



## **AIREYS INLET AND DISTRICT ASSOCIATION INC.**

### **Surf Coast Shire Council Election – Candidates’ Questionnaire**

AIDA members will be aware that many of our objectives for the environmental protection and responsible development of our part of the coastline depend for their success on the support we receive from the Surf Coast Shire and its Councillors.

Over the years we have been well served by our local councillors on matters of local concern, and now the shire wards have been re-introduced we will only be voting for councillors representing our individual wards. However all elected councillors will be required to vote on issues covering all wards. For this reason it is important for AIDA members to have an understanding of the views of councillors in all wards...and their familiarity with and sympathy for AIDA’s values and objectives.

But how do we find out the positions and values of all the candidates?

We have asked each candidate in each ward to share with our members their views on four key questions for our part of the Surf Coast Shire. We have provided – in alphabetical order by ward and alphabetical order by candidates within each ward – the candidates’ answers to each question exactly as they have given them – up to a limit of 100 words for each question – but we have not included any other commentary. We are aiming in this way to provide an even-handed opportunity for our members to understand Council candidates’ views on locally important issues, and compare them with those of other candidates. At no stage prior to the election will AIDA recommend or publicly favour any candidate.

The list below shows candidates, both new and re-standing, and also notes those who did not respond, or who did not give specific answers to the questions.

If you would like to view the candidates’ election statements, go to:  
<http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/Current/CouncilElections.html>

#### **The candidates are:**

##### **Anglesea Ward:**

Libby Coker (re-standing)

Raylene Fordham (new) (did not give specific answers to the questions)

Gary Kerr (new)

Tabitha Lowden (new)

Margot Ann Smith (new)

David Truman (new) (did not give specific answers to the questions)

##### **Lorne Ward:**

Clive Goldsworthy (new) (no response)

##### **Torquay Ward:**

David Bell (new)

Maurice Cole (new) (no response)  
Martin Duke (new) (no response)  
Gary John Dunne (new) (no response)  
Eve Fisher (new) (no response)  
Rose Hodge (re-standing)  
Brian McKiterick (re-standing) (no response)  
Joe Remenyi (re-standing) (did not give specific answers to the questions)  
Graeme Stockton (new)  
Merrin Wake (new)  
Dean Webster (re-standing) (no response)

**Winchelsea Ward:**

Jeff Dans (new) (no response)  
Keith Grossman (new) (no response)  
Ron Humphrey (re-standing) (no response)  
Carol McGregor (new) (no response)  
James McIntyre (new) (no response)  
Rod Nockles (new) (no response)  
Heather Wellington (new) (no response)

**Q1 What aspects of the neighbourhood character of Aireys Inlet to Eastern View do you consider most important, and how should Council seek to protect them?**

**Anglesea Ward:**

**Libby Coker:**

I value:

- Our sense of relaxed coastal village;
- Vistas to coast, hinterland, lighthouse and Painkalac Valley;
- Informal appearance of streetscapes, use of natural elements in footpaths, road surfaces;
- Buildings that are low-rise, low in density, set back, muted in colour without solid fencing;
- Habitat envelopes;
- Dominance of vegetation over built form, protection of indigenous species such as grass tree, ironbark, native orchids;
- Houses that do not sit on/above ridge lines.
- Open spaces, green belts.

These principles must be enshrined in Council's planning scheme via Overlays, Municipal Strategic Statements, permit requirements. Council must continue to advocate to State Government to ensure these principles are respected.

**Gary Kerr:**

The natural features between Aireys Inlet and Eastern View, are the ocean, coastline and the bush. These all go towards forming an important part in the consideration of what the local Neighbourhood Character consists of.

To avoid damaging this NC we need to ensure development is conducive to the environment, architecture designs, colours, materials, building heights and street front designs all need to compliment this character. It is important that non conducive development in relation to this environment be discouraged or prevented. Therefore the use of natural vegetation and appropriate landscaping is one way of ensuring NC is maintained.

**Tabitha Lowden:**

I was born and grew up on ten acres in the middle of what is now Jan Juc, so I have watched the changing character of Surf Coast towns for nearly forty years. I believe we live in a precious and valuable part of the world, with fragile biodiversity. People and community groups are incredibly

interconnected because of small population size and the clean coastal environment that we collectively treasure. The quiet beaches and pristine bush areas are worth protecting, as is the functionality of our towns in peak holiday season.

