



FRIENDS OF LORNE INC  
A0023195T

**URBAN FUTURES STRATEGY (UFS) AND PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW (PSR)  
Submission from Friends of Lorne to the Surf Coast Shire Council  
29 December 2023**

**About us.** We are a planning and environment community organisation in Lorne, established in 1966. We have 120 currently financial members. Our focus is on (1) the retention and protection of the natural environment in Lorne and (2) planning, development and maintenance of community services and activities consistent with the balanced needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists. [www.friendsoflorne.org.au](http://www.friendsoflorne.org.au)

**Our input to Shire planning review processes so far.** We took part in the Lorne Neighbourhood Character workshop in February and made written submissions on 14 April and 15 August 2023. We attended a briefing meeting on the UFS and the PSR in Aireys inlet on 8 November 2023.

**Our assessment of the UFS and PSR** Essentially the Shire asks the community, is the planning scheme robust? Are statutory planning processes performing well? Are amendments needed to fix drafting errors, to streamline the scheme, or introduce recently adopted policy? Is further strategic work needed to reflect changes in the municipality and update the scheme? Do we agree with the advocacy actions to the state that logically follow: short term accommodation planning controls, strengthening environmentally sustainable design, conserving Aboriginal cultural heritage. Is there any other strategic work the Shire could do given the expected increase in population? Is there anything missing?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment further.

1. We agree that Lorne growth be contained within the settlement boundary. Not only is this necessary for protection of life in the event of a bushfire, it retains the treed amphitheatre and beauty that makes Lorne, Lorne. This is a highly valued aspect of structure plan. In 1975, as a result of Friends of Lorne campaigning, Lorne was gazetted as a *Place of Natural Beauty and Special Significance*.<sup>1</sup> The state's designation took force subsequently in the newly formed Surf Coast Shire's planning scheme for Lorne. This is a legacy we wish to preserve.

2. We see increased housing density as a last resort. We prefer the alternative, more environmentally friendly solution of using existing homes.

On page 7 of the UFS you state, "*The Surf Coast Shire must look to alternatives to the current growth framework... to meet housing needs*".

We agree.

With 69% of homes in Lorne usually vacant and with land so scarce, we must be looking at ways to use those homes for our permanent population, especially for our key and essential workers who cannot afford to buy in Lorne and who travel long distances to be here for work.

We strongly suggest that the Shire investigate shared equity schemes. We refer you to a Churchill Fellowship in 2018 undertaken by Samantha Evans, a Queensland based property and finance professional. She examined how shared equity schemes could become a mainstream solution to housing affordability in Australia ([check it out here](#)). Shared equity means the property is part owned by the new homeowner and part owned by investors and/or some kind of housing entity. Such schemes are common in the UK and the US. Similar schemes are operating in high price markets like inner city Sydney, allowing key and essential workers to live near their workplace. Of necessity, the Sydney scheme applies to existing housing stock, as there's no room to build. Find out more [here](#).

For decades, land clearing and house building/density increase has been the unquestioned default solution in housing. It is time to shake-up the thinking. Our footprint in Lorne is limited. It's not the lack of do-ability that is holding back these types of alternative solutions. It's the ignorance about them. While not the solution for all parts of Australia, the solution is ideal for places like Lorne where most of the existing housing stock is underutilised. This is a solution that could be put in place now to service the current needs. It does not need to be enacted only because it is anticipated that Lorne's population will grow by 2041.

3. We also seek to reclaim back to the state potential housing assets that have been on long term lease to the private sector. There is still 26 years left on a 50-year lease for the Mantra at Lorne. A proportion of those units could be made available for down sizers and/or key and essential workers (rental or purchase as part of a formal housing entity/community land trust). But it takes advocacy and forward planning *now* for that to happen.

4. Achieving the right balance between preserving significant landscape, preferred character outcomes and bushfire risk is crucial. We strongly support this work, including wider education about the scientific evidence about types of vegetation and bushfire spread. We look forward to a broad community conversation about bushfire resilience and the vegetation on private property, on nature strips and on public land. Resilience to climate change and increased associated risks will necessarily involve a discussion about risks and costs and private/public responsibility.

5. At present, planning processes are not performing uniformly well. We are aware that the planning system offers planning officers discretion. We welcome the recent news that the planning team is retrospectively reviewing all PAs to determine if there is pattern in this discretion, that is are some principles (like vegetation) being traded off against set back or height.

Yet overall, too many bulky and visually prominent homes are being built, with scant attention to landscaping. We are in strong agreement with Lorne's Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) and want to see it more reliably and uniformly implemented. Planning applications (PAs) are being approved that seem contrary to the NCO. We reiterate our concerns that (1) current processes place too much reliance on objectors raising concerns or issues; (2) the tree canopy is being removed; (3) compliance with landscaping is not being adhered to; (4) while pre-planning meetings are now encouraged with those home owners making new planning applications, knowledge about the NCO is not widespread and so it would help if this information were supplied proactively to each new homeowner, perhaps at the time of arranging their first rate installments, ; and (5) an adversarial process is created from the outset because community participants in PAs are automatically classified as either supporters or objectors (eg, a better system would perhaps be to tick a box that classifies a person as *objector, supporter, or I have questions/reservations*).

We are also aware that community voice in Lorne could be made stronger to assist the planners in implementing the NCO. Our own organisation is seeking to be more proactive and systematic.

6. Advocacy is needed. We agree that advocacy to the state to control short term accommodation letting is much needed. Advocacy to conserve Aboriginal heritage is also much needed. Advocacy is needed to support environmentally sustainable design.

Advocacy and leadership are also needed to create greater understanding of and interest to develop *civic and financial infrastructure* to increase home ownership for specially targeted groups (eg., shared equity schemes for key and essential workers). This may involve the establishment of creative public/private partnerships and not-for-profit entities, with the support of local and state government. Put simply, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, infrastructure to support housing is not just roads, electricity, or water supply.

### **Conflict of Interest (COI) Statement**

Friends of Lorne operate under the [Model Rules of Consumer Affairs Victoria](#) (2012, revised 18 November 2023).

The Friends of Lorne committee discussed COI in relation to housing policy on 22 November 2022 and again on 3 February 2023. This was prompted by discussion of [draft proposals](#) for affordable housing in Lorne that had been put forward by the Committee for Lorne. Some proposals might substantially benefit owners or managers of land outside the town boundaries, if the land was rezoned and released for housing.

As of 18 November 2023 (our last AGM) we have two committee members who own property inside the town boundaries and two who hold property outside the town boundary. All other members of the working group who took part in forming our submission are land holders within the town boundaries.

The Rules state that committee members that have a material personal interest in a matter being considered must disclose their position, as well as the nature and extent of their interest, to the committee. The committee must also maintain a COI Register that records any material personal interest declared by a member, as well as a management plan documenting actions required to mitigate the conflict (additions to Rule 65). Our first committee meeting held since 18 November (held 12 December 2023) noted the revision to the Model Rules and the requirement to keep a Register.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Gregory EB, Gregory ML, Koenig WL. *Coast to Country. Winchelsea. A History of the Shire.* Hargreen Publishing. North Melbourne .1985

Penny Hawe on behalf of Friends of Lorne  
[www.friendsoflorne.org.au](http://www.friendsoflorne.org.au)

Contact: [committee@friendsoflorne.org.au](mailto:committee@friendsoflorne.org.au)