

ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2014 *AS PRESENTED AT THE AGM, 10.1.2015*

1. President's Report:

It is with pleasure that I present this Report for the year ending 2014

At last year's AGM, PICS celebrated 25 years since the successful campaign to stop the canal development at Salt Water Creek at Ventnor. There was much reminiscing as many of those present reflected on the actions and the commitment of many people who believed the proposal, if allowed could be the fore-runner of large-scale developments limiting people's access to the Island beaches. It was people power at its best. John Eddy will report this evening on the work during the last 12 months of the Red Rocks and Salt Water Creek Action Groups. PICS commitment to the area is ongoing.

The proposed expansion of the Port of Hastings as a Container Port dominated the local environment issues in the last 12 months. Following a Public Meeting called by PICS in March 2014, a Preserve Western Port Action Group was formed and became a sub-committee of the Society.

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The PICS Committee decided to take out a Public Liability Policy as it became clear that the new group would need to be pro-active and visible for many months before the State Election, if it was to be effective. PWP in the last 9 months has presented the case to Preserve the Bay with professionalism and conviction. PWP will now become its own Incorporated Entity with the State Election over and as it starts a new chapter in its mission.

Jeff Nottle, Chairman of PWP will present a Report this evening and I know all who are present here tonight wish to thank him and his committee on a job well done. The Conservation Society has nominated Jeff for the Bass Coast Shire Citizen of the Year and wish him well.

Penny Manning, Margaret Hancock and I, continue to meet Jodie Kennedy, Bass Coast Planner every 3 months and believe these meetings are of mutual benefit. PICS again funded an Environmental Art Award in the Artists Society of Phillip Island's Annual Cup Week-end Exhibition. The PICS General Meetings, held every 3 months in the Heritage Centre provide an opportunity to learn more about local environment issues and a forum for discussion.

The Committee wrote during the year to local member and Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, expressing its concern about the severe cutback in funding for the highly successful national Landcare program. The Society also has doubts about the effectiveness of the proposed Direct Action Plan, which apparently will commence on the Island in March. PICS has told the Minister of its concern with the proposed reduction in the Renewable Energy Targets. Margaret Hancock and Penny Manning met with the local member a few weeks ago.

The President of PICS, FOK and Birdlife Bass Coast meet regularly with Matt Jackson, PINP CEO. These meetings are informal and informative.

The Conservation Society remains committed to action being taken to address the noise emanating from the Phillip Island Motor Circuit. This has been an issue for over 2 decades and is now, as ever, not about large events but consecutive days of use and the social and health impact of intrusive noise on people's well-being. There has never been any attempt to put in place, noise attenuation measures and PICS believes this is unfair and unacceptable.

As reported in the Newsletter, the committee is saddened to lose Dani Angel as the Treasurer. She has done an outstanding job and PICS is grateful for her commitment during a difficult year. I would like to take this opportunity of also thanking Steve for his considerable contribution to the Society and wish him and Danni well.

Our thanks to John Eddy and Christine for the informative quarterly Newsletter and Gillian Collins, the Minute Secretary, who comes to the committee meetings from Frankston. I would also like to mention committee member Lisa Schonberg and Alia for their wonderful gift of the photography of Western Port Marine life. Also thank you to Jane Westworth, the PICS rep on FOCIS and certainly a thank you to Council member, Cr Phil Wright for his support for all matters Environment.



The 150th Centenary of Phillip Island European settlement will be celebrated in 2018. The committee has met regularly during 2014. That year will also see the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Phillip Island Conservation Society.

I have a dream that to celebrate this anniversary, someone will write a book about Island's Women Conservationists., from Mrs Oswin Roberts to the present day. Anybody here tonight going to put up their hand ?

May 2015 see the Container Port for Hastings idea shelved and be comprehensively buried. *Anne Davie*

2. Planning Report – Margaret Hancock

PICS attended the hearing of Amendment C82 which was held in Wonthaggi. The Amendment sought to identify areas in Bass Coast Shire which will be affected by the expected rise in sea level. Hopefully, the outcome of the Amendment will help PICS when opposing inappropriate coastal developments, such as the recent one, which related to the Cowes Golf Club.

