



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society - Second Quarter, June 2005

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Newsletter

Dates for your Diary

Friday 8th July, Friends of Koalas GM, Meeting Room, Heritage Centre, Cowes. Enquiries Patsy Hunt 5952 2407

Saturday 9th July, 10 am, WESBOC AGM, Rhyll Hall, speaker. Enquiries Bessie ph 5956 9401 or Sophie 5956 9582. See article below.

Saturday 9th July, 8 pm, PICS General Meeting, Heritage Centre. Speaker: Paul Smith, Manager, Bass Coast Shire Environment Department. Followed by General Meeting.

Saturday 10th July, 10 am, ♦Working Bee: Coast Action, Red Rocks. Meet at car park.

Saturday 20th August, Bass Coast Shire environment groups get-together, hosted by PICS. Newhaven Hall, 3 p.m. til approx 8.30 pm. Coastcare theme. Speaker. All welcome. See article below. Enquiries Christine Grayden 5956 8501.

Saturday 20th August, 3.30pm, Seasonal Walk, Newhaven coast, hosted by Newhaven Coast Action. Meet at Newhaven Hall, walk to Coastcare site. Walk led by Newhaven Coastcare members and BCSC's Derek Hibbert.

Saturday 24th September, 8.00pm, PICS General Meeting, Heritage Centre, Cowes. Speaker will be Thierry Roland from Parks Victoria, talking about Westernport's Marine Parks, especially the biology of the Churchill Island Marine Park.

Meeting to follow.

Sunday, 25th September, 10 am, Working Bee, place to be announced.

Saturday, 12th November, WESBOC 30th celebrations. All welcome! See article inside.

Saturday, 19th November, 2.00pm, Seasonal Walk: low energy home. Visit to Bett Robertson's energy self-sufficient home, Rhyll Road.

Saturday, 21st January, 8.00pm, PICS AGM, Heritage Centre, Cowes.

Friends of Koalas Habitat Days: First Sat of every month at 10 am. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Koala Count at the Koala Conservation Centre, second Thursday of every month at 10 am.

Biosphere - Bass Coast Round Table meets at San Remo on the third Friday of every month at 8 pm.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

The Queen's Birthday Holiday weekend was no holiday for the volunteers who came to the Parish Hall to sort out the PICS records! We worked hard for most of Sunday and Monday sorting, listing, discarding - and, as we worked, reminisced and laughed at all sorts of treasures from the past. The work on the records is by no means finished, but we've made a good beginning and can see the way ahead. So, a very big THANK YOU to everyone who came to help, and to the people who donated money to pay for the associated expenses. We certainly are not short of material for the PICS History, but we do have gaps in our collection of *Penguin* newsletters. If you have any OLD copies on your bookshelves, please would you let me know. Old copies can be photocopied then returned to you.

I hope that you will be at our next meeting, and at the tree planting at Red Rocks the following morning. Please be sure that Saturday August 20th is in your diary, as PICS will be hosting the Environmental Get Together at Newhaven Hall on that afternoon and evening.

With best wishes,

Margaret Hancock, President.

P.S. Phillip Island is rejoicing with RAIN!

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BASS COAST ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS FORUM

Funded by Coastcare Environment Education. Hosted by
PICS

Saturday 20 August, 3 pm ♦ 9 pm

Newhaven Hall, Newhaven

To allow all the environment, planning and Coastcare groups of the Bass Coast Shire the opportunity of getting together to exchange information and ideas and to learn new things, PICS has decided to revitalize the annual get-togethers that were held for some years until they lapsed last year. Thanks to funding from the Department of Sustainability and Environment Dandenong region's Coastcare Environment Education program we are able to hire the Newhaven hall, Bass Coast Shire is funding catering, whilst local State member Ken Smith's office is providing photocopying free of charge to support the event. Whilst the theme will be Coastcare, there will be ample opportunity for all groups to network.

