



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

Dear Kate,

Further comments on the NCO Review Process: Our main concern is that the NCO is not implemented sufficiently.

Friends of Lorne endorses our current Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) and its commitment to preservation of natural vegetation and buildings that are recessive in the landscape. Our main concern is that the NCO is not being implemented sufficiently by council officers.

This requires more planning applications (PAs) to be rejected as inappropriate and that takes “braver” decisions by Council. We believe Council will develop that courage if there is *stronger community voice*. Organisations like our own have a role to play. We can increase our public communications about retaining coastal character. We also note that community organisations could be prepared to act as co-defendants when disgruntled homeowners take the SCSC to VCAT (as we understand AIDA does in Aireys Inlet). We are exploring our own capacity to do this.

Loss of neighbourhood character is also a consequence of *no one other than neighbours knowing that a PA has been submitted*. Neighbours are often reluctant to place objections, due to social obligations/pressure. Further, objections placed by neighbours most likely pertain to immediate issues (noise/views/privacy/shadowing). This means that larger threats, such as loss neighbourhood character and loss of vegetation and a wildlife corridor, go unnoticed.


We would like the NCO Planning Review to consider the following actions to strengthen NCO implementation:

1. Providing information about the NCO, its significance, and its requirements to every new property purchaser in Lorne.
2. Opportunities for collaborative proactive work prior to PAs being submitted (applicants and planners).
3. Publicising every planning application (PA) in the *Lorne Independent*, so that more people know about them. Concern was raised that this might be seen to be soliciting objections. But that would not be the case if it were a universal policy. It is merely promoting transparency and accountability. We believe that the timing issues on this matter (synchronising of announcement and *Lorne Independent* edition) could be resolved.

4. Allowing anyone to comment on a PA without automatically being classified either as an objector or a supporter, which is currently the case with the online form. This would remove the sense of combat from the outset and may encourage better outcomes.
5. Liaison with and querying of real estate agents who advertise properties with “views that can only be improved” (by implication, by removal of trees).
6. Post planning assessments of the final home build or renovation 6 months afterwards and rating by the council on the extent to which it meets the NCO. This will address two things (1) whether the criteria exercised for approving the development was appropriate and; (2) the possibility of non-compliance, particularly with vegetation/landscaping.
7. All tree removals should be required to apply for a permit (as is the case with the Colac Otway Shire, see attached).

Thank you for the opportunity to have further input to the NCO process review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Hawe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

15 August 2023