Newhaven – 20 plus years on, the Grollo development saga is coming to an end! Do you remember the original Woolamai House proposal which included a motel, nine hole golf course and a wildlife park? Do you remember the excitement of seeing large cranes dropping the panels of 'the wall' in place? Do you remember that the Phillip Island Shire President of the time rang Ailsa Swan to ask if she knew of any clause in the Planning Act which would enable the Phillip Island Shire to order that 'the wall' be removed? Do you remember our alarm as double gates were installed along the foreshore fence line? Was a marina being planned? Just what WAS going on? And the Phillip Island Shire sending a copy of the foreshore regulations to the property owner so that he would be aware that vehicular access to the foreshore was prohibited?

Well, all that excitement is long since over, and the end result is an uninspired housing subdivision.

In late September, Penny Manning and I represented PICS at a successful mediation about the future of the, at present, vacant land, adjacent to Woolamai House. We learned a lot from the CFA about restrictions on buildings and vegetation near areas such as the Newhaven Swamp. There WILL be a subdivision, which could have been better had the proponent been willing to 'go back to the drawing board'. There will be properly defined access tracks along and across the adjacent foreshore – but these plans are not yet finalised, and we can expect the usual arguments about who will pay. The future use of "Woolamai House" is unknown – will it continue as a private house or be turned into some sort of accommodation facility?

The future of the proposed subdivision at Newhaven West, adjacent to Western Port, is still unknown. It's fortunate that Amendment C82 is in place, as it will greatly affect this proposal. Meanwhile, For Sale notices are up again at the Boy's Home: it will be interesting to see what happens next!



“Chinamens” – the great local news is the planning and current works for reclaiming Chinamen’s Estate. The Bass Coast Shire Council is to be greatly congratulated on tackling this problem and getting remedial works underway. Originally, the developer’s name for this area was Holiday Isle Estate, then it became “Scenic Isle Estate”. Obviously a new name is needed for the area – have you any ideas? Let’s remember that more than 45 years ago – before PICS was born – Ailsa Swan and Murray Hilgendorf fought and won the battle against this unsuitable subdivision at the Town and Country Planning Board (the forerunner of VCAT). Not only did

Ailsa and Murray win the battle, they also won an award for their contribution to planning.

Saltwater Creek, 25 years on, funding in hand for the bridge as proposed in the plans for Ventnor Common and Saltwater Creek, and OOPS! Back to square one. The new alternative plan for the siting of the path and bridge will need to be worked through, funding may or may not be available, so ‘watch this space’.

Blue Gum Reserve and Blue Gum Alley – part of the Phillip Island Bicycle Plan. The regular users of blue Gum Reserve and the neighbouring households were startled to find a Frisbee Golf course established by the Bass Coast Shire in the reserve. If that can happen – what may happen next!? Well, what has happened next is that 1. PICS has commissioned Alison Oates to undertake a vegetation study of the area; 2. Birdlife Bass Coast is conducting regular bird counts; 3. On Sunday, Feb 15 at 11 a.m. in the Scout Hall, there will be a meeting to form the “Friends of Blue Gum Reserve”. Cr Phillips will attend the meeting. If a Friends group is formed, its activities will be carried out in conjunction with the Shire, and will be auspiced by the Shire, which means that public risk insurance will be covered. So, this is an exciting and positive response that’s been triggered by public disquiet.

The Isle of Wight hotel – NOTHING! PICS continues to ‘watch this space’.

3. *Preserve Western Port Action Group – Jeff Nottle*

Space does not permit the full report presented to the AGM in this newsletter. Please see the PICS website for the full report:

From the outset the PWP action group ran very hard and fast in developing and implementing a diverse campaign that engaged with the community and key stakeholders in the lead up to the State election in November 2014. Following the PICS public forum on the Port of Hastings plan on 22 March 2014 a group of enthusiastic people met on 24 March for the initial meeting of the proposed Action Group. Office bearers were elected and the Mission Statement resolved:

To save Western Port today. For tomorrow.

By providing information, communication and support to Phillip Island and other Western Port communities on the threat posed by the proposed expansion of the Port of Hastings.

