

**President Anne Davie gave her annual report:**

- ☐ Member Jeff Nottle was declared "Bass Coast Citizen of the Year."
- ☐ In June, the Committee did great work, with the assistance of John Eddy, sorting old records that had been stored in former President Margaret Hancock's house.
- ☐ Our new gazebo has a presence in the Town Square today and Preserve Western Port, one of our auspiced groups, had their Gazebo on the beach.
- ☐ President Davie met with new MP Richard Wynne and passed out our three top priorities for Government.
- ☐ The new Scenic State Reserve was opened. PICS has expressed its deep gratitude to John Eddy for his tireless work as co-ordinator for the Friends group.
- ☐ The Blue Gum Reserve has progressed, thanks to Margaret Hancock.
- ☐ Committee Member Steve Angel has inspired us to move forward on a number of membership initiatives, including our new and beautiful brochure and our new membership card that gives members 25% off entry to PINP attractions.
- ☐ The Shearwater Festival was a great success.
- ☐ PICS thanks Ross Lloyd for his press cuttings archiving.
- ☐ And thanks to the whole Committee for another year's exceptional work!

Margaret Hancock gave her **planning issues** report:

- ☐ We had an exceptional year with no visits to VCAT!
- ☐ The Woolamai House Retarding Basin has taken a fair bit of our time, and it is not resolved yet.
- ☐ The Boys Home site in Newhaven has been sold. We do not know the identity of the new owner.
- ☐ The planned Forrest Caves Caravan Park has gone off the radar.
- ☐ The Golf Club proposals are still not resolved.
- ☐ The Cowes town boundary is still under discussion.
- ☐ The Wildlife Corridor fencing issue is still not resolved.
- ☐ The Blue Gum Reserve is still progressing, and Alison Oates has done invaluable work identifying plants and trees of importance in the area.
- ☐ The P.I. Airfield issue remains of concern. There are no reliable plans yet, and it would need a change to town boundaries for it to proceed.

Barb Martin Bush Bank report was given by Anne Davie Friends of Koalas report was given by Patsy Hunt **Friends of Churchill Island Society** report given by Pauline Taylor:  
The Friends group had a number of speakers: In February, Anita Brady spoke about the Churchill Island Conservation Management Plan, which has been approved by the PINP Board. In May, Christine Grayden spoke of the "Extraordinary 5

Life of Harry Jenkins." In August, Patsy Hunt of Friends of the Koalas spoke of her group and the Koala Conservation Centre. In November, Dr. Duncan Sutherland spoke on the Churchill Island Eastern Barred Bandicoot population.

Events during the year included: FOCIS member Graham Paterson donated a facsimile of Grant's journal aboard the Lady Nelson. Pat Baird's book continues to sell steadily. There are about 1/2 of the original number left. We continue to supply the Register of Cultural Organisation with documentation for our tax-deductible status. Still waiting for an outcome. The PINP Open Day on Sunday, March 1 featured a display on Harry Jenkins and traditional children's activities. It was very popular. Rebecca Sanders, PhD candidate, successfully submitted her thesis on Churchill Island and graduates soon. We continue to catalogue collection items onto the web site for Victorian collection. Twenty highly endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoots were introduced in spring. Only two lost so far. PICS Life Member John Swan died this year. John was on the original Victorian Conservation Trust, which purchased Churchill Island for the people of Victoria in 1976. **Red Rocks Coast Care** report was given by John Eddy: During 2015, Red Rocks Coastcare working bees were again well-supported by our great band of volunteers. As always, we thank them, and Bass Coast Shire Council, particularly Environment Officer Dave Martin, for assisting us at all times. A special thanks also to Maurice Schinkel for taking photos for us to use on the PICS Facebook page and for press articles. Our revegetation work continued to target areas previously cleared of Blue Periwinkle. Our June planting day resulted in about 400 plants going in over 9 different sites along the Fire Track. On that occasion, our 16 volunteers included state member for Bass, Brian Paynter, and Bass Coast mayor, Cr Kimberley Brown. Survival of the plants so far has been better than expected, given the very dry year. Poa grass has been especially successful, with more than 90% survival, Bursaria and Moonah (in guards) about 60%, but very low survival for Seaberry Saltbush due to tubestock affected by a root disease prior to planting. The July planting day concentrated on planting 100 native pigface plants on bare dunes near Red Rocks Point. The plants were grown from cuttings by a year 8 class at Koo Wee Rup Secondary College and donated to Red Rocks Coastcare. There has been 90% survival so far. Guards on Sweet Bursaria and Moonah continue to defy wallabies, and have proved to be successful enough to justify their cost and installation.

In weed control, our efforts in September were directed at Angled Onion, an insidious unpleasant weed that has been invading gradually along tracks. Our volunteers found hand-pulling of isolated plants was effective, but dense patches were left for contractors to spray. We continue to monitor and remove sea spurge seedlings from dunes at Red Rocks, but numbers are now very low in the main beach area.

