



# Speech

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Cr Helene Cameron, Mayor  
Friday 10 January 2014, 7.30pm  
Point Lonsdale Primary School, Learning Common

## **Point Lonsdale Civic Association AGM 2014**

President Fay Agterhuis, Secretary Jasper Coghlan, PLCA Committee, members, my fellow Councillors, ladies and gentlemen... thank you for inviting me here this evening.

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There are a couple of things I'd like to talk through tonight.

I'll provide a summary of the main Council achievements in 2013. I'll provide an overview of some of the key activities that Council is currently undertaking. I'll talk through some existing and foreseen challenges that we face. And I'll also provide an outline of projects that Council will be focusing on for the remainder of this financial year.

I'm going to concentrate on those matters most pertinent to Point Lonsdale and that are Borough-wide, so this is by no means an all-inclusive account.

If I miss anything that you're keen to know about or understand better, please let me know during the question time at the end; and I'll do my best to satisfy your enquiries.

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Council has just finished its first year as a new Council and this past year has been extremely productive. Our first main task was to develop the new Council Plan, which sets the direction for the next four years. Developing the Council Plan involved two stages of community consultation and extensive debate within Council. But I'm confident that the outcome is a really well-balanced, ambitious yet achievable plan.

In this process we also developed a new vision for the Borough which I

think really captures the essence of who and what we are:

A vibrant, safe and welcoming community that draws inspiration and life from our heritage, unique environment and connection to the sea.

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The first Annual Report produced by the current Council demonstrates a vast improvement in how Council reports back to the community. It provides a far greater level of detail about Council's activities and is proving to be a valuable reference tool for community organisations.

If you have done so yet, I really encourage you to have a look at it. It is a user friendly report that has generated positive comments from those who have accessed it on our website.

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To follow is a snapshot of some of the highlights of the past year.

- The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.  
This was such a special milestone to be part of. We received great response to the community activities including the time capsule. And feedback on the Point Lonsdale photo boards was really positive.
- The Point Lonsdale Foreshore Revitalisation, of which a number of key elements were completed in time for the Christmas period.

This includes the stunning look out platform and a Disability Discrimination Act compliant ramp to provide all-abilities access to the promenade and beach.

In February the rest of the stage 1 and 2 elements will be completed, including a second all-abilities ramp, another set of steps, beach huts and BBQ facilities. This work should take 4 weeks, depending on the weather.

Seven hundred thousand dollars in federal and state government funding was obtained to be able to implement stages 1 and 2 of the foreshore revitalisation works. And Council is still pursuing funding options for stage 3 of the project, which is essentially the

redevelopment of the Point Lonsdale foreshore amenities block beside the playground.

I must take this opportunity to quickly thank the project reference group members who have significantly assisted with determining the scope of this project. Their support, over many years of planning, has been truly fantastic. I also thank the Point Lonsdale community for their input through the consultation programs and also for their patience during the construction works.

And now back to the highlights...

- The new roundabout at the corner of Point Lonsdale Road and Admans Street, which provides a **much needed** safe and legal U-turn facility in the village.
- In the last couple of months improvements have been made to several beach access points.

We've done a major reconstruction of the lower section of the Rip View Car Park stairs, which involved removal of one section by crane and a new section fabricated and installed. We've constructed a new set of stairs at Royal Park to transform the existing narrow concrete steps into a safer set of timber steps, and restored the bluestone steps at the Springs car park access point.

- Significant volumes of environmental weed have been removed from foreshore areas such as Bunny Woods, the Narrows and along Ocean Road. Much of this work has been done in conjunction with partners such as Conservation Volunteers Australia, Bellarine Catchment Network, Swan Bay Environment Association, our primary schools and a number of community organisations.

The project in the Narrows even won the Coastcare Community Award in the 2013 Corangamite Landcare Awards.

- Extension of the Arts Trail across to Point Lonsdale
- The production of a series of trail brochures to better promote various attractions and encourage visitors to fully explore the Borough – both Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale.

This includes the Arts Trail brochure, the Walking and Cycling Trails brochure and the Retail Trail brochure.

