



Nepean Conservation Group

2022 President's report

Ursula de Jong



Our Wards

Current Councillors

Briars Ward

HOLLAND, Steve

O'CONNOR, Despi (on leave)

MARSH, Anthony MAYOR

Cerberus Ward

DIXON, Lisa DEPUTY MAYOR

Nepean Ward

RACE, Sarah

BISSINGER, Susan

Red Hill Ward

GILL, David

Seawinds Ward

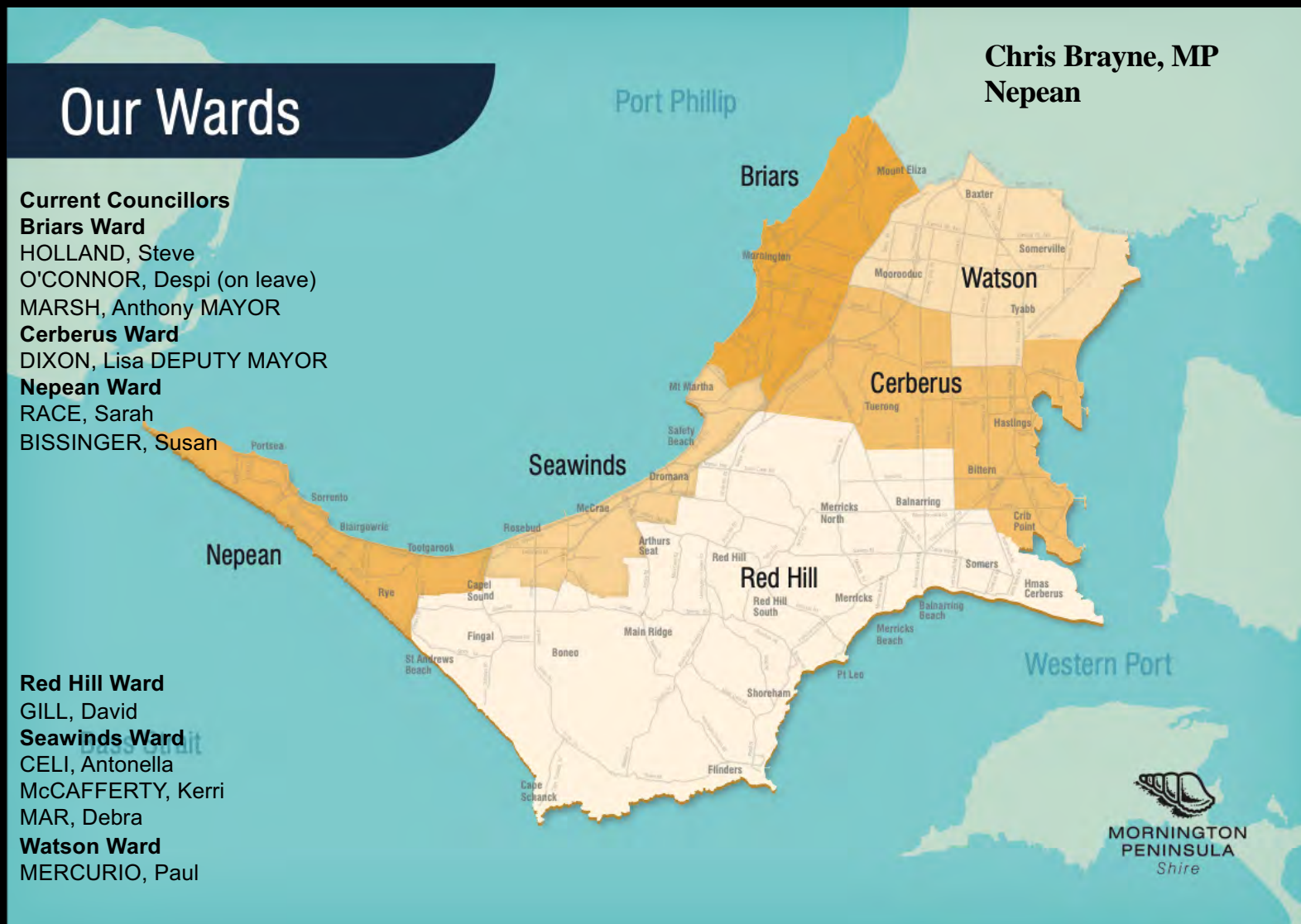
CELI, Antonella

McCAFFERTY, Kerri

MAR, Debra

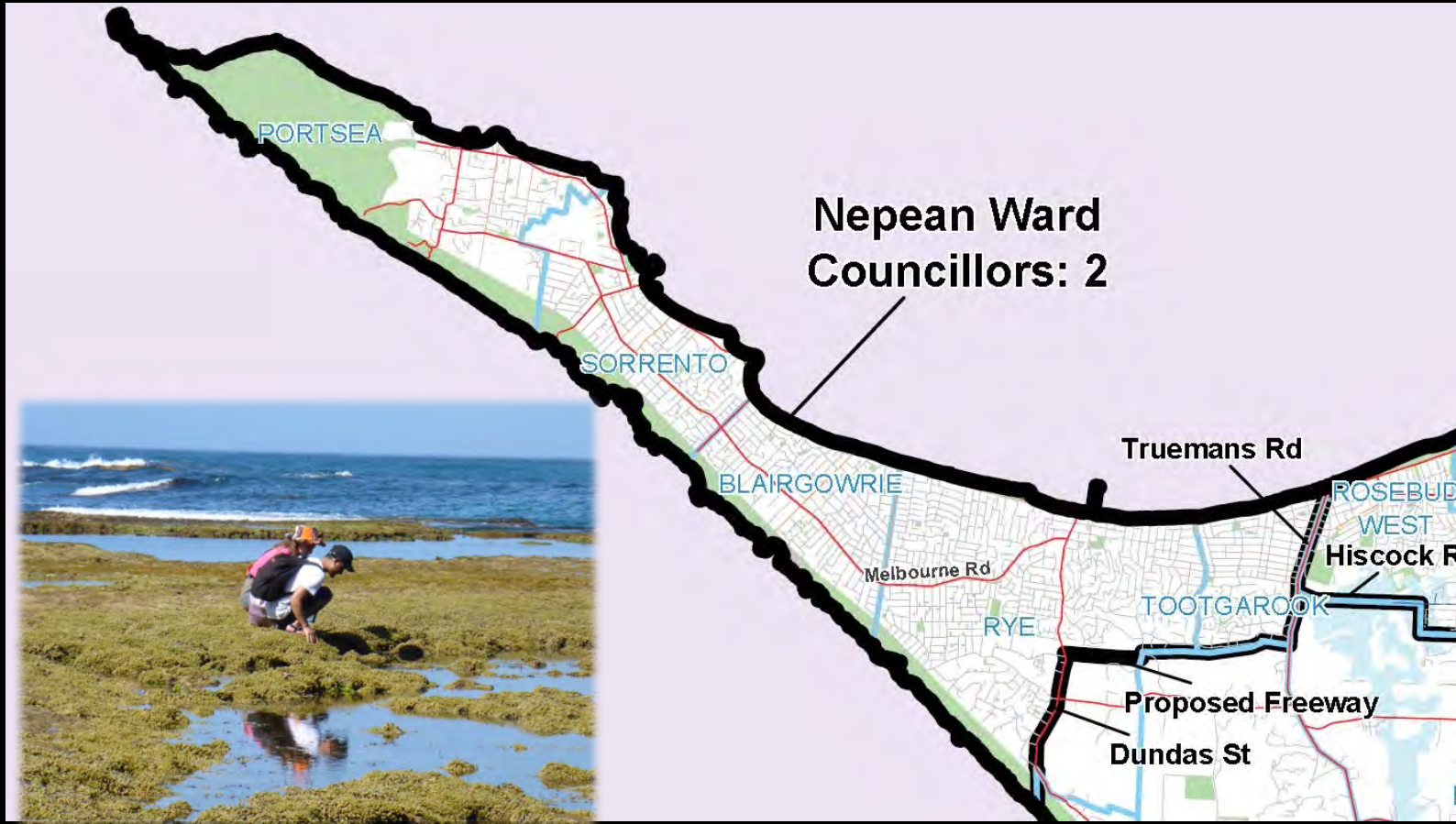
Watson Ward

MERCURIO, Paul



Chris Brayne, MP
Nepean

The jurisdiction of the NCG Inc covers the whole of the Nepean Ward in the Mornington Peninsula Shire:
we have two representatives, Cr Susan Bissinger and the Cr Sarah Race



**Nepean Ward
Councillors: 2**



Dune thistle

The NCG Constitution which dates from 1973, states that the objects of our group are