At this stage the outline of the day will be:

- 3.00 pm Arrive, set up displays, cuppa
- 3.30 pm Walk to Newhaven foreshore and examine the Newhaven Coastcare's great work, led by a Newhaven Coastcare members and Derek Hibbert, Coastcare Co-ordinator, Bass Coast Shire. (Please note if the weather is totally foul this time will be used for BCS Environment staff to outline the role of their department + question/answer session)
- 5.00 pm Informal chat, view displays and resources, network, cuppa
- 6.00 pm Dinner
- 6.45 pm Round-up: short talk from group's representatives on each group's activities
- 7.30 pm Speaker: Denis Cox from DSE Coastcare
- 8.30 pm Questions & Answers
- 9.00 pm Close. Feel free to fill in an evaluation form before you leave.

Of course we may not stick to the schedule! All groups on the BCS database will soon be contacted, but if you are interested in attending and don't have an attendance form soon, please contact the organizer, Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 to obtain a form. If you have an email address, please apply by email to receive the form as an attachment and save postage! Email Christine on: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

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CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT MORNINGS

The final two sessions of our CEMs for this season were firstly with Robin Stewart, who kindly brought in three of her pet lizards for the children to view and handle, and told them lots about lizards. My thanks to Bruce Howe and John Eddy for running this session as I was unavailable. They were kept very busy by children enthusiastically making lizard bookmarks for John to laminate! Over 20 children and their parents attended. Our final session was with Mike Cleeland for 'Rocks and Crystals', on his return visit to CEM from running 'Dinosaurs' previously. He showed slides, took the children out for a crystal hunt in the (very quiet) car park, and had lots of samples for them to examine. John Eddy also brought samples and microscopes from his school. The microscopes are always a hit. We had 16 children and their parents to that session.

The CEM program has been extremely successful, with many parents stopping me in the street and asking: "When's the next one?" The answer to that is October as we decided to recess for winter, and then 8 more sessions have been made possible by funding from Coastcare, thanks to Denis Cox, Coastcare co-ordinator of Box Hill DSE. Please feel free to phone me for more information about the sessions: 5956 8501, and watch for the program to go on our website or phone me for a printed copy.

PICS, Coastcare and CEM recently participated with a display in the World Environment Day Expo over 2 days at the San Remo Recreation Centre. Over 600 children attended the Expo, which included displays and activities from Bass Coast Shire, PINP, Parks Victoria, Westernport Water, South Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Con Soc, Landcare, Wonthaggi Heathlands, Friends of the Koalas and PICS.

Christine Grayden.

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OUR COMMUNITY, OUR FUTURE

How far ahead do **you** plan? To start a family? Tertiary education for the kids? Self-funded retirement? Re-painting the kitchen? Write your memoirs? Most of us look about five years into the future, and in this day of massive and rapid technological change, that's about as far ahead as it's really feasible for individuals to look. But for town and regional planning, we need to look considerably further ahead than that to ensure that infrastructure, environment and valued features

of our lifestyles are all going to be protected.

That was the challenge delivered to a panel of five experts and the fifty or so community members who attended a day of discussion and debate on Sunday 22nd May in the lovely surrounds of Bass Valley Primary School. About **Living on the Waterline**, the Creatively Connecting Communities team put the day together as a major step towards getting funding for the largely forgotten Bass Coast Shire Waterline communities from Jam Jerrup to Woolamai to determine exactly how they want their area to look in the next 20 years time. I went there for PICS, as the situation facing the Waterline is common to most of Bass Coast Shire, including Phillip Island.

Introduced by Bass local and Landcare officer Moragh McKay (PICS membership officer), the two aims for the day were spelt out: 1. Create a regional voice for the communities living on the Waterline from Jam Jerrup to Woolamai, and 2. To gather information on community needs/concerns for a reference group to prepare a proposal for 3 years of funding.

PANEL

Gail Kelly, from CSIROs Division of Sustainable Ecosystems, facilitated a Panel discussion on the question: Given current trends, what is your scenario for the Waterline area in 2020? What are the opportunities and challenges in that scenario? The Panel members were: Peter Dann, *Research Manager, PINP*; Dick Cox, *Harbour Master, Port of Hastings (Toll Westernport)*; Bill Russell, *Adjunct Professor at: the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, and Southern Cross University*; and Michael Buxton, *Assoc. Prof. Environment and Planning, RMIT*.