**Margot Ann Smith:**

The Aireys Inlet/Fairhaven/Moggs Creek/Eastern View section of the coast is a very natural environment. The housing is generally well positioned to ensure the natural bush settings are still the dominant design feature, whilst also providing many residents with spectacular views. Council can protect this by strong guidelines on development that through planning ensure the natural features of the land remain in place as much as possible with new building. Set backs, plant lists, limitations on the number of trees that can be removed are all part of this. The inlet area between Aireys and Fairhaven should be maintained as it is.

**Torquay Ward:**

**David Bell:**

For me the character that is most important is the low density of occupation, the low rise nature of the majority of the built environment and the retention of most of the flora. It would be almost criminal if that part of the coast was overrun by multistorey developments, weather for tourism or apartment living.

Council can protect these areas by putting in place planning guidelines and controls and most important enforcing these guides and controls. The problem comes then from the State Government which at the moment seems hell bent on instituting further one size fits all planning that takes no interest in local ...

**Rose Hodge:**

What I have learnt from the Aireys Inlet area is the need to feel the area is of a "low impact" nature, subtle in design and colour and building materials, heights and fencing. A seaside village of gentle amenity. The need for green open space, protection of this and vegetation. The less "urban" the better.

Our Scheme must be strong, strength in permits.

**Graeme Stockton:**

Proposed changes to State Government planning policies are likely to bring significant changes to the rural landscape. This includes a new Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) that requires a 50m clearance around all houses within rural zones. In addition, changes to the Rural Conservation Zone will see a relaxation of currently prohibited land use activities.

The natural landscape of the Great Ocean Road makes this area special; indeed it is listed on the National Heritage register. Therefore, Council will need to be pro-active in liaising with State Government to demonstrate its actions reflect the long term wishes of the community.

**Merrin Wake:**

As someone who does not live in this area I would be led by the community who live there. I am grateful for this area and what it gives me and my family, especially the education my children gain from a beautiful area with such biodiversity. There are areas of the Surf Coast that demand our development attention with a growing population as well as other areas that need to be protected. The management of areas such as Aireys Inlet through to Eastern View needs to be done by creating real consultation and community partnerships and listening to the community.

**Q2 Surf Coast Council noted in its minutes of March 28<sup>th</sup> 2012** *“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.”*  
**How would you ensure that this approach is implemented?**

**Anglesea Ward:**

**Libby Coker:**

Introduce a local Community Reference Group that meets with Ward Councillors, officers and relevant agencies once every 3-months to discuss issues/ infrastructure needs/emerging concerns. When a need for new/upgraded infrastructure is identified focus groups from the community are engaged to discuss possible solutions prior to Council putting forward a formal proposal.

This open-ended approach ensures there are no pre-conceived ideas presented by Council and the community is engaged from the outset.

**Gary Kerr:**

By putting in place low density development overlays that would reflect the environmental sensitivities of these towns, as far as the development of land was concerned by minimizing lot size and maximum development density applications. It is important that such towns as Aireys Inlet and Anglesea maintain their coastal and village character. That is one of the main attractions of living within these communities. Therefore ensuring that future development is both sensitively located and visually sensitive to the local environment with minimal loss of habitat and amenities for those that choose to live within the community is a priority

**Tabitha Lowden:**

If elected as a councillor, I would ensure that community groups and members were able to raise their concerns and express their views about designs for proposed infrastructure by inviting proposals and holding forums for discussion and consultation. Each town could come up with a design booklet which set out guidelines expressing members' views. I would endeavour to improve the outcome for residents who want to uphold the values of the majority of locals.

**Margot Ann Smith:**

A design approach that is sympathetic to the local neighbourhood character is a challenging concept to implement as one person's view on what is sympathetic will be different to another. I believe the approach on this should be to flesh out what this means - what can't be included in the infrastructure design and what should be included, with examples of what that means for an acceptable design. That should then be work shopped with the impacted communities - interested parties - to achieve acceptable guidelines. I believe it is important to agree design principles upfront.

