## AIREYS INLET AND DISTRICT ASSOCIATION INC

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(Reg. No. A000710V)

**Surf Coast Shire Council Election**

**Candidate Questionnaire 2024**

As in previous council elections, AIDA sought the opinions of all candidates for the council election, asking that they outline their view or position on the four questions below. These were selected to address key areas of interest to AIDA members. The questions were sent to candidates on 18th September and responses were due by 5 p.m. on Friday 4th October.

While electors can only vote for council candidates for their ward, AIDA sought the opinions of all candidates as all councillors will be voting on issues that will affect the area from Urquhart Bluff to Eastern View. Candidates who did not respond are noted as such. We limited responses to a maximum of 100 words.

The ballot papers will be mailed on October 7th.

**The questions AIDA asked are below with all responses received. The answers were not changed or edited.**

1. What aspects of the neighbourhood character of the area from Aireys Inlet to Eastern View

do you consider most important, and how should Council seek to protect them?

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| **Otway Ranges Ward** |  |
| Mike Bodsworth | Built form that’s low rise and generally low density – with potential for denser pockets in selected central areas to provide some more diverse, more affordable housing. Vegetated landscape of generally local species for a ‘bushy’ character. Protection of key views and landmarks, with minimal disruption from signs, powerlines, vehicles etc. Architectural design that’s earthy, unpolished, unpretentious and responsive to place and climate. Landscapes, neighbourhoods and facilities that encourage walking and riding - so people, outdoor activities and social exchange form part of the character (vibe) of the place. Council-community and Council-GORCAPA relationships are critical. |
| Kate Gazzard | Aireys Inlet to Eastern View holds a special place in my heart. It is my favourite area for trail running and surfing. The aspects I consider most important are the unique and tranquil small-town feel, the stunning beaches, cliffs, dunes and wetlands, how at times you can feel like you are the only person out in the wilderness, and then still find a friendly face, a cosy local business and a hot cup of coffee after being out in the elements. Unlike many towns, there is a real harmony between humans and nature. |
| Libby Stapleton | Retain informal, low-key coastal village character, with townships surrounded by natural bushland. Specific neighbourhood character overlays, such as those for Lighthouse area, must be recognised and enforced, along with building heights, setbacks and site coverage to avoid creeping urbanisation of townships. Housing should be low scale and sensitive to coastal landscape and potential impacts of climate change. Increased housing diversity and affordability, must be balanced with overarching need to protect township character, boundaries and preserve natural vegetation – while ensuring communities remain sustainable long-term. A placemaking approach is needed by Council, in partnership with community, to carefully plan any future development. |
| Leon Walker | The significant landscapes, environment and heritage are important and these characteristics should be maintained between all the communities while being protected and continuing to have sustainable communities now and the future. Working closely alongside the local community with clear transparent engagement and achievable sustainable outcomes for everyone of the non urbanised coastal villages. Yes, council should seek to protect them while considering the bush fire risk, adapting to climate change and natural landscapes |
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| **Torquay Ward** |  |
| Paul Barker | No response received. |
| Rebecca Bourke | No response received. |
| Phoebe Crockett | The existing relaxed low-key village character of these communities is of high value and appreciated by locals and visitors for its environmental and social assets.  Council could help to enhance the coastal village atmosphere with pedestrian-oriented planning, favouring pedestrians and bicycles over cars, and support small diverse businesses that reflect local character. Enforcement of local regulation could be considered if building guidelines are not being met. |
| Martin Duke | No response received. |
| Eric Menogue | No response received. |
| Liz Pattison | The character of the neighbourhoods from Aireys Inlet to Eastern View is unique and needs to be retained. There is so much that appeals from the unsealed roads which are quiet enough to walk along, the small town feel, the natural environment and vegetation to the varying coastal architecture. Consideration is need to maintain the low scale, low built environment which is important for the neighbourhood character. |
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| **Winchelsea Ward** |  |
| Joel Grist | No response received. |
| Aleisja Henry | I think that the coastal character of the neighbourhood needs to be retained, with no reduction in vegetation cover in residential areas or open spaces. It would be disappointing to see original houses demolished to make way for volume build or excessively large houses, that potentially increase energy demand (based on house size) and reduce vegetation cover and loss of essential urban habitat vegetation for wildlife. |
| Rose Hodge | The low key coastal character and its distinctive coastal feel, protection and retention of vegetation, planning complaint with low density, including heights, setback and colours and fencing regulations. Also the preservation of the night sky which has particularly become more popular over the last several years. The roads and drainage need to be maintained as the community feedback is for less structured urban look. Protections through the overlays on the areas such as Significant Landscape, Design and Development, Neighbourhood character, Vegetation and Environment. |
| Tony Phelps | To me, Aireys is a small town of low-profile, higgledy-piggledy housing heavily interspersed with trees, bushes, and vegetation. Managing town character is already an important priority for Surf Coast Shire. I would like to see full use made of planning schemes, zoning and design guidelines, overlay controls, and the careful assessment of development applications. It must be noted, however, that state government makes all this hard to enforce as they can and do override frequently. |
| Adrian Schonfelder | Obviously the Lighthouse precinct is the most important and could be added to the DAL Distinctive Area Landscape. Would need to seek advice pertaining to further and future protection. |
| Darryl Wilson | No response received. |

