

# Barwon Heads Association Inc.

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## BHA ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Oh dear, we have had another interesting and strange year. I think we have adapted to being locked down with little notice and feel lucky that we have been in Barwon Heads with our very strong and supportive community, great beaches and of course takeaway coffee.

We have really missed our normal catch ups and face to face meetings. As a community group the committee has worked very hard to compensate the lack of member engagement. We have written detailed articles in Talking Heads and have sent you all monthly newsletters. We thank you for the strong support you have provided which is evidenced by our membership numbers and very generous donations.

The BHA Committee has continued to meet on a regular basis and many big projects have presented themselves during the COVID shut down.

Geoffrey Waite our Treasurer for 8 years retired this year. Geoffrey has about 20 years involvement in the BHA including as its Secretary and President. Thankyou Geoffrey for your great contribution, we miss you.

It has been another great team effort. In particular a big thank you to:

- The Barwon Heads Community
- Our loyal members and welcome to all our new members and supporters
- Our very generous donors
- Talking Heads, Trish has been so very generous, supportive, and encouraging. We have supported her decision to publish online and have benefited from 2 pages rather than 1. We encourage our members to support Talking Heads and all its advertisers, by reading it online, sending it to your friends and neighbours and buying from the businesses that advertise.
- A wonderful Committee, who all come when asked and participated in a broad range of community activities throughout the Bellarine
- The Combined Bellarine Community Association
- Our very busy member for the Bellarine Lisa Neville, we welcome her back after a long break due to illness.
- Our member for Corangamite Libby Cocker
- Our Bellarine Councillors Stephanie Asher, Trent Sullivan, and Jim Mason. Cr Asher as the Mayor and Cr Sullivan as her deputy.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Being part of the Bellarine

The BHA continues to be a strong supporter of the Combined Bellarine Community Associations, (CBCA). Colin Bridges and I have been the BHA representatives again this year. This group has continued to develop in 2020/2021 and has now met bi-monthly for more than 4 years. Each association has nominated representatives to attend these meetings. The role of Chairperson has rotated.

Phil Edwards the inaugural chair handed over a very efficient process to his successor Lawry St Ledger from Breamlea. Chris Kelly from Portarlington is a strong friend and glues the group together as its very efficient Secretary..

The CBCA has continued to be a very strong advocate for the Bellarine in the ongoing process to embed a Bellarine Distinctive Areas & Landscape (Bellarine DAL) into the Planning scheme. This is an ongoing matter with very strong lobbying from developers to water it down.

This year we have responded to the Draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy and worked collaboratively on a number of projects. We met with the CEOs of the CoGG Martin Cutter and the CEO of the BoQ Martin Gill. The contrast was extraordinary with the Burrough having about 3,000 permanent residents and Geelong over 250,000. Items for this forthcoming year include holding Federal election forums and more detailed discussion about the Bellarine within the City of Greater Geelong. We also continue to work closely with the Ocean Grove Community Association and have developed closer working relationships with the Point Lonsdale Civic Association. We are all talking about the same thing – over development and failure to plan properly for the impacts of growth on fragile coastal villages.

We are represented by Brian Cook and Geoffrey Waite on the Community Safety Networks – Greater Geelong and Bellarine.

#### **Draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy**

The BHA put in a detailed submission supporting the draft SPP, its application of protected settlement boundaries around all Bellarine Peninsula settlements, including the Barwon Heads coastal village – which is consistent with the Barwon Heads Structure Plan and development being sympathetic to each settlement's unique character.

BHA is pleased that the Government is delivering on its promises that the Bellarine Peninsula's attractive rural landscape and significant environmental features would be protected from further urban sprawl.

We believe protection of these areas is vital not only for the health and benefit of existing residents and our future generations, but also for the many visitors to the Peninsula. It is imperative that the qualities which attract residents and visitors alike continue to be protected and enhanced for all the reasons outlined in the draft SPP and supporting background papers.

The BHA broadly supports the objective and strategies of each of the policy domains and notes they have been produced in response to previous stages of consultation and the background papers.

We consider the objectives and accompanying strategies, with suggested amendments as proposed in Attachment B, provide a strong framework for future decisions. These recommendations include making the strategies binding as allowed for under Clause 46AV (1)(c) of the Planning and Environment Act.

The BHA supports:

The level of importance provided to the protection of the Peninsula's landscape qualities. The BHA also understands there is considerable evidence of an important close relationship between nature (in its wider context) and community health.

