



BHA ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

The Barwon Heads Association (BHA) acknowledges the Wathawurrung People, the traditional owners of the country on which we live and work. We pay our respects to them, their culture and their elders past, present and emerging.

Following two years of lockdowns, we have slowly seen a reduction in Covid disruptions despite the fact that many infections continue to affect our community.

The BHA Committee has continued to meet regularly and we have been able to return to General Meetings for our members to attend where we have had an opportunity to invite guest speakers.

March saw our first general meeting when Cameron Smith from People for a Living Moorabool screened the film “The River Moorabool” followed by questions and discussion. Cameron highlighted the threatened state of the Moorabool and all the waterways within the Barwon Basin.

With some 90% of the Moorabool’s original natural flow being diverted, the river’s health, flora and fauna are being severely damaged.

Following a major sewage pipe failure in Barwon Heads and a summer of Blue Green Algae outbreaks in the lower Barwon River affecting Barwon Heads, Shaun Cumming, General Manager Infrastructure and Technology, Barwon Water, was invited to attend our June meeting.

A failure of part of the main line from Ocean Grove on Barwon Heads Road resulted in a spill which quickly entered the storm water system and the river. Reasons for the failure are still under investigation.

Shaun also spoke about “Water for the Future”, a community driven program, which is looking to address the problem Barwon Water faces to ensure water supply beyond 2030 when demand will exceed supply should there be periods of dry.

Barwon Water are investigating future sources to meet demand and return water to our stressed rivers.

Members and visitors with their grand-children, children and friends came to our August meeting. Richard Weatherly OAM is a passionate advocate to protect the environment, the natural habitat and all creatures great and small that inhabit our open spaces. We saw the most amazing photos of our local birds and their habitats. He presented his submission to the Bellarine DAL emphasising the importance of corridors for birds and the dangers of fragmentation of our open spaces. We are very lucky to have such a strong advocate to protect our open space.

Tonight, we will welcome Gary McPike from Barwon Coast who will speak about Barwon Coast and its importance to Barwon Heads and the adjoining coastal areas.

I thank all our guest speakers and the support shown by our members at our general meetings.

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During the past 12 months, the Barwon Heads Association has been represented in a broad range of community activities including:

Bellarine Peninsula Distinctive Area and Landscape Statement of Planning Policy (DAL)

Release of the Draft DAL led to a lot of pressure from developers on the State Planning Minister who decided not to sign off on the Draft document from DWELP and refer part of the draft report relating to Permanent Settlement Boundaries to a Special Advisory Committee.

This decision involved the committee of the BHA in approximately 6 weeks of public hearings, hours of reviewing submissions, numerous expert witness statements and assisting our Advocate Shelly Fanning from Coastal Planning in representing Barwon Heads at the Committee Hearing. Shelly prepared and presented the BHA submission and cross-examined numerous expert witnesses called by landowners and developers. We thank her for her commitment and expertise.

Thanks to our generous members, the many donations to the BHA allowed Barwon Heads to be well represented at the hearing. Barwon Heads was the only town from the Bellarine represented by professional planning advocates with the Save Barwon Heads Alliance also represented by legal representation in support of the Barwon Heads boundary.

On 7th October 2022, the Honourable Minister Lisa Neville accompanied by the Premier announced to a crowd of Bellarine Community members that all the recommendations of the Draft Statement of Planning Policy including the protected settlement boundaries had been approved by the Minister. This means that the Bellarine Towns will enjoy permanent protected boundaries (and will require an act of Parliament to change) for at least 10 years once gazetted by the parliament.

Combined Bellarine Community Association (CBCA) This group represents 9 communities on the Bellarine. The BHA has attended bi-monthly meetings chaired by Lawry St Ledger from Breamlea and Secretary Chris Kelly from Portarlington. The CBCA have been actively engaged with the DAL process, and were represented by Lawry at the Advisory Committee Hearing. The CBCA also organized a petition and held a rally in mid-August at Edwards Point which was well attended by over 200 people including 2 candidates for the coming state election.

The CBCA organised the Federal Candidates Election Forums and the coming Victorian State Election Forum is to be held at the Barwon Heads Hall on Thursday 10th November and hosted by the BHA.

Sandy Gatehouse, Colin Bridges and myself have been the BHA Representatives on the CBCA this year.

Bellarine Safety Network: The BHA are represented by Brian Cook and Geoffrey Waite who meet with Police from the local area.

