



PORT PHILLIP CONSERVATION COUNCIL INC.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thank you all for your attendance this evening, and for your ongoing support and interest in our organization.

Firstly I would like to say a few words about our long time committee member, Janet Ablitt, who has been unwell for the last year and has recently moved to a nursing home in Mentone. I think this is the first AGM that she has not attended for many years. Janet represented BRASCA Inc. on our Committee for many years. For years until recently she hosted our monthly Committee meetings in her home, and has been a wonderful supporter of all that we have worked for. She has been a committed environmental activist for most of her life, was until recently an Iceberger and committed volunteer on BRASCA Inc's foreshore work. We are missing her presence at our meetings and I know we all extend our best wishes to her.

Reviewing our activities for the last year, I see that we are fighting many issues that we thought has been won before. It seems as government's lurch from Liberal to Labor and back again, that with every swing of the pendulum, environmental protection keeps taking the hits in favour of developers and corporations.

I have chosen a few particular issues from the dozen or so that your Committee and Member Organizations have engaged in over the last 12 months to report to you.

POINT NEPEAN

The first example of the State Liberal government's policy of privatization of our National Parks is occurring at Point Nepean. In July, the Premier announced government had chosen 'Point Leisure Group' to develop the Quarantine precinct within the National Park. PLG directors are Richard and Trine Shelmerdine, and it is proposed that \$100 million will be spent to make Point Nepean National Park *"a world class tourist destination and education precinct"*. The proposal includes a high quality hotel, function and events centre, health retreat and wellness centre, hot springs, museum, and a multitude of recreational, cultural and educational opportunities. Also included is a new jetty, a marine education and research precinct with the University of Melbourne, luxury "camping style" accommodation, shops, cafes and restaurants. It is claimed that there will be 220 construction jobs and 390 ongoing jobs in the development. It looks like another town is being built on the Peninsula!

According to the Premier, all of that is *"in keeping with the site's cultural and indigenous heritage, while delivering stringent environmental protections"*.

The developer's proposal is completely at odds with PPCC Inc's policies and must be resisted with the same force of community objection that beat back the last proposal to sell off Point Nepean, and we have made a submission to government and will assist our Member Organization Nepean Conservation Group Inc's fight to oppose the proposal however we can.

It is interesting that Mr Shelmerdine claims to be a "contributing member" of NCG Inc. however NCG Inc. have stated in the media that they have serious concerns about the proposed developments at Point Nepean. In his recent newsletter Nepean MLA, Martin Dixon, reports that

the state government has spent \$13.8 m at Point Nepean (installing sewerage, power, new roads and car parks – (all things that will benefit the developer!) and \$9.4 m on Port Phillip beaches.

BLAIRGOWRIE MARINA

In November 2013, the Panel appointed to hear submissions on the proposed doubling of size of the marina released its report outlining its support for the expansion. The Panel ignored all the negative impacts that the existing marina is already causing. (The loss of Blairgowrie beach caused by the existing marina has required the state government to spend \$400,000 on beach renourishment.)

The Panel has approved an extra 165 wet berths, extension of the main wave screen 161 metres westward and then another 75 metres angled towards the shore, a new hard stand area, two lift out cranes, a new straddle carrier track 190 metres long and other ancillary constructions. In other words the complete industrialization of Cameron's Bight.

The boating fraternity's appetite for new marinas is never sated. Notably, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has just released a new report entitled MP Draft Marine Precincts Strategy, which outlines a need for a new marina between Martha Cove and Blairgowrie, and a network of marine precincts for boat building etc. on the peninsula.

BELLARINE PENINSULA

While we have concerns about Point Nepean developments, our Member Organization, GEC Inc, has reported on its concerns about development proposals at Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff lighthouse reserves. Their local council has received \$100,000 from the state government to prepare development plans for these two areas of public land. Over 1,200 submissions have been received with most stating opposition to any developments as proposed by the consultants. Nearly all submissions requested the area at Point Lonsdale be reserved as public parkland with revegetation of local coastal vegetation and some passive recreation areas. This would be an excellent addition to the township, as apart from the foreshore there is very little parkland for passive use.

GEC Inc's other concerns include the potential sale by ALCOA of the Anglesea coal mine and power station – including its leased 7,000 hectares of Anglesea Heathland. GEC Inc. submits that the power station and coal mine should be shut down and the heathland added to the adjoining Great Otway National Park now that the Point Henry smelter has closed.

GEC Inc. is also concerned by the proposed large residential development proposal for the Cheetham Salt pan area. GEC Inc. asks do we really want the foreshore from Limeburners Point to Point Henry covered with luxury developments?

