



AGM Friends of Lorne President's Report for 15 November 2025

The Year in Review

Welcome everyone. We meet today on the traditional lands of the Gadubanud people.

Our financial report and your membership subscriptions are for the financial year. But the report on activities (this report) is from the last AGM to this one, so that it can be up to date with recent events. This is a full report on our activities. But at the AGM itself I will just cover a few highlights/low lights as it takes too long otherwise.

HIGHPOINTS of the year

- Securing a commitment to change the co-op building draft plans
- Invitation to speak to state parliament on essential worker housing - our concern about the state's investment in short term solutions
- Commitment from the Council to an essential work housing solution that uses existing housing stock (Lorne Land Tax Discount Trial)
- Securing changes to the tea tee removal plans and a commitment to adapt plans in line with community values and habitat monitoring
- Lorne community comes out in full to support history and heritage of the co-op building, thanks to the Committee for Lorne accessing their networks

LOW POINTS

- No response as yet to our questions about the monitoring of rare and threatened species in the planned burn zones
- There will be stronger lease compliance penalties with the swimming pool but still no indication that heating lease conditions will be based on water temperature

1 Our priorities for the Committee

Our priority for the year has been to **increase the organisation's profile and the size of membership** of Friends of Lorne. Done. We are now 150+ members with more people joining us from, let's say, a younger age cohort. So, we are *delighted* about that. We have doubled our membership in the last 5 years.

In terms of **profile**, the biggest win was when we were invited to appear before Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria. Environment and Planning Committee of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria because of our work on essential worker housing. We were live streamed so that led to media interest and (further) interest from local parliamentarians. We report below on how we used that moment (what we advocated for). We are asked to give stories to ABC Geelong, the Surf Coast Times, etc. We choose those moments carefully as getting profile for the group should not undercut problem solving/projects we are doing locally and collaboratively.

We need more help doing what we do, so we are always on the lookout for ways to access the skills and interests of our members, more on that below.

2 Getting work done – it's a big group

We have been carrying a committee vacancy all year and it has made the workload harder to manage. That said, a large amount of work has been done by people *not* on the Committee. This is ideal really, as people find topics and time-limited ways to assist, meaning that no one gets overburdened signing up for stuff that seemingly never ends.

Deb Burns is our Membership secretary. She makes a huge difference to managing our data. Our work in water supply planning with Barwon Water is done by Colin Leitch. He is our representative on the Community Reference Group and Janet Beard assisted when it came time to writing our submission. Eva Youl writes our Nature Notes section in the Newsletter. This year, on our behalf she hosted a group of visiting secondary college students from Ballarat here (among other things) to find out how we manage local environment issues. Eva designed their half day science-learning in Lorne experience. Mary Lush and Sheryl Lewis helped us put together an enquiry to DEECA about population monitoring of rare and endangered species (Otway Smooth Frog and Yellow-Bellied Gliders). DEECA manages both fire safety and habitat conservation.

Ron Billard, Graham Brawn, Ian Farran, and Jane Orr have led on planning matters (reviewing policy and looking at how to encourage better planning). Steve Bayley, Peter Bardley and Ros Grady participated as Friends of Lorne in the community workshops facilitated by the Council on essential worker housing and Peter subsequently provided briefing materials that we used in getting Council staff and Otway Councillors up to speed with policy experiments, including what a Lorne Land Tax Rate Relief Trial could look like.

Karen Pitt has joined me as “co-beach lead” (the fancy name that *BirdLife Australia* gives people who do admin, volunteer support and rostering) for the hooded plover protection. Friends of Lorne hoodie volunteers are Deb Burns, Sheryl Lewis, Peter Lewis, Penny Hawe, Alan Shiell, Mary Lush, Eva Youl, Karen Pitt, Sophie Buchanan, Liz Quinn, Jo Dunin, Amanda Place, David McCormack, David Harper, Linton Ferguson, Mike Anderson, Helen Clements and John Clements. Ross Dimsey and Janine Haddow have put their hands up too, but we have not had a nest survive long enough for them to get on the beach wardening chicks.

