



NEPEAN CONSERVATION NEWS

SUMMER 2020



August 2019 ramble, Tyrone foreshore. Photo: Eddy de Jong

December 2019 ramble, Flinders St Reserve Rye. Photo: Ursula de Jong.



From the President

The NCG newsletters this year have been sporadic – and we have used the email to communicate with many of you. For the first time ever, this Newsletter will arrive electronically and be available on our website before it is printed as I have simply run out of time before the Christmas/ New Year shut down.

As I write serious fires ring so much of Australia: parts of Queensland and WA, SA, NSW and Victoria. Heat waves roll over our dry drought-stricken continent. Little if any rain in sight as summer settles in Victoria. Cool days and nights interspersed with a 40 degree day here and there have been our pattern till now. Our December E G Ritchie working bee was cool and drizzly – we got a lot of weeding done, mulched bare patches and repaired the walking track for summer. We were accompanied by the blue wren and his harem, the yellow breasted robin, two cheeky fantails, and others too shy to make themselves visible. Our Christmas present however was an echidna joining us for morning tea! As it wandered around, hiding under logs when we were too noisy, checking its territory, finding ants, we reflected on just how important caring for our local habitat really is. For over 25 years a small group has been meeting for two or three hours once a month. It began with clearing out rubbish, then weeding and removing introduced species, then a little planting, more weeding, reclaiming habitat, learning on the ground, nurturing biodiversity, educating neighbours to appreciate their bushland reserve and not dump rubbish and garden waste. We have been ably supported by the Shire, over recent years particularly by Dan Suffern and her Naturelinks Team. Friendships have

developed. Children love secret places in a magical forest; the community enjoys a walk in nature. Our small group has begun to move into other reserves when ours needs less work. Volunteers really are part of the ecosystem. So a big thank you to all our Friends Groups – your commitment, generosity and hard work is valued a thousandfold. This newsletter is in two parts – in one dedicated to our Friends Groups we pay tribute to all our “friends” and report on our August ramble at Tyrone Foreshore, the October one at Tootgarook swamp and our December ramble and BBQ at our newest reserve: Flinders Street Rye.

The second part of the newsletter reports on some of our other work. Planning continues to occupy us at multiple levels. We report on the Shire fire risk study; the Continental Hotel; on Ocean Beach Road; on vegetation clearance; on development; on jetties; on major erosion bay and ocean side. We ask that you read with interest and advise where you can help support the NCG in its mission: to lead and inspire the community to appreciate, recognise, conserve, protect and celebrate the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Nepean Peninsula.

I thank the NCG committee for their dedication and work over 2019; I thank our members for their support, and stepping up when needed. I look forward to meeting many of you at our 2020 AGM. I take this opportunity to wish you and your families blessings of the season – enjoy your times together in this most beautiful place on earth and may it provide some respite in these devastating times - and all the best for 2020.

Ursula de Jong

NCG Friends Groups - volunteers partnering with the Shire and /or Parks Victoria to care for coastal bushland reserves on the Nepean Peninsula.

The Nepean Peninsula is an area of great natural beauty and significant biodiversity but sadly, it is becoming more and more urbanised. Native vegetation continues to be removed and the unique character of the Peninsula is in danger of being lost.

How do we respond to this challenge? The Friends Groups who work as volunteers on 50+ bushland reserves across the Peninsula are central to the management and protection of the biodiversity of the Peninsula. The NCG has an MOU with the Mornington Peninsula Shire, currently looking after 19 bushland reserves on the Nepean Peninsula.



*Working bee Western Sister 2019.
Photo: Rob Varney.*

Friends Groups

Friends Groups work to preserve, enhance and restore the natural values of an area. They nurture flora and fauna to foster biodiversity. They weed and plant; they harvest seeds whenever possible; they mulch and water when necessary. They promote engagement with the natural environment which we all know is so important to community well-being. They provide opportunities for friendship and to share a common purpose for the good of the community. Most importantly they get things done.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Friends Group Manual lists 412 working bees which planted 9,600 indigenous tubes, filled 2500 weed bags and produced 400 cubic metres of green waste in 2018/2019.

Each Friends Group is led by a Coordinator who liaises regularly with the Bushland Management Team, scheduling and organising regular working bees – these range from twice yearly to monthly, with extras in between as necessary. The Shire and NCG provide insurance for all volunteers working in a Friends Group in the Nepean Peninsula as part of the MOU, subject to conditions outlined in the Mornington Peninsula Shire Friends Group Manual.

The Bushland Management Team is made up of the Shire's Natural Systems Team (Simon Thorning and Hannah Brown are our main contacts) and the Management contractor, Naturelinks, Danielle Suffern and her team. MPS coordinates a Friends Group Network and produces a bi-annual newsletter.

Nepean Conservation Group (NCG) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with) Mornington Peninsula Shire (MPS)

The NCG which covers the Nepean Peninsula, and the local government area known as the Nepean Ward, has an MOU with the MPS. This MOU has a number of purposes, ensuring insurance and funding for each group listed below, and making sure that annual work plans are agreed with MPS, that they are developed, implemented and reported to Council every year.

Of the sites listed under the NCG MPS MOU, some are well advanced in clearing weeds, restoring the site and providing walking tracks. Others have further work required to remove weed infestation and rubbish, provide walking tracks and restore vegetation. Others still, are waiting for a Friends Group to be formed.



Friends appropriately attired for a working bee – Alex models high vis vest, gloves, mask, long sleeves and long pants, and sturdy shoes. To complete the outfit – he should also have a sun hat and glasses. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

The NCG is grateful to Friends Group Coordinators for providing information, and to NCG Friends Co-ordinators John Trewarne and Rhonda Day. The NCG has also accessed the MPS naming of the reserves document: <https://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/new-website-documents/building-amp-planning/heritage/docs/naming-of-the-reserves.pdf> This report is a beginning! We look forward to continuing to gather information and stories and compiling the histories of our Friends Groups and the bushland reserves they care for. We invite you to send information, photos, milestones and updates to the NCG: info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au



Friends of E G Ritchie Reserve, busy mulching. Photo: Eddy de Jong.

