

# The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society - Fourth Quarter, December 2002

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## Dates for your Diary

**Saturday, 11 January 2003: Annual General Meeting and General Meeting, 8 pm, Heritage Centre, Cowes.**

**Sunday, 12 January 2003, Red Rocks Working Bee, 10 am. BYO lunch.**

**Sunday, 2 February 2003, Nobbies "Think Tank", Noon - 4 pm (see President's letter)**

**Saturday, 15 February 2003, Seasonal Walk - Fishers Wetlands, Churchill Island, 2 pm.**

**Friday 21 February 2003, 'Meet the (Bass Coast Shire Council) Candidates', 8 pm, Parish Hall, Cowes.**

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

As I write this the rain rains! Our Island is green and beautiful! And, for many people, it's almost holiday time. For PICS members it's almost time for the Annual General Meeting, when we find out what has happened in 2002. I hope that you will be at the AGM on January 11<sup>th</sup> as there is important business to transact. The new Constitution, accepted at the Special General Meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup>, has been approved by the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs. So the first two steps in our endeavour to gain Tax Deductibility have been achieved. The next two steps we will take at the Annual General Meeting when the Public Fund Bank Account is established and its Committee of Management appointed.

The new Constitution requires us to use a very formal process in the election of the Office Bearers and Committee. A Nomination Form is included with this *Penguin*. Please consider standing for the Committee; if you are not a permanent resident of Phillip Island we still need you! There's often work to be done, and functions to attend, in Melbourne. This year, Committee Meetings have been held on the first Friday of each month at 8 p.m. but it's up to the incoming Committee to set its own schedule.

As you know, the lease of the excised Public Land at Point Grant has been handed back to the Victorian Government by Seal Rocks Victoria Australia. The Visitor Centre has been partially re-opened and repairs are underway in the main part of the building. Whatever we think of the building IT IS THERE, and some use has to be found for it. There will be public consultation about the future use of the building in 2003. So that we can get "the feel" of the building, and perhaps begin to formulate some constructive thoughts, PICS is holding a "**Think Tank**" there as a picnic on Sunday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, from 12 noon to 4 pm The fiasco of the past six years in behind us, so BYO lunch, chair and some creative thinking.

2002 has ended on a "high" with the proclamation of the Marine National Parks, so let's go into 2003 with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

With best wishes for a peaceful and happy Christmas.

Margaret Hancock

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## FORESHORE MANAGEMENT PLAN (Draft)

The Bass Coast Shire Council has released for community comment a draft management plan for this important foreshore area on Phillip Island. They are seeking public comment. Under consideration are recreational, cultural and environmental aspects of this popular coastline. If you wish to peruse a copy of the draft plan, they are available at the Shire Library branches, Shire Offices or directly through Paul Smith, Environment Manager (phone 5671 2217) or email [p.smith@basscoast.vic.gov.au](mailto:p.smith@basscoast.vic.gov.au). The closing date for written submissions is January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

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### JOIN THE PICS COMMITTEE!

All members are invited to join the PICS Committee. Elections will take place at the AGM on 11th January. There will be vacancies on the Committee this year and this is an opportunity for you to offer your services for the well being of the environment on Phillip Island. The Committee is not a *clique* but is open to all PICS members.

Being on Committee is a wonderful way to be fully informed of the current environmental issues being discussed about Phillip Island and Westernport. It offers a chance to make a difference to the future of our Island. The Committee meets only once each month.

You have talents that can be used for the work of PICS. In addition to the executive, Committee members take on areas of interest such as:

- The Five-Ways beautification project
- Red Rock Coast Action project
- PICS History
- Newsletter
- Minutes Secretary
- Membership
- Walking/bicycle tracks

*We need your help.* Don't hesitate to nominate for a position on Committee this year. Nomination forms are included in the hard copy of this newsletter, available at the Phillip Island Library..

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### COMMUNITY PLAN

Following consultations across Bass Coast Shire the Community Plan will be on view during January at Customer Service Centres and Libraries. **PLEASE MAKE YOUR COMMENT.**

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### Local Government Elections – Coming soon to Bass Coast

Local government elections will be held in Bass Coast Shire in March 2003. The Victorian Electoral Commission will conduct the elections. People interested in standing for Council are encouraged to attend a candidates' workshop on Monday 3 February 2003, 7.30 pm at the Council Chambers, Bass Coast Civic Centre, Baillieu Street, Wonthaggi. Nominations from election candidates will be accepted from 6-11 February 2003.