Thanks also to new members, Lara Bardsley and Rob Deguara for assembling materials on the different penalties across Victoria imposed by different local government areas for tree removal without a permit. We would like to see harsher disincentives in Lorne for tree removal. All the latest tree removal culprit got was a stern letter from the Council. So, you will see more on that soon.

Then of course there is the committee itself, the hard-working Office Bearers: [Lindy Pearce](#) and [Mary Rose Yucken](#), and committee member [St John Sutton](#). We all took a deep breath at our last meeting for the year and hoped to soon see others join us and/or take our place.

What are we not doing? Neighbouring communities (Wye and Aireys) are actively monitoring and raising concerns about water quality in their estuaries. We are not, but only because there are not enough of us to do so. We have at least one member of Friends of Lorne engaged in the platypus monitoring group. But there are other citizen science projects that we would love to initiate and maintain (e.g., coastal habitat monitoring and the impact of tea tree removal on rufous bristle birds). GORCAPA has indicated that they would partner with us and *Birdlife Australia* to achieve this. Interested members are much welcome.

3 The purpose of our organisation

To recap our two purposes are:

- To encourage and contribute to the planning and development of the environment within Lorne and its environs consistent with the need for **preservation of the natural features, flora and fauna** of the district.
- To encourage and contribute to the planning, development and maintenance of **community services and activities** within Lorne and its environs consistent with the balanced needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists.

4 Activities in the last year (from last AGM to now) Note that you can find all policy submissions are on our website on a page called, [Policy Submissions](#).

- 8 committee meetings
- 4 Newsletters (long and distributed to a broader group than just members), plus 21 member-only informative emails (i.e., a few items only plus photos to enhance the experience)
- 5 articles in the *Lorne Independent*, on hooded plovers, tourism on the GOR, essential worker housing, vegetation and habitat management
- Participation in the Pt Grey Community Reference Group
- Participation in the Great Ocean Rd Communities Network
- Participation in the Committee for Lorne
- Participation in Barwon Water planning for Lorne
- Submission to Barwon Water on water supply for Lorne
- Submission to the Surf Coast Shire Community Vision and what should be the chief focus for the next four years.
- Submissions to GORCAPA on Pt Grey (in June and in September)
- Submission to the Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria. Environment and Planning Committee. Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria.
- Submission to Resources Victoria objecting to the possibility of gas exploration in the Otway Basin.
- Submission of evidence and an enquiry to DEECA about rare and threatened species in the planned burns area around Lorne (Are DEECA aware? Is the population at risk, or not?)

I highlight the main activities below. An * indicates that you can read more about it at www.friendsoflorne.org.au.

4.1 Pt Grey *

We wrote two submissions this year on Pt Grey, and [Mary Rose Yuncken](#) has been representing Friends of Lorne at the Community Reference Group.

We got assurances that large buses will be excluded from the site and we are pleased to see that fishing and boating activities are now prominent, rather than hidden away. Mostly as a result of the Anglers' Club campaigning, the 2024 community engagement survey had more than 1100 participants. This year it was more than 400.

Earlier this year we asked GORCAPA to withdraw the confidentiality agreement that they had asked all the Community Reference Group (CRG) members to sign. They agreed. This request was an initiative of Friends of Lorne working with the Wye River Association on behalf of the GOR Communities Network. We wanted all the City Deal funded projects along the coast to be unencumbered by confidentiality agreements. Once the CEO and Board chair were aware of them, the confidentiality agreements were removed without question. The CRG has now been disbanded as if its work is done. We think work is still ongoing.

