

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2014 -2015

PRESENTED 11 APRIL 2015.

I would like to deliver the President's Report now, and it is indeed an honour to be delivering this report when we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of AIDA. To try and put some perspective on the workings of the committee over this time, I spent some hours, more hours than anticipated actually, absorbed by past newsletters, and two things have stuck with me – firstly, the sheer number of people who have put in so much time and contributed such expertise to work towards preserving this unique and beautiful area, and secondly, the number of times the same issues of inappropriate development, preservation of the Painkalac Valley and changes to Government regulations at State and local level, have had to be challenged by AIDA and its members, always led by a committee which just never gives up. And there is really no reason to suppose that this same sense of awe of achievements past, will not be felt by the President and committee at AIDA's 100th anniversary.

Today, I want to highlight some of the key things our consultation process has allowed us to achieve to continue to help shape the future development of the area, as well as highlight some areas that will need our ongoing attention. Most of the things I will mention have been covered in the AIDA newsletter so if you need any further details please feel free to refer to specific articles.

Before I take you through AIDA's key achievements, I just want to stress the importance of AIDA's involvement in maintaining the beauty and unspoilt nature of the area and to highlight our role in trying to prevent undesirable development. This year, several new strategic plans have been proposed and the ability of AIDA to consult directly with the Surf Coast Shire and other relevant parties has again ensured that that the future of the area remains in line with the specific expectations and needs of the community.

Perhaps one of the most important strategic plans for AIDA to be involved in, is the Aireys Inlet to Eastern View Structure Plan. The last Structure Plan was undertaken in 1990 by the then Geelong Regional Commission and, in consultation with AIDA, has guided the development of the area for the last 25

years. The 2015 structure plan sought to build on the previous one by revising or reaffirming the planning policy framework, providing for increasing visitor numbers to the area, and responding to current and future needs of the communities. Surf Coast Shire appointed AXOS consultancy to research the framework and, in their words, “embed themselves in the community” where they interviewed individuals, local groups and visitors. As a key local group, AIDA was sought out to help steer the direction of the plan. Our thanks must go to AIDA members Kim Neubecker, Jane Grant and Liz Wood for their input into this process. Surf Coast published their summary of Phase 1 and we will be consulting with them at each phase to ensure it preserves the special character of the area. At this stage we are pleased to see that some of the principles align with our member’s views and AIDA policies, such as the recognition of the unspoilt natural environment, freedom from large scale development and the recognition of the undeveloped nature of the Painkalac Valley and its indigenous heritage. It should also be noted that AIDA is remaining firm on those areas which we consider to be in need of complete change as in contradictory, incomplete and unrepresentative statements and where conclusions appeared not to be based on any evidence at all. Some examples include the lack of formal recognition that stronger planning controls will be necessary to actually protect the unspoiled nature of the area, the statement, completely unsupported, that a small supermarket would reduce escape spending, and assertions that the Painkalac Valley is the “preferred site” for a sporting oval. AIDA has submitted a 10 page document in response to the plan and so far Council’s response has been positive in so far as they appear to have accepted the changes AIDA has proposed. We have requested a track change version and will keep members updated on progress. The committee’s heartfelt thanks must go to Ian Godfrey for this detailed and perceptive submission, and if any member is interested to read it a copy can be made available.

Other strategic plans we have consulted on and provided submissions for include:

- The Surf Coast Open Space strategies and Issues paper. This paper looks at open spaces within the Shire – their protection, maintenance, distribution and requirements for space in new developments. Our submission pointed to the large areas of open space and diversity of the area, the variety of recreational opportunities and put forward community expectations of recreation versus environmental issues.

- As well we will be responding to the Biodiversity and Bushfire Review in Coastal town's paper which went on public display on 9 April and will remain until 11 May when submissions close. This review seeks to delete certain specific environmental overlay schedules and replace these with one over-riding schedule. It is an amendment which we hope will not impact to the detriment of the local character and one which AIDA members should be aware of.
- . Some other key areas include:
 - our continued discussions with Council officers on changes to the Planning Zones in the district and the impact these may have on the local Planning Regulations,
 - our consultation with Barwon Water and its Officers on the proposed Anglesea pipeline throughout their consultation period and keeping members updated throughout the process.
 - Our representation on the Painkalac Reserve Community and Agency Group set up to establish community use of the Painkalac dam.
 - We have clarified our position on local signage both to Council and as AIDA policy, and have written to Councillors and the CEO of Surf Coast Shire stating our opposition to yet another proposal for an oval in the Painkalac Valley based on both environmental and cost issues and member response.
 - Importantly, we continue to push for the development of the site in Fraser Drive to be turned into older persons housing and will continue meetings on this very important project.