Friends of Bridgewater Bay

Established in 2013, Friends of Bridgewater Bay aim to work with the local residents to improve the habitat of the neighbourhood. This includes nature strips and drainage reserves to create linked corridors of vegetation for our local fauna. Bridgewater Private Streets Maintenance Association (BPSMA) have donated funds towards this project. Jack Ritchie Track Bushland Reserve, 51 Dana Avenue Blairgowrie (Melway 167 D4) is currently the focus of the work of the Friends of Bridgewater Bay. This large block of land has been set aside by the MPS. It has a defined walking track through the reserve linking to the Mornington Peninsula National Park. It is in poor condition

and requires a management plan and further action. To date weeding has been supported by Naturelinks and an NCG place making grant through the MPS. Meet 1st Friday of the month, 9.00am-11.00am. Contact Kate:

friendsofbridgewaterbay@gmail.com

Friends of Dimmicks Bushland Reserve

Mungala Crescent Sth, Blairgowrie (Melway 167 G7). The reserve adjoins Mornington Peninsula National Park. It is in good condition with few weeds and a defined walking track through the reserve. Signs at Carlslake and Mungala entrances to Dimmicks Beach refer to "Dimmicks Bushland Reserve" and the Friends Group. Harold and Barbara Dimmick owned much of the land around where this

reserve now stands. The section walked through to get access to the beach is the bushland reserve. This followed successful action by locals in 1999 against a proposal by the Shire to sell off these blocks which provide access into the National Park cliff walks and Dimmicks Beach. The Friends of Dimmicks Bushland Reserve meet on the 1st Sunday of each month at 10am. Contact: Keith Murley 5988 9124

Friends of the E G Ritchie Memorial Bushland Reserve

The E G Ritchie Memorial Bushland Reserve, corner Dana Ave and Summoner Street Blairgowrie (Melway 167 D5). The reserve is named for Edgar Gowar Ritchie (1871-1956), a public servant and engineer, who was born on 15 July 1871 at Kew, Melbourne, son of Frederick Henry Ritchie (1841-1909) clerk, and his wife Eliza, née Kirwood, both English born. His father became Secretary to the Board of Trade and chief clerk of the Victorian Railways, and secretary to the minister. Jack and Kathleen Ritchie gave six blocks of land as a flora fauna memorial reserve to the MPS, named in honour of their father. The MPS has since added another block to this reserve. Jack Ritchie was a former President of the Nepean Conservation Group, when it was the Portsea, Sorrento Blairgowrie Conservation Group. A Friends Group was first formed in

1996, at the instigation of Mardi Carpenter. A group of friends has met every month since! The E G Ritchie Memorial Bushland Reserve is in good condition with few weeds and a defined walking track through the reserve.

Friends activities include weeding, planting, track maintenance and overall management of the reserve. In some months the E G Ritchie friends work in another bushland reserve close by. New members are always welcome. The Friends Group meet for a working bee on the first Sunday of every month 9:00-11:30 am (except January). Contact Ursula de Jong president@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au or Margaret Finger 5988 8882



Above: Dimmicks Friends working bee 2019; MPS signage at Sid Baker Bushland reserve, 2019.

Friends of Rye Foreshore

The main task of the Friends of Rye Foreshore is to conserve and revegetate the bushland areas from Rye Yacht Club to Whitecliffs Hill. However, sessions can include clearing beach paths and being involved in projects such as the up and coming Whitecliffs project and the conversion of a foreshore storm water drain into an attractive biofiltration plant. One of our projects involves removing gazanias (African daisies) from the Rye Foreshore and revegetating with indigenous grasses (eg hairy spinifex and Australian salt grass) and shrubs (eg saltbush and bearded heath). The group meets at 10 am (finishing at 12noon) on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. New members are always very welcome. People can choose to come for half an hour or the full 2 hours. Every bit of time given helps. Co-ordinator: Mechelle Cheers.
Contact Mechelle: 3941RCGA@gmail.com

Friends of Sid Baker Bushland Reserve

15-17 Summoner Street Blairgowrie (Melway 167 E4). This is a small bushland reserve with no facilities. It is named after a former Councillor in the Shire. Sydney Alfred Baker was a Flinders Shire Councillor (1948-65).
In 1948 Syd Baker, licensee of the Continental Hotel, Sorrento, won

the Shire of Flinders' seat of North Riding unopposed after it was vacated by David Macfarlan. The Friends Group manages the reserve and conducts weeding and planting. The reserve is in good condition with few weeds and a defined walking path through the reserve to Dana Ave. The Friends Group meets on the 3rd Sunday in alternate months from 10am-12noon.
Contact Suzie MacFarlane:
macfarlanesuzie@gmail.com

Friends of Slips Reserve

Slips Reserve, Blairgowrie (Melway 167 CD1). The reserve is in fair condition with weed clearing and a management plan in progress. The Friends Group meets monthly on the second Monday on the month, 1.30pm - 3.30pm.
Contact Chris Ekinsmyth: 59887014

Friends of Sullivan Bay and Western Sister

Sorrento (Melway 157 F1). The Friends Group have worked very hard to remove polygala. They have also done a lot of planting. They were recipients of a grant, and had the help of the Green Army. The Friends Group meets on the 4th Friday of each month at 2:00pm. A number of the friends avail themselves of the opportunity of a wonderful swim at Sullivan Bay after the working bee!
Contact Richard Holland: 0412 429 160



Volunteers work to clean up weeds in the Western Sister area. Photo: Rob Varney.

