

CORRECTED VERSION

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LAND DEVELOPMENT

Apollo Bay — 8 November 2007

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Witness

Mr N. McGain, Otway Forum.

The CHAIR — Mr Neil McGain, also with the Otway Forum, is quite prepared to make a very brief contribution.

Mr McGAIN — Yes. Just to pick up where Mr Spencer left off about the flood plain issue, you should have been here on Sunday to see the flood. It was mostly contained on the inland side of the road and took quite some time to get through there, because on the lower side of the Barham Valley Road the flood plain is quite often well up because the sand bar at the entrance to the river is closed, and you can have a minor flood about the actual bank height quite regularly that sometimes stays for weeks. Because that was clear and the river was low, there was not much resistance once it got to the other side of the road. But apparently in the engineering figures they say that there will be some slowing of water going through the flood plain because of the pods and a widely rumoured approach by the developer to the football club not to object to the development going on upstream because of its impact on increasing flood risk to the football ground which encompasses the camping area and recreation reserve. Have you heard from the recreation reserve's manager?

The CHAIR — No.

Mr McGAIN — No, not yet. He will go into that — but anyway! So that is that.

What I wanted to bring up is the use of the public land, particularly around the harbour. The plan put forward was basically focused on commercial development aimed at tourism, but I think the essential function of a harbour is to centre on those industries such as aquaculture, which is a growing industry. You would need facilities created onshore to satisfy food-handling procedures so you have quick movement to a handling area rather than down along the wharf. There is stuff that should have been looked at was not. The slipway was proposed to be removed — I believe they have now reneged on that — but increasing the facility of making spur vessels here. Apollo Bay as a harbour is the first roadstead, so to speak, for shipping coming in from the west, with very little between here and Warnambool, really. Port Campbell is a very dodgy harbour, so this a sanctuary for people coming from the west, and it is an increasing thing these days, to sail, — previously we had the Cape Otway lighthouse — and we are regularly seeing an increase of sailing vessels and pleasure craft coming around. Apollo Bay harbour should be looking at facilitating what those people need in terms of short-term fix up. When there is a jam-up on the slipway for the fishing fleet, they need to be able to get quick access for repairs, or they limp on to the next one.

There are things such as an interpretative centre for the marine life in the area. In the harbour there is a reef section that would be easily accessible by a pontoon system, a glass-bottomed area, so that people could walk around and look at a prize piece of reef that would increase the facility at the harbour itself. Little ideas have been put forward, like making a mini-lighthouse out on the end as a functioning light to increase the standard of the light, but also to create a tourism facility that goes with the harbour. The fishing co-op building itself is in need of a revamp. I have actually worked in there — I have worked there as a deckhand on fishing boats — I have worked in the fishing co-op — so I know that the place does need modernising. How that is done, ask the professional fishermen themselves, not the council, really, who are not quite across these issues.

Further up on the golf course area, if the golf club moves, which is still very much up in the air, I think I am right, with the prospect of C29 proceeding on the flood plain, that open area should be maintained as public open space. The council had proposed putting a library there and other buildings. I think it is totally unacceptable that a beautiful open space like that be cut off for commercial developments so some little shop owner can make a motza out there, which will affect the shopkeepers in the town. They would get their goodies and go out there for a walk, away from the shops. I think it is important to have places for kids to throw frisbees, for dogs to run and for kicking balls and have plenty of open space, and there is very little of it. The council itself has no public park in the town. Any park playground facilities are provided by the public reserves committee. Some structures associated with playground or exercise equipment and these sorts of things would be acceptable, but not creating buildings and putting council offices or libraries, especially not a huge increase in parking.

The proposal for the front of the Greenacres area — for the road to be shifted down lower and parking created along there — I think once again goes back to the sore point that the council has been failing to provide parking spaces in the town itself. Most of the developments recently in the town have been able to pay a penalty to the council as an offset for having a parking space, with the result that over on the foreshore goes most of the parking. As an interest I work part time for the public reserves committee, so I see the fact that a lot of damage is being done to the foreshore by excess parking coming on there.

The demise of the cypress trees has been partly due to the pressure of cars being parked under the trees. There is that issue of extra roads and parking on the public space that I think needs to be expanded on, and issues such as the weeds. Mostly the two part-timers on the foreshore for Apollo Bay to Kennett River pull all the weeds and do all the maintenance, and all the other things. The state government does not give anywhere near enough money to the maintenance of public open space. It is not just here. I also worked on the Torquay public reserves committee years ago, and they have the same sort of trouble there. But maintaining all of these issues like weeds is the last place the money trickles down to. For years and years and years lack of attention to weeds has meant that there is an explosion of sea spurges, as an example, along the coast. There are various weeds. I could go on for ages, but I suppose I have used my 5 minutes!

The CHAIR — I am conscious of the time, and I thank you for your additional contribution.

Mr McGAIN — Good-o; thanks for your time.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.