



Point Lonsdale Civic Association Inc.

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Representing Point Lonsdale Residents since 1910

June 2023 Newsletter.

2023 Annual Subscription Payment and Donations

The annual subscription payment for 2023 is due by the date of the AGM, being 6 January 2023. The subscription amount for 2020 is \$10 per person. Donations are welcome and appreciated, in addition to the payment of the subscription amount. The preferred method of payment is by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to the PLCA bank account. Alternatively, payment can be made by cheque – however as we have lost Bendigo Bank facilities in Queenscliff, EFT payment, rather than cheque (which we have to bank in Ocean Grove) are preferred.

[Online Membership Renewal Form](#) (Renewal)

[Online Application for Membership](#) (New Members)

Please click the **Online Membership Renewal Form** from link above. You will be directed to a Google Form, complete it, then hit 'Submit' – and you'll receive further instructions on EFT bank details, to complete your EFT payment:

Alternatively, use PDF form below; print and scan and email to us, or deliver at a meeting, or post.

[Print out Membership Renewal Form](#)

The PLCA bank account details are:

Account Name: Point Lonsdale Civic Association
Bank: Bendigo and Adelaide Bank
BSB: 633108

Account Number: 131346017
Description: Surname and Initials of the member must be shown

If payment is made by cheque, please write your name on the reverse of the cheque if it is from an account different to your name. Please, **DO NOT** send cash via the post.

Please ensure you complete the Membership Renewal and Subscription Payment form.

New Members: Click link above, **Online Application for Membership**, and fill in online and hit 'submit' - and you'll receive further instructions on EFT bank details, to complete your EFT payment.

Or, use PDF form below; print and scan and email in to us, or deliver at meeting, or post.

[Print out Application for Membership Form](#)

New Committee Members Required!

The Association still desperately needs new committee of management members to help out. All the current committee members are passionate about 3225, but we do need some extra help to lighten the load for all of us. There are many issues, in particular in CoGG 3225 that we need to start to address. If you are interested, please contact the Secretary for further details: plcasecretary@gmail.com

Resignation of Deputy Mayor, Cr. Fleur Hewitt.

Cr Fleur Hewitt has formally tendered her resignation as Councillor from the Borough of Queenscliffe Council.

Cr. Hewitt served Council since her election in November 2020. Her Portfolio included Governance & Finance and prior to that the Environment Portfolio. She was also a member of the Audit and Risk Committee, Barwon South West Local Government Waste Forum, G21 Sustainability Pillar and Chairperson of the Borough's Coastal and Marine Management Plan Steering Committee.

Cr. Hewitt was a hard working Councillor and Deputy Mayor who always made herself available for meetings with Association and other groups. In particular we greatly appreciated her work on retaining the former High School site, Council's aged care services, Victoria Park, the Council Plan and for her work on the Coastal and Marine Management Plan.

The CEO advised that a Countback to fill the vacancy will occur on the 19th of June at 1pm, via a webinar.

The Association wishes to thank Ms. Hewitt for her work and her commitment to the local community. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Borough of Queenscliffe 2023 – 2024 Draft Budget and Draft Financial Plan – Association Comments.

The Borough's recently released 2023-24 draft Budget and Financial Plan indicated:

- A debt free balance sheet with zero borrowings.
- A projected break-even budget of \$16.4 million.
- A capital works program of \$2.8 million.
- New capital works of \$1.4 million.
- New operating initiatives of \$723,000.
- No draw down on any funds out of the General Reserve.
- The lowest rates (based on a \$1 million property value) of any G21 municipalities.

However local ratepayers already suffering cost of living increases are going to be asked to pay:

- *3.5% increase in municipal rates* resulting in \$243 more in rates householders will have to find.
- *7.3% overall increase in waste collection charges* for residential properties comprising kerbside waste charge of \$316.52 and public waste collection charge of \$112.72 (public parks and streets) resulting in a total waste charge in 2023-24 of **\$429.24 per property**.

After carefully reviewing and analysing the documents provided, the Association requested a review of these increases, particularly in respect of waste collection increases.

The Association has also expressed concern with the costs associated with:

1. Increasing EFT (Staffing Numbers)

The Association is concerned with further increases in Council staff numbers (47 EFT up from 43 not so long ago), The budget figures suggest more staff are to be hired and existing staff will receive annual increases which is expected to cost ratepayers some \$480,000 more in people costs. The budget specifically lists \$126,000 to appoint a new executive level administration assistant, we also understand that the Manager Community Services position is to be yet to be filled following a recent resignation and another new staffing position is possibly being contemplated.