The translation and interpretation of the Victoria Planning Provisions Clause 11.03-4S (Coastal Settlements) and the Government's policy on coastal settlements (Marine and Coastal Policy 2020) at a local level for the Bellarine and Barwon Heads.

The hierarchy of settlements (subject to Barwon Heads being referenced as a coastal village), the proposals to impose protected settlement boundaries around all Bellarine Peninsula settlements and conserve and enhance significant landscapes and environmental areas. We also recognize the Green Break areas are likely to provide excellent opportunities for future tourist related developments and farming activities.

The decision that submissions are not referred to an Advisory Committee for independent assessment.

The comprehensive planning arguments presented in the draft SPP and accompanying background papers present overwhelming support of the draft SPP. We urge you to proceed with the next steps to enable the final SPP to be approved and implemented.

The BHA has been watching the development of the Victorian Marine and Coastal Act 2018 and will comment on the recently released draft Marine and Coastal Strategy (the Draft Strategy). The strategy will provide a very important tool for all custodians of the coast and will help protect our precious coastal villages. In particular it empowers traditional owners, builds foundations for long term climate change, improves integration and co-ordination across governments, industries and communities when planning and managing coastal areas and builds skills and adaptability of communities, managers and governments. The BHA sees that these are very important elements of the SPP and the linkages between the two are very strong. The Draft Strategy has very clear implementation goals which are encouraging.

The BHA looks forward to working closely with DELWP, the City of Greater Geelong, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and other RPEs to ensure the binding objectives and strategies of the approved SPP are achieved and where necessary, changes are made to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme to further enhance their implementation.

### **The City of Greater Geelong**

Our Bellarine Ward Councillors Stephanie Asher, Jim Mason & Trent Sullivan are now seasoned representatives of the Bellarine. They have always been available and willing to talk. They work well together and have diverse backgrounds. We continue to support multi councillor wards, however the changes in the Local Government Act 2020 mandate single member wards for all Victorian Councils from 2024. We believe that our community has experienced an improvement in local government by councillors who have demonstrated a cooperative shared responsibility with the ability to provide mutual support for the overall benefit of the community.

The municipality has a population of over 252,000 and this is expected to increase to more than 393,000 by 2041. There are a number of policies and strategies that are evolving which are difficult to follow, it always seems that the Council is very reactive. Significant submissions were made relating to the environment and transparency.

Transparency - The lack of transparency by CoGG on building and planning decisions in Barwon Heads is an ongoing issue. The Council should not be able to hide behind privacy legislation and require ratepayers to use FOI to access information. We strongly support the establishment of a public register to record meetings between property developers, council management, senior officers and Councillors and expect that Council enforcement activities are recorded in a public register with the reasons for the decision and be made available to the public.

### **Water Quality in the Barwon River**

This continues to be a major challenge. Our local member Lisa Neville is the Minister for Water; she has been kept well-informed and provided support and encouragement.

Barwon River Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) - The Association has participated in the Barwon River MAC process and made a submission to the MAC on the 6th of November 2019. We are involved because of the lack of real accountability for the health of the River and the continual buck passing that we continue to witness. We understand that the MAC recommendations were submitted to Government in December 2019 and note that the Barwon Action Plan was due to be developed and released by late 2020. We continue to participate in good faith and have had constructive discussions with senior people from DELWP about the ensuring alignment between the MAC process and the Bellarine DAL. We have been very vocal to ensure that bureaucratic processes don't cancel each other out.

The Bellarine DAL provides a wonderful opportunity to align the Planning legislation with the Marine and Coastal legislation. We see a real threat if the MAC is not released in a timely manner to co-ordinate with the DAL.

The Barwon Estuary Public Health Water Quality Monitoring Project – has progressed this year. We were successful in obtaining additional government funding to enable water quality testing to be resumed until February 2022. It is hoped that the additional information will give clear indication of the water quality in the estuary particularly after rainfall and the discharge of stormwater drains from Barwon Heads & Ocean Grove. Colin Bridges and Leigh Dwyer are participating in this important project.

Our goal is to have an ongoing and integrated water quality-monitoring program of the Barwon River, its estuary and local beaches established with ready community access to the monitoring data and reporting of expected future conditions the monitoring would

focus on public health indicators for recreational uses and provide a publicly available Beach Report - Water Quality Forecast as is already available for 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay.

