

Pt Grey VCAT appeal

Fight to retain a Workable and Historic Maritime Precinct

After years of neglect, the old co-op building at Pt Grey may not look like much. But its architecture conveys our fishing heritage in a universal language. Visitors gravitate to the pier. Those from far-flung places with fishing industry history see the co-op and identify with it instantly.

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) wants to demolish the co-op building and replace it with a “high-quality” hospitality and event space, expanding the restaurant seating by 23%. The people of Lorne care so dearly that \$21,000 was raised to mount a VCAT appeal. GORCAPA faced off against the legal teams of two Lorne citizens and the Lorne Aquatic and Angling Club (LAAC) in a four-day hearing ending on the 15th April. A decision could come in weeks.

To the objectors in the public gallery, the highpoint of the proceedings was the elegance with which the LAAC barrister demolished the quality of GORCAPA’s traffic engineering evidence. A low point was GORCAPA’s lawyer’s statement that without a heritage overlay, VCAT cannot use planning law to retain the co-op building. Another low point was an opinion of GORCAPA’s expert witness on planning. She felt it was reasonable for a petition to state parliament against demolition (signed by 1527 people) to be treated by a local Council as just one objection (because it was attached to the formal submission of one person).

Surf Coast Shire’s records show that the Shire’s 2005 heritage overlay amendment for the land containing the co-op building was removed by the state planning minister in 2006. Both Queenscliff and Apollo Bay co-op buildings have heritage protection. Heritage protection still allows redevelopment – but in a way that is sensitive to the preservation of identity.

Lorne is not selfish. We know that the Great Ocean Road is a state-level asset. But retaining Pt Grey as a *maritime-focused precinct* could be a pathway forward and win-win for us and GORCAPA.

A workable solution could retain and reimagine the co-op building and create a new LAAC sympathetic to it. User-centred design could support fishing and boating. We could embrace the trend for heritage-driven tourism. In other words, we don’t need to create a new spectacle at Pt Grey in order to reap social and economic benefits. What we have to share with the world already is treasure.

Penny Hawe

Friends of Lorne

www.friendsoflorne.org.au



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