With respect to the new executive level administration assistant the Association believes that this increase in staffing is not needed and no valid business case for this new appointment has been released to the community. If there is a demonstrated need articulated to ratepayers/community, the Association is happy to reconsider its stance on this issue. Some consideration of multi-skilling or staff redeployment might also be considered appropriate by Council.

To help repair the budget position we propose delaying or abandoning staffing appointments thereby saving some \$200,000 annually.

2. Need to Review the Use and Costs Associated with Consultant Services

There is concern in the community with the overuse of consultants and it's often difficult for residents to determine a figure for "external people costs" some of which are apportioned to Services and Materials. As part of this year's budget process, it's pleasing that Council officers have provided an Operational Contractors Spend Report (listing some 19 ongoing contracts) which details costs of \$2,090,112 for the 23/24 Budget up from \$1,943,497 in 22/23. This information will be useful not only for the coming financial year but as a benchmarking tool against future budgets.

However, to complete the picture we still need to understand the ongoing costs associated with the use of external consultants for listed projects in 2023/24, which of course will be subject to approval of the final budget and any changes Councillors may choose to make. Added to this concern residents are often unable to access completed consultant reports commissioned by Queenscliffe Council, even under FOI provisions.

As part of the Budget process and ongoing Council operations, the Association believe Council should:

1. Review the annual cost of hiring external consultants and try to do more of this work inhouse.
2. Make the annual costs of hiring consultants publicly available.
3. To avoid non-endorsement of consultant reports Councillors must become actively involved in the creation of consultant and contractor briefs and have knowledge of the final tendering process for these activities.
4. Consider reinstating or re-forming the Governance and Finance Advisory Committee with community representatives.

3. Spending Review and Capital Works.

The budget projects a deficit of some \$56,000 (effectively a break-even budget in 2023-24) however at a recent meeting with Council some residents indicated that if the list of capital works is approved, the real deficit, using a generally accepted accounting method, could be far greater requiring Council to dip into its General Fund.

We suggested Council review its budget spending, including some of the larger capital works items and priority be given to those projects that already have carry over or State and Commonwealth Government funding, these include:

- The Point Lonsdale Maritime and Defence Precinct (\$1 million);
- Recreation Reserve lighting upgrade (\$160,000);
- Or those projects likely to receive Government funding (foreshore fencing works in the Narrows).

We understand there is State Government election funding available for the installation of a Neighbourhood Battery (some \$500,000) sometime in the future.

Borough Active Transport Strategy.

Following Council's invitation to lodge a submission to their draft ATS and a recent Mayoral/CEO meeting, the Association suggested a rethink of their 30km/h proposal so many of the other worthwhile improvements contained in the document are not lost in the recent debate over speed limits. We also suggested that Council re-issue a revised ATS for further comment and release a recent transport related consultant's report for residents to consider. The Draft ATS recommends some \$1.6 million of works to improve our footpaths, crossings and shared paths over the next 10 years and encourage more active use of these facilities by the community. We look forward to Council's review of the many submissions and the release of a revised ATS. Council's CEO has also indicated it now has a solution for a shared path along Murray Road to the Bellarine Rail Trail and have allocated \$60,000 in the upcoming budget for the project.

Update - Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy.

The Association understands that the final draft Bellarine Peninsula Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) has now been endorsed by all responsible public entities and the next step is to seek approval of the SPP by the Governor in Council. Once the SPP is approved and a notice of decision is published in the Victorian Government Gazette, it will be operational and must be considered by responsible public entities, including councils, in making land use and development decisions and taking other relevant actions. Following approval of the SPP, the Greater Geelong and Queenscliffe planning schemes will be amended to give effect to the SPP to ensure the existing planning provisions are in alignment with the SPP. This is expected to occur within 6 months of the SPP being approved. Further planning scheme amendments may occur to implement the policy directions of the SPP.

Point Lonsdale Rock Sea-Wall Safety concerns.