Blue Periwinkle, which was the target of the 2012-13 spraying campaign, still requires regular monitoring and removal of the few seedlings re-emerging, but is dwindling markedly. Removal of thistles is ongoing, and 6

occurrence is spasmodic. Several blackberries adjacent to the carpark seem to have been successfully controlled by contractors. Thankfully beach erosion was much milder this past winter. Council organised the building of a short extension to the beach end of the stairway near Penguin Rocks to provide safer beach access. Some of our members also took part in the Coastcare Leadership workshop, organised by Gayle Seddon and Surf Beach/Sunderland Bay Coastcare. It ran over a weekend in May and proved to be a great success, with over 40 participants. Afternoon visits to numerous Coastcare sites around Phillip Island were a highlight, and included brief visits to Red Rocks and Saltwater Creek. Our Spurgebusters program, aimed at eliminating sea spurge from the primary dunes west of Justice Rd, began the year with a trial of volunteers working individually at any time that suited them on removing plants, preventing any seedset. However, participants indicated they preferred to get together for working bees, which were therefore resumed at the site in November. During the year, we also received valuable assistance from Newhaven College students and the guests at Kate Whittaker's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, who burnt off birthday cake calories by pulling up sea spurge. So far this summer, we have prevented any seedset by removing all flowering plants, in addition to the continual removal of seedlings. Gradually, the seed reserve in the dunes is being exhausted. Alarmed by reports of significant marine plastic debris coming ashore on Phillip Island's south coast, we surveyed the main Red Rocks beach during our September working bee. Four transects along the beach, and sieving of sand at numerous sampling sites near high tide level failed to find any 'nurdles' or other small marine debris. We were delighted to report a pristine beach at that time. Hooded Plover Watch, overseen by Phillip Island Nature Park's Jon Fallaw, occupies many hours for the dedicated team led by Sue Saliba. Our next working bee at Red Rocks is tomorrow, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> Jan, starting at 10 am. All welcome. *John Eddy, RRCC coordinator, 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2016*

**Saltwater Creek Coast Care** report was given by Kevin Harris: Our Coastcare group has had a very successful year with the completion of the Coastal Banksia restoration project next to Saltwater Creek and ongoing weed control and rubbish pickup on other days. This coming season we hope to continue with the good work and will commence further clean up and replanting on the west side of Saltwater Creek. Several places have been identified as suitable for replanting and, weather permitting; we hope to start during this planting season. This will be supported by Bass Coast Council and I have spoken with Dave Martin about these sites. He has visited them and would also like to clean up an area of dumped garden waste and tree cuttings and other waste behind a property. We have also identified some stands of Boxthorn on the West side of the Creek and will try to start work to remove them this season. John Eddy, I and Alison Smith recently walked through our Coastal Banksia project area and it is pleasing to see how well the plants are surviving. We have had some losses but, with Johns help, plan to remedy this once conditions are suitable

I would also like to give thanks for all the regular helpers that come to support our Coastcare group, just for the promise of some fruit cake and biscuits. Great effort by all. Our planned dates for this coming season are listed on p.1 Thanks to all that have helped Saltwater Creek Coastcare, Kevin Harris, Volunteer Co-ordinator Sue Saliba gave a **Hooded Plover** report and showed beautiful slides to illustrate it. The birds are endangered and struggle to fledge chicks on Phillip Island's busy beaches, where dogs off leashes are a constant problem. Fat tired bikes are also a potential problem. 7

John Eddy reported on the development of the **Friends of the Scenic Estate Reserve** and illustrated it with slides. It is not often that we get to celebrate the creation of a new Conservation Reserve on Phillip Island, but 2015 gave us cause for just such a celebration. The new Scenic Estate Reserve, of 28 hectares, was opened to the public in July after many years of uncertainty about the future of this defunct inappropriate subdivision from 1960, known by locals as “Chinamans”. In recent years, it suffered degradation by misuse from 4 Wheel drives, dirt bikes, illegal camping, and rubbish dumping. PICS, along with various other sections of the community, has long called for Council action. In 2012/3, Bass Coast Shire Council finally acted by closing access, commissioning a Landscape Design Masterplan, and clearing many truckloads of rubbish from the site. Development of infrastructure to create the Reserve was funded in part by a Regional Development Victoria grant backed up by Shire Council funds, and works undertaken in partnership with Phillip Island Nature Parks and Parks Victoria. This was all despite 50% of the blocks from the old subdivision still being in private ownership. We are indebted to Council for taking this initiative, and following it through. The Reserve now features walking tracks, an extensive boardwalk over native grasslands, several excavated wetlands, two picnic shelters, a temporary carpark and a coastal viewing platform with spectacular views across Western Port to Churchill Island, Rhyll and beyond. Thousands of plants have been put in, and of course there is the amazing Butterfly Sculpture. It is a “must visit” venue, if you haven’t been already, and the walks are fairly short and easy. Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve was formed at a September public meeting, convened by the Council. The group aims to assist Council in managing the Reserve and provides an avenue for community input and feedback. The new group operates under the auspices of PICS, and I was privileged to be appointed group coordinator, and chairperson of the committee which also includes Carmen Bush, Michael Whelan, Cr Phil Wright, Dave Martin (representing BCSC) and Samantha Coleman (representing PINP). The committee has met in Sept., Oct and Dec, and is working well together. Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve, now known by its acronym FOSER, was officially launched at the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, amid plenty of positive publicity. Almost 40 people met at the carpark, where BCSC mayor, Cr Kimberley Brown, officiated. The formal proceedings were followed by a guided tour through the Reserve and morning tea at the coastal picnic shelter. Participants were encouraged to get to know the common indigenous plant species at the Reserve, and to provide feedback on ideas for management, use and development of the Reserve. A leaflet was produced for the occasion, including a map and common plant species list. Several FOSER working bees have been held to control weeds, and to assist with wetlands management by cutting Poa grass and laying it as thatching on bare soil around the wetlands. A workshop in Nov arranged by BCSC instructed volunteers on these techniques. Our email list of volunteers has grown to a pleasing 46, but while they are kept informed, only a small proportion have so far been active participants. The FOSER committee has had input into the design and placement of signage which is now in place along tracks, safety signage and barriers near the unstable coastal cliffs, and plant ordering for 2016. A Google docs account has also been created to store accessible documents relating to the Reserves history, development and natural features. In the year ahead, we hope to take steps towards a detailed Vegetation Management Plan, define the role of FOSER more clearly, continue the control of serious weeds and encourage visitors by promoting the features of the Reserve and providing information on what can be enjoyed there. We also hope to find a more appropriate Aboriginal name for the Reserve. We also look forward to an official opening of Scenic Estate Reserve, involving Council and State Govt ministers, early this year.