- (a) To make every effort to ensure that the land and waters of the [Nepean Peninsula] are used with wisdom and foresight and that the competing demands upon them are resolved in the best long-term interests thereof
- (b) To foster the conservation of the vegetation and fauna and natural features ...
- (c) To cooperate with, or promote cooperation ... among persons, trusts, corporations, firms, associations, institutions, governments, ... concerned with or interested in conservation
- (d) generally, to take such action as it considers necessary or appropriate in the interests of promoting conservation...

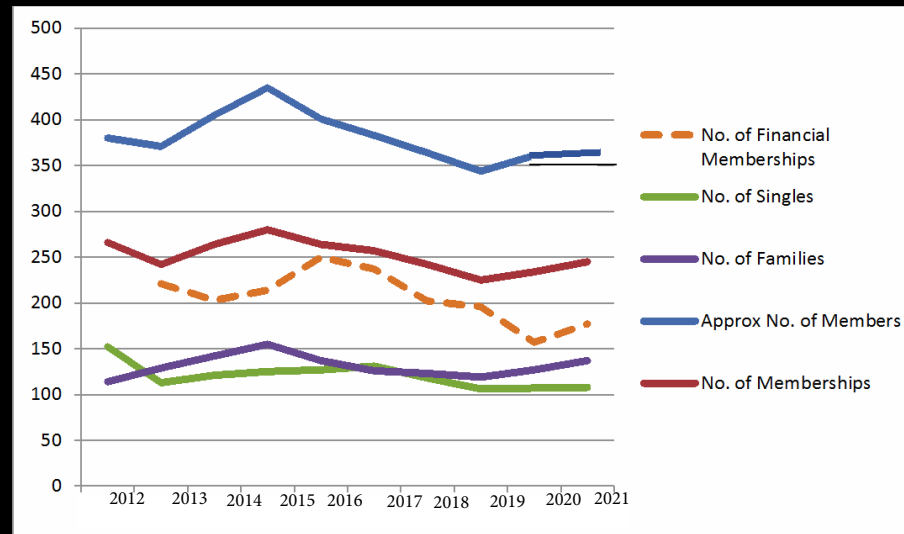
NCG Vision and Mission

'VISION: The NCG's vision is for people to understand and appreciate the natural, cultural and built heritage that contributes to the sense of place of the Nepean Peninsula, in order to protect and conserve the amenity and enhance the character of the Nepean Peninsula.'

