



AIDA

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2010

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

^{14th}
FRIDAY 7 JANUARY 2011

7.00 p.m. for a 7.30 start

Aireys Inlet Community Hall

*Doors open at 7.00 p.m.
for membership renewal.*

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

ROD QUANTOCK

What's so special about a special charge scheme?

Residents of Aireys Inlet and Fairhaven may have had the unpleasant experience of paying a special charge to fund capital works proposed by Surf Coast Shire. There have been examples where residents feel so strongly about the capital works proposed that, not only do they not wish to contribute, but they would happily pay for the works not to go ahead.

The council's website¹ states that the *Local Government Act (1989)*:

provides Council with the ability to introduce a Special Rate or Charge Scheme seeking property owner contributions towards infrastructure projects such as roads, footpaths and drainage improvements. A Special Rate or Charge Scheme may also be appropriate for projects such as streetscapes and traffic management.

In other words the council may charge property owners for 'necessary' infrastructure. In return the property owners will receive a 'special benefit'.

Residents may find the projects neither beneficial nor necessary. It is questionable whether the benefit of a sealed road outweighs the increase in traffic, the increase in speeding cars, the increase in buses, and the total loss of neighbourhood character. Whether infrastructure is necessary is also highly subjective.

The council's policy on Infrastructure Special Rate or Charge Scheme² states that special charge schemes are necessary because infrastructure demands exceed available financial resources.

This argument is flawed on two counts. First, the job of the council is to allocate limited financial resources in a responsible and expedient manner throughout the Shire. If infrastructure is needed, then money will be allocated for that project on a needs basis, as is often the case now.

A special charge scheme, funded by residents, enables projects to go ahead that would perhaps never stand up to the rigors of allocation of funds through general revenue. Second, residents should not be expected to pay money, often many thousands of dollars, in addition to their rates.

It is disturbing that council's website indicates the only recourse for objection to a special charge scheme is through VCAT. This is not the case. It is only fair that residents should be informed of the provision contained in Section 6 of the *Local Government Act (1989)* s163b, but no mention is made of it on the council's website. Section 6 states that a council cannot make a declaration to levy a special charge if the council receives objections from the majority of rateable properties in respect to which the special charge scheme would be imposed. So, if more than half of the owners of the rateable properties object to a special charge scheme then it will not proceed. This was the case in Bambra Road with the proposal for a footpath in 2008, and also in Boundary Road with a proposal to seal the road in 2006.

AIDA believes that residents should be informed of Section 6 in all preliminary information concerning special charge schemes as a matter of good corporate governance. Further, the information should be presented in simple language; it is not reasonable to expect residents to trawl through the Act to find this information.

If you would like to comment on the council's use of special charge schemes, there will be a review of the policy in June 2011. In the meantime if you do not agree with proposed infrastructure changes, discuss it with your neighbours and put in an objection. Remember, the scheme will not proceed if the majority of rateable properties object.

¹ <http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/infracurrent.htm>

² http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Council/Documents/Policies/SCS_009_Special_Rate_Charge_Scheme.pdf

Frieda Wachsmann

Split Point Lighthouse precinct update

The woes of the Split Point Lighthouse precinct began in 1999 when Surf Coast Shire received a grant to seal Lighthouse Road and Federal Street to facilitate tourist access. Many residents, aware that the residential streets could not cope with the projected increase in traffic, reluctantly agreed to the sealing when in the winter of 1999 Lighthouse Road, through lack of maintenance, partially collapsed. Since then, many thousands of dollars, and hundreds of hours have been spent trying to rectify this ill-conceived scheme.

Four traffic management plans have been commissioned from independent consultants, each of whom has ignored the fundamental problem that there is no room at Step Beach car park for the enormous number of vehicles that traverse the precinct, a number increasing exponentially every year. The opening of the Geelong ring road has resulted in an even larger increase in the past year.

In April 2010 at a public meeting about 60 people voiced their concern over developing Step Beach car park into a large sealed car park with long vehicle parking. As a result of this meeting the consultants were asked to revise their plan.

Unfortunately, this revised plan contained factual and technical errors, so in April 2010 AIDA took the unusual step of not just commenting on the latest plan, but actually proposing a traffic management plan for the precinct. A modified form of this plan was unanimously accepted by council on 25 August 2010. The resolutions were moved by Cr Northeast and seconded by Cr Mears.

