetings, and look forward to this continuing into 2013.

AIDA's commitment through its membership and committee remains as firm now as it was at its inception in 1966, and that is to protect the uniqueness and local character of this area and in doing so maintain the distinct difference between our district and those of the surrounding townships. Informal gravel roads, vegetated nature strips and casual shared roadways are central elements to the local character of the area from Aireys Inlet to Eastern View.

We have therefore been disappointed at the increasing sealing of roads occurring in Aireys Inlet, especially local intersections where no apparent safety issues or resident need was identified. AIDA is aware of the need to seal off-ramps to the Great Ocean Road, but was bemused by the need to seal the intersection of Beach and Eaglerock Parade, and Hopkins and Hartley Streets, hardly dangerous or unsafe intersections. We also questioned the need to bituminise for such a large distance on both sides of the intersections. With this in mind, we invited Sunil Bhalla, the Director of Infrastructure, to our June AIDA meeting and he admitted that, whilst Surf Coast Shire policy was to seal intersections for a large distance on rural roads where traffic travels at speeds of 100 kph, there appeared to be no reason for the same to be transposed to Aireys Inlet. He gave commitment that there would be no further residential road sealing in Aireys other than that required for safety in turning off the Great Ocean Road.

The sealing of these intersections had followed council's proposal in the middle of 2012 to impose a special charge scheme on the residents of Precinct 2, an area roughly bounded by Bambra Road, Phillip Street, the Great Ocean Road, Aireys Street, and McConachy Road. The proposal from council differed completely from the outcome of the Precinct 2 citizens' jury process, in that contrary to the jury's recommendations to seal only approximately 690 metres of roadway and this only in specific intersections, council's intention was now to also include full-length sealing of three streets and so increase the bituminisation to 1450 metres. If implemented, these proposals would have changed forever the local character of the area and denied expert advice presented at the jury sittings, which showed that safe and stable unsealed roadways are achievable.

AIDA strongly supported the local community in their opposition to this scheme, and provided advice and support to its members. We also made submission where we stated that we:

- strongly opposed the failure of proper process in considering and acting on the recommendations of the Precinct 2 citizens' jury in accordance with council's

terms of reference, and outlined our concerns that our letter to their infrastructure department on the matter had not been acknowledged, and

- that our objection arose from our objectives as an association which were to conserve the environment and natural qualities of our district and specifically protect and enhance the informal coastal character of our townships.

The result of residents' submissions was that of the 311 properties in the precinct, 188 objected to the special charge scheme. Council was not able to declare the scheme and the community is to be congratulated on the success of their campaign. As importantly, in its meeting of 28 March 2012, council resolved to 'endorse for all future infrastructure solutions in sensitive coastal areas a design approach in sympathy with the local neighbourhood character and request that engagement with impacted communities occurs prior to the commencement of design work to ensure communities contribute to proposed infrastructure solutions.' This is an important edict in its implication for future planning in Aireys Inlet and district.

As always AIDA has continued discussion with the shire regarding plans for parking in the Split Point Lighthouse precinct. As members are well aware, this contentious subject has been a yo-yo for a number of years, with plans being proposed and rejected on both sides. Following the shire's public consultation in January this year on planned improvements to the Skate Park car park and long-vehicle parking, AIDA prepared a submission outlining its concerns and proposing long-vehicle parking accommodated in the Vline lay-bys near the bottom shops and supporting community proposals for additional parking in the area west of the Painkalac bridge. We also opposed the somewhat odd proposal for a viewing platform at the edge of the Inlet in the form of a giant pink hand cradling a boat. We were pleased when local councillors put forward a recommendation, and that the resolution arising from this was to:

- accommodate long-vehicle parking for short periods in one bay on each side of the Great Ocean Road in the modified Vline spaces and to screen with vegetation any impact this may have on adjacent houses
- further investigate ways to maximise the use of existing gravel car-parking areas west of the Painkalac bridge
- propose allowing 12-seater buses to enter and park within the Split Point Lighthouse precinct, but that larger buses, a hugely contentious issue, will be restricted to 'drop-off' within Inlet Crescent and with entrance and exit points to the Crescent specified

- not allow parking for larger vehicles (including large campervans and cars with caravans) in the precinct.