At a public meeting on Pt Grey 8 September (the last in the series of public consultation meetings from October 2024 – September 2025) GORCAPA showed participants draft plans of the internal layout of the co-op building. The toilets looked too big, the dining area too small, and we couldn't see where the display/history telling would take place. We asked for copies of the draft plan and we passed them on to the Committee for Lorne. They told us that they had already seen much the same thing at a LAAC meeting. We then wrote our [second 2025 Pt Grey submission](#) for the year asking for the toilet areas to be shrunk so that there could be more room for other functions. GORCAPA responded saying 'yes' (in an email from the CEO that we circulated to the Committee for Lorne). GORCAPA also said there were now seats for dining inside and out. Plus, we secured a commitment to bring back parts of the crane. GORCAPA also agreed to ask their architect to see if it would be possible to suspend a 'couta boat hull under the roof space. We have funding (through a generous FoL donor) for both the boat and crane, although GORCAPA is saying they can cover the crane costs.

We thought that this was news that CfL would want to share with their 1000+ readers of the *Surf Coast Times*. But CfL chose not to publicise any of these amendments and undertakings. They prefer to wait until the amendments are incorporated graphically into the final plans (which will take another month or longer).

There is an arts and history subgroup now engaged with GORCAPA, looking at how the history of the site can be told and the implications for the architectural design/layout. Friends of Lorne is part of that group along with two local Lorne historians, the Lorne Historical Society, and the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

The plans are not yet finished because there are three or four more meetings yet to be held with the history and art subgroup. Their deliberations will impact the design (i.e., along with the commitment to shrink the toilets, increase the size of the kitchen and accommodate a crane and 'couta boat). The architects attend the meetings of the art and history subgroup.

Last year we told you that the main business at the CRG was about understanding the new policies governing the site. The legislation that will have the greatest influence is the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020 and the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 – MACA First Principles and the MACA Policy. The siting design guidelines for structures on the Victorian coast consider purpose and need, the footprint of the new design, and climate change and adaptation. Essentially, we were told that sea level rise will require the buildings to be set further back. Likely inundation also suggests that the building footprint might have to shrink. This year we are seeing community dismay about that. When we first started putting in submissions about the co-op building, the sea level rise was projected to be 0.8m by 2100. It is now expected to be 1.2m and the co-op building (rather than the LAAC side) gets the worst of it.

GORCAPA have now kept the location of the co-op building in the original position, with the intention of having a new building engineered and designed to withstand the inundation. The new building retains the look and feel of the 1949 structure (as we requested) and will recycle what materials can be salvaged for re-use. Can the building itself be retained and re-adapted? We are advised ‘no’ because the 1949 footings are not engineered to withstand the predicted inundation and sea-level rise.

The Committee for Lorne (CfL) has never previously taken a role with the co-op building. But they are concerned about it. They held a community meeting on Sunday 9 November to invite Lorne to consider what was to happen to with the building. By leveraging their mighty networks, more than 175+ people attended, which was wonderful. All were keen to ensure the history telling and heritage is prominent. It was just a shame that the meeting was not called back in September before the public submissions on the Urban Design Framework (UDF) closed. The last public meeting GORCAPA held on Pt Grey on 8 September was only attended by 7 people. But GORCAPA held individual meetings with the Lorne Historical Society, Friends of Lorne, the Biennial Sculpture Committee as well as “drop-in sessions” at Stribling Reserve on the UDF.

However, because CfL are cautious and reluctant to accept that GORCAPA has already agreed to change the draft plans, at the 9 November community meeting they showed the outdated “draft plans” on three large screens and asked the assembly to indicate whether they liked them or not. Not surprisingly, all voted noted ‘no’.

Any major changes secured this late in time may come at the price of holding up the construction work and funding agreement compliance conditions. However, it was very good to learn at the meeting, that one of the community architects who was on the Community Reference Group has offered up a redesigned layout for the building. This plan was shown at the community meeting. It shrinks the toilets and expands other spaces, allowing both dining and a display space to be accommodated quite easily it seems. So, this illustrates that changes we think we have secured so far are in fact doable and may be done within the existing timetable.