Victorian Marine and Coastal Act 2018. The BHA continues to take an interest in the development of the policy and delivery of a healthy and diverse marine and coastal environment

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The City of Greater Geelong:

The BHA continues to maintain close relations with our Bellarine Ward Councillors Jim Mason, Trent Sullivan and Stephanie Asher.

Congratulations to Peter Murrhly following his election as Mayor of the CoGG. The BHA made submissions through Engage Victoria to surveys in relation to the Port Phillip Bay Ramsar Site Review which includes the Bellarine Peninsular Ramsar Sites of Lake Connewarre and Breamlea Karaaf Flora and Fauna Reserve. The BHA also made a submission to the review of the Future Growth of the City of Greater Geelong and another survey on Victoria's Bus Network Reform.

There is a constant release of these Engage Victoria surveys and reviews, but one can be sceptical as to how much they are considered by our bureaucracy, as often it appears they are little more than a tick the box exercise.

Planning:

Planning continues to be a major challenge for Barwon Heads residents and the BHA. The approval by the State Government of the Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy will assist in the protection of the Bellarine 's attractive rural landscape and significant environmental features will be protected from urban sprawl.

Developments in Hitchcock Avenue continue to contribute to a lack of design or real street improvement. Parking is limited, and all developments continue to be granted Parking Waivers at no cost to the developers and to the disadvantage to residents and existing businesses.

The BHA has continued to submit 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 assaults funded by developers.

The BHA would encourage residents in Barwon Heads to lodge an objection if there is a development to which they may have an issue. The more people who object to a new development the more likely council and government are to respond.

Numbers are vital.

Traffic and Parking:

The BHA Transport and Parking Sub-Committee continues to meet three times per year, led by Committee Member David Littleton as convenor. Along with our Committee Members, we meet with representatives from Regional Roads, the City of Geelong, and traders including 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 an Implementation Plan was endorsed by Council mid May 2021.

Unfortunately, in spite of lobbying by the BHA, Council have failed to fund the implementation of the plan in the 2022 budget which is most disappointing.

Barwon Heads Arts and Community Hub:

An election commitment by Lisa Neville of \$1m to the community to redevelop the old kindergarten site, the Barwon Heads Association and the Barwon Heads Arts Council in consultation with the Barwon Heads Senior Citizens and the City of Greater Geelong have worked together as members of the Project Reference Group.

Thanks to Lisa Neville and the City of Greater Geelong, Barwon Heads now has an impressive Community Hub known as the Barwon Heads Arts and Community Hub which is managed by the Barwon Heads Arts Council.

The new facility was opened in July 2022 by Lisa Neville, and has already held several very successful community events.

The Village Park Master Plan:

Following approval by Council of the Master Plan, the Barwon Heads Association, led by Libby Darcy has continued to be an active participant and engage with the community and COGG to monitor proposed developments within the park to ensure the agreed Statement of Significance of Landscape and Character of the park is maintained.

The BHA continues to support the Barwon Heads Scout Group in their efforts to improve their facilities, and protection of their immediate area within the park.

The Barwon Heads Library

The library is an asset to the Primary School and the community. The Friends of the Barwon Heads Community Library continues to support the library with support and encouragement of the BHA. Thank you to Karen Firth and her committee for their time and energy along with the Principal of the BH Primary School for her support and interest.

Barwon River and Water Quality

The Barwon and Moorabool rivers continue to be two of the most stressed rivers in Victoria, and water quality is a major issue for Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove with outbreaks of Blue Green Algae occurring in the lower Barwon again this year.

The BHA was disappointed in the final report of the Barwon River Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) from the Minister for Water which was finally released in late 2021. The report did not present any long-term commitment by Government as to where future water is to be obtained for our rivers and growing populations, but did acknowledge that the future water supply is under threat due to over commitment of our current water resources and the long-term effects of Climate Change.

The BHA has again participated in the Barwon Estuary Public Health Water Quality Monitoring Project. The BHA was successful in obtaining additional funding to enable water quality testing at the Estuary after rain events and the discharge of stormwater drains until February 2022.

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Colin Bridges and Leigh Dwyer have been participating in this important project. The final report from the Corangamite CMA is still awaited.

The BHA WEBSITE

The BHA is currently reviewing and updating our WEBSITE with an aim to improve the flow of information to our members. This is an ongoing job led by Libby Darcy and Karen Firth who are regularly adding information to the site.