The elections will be conducted by a postal ballot, which will close on 15 March 2003. Every person on the voters' roll will be sent a ballot in the weeks prior to 15 March.

For more information about local government elections in Bass Coast Shire, contact the Victorian Electoral Commission on **131 832**.

**'MEET THE CANDIDATES' at the Parish Hall, Cowes, Friday 21<sup>st</sup> Feb at 8 pm.**

### HOW ABOUT PUTTING UP YOUR HAND?

It's easy for us to whinge about what our Councillors do or don't do, but have **you** considered "having a go"? If you want to know more about the job, two of our members ARE Shire Councillors and it would be worth talking to them.

- Cr Loretta Leslie – Bass Coast Shire Councillor 5952 1839
- Cr Greg Johnson – Nillumbik Shire Councillor: 9439 9853 or 5956 8327

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### EXTENSIONS TO PLANNING PERMITS

Council adopted an administrative policy at its November 6 2002 meeting regarding the extension of planning permits. This will require the owner to provide information to Council regarding the circumstances

planning permits. This will require the owner to provide information to Council regarding the circumstances of the extension. A change in circumstances can include: an actual or proposed change in the planning policy or planning scheme provisions, a change in character of the locality or a change in knowledge or attitude with respect to the use or development originally permitted. Other factors Council must consider include the time originally allowed, intervening circumstances, financial commitment by the applicant to the project and the need to strike a balance between the public interest and the interests of the applicant. This policy will assist planning officers to consider whether the permit holder is "warehousing" the permit.

(From *Inverloch Residents & Ratepayers Association Newsletter*)

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## WHOLESALE ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION IN THE NAME OF 'GREEN ENERGY'

You may have seen electricity companies promoting 'green energy'. It's meant to be for electricity generated by environmentally friendly and renewable sources – wind generation and solar power for example. But what the current Renewable Energy Act includes is the burning of something called "biomass" for electricity generation. And included in the definition of biomass is native forest wood!

Consumers are signing up for "green energy" to do something good. Importantly, this is driving electricity companies to source more power from sources such as wind farms and solar power. However, the current Renewable Energy Act actually allows the logging and clearing of old growth forests, which are then burnt to generate electricity, all under the label of "environmentally friendly" energy production.

Over 90% of Australia's original old growth forests have been destroyed since European settlement. Let's make sure what remains isn't wiped out in our lifetime, especially under the misleading title of "green energy".

The above information is excerpted from a letter from the Australian Conservation Foundation regarding destruction of old growth forests for woodchips and fuel. To contact ACF: PH: 1800 332 510; email: [acf@acfonline.org.au](mailto:acf@acfonline.org.au) or Internet: [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)

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## PENGUIN HITS 57 METRES IN FOOD SEARCH!

A fairy penguin has lived up to its scientific name, *Eudyptula minor* – which means "good little diver" – by diving 57 metres. The 33 centimetre, one-kilogram adult male, known only as number 662036, was recently recorded diving into the depths 20 kilometres from Phillip Island.

The dives were measured by a lipstick-sized time-depth recorder attached to the back of the little, or "fairy" penguin. The dive study, by Phillip Island Nature Park researchers, has changed the common wisdom about how little penguins feed. The penguins complete an average of 700 dives each day searching for food. It was previously thought they dived to a depth of only five to 10 metres. Excited researcher Andre Chiaradia described his subjects yesterday as super-amazing. Number 662036 dived 57 metres in 98 seconds – on one breath, he added, perhaps superfluously.

(Information excerpted from *The Age*, 6.12.02)

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## PORT OF HASTINGS

TollWesternport's Environmental Management Plan for the Port of Hastings:

The protests we and others made last year when EPA and TollWesternport announced proudly at a public meeting in Hastings their 'partnership' (!) in an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Port of Hastings have clearly been heard and acted upon. Significant amendments we suggested to the originally deficient draft have for the most part been generously accepted, and the EMP is now quite a good document. In fact it is a gripping cautionary tale – expand the port at our peril!

