



# AIDA

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Urquhart Bluff • Aireys Inlet • Fairhaven • Moggs Creek • Eastern View



Michael van Berkel

## President's report 2022

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

I would also like to recognise that while our concerns today are very local, we must also think of the people of Ukraine and anybody who has family or friends there.

Welcome to our ward councillor, Mike Bodsworth, and the shire's CEO Robyn Seymour. Our other Anglesea ward councillor and mayor, Libby Stapleton, is an apology as is Lorne ward councillor Gary Allen. I also welcome Danny Aitken from the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) who will give us an update on the authority's activities following the AGM.

Welcome everyone. The AIDA committee has had another year of Zoom meetings, but we have been busy and productive in pursuing AIDA's overall policy, that is, **'to encourage and support the planned use of the region between Eastern View and Urquhart**

**Bluff, together with the adjacent hinterland, in a manner that is sympathetic to the environment and conserves as far as possible the special character of the area'**. Recently the committee started to review AIDA's policies, aims and objectives to ensure they still accurately reflect the organisation's priorities and activities. The results of this review will be communicated to all members before any changes are made.

Our interest in GORCAPA's plans and activities remains very high. Its strategies and impacts on the Great Ocean Road, its communities, tourism and the environment, will be significant as it progressively assumes responsibility for all Crown land along the road and in the hinterland, as well as introducing uniform new strategies and plans that will apply to the whole Great Ocean Road.

While the AIDA committee remains focussed on the area between Urquhart Bluff and Eastern View, we recognise we must also maintain a strong interest in the whole of the Great Ocean Road. Any plans

for tourism or residential developments and other infrastructure along the road have the potential to have an impact locally – either directly or by setting a precedent that could be followed. At the moment there are development plans at Kennett River and Princetown that, we believe, would threaten their local communities and environment. And, of course, closer to home there is the Eden Project in Anglesea. While this is in its very initial stages there seems to be substantial evidence that allowing Alcoa to continue to pump groundwater to fill the mine void is having serious impacts on the health of the Anglesea River with increased water acidity which has effectively killed all fish life. Given the report in this week's *Surf Coast Times* that Alcoa and the Eden project agree getting the mine void 50 per cent filled by the required date of 2024 is improbable raises the question – why continue the groundwater extraction? The AIDA committee will closely follow this distressing situation and all the issues raised by the Eden Project which your committee opposes.

The Great Ocean Road Communities Network, or GORCN, which was an AIDA initiative, has had a very successful year with several new members: more than fifteen community organisations now liaise regularly. Our webinar series on Climate Change and Coastal Erosion attracted more than 700 registrations to each of the four sessions, with interest coming from around Australia as well as overseas. GORCN was extremely grateful for the technical assistance and financial help from the shire.

We are especially pleased to have begun regular meetings of our Great Ocean Road Communities Network with the chair of GORCAPA Libby Mears, and its CEO Jodie Sizer.

The network members believe that the Great Ocean Road needs fewer tourists, spread throughout the year, who take time to enjoy the whole coast and what its hinterland has to offer. In last year's report I mentioned that it would be a lost opportunity if there is a return of the convoys of large buses making the one-day dash to the Twelve Apostles and back. They contribute nothing to the community and are an impost on our resources and environment. I still firmly believe this is the case and we must hope that the GORCAPA's tourism strategy reflects this view. I am optimistic that this is the case.

Reviewing all planning applications to the shire for our area is a core and essential AIDA activity. When applications are for developments that do not comply with the shire's planning policies or Neighbourhood Character Overlays, AIDA submits an objection. This year we have become very concerned by the number of applications that do not meet the requirements for

setbacks from front and side boundaries. These setbacks are very important as they provide space for vegetation between buildings which serves to soften the built form and maintain the sense that our townships are 'nestled among the trees'. It is very disappointing to see the shire's planning officers allowing these non-compliant applications to proceed. We have raised this issue with the shire several times this year.

The committee has progressed its plans to apply for our area to be recognised by the International Dark-sky Association as a dark-sky community. We are planning to hold a community event in September that will involve some talks and discussion about the importance of the dark-sky followed by some guided star-gazing with the experts. Becoming a recognised dark-sky destination would have some huge community and environmental benefits. Gaining accreditation is a long process that will take several years and requires support from the community and the shire. We believe we have this support. Holding the Dark-sky Event in September is dependent on wi-fi being available in the hall and AIDA is working with the hall committee to see how this can be achieved; the AIDA committee has offered a small amount of financial assistance to get the NBN connected. Having the service available in the hall would be a huge benefit to many of the community groups who use it and in any emergency event.