All our submissions this year were supported by data collected from our member base. We were fortunate this year to be able to clarify the focus of the committee as well as confirm our alignment with the ongoing needs of the community, through the use of a questionnaire. With the advent of such key strategic proposals as the Structural plan, it was more important than ever that we ensured we had input from the community to know we were truly representing the broader view. We have been in negotiation with Council to send out our questionnaire as done in previous years, but were restricted by its interpretation of the Privacy Act which prevented it from distributing anything other than council material. We were able to circumvent this by distributing it directly to AIDA members, numbering 486, and we were fortunate to have a response of over 43%. Questions covered issues such as the environment, planning and development and lifestyle choices of the residents of Aireys Inlet,

Fairhaven, Moggs Creek and Eastern View. Multiple choice questions were largely based on those from past questionnaires with additional questions around the older persons housing proposal, street character design issues and emergency fire safety. Although in previous years we had been able to distribute the questionnaire to all ratepayers and residents, what was surprising was that the consistency of opinion, and profile of viewpoints was largely the same, whether limited to AIDA or that of a wider audience. This comprehensive view of community planning and environmental values has given us invaluable information for our recent submissions and will provide the basis for future needs.

One final issue I want to touch on, which is of great importance to the community, is that of notification of fire. We have now passed the summer period and with some relief we farewell the fire danger period. However, in an area which has been designated in recent years as one which is most vulnerable to bushfire, it is surely unacceptable that there are still areas here which are not able to get mobile reception in times of high service demand. The Federal Government has allocated \$20 million dollars to their Mobile Black Spot Project and although submissions were received from nineteen areas in Corangamite, only three areas were able to be nominated for funding and the Aireys district was not included. The three areas proposed were Birregurra, Dereel and Gellibrand and were apparently chosen because these were the areas from which local MP Sarah Henderson had received the most correspondence. Although AIDA argued that as an entity it represented hundreds of members, we were not successful. AIDA will continue to press for action and, based on the squeaky gate syndrome which obviously applies here, we urge members to also write to all local MP's demanding inclusion in any scheme which will improve our mobile service and ultimately our safety.

Which leads me to one of the vital parts of our ongoing success, and that is our member base. For 50 years AIDA's great strength has always been its members and a continuing high membership gives potency to AIDA's ability to truly represent local opinion. Our current membership stands at over 400 and we have initiated a membership table at the Top Shops to become more visible and encourage passers-by to become members. This has proven to be very successful and we will continue with this throughout the next 12 months. We are keen for members to join us at our table, so if anyone is and willing to sit with us for a short period you will be very

welcome. We are always interested in new ideas and input from our members. Please don't forget that there are more ways of helping AIDA than by being a committee member, so don't hesitate to contact us for a way you may become involved, which suits your experience and time commitments. We will continue to keep members updated via newsletter, email and our web page.

The committee has continued to meet monthly, and, as with all community groups of people of our age, commitments and wanderlust have meant that at times we have scrambled to achieve a quorum. I am today sorry to say we are losing two of our committee members, Frieda Wachsmann who has been on the committee for 7 years and whose drive, enthusiasm and love of the district has seen preservation of the integrity of the Lighthouse district and simplification of those damned signs around Aireys. And also Charlotte Byrnes who brought a youthful perspective to our meetings and who is leaving to join the ranks of motherhood. Our gratitude and good wishes go with both of them. To be entirely pragmatic, this of course means there are now vacancies on the committee, so I would ask you to seriously consider nominating for positions when these are put.

I must give thanks to our Councillors who are always available and ready to listen, to our Committee photographer extraordinaire Gary Johnson, and as always to Nan Webb for everything she does for us in producing our Newsletter. This is my last report as President – I am stepping down after 6 years – and so lastly I would like to thank the committee who have worked so hard in dealing with such a broad range of issues, and whose good humour and wise counsel have assisted me over that time. I ask you all now to please join with me in showing your appreciation of their efforts on your behalf.