Gail pointed out that a lot of people throughout Australia were struggling with how they manage change and how their views get through to the decision-makers in coastal areas. She challenged us to try to imagine: What will this place look like in 20-30 years? and to think about the connections between the port, environment, urban environment and transport.

Peter Dann spoke first, outlining **environmental changes** he saw for the Waterline area based on current global forecasts and local conditions. Apart from predicted global warming, Peter believes we could see more windy days, which may make wind farm generation feasible for the Waterline communities. We could see a 10-40% increase in hot summer days over 35 degrees, and a marked increase in the value of water, as storages will diminish and households will depend more on their tanks. Water quality will also be problematic, as warming will increase the incidence of algal blooms. However, river and estuary systems will be improved, due to protection works being currently carried out in the catchment (e.g.

fencing of river boundaries, removal of willows), so that we will see more platypus and fish in the Bass River.

Although society's dependence on only one or two types of energy production will be diminished, and per capita use of energy will fall or be more efficient, we will still have major problems with greenhouse gas emissions due to increased population. Global dimming also seems to be a factor looming on the horizon. We won't have so much broad scale agriculture, but there will certainly be more trees than now due to Landcare and credit balancing schemes.

The bush that we are used to seeing in parts of the Waterline area will disappear as sand mining takes precedence on this largely privately owned bushland. Any wetlands remaining will be enormously valuable, and we will see some different birds, normally associated with up north, such as crested pigeons and corellas, moving into our area. Due to our poor current management practices, we will see many more noxious and environmental weeds, and vermin problems in the future.

Westernport will see an explosion of marine-based recreation as population expands from Melbourne closer to our shores. This will need to be controlled by some form of zoning system, whilst recreational fisherman (there will be no commercial fishing in Westernport by then) will have strict and very small bag limits. Like Port Phillip Bay, which now has over 100 marine introductions, Westernport will see an increase in introduced marine species.

Dick Cox, Harbormaster for the Port of Hastings, run by Toll Westernport that controls all the port facilities in Westernport, gave the gathering a run-down on current **port operations**. There are currently 250 vessels per year entering Westernport and using a total of five berths. Although Westernport is now considered a supplementary port to Port Phillip, Dick believes development of the Port of Hastings is inevitable, given the totally negative report recently handed down on the plans to deepen Port Phillip, and the difficulties intrinsic in Port Phillip Bay's being a silty estuarine system. Geelong is just too shallow. In discussion later in the day, Dick told us we could be seeing up 1600 ships per year entering Westernport, and that the port could be up and running within four or five years of the decision being made.

Dick pointed out that there was currently a lot of privately owned land around the POH which is zoned for port use, and that would be needed for major infrastructure such as double height container railway systems running from the POH to distribution centres in Dandenong. This, and the need for a traffic-light free truck run to Dandenong, will entail government buy-back of private land around Hastings and between Hastings and Dandenong. Australia has no standard gauge

railway system, and Dick sees this, and the need to get more efficient transport corridors going, as a priority infrastructure project. The government is aiming for 35% rail freight in 20 years; it should be 50%.

The main issues with regard to the development of the Port of Hastings, other than infrastructure, are undoubtedly environmental. Dick believes Westernport can be kept **Clean and Green** even as Victoria's main port, if:

1. All necessary equipment is in place along with the training to use it.
2. Sufficient numbers of **Environment Police** can operate
3. The major treaties (e.g. Ramsar) and environmental legislation are adhered to
4. Strict monitoring of environment
5. Strict implementation of strong environmental controls
6. Co-ordination of all groups working on environmental research and projects in Westernport. (He later gave the example of a group in the Waterline working on seagrass enhancement knowing nothing of the work of the Hastings group.) Importance of the Biosphere work mentioned.