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Some of the projects that are currently on the table and that Council will be progressing in the first half of this year include...

- Revegetation of the Point Lonsdale foreshore and the Admans Street roundabout area.

A draft foreshore Tree Plan will be available for viewing and comment in February. The revegetation will not be done until late Autumn, to align with ideal planting conditions.

- As you'd be aware, planning has commenced on the future of the Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale lighthouse reserve sites and this project will be continuing over the next few months.

In the first round of community consultation there were 79 responses submitted in relation to the Queenscliff Lighthouse Reserve and 259 on the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve.

Although the comments received have been varied there are several consistent themes coming through.

As reported in the January edition of the Rip, four options for the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve have been tabled to the project reference group for initial feedback. However these options have yet to be fully analysed, which will be done as part of the development of a discussion paper.

The community will be invited to review and provide comment on the discussions paper, including concept plan options, around March 2014 as part of the second round of public consultation.

- As outlined in the Council Plan 2013-2017 and the current Council budget, Council is investing in a ‘future plan’ or master plan **for all three** of the Council managed caravan parks:
  - Golightly
  - Royal Park
  - And Queenscliff Rec Reserve and Victoria Park, which are considered as the one property.

The master plan will be completed as one project across all three sites to ensure a holistic approach to caravan and camping within the Borough.

The reason for the master plan is to conduct a detailed audit of the caravan park operations and to explore opportunities for increasing revenue, improving amenities and determining the best mix of accommodation options across the parks.

This planning project will commence in the coming months with the consultancy brief to be presented at the March Council meeting for endorsement.

The project will then be put out to tender and the successful consultant will be expected to commence work on the project in March / April. A reference group will be established for this project through an advertised ‘expressions of interest’ process.

- Council is still working with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries on strategies to minimise the impact of coastal erosion and to improve cliff stability.

DEPI has undertaken extensive assessments along the Point Lonsdale foreshore and research on the best options, and they have engaged consultants to work on a recommendation.

We hope to reach an agreed direction with them soon.

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Other key projects that Council is currently progressing include:

- Planning for the future of Fort Queenscliff
- A new pedestrian crossing on Fellows Road
- Launch of a community alliance program to help Council tackle greenhouse gas emissions and to work towards our target of being a 'carbon neutral' community by 2020.

Council officers have been working with some local school children and community members to develop a name and brand for the alliance program. I'm really looking forward to its launch in the next couple of months. We'll then be canvassing businesses, community organisations and individual members to join the alliance and take action to help protect our natural environment.

Another important matter is to determine a future home for the Point Lonsdale Boardriders and Surf Life Saving Clubs.

The short term solution for the Boardriders is a five year lease of the Engine Shed at the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve.

In the long term, Council is hoping the two clubs will co-locate into one facility and this has been part of the discussions we've been having with the Surf Life Saving Club.

A number of options for the future home of the clubs have been put on the table but at the end of the day it's really hard to balance the needs of the clubs whilst retaining enough open space in this area for general community use.

I understand it's been a frustrating process for the Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club but I'm confident that if we keep the lines of communication open and constructive, we'll be able to find a solution to suit all parties.

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Some of the challenges and opportunities that Council is either currently working on or is planning to address include:

- Ongoing maintenance of our significant areas of open space and Crown Land
- Relationship with and operation under the new regional tourism structure
- Continue lobbying for a shared pathway from Point Lonsdale to Ocean Grove (discussions are continuing with CoGG and this is on the G21 regional trails priority list)
- Explore funding opportunities to upgrade residential street lighting with energy efficient lamps as part of our commitment to reduce carbon emissions
- Improve Police staffing levels so we have a permanent presence in the Borough
- And to lobby and secure funding for a range of capital projects:
  - Stage 3 of the Point Lonsdale foreshore revitalisation
  - The Queenscliffe Community Hub Development
  - Botanic Gardens Precinct Development

The project reference group has confirmed their preference for the elements to be included in Stage 1 of the proposed Botanic Gardens and a budget allocation to develop the concept plans for stage 1 will be considered as part of the 2014/15 budget deliberations. Council will then be seeking funding for the works.