4.2 Affordable Housing for key and essential workers *

The housing subgroup of the Committee for Lorne dissolved. Attendance was low. The forum did not create what we had advocated for, that is, a community-wide conversation about housing and an opportunity to weigh up different options. In its place the Council planners led three community meetings of about 20 or so people drawn from a cross-section of the community. Friends of Lorne participated as an organisation, along with the Op Shop, the Committee for Lorne, the school, the emergency workers, the kindergarten, the Lorne Business and Tourism Association etc. The workshop devised a problem statement. They came up with a

proposal for two solutions (1) finding parcels of council or government owned land and applying for a grant to build accommodation on that; and (2) devising a scheme for 5% of the short term rental properties to be coaxed across to the long term rental market by offering land tax rate relief and municipal rate relief for a period of 3 years if the property is rented to key and essential workers.

We supported both options. In particular, we championed the second option as it would use existing properties (no tree loss, no increase in density, homes would be scattered and not concentrated in a 'affordable housing precinct' and there would be more choice for the renter about home size and location). Plus, the second option is a scheme that could be applied to other tourist zone areas of the state (about 65% of our houses are holiday houses). It also could be implemented quickly. Fortunately, among our more recently joined members, Friends of Lorne has the expertise and experience to develop a pitch to state government for the Lorne Land Tax Relief Trial and the connections to get it done. The other option (the home building one) takes a long time as we have witnessed in Aireys Inlet. There they found land, rezoned, found a housing organisation willing to build and run the complex but now they are waiting for a grant of \$17m to get it done.

By the time the Lorne Affordable Housing Project proposal was pitched to Council by the staff the council 'rate relief' part was removed, and the proposal was put for a land tax 'discount' trial instead. The staff did that. Still, it was approved 5-2 at Council. So, it is a win. An amount of \$50k has now been allocated to work up the projects.

The proposal was put up as a single package of two parts. Those Councillors who voted against it said that they were forced to vote "no" because while they supported the land tax trial, they opposed the other solution, the part which involved giving up of crown land for housing.

The first step in a land tax trial would be to model mathematically how much money the state would lose from uptake of the scheme. It is an empirical question as to how willing people would be to put their properties on to the 3-year rental market according to how much land tax they would not have to pay (all or just a part). So that is what we will find out. There are innovative methods for assessing this that lie within the expertise of our members. There is also an awful lot of other mechanics and practicalities to work out. A BIG THANKS to members involved so far.

Earlier in the year we appeared before the Parliamentary Enquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria. Our submission argued that (1) more use can be made of existing housing stock, especially in holiday hot spots like Lorne where 69% of homes are not occupied full time. Building new homes seems wasteful in such circumstances. But as these under-utilised homes come on to the market for sale, they could be made easier for purchase by permanent residents. We outlined three pathways to make existing housing stock more available for permanent living: shared equity purchase schemes, limits to short term rentals, and clawing back a portion of apartment accommodation currently on long term lease on public land (the Mantra) for essential worker housing. We also argued that (2) the build-new Regional Worker Accommodation Grants can do more harm than good because the properties created only require use for workers for 5 years, thereafter the properties can become holiday accommodation. The length of time for use as worker accommodation needs to be 20 years under government-funded home building schemes.

Our full submission is [here](#). We were covered by several media outlets including ABC Geelong. Most of them gave prominence to our argument right now that the Regional Worker Accommodation Grants are set up as stepping stones to building more holiday accommodation at the taxpayers' expense - leaving us with more problems in the future. Richard Riordan heard us live-streamed while driving from Colac to Melbourne and phoned to say that the issue is something he would be keen to address if he comes into government. Me, I just enjoyed the opportunity for the first time in my life to shoot my mouth off while under the benefits of parliamentary privilege!

4.3 Surf Coast Shire Council Community (SCSC) Vision and request for feedback on the priority focus*

Our submission of February 2025 is [here](#). Basically, we agreed with the principles about conserving the natural environment protecting community identities. Our concern was that the Council does not have the staff to systematically review compliance with the Neighbourhood Character Overlay over time (e.g., what trade-offs in height and set-backs are made at the time of application approval, these are at the Council planner's discretion to approve), There is also no capacity for post-development review to see if applicants have complied with landscape plans.