One of the issues that was evident in AIDA's community attitude survey last year was that people wanted more opportunities to have their say and be consulted. We took this on board and recently held a survey on Safely Sharing our Roads. Thanks to everyone who participated. The survey has been provided to the relevant authorities and will be available on the AIDA website. One of the most pleasing results is that there is strong support to reduce the speed limits through and around our communities.

This year the AIDA committee has continued to lobby the Department of Transport and our council for a speed limit reduction from 60 to 50 kph on the Great Ocean Road through Aireys Inlet and Fairhaven. Not only are we the only communities along the road that have the 60 kph speed limit through them but Aireys is also the only township along the Great Ocean Road that is bisected by the road. We are also lobbying to have the speed limit on all the townships' local roads reduced to 40 kph – as is the case in the Lighthouse Precinct. The shire will review the local roads speed limit and supports AIDA's advocacy for a speed reduction on the Great Ocean Road through the built-up areas.

It was very exciting to hear today from Robyn Seymour, the shire's CEO, that she heard yesterday that the Department of Transport has agreed to trial a

speed reduction through our townships and provide funds for some 'pedestrian treatments'. We look forward to hearing more about what these might be and about the trial.

The AIDA committee put in submissions to the shire's review of its Community Amenity Local Law as well as its Safer Cycling and Road Safety Strategies. The results from AIDA's Safely Sharing our Roads survey were provided for the Road Safety Strategy review.

At the end of last year AIDA had almost 500 members, the highest number in AIDA's long history. Thanks to the strong membership and the generous donations from many of our members, we have a healthy bank balance and have been able to give back to the community. This year we have given the wonderful Rubbish Rangers some additional funds for more high-vis vests and equipment. We also donated \$1000 to the local Hooded Plover group so they could purchase A-Frame metal signs to ask the public and dog owners to avoid the nesting plovers. These were placed at the walkways to local beaches where the plovers were nesting. We also donated a 1965 aerial photo of Aireys Inlet to the hall committee which had it reframed and hung in the foyer. Remember to have a look before you leave.

The VCAT appeal over the council's refusal to approve an application for a private bridge over the Painkalac Creek was heard in June last year. The tribunal's decision was handed down in late October and approved the issuing of a planning permit. However, the tribunal members were very clear that their decision was made purely on planning matters and that the applicants would also need a licence or lease agreement from council to allow construction of the bridge on Crown land and council reserves. The AIDA committee believes that the council has no legal authority to grant such a permit and has written to the shire detailing our concerns. A decision about the granting of this licence has yet to be made.

Despite all the Zoom meetings again this year the AIDA committee has continued to be an effective advocate for our area. My personal thanks to all committee members for their hard work and support.

This year there are five committee members who are not renominating for the AIDA committee for a variety of personal reasons. Our thanks go to Suzanne Cavanagh, Annette Comte, Leah Gaylard, Martin Gehrckens, and Catherine McNaughton for all they have contributed over their years on the committee. They will be missed. I'm pleased that Annette will still have a role with the committee and will be responsible for our monthly correspondence report. We are delighted that Barb Fletcher has nominated to come back after a year's break and that Jacqui Lamont, Guy

Abrahams and Helen Berthelsen have all nominated for the committee. We look forward to other AIDA members stepping forward to join the committee in its important but enjoyable work.

Once again thanks to Lecki Ord for all she does as membership secretary and to Nan McNab for presenting AIDA so professionally with the production of our newsletters.

Ian Godfrey remains our 'go to' reference point for many of our questions.

We are fortunate to have had AIDA advocating for this area for well over fifty years. Our communities have all benefited from the efforts and time of so many people and the departing committee members have all played their part.

Finally, we are grateful for the accessibility, local knowledge and commitment of our local councillors, Mike Bodsworth, Gary Allen and our mayor Libby Stapleton, as well as the shire CEO, Robyn Seymour. This is true as well of the chair of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, Libby Mears, and its CEO Jodie Sizer. The values we share with these officeholders gives us confidence that we can work successfully together to be good custodians of this special part of the world.