As directional signage and regulatory signage will therefore be crucial to traffic management, AIDA has continued to put forward submissions aimed at optimising traffic management while attempting to reverse the proliferation of signs within the precinct and will continue in discussion with council officers.

AIDA has been in contact with the shire for a number of years to try to resolve the issue of a lack of a comprehensive traffic-management plan to address the car-parking stresses occurring in the top and bottom shops. Our contention has been that this is not just a problem at peak periods, but is becoming a major concern all year round and will only intensify with the pressure of new businesses and their seeming ability to seek and be granted waiver of car-parking spaces by shire planners. As mentioned previously, in the hope of giving credence to our claim, AIDA committee members have undertaken counts of parked cars over a twelve-month period. These were taken on a Thursday and Saturday between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm on both days. We tabulated our results and noted specifically the changes which occurred over the period – for example at the bottom shops, the garden supplies and surf shops both closed, the old hardware was not trading and although undergoing renovations these were not open during the survey period. We also noted weather conditions, if shops were open or closed and expanded our counts to include overflow parking as needed.

Unsurprisingly (to anyone here), our results showed pressure on car-parking spaces in both the top and bottom shops, especially during the peak periods, with overflow parking increasingly occurring on local streets and the Great Ocean Road. This has been further compounded by the opening of additional commercial outlets – we anticipate the recent permit for 42 Great Ocean Road will increase demand for car- parking spaces at the top shops by a further nineteen over our surveyed number, and that the new restaurants in the bottom shops which have also sought waiver of car parking will add additional pressure on already crowded parking areas.

We have forwarded the survey to council and met council officers to discuss our findings. Funds were allocated in this year's budget for a traffic management plan, a necessary first step before any definitive action can be taken by the shire, and I was pleased to read in the 'Mayoral Column' of the last Surf Coast Times that council will conduct traffic counts in Aireys Inlet in both peak and non-peak times until June 2013 with a view to developing a traffic-management plan.

AIDA has been concerned at the unsafe parking that is occurring along both sides of the Great Ocean Road since the opening of the Food Store at the bottom shops, and we have been contacted by local traders who share our concerns. In AIDA's discussion with council officers regarding the Fairhaven to bottom shops pathway it was decided that a two-pronged plan be attempted – firstly so as not to increase signage pollution, it was agreed that a yellow 'no parking' line be painted on both sides of the Great Ocean Road and raised bed plantings on the verges would initially be used to try to deter cars from parking on these verges. If this and enforcement officers proved no deterrent, then no-parking signs may have to be installed. Council put these measures in place prior to the busy Christmas period, but disappointingly many cars are still parking over the yellow lines throughout the summer period, and some even against the raised plantings. AIDA and council will continue to monitor the situation.

In July 2012, the Victorian government introduced planning zone changes and AIDA sought members' assistance in voicing opposition to these as we feared their impact on our particular part of the coast, on its local character, on infrastructure – notably water supply, sewerage and roads – and the potential increase to bushfire risk.

These changes allow diversity of use in most zones – for example shops and offices in residential zones, school, accommodation and commercial use in rural zones. At the same time it is proposed to cut red tape by reducing the planning conditions needing to be met by developers, and reducing or eliminating opportunity for public objection. These changes have been introduced in the words of Planning Minister Guy to 'allow the market', that nebulous master, to determine the mix of uses under the new zones, rather than relying on the statutory controls already in place across the state. These changes will affect both rural and urban areas, but the changes affecting Aireys and district are harsh indeed in their possible impact on our beloved Painkalac Valley. The proposed changes to rural zones allow with a permit, but without use-related conditions, the introduction of leisure, sports and recreation facilities, camping and caravan parks, residential and retirement villages, primary and secondary schools and residential hotels including entertainment. Current caps on restaurant numbers at 150 are to be scrapped.