We also suggested changes to planning procedure to make practice match principle. For example, right now applicants are not required to provide detailed landscape plans and colour schemes during the public advertising period. But that could be changed and made a *condition* of approval.

Other actions by Council taken in conjunction with other authorities would also serve preserve environment and character. For example, the Council could collaborate with the power companies to place power and telegraph lines underground on key streets (like George St) to stop the slashing of trees and to compensate for the loss of canopy trees to the 10:30 (fire clearing) rule. This would be consistent with the Nature Strip Policy which aims to play an active role in supporting Council's climate change response.

We then spent the rest of submission criticising the design of the survey the Council used to gather input. It was amateur (and hopefully not very expensive). Worst of all it created the impression that all the things Council does comes from the same pot of funds. But in fact, for things like family violence prevention, money comes from a grant. Not rate-payer funds. So, rubbish collection and roads are not in direct competition with health and wellbeing.

4.4 Planning applications review *

Last year I reported at the AGM that the Committee is reluctant to do systematic review of every planning application without further discussion among the membership and a vote. So, in March we convened a group to consider how the entire membership could be engaged in considering whether FoL should be systemically reviewing every planning application, as they do in AIDA (Aireys Inlet). The working group was tasked with putting together the pros and cons that could be put to the membership. At that point we already knew we had the capacity to do reviews, with two architects and a planner putting up their hands as well as five ordinary members. One argument in favour is that without this we will lose Lorne's neighbourhood character one house renovation/new build at a time. One argument against is that applicants might consider this interference.

We worked on three “test” or “trial” planning applications in 2024/2025. One in a tourist zone (spotted by a review of the Council website). One in a residential zone (we walked past the notice). And one in a Rural Conservation Zone (we were approached by neighbours and asked to help). We did these trial reviews (and objections) to test our capacity and to evaluate the results.

The March meeting did not progress to designing a mechanism for member-decision making. Instead, they opted to first develop some educational materials to help people put in planning applications that are compliant with the neighbourhood character overlay (NCO). One of the group had previously offered to offer a “help service” to objectors. But we did not discuss that further at the time. That is, could a help service be a better substitute for reviewing every planning application.

The working group proved hard to convene (too big, too many schedules). But when they reconvened in October, they had progressed the education package for our website to draft stage. We also reported back on the results of the three planning applications in the trial. Two had not progressed further at Council. One was asked to submit landscape plan prior to approval. This was a big win for us as usually the landscape plan is something applicants are asked to do (but it’s never checked on) and this is the way Lorne loses its vegetation. As this was the planning application in an ecologically sensitive highly visible area and neighbours had already raised concerns about vegetation removal and habitat loss, the win was especially significant. On the downside, I have been subjected to bad mouthing.

The working group is now seeking a meeting with Council planners on whether the state government’s recent changes to planning laws will impact Lorne’s Neighbourhood Character Overlay and its power to keep Lorne green and buildings recessive in the landscape.

4.5 Great Ocean Road Communities Network (GORCN)

Friends of Lorne is part of GORCN. GORCN is a grassroots network of 21 community organisations, ranging from Port Campbell to Torquay. It formed in 2020 to identify and work on common issues and to create a direct “hotline” of information exchange between the communities and GORCAPA. GORCAPA (represented by the CEO and/or Libby Mears) meets with us four times a year.

A major initiative of GORCN this year was a 5-part webinar series on tourism on the Great Ocean Rd. In particular, the focus was on regenerative tourism, that is models that don’t wreck the local environment. It was well attended. GORCN is now reviewing and critiquing proposed policies to charge levies on visitors as well as investigating alternative ways to raise revenue for the care of the parks and marine reserves (e.g., an international airport tax) in discussion with the chief executive of GOR Tourism.