Tuckey Track Friends Group

(Melway 157 D10) Sorrento. Tuckey Track Friends Group is engaged in the restoration of Coastal Moonah Woodland habitat which characterises this part of the Nepean Peninsula. The Tuckey Track travels from the western sister headland at Port Phillip, through Tuckey Track Bush-land Reserve to St Paul's Look out at Bass Strait. The group is also involved in heritage projects associated with the historic Collins Settlement site. Thanks to the dedicated volunteers, the Tuckey Track is now well underway to becoming a restored Coastal Moonah Woodland area of indigenous flora and fauna. Coastal Moonah Woodland is listed as an 'Endangered Vegetation Class'

under the Flora Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. The Shire at times makes indigenous tube stock available for planting. The Friends Group has been supported by NCG, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Parks Victoria, Nepean Historical Society and other community groups over the years. Grants have been used to re-vegetate the bushland reserve. Interpretive signs have been installed throughout the self-guided walk.

Tuckey Track Friends Group combines observation, education, weeding, planting and socialising in its working bees and also has an online, informal quarterly newsletter. Working bees are on the 3rd Sunday of the month, four times a year. Contact Julie Corridon: juliecorridon@hotmail.com



Friends of Tyrone Foreshore. Photos: Ursula de Jong.

Friends of Tyrone Foreshore

Located in the town of Rye on the Mornington Peninsula, Tyrone Foreshore Reserve is a favourite of campers and beachgoers. It has been identified by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (now DELWP) as an area of environmental significance, with endangered and rare plant species. The aim of Friends of Tyrone Foreshore is to preserve and enhance the natural values of this reserve. The secondary aim is to raise awareness in the local community of the environmental values of Tyrone Foreshore. Monthly meetings on alternating Saturdays

and Sundays at 10 am for working bees, targeting invasive plant species. Contact Terese: 0413 234 130 or TereseDalman@gmail.com



Friends Groups Needed

The following bushland reserves are included in the NCG MPS MOU and Friends Groups have not yet been formally formed. We would love to hear from you if you are a friend of these reserves, would like to be part of a friends' group, and / or co ordinate a friends' group. Help is available and support is provided through the MPS Naturelinks.

Fawkner Avenue Bushland Reserve,
25-31 Fawkner Ave Blairgowrie

Tyrone Bushland Reserve also known as Hibiscus Grove Reserve,
7-17 Hibiscus Grove, Rye

After years of negotiating, the following drainage reserves are

now included in the NCG MPS MOU. The NCG had a 2018 place making grant from the MPS to begin work on these small reserves, work completed in 2019. As well work has been done on these sites by nearby Friends Groups, in particular the Friends of Bridgewater Bay, Friends of E G Ritchie and Friends of Sid Baker, as well as by neighbours. Formal Friends Groups have not yet been formed. We would love to hear from you if you would like to be part of a small friends' group, and / or co-ordinate a friends' group for one or more of the following reserves:

- 36 Dana Ave Blairgowrie
- 10 Dana Ave Blairgowrie
- 12 Hilltop Ave Blairgowrie
- 57 Ridley Street Blairgowrie
- 12 Arnold Street Blairgowrie
- 13 Sinclair Street Blairgowrie



Revegetation of 13 Sinclair St. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Update of the MOU

The NCG MPS MOU will be updated in 2020 to include:

Police Point Shire Park:

Co-ordinator Danielle Suffern-
DanielleSuffern@Naturelinks.com.au

St Johns Road Linear Bushland Park:

The NCG and Community 3942 received a grant in the Shire budget to plan the development of this bushland reserve and to undertake a study to calm the road traffic in St Johns Wood Road.

Contact:

info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

Flinders Street Bushland Reserve

50 Flinders Street Rye
Contact: Inez Dussuyer
-iddussuyer@hotmail.com
or Dennis Toth
d.toth@ozemail.com.au

Following a campaign by the community which commenced in mid 2017, the Shire has recently acquired 3.1 hectares of bushland at 50 Flinders Street, Rye from the Department of Education (DOE) for use as a public reserve to preserve the flora and fauna values of the site and save the land for community use. The bushland adjoins a small Shire owned children's playground at Milton Reserve.

DOE had intended to build a school on the land. In 2012 it commissioned a report by Biosis Research which found that this was a valuable conservation site. The area was habitat for more than fifty indigenous plant species, some listed as vulnerable or endangered, and many species of birds. It concluded that the study area supports a significant remnant of native vegetation in an otherwise residential area. It has very high

conservation significance according to DELWP criteria including habitat for the nationally significant Leafy Greenhood.

This area provides rare open space in the centre of Rye and can also become a valuable educational reserve for the community to learn about the biodiversity of the Nepean Peninsula on the Mornington Peninsula.

NCG has recently made a successful budget submission to MPS for \$20,000 to develop and implement a Community Engagement project. This will ensure the community will be consulted and able to contribute to the management of the site. We hope that the site will be given a local indigenous name in the near future.

Two friends' groups work with the Shire and Parks Victoria

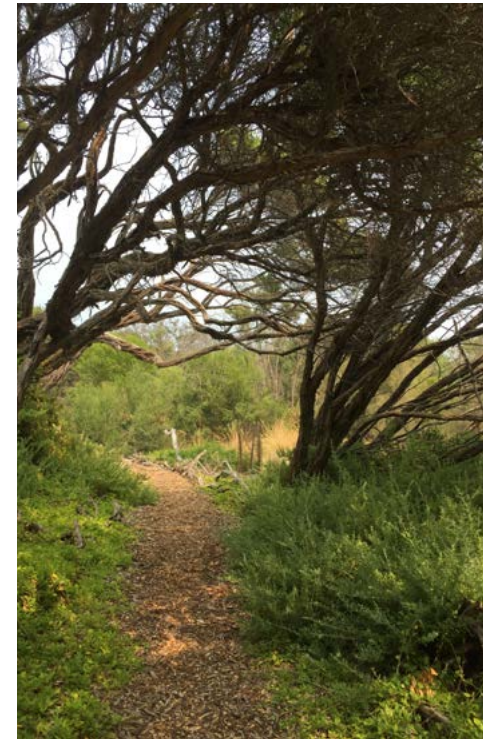
Friends of Spray Point Wild Coast Conservation Group Inc

Blairgowrie (Melway 167 B2). The Friends Group is active with a committee, working bees, annual planting and a newsletter. The Friends work in the Mornington Peninsula National Park and with neighbours on street verges. Contact Anne Hayman: 0402 049 797