1. Tourist numbers have returned to their pre-pandemic levels, which has meant a return of the multiple buses and private rental cars making the one-day dash to the Twelve Apostles and back. Is there another tourism model that might be more beneficial both to local communities and to the tourism sector?

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| **Otway Ranges Ward** |  |
| Mike Bodsworth | I support ‘slow tourism’ where visitors and locals enjoy similar things: walking and riding, unadorned nature, night sky, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, good local food and drinks, beach and river activities. I don’t support big tourist attractions; I support small scale facilities that are thoughtfully designed and offer high quality, memorable visitor experiences. The Council-GORCAPA relationship is critical, as is Council support for the right kind of tourism. I’m concerned about the impact of vehicles in the Lighthouse Precinct and keen to explore options like bus permits and fees, better pathways, parking restrictions and potentially a shuttle. |
| Kate Gazzard | I support a slower model of ecotourism, where visitors stay for longer periods, are more likely to take their time in our towns and buy from our local businesses. As a current councillor I have been involved in beginning the process of Surf Coast working towards ECO certification to support and promote more sustainable tourism at global best practice standards. This will encourage visitors to minimise their own impacts on our coastline while supporting businesses, helping the local economy and fostering a vibrant community. |
| Libby Stapleton | Encourage sustainable and regenerative tourism. We need to slow visitors down and inspire people to stay longer, attracting those who value what we love about our townships and want to protect the natural environment. I will continue to advocate for and support Council’s process to become a certified ‘Eco-destination’ working in partnership with Ecotourism Australia and the Great Ocean Road Authority. Focus on delivering high quality nature-based and cultural tourism experiences, and get the balance right so that tourism moves from an extractive ‘growth model’ to a resilient, sustainable model that recognises and promotes the unique character of our region. |
| Leon Walker | Yes, the one day tourist buses, in particular the large bus companies who are operated and owned outside of the region (Melbourne and overseas) should be charged a per person tourism levy which directly comes back to our local communities to spend on facilities and sustainable tourism. These are the buses that don’t spend in our region. A similar tourist tax could be implemented in arrival into Australia as per other countries. Better engagement also with tourism associations and visitor centres to increase stay/yield would be beneficial overall. |
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| **Torquay Ward** |  |
| Paul Barker | No response received. |
| Rebecca Bourke | No response received. |
| Phoebe Crockett | Tourism is the core of our economy, but we need to ensure we maximise the benefits year-round, while managing its impacts on our environment and our communities. I support the promotion of slow tourism that endorses mindfulness and travelling responsively, aiming for locals and visitors to leave the Surf Coast better than they found it.  Investment in active travel options such as safe cycling and walking infrastructure and trails both within and between towns. Support for experiences that support long-term stays where visitors can slow down, stay a while, support local and even contribute to conservation efforts would be ideal. |
| Martin Duke | No response received. |
| Eric Menogue | No response received. |
| Liz Pattison | Encouraging tourists to spend longer along the great ocean road is an important approach to change the trend of multiple tourist buses moving through. Slow and purposeful tourism through promoting the natural environment, creative industries and hospitality of our coastline is an important step to achieving this. |
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| **Winchelsea Ward** |  |
| Joel Grist | No response received. |
| Aleisja Henry | a. I think a review of how the Surf Coast and wider GOR region is needed. I have watched this spectacular region be impacted by over-visitation, observed environmentally insensitive development and witnessed some terrifying moments on the heavily burdened road networks.  b.                it should take a consultative approach, engaging with local community members along the coast, with a strict declaration of conflict of interest, engagement with the Traditional Owner groups, tourism operators, local councils and environmental groups.  c.                a better model of tourism exists; however, I do not know what this is and feel that it should involve co-design approach. |
| Rose Hodge | Several years ago this was a major problem at Bells Beach with an overabundance of buses, we introduced a licensing agreement with the bus companies and many did not take up the license and the numbers decreased. Perhaps a tool to be used again. Discussions with GORCAPA, community and the bus operators would need to occur. |
| Tony Phelps | I'm not aware of an alternative tourism model that won't unfairly prioritise the wealthy or unduly restrict the valuable income tourists provide to the region (including Aireys Inlet businesses on the main drag) - but I'm neither a traffic expert nor a tourism expert. I'm open to ideas on how such traffic could be managed, as this 'over-tourism' issue applies all along the coast and many places around the world and nobody has cracked it yet. |
| Adrian Schonfelder | E Eventually a railway line might be more environmentally friendly and inevitable. |
| Darryl Wilson | No response received. |