Later in discussion, the question was asked whether the community could actually trust the government and the Port of Hastings to do the right thing. Dick stated that we all need to start working NOW to ensure that the above is put in place as soon as possible. He referred to the Port of Fremantle as an example of a port that seems to be getting it right in Australia, with lots of community consultation. (see their website: www.fremantleports.com.au)

The car ferry to Cowes was discussed in a later workshop in regard to the Waterline communities. Dick pointed out that such a ferry, which could impact on the Bass Highway, decreasing traffic, could move about 600 people per hour. The Queenscliffe ferry had also brought considerable benefits to tourism in outlying areas, as people took the ferry to drive around their destination, lunch, browse craft venues, etc. at locations within easy driving distance of the terminal.

Bill Russell spoke next, pointing out the four **drivers** of **public transport planning** as he sees the situation:

1. Petrol cost is not going to decrease. China is rapidly becoming motorized and will put further upward pressure on fuel costs. We will need to use cars far more thoughtfully. Multiple car households are likely to diminish, as second car ownership now equals the cost of life options (e.g. equivalent to funding private schools for kids, holiday house, etc). This will have big implications for planning.

2. Urban development. Lots more people will move in between Waterline communities and Melbourne. Congestion will increase between there and Melbourne, affecting access to jobs, education, leisure (the big three)
3. Ageing of population means that older drivers are less confident in traffic and use cars more selectively, so need alternatives.
4. More trains = less environmental impact. E.g. loads on all the semi-trailers going to Sydney on the Hume Highway each day would fit onto 15 trains. Bill also sees the development of Westernport for freight as inevitable. Can't get double stacked containers on trains under Federation Square development and Webb dock rail link was removed, therefore need a rail link to Dandenong to service distribution warehouses located there. This may mean that trains take priority everywhere.

Bill asked us to think of three main Domains of movement: around Townships; Shire; and to Melbourne (Communities of interest). But just what deal do communities currently get? Fifty years ago the trip from Anderson to Melb took 138 mins; it's now 144 mins. There's actually less public transport now in the area, though the population is much higher. Our service to Melbourne is up to 56 mins slower than other areas in Victoria an equivalent distance from Melbourne. Our communities are significantly disadvantaged. Government has allocated \$25m for studies of Dandenong area public transport, but Bill fears this will just mean more bus services from private bus companies. He sees a need for a fast train service to Lang Lang.

Towns need to consolidate services. The elderly/disabled using motorised scooters should be able to access all necessary services in one trip, and we need better facilities for bike riders/walkers. There is a need to make access ways generally easier to use without the motorcar. The car WAS king, but not now, and not in the future either.

Michael Buxton was the final speaker, challenging us with some spiky thinking on **urban planning**. Michael claimed that the 1971 Melbourne Plan was the last really decent piece of urban planning. In that era the fights in the Dandenong Ranges were similar to those in Waterline now. He claimed that looking ahead 20 years is not very long, and we need to be planning for 100-1000 years time, aiming all the time for increased sustainability. What we plan now will go on indefinitely. Can we *really* manage what we value today to go on indefinitely? In the space of even 2 years we can have such radical change to land use that we can change the land forever. (Think of open cut mining)

People inevitably choose the best areas to live in e.g.

coasts. We are seeing the greatest population movement in human history happening now everywhere, including the increase in urban development around coastlines. There we have finite resources but infinite pressures. The Department of Sustainability and Environment has a good research group, but this doesn't translate into legislation or planning documents. What are the options when tackling these dilemmas?

The further from Melbourne you are, the less the pressures, but the Waterline communities are right in the firing line because of distance and good coastal and environmental assets. They face three big problems:

1. Linear development along coastal areas. We can a) let it happen, b) try and control it or c) control it forever. There is a definite need for legislated boundaries the planning system will never protect sensitive areas. (CG: doesn't PICS know that!)
2. Type of development between townships = a terrible threat. As more regulation is imposed on land closer to Melbourne (e.g. legislative protection of green belt areas) developers move to attractive areas with weak planning controls. Need stronger zones. The present unhelpful planning system was introduced by Kennett/Maclellan, and the current Bracks government has neatly fitted into this. We need to put pressure on government and councils to bring in stronger controls and get rid of present, very deregulated method of controlling land use.
3. Rural residential development. Michael believes that the Coastal Spaces document contained not one decent recommended action. Wishy-washy a classic cop-out. The group that put the document together has not acted within Delahunty's (planning minister's) original intention.