More clearly than the EPA's own State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) for Westernport, the EMP now spells out the three major risks attending the use of the bay for port purposes: dredging, oil and introduced marine pests. Of particular significance, after years of denial of their existence by the EPA, key documents which clearly set out the scientific basis of these risks have been cited and listed.... Meanwhile the Plan is available on request from Harbourmaster Dick Cox, TollWesternport, Stony Point, ph: 5983 9406. It is a useful document to read and file.

### Review of the Privatisation of the Port of Hastings:

The long-awaited reports from the State Government's Review of port privatization...have now been issued. These are:

- *The Next Wave of Port Reform in Victoria* issued by the Independent Steering Committee, chaired by

Professor Bill Russell

- *Government Response to the Next wave of Port Reform* issued by the Department of Infrastructure.

Both reports are available on the Ports and Marine website: [www.doi.vic.gov.au/portsmarine](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/portsmarine)

(From the October 2002 newsletter of the *Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council Inc.*)

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## VICROADS REVISES TREE REMOVAL

The following information is an extract from a letter sent to Bass Coast Shire Council from VicRoads re: *Vr "Application for Planning Permit to Remove Native Vegetation, Phillip Island Tourists' Road, Back Beach Road to Ventnor Road."*

"VicRoads has completed an extensive review of the proposed roadworks on Phillip Island Tourists' Road... and road safety measures have been developed to address safety concerns in the area while minimizing the number of trees to be removed.

### "Section 1 – Back Beach Road to Koala Sanctuary

It is proposed to provide 2 x 3.3m traffic lanes and 2 x 1.5m sealed shoulders with improved signage and delineation. The table drains will also be cleaned out.

"This work will require the trimming of low level vegetation encroaching onto the roadway...The vegetation classification in this area as defined in the Flora and Fauna Assessment Report...is 'Grassy Woodland of local significance and in poor condition'.

### "Section 2 – Through Koala Sanctuary

No road widening or vegetation removal/trimming works are proposed through this section.

### "Section 3 – Koala Sanctuary to South of Gap Road

No road widening works are proposed through this section. For safety reasons, trimming of vegetation encroaching onto the roadway is required (including) trimming of cypress trees on the western side...and low level vegetation...A stand of swamp scrub of high local significance located just north of the Koala Sanctuary will not be affected.

### "Section 4 – South of Gap Road to Ventnor Road

It is proposed to provide 2 x 3.3m traffic lanes and 2 x 1.5m sealed shoulders with improved signage and delineation. The table drains will also be cleaned out. The work in this section will require the removal of three trees, significant pruning of a fourth tree and the trimming of vegetation encroaching onto the roadway on the west side of the road.

"With the exception of Section 2, where no trimming is proposed, the extent of vegetation trimming will be to an offset of 0.5m from the edge of the sealed road shoulders. The vertical clearance shall be 5m above the shoulder surface level.

"VicRoads will arrange for an arborist's report to be prepared. This report will identify the extent of vegetation trimming, trimming techniques, appropriate management processes and strategies to be employed to protect all native vegetation not affected by the proposed works.

"Further to site discussions it is understood that NRE does not consider a permit under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic) is required for these works....Peter McCulloch, Regional Manager. (14.10.02)"

This is a huge improvement on the original proposal. Thanks to everyone who wrote in objecting to VicRoads' permit application.

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## Message from Friends of Churchill Island Committee

Members please note that subscriptions are due in January. Members not financial after March will no longer receive the FOCIS newsletter. Please ensure to renew your valuable FOCIS membership early in 2003!

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## BACKYARD BIODIVERSITY

The following section is extracted from *The Web*, Spring 2002, newsletter of the Threatened Species

## Network:

"Take the urban landscape from a bird or bats' eye view – a clump of trees in fruit (*stop and snack*) – gap – small flowering shrub – gap – a couple of shrubs about to flower (*remember for next weeks' meal*) – large gap – a tree without fruit or flowers but with excellent hollows for nesting/roosting (*good for a stopover*) – gap – clump of trees and shrubs out of season (*nothing edible now, but had lunch here last winter*) – very large gap, no greenery for miles.

