

NEWSLETTER

September 2020



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“Working For Victoria”

Under a \$500 million government initiative, many thousands of Victorians, most of whom have lost work as a result of the coronavirus, are being employed under an initiative designed to develop skills and grow jobs. This includes teams undertaking environmental work along our coast and in other natural habitats and also, throughout Melbourne.

A major component of the environmental project is tree planting with some participants being trained to guide urban forest modelling through census collection. For those working on the Mount Eliza foreshore, weed control, to aid the resilience of indigenous vegetation has also been a major focus.

For two teams, project induction took place on Thursday 18 June on the Mount Eliza foreshore. It involved DELWP, the Mornington Peninsula Shire and foreshore Friends. Site notes and a guided walk gave participants an overview of the area. This included discussion of the area's cultural heritage and the importance of resilient indigenous vegetation, established through systematic weed control and where necessary, planting site indigenous species.

Over the subsequent two weeks our happy team took part in a range of activities between the north side of Jacksons Road and the Canadian Bay carpark. Work on the Williams Road to Glen Shian Lane plateau was particularly popular, not least because it provided the opportunity for dolphin spotting. At this location the crew re-established access through the re-emerging Coastal Headland Scrub – an activity which enabled them to undertake weed control. Weed control activities in this area and other sites, included the removal of woody weeds (mainly re-growth), annual & perennial grass weeds, herbaceous weeds and scrambler weeds.

Many thanks to the Friends of Williams Road beach for their induction, mentoring and hosting. In addition, special thanks the highly productive and happy work crew, their wonderful team leader, Jessica Schubert-Hobin, Gerard Cook from the Shire's Natural Systems Team, Neale Adams and Justine Lund from Naturelinks. Finally, Phillip Wierzbowski, our Coastcare coordinator put in months of effort to make this program a reality. As usual Phillip also, created a wonderful pictorial record of activities - many thanks for so graciously allowing us to use these photos in this newsletter. Our foreshore Friends will look forward to working with Jessica and her team in coming months.

Further work on the Mount Eliza foreshore, including at Earimil Bluff and Ranelagh rocks is also taking place.

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Figure 1 Working For Victoria Crew. Picture, with thanks to Phillip Wierzbowski

Canadian Bay car park and picnic area

Further to our extreme disappointment over the continuing poor condition of the Canadian Bay carpark and picnic area – see picture in June newsletter - we wish to provide you with an update.

In response to recent correspondence from MEAFEC the Shire’s Coastal Planner advised as follows:

“A finalised new Mount Eliza Coastal and Marine Management Plan expected to be completed in the 2020 - 2021 financial year will include the carpark upgrade as a key action, however at this stage there is no funding included in the long-term Capital Works Plan to complete detailed design or to construct the carpark area.”

Given that a range of detailed concept plans were drawn up in 2010 and a preferred option updated in 2012, we are disillusioned to find that our only off-road foreshore picnic area has not been allocated funding for an upgrade – a measure which would bring this amenity into line with other key picnic areas on the Mornington Peninsula.

In support of this situation, a front-page article in the Mornington Peninsula News, 3 August encapsulates the displeasure of our committee and, in particular, Judy Smart, our Treasurer. Judy has told the Mornington Peninsula News that the “whole area is very run down, with car parking dominating the landscape, and the road barely driveable. The picnic area is sub-standard ... and has massive pot-holes.”

Judy says “It’s the only beach in Mount Eliza with easy access for families and the less able. The other beaches have long steep cliff tracks “and, therefore “this area has far more visitors and users than any other Mount Eliza beach”.

MEAFEC would like to thank Judy, The Mornington Peninsula News and the Shire staff and Councillors who acknowledge and share our concern.

Seal on Rocks – Ranelagh Rocks

Des Berry reports that on Sunday 5th July, a small seal came ashore at the southern end of Ranelagh Beach. Although I had walked on the beach 30 minutes before I received this Facebook image, I had not seen it – even although I had walked close to the rocks. The image had been noticed by my daughter who works in Hawaii. So, I received this image from Hawaii within 10 minutes of it being posted on Facebook – the power of the internet.



Figure 2, posted on Facebook



Figure 3 Warning sign erected by the Mornington Peninsula Shire. Picture, thanks Des Berry

The seal departed the rocks the same afternoon” and we were left with a sign which reminds us that we must not approach within 50 metres of resting or injured seals.

Ryman Healthcare Plans Rejected by Council

Further to our article, June 2019, RYMAN Healthcare’s plans to build a residential aged care and retirement complex at 60 Kunyung Road were lodged, reviewed by Council and the community and, have now been unanimously rejected by our Councillors. This follow significant community concern, including an objection from MEAFEC, about the inappropriate nature of this development.