I would commend the website to our members along with our newsletter and monthly article in Talking Heads by Sandy Gatehouse.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

We continue to share close relationships with other community groups including the Barwon Heads Arts Council, Save Barwon Heads Alliance, the Barwon Heads Senior Citizens (for friendship and use of their facilities) the Ocean Grove Community Association, and the Combined Bellarine Community Association. We also have strong relationships with Barwon Coast, the Bellarine Catchment Network (Where Geoffrey Waite is our representative), the City of Greater Geelong and especially our Council representatives Jim Mason, Trent Sullivan and Stephanie Asher

A special thanks to our retiring Bellarine M.P. Lisa Neville for her assistance and support to Barwon Heads. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

We also thank Libby Cocker our federal MP for the constant commitment she gives to the electorate.

A special thanks to Trish and her monthly production of Talking Heads. Now publishing and printing the magazine herself, we all look forward to seeing what amazing subjects will be on the front cover, not to mention the latest recipe, and of course the Barwon Heads Association news along with other local items.

The annual Duck Race was held on Easter Sunday when Ocean Grove Rotary again conducted a very successful race with a sell out of ducks. Many thanks to Heather Willson for her excellent organisation of the whole event. Monies raised went to Barwon Heads Primary School, the Barwon Heads Scouts and the BHA.

A special thanks to the numerous businesses in Barwon Heads who donated excellent prizes to the lucky duck winners and help make the event a success.

Our Members

Without our members, there would be no BHA. As President, I thank all our members for their support and donations which are vital to allow the BHA to function and represent the community of Barwon Heads.

I would urge as many people as possible to join the BHA, as numbers are a very important factor when addressing matters with all levels of government.

I would also urge anyone who would like to join the committee to speak to one of us, it's not that arduous, it's interesting, and many hands make light work!

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The BHA Committee

I thank my committee for their effort and support during my first year as President. I could not manage without their work behind the scenes.

Colin Bridges as Vice president, is of significant support on planning, editing Correspondence and our publications and generally being available to assist in keeping the BHA functioning. Colin is very important in keeping me on the right side of the legal maze. Colin, along with Sandy, Leigh and Libby was instrumental on the Arts and Community Hub working Group.

Sandy Gatehouse as immediate past president, has kept me up to the mark and has provided valuable advice and guidance. Sandy has been instrumental in keeping the BHA Newsletter to members full of the latest news as well as Talking Heads. Sandy has taken on a big commitment with Barwon Coast for which we congratulate her as well as keeping us up to date at the BHA.

Brian Cook is our Treasurer and his approach to new systems and information analysis along with online payments of subs and donations will be of great benefit to our members. Brian is the leader of the Barwon Heads Scout group.

Libby Darcy has been particularly active since joining the BHA Committee as our representative on the Village Park Master Plan Project. Libby is Secretary of the Barwon Heads Arts Council. Along with Karen, Libby has been a vital link in updating and reviewing the BHA Website. Libby is Secretary of the Barwon Heads Arts Council. Libby is leaving our committee but is happy to act in an advisory.

We thank Libby for her commitment to the BHA and wish her well in her new role.

Karen Firth has been assisting in the update of the website, and is a constant worker behind the scenes. Karen is President of the Friends of the Barwon Heads Community Library Committee.

(There is an old saying that "If you want something done, ask a busy person." Well, Libby and Karen certainly fit into that category)

David Littleton has joined our committee this year and has taken on the important role as the BHA representative of the Traffic and Parking Sub Committee. David is working to get COGG to provide funding for the program that the Council agreed to when accepting the Traffic and Parking Study Report.

Leigh Dwyer has been a great asset to the committee as a clear thinker and someone who understands how Government functions. Leigh has been our scribe

at committee meetings and was involved in the Arts and Community Hub working Group and the Water Quality Monitoring Project along with Colin.

Leigh is retiring from the committee, and we thank him for his wise counselling which will be greatly missed at our meetings.

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I wish to also thank John Nolan and Gabby Nagel for the assistance given in preparing the BHA Submission to the Bellarine Distinctive Areas and Landscape Statement of Planning Policy and the Special advisory Committee Hearing.

The BHA appreciate being able to call on people with special talents to assist in preparation of such detailed submissions.

I have tried to remember everyone who have assisted the BHA over the year, and apologies to any organisation or person I have omitted.

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**Phillip Bade, President Barwon Heads Association
17TH October 2022**