

## **ABCA Minutes - Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020**

**Apologies:** Carol Fortey, Angela Kennedy, Ken and Sandy West, Phillip and Kathryn Yuile, Matt Francis, Tony Magnus, Wayne Robertson. Elaine Norling.

**Treasurers report** - Ian Carruthers

Donations for ANZAC memorial stone of \$3200 and \$560 donations to the ABCA

Final Balance \$7912.69 + Cash Reserve \$7699.89

Total \$15612.58

**President's report** – Steve Fortey tendered a written report (attached)

### **AGENDA**

#### **BUSHFIRES**

Frustrating to not be able to help victims of the bushfires.

Mike has visited community at Lake Conjola who lost 90 homes in terrible devastating conditions.

Mike will write an article in the upcoming newsletter.

What can we do as a community?

Steve has approached local real estate agents to ask home owners of holiday rentals if they wouldn't mind donating a week of free holiday time. Invite bushfire victims here for a week of free accommodation. Steve has asked local businesses to throw in a free meal and everyone so far is in.

#### **LAKE CONJOLA** - Mike Rubbo

Houses had melted, cars driven into lake to apparently save them.

Before going, Mike was warned that people may be reluctant to talk, tread carefully, they are understandably traumatised.

Lake Conjola is situated 20km north of Ulladulla. Most of houses burnt were on the high ground.

They had no chance, no warning. They were never told to leave, the Fires Near Me app just said it's too late to leave.

Looking at the similarities here in Avoca, we've got Kincumba Mountain nearby, we could be in a similar situation.

One house that survived had a sprinkler system.

The town is near the lake itself on flat ground. On the morning of New Year's Eve the fire raged down but lost power at the flat area.

An over 50s complex called 'Ingenia' saw it coming, they had nowhere to leave. They decided to go to the clubhouse and fortunately the building was untouched. Bands of bush around them were on fire and got up to the windows. They had no power, no air con, alarms rang for 5 hours and it was incredibly hot and terrifying. Only 2 houses of this particular complex burnt, they had leaf mulch in their gardens.

The Lake Conjola community went to an evacuation point, a community hall, which in hindsight was not a wise choice as it was surrounded by trees. It had out of date fire extinguishers that were locked with no key.

The town was poorly prepared. A lot of people defended their houses with garden hoses which they did until around 4pm then they went to the water. There was no visibility at this stage.

Everybody went to the beach to escape and wait it out. It eventually took police 14 hours to evacuate those people. One road in and one road out, so it was very vulnerable to closure.

The evacuation hall did become vital as a recovery centre. They proactively formed a committee, taking donations, addressed sewerage issues, combining their skills.

In hindsight, they say they were complacent and said it's a very good idea to make an inventory of the talent they had in town to help co-ordinate essential services and goods.

So much to learn from their experience, how would we react and respond if it happened to us?

### **ABCA RESPONSE - Steve Fortey**

1) ABCA will approach Council to ask them to come up with a bush fire response emergency plan for Avoca Beach and surrounding communities.

Rocky Wolters runs disaster/emergency preparedness for organisations around the country and would be happy to investigate this for Avoca so we could actually set something up like this for Avoca.

2) ABCA can offer residents of Lake Conjola a week's respite holiday. 700 people in town, almost 100 houses destroyed, so almost 1/3 of the town. Only George Brand and Harcourts ACCOR have been approached so far.

The ABC News said it's likely to be 6 months before they begin rebuilding so this will be an ongoing assistance idea.

#### **\*How Can You Help?**

- Do you own a holiday house or know someone who does?
- A fund through the community to raise money for meals for Conjola visitors (rather than all the pressure be placed on our local restaurants)
- Have a BBQ for them?
- Suggest further ideas.

### **BANGALOE STUD DA**

Graham Murray the spokesperson for Pickett's Valley Community Action Group is away at the moment.

The ABCA would like to express concerns about :

- Increased traffic from 200+ additional homes and concern about the
- Access points. Their current access is quite a dangerous bend.
- Service road through Picketts Valley they are currently using may become another exit point which is also very dangerous.

- Health of Avoca Lake. You suddenly put a large hard surface area above our catchment area of Saltwater Creek.
- Destruction of wildlife corridor, they're cutting down 600 of the 900 trees.

Roger Johnson: has read the Bangaloe Stud DA's Statement of Environmental Effects . The main take away point is the precedent it sets in attempting to create a development of movable dwellings. High density housing on an E4 zoning which was intended for low density tourist development.

The legislative word puzzle in the Statement of Environmental effects, an area of low density (16 dwellings per hectare) has gone to high density/high impact from buildings that share similarity to caravans but they're actually large houses. Sneaky exploitation of a technicality loophole in the wording.

2013 LEP is not specifically zoned. Chunk of land from Bangaloe Stud to the back of the bowling club was changed to E4.

One similar environment is what has happened at Erina with all the subdivisions adjacent to Erina Fair. Is this the first domino in a much larger long-term development plan?

Ian Carruthers – similar situation occurred on the South coast but the community were successful in stopping it as it was not entirely consistent with the legislation. The Bangaloe Stud site is specifically recognised as a scenic buffer zone.

Roger has looked at the Bangaloe Stud DA's maps and noticed something very curious about the site plan. The internal roads align with the roads in the residential subdivision to the west (near the quarry). The main community hub of the DA is not in the centre, but further to the east, as though the developers have future plans to expand.