**Torquay Ward:**

**David Bell:**

I have been through consultation processes with our current council notably the Spring Creek development proposal, Torquay Jan Juc sustainable futures 2040 community engagement and the development of the Bellbrae structure plan.

The first two mentioned were in my opinion unmitigated disasters, processes that paid lip service to actually engaging with the community and were more exercises in telling the community what was about to be foisted upon them.

To ensure that meaningful community engagement occurs there will need to be a change in the culture of the planning department and a willingness on behalf of councillors to back the community view against developers ...

**Rose Hodge:**

With the last proposed special charge scheme we have to see a much better discussion between councillors/officers to residents of what is needed. The Ward councillors would be instrumental in this and to liaison with other councillors what the "feel" of the community is needed so if any infrastructure or major works are needed all know the level and costs. How is that done? Perhaps several ways but forums or information days could be done. Using AIDA as a communicator to many.

**Graeme Stockton:**

Whilst everyone agrees it is the natural landscape that draws us to the GOR, every addition of concrete generally means an incremental corresponding loss in the area of natural landscape available for nature; particularly if the new BMO is introduced. Therefore, visual amenity and non-human impacts need to be considered so that the legacy of strategic planning over many years is not lost in a surge of development activity.

Providing an ongoing authentic space for active community participation is imperative in all this. Indeed, as a candidate I feel it would be very hard to achieve good outcomes without it.

**Merrin Wake:**

As with any issue that faces council, it should be led by the community. The approach of 'engagement' needs to be done well before these issues are put in any agenda. Policy statements need to be drafted after real consultation with the community. This involves speaking the language of the community and not replacing a community need with bureaucracy of council officers, political party lines or 'best practice' policy that is not in the best interests of the community. This approach would best work with developing better community partnerships and ensuring everybody in the community has access to the process.

**Q3 How should Council establish the best balance between the pressures of tourism and the needs of the community along our fragile coastline?**

**Anglesea Ward:**

**Libby Coker:**

Council can never provide enough car parks, bus bays and toilet blocks to accommodate the growing number of tourists to our region. Instead we must have defined low key spaces where buses and visitors can stop, stay, enjoy the beauty of our coast and add value to the local economy. To better understand the dynamics of this issue, a solution-focused review should be undertaken by Council's Surf Coast Tourism Board

**Gary Kerr:**

The pressure on tourism and the needs of the community unfortunately will continue to grow in line with our population growth. You can only manage the pressures on both by striking a balance between the needs of both .

Discussions are needed now between the local community, businesses, the shire and Tourism Victoria as to how we control this and yet still maintain the Character of the region, if we are to achieve that balance needed. With Armstrong creek coming on line with 50,000 residents the pressure on both local tourism and local communities will only continue to grow .

**Tabitha Lowden:**

This is a major issue for the next council to manage. Ensuring visitors walk and ride through precious areas instead of taking their bus or car. Educating tourists about the biodiversity of our areas to help them value it. Adventure tourism and ecotourism will build our economies as well as helping visitors to value this precious part of the world. Amenities will need to be built, and the design should be directed by the local community groups and residents.

**Margot Ann Smith:**

I believe the key pressure point for tourism is the road and with the opening of the Geelong Ring Road the traffic seems to be increasing even more. Providing safe places for stopping/parking along the road is critical. We must look for options to relieve the pressure on this road and I don't have the answers for that. Large resort style accommodation should be concentrated in Torquay and Lorne. I do believe we have opportunities to use our walking tracks for place to place walking tours and potentially accommodation similar in nature to the Tasmania Overland Track and Bay of Fires.

### **Torquay Ward:**

#### **David Bell:**

To me the best way to achieve the balance between community and tourism is to have frank and open discussion between all parties and develop priorities, a hierarchy of importance. My initial thought is that the natural environment is first existing communities second and tourism third. My thought is always that we have seen a pattern of destruction of the things we love by the pressure of people coming to be part of it. The very act of joining the rush to have part of the coast destroys the coast. A big part of any council attempts to find the balance...

#### **Rose Hodge:**

This is a problem throughout this area, where all what to see. Tourist buses need to be accommodated with toilets, a coffee shop (adds to the economy of the smaller stops) and sufficient bins, trying to get these area to be of the "low impact" is difficult along with signage, (which can be a visual dislike for locals). Now that Bells Beach is not one of the stops now for the larger coaches they will need to stop somewhere. Council needs to see the impacts of this further down the coast such as Anglesea/Aireys, more work is needed on this one.