At the same time radical changes to shopping centres or commercial zones to 'promote vibrant mixed- use commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment and high-density residential use' would, in principle, allow gambling and car sales without the requirement for a permit. We also fear that high-density residential could effectively mean high rise, as has been allowed by

the minister elsewhere, and are greatly troubled that all this could be in place without need for a permit or public display.

In September last year AIDA submitted a detailed objection to all facets of this proposed policy. We now await the working party's report to see what will actually be implemented, but with this particular planning minister's stated philosophy and his dilution of the proposals submitted by AIDA and the shire for the Design and Development Overlay guidelines for the Aireys commercial areas, or Amendment C55, we do not have great expectations.

But we must celebrate the acceptance by the council of AIDA's submission to the proposed revision of Amendment C781 to the local Planning Scheme. This included retention of a fully itemised description of what constitutes local character, and also inclusion of reference to the Aireys Inlet to Eastern View Neighbourhood Character Study and Vegetation Assessment (2004). Without these references our ability to argue local character and try to prevent building discrepancies and overdevelopment would have been greatly reduced.

It was an election year for local government in 2012, which saw the Surf Coast reintroduce boundaries into the electorate. AIDA again circulated a questionnaire to prospective councillors seeking short responses to local issues which we hoped would assist our members make informed decisions about the candidates. These questions included the importance of neighbourhood character, whether special charge schemes are the best way of funding infrastructure projects, how a balance between tourism and local amenity can be maintained and how each saw council's role in global warming and sea-level rise. When collated, these responses were emailed to those members who had provided us their address and also published in our newsletter. AIDA has worked closely with all councillors over the past twelve months and hopes to have the same relationship with the new councillors. We also hope the implementation of boundaries will not lead to an 'us and them' outcome, but that all councillors will continue to assume responsibility for the shire as a whole.

Planning continues to be a contentious issue and we continue to see proposals to council that ignore local regulations and flout neighbourhood character, and I seem to comment on this continuously in these reports. Council, with the intention of reducing time dealing with planning applications, has instituted a system that gives greater authority to officers, whereby a planning application requires three or more objections before it goes to their planning committee for consideration. This planning committee is chartered to judge an application on

reports from the planning officer, statements from the developer and to take input from anyone opposing the application. Now, if there are three objectors or fewer, applications will be considered by a panel chaired by the Manager of Planning and Development and the statutory planning coordinator themselves. We are yet to see if this is effective, but as one of the first decisions was to waive parking in the top shops for the application at 42 Great Ocean Road, we are concerned, but look forward to the results of the trial.

There are many issues I have not included in this report, most have been covered in our newsletters, and future issues will now also be incorporated on our website. In the name of expediency, and taking note of the hard chairs, I will refer you to these two outstanding sites for further updates. If there is anything you would like to be expanded or updated, please either ask in question time or discuss with committee members during refreshments.

On behalf of our members, I would like to thank our two outgoing councillors, Libby Mears and Simon Northeast, for their outstanding contribution to the local community over their time on council, and congratulate Libby Coker on her re-election and appointment as mayor. And also welcome councillor Margot Smith as our locally elected representative and look forward to working with her in the future.

To Nan McNab, who has done a sterling job with our newsletter and ably fitted AIDA's needs around her already very busy life, we thank you, and also Lecki Ord who as membership liaison is responsible for collating and follow-up of membership renewals and emails to notify of issues. We extend thanks to Graeme Teague whose role as public officer is no longer required by legislation, but who has ably represented us in this role for many years.

It is always difficult to farewell committee members, and this year neither Roger Clifton nor Len Kelly will be renominating. Len's academic perspective will be missed at meetings, and Roger's drive and enthusiasm has meant he has been snapped up by the private sector, but his time on AIDA will be remembered for our new logo, AIDA pins and car stickers. We wish them both well and thank them both for their time on the committee.

And in conclusion and importantly, I would like to commend and thank the committee for their wise counsel and hard work throughout 2012. We have attracted some very talented people to our table and their expertise and knowledge have continued to ensure AIDA's good name throughout the local community and made my role as president both enjoyable and relatively easy.