1. The Painkalac Creek Valley’s environment and landscape are a much-loved feature of our area. How would you ensure that this critical feature of the town is protected and maintained, and that diverse community interests are balanced?

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| **Otway Ranges Ward** |  |
| Mike Bodsworth | I have played a leading role on the current Council in increased effort to protect and celebrate the Painkalac, opposing development on the creek, promoting local voices in relation to artificial openings, flood mitigation, water quality and cooperative management arrangements, promoting greater recognition of traditional owner views, advocating low key recreation facilities and interpretation and seeking State guidance on coastal hazards and climate adaptation. I strongly support the Lot 2 rewilding project and hope the effort can extend beyond that site. I support retention and reinstatement of natural floodplain function, as far as possible. |
| Kate Gazzard | All our waterways and wetlands are precious, and it is important to protect these areas from the impacts of human activity, particularly climate change and its effects. We need to balance affordable housing and helping families and workers to live in the area, while also conserving and regenerating the natural environment. I support environmentally sensitive development and infrastructure but not at the cost to our wildlife and water. We have a lot to learn from First Nations peoples who have been custodians of these lands for millennia, and we need to do better to protect our waterways. |
| Libby Stapleton | Conditions exist to protect Painkalac Creek Valley and it is Council’s responsibility to help preserve the valley and its significant environmental values. It’s a highly valued natural feature of the Aireys/Fairhaven landscape and is identified in the Structure Plan as a place of environmental and cultural significance. I would continue to advocate for its protection, and will work closely with the Painkalac Valley Network, AIDA and relevant agencies, to ensure a collective and informed approach is taken with Council, to revive and maintain the health of the Painkalac, while also educating community and visitors about its unique ecosystem and biodiversity. |
| Leon Walker | Continue to engage with all the communities for the important eco system, along with all the stakeholders; such as shire, gorcapa, estuary watch, catchment authorities and barwon water. Engage and discuss through conversation and forums with everyone ensuring the area is in line with AIDAs community needs of protection and health of the bio system. |
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| **Torquay Ward** |  |
| Paul Barker | No response received. |
| Rebecca Bourke | No response received. |
| Phoebe Crockett | The Painkalac Creek Valley is a vital ecosystem. We must resist over-development, limited to recreation upgrades for walking and cycles for people to enjoy and take care of this unique place and its native flora, fauna and in-stream habitats. A continued collaborative effort between stakeholders such as Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, ANGAIR, AIDA and relevant Aboriginal parties is needed to ensure suitable management and diverse community interests are balanced. Advocacy for further State Government funding will help prepare for future challenges. |
| Martin Duke | No response received. |
| Eric Menogue | No response received. |
| Liz Pattison | The Painkalac creek is valued very highly for its natural beauty and environmental value. It is important that the Shire continues to work with residents and community groups to bring them to the table with the wider stakeholder group. This keeps all parties informed and involved in key decision for the Painkalac valley’s future. |
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| **Winchelsea Ward** |  |
| Joel Grist | No response received. |
| Aleisja Henry | * 1. One of the most important aspects is managing the health of the waterways and wetlands, through proper scientific methods with the relevant land and water management agencies responsible for this area.   2. Any recreational use of the waterways and wetlands should be balanced against the environmental needs of these ecosystems. |
| Rose Hodge | Ensure the community receive notice and information on any opening of the creek, working together with other agencies, no unnecessary infrastructure, Work towards a low passive recreational, eg walking trials. No active recreational area such as a football oval, one of the key actions of the 2015 Airey’s to Eastern View was not to progress a development. Balance any vegetation removal (if needed) for bushfire conditions. No unnecessary signage. |
| Tony Phelps | As with question 1, Surf Coast Shire can attempt to manage and control development with appropriate planning measures (and these should be strengthened & defined if/as appropriate) but again it simply isn't possible to "ensure" they are followed due to state government interference. The unelected GORCAPA virtual-council complicates things further. I'm happy to support the preservation and regeneration of the Painkalac Creek valley and surroundings. |
| Adrian Schonfelder | O Would highlight the importance of working in concert with key stakeholders including First Nations People, GORPCA, Surf Coast Shire and others to ensure this precious valley is protected from inappropriate development. |
| Darryl Wilson | No response received. |