The resolutions are taken from the council's website <http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Council/Documents/Minutes/2010/25_Aug_2010.pdf> and reproduced below:

1. Note the Split Point Lighthouse Precinct Traffic Management Plan.
2. Remove all existing lighthouse vehicular directional signage from the Noble Sanctuary entrance to Inlet Crescent North and also from the Lighthouse Road intersection and, except for disabled and pedestrian signage, from elsewhere within the precinct.
3. Redevelop the skate park car park providing increased car parking and also long vehicle and coach parking taking into account the needs of the local community and their use of this precinct.
4. Prohibit buses, vehicles towing caravans and trailers from entering the precinct and direct all traffic to the redeveloped skate park car park whilst providing new Great Ocean Road signage at and before the Noble Sanctuary entrance to Inlet Crescent North confirming same.
5. Request Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) that any redevelopment of the Step Beach car park should avoid impact on existing flora and fauna, be limited to a maximum of 25 spaces on an unsealed surface, with no provision of long vehicle parking or of overflow parking in Eagle Rock Parade.
6. Consider the potential to increase disabled car and minibus parking at the foot of the lighthouse.
7. Use installations and planting to prevent vehicles parking on the side of the road in Federal Street.
8. Subject to Aboriginal midden protection, allocate up to 15 well-defined but unsealed parallel parks in Inlet Crescent South.
9. Provide signage prohibiting long vehicles from entering Inlet Crescent South.
10. Advise tourists, bus companies, tourist operators of above and keep the community informed.

CARRIED 9:0

The adoption of these resolutions was a victory for the residents of the Lighthouse Precinct who for eleven years have watched their streets become congested and overrun purely because of bad traffic management. The challenge now is for residents to ensure that the resolutions are carried out. We must continue to lobby the council, and we must lobby the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee to ensure Step Beach car park does not have the same fate as Bells Beach where eighty tourist buses a day arrive daily. As residents we deserve better than this.

Frieda Wachsmann

Update on Aireys Inlet Commercial Zones design guidelines

The Surf Coast Shire, through its contractor Hansen Partnership, consulted the community to determine guidelines for future development of our top and bottom shops. The final draft Design Guidelines – Aireys Inlet Commercial Areas was adopted by the council in June, 2009.

The first step in implementing the guideline was for council officers to draft an amendment (C55) to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme. This was done, exhibited in March–April 2010 and received four requests for modification. To sort out the most contentious concerns, council referred the issue to Planning Panels Victoria for a hearing.

The September hearing heard presentations from the Surf Coast Shire, AIDA, and a barrister hired by the owners of 73 (Kalbaru Construction warehouse), 83 (former hardware store) and 85 (former surf shop) Great Ocean Road (GOR). Much of the discussion related to issues at the bottom shops including whether maximum height requirements (8 m) were needed, whether the 3 m GOR setback was appropriate, whether pathways and views from the GOR to the Painkalac Creek were needed and whether developments should have active frontages to both the GOR and the Painkalac Creek. All these points came out of the

community consultation and were opposed by the commercial interests. Panel Chair Kathryn Mitchell will determine how the new developments in our commercial areas will appear and function.

Of immediate interest are the current planning applications for 73 and 83 GOR. However, the fate of 77 GOR (former garden supplies) is an obvious concern. These three very large blocks need to be developed to revitalise the bottom shops. They provide excellent opportunities to develop community services in a sensitive coastal shopping centre.

The conduct of a hearing is strictly regulated and only expert witnesses can be cross-examined. This can lead to humour and frustration for participants. When the barrister reported that the ice cream shop at 89 GOR had failed despite its location, there was a gasp then laughter from community members in the audience. The observation that it was rarely open (an estimate from a local shop keeper was six days per year) could not be introduced as the barrister spoke after AIDA and he was not an expert witness.

Arghh!

Gary Johnson

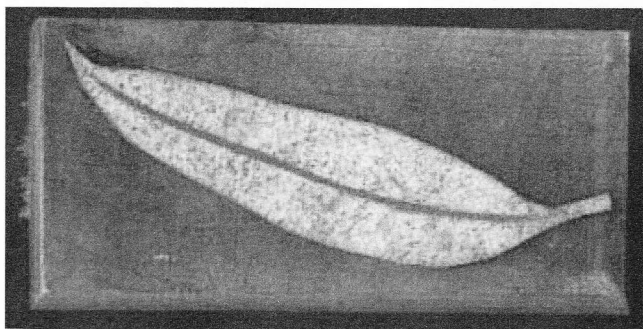


Who opens the Painkalac Creek mouth to prevent flooding?