'MISSION: To lead and inspire the community to appreciate, recognise, conserve, protect and celebrate the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Nepean Peninsula.'



NCG Membership ...



Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of our new members are recruited by learning about the NCG from existing members. Increasing our membership is clearly dependent on current members (not just the Committee) promoting the work of the NCG and being able to demonstrate that important issues are being addressed. In other words, the NCG is making a difference in the eyes of its members – now we need to broadcast our work further afield. Overall membership is being maintained at about the 250 level (this represents about 360 people). While 2020 and 2021 were difficult years for all of us, the NCG committee has put in place a strategy to communicate with its members through quarterly Newsheets.

ACTION – in 2022 we again ask each of our members to sign up a new member!

ACTION – membership is one of the strategic priorities of the NCG committee for 2022

Permit applications

While coastal landscapes, such as that of the Nepean Peninsula are highly valued by the wider community for their scenic beauty and for recreational activities, they are also highly desirable as real estate – this seems even more so after 2020 and 2021 following the continuing pandemic. One of the consequences of the MPS being part of metropolitan Melbourne, ease of access via freeways and increasing suburbanisation has been the loss of character of place. Balancing the economic, social and infrastructure needs of growing residential, holiday home and tourism communities with environmental sustainability and the capacity of such a sensitive coastal landscape continues to be a considerable planning conundrum. The NCG committee spends much time writing planning objections – 35-40 per month – we concentrate on vegetation removal, landscaping and response to neighbourhood character. We particularly thank John Atchison for his hard work and coordination of planning matters.



Nepean Conservation Group Inc AGM 2022



© Dr Ursula M de Jong

Bushfire regulations and compliance

The impact of State bushfire regulations on the MPS continues to be profound - State bushfire regulations mean we have little means to protect the vegetation of the MPS. The loss of vegetation on an increasing scale means loss of habitat, loss of biodiversity, loss of character of place and greater difficulty in mitigating against climate change impacts. The State regulations are used to completely clear blocks of land. Vegetation replanting and landscape plans, if provided, are generally not followed up by MPS officers. Compliance is a major issue on the Mornington Peninsula.



Engagement

We participate in relevant Shire, Council and committee meetings. The “Nepean Coalition Group” monthly meetings were severely disrupted by Covid and by a restructure. A smaller more focused group met again in January 2022 to consider and to prioritise matters that should be actioned within the Nepean Ward.

These meetings have provided both us and our councillors, Susan Bissinger and Sarah Race, with the opportunity to focus on matters of major concern to our community, as well as offering Council officers an opportunity to attend, and update us on actions they are taking.

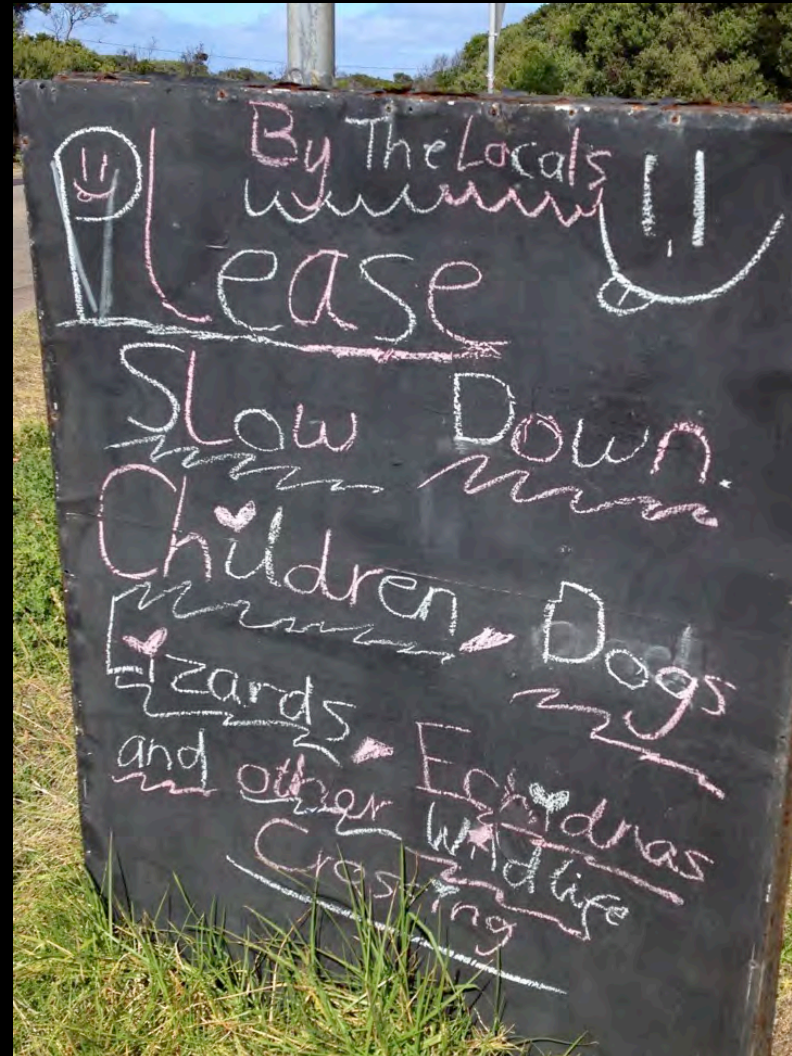
Our next meeting was scheduled in March 2022. This week we received an email to say the councillors are taking a break from the Nepean Coalition and meetings have been put on hold indefinitely. Coalition members are following this up with our councillors – watch this space!

