



## NEPEAN RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION INC.

*Engaging the Nepean Ward in supporting a sustainable community*

### **Presidents Report 2025**

It has been another busy year for us. Following is a summary of matters that we have been involved in since our last Annual General Meeting.

#### May 2024

NRA and Beatty Hughes met with Stephen Chapple (Regional Manager for Port Phillip Bay DEECA) and four other senior officials from DEECA in May 2024 at their office in Exhibition street Melbourne. The purpose of the meeting was to inform them that the NRA had new scientific evidence linking the erosion issues at Portsea Front Beach was clearly linked to the CDP.

This new evidence now opens up legal challenges and options to the NRA to initiate actions against the State Government as they have been in denial of these facts since 2009 and have constantly alleged the erosion is the cause of climate change.

Beatty Hughes indicated that we were reluctant to go down this path and instead offered another path which was for the Government and the NRA to enter into a formal structured without prejudice mediation forum.

This message was then conveyed to the Minister Mr Steve Dimopoulos in writing the following date and we requested that a response be given by 1/07/2024.

After constant follow up by Beatty Hughes to the Minister's office and my personal follow up with Stephen Chapple Beatty Hughes received a response in November 2024.

The Minister outlined that before considering our mediation request he wanted a further investigation to occur to review all previous reports and to see if anything new might raise its head.

The NRA protested against this decision and requested a copy of the scope of works that would be given to a contractor to perform these tasks, our request was refused as the department deemed the appointment confidential.

The NRA recently discovered that FSC Group has been engaged by DEECA, and no information will be available until approximately 4-5 months from now. As a result I have organised that a very prominent and well-connected member of the NRA has engaged his lawyers to seek an FOI request for the scope of works as it is of enormous public interest. If his request is also denied he will engage OVIC to review the department's decision.

#### June 2024

The NRA received correspondence from Parks Victoria confirming major repairs were to commence in June 2024 to repair parts of the Portsea Pier. This response was a result of a letter we had sent to them previously notifying them of the deterioration of the pier. Someone had leaked to us a report done in 2021 highlighting the defects and overall condition but nothing had been done.

Richard Doery, our Blairgowrie representative, prepared a list of projects that had been requested by the community over the last 19-20 years for presentation to council and any new council nominee standing for the upcoming elections.

### July 2024

The NRA received advice from the Shire that the C286 Planning Scheme Amendment was endorsed and the recommendations were in line with the NRA submissions over many previous years.

The NRA was also advised by our Rye representative (Mechelle Cheers) that P22/2300 6 Napier Street Rye was heard at a preliminary VCAT hearing and that the developer submitted a revised proposal reducing the height levels and that MPS had accepted this rather than proceed to VCAT. This outcome was a small win and was consistent with the NRA's objection submitted to the Shire re this planning application.

The NRA attended a Sorrento Traffic Management Meeting with the Department of Transport (DOT) where results of a traffic survey undertaken in January 2024 were presented. The data presented only confirmed what we already knew that Ocean Beach Road becomes very congested at peak school holidays and long weekends. DOT representatives made it very clear that money for road projects was very tight and given this was a seasonal issue it will not be a high priority for State Government.

The NRA were invited by the Shire to participate in the MPS draft Open Space Strategy.

The NRA was notified that the Solar Rates Incentive Scheme Would not be going forward and this decision was strongly aligned to our objection submission during the community consultation period.

### September 2024

NRA received advice from the Shire that the C219 planning scheme was adopted by council on the 6/08/2024 and sent to the Minister for planning approval.

NRA was advised by Mechelle Cheers that a tender process had been released for the rejuvenating of the Rye Foreshore after the State Government grant was received after many years of advocacy from the NRA and Mechelle Cheers. The work to reconfigure the camping area has again been delayed until 2025.

NRA met with Team Leader, Natural Systems MPS re clearing of invasive weeds in roadside reserves. It was noted that MPS is doing considerable work to reduce the environmental weeds in some areas but does not have enough resources to address all roadside reserves across the Shire.

### October 2024

NRA prepared a list of 5 questions that were going to be presented to the 7 candidates that nominated for this year's council election. Members of our committee reviewed the responses to the questions and then used a traffic light type of assessment to assist our members decide when voting.

### November 2024

NRA was made aware of P23/0853 Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club. NRA considered the planning permit application and found no grounds for an objection.

Mechelle Cheers reported that MPS are finally working on the playground on the Rye foreshore. Mechelle has been made aware of a significant cost blow out for completing the Rye Foreshore Plan. MPS is now looking at what can be scaled back. This is very disappointing given the Shire received State Government funding of \$6.5M for the project four years ago and work should have commenced then. An inquiry should be had to discover possible incompetence of Shire Officers.

### November 2024

NRA was advised by the committee of the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club that the Principal Planner for the Shire had raised some concerns about the current planning application as she had received 3-4 objections. As a result the NRA wrote to the Shire again fully supporting the planning application.

NRA was advised that rumours were circulating in the community that the arm of the Portsea Pier is to be removed after reports in the weekend press of the Dromana Pier being reduced in size. In addition

the end of the pier had been fenced off as the pier had been extensively damaged in late September 2024 by a massive one-off storm surge and Parks had done nothing to rectify the damage. NRA wrote to Parks Victoria seeking clarification, as a result Parks repaired sections of the pier, and it reopened prior to Xmas.

Jill Sands (Secretary of NRA) and I met our new councillor Andrea Allen on the 6/12/2024 to introduce the NRA and discuss matters of interest. These include planning and compliance, customer service and direct interface with the community, outstanding planning issues and outstanding Master Plans. These include Rye Foreshore, Sorrento Foreshore, MacFarlane Reserve, Portsea Front Beach and the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club planning application.

#### February 2025

Andrew Laing (NRA member) and I met with Cr. Allen regarding the Shires new updated Municipal Emergency Management Plan. Andrew has enormous experience in this area and thought the document could be improved. He offered on a pro bono basis to review the plan and offer suggested improvements for councils' consideration. This document seeking amendments has been submitted to the Shire for consideration with the NRA's full support.

Colin Watson met with our previous councillor Susan Bissinger who outlined her discussions with Safe Transport Victoria re ongoing community concerns with Jet Ski's on the southern peninsula waterways.

Mechelle Cheers provided the committee with an update about her advocacy on this issue over the last 5 years. Mechelle is working with 53 community and water sport groups around the bay advocating for regulation change. Mechelle has also met with Safe Transport Victoria, and they appear limited with what they can do within the limits of their authority's. Mechelle is also waiting for responses from Tim McIntosh and Minister Dimopoulos.

#### March 2025

Parks Victoria contacted NRA and organised a meeting with one their representatives to meet Colin at the Portsea Pier in late March 2025.

NRA received notification from MPS that they have released a document titled Morce Avenue Car Park proposed options. These four options are open for public comment. NRA has participated in this process representing our ratepayers.

If you have any questions or queries regarding this report, please feel free to contact me by telephone on 0412 998177 or my private email address [colinfwatson@bigpond.com](mailto:colinfwatson@bigpond.com)

Colin Watson  
President  
Nepean Ratepayers Association.