## AIDA 2021 AGM report

Forty-one of AIDA's approximately 450 members forwent a significant portion of a gloriously sunny Saturday afternoon to attend the 2022 AIDA Annual General Meeting on 23 April at the Aireys Inlet Community Hall.

AIDA president Charlotte Allen welcomed members as well as guests Robyn Seymour, CEO of the Surf Coast Shire; Mike Bodsworth, councillor of Anglesea ward; and Danny Aitken, Operations Manager of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. Apologies were received from Libby Stapleton, mayor of the Surf Coast Shire and councillor of Anglesea ward, and Gary Allen, councillor of Lorne ward. The shire representatives presented an excellent review of the council's new Vision for the Future and its underlying principles and strategies, especially those pertaining to our district. This Vision had been developed following wide-ranging community surveys in 2021 and the work of the community representatives on the People, Place and Future panel. A summary of the presentations and responses to questions from AIDA members are included in the minutes of the AGM, which will be circulated to members and uploaded to the AIDA website. Of particular interest, Robyn Seymour announced that the Department of Transport had acted on lobbying by AIDA and the shire and agreed to run a

speed reduction trial on the Great Ocean Road through Aireys and Fairhaven.

During the formal portion of the AGM the minutes of the 2021 AGM were accepted as a true record of that meeting before Charlotte Allen read her president's report for 2021. Treasurer Frieda Wachsmann then presented her AIDA 2021 annual financial report, which was formally received by the members. After the members had approved the continuation of our practice of having a maximum of twelve committee members in addition to the four office holders, the election of the 2022–23 committee was held. There being no more than one person nominated for each position on the committee, the new AIDA committee was declared to have been elected and new members Gary Abrahams, Helen Berthelsen and Jacqui Lamont were welcomed to the committee and Barbara Fletcher was welcomed back. Charlotte then thanked retiring committee members Annette Comte, Suzanne Cavanagh, Leah Gaylard, Martin Gehrckens, and Catherine McNaughton for their years of service on the committee before everyone at the meeting showed their gratitude by enthusiastic applause.

The AGM was followed by a presentation by guest speaker Danny Aitken, who outlined the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority's immediate and long-term plans for the Great Ocean Road, including its plans and strategies to protect the road's environment, local communities, and tourism.

Danny then answered questions before attendees were served light refreshments and had the opportunity to talk to the shire representatives, the guest speaker, the new AIDA committee and other members.

*Mary Jane Gething, Secretary*

## Threatened Broad-Toothed Rat found in the Painkalac Valley



David Paul, Museums Victoria

The Broad-Toothed Rat, a threatened native mammal, has been identified in the Painkalac Valley. This little Australian native rodent hasn't been seen in the Eastern Otways since the mid-1980s when one was trapped a few kilometres from the coast in the Painkalac Valley.



David Paul, Museums Victoria

Professor Barbara Wilson and Dr Mark Garkaklis, working with colleagues from the Melbourne Zoo and supported by a grant from ANGAIR, found their typical green scats, which were confirmed by DNA analysis to be from the Broad-Toothed Rat. The scats were found around the Painkalac Estuary in Aireys Inlet.

This adds to the incredible diversity of small native mammals now identified in and around the Painkalac Valley: the Swamp Antechinus (another threatened species), Agile Antechinus, Swamp Rat, Bush Rat, Rakali (water rat) and Southern Brown Bandicoot.

Small native mammals in Australia have experienced significant extinctions and still face ongoing severe population declines. It's wonderful that in our little part of the coast we still have populations of these precious threatened animals. It reinforces the importance of preserving and restoring natural habitat in the Valley. Ongoing work on Lot 2 Bambra Road has included the planting of around 1000 manna gums and 100 swamp gums, preferred food sources for koalas, and the establishment of native grassland for small mammals. Restoration of a further 1.4 ha area of council administered land on the banks of the Painkalac Creek, level with Aireys Street, has also recently begun. Planting has been specifically designed to create a refuge for small native mammals. This project is run by ANGAIR with the support of the Surf Coast Shire and a Commonwealth Government Wild Otways Grant, administered by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

*Michael Loughnan*

## Surf Coast Shire grant for hall wi-fi

In July, AIDA received a grant from the shire's Small Grants Program to pay for the NBN to be installed at the Anderson Road Knight Community Centre. In addition, AIDA has offered to cover the cost to provide wi-fi in the hall for twelve months. The service will be of great benefit to many of the hall's regular, and casual, users.