How do we get our land mix right, and how do we get our controls right? We'll see immediate and incremental change if we don't get these right now.

In **summing up**, Gail said there was a clear need for lots of pressure from the grass roots and local communities to greatly improve the planning situation for all four factors: environment, port development, public transport and urban planning. A question session followed the forum and Workshops were held on the different topics after lunch, with summing up presented by representatives of the different groups contributing to the aims outlined by Moragh initially.

Overall this was an incredibly worthwhile exercise, which we could well do to emulate for Phillip Island and San Remo. You can read my complete notes for the whole day in the Issues section of this website.

Christine Grayden.

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An Invitation from WESBOC

WESBOC cordially invites everyone to our Annual General Meeting to be held at the Rhyll Hall on Saturday July 9 at 10.00am. ♦ At 11.00am our speaker for the day will be Keith Job, the new General Manager for the Bird Observers Club of Australia. ♦ Keith has many new forward-looking ideas for the Club in the 21st century and I feel that possibly some of these ideas may be of interest to other environmental type organisations and people generally. ♦ If preferred, come at 11am to hear Keith and bring some lunch so that we can eat and chat afterwards.

WESBOC is celebrating its 30th anniversary in November this year and we have planned to walk the Rhyll Inlet and picnic in the Rhyll Park afterwards. ♦ The date will be Saturday the 12th and we would like anyone who has been associated with the club in the past to attend and also any who are friends of the club now. ♦ Especially we would welcome anyone interested in joining the club.

Further information if required may be obtained by ringing Sophie at 59 569582 or Bessie at 59 569401

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AUTUMN WALK AMONG THE MOONAHS

Our Autumn walk among the Moonahs at Red Rocks was led by Gidja Walker from the Mornington Peninsula whose botanical specialty is in moonah woodland communities. This was an excellent opportunity for us to learn about how the various plants in the area interact, which ones the Coastcare group should leave, and which ones should be removed and why.

Commencing at the end of Red Rocks Road, the group made its way along the foreshore, heading south west, examining the plants as we went, then descended to the beach, walked back towards Cowes then up the access way and back to the car park. Along the way, Gidja pointed out several plants we had not previously noticed or considered, or been sure of what we should do about.

Testing for the PH level of the sand, Gidja told us that the Mornington Peninsula moonahs typically grew in a PH of 8.5-10.00, whilst at Red Rocks tests showed it varied between 7.0 and 8.0. Phillip Island is unique as we have moonahs growing

in sand, clay and peat. Another moonah species in Victoria grows in the Little Desert ♦ the Inland Moonah.

For new plantings, Gidja suggested we might try open mesh guards, which do not have problems of drying out or humidity which are inherent in closed, plastic guards. The milk cartons seem OK but last a long time and need to be removed from many species (e.g. bower spinach) before the cartons rot down. Better to harden the young tubestock off close to the coast, then plant them out in mesh guards.

Full of information about the characteristics of various plants, how weeds responded to different methods of control, and how they interacted with each other and animals in the typical moonah woodland environment, Gidja led us on a fascinating few hours' tour of this area most of us were so familiar with but were then able to see through new eyes.

♦ Gidja observed fox tracks near the top of the steps on the Toilet Block access track. ♦ She suggested one method of control that has been used is a sterilising agent placed in baits.

♦ Gidja pointed out white material near the top of the cliff face located south of Penguin Rock. ♦ She thought that this might be evidence of a former bird rookery (or is it a geological process?) ♦♦

At Red Rocks the main companion plants we found were:

Indigenous:

Thyme Rice flower: *Pimelea serpillifolia*

Bower spinach: *Tetragonia implexicoma* ♦ Part of this area is called ♦Penguin Rocks♦, because, in common with much of the north coast, penguins were here until into the 20th century. Gidja presumes that the birds would have ♦worked over♦ the understorey, and it would mainly have consisted of spinach and seaberry saltbush under the moonahs then.