The NCG participates in planning conferences with Councillors and Shire Officers on a regular basis to discuss concerns and to contribute to deliberations for decision making.

Meetings with Chris Brayne have been cancelled on a number of occasions due to Covid – we keep in touch via email/phone. We look forward to in person meetings in the coming months.

The NCG committee reviews, contributes to and comments on many MPS and State policy papers including:

- Mornington Peninsula Strategic Planning
- Sorrento Ocean Beach Road Heritage Significance Overlay C204
- Neighbourhood Character Amendment – now linked to C219
- MPS Climate Change Summit
- Coastal Management Plans, including foreshore management strategies such as the Western Sister and Sorrento Foreshore
- Portsea Beach erosion
- Community strategy plan
- C219 moropen
- Stringer Rd Reserve
- Draft Marine and Coastal Strategy
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Planning





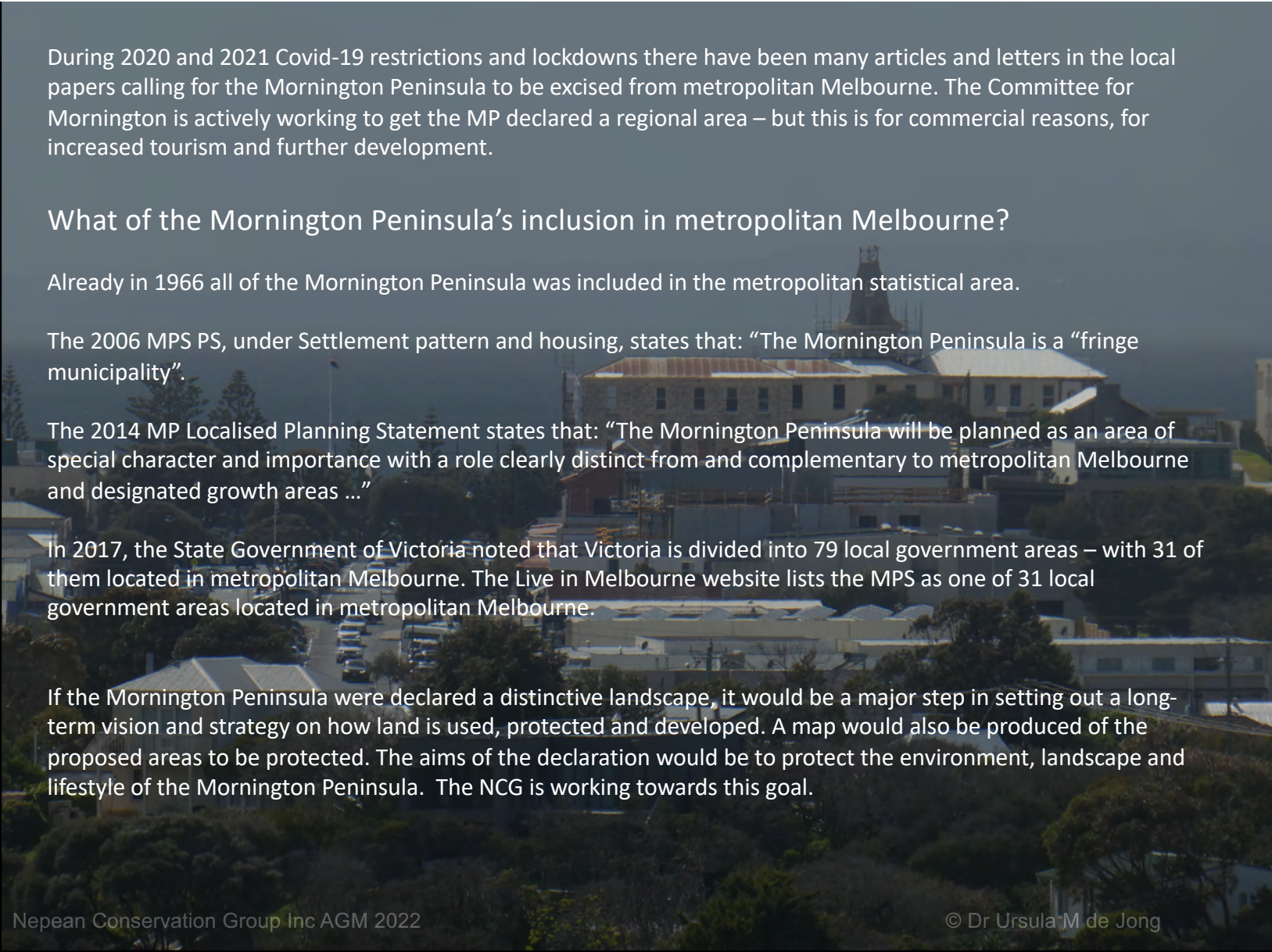
Lindsay Fox in land grab for more Portsea beachfront by Royce Millar and Chris Vedelago July 4, 2020

“Dr Ursula de Jong, president of Nepean Conservation Group, has spoken against the land extension move.”