GEC Inc's other concerns include fracking on the Bellarine Peninsula, with licences already covering much of the Peninsula, and planned burning in the Otway forests and heathland. The burns are increasing in area each year, and are now well above the Royal Commission's recommended 5% p.a. Frequent burning in areas such as the dry Mallee and alpine areas is too destructive to burn at 5% p.a. so it appears other areas are having their targets increased.

VICTORIAN COASTAL STRATEGY 2014

The [VCS](#) was released in September 2014 and appears to contain a number of criteria that should make it harder to get coastal consent for coastal developments. For example, Page 66: "Must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrates need to be sited on the coast, based on support for, and direct linkage to, coastal activities
- Demonstrates that the use and development cannot be feasibly located elsewhere
- Enhances public access to the coast and minimizes loss of public open space

Page 67 has a very welcome and long overdue policy:

- New private structures on coastal Crown land that provide no public use benefit (e.g. private jetties, 'bathing boxes', boat sheds) are not permitted

Page 69 states:

- Private land is the preferred location for new tourism developments on the coast
- Ensuring that tourism developments do not become new settlements or create linear coastal **LINDSAY FOX LAND AT PORTSEA** development

This clause alone should negate the Point Nepean development being promoted by the state government, and the possible developments at Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff. In summary, the **VCS** appears to be an improvement on the draft released last year.

Late last year the Land Titles office transferred 2,400 square metres of accreted sand to Mr Fox's adjacent land title, at no cost to Mr Fox. It is said to be valued at \$5 million. State government was said to be shocked and implied it would do all in its power to reverse the decision.

We have written to the government several times expressing our opposition to Mr Fox's land grab. We were eventually advised by the Planning Minister, Mr Guy, that nothing could be done on this land without the minister's approval. Within 3 days of that letter, Mr Fox erected bollards around the perimeter of the land without anyone's approval!

We wrote again to the Minister objecting to the bollards and suggesting new legislation to put the beach back into public ownership. Mr Guy responded in September advising that he had referred our suggested legal solutions to the Fox land grab to the Minister for Environment, who has carriage of the issue.

However, of note, Mr Guy also advised that Mr Fox is required to seek consent of the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Primary Industry and obtain a planning permit from Mornington Peninsula Shire Council as the bollards are considered "works". Yet within one week of receiving that advice from the Minister, the local paper reported *"Fox can keep his bollards"*, after MPSC completed an investigation into their installation, reporting *"Shire officers have formed the view that enforcement action is not warranted and would likely be unsuccessful"*. A spokesman for the Minister said, *"It is disappointing that the local council is not using its powers to enforce the strict planning rules which apply to this land"*.

So, rather than just Mr Guy being disappointed that Council is not using its planning powers over Mr Fox's actions, we are even more disappointed that Mr Guy is not using his!

Especially as we note Page 52 of the **VCS**, Item 13, states:

- Where coastal accretion occurs, any resulting increase in beach or foreshore is considered for incorporation into the coastal Crown land estate to ensure benefit for all Victorians.

Following the closure by state government of its free web hosting program in January this year we had to transfer to a new host, which was organized seamlessly by our Webmaster and Life Governor, Geoffrey Goode. Address: www.ppcc.org.au

EROSION INVESTIGATION AND BOAT TRIP

On 28 May 2014, Queenscliff Sea All Dolphin swim boat operator Robbie Maine invited several PPCC Inc. members on a trip to view areas of southern Bay coastline from Portsea pier to Queenscliff where he was concerned about the rate of erosion. Mr Maine stated that erosion had accelerated markedly in the Point Nepean National Park since the dredging of almost 1 million tonnes of rock and reef from the Rip during the Channel Deepening project. We agreed with his assessment that erosion appeared to be recent and swift, we took lots of photos and are currently considering what to do with the evidence.

SOME OTHER ISSUES THAT YOUR COMMITTEE HAS MADE SUBMISSIONS ON:

- Beaumaris fossil cliffs and BMYS Marina expansion
- Frankston Yacht Club expansion and draft Structure Plan
- DEPI Draft Fire operations Plan – Eastern Metro region
- Brighton Beach 'Bathing Boxes'
- Proposed Skylift or Gondola on Arthurs Seat
- Kingston foreshore bicycle road

As I have said before, we need more emphasis, not less, on protecting that special part of the world where the land meets the sea. It will be our last line of defence against climate change.

Thank you again for the part you all play in protecting that precious place, and please let us know when you need our support for your local issues.

Len Warfe
President
Port Phillip Conservation Council Inc.