4.6 Coastal Tea Tree removal from the Foreshore and habitat restoration *

In 2023 Friends of Lorne took the lead in explaining to the public the GORCAPA tea tree removal plans on the Foreshore. We put together a [photo guide](#) to what goes and what stays along the 4.2km stretch from Stony Creek to the pier. This was important because many people in the community were upset. Also, people were not aware that not all the tea tree is coming out. There is a different strategy for different zones.

As a result of our advocacy GORCAPA will retain the green screen between the dog beach and the Great Ocean Road. We don't want to start seeing traffic. On an experimental patch of tea tree removal near the Swing Bridge café, they also agreed to replant (with more appropriate indigenous species), rather than simply leave things to regenerate. The area is being monitored and there is a significant increase in diversity. The height is now 1.7m. We are also in discussion with them about monitoring rufous bristle bird habitat on the foreshore (citizen science).

On 6 November, at our request, GORCAPA ran a webinar on the foreshore and Queens Park vegetation and habitat management plans. We were concerned about the logic of what we see, particularly when it comes to what volunteers do and the best use of our time. We are putting together a FAQ after we have submitted more questions to GORCAPA. The webinar ran out of time to cover all the community questions.

4.7 AGM process and a constitutional amendment to our Rules*

We held a Special General Meeting on 29 September 2025 and adopted a change to our rules that essentially put into black-and-white a convention we adopted during COVID (on line meeting and voting) of calling for nominations for office bearers and the committee in advance of the AGM (not just at the AGM). The meeting took just 12 minutes. Many thanks to those who attended or sent proxies. Special thanks to Jonathan Casson, the governance lawyer who guided us through the process.

4.8 Hooded plovers in Lorne*

GORCAPA and DEECA (Dept of Environment, Energy and Climate Action) are responsible for wildlife protection. Once eggs hatch, volunteers rally to form a roster to continue to protect the site (although they also check on nest welfare as well, prior to that). The volunteers are managed by Birdlife Australia. Locally, our role is to volunteer and to talk up volunteering. Most of the hoodie volunteers in Lorne are Friends of Lorne members. This year [Karen Pitt](#) put her hand up to help with rostering, inducting new volunteers and trouble-shooting on the beach.

We need 30 or 40 volunteers to run a low-burden roster (ie, 2-3 shifts a week of 1.5-2 hrs over 6 weeks). Right now, we have about 20 volunteers. Only two new volunteers have joined since last season. So, we're having trouble recruiting. To be honest, I cringe about pushing it as I don't know a person in Lorne who is not already a volunteer in some way three times over e.g., Op Shop, hospital, community garden, Historical Society, Stribling Reserve (footy and netball), Lorne Community Connect etc etc. And some of these people also do the hard stuff as well – CFA and/or SES.

If you looked at the number of “likes” for hoodie photos on the Lorne Facebook page, you would have thought we had tons of volunteers. That said, the likes on the Facebook page are vital as it's the community attitude and dog control that makes the real difference.

Most of us knew very little about this endangered bird a few years ago. But with only 3% of the eggs making it through to fledging (flying away), they need a lot of help. A big thank you to those who take part. I have enjoyed getting to know Friends of Lorne members this way (you are just an email address otherwise!). It inspired us to create a whole page on our website about

volunteering in Lorne, as there are loads of initiatives focussed on the environment (looking at you [David McCormack](#) with your monthly litter patrol helpers, good on you).

4.9 Lorne's water supply planning with Barwon Water *

Barwon Water has been drawing up water supply and management plans for 2070. They established a Community Working Group to oversee the work. [Colin Leitch](#) represents Friends of Lorne on that group. This year Barwon Water are asking the Lorne Community to make some big decisions. A water desalination plant? A wastewater recycling plant? A big pipe connecting us to Geelong? Assisted by [Janet Beard](#) and me, Colin led us in making a [submission](#) from Friends of Lorne which side-stepped the task of simply voting for various options and instead surfaced the key enduring values that we want applied to any option. The main one of these was that we must not “water” the town at the expense of what is called environmental flows (water going from the Allen Dam to the St George River to the habitat of the platypus). Another key value was to use and reuse existing infrastructure sites in preference to clearing forest. Our submission is here. Many thanks to Colin, a hydrologist, for lending his expertise, time and enthusiasm to this task. Water is a taken-for-granted resource that should not be taken for granted.