Recently, the Association wrote to DEECA (Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action) Barwon South West, about concerns raised about the Rock Sea-Wall near the Springs Beach undercutting on the Queenscliff side of the launching ramp extending north to Logs Car Park in the Narrows, where some of the larger anchor rocks (at the base), support the steep wall above. The rocks appear to have moved with recent big seas. In certain areas the overhanging rocks appear to be quite dangerous. The fear is that children, holiday makers or locals using the beach may be injured.

We received a reply in early March. DEECA stated:

The last condition inspection by civil engineers was in May 2021 and it was found to be in good condition. (Editor's Note: known as Revetment S761047, Lonsdale Revetment East)

As it has been almost 2 years since the last inspection, our team are now working to engage civil engineering contractors to undertake another independent inspection. The inspection will document any changes in the condition of the asset since 2021, assess risks to public safety and recommend any actions. We anticipate that this inspection will be carried out within the next fortnight.

We will provide a further update to you following the inspection and engage with the Borough of Queenscliffe if there are any follow-up actions which Council can support.

We received a follow up letter on the 18th of May:

A Level 2 inspection of the asset was undertaken by civil engineering contractors engaged by DEECA in April. The Department has now received the condition assessment report with the outcomes of the inspection.

The key findings of the asset condition report are as follows:

The rock revetment structure was rated in fair condition, with no defects identified that present an elevated risk to public safety.

The consultants recommended that a risk assessment at the public access points be carried out to identify any control measures which could be put in place to assist access to the beach.

DEECA is working with Borough of Queenscliffe to schedule the risk assessment of the access points and identify any control measures for action. This assessment is proposed to take place within the next week.

Point Lonsdale Maritime and Defence Precinct

From the Ordinary Meeting, 24/5/23, the CEO's report contained the following:

Council and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) have now signed the funding agreement for the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve Stage 2 Development project. The purpose of the project is to improve public access to the historic precinct (all abilities) and provide strategic building and precinct restoration works.

The specific actions in the agreement are:

- All abilities shared pathway and parking zones from southern carpark to Point Lonsdale Pier.*
- Restoration works on the WW1/2 Directing and Ranging Station and WW2 Eastern Search light.*
- Restoration works on the lighthouse surrounds.*
- Improved fencing and signage across the precinct.*
- Mains power improvements across the site*

All works will be completed with reference to the Conservation Management Plan, Point Lonsdale Maritime and Defence Precinct (Ecology and Heritage Partners 2021). Works are to be delivered through an appointed Project Control Group, which will include representation from the community (via an Expression of Interest process).

Meanwhile, the Borough has released details of a Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve Development – Stage 2 Project and Control Group.

The funding will be used to extend recent restoration and upgrade works across the site.

The funding supports the following Stage 2 activities:

- Restoration works on the WW1/2 Directing and Ranging Station and WW2 Eastern Searchlight
- Improved pathway to WW1/2 Directing and Ranging Station
- Restoration works on the lighthouse surrounds
- Improved fencing and signage across the reserve
- Installation of mains power improvements across the site
- Creation of an all-abilities shared pathway and parking zones from the southern carpark to the Point Lonsdale Pier

The Project Control Group will include 2 Councillors, 2 Community Members, a Member representing DEECA (Department of Environment, Energy, and Climate Action), and a Project Manager. The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) will be invited to participate in the project and will be welcome to join the PCG, if WTOAC resources allow.

The Association has nominated the Association President for a position on the PCG, and we are awaiting a decision either way.

Finally, Council are also planning to renew the existing toilet block on site under a different funding stream.

Ramsar Review of Port Phillip (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Sites

Following the recent nomination of a number of additional areas including Edwards Point, Swan and Sand Islands and Lonsdale Lakes (including Lake Victoria) on the Bellarine Peninsula, a detailed examination of potential additions is being undertaken during 2023 (stage 4 of a 6 stage process).

Essentially DEECA will assess site values against Ramsar criteria and other considerations including current management arrangements and ability to manage these sites into the future. Stage 5 will see the final list of potential additions agreed with wetland managers and approval sought from The Victorian Minister for Water. Stage 6 will then see approval being sought from the Federal Environment Minister and if approved, Ramsar Secretariat will be notified of the additions.

Borough's Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP)

The Association understands there are carry-over budget monies available to continue the 2-year process of finalising the Borough's CMMP. This comes after we were recently informed that key coastal areas such as the former Queenscliff High School site and the Queenscliff Recreation Reserve (Council is Committee of Management over both these crown land sites), Camp Wyuna (Council owned) and Golightly Caravan Park (partly owned by Council) were removed from the CMMP and will now be included in a revised Open Space Strategy, which means we will have 2 documents covering our coastal lands.