Seaberry saltbush: *Rhagodia candolleana*

Shade (or forest) pellitory: *Parietaria debilis* (related to nettles, this is food for the Australian Admiral Butterfly)

Coastal bone fruit (Wallaby saltbush): *Threlkeldia diffusa*

Coast daisy bush: *Olearia axillaries*

Dianella (Flax-lilly): *Dianella revoluta*

Short-stemmed Flax-lilly: *Dionella sp.*

Coast Banksia: *Banksia integrifolia*

Moonah: *Melaleuca lanceolata* Gidja said that the age of moonahs generally had been seriously underestimated, and that from limbs lopped from moonah on a Peninsula golf course, they can tell that trees of the size of some larger specimens at Red Rocks are about 600 years old.

Coast beard-heath: *Leucopogon parriflorus*

Dune thistle: *Actites megalocarpa* ❖ very long livers

Coast wattle: *Acacia sophorae* Need to ensure no sallow wattles (*Acacia floribunda*) are nearby, as these create hybrids.

Sweet bursaria: *Bursaria spinosa* also very long-lived.

Pigface (Karkalla): *Carpobrotus rossii*

Beach tea tree: *Leptospermum laevigatum*

Dogwood: *Cassinia aculaata* ❖❖❖❖

Swamp gum: *Eucalyptus ovata* Growing together, these plants appeared to be growing over an aquifer.

Austral bracken: *Pteridium esculentum*

Rough hound❖s tongue: *Cynoglossum australe*

Boobialla: *Myoporum insulare*

Native Plants:

Elderberry: *Sambucus gaudichaidiana*. Whilst Gidja felt this was indigenous to the area, there is some controversy about elderberry being indigenous to Phillip Island. The tall non-native elderberry should be removed.

Bracelet honey-myrtle: *Melaleuca armillaris*. Planted some years ago, best removed as it can hybridize with other *Melaleuca* species.

❖ Also suggested that we don❖t collect seed from moonahs located near *M. armillaris* as it may have already hybridised.

Cootamundra wattle: *Acacia baileyana*. Best removed, as above.

Weeds:

Thanks to a history of PICS and Coastcare activity in this area, the weed problem is gradually getting under control. Derek Hibbert pointed out that Bass Coast Shire Council has a grant of \$1000 for woody weed removal at Red Rocks. Gidja has had great success with a flame-thrower for non-woody

species, but she cautions that this implement needs to be used selectively and by trained operators, avoiding off target damage. Training days for volunteers would be appropriate. Weeds encountered were:

Kikuyu (grass): Gidja considered this fine in the centre of the car park, but there was a need to control it from spreading into the foreshore area. Two suggestions: 1. Shade it out by planting a thick hedge of boobialla along the verge of the vehicle access to stop it invading from the other side of the track. (Kikuyu hates dense shade). 2. Spray with Roundup. She has had success using a solution as weak as 1-500. Best to spray in summer, though not appropriate for ground nesting bird colonies.

Veldtgrass (annual and panic): Need to get seed out, as spraying produces better conditions for it to thrive. These grasses are typical of this.

Sea Wheat grass Planting spinach along the edges of foreshore can reduce spread of invasive grass species.

Hairs-tail grass (lots of common names) *Lagurus ovatus*

Oxalis can be eradicated by using flame-thrower. In other areas swamp rats seem to love living in the oxalis, whilst bandicoots love living in onion weed (*Allium triquetrum*)

Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) and Asparagus fern. Need to get the crown, not worry about all the storage organs, when weeding out. Use flame-thrower to kill off any regrowth. Beetles have been used with success in other areas where the asparagus are thick. Knapsack spraying does not really work as the tops may die back but the rest of the plant underneath the soil may still survive.

Fumitory

Crassula (*Crassula multicava* spp. *Multicava*) Located just west of the top of the Penguin Rock access steps (and at a few other locations within the Red Rocks foreshore).

Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) Gidja explained that if the root snapped when hand pulling, the plant would not grow back if the snap was below the hypocotyl. This has implications for mature plants with deep roots as we probably don't have to dig too far down, therefore saving time and reducing erosion and impact on nearby indigenous species by creating big holes in the dune.