Friends of Diamond Bay (Melway 157 B 11) (Parks Victoria). The aim of Diamond Bay Friends Group is to preserve and enhance the natural values of this area. The Friends work at the interface between Shire and the Mornington Peninsula National Park. The Friends Group meets monthly for working bees, targeting invasive plant species, weeding and planting new plants on the 2nd Friday each month at 9.30 am. Contact Richard Holland: hollandr@ozemail.com.au



Weed removal 13 Sinclair. Photo: Ursula de Jong



Cleaned up, and mulched track through E G Ritchie Reserve. Photo: Ursula de Jong



August 2019 ramble, at Rye Lime Kiln. Photo: Ursula de Jong

NCG 2019 Rambles

NCG Winter ramble – Sunday 18

August 2019 9.30 – 11.30 am
A blustery wind greeted a small group at Rye pier. We walked along the beach, the foreshore and eventually joined the Friends of the Tyrone Foreshore to discuss their work, their challenges and their achievements. We explored the historic Lime Kiln and climbed to the top of Whitecliffs Lookout to admire the expansive views all the way to the Melbourne skyline some 80km away. We were particularly impressed with the stands of ancient moonahs which framed our views of the bay. We considered the measures that the friends had taken to protect the moonahs from “mountain bikie-gangs”, who made trenches and paths in the dunes,

disturbing roots and prostrate trunks. Weeds and erosion and rubbish dumping were of greatest concern to the Friends of the Tyrone Foreshore.

NCG Spring Ramble – Sunday 12
October 2019, 12.00 – 2.00pm
Members of the Nepean Conservation Group were invited to join a Trust for Nature WALK AND TALK IN TOOTGAROOK SWAMP held at 12 Noon on the 12th October 2019 at 312 Boneo Rd Boneo. This event was an opportunity for landholders and others to understand how to protect properties now and for the future. Participants were able to walk around a property that has a conservation covenant and heard from local experts about local plants and animals. This site is home to a diverse range of plants and animals

and participants were asked to bring cameras to photograph birds and the wetlands. A number of our members reported a wonderful walk and talk, and a great opportunity to be part of a Trust for Nature event.

The Beach-nesting Bird Project 26 October 2019

NCG members were invited to The Beach-nesting Bird Project by BirdLife Australia, which ran two beach walk and talk sessions on the Ocean Beaches of the Mornington Peninsula on October 26th, 2019. Are you interested in learning about the birds that call your local beaches home? Did you know that there are threatened birds nesting on your local beaches? Walkers joined experts from BirdLife Australia and Parks Victoria on the beach for an informative walk to learn more about the quirky behaviours of these persistent birds, the threats they face and how people can help them survive!
St Andrews Beach carpark, end



December 2019 ramble, Flinders St Reserve Rye. Photo: Eddy de Jong

of Paradise Drive. Saturday 26th October @11:00 am. And Koonya Beach carpark, end of Hughes Road. Saturday 26th October @ 3:00 pm. If you missed out, similar programs will be offered in 2020.

NCG Summer ramble – Sunday 8
December 2019 9.30 – 12.00 noon
Moonah Woodland Reserve, 50 Flinders Street Rye, meeting point 45 Milton Road Rye, met at 9.15 am for a 9.30 start. The parcel adjacent to Milton Road Bushland Reserve has recently been acquired by the Shire, after a successful campaign by the Nepean Conservation Group. We had over 70 people come to celebrate, joining us for a guided walk with local ecologist Gidja Walker to explore the reserves natural values, followed by a BBQ lunch with vegetarian options available, Gerard and Hannah and team from MPS cooking. It was a fabulous morning, and a great opportunity to meet with many NCG members, the broader local community and hear people’s concerns, hopes, suggestions and visions for the future. It was a wonderful opportunity to thank our many Friends Groups for the wonderful work they do. The NCG is very optimistic about forming a Friends group in early 2020 for Flinders St Rye – with numbers of people already volunteering.

December 2019/ January 2020

The fire situation in Australia is just devastating. Many small communities have been burnt to the ground, so many homes lost, so much of our environment has just gone with millions and millions of hectares burnt – our ecology devastated, our native animals and birds gone. Thousands of dead birds reported on the shores at Mallacoota. So much of SE Australia is burning, and authorities are now concerned that the coastal fires in NSW and Victoria will join up, and that the alpine fires in NSW and Victoria will also join up. The fires have been so hot and ferocious that recovery will take decades, some suggest a century. We have severe drought in much of the country, climate change, high temperatures and very low humidity, a toxic combination.

Bevan Shields, Europe correspondent for *The Age*, 3 January 2020, in an article on “Britain’s big shift from coal”, notes that “Renewable energy has overtaken fossil fuels to become Britain’s largest source of electricity in a historic shift that could signal the beginning of the end for coal across Europe. National Grid data released on New Year’s Day revealed coal represented just 2.1% of Britain’s overall electricity output in 2019. By comparison, black

and brown coal fuelled 74% of Australia’s energy mix in 2018”. Shields also reported that the royal family has just launched “the most prestigious environmental prize in history to find 50 solutions to climate change over the next decade”. We may well ask, where is the leadership in Australia acknowledging the catastrophic reality of global warming and the need to act.

The PM Scott Morrison continues to insist that “Australia’s existing emissions reduction policies will do enough to protect the environment and seek to reduce bushfire risks”, at a time when “Fires spewed two-thirds of national emissions” [*Mike Foley, The Age 3 January 2020*]. Australia’s bushfires are believed to have spewed as much as two-thirds of the nation’s annual carbon dioxide emissions in just the past three months, with experts warning forests may take more than 100 years to absorb what’s been released so far this season.