The message is simple: plant native vegetation that fruit and flower and help our hungry animals, and plant now to protect our wildlife in the future. Native plants are not only beautiful, but also beneficial. Unlike many introduced plants, eucalypts and the plethora of other native plants are suited to the harsh and unpredictable climates of Australia and can survive without excessive watering or other high-maintenance regimes.

Many urban inhabitants feel that they are unable to play a direct part in species conservation. But the potential importance of urban bush and gardens to native wildlife cannot be overstated. In years such as this, where conditions inland are harsh and productivity low, coastal areas and well watered urban spaces can be vital as fallback positions for our endangered wildlife such as the swift parrot or grey-headed flying-fox.

Firstly, councils must be encouraged to plan with wildlife in mind, leaving or creating green corridors, working to overcome the barriers posed by major roads, and considering wildlife issues such as bat camps and flyways when planning future development.

Secondly we should all take some time to develop a little habitat of our own in the space that we have available. To do this, there are a number of simple steps that can be followed. Any of these will be of benefit, although the most biodiverse garden is likely to be one that includes all:

- Remember to plant some species that will benefit small insectivorous birds
- Use local native species – ask your Council for advice
- Don't plant hybrid species as they do not produce pollen.
- Choose plants that flower at different times of the year to provide a year-round menu for your backyard wildlife
- If you have space, develop a frog pond
- In a space out of reach of cats and close to shelter, install a highly visible and safe place for birds to bathe
- If you have a cat, for its own safety and that of your backyard wildlife, please keep it inside, especially at dawn, dusk and night.
- Ideally your garden should have:
  - At least one tall fruit or nectar producing tree above 2 \_ m in height
  - A variety of pollen, seed, fruit and nectar producing native plants, from large trees and open shrubs to small dense ones, to provide a range of habitat to birds of different sizes
  - Native grass or short native plants to provide ground cover to small birds, reptiles and insects

A litter space with earth, leaf litter and stones or wood, where birds can scratch for insects and lizards can bask and hide."

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## VENTNOR COMMON – A Short History

Thanks to the Burke's Backyard team, Ventnor Common is now known nationally due to this patch of Crown Land being the focus of the Environmental Blitz in early October. Over three days, hundreds of volunteers planted thousands of trees, removed weeds, including many unsafe pine trees, built walkways, picnic areas, put up rabbit-proof fencing, made tracks, created a wildlife corridor, made wetlands, did dune restoration work and reformed a four-wheel drive quagmire – all coordinated by LandCare. It was certainly a mighty effort. But the Blitz was just one episode in the colorful history of this valuable piece of public land.

Boat Creek, on the southwest boundary of the land, no doubt provided fresh water to the Bunurong who spent their summers on Phillip Island. When Grant anchored in Elizabeth Bay (Ventnor Beach) in 1801, he heard lots of birds calling from thick timber in the area. When the McHaffies arrived they had a practice of annually burning much of the Island, and the Common would have almost undoubtedly been included. When the time came to open the Island up for closer settlement in 1868, the area we now know as *Ventnor Common* was actually surveyed as the Ventnor Township, with a Recreation Reserve on the current site and a State School site where the pine forest is now, planted by the Ventnor Primary School children in the late 1920s. The rest was bisected by McHaffie, Henderson and Adams Streets, with Ford and Barker Streets crossing them at right angles running down to Elizabeth Bay (Ventnor Beach). Barker Street is now Ventnor Beach Road.

The township was actually never taken up – whilst Ventnor had a post office (the house, recently restored on the corner of Grossard Point road and the unmade section of Lyall Street) there wasn't even a store in Ventnor until the Graydens built the Anchorage Store in the 1950s on Ventnor Road. The Common became a free-for-all open space, with activities such as rubbish and dead stock dumping, seasonal grazing, and even chicory growing on the Recreation Reserve, which was officially established in the 1940s, with the Ventnor Progress Association also planting the cypress trees then.

In the 1950s the Council stripped topsoil from a substantial area of the common to use as binding material for road gravel. Regeneration of native species and invasion by noxious weeds has gradually occurred since then. The Recreation Reserve has been used at various times by football clubs, cricket clubs, and the Phillip Island Pony Club has been a consistent user since the 1960s, including holding One Day Events over much of the Common area.