The Mayor, Sam Hearn says that in rejecting this application Council aims to “protect the unique rural and green break between Mount Eliza and the township of Mornington”. Unfortunately, Ryman Healthcare intends to take the Shire’s rejection of its application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

To assist the Shire with this ongoing process, Sam Hearn “encourages the community to write to the Minister for Planning (Richard Wynne) to voice their objections to this large scale development. Protection of this heritage overlay coastal property, which lies beyond the urban growth boundary and was intended as part of the Green Wedge, is imperative.

Proposed Bay Trail

While very few would contest the concept of a bay trail, linking the northern Peninsula through to Mornington, MEAFEC has major concerns about the proposed alignment, Moorooduc Station to Bungower Road.

This proposed alignment is planned for placement on a highly significant biolink, which was recently mapped in a study entitled *Threatened Wetland Vegetation Ecological Vegetation Classes on the Mornington Peninsula*. The area contains threatened vegetation communities including *Natural Damp Grassland* and *Plains Grassland*. Also present is the only occurrence on the Mornington Peninsula of *Plains Swampy Woodland* with its rare flora including *Craspedia paludicola* (Swamp Billy-buttons) which now appear to be limited to this Mornington Peninsula site. Additionally, there are large areas of scattered and rare *Grassy Woodland*. Among the outstanding floral species, there are also, several colonies of *Diuris punctate* (Purple Diuris) a threatened orchid in Victoria not found elsewhere in the Mornington Peninsula Shire. The presence of *Eucalyptus pauciflora* (Snow Gum) is another important feature of this biolink.

The potential loss of this rare and irreplaceable habit has led MEAFEC to write to the Shire's Chief Executive Officer requesting a copy of plans and an environmental assessment report. A response was received on 12 June from The Team Leader Traffic & Transport. It reads as follows:

“Currently, the Traffic & Transport Team is working with the Natural Systems Team to explore and consider various options for trail alignments and construction methods both within and outside of the railway corridor. The objective of this work is to find the best alignment that balances user safety, rideability and protection of the important vegetation communities and species. At this stage, we are



Figure 2: Grasslands on the railway line - spring 2019. Flora includes Billy buttons and Snow gums. Photo, thanks to Judy Smart

not ready to discuss these options with MEAFEC or other stakeholder groups. Working with stakeholders on projects like this is essential. We will be in contact in the next two months to arrange the sharing of work completed so far and to receive feedback. This will then be incorporated as the planning progresses. We currently do not have funding for the next stages of detailed design or construction of the trail". We have still not received an environmental assessment and are awaiting further advice from the Shire.

Ranelagh Beach Sewer Mains Replacement Works.

Further to the report in our December 2019 newsletter, Des Berry reports that sewer replacement works finally began on 1st July. The picture below shows the temporary sewer pipe which was pulled through the foreshore reserve from Earimil lookout.

Unfortunately, in the third week of construction it was discovered that two additional pipes were required to connect the temporary sewer pipe to the pumping station. Des says "These pipes were not shown on the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP). All work was stopped on site, and all workers and equipment removed ... The CHMP must now be resubmitted with the additional pipe trenches shown. They anticipate getting back to work in early August." Work has not yet recommenced.



Figure 3: Temporary Pipe. Thanks, Des Berry

Victory Reserve

Gerard reports that there has been a lot of *Pittosporum* removal at Victory Reserve. He also, says that there is a great deal of natural regeneration.

Observations

Over recent weeks nature has offered us some excellent avian sightings: a New Holland Honey Eater feeding on the sap of a Black Wattle was observe by Ross Simpson at the Quarry Reserve; John Scholes noted, from his lounge room chair, a flock of nine pelican heading southward over the Ranelagh Estate; a Glossy Black-Cockatoos was photographed by Diane Peters in the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve; and the Yellow Tailed Cockatoos continue to be observed throughout the suburb.

In early July a pod of dolphins was sighted by the “Work For Victoria” crew at Canadian Bay, a Southern Right Whale was photographed by Sue Brabender off Mornington and a young seal was observed on the rocks at Ranelagh Beach (see Des’ report). In addition, Melinda Gustus reports that Powerful Owls have been heard around South Frankston.



Figure 4: Picture, with thanks, Sue Brabender



Figure 5 - Picture - with Thanks Gerard McDonald



Figure 7 Pod of dolphins, Canadian Bay - picture thanks to Jessica Schubert-Hobin



Figure 8 Glossy Black-Cockatoo. Photo, thanks, Diane Peters