Having wi-fi in the hall was a pre-requisite for holding the Night-Sky Event in September and it should also enable AIDA to hold its next AGM as a hybrid event with members in the hall and on-line. The committee thanks the shire for its assistance and support.

## GORCN –

### Great Ocean Road Communities Network

As a founding member of GORCN, AIDA has continued to be involved in meetings with the new Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) along with other community organisations along the coast from Torquay to Port Campbell. On 18 May we met with Libby Mears

(Chair, GORCAPA Board), Jodie Sizer (CEO, GORCAPA) and key members of their staff. The items discussed were:

- 1 GORCAPA funding sources: the apparent contradiction between the imperative to preserve the environment and the need to generate income to sustain the authority.
- 2 Princetown: development plans on Gellibrand estuary/wetlands.
- 3 Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve: master planning and plans for further development of camping sites.
- 4 Kennett River: plans for a new toilet block and parking arrangements.
- 5 Feedback on GORCAPA's draft Community Engagement Strategy.

It was noted that some specific community issues either pre-date the creation of GORCAPA or are outside its responsibilities (for example, being on private land). Both sides value the opportunity for GORCN organisations to discuss major policies and concerns with the authority.

*Peter McPhee*



Michael van Berkel

## AIDA's Dark-Sky Event

As part of AIDA's plans to receive accreditation from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) as a dark-sky community, AIDA is holding a Dark-Sky Event on 24 September this year.

The event will be in two parts. The first part will be

in the community hall, and the second part will be at Lot 2, 79 Bambra Road – Mick Loughnan and Jacinta Halloran's block. At each venue there will be speakers and activities to introduce residents to the wonders and beauty of the night sky at Aireys.

The first part will consist of presentations from three speakers, all around the theme of preservation of the

night sky. Judith Bailey from the Victorian Chapter of the IDA will discuss the work of the IDA, and why it is important to preserve our night sky; Krystal de Napoli, Indigenous woman and astronomer will discuss the night sky from the point of view of Indigenous people; and local author Greg Day will discuss the night sky in the context of his work.

After the formal presentations, guests will be bussed out to Lot 2 where they will be free to gaze at the night sky. For those who would like a little more structure and guidance, we will have telescopes set up, informal discussions and an ecologist who will take people on a night walk to observe nocturnal wildlife.

The International Dark-sky Association is based in Arizona, USA, and works to preserve the night sky from the effects of light pollution, and so preserve it for future generations. Its work takes on many aspects of preservation of the night sky, including grass-roots lobbying for improved residential street lighting, advocacy for planning policies and education and community awareness.

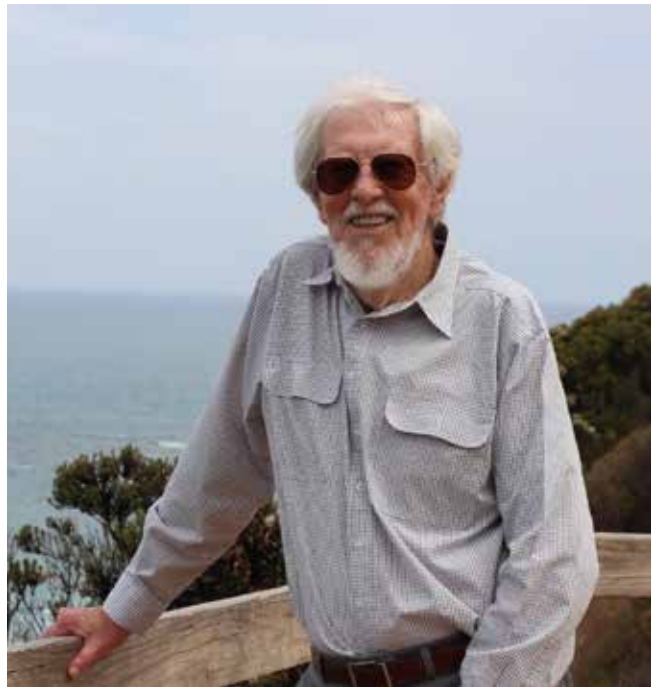
This certification will assist AIDA to promote our area as a dark-sky community. The preservation of our night sky has important ramifications for both humans and other animals. Already there are several examples of fauna becoming endangered due to disruption of their habitat by light pollution. The demise of the night sky can harm the health of humans, and wastes energy and resources. It robs us of a cultural legacy that has encompassed all people since the beginning of humankind. AIDA sees this accreditation as one part of our aim to preserve the natural environment of the area.

