Barwon Heads Association.

Members Meeting 17 Oct 2017.

Vegetation Overlays in Barwon Heads township.

Background.

Over the last 50 years various state federal and local government bodies have stressed the importance of retaining native vegetation yet apart from several exceptional areas, our native vegetation, including significant remnants, have gradually disappeared.

As the photographic record will show, on road reserves and pockets of created wetlands in suburban areas, native vegetation has been preserved and protected. Our state forests have also acted as a retreat for both native fauna and flora. Despite expert environmental reports, strategies and structure plans, the need for houses and infrastructure has meant the rezoning of green spaces and vegetated areas, no matter their environmental importance, for residential development.

In Barwon Heads we have all seen the constant moon-scaping of blocks for new residential development. Setbacks are allowed to encroach on green space in what was once a front garden area, backyards have all but disappeared and side lanes are largely paved and vegetation free.

Because of the risk of bushfire, bought about not only by increasing temperatures, but also by our farming and forestry practices over two centuries, trees which were once our friends are now seen as our enemies.

We are slowly removing the vegetation cover necessary to soften the skyline and allow a coastal sense of place to continue. The silhouettes of buildings will soon be our urban skyline, and these building will be three and four stories high without any associated vegetation.

The traditional understanding of the vital importance of vegetation for binding soil, drainage, creating rainfall, creating shade and shelter and of course providing habitat for some of the most precious animals and bird life on the planet, has been largely disregarded. The understanding that trees are community life forms and do not do well in isolation is also disregarded by planners.

Barwon Heads does have an area with a Significant Vegetation Overlay (North east river precinct) but in the face of new development this is no longer adequate. The existing structure plan for Barwon Heads lacks serious reference to, or consideration of, the importance of preserving vegetation.

Barwon Heads park, the famour 54 acres, has become a recreational sport area, plus kindergarten precinct and will be under future threat of increasing incursion of built forms. Except for parts of the Bluff there is nowhere in Barwon Heads where our native vegetation flourishes.

During the Structure Plan Review, there is an opportunity to clearly voice your concerns on the protection of native vegetation and the need for green cover.

More vegetation overlays are needed and more planting of indigenous species

should be encouraged.

Judith Brooks

Committee BHA