4.10 Rare and threatened species in the path of the planned burn zone*

Two of our members [Sheryl Lewis](#) and [Mary Lush](#) have submitted video and audio evidence to the Dept Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) that there are Otway Smooth frogs and Yellow-Bellied Gliders in the proposed burn area around Lorne. The Otway Smooth Frog was only classified as a new species in 2023. It is not found in any other part of Australia. Our Yellow-bellied Gliders may be particularly special, because Otway populations differ from other populations in western Victoria, which in turn differ from those in eastern Victoria and again from those in northern Australia.

The presence of rare and threatened species on its own would not be a reason to stop a burn. It depends on other things like the size of the local population and whether there are already enough individuals and terrain to sustain the population. So, we asked DEECA about their monitoring methods and their understanding of the local habitat and population distribution. That was back in May. We eventually got a reply (in September) that did not answer the question. It spoke to the importance of burns. It quoted the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas as one of the tools that DEECA uses to plan the burns. If this was indeed the case, then DEECA would already consider the yellow-bellied gliders in Lorne as potentially extinct because there has been only three records of yellow-bellied gliders listed there since 2010. We wrote again and we are still waiting for a reply.

It is important to note that we are not against the burns per se (although we note that evidence in support is contested by scientists). We just want to know how plans have been adjusted as a result of surveillance of the rare and threatened species in the area. Has the area of burning changed? Is the burn frequency changed? Conservation is a DEECA responsibility. What we are asking should not be difficult to retrieve from DEECA records. Plus we asked what was done with the evidence we submitted.

4.11 Meeting with the GORCAPA CEO

We extended an invitation to Christine Ferguson, the new CEO of GORCAPA, to meet with Friends of Lorne members on 2 October 2025. We included members of the Committee for Lorne in the invitation because the opportunity for Lorne was a good one. We filled the Figtree Meeting room at the Lorne Community House. Topics were driven by Q and A from the floor. I do not intend to replicate the answers here as they have been circulated already to the participants. They included the foreshore habitat management and Queens Park, the swimming pool, graffiti management, contradictions/concerns in how GORCAPA is funded, erosion, invasive weeds, the Doug Stirling track and Erskine paddock and the playground. We thank Christine for making the trip and for the detailed fast follow up on questions she was not able to answer on the spot. We will follow up on those topics where we still have concerns (eg swimming pool heating).

4.12 Fireworks on the foreshore

In September GORCAPA contacted us about a request they had received from the Lorne Hotel to operate a short 10-minute fireworks display on the foreshore for a May 2026 wedding. Would we give approval? We are assured that it was a one-off with all procedures in place for safety etc etc. We replied with a 'no', drawing on Parks Victoria policy where fireworks are only permitted for events of local, state, national or international significance. A wedding is not one. We had concerns for Lorne's wildlife. We saw this as the thin edge of the wedge – that is more requests would follow. The Committee for Lorne also said no.

Merivale/Lorne Hotel put the request again, more vigorously this time. arguing that weddings with fireworks would be good for Lorne tourism and business. We replied with a 'no' again. We also pointed out that the applicants had shot themselves in the foot. First of all, they had claimed that this was a once-off. Now they were saying fireworks could become a much-favoured inclusion of a Lorne wedding offering. We are following up to ascertain GORCAPA's final decision.

Acknowledgements

Leon Walker, Libby Stapleton and Mike Bodsworth are our Otway Ward councillors. They have made the world of difference to figuring what to do and getting things done. We can't thank them enough for their accessibility, advice, wisdom and support.

The chap who makes it all happen by maintaining our website and communications is Charles Coates, our IT and computer expert. He looks after our systems and troubleshoots us when we get flustered and do silly things (that would be me). He is a brick. We can't thank him enough.

Penny Hawe

15 November 2025