Some of the activity by PWP members over the year included: issuing press releases as needed; Hosting the Professor Costanza Scenario planning for Westernport workshop 28/7 – 1/8. The workshop was attended by 75 people from 40 different organisation and included academics, key regional decision makers, business people, local councillors and community groups; meeting with BCSC CEO, schools, fishing groups, etc; Working with PWP lawyers in sending a letter to Greg Hunt regarding impacts of PODHA marine geotechnical surveys on whales in Western Port; attending appropriate conferences and workshops; photographing and monitoring whales inside Western Port to add to the data base; Launching a PWP Discussion Paper & Web based discussion forum on 19 September; Printing coffee table quality copies of the PWP Discussion Paper and sending it to key politicians, Councillor and other key stakeholders; Being interviewed about the PWP Discussion Paper on John Fayne 774 show and 3RRR Radio Marinara show.

Other activities included: Staging a “Save the Bay Picnic Day” on Sept.21st on the Cowes foreshore. Over 600 people attended including representatives of PWP manning stalls, Sea Shepherd and Cowes Yacht Club. Free live music and entertainment provided to the community; The PWP Art Show opened on 27 July with 65 works of art for sale. Local artists generously donated the proceeds of the Art Show to PWP. The Art show was regarded by many as the most successful held on Phillip Island with sales of \$9,100 and a contribution to PWP of \$4,815; Holding a community forum at St Phillips on 25 October entitled: “The Port that makes no Sense (or Cent\$). The forum was standing room only with around 120 attendees that included media, politicians and the general community; Presenters at the forum included PWP, Dr Hermione Parsons (Supply Chain Institute), Chris Smyth (Scenario Planning); Making a formal presentation to the C82 Planning Panel hearing. Many other actions took place, and all were highly productive.

Brief Financials (APPROX)

Income

Donations Individuals-sponsors	\$7400
Donations web/facebook	\$1790
Donations Artists	\$4,815
Donations and sales, street stalls etc	\$8,500
Total	\$22,382

Expenses

Advertising	\$4,000
Merchandise	\$2,700
Picnic Day	\$3,800
Printing	\$1,400
Office sundries/equipment	\$1,900
Total	\$21,400

**PRESERVE
WESTERN
PORT**
ACTION GROUP

Barb Martin Bush Bank – Anne Davie

The Barb Martin Bushbank continues to thrive, celebrating its 16th birthday in September and the annual Christmas party in early December.

Volunteer numbers are good with some new ones coming and going. The staunch group of helpers, who have been coming for many years, are as committed as ever.

The modifications and improvements in the Work Area, completed in late 2013, continue to be a great outcome.

Retail sales continue to rise. Jenny Toy, the wonderful Co-Ordinator who comes from the Peninsula, 4 days a week, receives great assistance from dedicated volunteers on the first Saturday of the month, when the Bushbank is open for sales to the public.

Friends of the Koalas keep putting up their hand whenever the Bushbank has a need for a new project. Their support is greatly appreciated by the committee.

Phillip Island Landcare remains the Bushbank’s largest client. Lisa Wangman held another successful seed collection information day early in 2014 and another is planned soon.

The Bushbank continues to collect seed, propagates plants, educates and informs about the indigenous plants of Phillip Island.

This it does successfully and the Bushbank also achieves commendable social outcomes. Friendships are created and valued. Barb would like this.

This year the International Landcare Conference Day at Phillip Island had its luncheon at the Bushbank. Many attendees commented on the ambience and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere in

the Shed. They visited 2 Island farms and saw the excellent tree lines and observed the Wildlife Corridor.

The Shed also hosted the Phillip Island Landcare AGM . The Bushbank is a very strong part of the community life of Phillip Island.

5. Friends of Koalas – Patricia Hunt

FOK will be holding their 25th AGM on Saturday 17th January at 2 p.m. at the Koala Conservation Centre. All welcome. We have a need for new committee members and active volunteers both for Habitat Days and koala counts. 2015 Habitat Days in 2015 will mainly involve working in Oswin Roberts Reserve following receipt of a Communities for Nature grant of \$6483 for Eucalyptus and grassland revegetation. Green Army and international volunteers will assist. PINP applied for this grant on FOK's behalf.

Monthly koala counts now include bird count, with an average of 25 bird species being counted. KCC koalas so far this season have no surviving joeys. More information on FOK activities is available in our quarterly newsletter (a copy on the table at this meeting).