Sparrowvale – the new wetlands at Warrily are to be developed by Council over the next 50 years to capture the urban storm water runoff from the Armstrong Creek area and provide a 500 hectare public parklands and nature reserve. We have supported and participated in the public consultation process and the presentation of this project was one of the most interesting we have had.

### **Planning**

Planning continues to be a major challenge for Barwon Heads residents and the BHA. This will remain a significant challenge without the proper recognition of the frailty of our location. Where are the best practice guidelines for coastal development? Where is innovation recognised and encouraged? Why aren't the community valued and referred to as major stakeholders rather than the bureaucrats fixated with permitting housing and development anywhere. The failures to protect vegetation and provide adequate parking continue to grow as significant issues. We have been putting in objections to applications that set poor precedents and threaten the coastal village amenity however we are ill equipped to continually stand up to the significant legal assault funded by developers.

Developments in Hitchcock Ave - we are now witnessing the completion of significant developments in Hitchcock Ave. It is very apparent there is no design overlay for this very important precinct. The new developments might be functional, but there is no design symmetry or streetscape improvement. Parking is limited and tight. All were granted waivers of parking. We cannot understand why this is so easy, and wonder where people are meant to park other than in residential streets. Waivers are all granted at no cost to the benefit of developers and the disadvantage to residents and existing businesses. There is limited bicycle parking and the driveway access to most developments in Hitchcock Ave across the footpath have a negative impact on the pedestrian movements and can be quite dangerous. Trees are all removed and buildings built to the footpath ensure there is no real vegetation.

### **Traffic & Pedestrian Safety**

The BHA Transport and Parking Sub-Committee continues to meet three times year. Led by Committee member John Nolan as the Convenor. As well as our Committee members, we have representatives from Regional Roads Victoria, the City of Geelong, traders including the IGA, BH Cycling Club, the BH Primary School and the Ocean Grove Community Association as an observer.

The Barwon Heads Transport and Parking Study Summary Report of April 2021 and associated implementation plan was endorsed by Council in May 2021

We are generally pleased with the outcomes however are very concerned that there is appropriate funding to implement the plan which has been endorsed by Council.

We continue to lobby over the failure to require developers to provide adequate off-street parking.

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) review of Victoria's electoral boundaries for the 2022 election.**

There was a significant risk that Barwon Heads would be taken out of the Bellarine and put into South Barwon. The BHA, led by Committee member Brian Cook put in a very strong submission resulting in our remaining in the Bellarine.

The Barwon Heads Association thanks the EBC for the work they have done and is very pleased that the Barwon Heads community will remain within the Bellarine Electoral District. This recommendation recognises the strong economic, community and social ties between Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove and means that the Parliamentary representation of our community will not be compromised as Barwon Heads remains in an Electoral District with which we have great affinity and many common interests.

### **The Village Park Master Plan**

This is another major project for the BHA this year, led by Committee member Libby Darcy. We were active participants in the process and in promoting it to our members and the Barwon Heads Community. We initiated a petition with over 544 signatures seeking recognition of the Barwon Heads Village Park as a Significant Landscape.

The local community has clearly communicated its desire to recognise and protect the Barwon Heads Village Park as a significant landscape via support of this petition and via the COGG's community engagement process, in which the protection of the park's open space and character from over development emerged as the number 1 theme. Council have have worked collaboratively with BHA to include in the plan, additions and recommendations which strengthen planning protection of open space and character including:

- A statement of Significance – Landscape & Character
- Building Design Guidelines
- Recommendations which quantify and protect open space

The Master Plan was approved by Council on the 26th of October 2021.

### **The Barwon Heads Library**

We are very proud that our Library continues to grow and is now a role model for other small community libraries. The Friends of the Barwon Heads Community Library continues to support the library with the support and encouragement of the BHA. Thank you to Karen Firth and her committee for their time and energy. Thank you to BHPS Principal Daniel Vella for his interest and availability. Hopefully our library is now safe from bureaucratic processes and modelling.

### **Barwon Heads Arts and Community Hub**

The Barwon Heads Association and the Barwon Heads Arts Council in consultation with the Barwon Heads Senior Citizens have continued to meet throughout the year. We were members of the Project Reference Group. The old building has now been demolished and plans reflecting our input and ideas have been approved. Building has started.

The model for ongoing management is still being assessed.

