

**Friends of Lorne**  
**Annual General Meeting 2022**  
**Saturday 29 October 4pm, Figtree Meeting Room**  
**Lorne Community House**

1. Present: Lindy Pearce, Graham Brawn, Penny Hawe (chair), Mary Lush (by phone), StJohn Sutton, Eva Youl, David Harper, Margaret Harper, Matt Boland, Hutch Hussein, Phil Martin

Apologies: John Wilson, Valerie Wilson, Steve Bayley, John Wilson,<sup>1</sup> Wendy Wilson, Marion McIldowie, Keith Edwards, Maree Tierney, John Agar, Clive Goldsworthy, Jane Orr, Alan Shiell, Lesley Goldsworthy, Jack Wynhoven, Cynthia Wynhoven, Bill Youl, Pippa Strang, Andrew Strang, Gary Allen, Richard Riordan.

A quorum was declared, including the 5 proxy votes that had been received from Gary Allen, Alan Shiell, Jane Orr, Keith Edwards, and Maree Tierney

Penny welcomed state Labor candidate, Hutch Hussein and her staffer Phil Martin as guests to the meeting. They attended so as to find out more about Friends of Lorne (FoL), having been briefed earlier by FoL about Pt Grey. Penny noted that Richard Riordan (sitting Liberal member for Polwarth) had given last minute apologies to the meeting. He had originally planned to attend also.

2. Acceptance of minutes of the AGM of 9 October 2021. Moved StJohn Sutton. Seconded Lindy Pearce. Carried.
3. Approval of financial statement for 2020-2021 (Treasurer's report). Moved Lindy Pearce. Seconded Graham Brawn. Carried.
4. President's report (Penny Hawe)

"Just to remind you, our focus is planning and development in Lorne and its environs:

1. consistent with the need for preservation of the natural features, flora and fauna of the district
2. consistent with the balanced needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists

Since 2019/20 we have been focused on revitalising the organisation. This has three objectives (1) to get our systems of operation in order and make them as efficient as we can; (2) to increase the profile of Friends of Lorne; and (3) to be active in planning and conservation issues.

Our main activities since October 2021 include:

- Upgrading our internal operating systems. Two years ago, we focused on archiving. This year we've been working on membership recording systems. In the upcoming year our focus will be committee processes, committee member orientation and governance.
- We held eight committee meetings (7 general business and one Special-purpose, on affordable housing). Please don't be daunted by the workload. We have had members join us as observers at meetings, to get to understand the inside-out of particular issues. They

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<sup>1</sup> Not an error. We have two John Wilsons in FoL.

end up staying. If you have interest in being on our Committee, this is a good way to check us out.

- We put out two digital newsletters and held one Friends of Lorne webinar (on the importance of trees in built and coastal environments)
- We put articles in the *Lorne independent*
- We've been active with planning and environment submissions. For example, submissions on the Great Ocean Road "Trail" design (Fairhaven to Skene's Creek); a submission to Parks Victoria on land management strategy; and a submission to the Surf Coast Shire to Council on residential nature strips and policy guidelines
- We participate in the Committee for Lorne
- We participate in the Great Ocean Road Communities Network (GORCN). This is a network of 17 community organisations from Port Campbell to Torquay. It's the chief way we find out what's happening along the surf coast through exchanges with these organisations and because the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) now briefs this network four times a year
- We participate in the community co-design group for Pt Grey (GORCAPA)

For the last year we've been working up and down the Surf Coast for the first time, and not just concentrating all our attention in Lorne. We learned that there is value in working at both ends of the scale. So, for an example of working locally (slide photo) here is a house in Hall Street that is non-compliant regards the Lorne structure plan. We're not permitted in Lorne to have paling fences. So we put in a planning compliance investigation request, and spoke to the officer responsible. Sure enough, what was approved was a back fence, as a paling fence. But that was all. Not what you see here, in fact.

Here is another example of working locally (slide photo). Our webinar on trees and coastal towns featured photographs of some recent tree removals in Fernleigh Terrace, which we know were distressing for a number of homeowners. It pays to draw attention to things happening in our own backyard.

But only in the last year have we started working on a bigger scale as well. Here is the slide (slide photo) which advertised our 4-part webinar series on coastal erosion. Mary Lush was on the organising group for the Great Ocean Road Communities Network on this one. It featured top-of-the-line scientists and high-profile moderators (i.e., Zoe Daniel, Robyn Williams, Gael Jennings). We invited GORCAPA, DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning), Regional Roads Victoria, Surf Coast Shire Council, and Colac Otway Shire to respond to the material presented by the scientists and community residents. What was terrific about it was that before they were asked to participate in this webinar series, none of the agencies along the Great Ocean Road at that point had ever met and discussed strategy of coastal erosion management together. But our having a public webinar series forced them to convene a "pre-meeting" to do so. So public visibility and accountability was a lever for interaction between agencies and (hopefully) continued coordination.