We continue to advocate for an appropriate outcome ... and respond to permit applications such as “watering the buffalo grass”.

We still await a response from the State Government!

Dr Ursula de Jong, president of Nepean Conservation Group, has spoken against the land extension move.



During 2020 and 2021 Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns there have been many articles and letters in the local papers calling for the Mornington Peninsula to be excised from metropolitan Melbourne. The Committee for Mornington is actively working to get the MP declared a regional area – but this is for commercial reasons, for increased tourism and further development.

What of the Mornington Peninsula's inclusion in metropolitan Melbourne?

Already in 1966 all of the Mornington Peninsula was included in the metropolitan statistical area.

The 2006 MPS PS, under Settlement pattern and housing, states that: “The Mornington Peninsula is a “fringe municipality”.

The 2014 MP Localised Planning Statement states that: “The Mornington Peninsula will be planned as an area of special character and importance with a role clearly distinct from and complementary to metropolitan Melbourne and designated growth areas ...”

In 2017, the State Government of Victoria noted that Victoria is divided into 79 local government areas – with 31 of them located in metropolitan Melbourne. The Live in Melbourne website lists the MPS as one of 31 local government areas located in metropolitan Melbourne.

If the Mornington Peninsula were declared a distinctive landscape, it would be a major step in setting out a long-term vision and strategy on how land is used, protected and developed. A map would also be produced of the proposed areas to be protected. The aims of the declaration would be to protect the environment, landscape and lifestyle of the Mornington Peninsula. The NCG is working towards this goal.

A distinctive area and landscape

In May 2018 in landmark legislation Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Act 2018 was passed to recognise Victoria's most distinctive natural and cultural landscapes.

The Mornington Peninsula, on the fringe of Metropolitan Melbourne, is renowned for excellent beaches, bay and ocean, historic towns and villages, coastal biodiversity, a rural hinterland, valuable green wedges, boutique wineries and artisan producers, offering a wealth of recreation and tourism facilities and amenities. As the yet to be implemented MPS Neighbourhood Character study has revealed, each community is unique and has its own distinct identity.

The area has been experiencing significant development pressure (as demonstrated by the township of Sorrento, the RACF, and the ever increasing Covid-led demand for residential properties across the Nepean Ward) leading to significant threats to the peninsula's valued landscapes and natural areas, as well as its cultural heritage.

There is a need to treat the region as a single, integrated and living entity so that it can be protected for future generations. There is no other place like the Mornington Peninsula.

The Mornington Peninsula community needs to work very hard together if we are to achieve this goal.



The NCG reviewed and submitted a detailed response to the Victorian Draft Marine and Coastal strategy

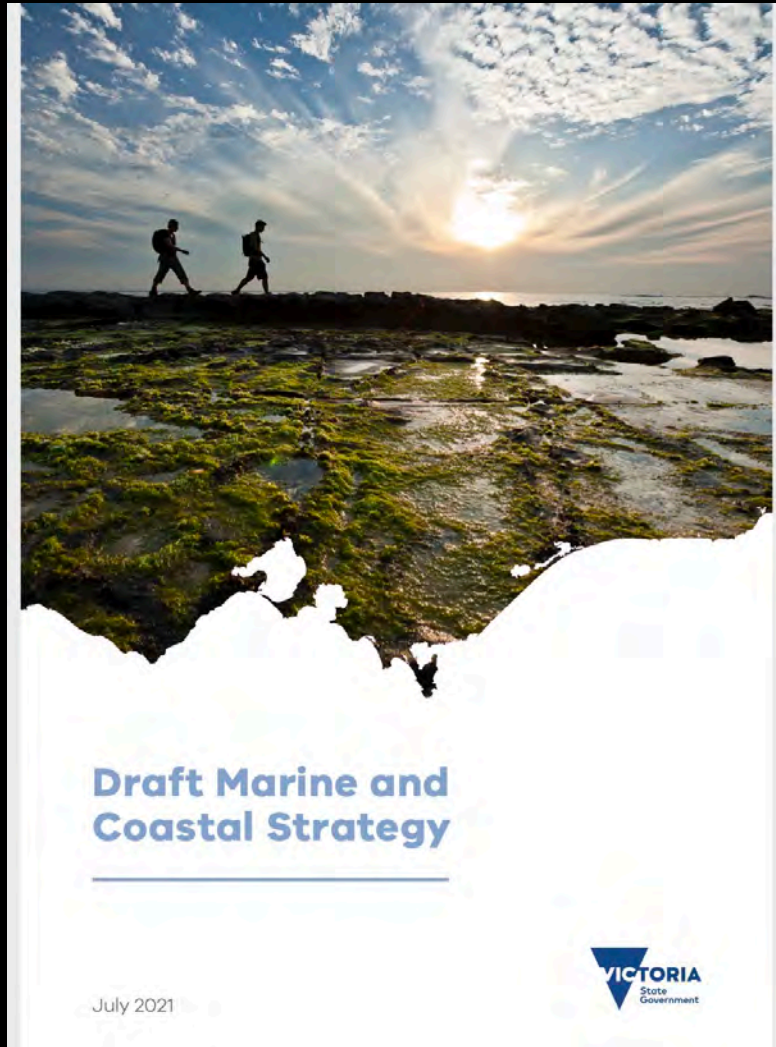
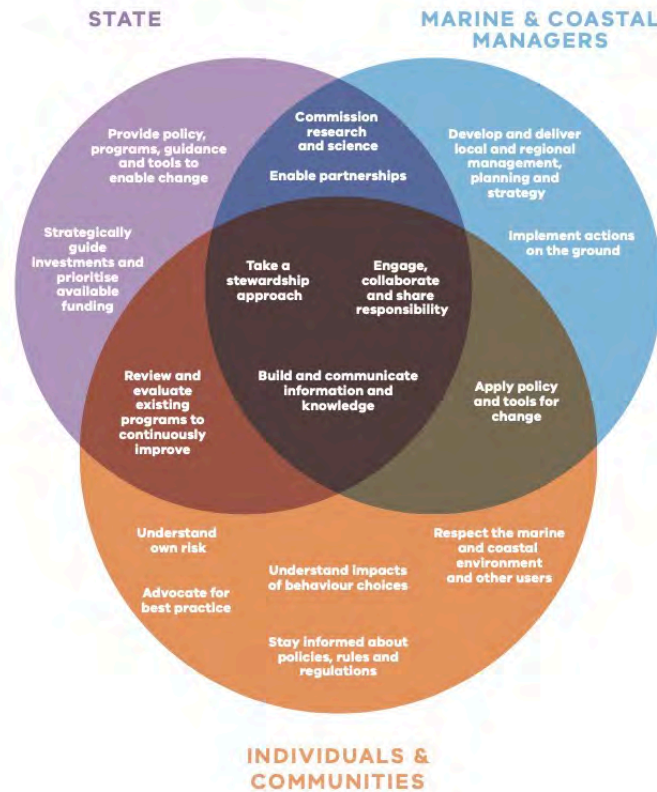