- And funding for the Queenscliff Sport and Recreation Precinct Development Project. This is the Borough's only sporting precinct and includes one of the four Council managed caravan parks. This is potentially a \$3M plus project:

\$600K – next stage of the Monahan Centre

\$1M – upgrades to community sporting facilities

\$1.5M – infrastructure improvements, i.e. solar power, water, sewerage, etc

And we will continue to advocate for ‘one’ Point Lonsdale by seeking a change to the Borough of Queenscliffe Municipal Boundary.

Another unusual issue is the age of our volunteers. BOQ has an extremely high rate of volunteerism within the community however many of our volunteers are of older age and are unwilling to take on leadership positions within our local community organisations.

We need to ensure our younger people take on volunteering opportunities and are given training so they can step up to lead our community groups.

I understand this has been one of the underlying reasons as to the very recent change of management of Point Lonsdale Cemetery, which is now part of the Geelong Cemetery Trust. I have only recently been advised of this change and Council will be seeking further information to understand any implications of this; and ensure a good relationship with the new cemetery managers.

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In terms of a ‘year in review’ and ‘challenges’ it would be terribly remiss of me not to mention Bellarine Community Health.

First, they severed their contract to provide Maternal and Child Health Services and really put pressure on Council to be able to implement an alternative arrangement at short notice. But, we managed this and in this regard I thank the Queenscliffe Neighbourhood House and City of Greater Geelong for their cooperation. We were able to continue to provide Maternal and Child Health Services to the Borough community without too much of a disruption.

And then Coorabin.

I’m sure that my disappointment at its closure is shared by many here. And not just the fact that it was closed but the lack of forewarning and the way in which it was done. As a Council, we were very worried about the 40 Coorabin residents and their families, and the 50 staff affected.

We were also concerned for the future of the Meals on Wheels program,



also provided by Bellarine Community Health.

I am grateful that many Coorabin residents and staff have found a new home in Arcare. And I understand that the future of the Meals on Wheels program is also secure, albeit under some new arrangements.

In terms of the Coorabin site and the Eric Tolliday units... at this stage that's a big unknown. Council has not received any indication as to the potential future use of the buildings and the site. We will continue to seek advice from Bellarine Community Health to this regard.

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Just quickly, I'd like to comment on the continual improvements to Council's financial management.

The December 2013 report from the Victorian Auditor-General on the 2012/13 local government audit results highlights an overall **continuing positive movement** by Council in working towards long-term financial sustainability in terms of the VAGO definitions and assessment.

The Borough of Queenscliffe was assessed as low risk for overall financial sustainability.

We fared well in terms of the continued focus on addressing asset renewal challenges and setting aside funds in reserve for future asset needs. For this we were in the top four in the state.

The Borough of Queenscliffe met each of the elements of internal control required by the Victorian Auditor-General. Council's Audit Committee comprises four independent members and two Councillors, follows a Charter and periodically assesses its performance against this Charter.

Council also adopted a formal rating strategy for the first time during 2012/13, drawing on relevant guidance and best practice sources in the completion of this important document.

Council is very mindful of our financial capacity. The Borough relies more heavily on rates income than other councils, with rates providing 63% of operating revenue. Our ability to invest in new projects and program is restricted by our limited resources.

As always, we will continue to examine new potential revenue sources and to maintain the excellent level of State and Federal grant funding that has been achieved in recent years. For the last financial year we received grant funding \$2,562,927 – a 4% increase on the previous year.

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Lastly, I'd like to point out some of the upcoming community consultation programs that you can be involved in:

- The next stage of feedback on the Lighthouse Reserves project
- The camping and caravan park master plans
- The Planning Scheme Review, which is a legislative review process that is required to be undertaken every 5-10 years
- Options for progressing a regular kerbside green waste collection
- And the draft budget and business plan for 2014/15, which will be in May.

I encourage you all to participate in these and other consultation opportunities as they arise.

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Again, thank you for having me here tonight. On behalf of Council, we look forward to working with the Committee and the Point Lonsdale community throughout the year and for the remainder of this Council term.

Thank you.

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