Dark-sky accreditation will complement the initiative of the State Government's new Great Ocean Roads Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) and other agencies to advance nature-based, sustainable tourism along the Great Ocean Road. There is increased interest in 'slower' tourism rather than the fast coach travel we have seen previously. This previous approach has diminished the amenity of small coastal towns and contributed little to the local economy. This project fits the new model perfectly, as it is aimed at encouraging visitors to stay longer, to appreciate nature, and to value this special part of the world.

AIDA acknowledges the financial support from Surf Coast Events, and Community Underwriters, our insurance company, and the support in kind from Surf Coast Shire. There are many other volunteers who have contributed their time and expertise to this project, from graphic designers to amateur astronomers, and AIDA gratefully acknowledges their contribution.

*Frieda Wachsmann*

## Dennis Leavesley



Dennis died on election day this year, but we know that he would have been very pleased with the result. A keen humanist and environmentalist, he and Barbara were the main instigators of the formation of the Goulburn Valley Environment Group in 1989 and brought this experience with them to Aireys in 1999. They lost no time in getting involved in local community, Dennis concentrated on ANGAIR activities while Barbara became a force in AIDA. Quite a formidable team.

As well as being active on the ground with planting and weeding at Aireys, Dennis took over as convenor of the ANGAIR group Friends of the Aireys Inlet Coastal Reserve in 2005. He drafted a weed control management plan based on the system of numbered vegetation units devised by the former Foreshore Committee and used Google Earth satellite photographs to map the weeded areas and plan the group's work programme.

Dennis organised the monthly weeding group in consultation with GORCC and continued this work with an ANGAIR grant, engaging contractors using chainsaws to undertake the heavy work of removing weeds from the remaining woody thickets that had been beyond the capacity of volunteers.

We will all miss Dennis, but have to agree that he made the most of his life, and we all appreciated his wisdom, knowledge and humour. When we walk in the bush, we will be thinking of him. We send our very best wishes to Barbara and the family.

*Lecki Ord*

## Safer Sharing of Roads Survey

Thank you to all those members who participated in the recent Safer Sharing of Roads Survey. AIDA received over 150 responses to the nine questions posed in the survey with many participants choosing to elaborate upon their answers in great detail. We are currently analysing these responses and hope to publish the survey results in full in the near future.

Some of the problems highlighted by this survey include the following:

- Over 90 per cent of respondents said that the sharing of residential roads is very or moderately successful over the winter months.
- However, this percentage drops to 66 per cent during the summer months when traffic volumes are higher.
- Nearly 70 per cent of respondents said that visiting drivers who are unfamiliar with our road behaviour are a major problem.
- Just over 64 per cent of these respondents also nominate speed as a major problem.

It therefore comes as no surprise that nearly 74 per cent of respondents say that lower speed limits would improve conditions and that 63 per cent favoured 'shared roadway' signs at the entrances to town.

Other improvements frequently suggested in this survey include the following:

- Additional safety islands and pedestrian crossings at key points along the Great Ocean Road.
- Greater safety measures for pedestrians and cyclists along busy roads including improved road verges and separate paths where necessary.
- Better enforcement of speed limits including an increased police presence.
- Additional road signage and improved road markings.

The above commentary barely scratches the surface of what was a very strong response to an important local survey.

*Ian Laging*

## Speed limits through Aireys Inlet and Fairhaven

For over a year AIDA had been lobbying the Surf Coast Shire and the Department of Transport to get the speed limit on the Great Ocean Road through Aireys Inlet and Fairhaven reduced from 60 kph to 50 kph. This would increase safety for all road users, including pedestrians, and bring speed limits into

line with all other communities along the road. The shire supported AIDA's position and also lobbied the Department of Transport.

At our AGM it was wonderful that the shire's CEO, Robyn Seymour, was able to announce that the Department of Transport has agreed to a speed reduction trial through our townships. We have no information about when the trial will start, how long it will last or how it will be assessed. We are hopeful the reduced speed limit will become permanent and that we can also get reduced speed limits on our residential streets.

*Ian Laging*