Christine Grayden, John Eddy & Derek Hibbert

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VCAT HELICOPTER HEARING

PICS supported the Bass Coast Shire's refusal to grant a permit for Helicopter Joy Flights from the property adjacent to Swan Lake. The most helpful information that came out of the two and a half day hearing was the possibility of a Fly Neighbourly Agreement.

The Tribunal's reasons not to issue a permit were:

59 On balance the Tribunal finds that a permit should not issue for the development as proposed. The Tribunal's most particular concerns are with respect to the migratory birds and the colonial birds including the fairy penguins. The Tribunal finds there is insufficient evidence to indicate that these birds will not be disturbed by the proposal. The status of the PINP as a world class eco-nature based tourism destination and research facility is sufficient to warrant a precautionary approach to be taken in this instance.

60 The Tribunal notes that the applicant already has helicopter landing rights at Cowes, while accepting that the proposed location could well provide additional business opportunities, takes the view that overall the relocation of the heliport at this site would lead to greater number of helicopter flights over the area, the impact of which on the bird life is unknown and potentially damaging.

61 The Tribunal also notes that if the PINP management is concerned about the potential impacts of flights around the nature reserve they should pursue an application to CASA for inclusion of a fly neighbourly agreement.

62 Finally it was noteworthy that the applicant's commitment to work with the relevant environmental groups, including PINP, in a co-operative manner and that perhaps further discussions may result in more information being made available to allow a more informed decision to be made on the impact of the important fauna in this area.

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The Point Grant Saga Continues

A. In the 2005-06 Victorian Budget the Treasurer stated that: Funding will be provided in this year's budget to repair the visitor information centre and restaurant at the Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre, plus storm damage to the roof in 2002.

Budget Facts:

\$6.6 million will be provided over two years to restore the Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre at Phillip Island.

◆ The recommissioning will repair and upgrade the facility to enhance the services available to the public as follows:◆
New kitchen and equipment; Interpretive display in main hall; Rectification of the structure to comply with current building standards; New plant, associated equipment and fittings for cool room, freezer and dry room

◆ An additional \$120,000 in ongoing funding will be provided to help meet the operating costs of the Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre.

◆ Total floor area utilized will be 1230 square metres (of a total 3390 available)◆◆

B.◆ PICS responded with a letter to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. J. Thwaites (18.5.05):

◆◆Please would you supply PICS with the Business Plan that has been developed to demonstrate that the Seal Rocks Visitor Centre will generate sufficient income within daylight hours to sustain its operation. We would like this plan to include an explanation of the visitor experiences to be supplied, and the income each will generate. The former operator was unable to provide visitor services that generated sufficient income to keep the Centre open, and his failure cost the Victorian taxpayer millions of dollars.

We would also like to know if the Title specifically created for the SRVA leased land has been annulled, and has it been re-incorporated into the adjacent Crown Land.◆

C. The Phillip Island Nature Park Media Release on 30.5.05 read in part:

◆Nobbies Update

Since the recent government announcement, Phillip Island Nature Park has appointed an independent engineering consultant to advise on what needs to occur for compliance with ◆current building standards◆. This will include a ◆condition review and plan◆ to protect the building for the immediate future e.g. corrosion repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Ground Level

The Nature Park will provide a Food and Beverage experience where visitors can sit in comfort, have a good cup of coffee and a reasonably priced meal. It is not anticipated that there will be an entry fee for the ground level.

To do this requires installation of substantial ground floor facilities. We will also work to provide visitors with interpretive information about the seal colony and surrounding areas. A

themed gift shop will also be included. Investigation is currently under way for the reinstallation of new technology cameras at the seal colony which may include underwater vision. We expect that visitors will be able to relax with an ocean view and enjoy the antics of the seals offshore at Seal Rocks as well as the extraordinary marine environment of Bass Strait.

We anticipate that the overall theme of the ground floor will be simple and enjoyable.