We have been working together and lobbying for this community space in Barwon Heads since 2013. In 2014, a petition gathered 932 signatures supporting the transition of the soon to be vacant kindergarten into an arts and community hub. During the 2018 election, Minister Lisa Neville pledged \$1m to the community to redevelop the kindergarten site. This project is funded through Regional Development Victoria and has been paid directly to the City of Greater Geelong. Working with CoGG on this project has been a very positive process and we thank them.

Thank you Lisa Neville and the City of Greater Geelong for the funding. We anticipate it will be open by Easter 2022.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We continue to share close relationships with other community groups. The Barwon Heads Arts Council, Save Barwon Heads Alliance; the Barwon Heads Senior Citizens (for friendship & the use of their facility) and the Ocean Grove Community Association. We also have strong working relationships with Barwon Coast and the City of Greater Geelong.

I thank all the Committee for their efforts this year:

- Our 2 Vice-Presidents who have taken a lot of the load from me and their input and advice has been wonderful)

- John Nolan has been a significant contributor especially relating to the Bellarine DAL, all water and storm water matters, planning and he chairs our traffic and parking sub-committee which has had a very busy year. John has been extremely successful in influencing our final Transport and Parking Plan. John is retiring from the Committee we will miss him. He will continue to support us on water projects.
- Gabrielle Nagle has always been a very strong and wise supporter on the Committee. She is retiring from the Committee this year we will miss her.
- Geoffrey Waite our Treasurer for keeping the purse and membership records and representing the BHA at the Bellarine Safety Group
- Brian Cook our incoming Treasurer for his approach to new systems and information analysis. Brian also was our main resource for the submission on electoral boundaries. Our submission was a very high standard and successful due to his hard work.
- Colin Bridges as Secretary has been a significant support on all planning matters. Colin has also been a representative on the CBCA with me, and on the Arts & Community Hub working group. He and I craft the monthly articles on Talking Heads and our regular newsletters to members.
- Karen Firth has strong community connections and interest in the community and equity. She is the Chair of the Friends of the Barwon Heads Community Library Committee
- Philip Bade continues to provide his input into planning and community matters and we value his advice. He is stepping up into the role of President this forthcoming year. This will be an exciting change, and hopefully he will bring fresh ideas and leadership.
- Libby Darcy joined the Committee this year. She has represented us on the Village Park Master Planning project and with Karen, Brian and Leigh is reviewing and updating our website.
- Leigh Dwyer has been a very wise addition to the Committee this year. He has taken on the task of "record keeping" for the Committee meetings and has been involved in the Arts & Community Hub working group. He is also involved in the water testing project.
- Sarah Jackson is no longer on the Committee however she has continued to provide support through her strong connections with the community. She sends newsletters to members and provides guidance when needed.
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We thank all our elected representatives who have all been very supportive:

- Lisa Neville our local Member of Parliament who is always available and interested in anything we contact her about. We acknowledge her role in the State Government, which is extraordinary
- Libby Cocker is our member for Corangamite has been very supportive of the community in a very hard year.
- Sarah Henderson our local resident is a Senator for Victoria and very visible in Barwon Heads, giving locals a chance to talk to her about things that matter to the local community.
- Bellarine Councillors Stephanie Asher who was a very successful Mayor of Geelong and recently reappointed for a second Mayoral term, Trent Sullivan the new Deputy Mayor and Jim Mason

We also value the ongoing support from Gary McPike the CEO of Barwon Coast.

Thank you to all our members for supporting me during my Presidency. I am vacating the Chair at a time that our organisation is very strong and well respected. I am staying on in the role of Secretary and will support Phillip in his role as President.

Sandra Gatehouse

President Barwon Heads Association 2020-2021

# Barwon Heads Association

## Treasurer's Report 2020-2021

The Profit and Loss report is attached. We remain in a good financial position with a surplus of \$2,878.03 for the year

Account balances as at 30 June 2021:

Bendigo Bank account:	\$12,307.98
Fixed Assets:	<u>\$ 783.00</u>
Total Members Equity	\$13,090.98

The impact of COVID-19 on our operations during 2020-21 was such that both our revenue from member subscriptions and member donations decreased by 29%. Membership dropped by 16% from 259 to 218 and donations were down by 46% to \$2,121.00. Despite this reduction in revenue, we made a surplus for the year of \$2,878.03. Our costs of operating also reduced by 29%.

I became Treasurer in July following the resignation of Geoffrey Waite who had been in the role for many years. I would like to express my appreciation to Geoffrey for all the work he has done over many years in this and other roles in the BHA.

Brian Cook