In the late 1970s the Council, desperate to solve the problem of itinerant campers on roadsides and foreshore reserves, proposed that the Common be turned into a "minimum facility camping area". After much protest by locals, who not only objected to the wholesale clearing, drainage problems and foreshore trampling that would have resulted but did not want all the visiting 'riff-raff' concentrated in their neighbourhood, the Council eventually abandoned the idea. They did, however, establish a BMX track adjacent to the Recreation Reserve by dumping loads of dirt into a clearing. Unfortunately this quickly attracted motor bike riders and 4-wheel drivers with little sense of environmental responsibility.

PICS attempted to create more habitat twice during the 1980s on this same area by planting several hundred trees, and in July 1988, as part of PICS Bicentennial project to plant an indigenous tree on public land for every PI resident, a public planting of 850 eucalypts, sheoaks and wattles took place on the south western end of the Common. This planting was very successful and the area is now thickly inhabited by swamp wallabies, echidnas, reptiles and lots of species of birds.

During the 1990s there have been various attempts by individuals (especially PICS Life Member Keith Grayden), Shire and government departments to control gorse, rabbits and foxes.

So, whilst Don Burke and his camera crew might have helped make recent history at the Ventnor Common, the area certainly has its own rich and fascinating history.

By Christine Grayden

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## **MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC. HELD 12 OCTOBER 2002**

Meeting opened at 8.07 pm

1. **Welcome.** The President, Margaret Hancock, extended a welcome to all those present.
2. **Present.** As per the attendance book.
3. **Apologies** G & M Johnson, R. Thomas, A.Davie, D & J Baird
4. **General Business.** The President informed those present as to the specific purpose of this Special General Meeting.

**Motion: "To Rescind the Constitution of this Society dated 12 October 1986."**

Moved: Penny Manning Seconded: Terry Beales. Carried unanimously

**Motion: "To adopt the Constitution dated 12 October 2002 that has been circulated to all members of this Society and tabled at this meeting."**

Moved: Gillian Collins Seconded: Pauline Taylor Carried unanimously

Meeting closed at 8.18 p.m.

*Bruce Howe, Minute Secretary*

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## **And also**

Thank you to our newsletter sponsor **Kevron Plastics** (Tel 03 9387 9811), Australia's Leading Manufacturer of Plastic Identification Products.

The hard copy of our newsletter contains some items that are not included in the online version. The PICS newsletter is available at the Phillip Island Library.

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**YOUR PICS COMMITTEE**

The PICS Committee, elected at the AGM, meets once a month to discuss issues of immediate concern to the conservation of wildlife on Phillip Island. These meetings are very informative and challenging. Members are welcome to attend at 8.00 pm on the first Friday of each month. Meetings are usually held at the home of Coral Wood.

Please consider nominating for a Committee position next year. The Committee can always use new members and ideas. A nomination form will be in the last newsletter of the year before the next AGM.

The positions for 2002 are as follows:

<b>President</b>	Margaret Hancock (Ph/Fax 5952-2557)
<b>Senior Vice President</b>	Rose Thomas
<b>Junior Vice President</b>	Sandra Shively
<b>Secretary</b>	Margaret Johnson (Temporary help needed)
<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	Bruce Howe
<b>Treasurer</b>	Gillian Collins (Ph 5956 8840)
<b>Newsletter</b>	Christine Grayden/John Eddy (Ph 5956 8501; Fax 5956 8314)
<b>Meeting notices and publicity</b>	S. Shively, Rose Thomas
<b>Ventnor Public Land Committee</b>	Greg Johnson
<b>Red Rocks Coast Action Project</b>	Position urgently needs to be filled
<b>South Coast Walking Track</b>	Penny Manning
<b>Friends of Churchill Island Liaison</b>	Julie Box
<b>Barb Martin Bushbank Liaison</b>	Anne Davie
<b>Western Port Catchment Committee</b>	Graeme Burgan
<b>Landcare Liaison</b>	Morag Mackay
<b>Landcare Salinity Committee</b>	John Jansson
<b>Website Manager</b>	Diane Baird
<b>Meeting Venue</b>	Coral Wood

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