Lower Level

PINP is seeking opportunities to partner, subcontract or lease the downstairs area to enhance the experience for visitors and the community

D. In commenting on the Media Release, PICS has responded that:

1. In no circumstances is the building to be open at night. All activities must cease at the time set by the Nature Park's Research staff.
2. The emphasis must be on a family friendly cafe
3. Any business or activity must be relevant to the environment
4. Any business or activity must comply with the PINP Mission Statement
5. The significance of the area to the Bunurong people must be recognized.
6. The mounds and the works area need considerable improvement
7. The Upper Floor should be set aside for the Westernport Biosphere.

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What does the Phillip Island Conservation Society Do?

1. Habitat restoration e.g. Five Ways road reserve replanting, Coastcare at Red Rocks, Newhaven, etc;
2. Participate in the planning process in order to:
 - a) Help develop planning documents which include sound environmental principals
 - b) Scrutinise planning proposals to ensure that

they comply with existing planning documents, and to make suggestions to improve the environmental emphasis of the original plans

c) Object to environmentally unacceptable planning proposals and, if necessary, attend VCAT hearings to try and have such proposals dropped or revised;

3. Assist with wildlife research;
4. Operate free environmental education for children through the monthly Children's Environment Mornings;
5. Provide opportunities for the community to learn about our environment by providing expert speakers at four public meetings throughout the year.
6. Take guided walks one for each season of the year around Phillip Island and other nearby parts of Bass Coast Shire.
7. Advocate for individuals and groups in the community who have environmental concerns they wish to convey to the authorities and need help to do it;
8. Maintain historical records of events of environmental &/or planning significance which occur on Phillip Island;
9. Participate on public committees concerning our local environment;
10. Comment in the media on local environmental issues to ensure that the needs of the environment are kept to the forefront when decisions are made;
11. Hold public meetings on major environmental issues as they arise.
12. Run Meet the Candidates forums for Council, State and Federal elections so that the public can hear each candidate and ask questions.
13. Produce an informative newsletter four times per year for our members and which is also available to the public on our website or in print on request.
14. Host annual forums for all of the environmental groups in the Bass Coast Shire.

This text formed part of the PICS display at the recent World Environment Day Expo and was written by Christine Grayden and Margaret Hancock.

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Victorian National Parks Association

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) has been protecting our National Parks in many ways for many years: establishing new parks and conservation reserves, running bushwalking and outdoor activity programs, and ensuring that there is a diverse and complete national parks system for future generations to enjoy. Anyone interested in joining or donating to VNPA can contact them at VNPA, Level 3, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, VIC, 3053, by phoning them on (03) 9347 5188, or visiting their website at www.vnpa.org.au

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PICS CONTACTS

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YOUR PICS COMMITTEE

The PICS Committee, elected at the last AGM, meets once a month to discuss issues of immediate concern to conservation on Phillip Island. These meetings are very informative and challenging. Members are welcome to attend at 8 pm on the first Friday of each month in either the Heritage Centre or Cultural Centre, Cowes.

The elected committee for 2004 is:

President	Margaret Hancock (Ph/Fax 5952-2557)
Senior Vice President	Bruce Howe
Junior Vice President	Penny Manning
Secretary	Margaret Johnson
Minutes Secretary	Bruce Howe
Treasurer	Gillian Collins (Ph 5956 8840)
Other Members	Anne Davie, Penny Manning, Greg Johnson, John Jansson, Julie Box
Other PICS Responsibilities:	

Newsletter	Christine Grayden/John Eddy (Ph 5956 8501; Fax 5956 8314; cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)
Meeting notices and publicity	Rose Thomas (on leave for several months)
Ventnor Public Land Committee	Gillian Collins
Red Rocks Coast Action Project	Gillian Collins
South Coast Walking Track	Penny Manning
Bike Paths	Penny Manning
Friends of Churchill Island Liaison	Christine Grayden
Children's Environmental Mornings	Christine Grayden
Barb Martin Bushbank Liaison	Anne Davie
Membership Officer; Committee	Morag Mackay (Ph 5678 2240)
Landcare Salinity Committee & PICS Planning Scheme Registrar	John Jansson
Website Manager	Diane Baird (dianebaird@yahoo.com)
Grant Investigation	Tim Patkin
Port of Hastings Committee	Gillian Collins

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