Until recently, Australia’s forests were thought to reabsorb all the carbon released in bushfires, meaning they achieved net zero emissions. But scientists say climate change is making bushfires burn more intensely and frequently. Dr Pep Canadell, a senior research scientist for CSIRO and the executive Director of the Global Carbon Project, said that means slower regrowth rates in Australian forests between bushfires. “We used to see

hundreds of thousands of hectares burned in bushfires, but now we are seeing millions on fire,” he said. “It is drying in south-east Australia, that prompts the question if these trees will be able to bring all that carbon back [into regrowth]. We may need more than 100 years to get back to where we were, after those mature forests with beautiful tall gum trees have burned”.

“Normally the forest would bounce back, but because it’s been under huge drought stress, the capacity of forest to regrow is limited”. Murdoch University lecturer in environment and conservation sciences Joe Fontaine said climate change was making fires more frequent and intense. “We know that warmer and drier conditions will come from global warming, and we will get more fire in the landscape, and that gives plants less time to regrow. We are experiencing hotter droughts and that’s why the fires are worse

- not just more extensive but more intense.”

Chris Hardman, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) chief, has said that Victoria’s rainforests could suffer the same fate as those in NSW. “Where you get long term drought or lack of rainfall and the soils are dry, we will see our wet forests burn more readily” he said (Peter Barrett, What will be left of our rainforests?, *The Age*, 4 January 2020). Barrett reports that researchers from the CFA and BOM have concluded that “human induced climate change is the most likely driver behind Australia’s earlier and longer fire seasons”. ANU Prof David Lindenmayer, a forest ecologist interested in biodiversity, says that “many species of plants and animals are able to deal with a single major fire event in terms of their populations recovering. But once you start to have many events in rapid



Smoke haze across the Peninsula, 6 January 2020. Photo Ursula de Jong



Knarled trees ravaged by drought and sea winds, MPNP, Photo: Ursula de Jong

succession, then you really have a problem". Lindenmayer explains that regrowth forests (whether from fires or logging) are more prone to high severity fires, because the thirsty saplings dry out the forest floor, and the loss of tree ferns further dry out the forest floor. Chris Hardman reflects that while we may do our best to manage the intensity and impact of fires, bushfires are part of the Australian landscape.

Former ANU paleobotanist Dr Gurdip Singh (1932-1991), quoted by Fran Henke in the Southern Peninsula News, 25 December 2019, p.2, asked a big question: whether modern Australians have the will, capacity and above all motivation to restore original vegetation. "Humans are a dynamic part of the developing ecosystem. It is important they recognise the history of their own impact on

vegetation, since they first started to use fire as a tool to change their environments around the world. It is only then they can successfully set upon a course of restoration and management. If we weigh the fruits of restoration purely on economic grounds, in terms of having less fire prone forests, improved soil, greater sub surface moisture storage, the existence of perennial lakes and rivers and an overall more hospitable environment for humans and animals, then surely modern humans have good enough reason to reverse the damage." It was Dr Singh's contention that "slower growers may change the fiery loop of the eucalypts".

We still have so much to learn as we try to come to terms with the devastation these current fires have caused. In the current bushfire-crisis we note the destruction of millions

of hectares of our environment in Victoria and other parts of Australia, and the resultant loss of billions of animals, birds and insects, and well as the loss of flora species. Our many ecologies have been irreparably damaged, and the loss of habitat is catastrophic. Scientists are making it clear that climate change has wrought such changes to our environment, to nature, with sustained drier hotter conditions, that nature must continue to evolve and change and adapt. In these circumstances, we must plan for nature to thrive. Nature is integral to our communities. Therefore we must rethink how we care for our flora and fauna, our habitats, our biodiversity on the Mornington Peninsula, and more particularly from the NCG's point of view the Nepean Peninsula. We can only act locally to make a difference.

Ursula de Jong

MPS Fire management Report

The NCG has been advised that the MPS has commissioned a Fire Management report from a Fire Consultant to develop an alternate strategy to vegetation management, other than removal. We have been told that early 2020 has been set aside for community response to this report. The NCG sees this as a critical initiative and would like to contribute at the outset. To that end we sought advice from our Councillors and the Shire Planning Manager.

The NCG was advised that a bushfire expert has been engaged to review the application of the Bushfire Prone Areas in the Nepean Ward and also undertake a review of the broad exemption that applies to all vegetation for bushfire protection, which applies to all properties across the Shire. This is a matter for the Shire's bushfire expert to provide advice to Council in the first instance and then it may be discussed more broadly. Any further public feedback will definitely not take place during our current bushfire season.

It has been strongly suggested that the NCG and all our individual members write to the State government requesting that the vegetation exemption be removed from the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme.

- Mr Julian Lyngcoln, Deputy Secretary for Planning, Level 15, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
- The Hon. Richard Wynne, Minister for Planning, Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Vegetation removal on the Nepean Peninsula – this is happening on such a scale with planning applications that the NCG has written to our Councillors and David Bergin. The NCG believe that Melbourne 2050 has a requirement for min 25% vegetation to be

retained on each block – this is not evident on the Mornington Peninsula. What are the current Mornington Peninsula specific requirements? And how do these intersect with State bushfire regulations?

The State government has declared that all vegetation can be removed that is within 10 metres of a dwelling and a combined width of 4 metres of a fence line that was built before 2009. This was introduced after the Black Saturday Royal Commission. We have been advocating for this exemption to be removed from the planning scheme and we have commissioned a bushfire expert to support this position.

Again it is suggested that the NCG and all our individual members write to the State government requesting that this exemption be removed from the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme.

- Mr Julian Lyngcoln, Deputy Secretary for Planning, Level 15, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
- The Hon. Richard Wynne, Minister for Planning, Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

On the Nepean Peninsula we do not have the fuel load seen in the Victorian and NSW coastal forests. The NCG argues for the protection and care of our environment, for an understanding of our unique flora and fauna, for the enhancement of our biodiversity. We model this through the work of volunteers in bushland reserves, by advocating for setting aside further reserves, by overseeing development proposals and arguing for retention of vegetation and appropriate landscaping. The NCG believes that development should complement and improve the local



Ringtail Possum feasting on a rosebush.

Photo: Ursula de Jong.