Figure 1: Roles and responsibilities in marine and coastal planning and management. Traditional Owners have roles in all areas.





Sorrento Foreshore Coastal Management plans

The NCG has reviewed and responded to a number of management plans and concept design plans for areas along the Sorrento foreshore. SCAG advises the Shire in greater detail.

We have made a number of general points as well as providing detailed feedback.

We have suggested a holistic integrated approach to place. We are concerned by the multiple jurisdictions and lack of accountability across the foreshore.



Sorrento Foreshore Reserve

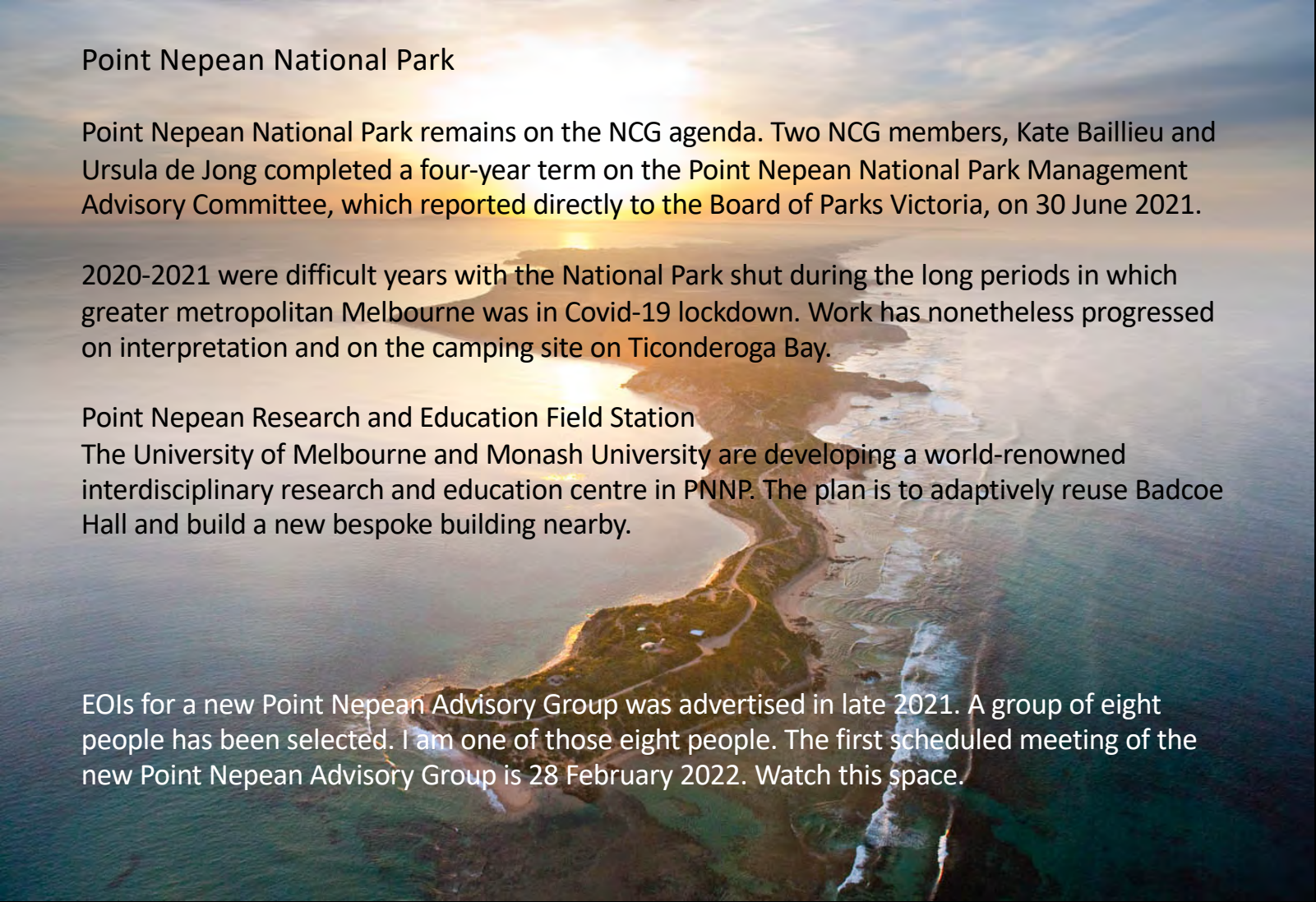


Overall Master plan for the Western Sister – the NCG wrote a lengthy submission incorporating an understanding of the history and natural and cultural heritage values of the site. Thank you to Frank Hindley.



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An aerial photograph of the Point Nepean National Park coastline in Victoria, Australia. The image shows a narrow peninsula jutting into the ocean, with a winding road and some buildings visible. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the water and sky. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue.

Point Nepean National Park

Point Nepean National Park remains on the NCG agenda. Two NCG members, Kate Baillieu and Ursula de Jong completed a four-year term on the Point Nepean National Park Management Advisory Committee, which reported directly to the Board of Parks Victoria, on 30 June 2021.

2020-2021 were difficult years with the National Park shut during the long periods in which greater metropolitan Melbourne was in Covid-19 lockdown. Work has nonetheless progressed on interpretation and on the camping site on Ticonderoga Bay.

Point Nepean Research and Education Field Station

The University of Melbourne and Monash University are developing a world-renowned interdisciplinary research and education centre in PNNP. The plan is to adaptively reuse Badcoe Hall and build a new bespoke building nearby.

EOIs for a new Point Nepean Advisory Group was advertised in late 2021. A group of eight people has been selected. I am one of those eight people. The first scheduled meeting of the new Point Nepean Advisory Group is 28 February 2022. Watch this space.



The NCG can report on
successful grant applications

NCG works with the MPS and PV to co-ordinate Friends Groups to restore habitat and biodiversity across many bushland reserves. In 2021 we reported that we were successful in getting three grants to help in this work: MPS place making grant (\$5k); Bendigo Bank Community Grant (\$2.5k) and a South East Water Community Grant (\$2k). We have successfully completed work using this money to reduce weeds and restore habitat.

