



Kate Sullivan
Planning Scheme Review
Surf Coast Shire Council
PO Box 350, Torquay, 3228

Dear Kate,

We are a planning and environment community organisation in Lorne, established in 1966 with over 100 members. Our focus is on the retention and protection of natural environment in Lorne and planning, development and maintenance of community services and activities consistent with the balanced needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists.

Somewhat belatedly, I would like to thank you and your team, on behalf of Friends of Lorne, for the workshop on the Neighbour Character that you held here on Saturday 25 February 2023. All of our Committee (with the exception of one person who was interstate) attended and asked me to convey our appreciation.

A few key messages stood out for us. First, as you heard, the Lorne community is for the most part satisfied with the values and principles represented in the NCO and exemplified in the Lorne Strategy (example below). Our organisation relies on heavily the NCO to guide what issues we get involved with. In fact, if you go back into SCSC planning history you will find that we were instrumental in its development for Lorne.

21.10 08/03/2018 C96	KEY ISSUES AND INFLUENCES	"Other important neighbourhood character elements include low profile buildings with a sense of space between properties, views of surrounding landscape features."
	OBJECTIVES	"To support sustainable urban development in Lorne in a manner that enhances the distinctive, vegetated, low density coastal character of the town whilst addressing risks associated with bushfire."
		"Encourage new development that displays a coastal style of architecture, using design, materials, features and colours that contribute to the identity of Lorne, maintains a low-rise building form, blends with the surrounding landscape and provides openness between properties."

It was gratifying to hear participants at your workshop confirm that the "signature" of Lorne is its tree canopy and its protection is paramount to the preservation of our character. Also, you most likely heard that our frustration is not with the NCO itself, but its (lack of) implementation. We feel we have an important role to be outspoken about Lorne character values and in that sense to help

justify the planning decisions by Council that defend Lorne character. We would like to strengthen community voice in Lorne to support your work.

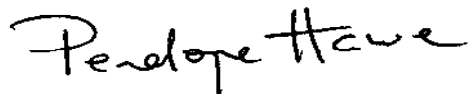
Second, we would like to see more proactive planning preparation and community liaison (and we can help with this) to help avoid the situation where new buyers in town invest heavily in inappropriate plans, ending in protracted amendments or worse, VCAT. Sadly, many newcomers only really get to understand local character and how their houses could fit with it (as opposed to work against it) too late. This idea was raised by one of our Committee at the workshop and we echo it here.

Thirdly, we were worried by the comment by the facilitator that regulations (as opposed to guidelines) should be avoided because they lead to standardisation. She invoked the image of the housing developments on the outside of Melbourne as what happens when there are regulations. Could that idea be interrogated a bit more please? You see, to us a regulation about something like height, for example, has clear advantages. Non-compliance is easy to assess and “cookie cutter” type buildings do not necessary result from it. Perhaps there could be more discussion about what aspects of design are/are not regulated as such, the reasons for that, and the consequences for design approvals.

Finally, we did not keep a record of the number of people who attended the workshop. Could you let us know please? As mentioned, because we want to garner more support for your work in protecting Lorne’s character, we would like to write some public communication pieces about it. So, the attendance achieved on a busy Saturday morning is good news to build on.

We wish to continue to collaborate in your NCO revision process. Please let us know how else we can bring critical, timely and constructive feedback.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Hawe". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter 'P' being significantly larger and more stylized than the rest of the name.

Penny Hawe
Friends of Lorne
www.friendsoflorne.org.au

14 April 2023