Rugged coast MPNP, Photo: Ursula de Jong

built environment, sit easily in the natural world and provide real public benefit. Much of the Nepean Peninsula has been surveyed for bushland, and to identify sites suitable for regeneration. This has led to an increased awareness of local bushland among property owners and the Shire has responded to the NCG call to maintain and protect it by supporting all Friend's Groups. The NCG works for protection, regeneration and bestpractice management of local bushland on the Nepean Peninsula. But in order to halt the current rampant development, we need people to speak out in big numbers, against inappropriate proposals, to demand change in others and refuse to accept developers' proposals that have denuded the peninsula and turned our villages of Portsea, Sorrento, Blairgowrie and Rye into metropolitan suburbs of concrete and steel.

Neighbourhood Character

Neighbourhood Character Study: during 2019 the NCG had the opportunity to comment and offer feedback on the development of the Mornington Peninsula Shire's Neighbourhood Character Study & Guidelines, September 2019. This Study was undertaken to identify and define the distinctive and valued elements of neighbourhood character in residential areas and to develop neighbourhood character guidelines that will help protect the existing character, and to ensure that new buildings respect established townships, settlements and our natural environment. The Guidelines cover building forms and height, siting and setbacks, gardens and landscaping, garage storage and vehicle access, as well as fencing. As far as the NCG understands, the Design and Development Overlays (DDO)



August 2019 ramble, Tyrone moonahs frame the view of the bay. Photo: Ursula de Jong

which currently cover the Nepean Peninsula will remain in place. The planning hierarchy will be: MPSC Planning Scheme, DDOs then Neighbourhood Character Guidelines.

In November, the NCG sought advice from our Councillors and the Shire Planning Manager re Neighbourhood character amendment awaiting state government approval. When is this likely to come through? Will Neighbourhood Character be mandatory once it is adopted and part of the MPS PS?

The recently adopted Neighbourhood Character Study will form part of a revised and updated Planning Scheme Amendment C219, which will seek to introduce the Neighbourhood Residential Zone for large parts of the residential

land within the Shire. This will ultimately go back to Council in the new year (2020) and then be submitted to the Minister for Planning seeking authorisation. Your question about length of time for authorisation will need to be addressed to the Minister for Planning, because he (or his delegate) makes the final decision for when something is authorised.

The Nepean Ward already has significant mandatory controls included as part of the various Design and Development Overlay schedules which currently exist in the Planning Scheme. It is unlikely that further character controls will be mandatory based on recent discussions with senior Departmental staff members.

Continental Hotel

Since the public community meeting organised by the NCG in June 2019, the NCG has been following up with and corresponding on a regular basis with Julian Gerner, the Mornington Peninsula Shire and Heritage Victoria. The NCG has made regular site inspections and photographed the building and site. The NCG has sent letters with updates following these. The NCG was permitted one member to join the full site inspection with the owner and HV in December. NCG committee member John Atchison made a site inspection with Julian Gerner and Heritage Victoria on 4 December 2019. The NCG wrote follow up letters.

We have made it clear to our Councillors and the Shire that the NCG and the broader community expect much greater vigilance and active engagement with the Conti from the MPS and the MPSC to get a positive outcome for Sorrento sooner rather than later. The current situation is totally unacceptable: the heritage building is at risk and the current state of the hotel and the site compromises the township – safety, historic heritage values, an iconic eyesore greeting visitors, tourism and commerce affected short and long term, loss of general amenity as well as in both accommodation and entertainment. We asked to be advised what actions have been taking place behind the scenes? And publicly?

The Shire response is as follows: The commencement of construction on the site again is totally the responsibility of the owner. However, the Council does recognise that this is a very important building for the Sorrento and broader Victorian community, which is why we continue to work with Heritage Victoria to ensure that compliance with the Heritage Act 2017. Unfortunately, the Council has no ability to force land owners to complete construction. No actions have been taken by Council to support Mr Gerner raise the relevant investment required to commence construction again, other than to advise that his current Planning Permit is valid and does not expire until 2023. We encourage and support the commencement of the project to ensure that the heritage building is protected from any deterioration. I therefore suggest that you again write to Heritage Victoria seeking action by the State government to ensure that this important building is protected and maintained.

In late December Julian Gerner advised as follows:

1. The protection of the building will be maintained throughout, including commitments made to HV and MPS.
2. Funding negotiations are progressing. Settlement is scheduled for January and we are working to meet the deadlines.



Continental Hotel, under scaffolding, December 2019. Photo: Ursula de Jong

3. There is no point in a community meeting until there are material progressions. That said, there will be a key stakeholder update before community are re-engaged and that will include NCG as well as other stakeholders. Possibly as early as February.
 4. Six Degrees Architects have been working hard on producing a full suite of documentation with a view to tendering the project and construction to commence in Q2 2020. Point Polaris are managing the project. An army of consultants have been engaged to deliver all elements of the project across 1.5 acres and 7 levels. I know you have an architectural background and am sure you appreciate the complexities. In addition to the Continental (less than 20% of the land) we are working on an award winning, sustainable, best practice and green set of buildings to create a world class hotel.
 5. Works will recommence on the heritage restoration as soon as a builder is appointed. The scaffold remains at significant cost to me personally on site with a view to HV works remaining a priority.
- May I say, that I have worn many millions of dollars personally to ensure the project happens and the Continental Hotel lives and remains as a community asset. I trust that, after the commercial complexity and market events, that you and your group now realise the fragility of this project and difficulty in financing the project. Further challenges could scare off investors and a letter of support would assist in the fundraising process.