The NCG can report on successful grant applications – the South East Water grant (\$2k) was completed and reported on in December 2021; MPS Placemaking grant (\$5k) was completed and signed off in January 2022. Works included weeding and rehabilitation of habitat in small pocket bushland reserves, and at St Johns Wood Road carpark end.



St Johns Wood Road carpark: May spraying; August mulching followed by tube stock planting. Naturelinks and Friends. 2021



The NCG can report on successful grant applications – 2021 Port Philip Bay Fund received \$48,597 from DELWP Stewardship of the Bay: conserving coastal habitat Portsea to Rye.

Our aim: Addressing environmental threats by removing invasive species - woody weeds (such as sweet pittosporum, polygala, and scramblers (including dolichos, blue periwinkle, and cape ivy), and sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) which displaces local species, colonises open sandy areas favoured by certain nesting birds. Our plan: The Nepean Conservation Group will work with the Mornington Peninsula Shire, volunteers and contractors will conduct on-ground coastal bushland management works to remove woody weeds and scramblers and hand-weed ground flora weed plots. Our outcome: The improvement of the overall extent and condition of the Bay's natural ecosystems by restoring habitat and replanting.



Map 1. Police Point-woody and scrambler weeds.

Map 2. Sorrento Western Sister-woody and scrambler weeds. Ground flora weeds in selected plots only.

Map 3. Sorrento Eastern Sister-woody and scrambler weeds

Map 4. Rye foreshore-woody and scrambler weeds.

Not shown on maps: sea spurge control from Shirlow Ave Rye to Whitecliffs kiln, and Hughes Rd to Police Point.

Progress report due end of Feb 2022.

The NCG can report on successful grant applications: Sorrento Foreshore bushland reserve \$30k with Richard Holland and the Friends Group and Contractor Naturelinks, led by Dan Suffern. Work commenced 15 February 2022



Our Friends Groups make a difference

for biodiversity by caring for bushland parks and coastal reserves, for flora and fauna, for habitat on the Nepean Peninsula

Mornington Peninsula Shire Groups:

- *Dimmick's Bushland Reserve (Carlake Ave)*
- *E G Ritchie Flora and Fauna Memorial Reserve*
- *Rye Foreshore*
- *Sid Baker Reserve*
- *Slips Reserve*
- *Tuckey Track Reserve*
- *Sullivan Bay and Western Sister*
- *Sorrento Foreshore*
- *Friends of Bridgewater Bay Jack Ritchie Track*
- *Tyrone Foreshore*
- *Bridgewater Bay area 6 small reserves*
- *St JohnsWood Road Carpark*



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New reserves underway in MPS:

- *Police Point Shire Park*
- *Moonah Warren Bushland Reserve*
- *St Johns Road Linear Bushland Park*

Working with Parks Victoria

- *Friends of Spray Point Wild Coast Conservation Group Inc*
- *Friends of Diamond Bay*

PV, the MPS and the NCG thank all our volunteers and welcome you to join one or more groups ...