1. AIDA advocates the retention of shared, gravel roads, and the implementation of Council’s commitment to a speed limit of 40kph on local streets in Aireys Inlet. Do you agree, or would you support different policies?

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| **Otway Ranges Ward** |  |
| Mike Bodsworth | I strongly support 40kmh local streets and sharing of road space on quieter local streets. I generally support retention of gravel roads for aesthetic and character reasons but I support the sealing of steep and unstable roads like the steep part of Boundary Road. I’m concerned about the environmental cost of gravel extraction, given Gherang gravel is a non-renewable natural resource that’s mined from highly environmentally-sensitive bushland. I’d welcome conversations between Council and the local community on these points. I am also mindful that good unsealed road surfaces, year-round, are important for walkers and riders. |
| Kate Gazzard | I agree, unless there are any safety issues raised - this is my first priority in anything to do with streets and traffic. For example in some Melbourne streets now there are speed limits of 30 km/h which has been shown to be safer for pedestrians and especially children. I would be guided in part by the community and also by evidence-based research on these matters. I do love the shared, gravel roads up to the lighthouse and trails and I support the retention of these. |
| Libby Stapleton | Aireys local streets also act as shared pathways for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders, and I strongly support a 40kph speed limit, to create greater amenity, enjoyment and safety for all road users. Gravel roads are part of the overall character of Aireys Inlet and on the whole I support their retention (declaration: I do like living on my gravel road). I also appreciate there are a few roads where the steep gradient causes issues with drainage and run-off, and the financial / environmental impact on some specific streets must be considered alongside the overarching preference to retain our gravel roads. |
| Leon Walker | Yes, but the roads must be maintained to a standard for all users all year round, and some parts (corners and steeps) could be sealed/widened or better maintained. Better grading to reduce corrugations and potholes could be better (across the whole shire also). |
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| **Torquay Ward** |  |
| Paul Barker | No response received. |
| Rebecca Bourke | No response received. |
| Phoebe Crockett | I agree with the retention of shared roads with a high proportion of unsealed roads. I believe Council undertakes renewal of unsealed roads by reviewing the asset’s condition, risk profile and criticality. Reducing speed limits in neighbourhood streets help to create safer and more liveable streets for people and aligns with worldwide best practice. |
| Martin Duke | No response received. |
| Eric Menogue | No response received. |
| Liz Pattison | I support the speed limits of 40kph on local streets in Aireys Inlet. This allows residents to drive to the conditions of the unsealed roads, allows people to share the road safely and maintains a community feel. I generally support the unsealed roads of Aireys Inlet. |
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| **Winchelsea Ward** |  |
| Joel Grist | No response received. |
| Aleisja Henry | I agree with AIDA’s position on this matter. |
| Rose Hodge | It’s hard to comment as not a resident of Airey’s or an everyday user of the gravel roads, if the majority of the community agree the speed limit is adequate, I’d support. |
| Tony Phelps | I'm a strong believer in and supporter of democracy (subject to the greater good). If shared gravel roads and 40kph speed limits are what the majority of Aireys Inlet inhabitants would like, I'm more than happy to support them. More responsive management of unsealed roads is a key issue for me, and they are certainly part of the feel of a town. |
| Adrian Schonfelder | I support 50km as the lowest speed limit statewide. |
| Darryl Wilson | No response received. |