State government has recognised this is an anomaly in the legislation ruling but have still not clarified it. This is the same loophole that is being exploited at Bowtell's caravan park with the use of pre-fabricated mobile homes that are actually big homes.

If it goes to the Land and Environment Court they follow to the letter and will probably approve it.

Helen Polkinghorne asked what can we do to argue that the wording does not provide for the actual situation that is occurring.

Meeting agreed that a submission raising the above points be lodged with Council.

## **AVOCA LAGOON**

Water quality is the poorest on the coast. A lot of theories as to why, one is that it is to do with the sewerage pipes are old and leaking. Currently there is an intensive study of the lake going on with extensive testing.

The lead engineer has replied to ABCA that they are going to the extent to examine how much of the faeces in the lake is human or animal to find the real problem.

Helen Polkinghorne asked whether there is also a lot of chemical runoff.

Roger has a background in this area. The data he's seen from the Terrigal situation indicates the issue is the resilience of the local catchment. Scientific studies show 10% of area development such

as clearing the natural systems, hardening surfaces, open drains leads to the catchment being significantly affected.

Eg Saltwater Creek, vegetation overgrown with weeds, privet, camphor laurel. Council is not improving the natural systems to address the issues. Avoca lagoon is full of silt. The data from the 1985 lagoon had a half metre of silt.

ABCA will write a letter to Council once the Terrigal and Coastal Lagoons Audit report is done and the main problems identified, to be released in June.

Council are running drop in information sessions 13<sup>th</sup> Feb at Copacabana.  
See [www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/tcla](http://www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/tcla) for more info.

#### **BOWTELLS DA – Ian Carruthers**

Developer had been given until end of December to provide an update on how they were addressing flooding issues and now have until end of Feb to provide this info.

The DA is currently rejected due to situation on flood plain.

#### **BOB PICKETTS LAND DONATION – Steve Fortey**

Bob wants to donate a large parcel of land (5 acres) to the community for sporting fields and recreational use, similar to use as Heazlett Park. The land is land locked by COSS land which would need to be accessed to get to Bob's land. Bob would like to join the two areas together to create a large green space.

Council replied 9/12/19 to our letter in May 2019. Council are very protective of COSS land but are open to a deal if the land is used for "passive recreation"

Council have asked Bob to draft a Memorandum of Understanding of what he would like to happen on the land.

Virginia Riley noted the extreme lack of open green space for the population of 4,300 in Avoca Beach and queried what % green space per capita is recommended by planning laws and that Council has an obligation to support this.

#### **AVOCA ROCKPOOL – Steve Fortey**

Engineers are aware of problems in rockpool but haven't been able to address them due to crowds. Wait for appropriate time to get in and remove the rocks. May also bring in some sand for the rockpool.

#### **FORESHORE DEVELOPMENT – Steve Fortey**

Overwhelmingly there is a positive response. A couple of little things about to happen, the little mulched area in front of the playground is where they're going to put a bike rack and some picnic tables.

Gary Hoare has also suggested a BBQ area on the eastern side of the surf club. The tuckeroo trees are dying, not maintained over holiday period. Council has been contacted.

#### **ANZAC MEMORIAL – Steve Fortey**

Small unobtrusive stone has been installed under the pine trees which will be the focal point for the Dawn Service.

The ABCA expressed gratitude and congratulations to the people who have made the ANZAC memorial a reality: Gary Hoare, Michael Scobie, Lindsay Cunningham and Steve Fortey.

#### **AVOCA NEWSLETTER - Mike Rubbo**

Going to run a story on the new petrol station. He interviewed the owner, Vic, who is endeavouring to keep prices the lowest on coast. He wants to sponsor a local cricket team and install a mirror for safe entry/exit.

He's also done a story on Tim Davies' business Treasure Hunters who scours the beach with a metal detector and reunites people with lost treasures, especially rings.

#### **DOGS ON THE BEACH - John Hobson**

John is wondering about Council's dog policy. Dogs are everywhere and people are not picking up their poos. The off-leash dog area laws are not clearly marked. Faded signs at entry to beach and dog poo bags at the southern corner deceptively indicate dogs can walk there, which they cannot.

Michael Scobie disagreed that people are not picking up dog waste, believing those are the minority and most dog owners do the right thing. He has volunteered to look into the problem and clarify the laws to ensure people are made aware of their responsibilities.

Council are issuing significant fines for dogs found south of the shark tower, approximately \$600 for dogs not on a leash and \$300 for leashed dogs, however some people feel the rangers are rarely around.

Virginia Riley said that 20 years ago the Council decided to ban dogs from the beach altogether. Members of the community formed BARC (Beach Access Reform Coalition) who fought hard to retain the leash free dog area and that if people continue to disrespect the laws, we could lose this privilege altogether.

Michael to approach Council for better signage and clarification on dog laws.

#### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

Bushfire respite – Nick Welch has volunteered to co-ordinate Avoca's bushfire assistance plan.

#### **Congratulations!**

Local resident Pauline Wright has just been appointed President of the Australian Law Society.

Local resident Andy Hoban was awarded an OAM for services to surf life saving.

Dr Michael Scobie, one of our members, recently received an OAM for ophthalmic services to indigenous communities.

Meeting concluded 9.20pm

**Next Meeting** Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April, Avoca Surf Club, 7.30pm.