A revised CMMP, which includes consultation with the Wadawurrung traditional owners of the land, is expected in the latter half of this year. We look forward to once again being involved in the process.

Bike Park Update

Planning work on the promised Bike Park is also continuing with Council allocating some \$16,000 in the upcoming budget, however the original design will be reconfigured into one track rather than two and the Department of Transport have agreed in principle for use of the road reserve where the off ramp to Point Lonsdale used to be located. When the latest plan is complete the Borough will continue to work with DoT for approval and Bellarine MP Alison Marchant for State funding opportunities.

Small. Mighty. A Strong Sense of Place.

(Editors Note: This was written by a long time concerned member.)

I can't believe that I feel compelled to write this letter to our community but here I am, like many I know, deeply concerned by the level of angst and disharmony that currently pervades community interactions. We are a great community, small but mighty and with a strong sense of place. We live and work where we live because we love it. But.....

We are currently at great risk of losing all we hold dear just because we cannot agree to disagree in a respectful way.

Open dialogue is critical in a democracy; it's how we make things better for everyone – and that is the job of the council.

It is timely to remind ourselves that we elect councillors to make decisions on our behalf, to represent us the residents of the Borough – it is a collective responsibility. Local government is not easy – it's tough trying to be all things to all people. Councillors can listen, act on ideas or not and ultimately as our elected representatives they make decisions to the best of their abilities and in the best interests of the entire community.

Our councillors stand for election because they want to make our community better – they go to the electorate with ideas and a vision for what might be, for what might be possible and with the very best of intentions. Being a councillor requires commitment and sacrifice. Once elected the rules of government apply – there are processes and constraints. If you don't believe me, get in the room and find out for yourself. Once inside that room, the rules of government do apply and there is no escaping them.

Our councillors are accessible – that is another benefit of being a small community and small LGA – we can talk to our councillors whenever and wherever we see them. Many of us have never made an appointment to talk to a councillor but many of us would have had a discussion, if not multiple discussions with them on the issues that matter to us personally.

The current state – where our councillors are under fire for all manner of reasons, facing personal attacks and threatening behaviour – is not who we are as a community and risks everything the Borough stands for, and fought for, to continue to exist as a Borough.

Public Office should not be justification or an excuse for the level of invective our councillors and council staff currently face. We can all agree to disagree in a respectful and constructive manner. We should treat our councillors and council staff with the same respect, we expect them to show toward us.

It is too easy for those who do not want to stand for Public Office to either initiate or support the divisive conversations we are all hearing. We are an educated and highly skilled community; we do have a wealth of experience and knowledge that we are keen to share – and yes, I firmly believe Councillors do and continue to want to listen, but to listen does not mean they must act on everything they hear.

In this current ‘debate’ Respect is missing. Trust is missing. Concern for wellbeing is missing, and ultimately a sense of a Positive Future is missing. It is incumbent on us to be supportive and put aside personal preferences and passions and act collectively to show our support for our elected representatives because if we continue down the path, we seem hell bent on following we will have no councillors – which means no council – which means no Borough and for those in our community who may be ‘planning to stand in 2024’ there will be nothing to stand for.

A de-stabilised council, fearful of making decisions because they are worried about their own safety and wellbeing or what their opponents might do or say is not the way forward no matter what those in our community hellbent on destabilisation might believe.

It is time for us to put aside our differences and reflect on the positives. Every organisation has problems, every organisation makes decisions that don’t fit with the mind set of all members, every organisation has areas of pride and success – so let’s focus on the positives and capitalise on what makes us the community where we love to live and work and use that as the launching place for a fresh and positive start.

As a community we need to work together and support our councillors and council team. We need to show some gratitude for their commitment to give their time to being on council – because it is a thankless task, and to commit to long term change not short-term quick fixes is never going to be easy nor quick enough.

*It is a long game and, **it’s the game**, we all need to play – **not the person**- if we want a sustainable and viable Borough for future generations. Remember when it’s gone it’s gone, and I am not sure that deep down we want the ‘death’ of the Borough on our collective consciences.*

Winter By the Sea.



Yours Sincerely,

David Kenwood – President PLCA.