6. Friends of Churchill Island – Jane Westworth

The Committee of FOCIS (Friends of Churchill Island) this year has a new President, Peter Paul, who has replaced Stella Axarlis. Two meetings have been held since the AGM on 16 August 2014 when I became the PICS Representative on the Committee.

Perhaps one of the most interesting projects to have come to fruition this year has been the video of the Working Horses, filmed on Churchill Island, and substantially edited by Paul Cooper. This was supported by a \$1,500 grant from Bass Coast Council which in fact covered the whole cost of the video. It has been uploaded to both YouTube and VIMEO – please have a look at it if you haven't yet done so!



Continued attempts to get tax deductibility for donations: Our treasurer, Tom O'Dea, has spent a large part of the year working on a revised application to the Commonwealth Arts Office for the FOCIS Churchill Island Heritage fund to be listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations. This will enable us to offer tax-deductibility for donations to FOCIS once we have a Public Fund set up which is endorsed as a Donor Gift Recipient (DGR) Fund. The first application by FOCIS was made in 2011, and this year (still battling against the ATO...) the Committee has supported Tom in his efforts to continue. For example, we now have a very clear statement of the Society's purpose: The Principal Purpose of the Society is defined as being 'the Promotion of the moveable cultural heritage of Churchill Island'. This makes a necessary distinction between the responsibilities of FOCIS and those of PINP, which has the stewardship for Churchill Island and is responsible for protecting the natural habitat of the Island. To define our separate role more, in our attempts to promote and care for this moveable cultural heritage, we need to continue to:

- Acquire
- Preserve
- Publish
- Catalogue and
- Educate

To this end, works undertaken this year have included, specifically:

- Sorting and archiving of photo collection (Christine Grayden)
- Cataloguing onto the Victorian Collection - online program - (David Saunders) and
- Restoring Farm Machinery – (Jeffery Cole).

In pursuit of our tax deductibility status, the Treasurer has clarified that that we can make payments to another organisation for the provision of goods and services, as long as these will further the Society's

principal purpose – promoting the Cultural Heritage of Churchill Island. This means we will be able to make payments for the fit-out of a museum, for which the Society already has funds laid aside. We will also need to supply a ‘supporting statement’ and make changes to our Constitution. These are in hand.

The Conservation Management Plan will be presented at the next meeting of FOCIS on 14 February at 1.30 in the Churchill Island Visitors’ Centre. This meeting is open to the public. The Consultants appointed to assist with the Conservation Management Plan needed to assess both the place itself and the collections. They also wished to assess the ‘social value’ of the Island, and chose to do this by asking members a totally open-ended question: ‘Why do you value Churchill Island?’ It was Christine who had the task of collating these responses – it was in some ways a challenging, and certainly thought-provoking thing to do! Perhaps members of PICS would like to try it!

There have been two working bees – on 13 September and 15 November, and there is now a revamped – or re-designed - newsletter by a new Editor, Jeff Cole.

My last point is unofficial – but nice to think about: a friend who volunteers at Churchill Island told me how truly beautiful the garden is now – that she thinks it is much more authentic, and she attributes this to the new gardener. She also loves the new harbour!

7. Red Rocks Coastcare – John Eddy

a. Blue Periwinkle Control - Our efforts to eliminate this major weed from Red Rocks were again paramount during 2014. Following the successes of the spraying program in 2012 and 2013, the vital follow-up of seeking out and destroying any regrowth of this persistent weed has been a major focus for us. The vast majority, probably 90%, of the regrowth this year has been in the form of seedlings. This has been a surprise to us, as it is generally understood that Blue Periwinkle flowers produce few if any seeds in Victoria.

Fortunately the young seedlings are easy to identify and pull up, unless, as is often enough the case, they are in spots that are difficult to access, such as under dense bushes or fallen dead branches. A sweep through the whole of the previously-infested areas needs to be done every 2-3 months. Such a mission just before Christmas yielded 170 plants. Undoubtedly more will pop up in the next few months, but eventually the seed reserve in the soil will be exhausted, giving us the final victory! Persistent effort will defeat the persistent weed.

b. Revegetation - Our four main working bees at Red Rocks were very well attended, averaging 13 volunteers at each. Our main planting day in July concentrated on revegetating areas previously covered by Blue Periwinkle, aiming to re-establish a dense indigenous groundcover to combat any potential future weed invasion. Over 400 plants were put in, including some Moonahs and Bursaria which had tall guards installed around them to prevent excessive browsing by wallabies. The guards have been a success. This revegetation will continue in 2015.