But let me turn now to some of the bigger issues that have occupied us in the last year.

#### 1. Community engagement with GORCAPA

GORCAPA drafted a community engagement framework which we and others in GORCN found to be an improvement on the usual engagement tool used by DELWP (the Department in which GORCAPA sits). But it was still too unsophisticated in that it was focussed on *listening* and *informing* and not the hard stuff - resolving conflict and dealing with diverse views. We led the submission from GORCN

on the framework, offering up a series of case studies of good and bad community engagement practice along the GOR by surf coast agencies. For us, it was great way to learn from other community associations, and swap insights about best practice.

## 2. Affordable housing

FoL are keen to see affordable housing for key and essential workers to support vital assets like the school and the hospital, as well as business and community service viability.

Advocacy from the Committee for Lorne (CfL) for affordable housing for workers has been prominent for a long time. Accommodating Lorne's Future has been part of the CfL's *Lorne Aspirations* document since 2014. In 2014, CfL was suggesting that we needed to increase the permanent population to 1500 by 2020 in order to sustain businesses and volunteers for the SES and CFA, an increase of 36%. A lengthy, initial plan to open-up land for affordable housing was drafted in late 2019. The centrepiece was a proposal that tracts of private land could be rezoned for housing (four specific tracts were named), with the deal being that in return for rezoning the whole tract, the landowner donated a portion of it free for affordable housing (leaving the rest for private homes, presumably).

We supplied 10 pages of comments at the time. In summary, we asked: (1) can CfL explain the numbers of population needed for Lorne (logic of the assumption that a 36% increase is required)? That is, can there be some mathematical modelling on what threshold population sizes are needed to sustain services. Precision is needed when we're talking about loss of tree canopy. Also, factors other than the number of permanent residents may play a vital role in the local economy (eg., spending by visitors and part time residents) and these need to be brought into the target population size planning as well. Our rationale was, we may not need to get so huge. We also asked (2) can CfL consider models to accommodate key and essential workers that preferentially use existing homes and buildings, rather than relying on building new? This is the simplest way to protect the tree canopy and vegetation. And (3) we opposed the relaxing of the fire overlays which currently prevent putting more permanent residents in the areas that were proposed.

Two years later, a modified plan was put forward by CfL. It is yet to be finalised, but the draft plan is much improved in many ways. The mathematical modelling idea was adopted (the 1500 target was dropped), and the plan steps away from featuring one type of solution (new builds) to acknowledge a range of solutions (although the most developed is the new builds). The plan now commits CfL to assessing and comparing solutions, systematically. It includes solutions that use existing housing stock. The report is to be launched in late November. It includes the disclaimer that not all members of CfL (such as FoL) support all the views and proposals contained. CfL is hoping to attract funding for a "demonstration project" tackling this issue.

FoL is taking the lead in organising a public webinar series on affordable housing options. We are asking those working in Lorne already on this to share their experience and explorations of options so far. We are asking other communities who have tackled similar issues to share their experience, along with agencies in our region who are addressing this.

## 3 Pt Grey

FoL have been part of the community co-design group with GORCAPA since late last year. We have been placing updates in our Newsletter and on our webpages. Right now, work is stalled while we await news of whether the \$10m in funding that was allocated to the original plans (rejected at VCAT) can be diverted to the new emerging co-designed plans (which retain a rebuilt and reimagined

co-op building and a new Aquatic Club). GORCAPA has Pt Grey top of its priority list for all the (former) Geelong City deal along the GOR that are temporarily suspended while funding is reviewed by the new federal government. GORCAPA are quietly confident of being told good news. When/if that happens, they will need to proceed to 'master planning' for the whole site again (as the old master plan was rejected as part of the VCAT decisions). But they assure us that it won't be back to first base entirely, as they recognise that both the Aquatic Club and the community co-design group's vision for the fishing co-op building has been mapped out already. Meanwhile we learned that up to \$100k can be spent by GORCAPA on building maintenance while new plans take shape.

We are also awaiting public communication on the how the Marine and Coastal Policy of 2020 will impact the Pt Grey plans. An enlarged restaurant in the old co-op building (as submitted by GORCAPA originally), is not permitted. But a café may be. We have urged GORCAPA to brief Lorne (and other communities) on the significance of the Marine and Coastal Policy of 2020 for future, and also for current commercial activities on coastal land. A central tenet of the Marine and Coastal Act is that development on the coast is only for coastal dependent activities. The current vacuum of information and interpretation is causing a lot of anxiety.

