

President's Report 2015

Twelve months after taking over the reins, I can report that all the issues that were bubbling along back then are still on the burner now. Happily, they all seem to be progressing well.

As was noted last AGM, nearly all our issues are long term and complex. Consequently, most are likely to be occupying our time and/or causing us concern for at least the foreseeable future. The pleasing thing to note is that we have been able to make a positive difference in the likely outcomes for almost all of them.

The results in Garden City Reserve are a hard won achievement, however it still needs championing. General maintenance is always required especially with PMPS use of the park, and the number of new plantings which seem to be a constant feature. In particular, Lois Daley has been her usual vigilant self, keeping council staff and contractors up to their task.

As a result of our efforts, we are finally seeing the replacement of the lighting along the central path through the reserve, the installation of a barbecue near the playground, public toilets at the South-East corner of the Trugo Clubhouse and seating around the park.

We have also had significant impact in preventing adverse impact from the expansion of the Port. The continued works notices from the Port are the direct result of our efforts with the PoMC. Helen Kuchel has been instrumental in pushing for planning and funding the playscape at Perce White Reserve, as well as keeping on the case for reduced light spill, better access and reduced noise from Webb Dock. She has also been selected as one of the community representatives on the Community Legacy Grants Board for VICT (the operator of the new container terminal).

With the lease of Webb Dock being sold, there are a number of additional issues confronting the local community. The first is the uncertainty around what is included in the new lease. While we've been assured that the new lease owner will be required to engage with the community on an ongoing basis, we have no idea what form that will take. We have also been told that VICT has asked the PoMC for additional land from Perce White Reserve to be added to their footprint. We will try to ensure that encroachment into the buffer zone does not become a regular occurrence.

Truck traffic remains a problem for those living on Williamstown Rd despite the closure of the entry into the Port from Williamstown Rd. We have asked the Council for a traffic survey to confirm the number of trucks still using this route to and from Webb Dock.

The Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area is the other major issue that will affect local residents and businesses for decades to come. We have taken a lead role in ensuring that there is genuine consultation with the community about improving amenity for existing residents as well as our future neighbours. Our involvement has contributed in no small part to changes to Council's decision making process for FBURA building permit applications, the creation of the Council Community Forum Meetings and the State Government's recent community forum. We have been assured by the Planning Minister and the new Taskforce Management that we will be consulted on all the major issues associated with the project.

Our members have also been closely involved in the Vibrant Village partnership that is re-energizing the Garden City Shopping Centre, and which organised a social event in December.

December also saw us celebrate 10 years of advocacy by Port People Inc., and I thank Sheona Simpson and Judi Groves for their organisation of a very successful get-together.

The closure of the Liberty service station on the corner of Salmon St and Williamstown Rd highlights the danger of contamination to our health and well-being. Despite the closure, the odours persist in affecting the residents around the beach end of Beacon Rd. We are liaising with the EPA about the contents of a number of environmental audit reports for a number of building sites in the area.

Over the last year we have worked hard to expand our contacts with other local community groups. We continue to have a constructive and mutually supportive relationship with Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association, and we have joined South Port Urban Responsible Renewal (SPURR) which has established itself as the major community-based advocacy group dealing with the FBURA project.

We have also strengthened our ties with Beach Patrol 3207, Port-to-Port and Friends of Westgate Park, all of whom face the same issues we do. Our collective voice, combined expertise across a range of skills and local knowledge makes it much harder for those who want to change this area to do so without gaining our agreement.

The City of Port Phillip is a key partner in facilitating what we do, and we are extremely grateful to our Ward Councillor and Mayor, Bernadene Voss, for her commitment to the area and her willingness to listen and, just as importantly, to act on our behalf.

Last – but by no means least - I thank the Port People committee for their support over 2015. In addition to those mentioned earlier, Patsy Poppenbeek is a terrific editor of our Newsletter (and not half bad at cracking the whip when it comes to extracting articles out of slow writers). Sheona has been a godsend as Secretary and is always willing to take on that little bit extra without being asked. Bob Ditton and Ernie Weston have selflessly devoted their time on more than a few occasions, and together we've achieved some notable wins for Garden City.

There is always more that can be done, and anyone willing to help make Port a great place to live will always be welcome at our meetings and events. And of course, anyone willing to join the Committee will be greeted with open arms.

Rowan Groves
President