Other working bees undertook rubbish clean-up and control of thistles, as well as hand-pulling sea spurge on the beach.

c. “Spurgebusters” - This initiative from Red Rocks Coastcare was born out of a serious weed threat from the east. While we have the beach weed, sea spurge, fairly well under control on the Red Rocks coast, it was evident from the start of 2014 that a very heavy infestation had taken hold of a wide sandy terrace behind the beach directly east of our area and extending beyond Justice Rd. By February an area of about 6000 m² was covered thickly with mature sea spurge plants, full of flowers and seeds. Potentially, a proportion of these seeds which are carried by the sea, could find their way to Red Rocks and other areas if the coastline was subject to erosion.

So we embarked on a project to do whatever we could to combat the weed, and at least reduce the enormous crop of seed that was developing. Called



“Spurgebusters” to try to involve the local community in the long-term control of sea spurge, the project started off with two working bees in February and March, at which the mature sea spurge plants were dug up or pulled up, laid side by side on the sand, and the seeding heads chopped off with a spade and bagged up for removal from the beach.

We were greatly assisted by a student team organised by Landcare Pest Plant and Animal Officer, Matt Stephenson. The group of TAFE students spent several days at the site. By the end of our second working bee, the area was cleared of seed-bearing plants. It was a remarkable achievement.

After a number of years of sea spurge producing and dropping seed at the site, there will be a considerable seed reserve in the sand, and we expect seedlings popping up after significant rain during the warmer months for some years to come, but quickly reducing in number if plants can be removed before they flower. We started this process at two working bees in October and November, and removed the seedlings from most of the site.

We have now entered a different phase of the control program. Rather than schedule more working bees, we are trialling an arrangement whereby individual volunteers have committed to spend half an hour each month at the site, with gloves on, pulling up seedlings, at any time that suits them. Every month I send these volunteers a reminder email and encourage reporting back. We will trial this method til May, then review how successful it has been. Hopefully we can establish an on-going control system that local volunteers can sustain.

d. Plant Propagation - During 2014 one class of Year 8 students at Koo Wee Rup Secondary College have been involved in the propagation of the native pigface (80 plants) and small numbers of bower spinach and thyme rice flower. These plants were grown from cuttings taken from Red Rocks, and the plants will be used to revegetate bare dune areas near Red Rocks Point.

e. Beach Erosion - Over the winter months, there was significant beach erosion at Red Rocks, particularly on the north- west facing shore. The base of our three main stairways was threatened. Some sand has returned over the summer months, but next winter could see potential damage to these stairways.

f. Hooded Plover Watch - Some of the Red Rocks volunteers have been heavily involved in Hooded Plover Watch, which is co-ordinated by the Phillip Island Nature Parks. Thanks especially to Sue Saliba, who has lead the local team tirelessly, and will report on the success in Jan 2014 and the present situation this year.

g. Thanks - As always, any success we have at Red Rocks depends on the commitment of our wonderful team of volunteers. My sincere thanks to them all. Thanks also to Dave Martin , and Rhianon Grinham, Bass Coast Shire’s Natural Resources Officers, for all their help and support. I look forward to 2015 being a time of continuing success.

8. Saltwater Creek Coastcare – Kevin Harris

HISTORY - Saltwater Creek Coast care was formed in Mid 2014, by a number of people who have had a long history (nearly 60 years) area around Salt Water Creek. As children we spent many hours enjoying the area and now are excited to be able to help preserve the natural beauty of Salt Water Creek. Saltwater Creek Coastcare was formed to take care of an area that has fallen into some neglect over the years and sits between the areas looked after by Red Rocks Coast Care and Ventnor Coastcare groups. We take care of the area between the Red Rocks and Ventnor Coastcare groups.

FIRST PROJECT - The first area that was identified for urgent work was the Coastal Reserve Area adjacent to the Aussie Golf course.

On our behalf John Eddy successfully applied for a grant of \$6800 for “Restoration of Coast Banksia woodland at Saltwater Creek” as well as some funds to help with the establishment of Salt Water Creek Coastcare.