Image: Reclaiming the verges – E G Ritchie and Sid Baker Bushland Reserves





World Wetland Day was celebrated on Sunday 30 January 2022 at Tootgarook, with thanks to Rob McNaught and the folks at Boneo Park Equestrian Centre for providing access and infrastructure.

Although often referred to as a swamp, Tootgarook is a pristine example of a coastal fen!

Thanks to the NCG committee for manning the marque from 7.00 am -1.00 pm.





NCG Strategic roadmap 2022/2023

Governance

Review the Rules of the Association – special meeting of NCG Inc to be called in mid 2022

Membership

Membership drive continues, alerting the wider Nepean community to our significant work and inviting them to support us

Environment

Short term: Biodiversity workshop (2022 date to be advised)

Medium term: Planning policy

Long term: Distinctive landscape

Ongoing: Friends Groups

Engagement

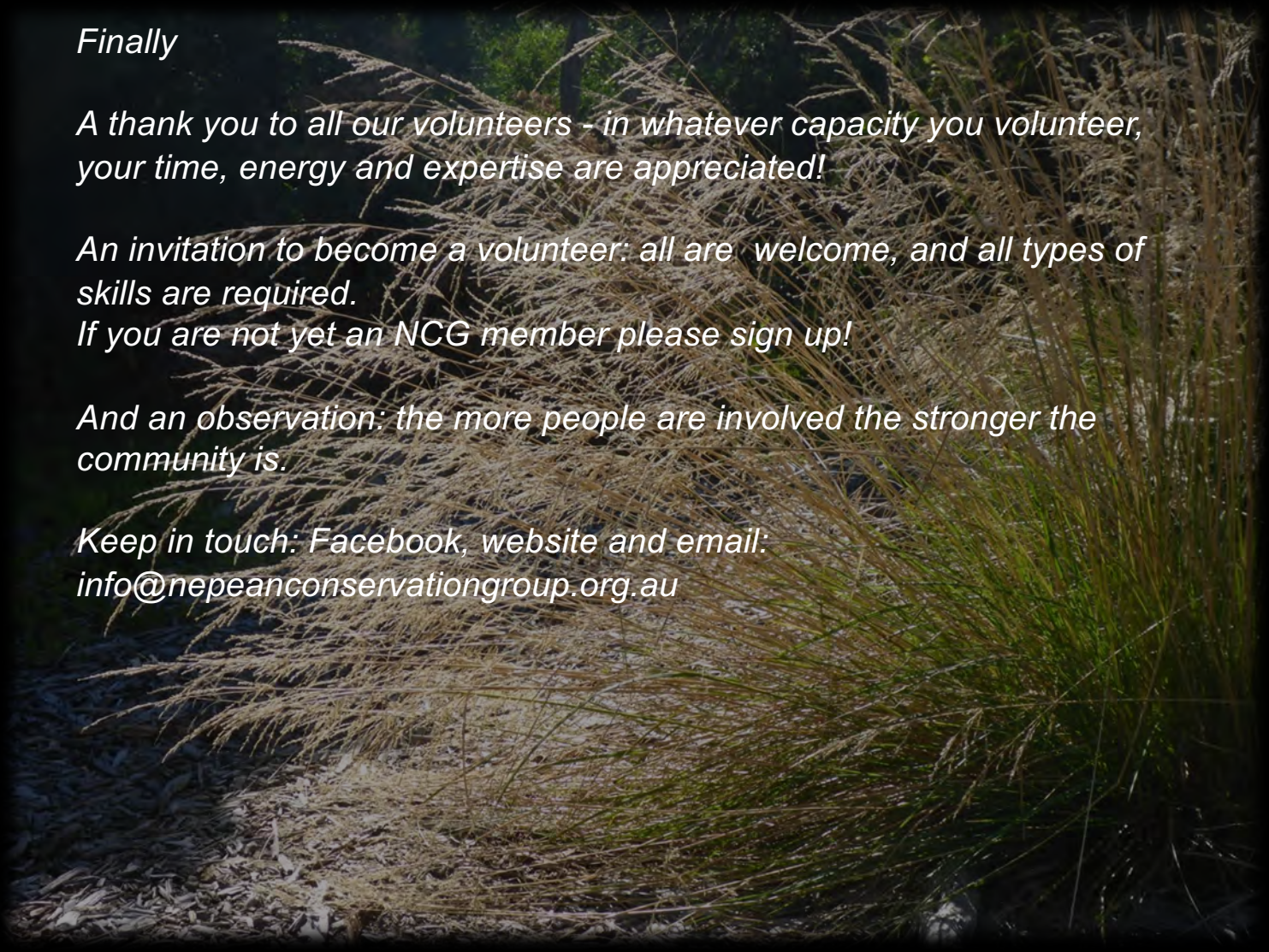
Business: local and state government, community groups and organisations

Members: regular communication

Broader community: sell ourselves

Join with Mornington Peninsula Landcare Groups

Join with other like-minded groups



Finally

A thank you to all our volunteers - in whatever capacity you volunteer, your time, energy and expertise are appreciated!

An invitation to become a volunteer: all are welcome, and all types of skills are required.

If you are not yet an NCG member please sign up!

And an observation: the more people are involved the stronger the community is.

*Keep in touch: Facebook, website and email:
info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au*