#### **Graeme Stockton:**

I'm tempted to also add 'the needs of native lifeforms as part of that equation'. This is important because biodiversity is disappearing at rates not seen for 65 million years. It includes numerous species within the Otways. Accordingly, I see the major challenge for this 21<sup>st</sup> century as resisting the temptation to over-develop areas such as the GOR and instead to concentrate on sustainability as a masthead priority. This immediately invokes many new questions, e.g. is there an ecological and safety upper limit to visitation on any one day for the GOR? What management tools are available to local government?

#### **Merrin Wake:**

The need for tourism in our region and the influence it has on the everyday lives of the residents is an important question. As someone who has run her own small business I understand the importance of visitors to our region and the pressure it places on existing infrastructure. I think with respect at the heart of any decision that I make I will be able to contribute to a council that will take every issue on its own merit. I am committed to a council that is transparent and allows our residents to direct the long term vision of our community.

**Q4 How can council ensure that the Surf Coast Shire planning processes better protect and enhance our coastal settlements and also provide greater certainty of planning outcomes for both residents and developers?**

### **Anglesea Ward:**

#### **Libby Coker:**

Council must continually strive to enhance the planning scheme, embedding clear guidelines, overlays, MSSs that protect and enhance our coastal townships.

The Planning Scheme must also respond to State Government's latest "reforms" with Council continuing to strongly voice its concerns when coastal neighbourhood character is threatened. Further streamlining of planning processes is also important..

Educating residents, non-residents, the building industry and potential developers of our scheme, its key principles and steps to a timely planning outcome would benefit both Council and community.

#### **Gary Kerr:**

By introducing a Strategy that not only encourages local input from the community but also ensures that the local council itself puts in place planning that takes into account that consultation and the unique nature and character of our coastal towns as they exist. Aiming to protect that character by putting in place planning mechanisms and planning overlays that reflect the wishes of the local community and yet at the same time not impinging upon the rights of individuals but rather by putting in place a process that is consultative in manner, yet guided by those strict set of guidelines.

**Tabitha Lowden:**

The council must work hard to be accessible to locals' input. This takes time and consideration so that we build communities that reflect our values and identity. The council needs to work hard at ensuring that other levels of government don't dissolve the power of residents to have their views heard and acted upon. The design of our homes and civic buildings is a strong reflection of our mindset and culture.

**Margot Ann Smith:**

I strongly believe that our planning process now is not customer friendly. Those submitting plans find that they frequently need to re-do plans as guidelines are not extensive enough to get something right first time. We need to have a focus on what can be done, as well as what can't. We need to speed up the process and we need to have a planning team that do not shy away from contact with their customers.

**Torquay Ward:**

**David Bell:**

My response is very similar to the one above; local planning must take priority over state planning. It requires an overhaul of the current planning system and will be part of my agenda for as long as it takes.

**Rose Hodge:**

The keeping of neighbourhood character and the preferred amenity of the area should be embedded in our Planning scheme. Council planners/builders/new property owners are all aware of what can and what is not encouraged for this area. State legislation should also reflect this.

**Graeme Stockton:**

Part of the policy platform I've suggested is permanent town boundaries for Torquay, Jan Juc and Bellbrae. In addition, I've canvassed the idea of re-inviting a 'futurist' like Peter Ellyard to help guide the Surf Coast Shire community in longterm planning to help us design a future we want; hopefully one predicated on sustainability and resilience. Whilst Aireys Inlet has an advantage over Torquay in already having fixed boundaries, there are many grey areas being introduced into the planning scheme (alluded to above) that are likely to have large impacts on the visual amenity and on those that live there.

**Merrin Wake:**

As an elected representative ecological sustainability will be at the forefront of any decision I make. As a community we need to understand the pressures of ensuring a sustainable way of life. Sustainability is more than the physical placement of buildings it is about respect. Respect for the residents and the ever growing population; respect for the biodiversity and environmental importance of our region; as well as the respect for the generations that went before, our indigenous history. With respect in mind I believe the planning processes of council need to be reviewed and led by community partnerships.