Heritage Victoria have kept NCG up to date with their oversight of the project. In late December HV wrote re the CONTINENTAL HOTEL, SORRENTO:

Heritage Victoria has been inspecting the building on a regular basis with the cooperation of Mr Julian Gerner. Mr Gerner has ensured that any issues identified have been dealt with in a timely manner. The issue of water entry to the ground floor noted during the last site inspection [4 December 2019] has been addressed by the replacement of the waterproof layer on the upper terrace. Its effectiveness will be unknown until the next rain event, after which an inspection will be undertaken. The other issues raised relating to mould, water movement and cracking at other locations will be discussed with Mr Gerner to determine methods of treatment and control prior to the commencement of construction activities and will continue to be monitored by Heritage Victoria. Should there be an extended delay in the restarting of the building project, the protection measures employed at the building to protect the heritage values will be revisited to determine a further course of action. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

The NCG's biggest concern is with the protection of this heritage listed building in the longer term. The NCG therefore continues to monitor the building and work for the protection of this historic heritage building going forward.

Ward representation and impact on MPS

A Local Government Bill has gone through state parliament about one councillor per ward - to be implemented in 2020. The NCG would appreciate any updates from you on this matter, and particularly the implications for the NEPEAN WARD going forward.

No greater detail is available other than what the NCG has highlighted regarding the new Local Government Bill and single member Ward distribution. Please see below the link to the State's web page for further information about the new bill
<https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/our-programs/local-government-act-review>

Erosion

We live in an area with a dynamic coast. Over 2019 we have witnessed major changes along the Bass Strait coast (with track closures at Bay of Islands, St Paul's beach and Bridgewater Bay among others) as well as significant erosion along the bayside shoreline from Point Nepean National Park all the way round to Mornington.

Portsea seawall

DELWP sends regular updates re major repairs to the Portsea beach seawall. On 16 December we were advised that "To minimise any inconvenience during the peak Christmas and January periods, repair works to the Portsea sandbag seawall have stopped and will resume in early February 2020. The site is currently fenced off, with warning and information signs. A rock wall is in place and is a temporary structure to protect

workers whilst they carry out the repairs. It will be removed at the end of the project. Pedestrian access to the pier is being maintained during the works and shutdown. The beach remains accessible via the scaffold stairs until February, or if safety becomes compromised". Mornington Peninsula Shire Mayor Sam Hearn, Nepean Councillors Bryan Payne and Hugh Fraser and John Baker CEO are leading a plan with DELWP and scientists to restore Portsea beach. An update on their progress can be found on the Shire's website at <https://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/About-Us/News-Media-Publications/News-Media/A-new-plan-to-restore-Portsea-Beach>

Bridgewater Bay Track Closure, Mornington Peninsula National Park

Parks Victoria have permanently closed the Bridgewater Bay Track, advising residents and visitors "The rugged coastline of the Mornington



MPNP, Bridgewater bay track closed. Photo: Ursula de Jong

Peninsula National Park is ever-changing, sculpted by erosion over millions of years creating beaches, coves and sandstone cliffs. These dynamic processes led to a cliff collapse and landslip in late 2018. To reduce further environmental impact, protect cultural heritage values and reduce risk to public safety, a section of the Bridgewater Bay walking track has been permanently closed. Park visitors can still access Bridgewater Bay via the beach access stairs. The Traditional Owners of this land, the Bunerong People of the Kulin Nation, have lived in this area for over 40,000 years. Bunerong People often gathered here, resulting in extensive coastal shell middens and other artefacts along the entire coastline that have significant cultural heritage sensitivity. The track closure serves to minimise further impact to this sensitive site. Keeping to formed walking tracks

allows regeneration of stabilising vegetation, and reduces the risk to public safety associated with the unstable nature of this landscape. We thank you for your assistance in caring for such a unique and valuable natural space". Hundreds of people simply ignore the sign and all attempts to close the track. Unfortunately the new fence is perfect for climbing!

Jetties

The Baths Jetty Sorrento: Sorrento foreshore off 3278 point Nepean Road Sorrento CA 77E
On 23 December NCG was notified that if no further objections are received, a permit will be issued by MPS for "the development of buildings and works associated with additions and alterations to a jetty and associated works in accordance with the endorsed plans".



Sullivan Bay: private jetties prevent the public from enjoying access to the public beach. Photo: Gary Naughton

In October 2019, the NCG objected to the proposal to rebuild the current satisfactorily functioning jetty with a lower (600mm lower) wider (300mm wider) jetty with a Davit to store a private boat for what appears to be purely commercial reasons only to satisfied perceived required improvements for the use by the operators of the Sorrento Baths restaurant. The modifications will have a detrimental effect on the community using the beach which involves much larger numbers of people than those who may benefit from the proposed alterations. Our points for objecting were as follows:

- Lowering the jetty will effectively place an above water fence between the public beach either side. Paddlers and small floating craft (e.g. shallow kayaks etc.) will find it very difficult to negotiate, possibly forcing them into deeper water and further from shore in order to pass the obstacle. The existing height would have been determined with this in mind. The claimed increase in safety should one fall from a lower height has not been supported by reports of incidents that have occurred.
- The widening offers no additional advantage to the public, although it does provide the opportunity for newlyweds to parade side-by-side along the jetty.
- The Davit at the end is clearly for the housing of a private-business craft. The argument that it would be available for rescue is tenuous

in the extreme. The law of the sea is that any craft is obliged to offer assistance to those in distress. This does not justify the use of public assets to house them.

- The application has not been supported with evidence that the existing jetty needs to be rebuilt for engineering, safety or aesthetic purposes.

The NCG's John Atchison attended a PAC on site with the Shire and DELWP. We confirmed our position. It seems inequitable that the jetty should be lowered for a perceived safety improvement for the minority. Re the Jetty ramp - the proposal to ramp up for a length of 14M provide a length of 3M and ramp down for a further 14M was strongly objected to by all objectors and seems to be another sticking point. This proposal would push the access underneath the jetty which is currently available from mid to high water times further seaward blocking access for beach strollers for those times. Jetty width increased from 1.2 to 1.8 M (600mm) - it was generally agreed that this would be an improvement for any perceived safety issue. Installation of a Davit - the main objection to this was from one attendee who objected to the likely obstruction of views to further out into the bay. Other objections were on the commercial use of the Davit for storing a boat owned by the restaurant operators. The NCG supports NO restriction for public use at any time.