This involved :

- Box thorn was removed by a contractor, BCSC organised the burning of the Box Thorn
- Control of kikuyu – which should have started this week
- Re-vegetation – planting started in first work party, ordering of 950 plants, soil survey, and propagation of 400 plants. Most of this planting will be in May – June 2015.

The **first unofficial work party** was held on 1st June 2014, and was a follow-up to the contractor's boxthorn removal from the creek banks. At short notice, an enthusiastic band of 8 volunteers was assembled to cut and treat remaining exposed boxthorn roots with Roundup to prevent regrowth.

First Official work party was on National Tree Day, Sunday 27th July 2014, With approx. 25 volunteers attending. A Wide age range of volunteers included older people and children.

This involved planting about 400 plants on two sites: behind a property at the end of Heyley Ave, and at the recently cleared boxthorn site on the north bank of the Salt Water Creek. Thanks to Bass Coast Shire Council for supplying plants.

The next work party was held on Sunday 23rd November. This was attended by 16 people which was a very pleasing turn out. It was good to see some new and enthusiastic faces. The focus of this work party was removing thistles and other weeds, and a general clean-up of the area between Saltwater Creek and Settlement Rd. The area focused on was the recent planting of the boxthorn removal site on the banks of the creek. About 5 bags of weeds and rubbish was removed from the area.

NEXT PROJECT - A preliminary survey of the Area from the Anchorage Rd Car Park to the Creek was carried out in preparation for the next work party. A large amount of Pittosporum, Boxthorn,



some shiny leaf and much general rubbish was found in the area. A small group carried out some preliminary boxthorn and Pittosporum control on the 31st Dec. 5 large Pittosporum and 2 Boxthorns clumps were removed. Also some garden waste and foliage dumped on the reserve was also tidied up with the view to possible removal in the future.

We are really pleased with the positive response we are receiving from members of the community with many people wanting to help in future events. A mailing list is being developed to keep interested people up to date with what's happening in Coast Care.

FUTURE PLANS - 25th January – work party... for a clean-up and weeding of the area between the car park and Saltwater Creek. Work has started between Anchorage Rd car Park and Saltwater Creek in preparation for the work party on the 25th Jan. With a small group of volunteers have already started on weed and rubbish control in the area as this will require considerable effort to clean up the area. Completing the grant project work next to the Aussie Golf ranch, i.e. kikuyu control and revegetation.

2015 – WORK PARTY DATES – see dates page 1 of newsletter

We are In the process of:

- putting together a website for our Work party notices and a mailing list. This will be at www.ventnor.com.au
- developing on a Saltwater Creek brochure.
- Developing a handout with photos and information on some weeds & significant indigenous plants for volunteers, thanks to John Eddy for assistance with this.

NATURE TRAIL - Note for transparency – some volunteers with Saltwater Creek Coast Care are also involved with the Northern Foreshore Protection Group who are liaising with Council regarding route for nature trails along the foreshore reserve

THANK YOU - Thanks to the hard-working members of PIC's for supporting our new group & attending work parties. Special thanks to John Eddy for his constant support and helping us through this significant learning curve. Thanks to Dave Martin and other members of the Bass Coast Shire for their support. Thanks to DEPI for the grant. Thanks to Rohan Walker, Aussie Golf Ranch, for allowing access through his property for the planting and weed control on the east side of the creek.

9. Children's Environment Activities – Christine Grayden

Bass Coast Shire Council once again funded the educational wildlife presentation “Animals of Oz” for \$400 last January, attended by approx 90 people over two sessions, including adults and children. The presentations are extremely popular. PICS pays for the room hire, advertising and lunch for the presenter – approx \$120.

PICS again participated in the Bass Coast Shire Council's Schools World Environment Day expo at the San Remo recreation reserve over two days in November. The theme was on supporting small island states in their problems with sea level rise, but few of the participant organisations followed the theme, which was a shame. I had borrowed cultural items from Barry Hayes (former CEO, Phillip Island Shire Council), whose family had spent many years on Pacific Islands. I also had a globe to show the children where the Pacific Ocean and islands are (no, they didn't know!) and posters with photos from the internet graphically showing the problems they face – sea level rise, flooded sewerage systems, infiltration of sea