#### 4. Vegetation on the foreshore and removal of the tea tree

Many Lorne residents and visitors are distressed to see the tea tree being ripped out on the foreshore and replaced with grasses. In 2019, GORCAPA put its foreshore management plan out for consultation. While we agreed in principle with "weed removal," we argued that the tea tree is performing an important function in maintaining the ecology of the area (e.g. keeping the structure of the sandbank, providing a visual screen between the beach users and a busy road, providing habitat). We argued that decisions about weed control need to be made on a niche-by-niche basis and not simply on the basis of the species type. We supported the retention of the tea trees for these reasons. However, as age requires replacement, we supported replanting with an indigenous species (of the same height) which can perform the same vital function. But that is not what is happening. We are not seeing replanting with anything at present.

We wrote to the GORCAPA CEO about it again more recently. She met with us to advise (1) an officer will visit and show us what to expect in terms of replacement; (2) they acknowledge the distress and agree to a public meeting in January to explain the logic of their strategy, to allow concerns to be raised and for different voices in the community to hear each other ; and (3) regardless of these commitments, no more removal is planned until June 2023 (so this gives us a window of opportunity).

In the coming year, the outgoing committee has put forward a few suggestions for the incoming committee to consider. First is to continue to get our systems working effectively and efficiently. Our focus will be on committee processes, committee member orientation, and governance. We also need to increase the profile of Friends of Lorne. For example, lots of people don't know the difference between us and CfL and they don't know our almost 60-year legacy. And we also need to continue to be active in planning and conservation issues. We are thinking of building on the GORCAPA offer of a public meeting in January to orchestrate other opportunities to discuss some of the big Lorne issues with FoL members and the community in general.

Finally, some comments and reflections. Last time I spoke about skills and energy, information and misinformation the community, relationship building, teamwork, and perseverance. These all still stand. But I have added in a few more things this year. We need wider membership and

engagement. We already have a vital role in facilitating community dialogue. People compliment us on that, and we need to do more of it.

And now a personal comment from me. Often when I see discussion in Lorne, I see common frames and typical blames. I wonder if we need to rethink them because they might be weighing us down.

For example, the recent win with the Aquatic Club and their outdoor space was written up (once again) as a victory for common sense *against* bureaucracy. Whereas my understanding was that the issue was not in GORCAPA's control, so Jodie Sizer (GORCAPA CEO) went away and found the name of the responsible minister and the precise regulation that needed to be changed, and said to the Aquatic Club, "Here is what you need". In other words, she *helped*. As did others, I gather.

I am saying that if Lorne is to take on the really big challenges over time, we need to allow people and organisations to change and to transform. Without this Lorne risks being corroded and blinded by old grievance, history, and wounds, when what we really need is a clear head and a clear eye for new threats. *And* an eye for collaborators. There is always a place for Lorne-driven, made-for-Lorne solutions. But some things will require other actors and problem-solving on a broader scale and we need to be open and up for it."

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5. Appointment of office bearers and Committee. The following people were nominated and appointed for the incoming year. There was no need for a ballot. Mary Lush (Secretary), Lindy Pearce (Treasurer), Penny Hawe (President), StJohn Sutton, (Committee). Eva Youl took the role of Returning Officer to call for nominations for the three vacant positions on the Committee. There were no new nominations. Eva reminded the meeting that the Committee will be seeking to appoint by invitation during the coming year.

6. Approval of annual subscription fees.

Two motions were proposed:

6.1 That the annual subscription fees should remain unchanged, at \$25 for family membership and \$15 for a single. Moved: Lindy Pearce. Seconded: Penny Hawe. Carried.

6.2 That new members joining after January 1 in any one year should only pay half the full subscription fee. Moved: Lindy Pearce. Seconded: Penny Hawe. Carried.

7. Closing remarks about AGM meeting process

Penny noted that the Committee had called for nominations for all officer and committee positions by Friday 23 October. The Committee cannot point to where calling for nominations beforehand is *written* in our rules. But the question is, is this practice *precluded* by our rules? It is certainly a common convention to close off nominations prior to a meeting, to facilitate preparations for a vote, if needed.

Penny reported that there had been different opinions on this in the last week, with various expert advisors, and disagreement. She acknowledged that FoL needs to address the ambiguity and get our desired process into black-and-white. If this requires the Committee to bring a special resolution to a special general meeting, it is what the Committee will do. The Committee will focus on process issues at the first Committee meeting for the year.

As President, Penny emphasised that her immediate chief concern lies with whether anyone felt they had been disadvantaged by the process. She asked that anyone present at the meeting who did not wish to be President, Secretary, or Treasurer seven days ago, but have changed their mind, to let her know.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.