



NEPEAN RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Engaging the Nepean Ward in supporting a sustainable community

NEWSLETTER – May 2023

Dear Members

Hopefully, this Newsletter finds you all in good health.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 12 May at the Rye Hotel. Thanks are once again extended to Peter Houghton for providing the Blue Water Room as a venue. Peter is a great supporter of local volunteer groups.

Thanks to those who attended.

Attendance at our AGMs has been dwindling in recent years and this year's AGM was no exception. We have tried different things each year including: varying the days and times for the meetings, inviting guest speakers, inviting councillors to provide updates on Council activities and promoting the meeting as a community forum. Unfortunately, attendance has remained stubbornly low.

While numbers were small the discussions and ideas generated were interesting and most welcome.

We would be interested in feedback identifying what we can do to encourage you to attend our AGMs in the future.

New Committee

Six people were elected to the Committee: Colin Watson, Graeme Hill, Joan Hoskins, Mechelle Cheers, Jill Sands and Richard Doery.

Retiring Committee Members

Two of our most experienced and hard-working committee members decided to not stand again for re-election, they are Christine Granger and Michael Batchelor.

Christine has been a member of the committee since 2005 and during this time her contributions have been invaluable. Christine has been the secretary, managed memberships, monitored all planning applications, established our online communications, managed our files and archives and written countless letters to Council and State Government supporting the many campaigns and issues the NRA has been involved with over this time. We will miss her enthusiasm, dedication and corporate knowledge of all workings within council and State Government Departments.

Michael has been on the committee for more than 20 years and has been our Treasurer for all that time, Michael will also be sadly missed as his contributions on many issues was valued.

I wish them both all the best for the future and if they ever get bored they will both be welcomed back.

Invitation to Join the Committee

The NRA Committee is under significant operational pressure, with only six members to cover the workload which has increased with Christine and Michael's departure.

The NRA:

- provides advice and assistance where possible on local issues and planning matters.
- makes submissions to Government and Council on local planning and environmental issues.
- monitors the performance and effectiveness of Council and Councillors.
- lobby Government and Council for improved services and to provide value for money with our rates.
- liases with and supports other community groups as requested.
- informs members of important issues by email and produces regular newsletters outlining our activities and successes.

Without adding any new matters, the NRA will be closely following and monitoring the progress of the following projects:

- Sorrento Ferry Terminal Upgrade including planned traffic management improvements.
- Coastal and Marine Management Plans for Portsea, Sorrento and Rye.
- Foreshore Management Plans at Portsea, Sorrento, Rye and Blairgowrie.
- Draft concept plans for Sullivan Bay Car Park Area, Webster Corner and the Western Sister Foreshore.
- Rye Township Plan.
- Footpaths, pedestrian access and safety, and bike paths.
- Waste treatment and disposal.
- The future of Shire appointed Coastal Advisory Groups.
- Portsea Front Beach.

Our six Committee members are volunteers and have lives, so the hours they can devote to NRA matters is not endless. We are at risk of not being able to effectively advocate on behalf of ratepayers to ensure that our part of the Peninsula continues to be a wonderful place to live.

We need new committee members to help share the load.

If you can assist in some way or know someone who you think can help, please contact one of the Committee Members.

Declining Membership

Given what you have already read, it will be no surprise that our membership is also declining.

At the Community Forum, following the AGM, lots of ideas were discussed for increasing membership. Some suggestions included:

- Increasing the community profile of the NRA
- Increasing use of social media
- Opening all committee meetings to members
- Distributing Agendas to members prior to Committee meetings
- Increase the use of social media e.g., Facebook to promote the NRA and engage with the Community.
- Dinner meetings to encourage social interaction between members.
- Using community notice boards, flyers and newspaper articles to promote the work of the NRA.
- Update membership records to include skills, experience and networks.

All are great suggestions but will mostly add to the workload of our already stretched Committee but will be considered and acted on where possible.

Local Area Development Plans

As an action to implement the Mornington Peninsula Shire (MPS) *Council and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021 - 2025*, the MPS is initiating the development of Local Area Development Plans for Peninsula townships.

These plans aim to document all projects and strategies applicable to each township in one place for easy reference. The three themes underpinning these plans are: A healthy, natural environment and well-planned townships; A robust, innovative and diverse economy; and A flourishing healthy and connected community.

As a pilot, MPS is developing a plan for the Blairgowrie, Sorrento and Portsea townships. The Nepean

Ratepayers Association has been invited to contribute to this plan.

MPS has been working with the Blairgowrie Action Group, chaired by Richard Doery to identify activities occurring in Blairgowrie. To further inform this work, a community consultation is taking place on Monday 5 June, at the Blairgowrie Community Hall, 8 William Street, Blairgowrie from 4.00pm to 6.00pm.

While this consultation will focus on Blairgowrie, it will be of interest to residents of Portsea and Sorrento as well, as it is an opportunity to find out more about the local development plans and their potential benefits to the community.

We are advised that similar consultation will occur focussing on Sorrento and Portsea in July or August.

This is an exciting initiative and a great opportunity to document and follow all local community initiatives currently underway and planned.

Member Survey – Local Area Development Plans

In April we emailed all members a link to an online survey aiming to gain a broad understanding of what you value about the Nepean Ward and what you would like to see improve. The Survey did have some technical issues that resulted in difficulties in responding for some.

A third of the recipients did respond which provided some valuable data for us and will help us contribute to the development of the Local Area Development Plans for Blairgowrie, Sorrento and Portsea.

In summary the most valued aspects were: the bay and ocean beaches; a healthy natural environment; our national parks; parks and gardens and recreational reserves and our historical places.

The most important services provided by MPS were: rubbish removal and recycling; maintenance of roads and footpaths; and management of foreshores, reserves and open spaces.

Concerns raised included: the protection of the natural environment; poor maintenance of foreshore reserves; poor maintenance of roads, footpaths and traffic efficiency; availability and access to beach and foreshore reserves amenities; preserving the seaside village and historical character; improved sporting facilities; and fire risk reduction.

NRA Website

Our website is our primary way of keeping members up to date so make sure you are a regular visitor.

You can easily provide feedback, become a member, and check out some of the issues that the NRA engages in via our website.

You can comment, make suggestions, raise issues, and express opinions via the feedback page. These comments will be reviewed by the NRA Committee, and we can contact you to discuss further.

Our web address is <https://www.nepeanratepayers.com>

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