NCG Membership

Thank you to all our members for your continued support. 2020 NCG membership is now due for renewal: 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020. Renewing or becoming a member is easy! Subscriptions apply to the calendar year and are due on 1 January each year. Membership is \$20 Single per year; \$30 Family per year. You can pay by EFT or by Cheque/Money Order. Please complete the enclosed form with this newsletter or go online to <http://ncgvic.org.au/membership-application> or download an Adobe PDF form that you can print off and send to us. Note that a membership application/ renewal implies that you have read and agree with NCG Inc's vision and charter.

In the COMMENTS Box please let us know if you would consider assisting with NCG projects / activities. Thank you for your support! To make a payment by bank transfer use the account details below. Please remember to put your details in the bank transfer (e.g. T Smith Family/ Single and/or Donation)
 BSB: 633-108 Account No. 163963846
 Account name: Nepean Conservation Group Inc.

NCG 2020 AGM

Notice and invitation: Saturday 15 February 2020. Point Nepean National Park, Badcoe Hall. AGM Meeting at 3.30, please arrive at

3.00pm for a prompt 3.30 pm start. Guest speaker: Gidja Walker. BYO picnic dinner 6.00 - 8.00 pm

It gives me great pleasure to invite you, your families and friends to the 2020 NCG AGM. The NCG is delighted that the eminent ecologist, educator and artist, Gidja Walker has accepted our invitation to be our guest speaker. Gidja Lee Walker BSc, DipEd, is an ecological consultant and natural systems teacher based on Victoria's Southern Mornington Peninsula. Gidja's specialties are natural systems management education and training, restoration ecology, threatened species management, endangered ecosystems including Moonah Woodland and wetlands, coastal and saltmarsh ecology, fire ecology, flora surveys, plant identification, weed prioritisation, site assessment, uses of indigenous plants and weeds and indigenous garden design. The holder of a Banksia Award for her long-term work on various threatened terrestrial orchids and a Parks Victoria Kookaburra Award for her volunteer environmental work in parks, she's a founder member and current long-time president of the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association – SPIFFA. Gidja will speak about the biodiversity of the Nepean Peninsula.

I and the NCG committee look forward to meeting you again at our AGM, to a little socialising and enjoying a some time with you.

Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento

The NCG sought advice from our Councillors and the Shire Planning Manager. Awaiting state government approval. When is this likely to come through? Will this overlay be mandatory once it is adopted and part of the MPS PS?

Any decision by the State government regarding the planning scheme amendment seeking height controls will need to be addressed to the Minister for Planning. Currently, the Minister has requested that Council undertake further work regarding the urban design criteria to be considered for mandatory height controls. This work has been completed and we are now awaiting further direction from DELWP. Council is seeking a fast track planning scheme amendment to introduce permanent controls, however, we await further direction from DELWP regarding the planning scheme amendment process they will force us to follow.

I therefore suggest that you and all individual members write the DELWP Deputy Secretary for Planning and the Minister for

Cover Images:

Nature Photo Ursula de Jong

MPNP, Cushion bush in foreground on coastal dunes, Photo Ursula de Jong

Planning to support Council in our endeavours for mandatory height controls in Sorrento via the fast track process.

- Mr Julian Lyngcoln, Deputy Secretary for Planning, Level 15, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
- The Hon. Richard Wynne, Minister for Planning, Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

NCG Friends Groups support committee

John Trewarne and Rhonda Day contact: info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

Authorities

MPS Hannah Brown, Natural Systems Volunteers Officer

Email: hannah.brown@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Phone: 03 5950 1356

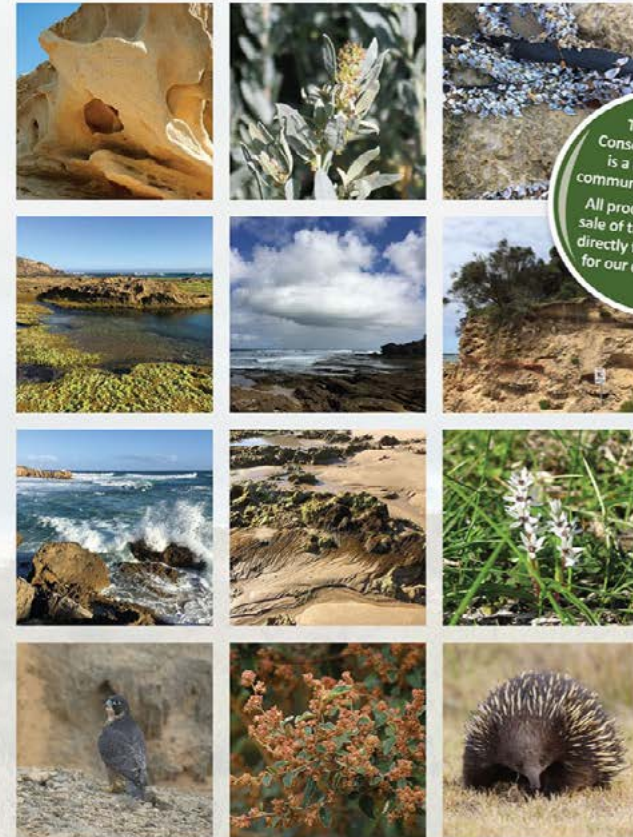
Naturelinks: Danielle Suffern daniellesuffern@naturelinks.com.au

Parks Victoria: Kris Rowe kris.rowe@parks.vic.gov.au

NCG 2020 CALENDAR

These are available from ANTIPODES bookshop, Ocean Beach Road Sorrento. \$25.00 only. All proceeds from the sale of our calendar go directly towards caring for our environment.

2020 Calendar



The Nepean Conservation Group is a not for profit community organisation. All proceeds from the sale of this calendar go directly towards caring for our environment.

All pages in this calendar are printed on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper.



NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC.
caring for our environment since 1973

PO Box 157, SORRENTO VIC 3943
e: info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au
www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au



NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC

ABN 44 531 738 131 Reg. No. AOO 2079IU

PO Box 157, Sorrento, 3943

www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au