The Dept of Sustainability & Environment and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) have given permission, with a list of conditions, to the Surf Coast Shire to artificially open the mouth of the creek. The opening can only take place once the water level has reached the trigger level of 1.9 m Australian Height Datum (AHD) on the road bridge depth gauge. This gauge can be seen from the western bank car park.

- The mouth can be opened at any time of the year if the Painkalac Dam Reservoir is full, a rainfall of 20+ mm is predicted and the water level is 1.9 AHD or more.
- Before opening, the relevant government agencies must be notified and the water tested. For their safety, the public are excluded from the mouth during the opening.
- The Shire, in conjunction with the CCMA, relies on a computer-based management tool (the Estuary Entrance Management Support System) to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not to open the mouth and to understand the risks of opening.
- Where practical, the mouth is opened on an outgoing tide, in the afternoon and in anticipation of a significant rainfall.
- The maximum size of machinery and the location of the opening (40 m from eastern cliffs) are specified.
- The mouth is not opened during rough seas, peak holiday periods, if the creek is flowing or if there has been minimal rainfall in the previous 48 hours.
- It is generally considered preferable that the creek open naturally but the Shire steps in when there is a community safety issue (GOR flooding) or threat to houses.

Gary Johnson



2011 Committee

The 2010 committee has been actively involved in many varied issues in our community. Meetings are held monthly on Friday nights with lively and stimulating discussion. For AIDA to continue in 2011 a few new committee members are needed. Please consider this. Enquires can be made to any of the committee members listed in this newsletter.

Tania Teague
52 896 526

Weeds to mulch

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. The Surf Coast Shire has developed an innovative community-based program called 'Weeds to Mulch' to reduce the fire fuel loads within townships. It uses the model 'House Ignition Likelihood Index' developed by Dr Kevin Tolhurst & Co. (Kevin is Senior Lecturer, Fire Ecology & Management Department of Forest and EcoSystem Science, University of Melbourne).

The Weeds to Mulch program aims to reduce fuel loads within the townships from 'extreme/high' to the 'medium' level. It also aims to empower the community to become self-reliant.

This year's program to be run in Aireys Inlet will target major assets such as the Top Shops, Community Hall and Primary School. Within the next three weeks, up to 70 properties surrounding this area will receive an invitation to become involved in this innovative fuel-reduction program in partnership with council officers.

Michael Cooper
Assistant Community Fire Safety & Environment Officer

Planning issues

73 Great Ocean Road Aireys Inlet

Application has been made for two shops, additional shed space for Kalbaru Constructions and two conjoined two-storey dwellings to the rear of the property with access from River Drive. Although this proposal contained some good planning concepts and generally adhered to the principles of the Urban Design Guidelines, AIDA objected to height overreach, frontage concerns with the dwellings and to the proposed large illuminated signage. A meeting between the developer and objectors was called by council and facilitated by the planning officer involved. From this meeting some modifications have been proposed, and AIDA awaits reassessment of our objections when these changes have been submitted.

7A Federal Street Aireys Inlet

This very important heritage site in the Lighthouse precinct has an application from the owners for a large two-storey dwelling. AIDA has many concerns with this application and the impact of such a bulky dwelling on views to the Lighthouse, including its heritage cottages and outbuildings. It is likely that this proposal will be highly visible behind the heritage stables and also to surrounding areas and the Great Ocean Road – potentially from as far as Point Roadknight in one direction and Lorne in the other. The proposed height of the building fails planning standards, setbacks are inadequate, and AIDA is concerned that hard surface coverage is not within requirements. We see this design proposal as unsympathetic and in conflict with design objectives which seek to protect the landscape values and vistas to the Split Point Lighthouse and incompatible with the Heritage Overlay applicable to this area.

83 Great Ocean Road Aireys Inlet

This application is now to be heard at VCAT in April 2011. The developer, who was legally represented at the Urban Design Guidelines Hearing (see Gary Johnson's report) opposed the majority of the proposed Guidelines, reducing the intended clauses to bear no relationship to community values and therefore to have limited impact on the proposed design of the supermarket including its connection to the Painkalac Valley. We are awaiting the outcome of this hearing to assess the impact on our case before VCAT.

*Barbara Fletcher and Gary Johnson
AIDA Planning*