John Eddy, FOSER coordinator 8.1.16 Jeff Nottle reported on this year's work of the **Preserve Western Port Action Group** and illustrated it with a power point.

- PWP expands Mission Statement to include any threats to the amenity of Western Port
- State Government establishes Infrastructure Victoria to recommend on container port
- PWP Media Release “The Port is Still on the Table”
- New brochures: “The threat has not gone away”
- PWP coastal erosion tours in Grantville

- Liaison with Councillors on their 20 May motion
  - *“Developing a comprehensive submission to Infrastructure Victoria..... in conjunction with the key Bass Coast stakeholder groups.”*
  - PWP presents to Planning Panels hearings on Yaringa development
  - PWP presents to Bass Coast Council with *The Nature Conservancy* on potential natural shore line protection projects for Western Port
- PWP Media Release following the arrival of the West Telesto oil rig *“Oil industry and environment collide in Western Port”*
  - PWP strengthens partnership with Sea Shepherd who speak at PICS meeting in July
  - PWP obtains Council grant for signage
  - Monash University student project concludes that PWP campaign has achieved key successes
- PWP appeared and presented to the: Port of Melbourne Lease Parliamentary Inquiry
  - PWP Media Release
  - *“It was an excellent opportunity to inform the politicians of Spring St of the importance of Western Port as a unique and fragile marine ecosystem, a nature-based tourism asset and a much loved holiday and fishing area.”*
- Melbourne University Professor and geomorphologist advises PWP of impact of required dredging for the container port
  - PWP Media Release highlighting Professors comments of *“... the very high risk of greatly increased erosion throughout the northern, western and southern shores of Western Port including the eastern shoreline of Bass Coast around Coronet Bay and the Phillip Island north shore.”*
- PWP Media Release highlighting the erosion and inundation problems from port dredging and calls for the establishment of a: *Western Port Erosion and Inundation Compensation Fund* as part of business case.
  - PWP makes headlines in Hastings papers, Leader papers with further follow up articles
  - PWP involvement in review of RAMSAR management plans
- PWP obtains scientific research that highlights potential adverse impacts of further salination of aquifers in the Bunyip Foodbowl district following Port dredging
  - PWP further enquiries being made
  - PWP engagement with Bass Coast Council on current tourism strategy, environment and economic strategy projects

### **2016 Judgment year for Western Port Industrialisation or recreation?**

- 2016 will likely see a recommendation to Government by Infrastructure Victoria on another container port for Victoria
  - A container port in Western Port will be the signal for further industrialisation
- PWP key planned 2106 initiatives include:
    - Engagement with Council on their Port initiatives
    - Engagement with Bunyip food bowl stakeholders
    - Planning for *Natural Shore Line Symposium* in March with guest

speakers from Deakin University, The Nature Conservancy US.....

- Planning underway with 3RR -102.7 FM
- Radio Marinara program 9.00-10.00am Sunday
- Special Western Port program being developed with PWP for February - TBC
- PWP will continue campaign actions that include public awareness, information and advocacy for Western Port and against a container port
- 2016 Judgment year for Western Port - Industrialisation or recreation?

Christine Grayden reported on the **children's activities**. Bass Coast Shire did not run a World Environment Day Schools Expo in 2015, and may not run them anymore, as they are concentrating their efforts on Sustainability Festivals. However, they did fund Animals of Oz for PICS again in 2015. This costs the shire \$400, and PICS approx \$150 for advertising and room hire. Around 60 children and 50 adults attended so it is well worthwhile.