

## **President's report**

Living in this wonderful place, it has been a privilege to work with the committee and our stakeholders in supporting our villages of Wye River and Separation Creek.

At the start of the year we faced a daunting list of challenges: No website, an unpublished member survey, uncertainty over a pedestrian crossing at Sep Creek, Paddy's Path closed, patchy Telstra coverage, chaotic parking in summer, uncertainty about fire regulations, confusion and concern over Harrington Park, issues with rates and community services, and other challenges. We also had a history of coming to our community meeting in January and facing the same problems of previous years.

We had several strengths. We had started working well with our stakeholders. And we had a talented committee. So what have we achieved?

### **Communication**

We have gone from no website to a useful website where we have published a lot of information of interest to the community. Led by our editor Toni Lawson, we produced and hand delivered two newsletters to around 500 houses, with 100 for casual readers. We also sent out several email news updates, which will be the model for future years.

### **Member survey**

Our unpublished member survey was transformed into an excellent report by committee member Prof Mark Stokes, and published on the website.

### **Pedestrian crossing Sep Ck and Vicroads**

Uncertainty about the Separation Creek pedestrian crossing was eliminated in July, when Sarah Henderson and Vicroads announced that construction would commence in 2015. We worked closely with Vicroads in planning and publicity about the 4 day closure of the Great Ocean Road, a once a generation event that was done flawlessly. We will hear more from William Tieppo today of the significant improvement works being done in our area.

### **Paddy's Path**

We worked closely with Otway Coast Committee and DEPI on getting Paddy's Path re-opened, including support from Terry Mulder. DEPI and OCC have solved some difficult engineering and planning challenges, and it was reopened before Xmas and it is looking great.

### **Parking**

For many years summer parking in Wye has been chaotic, inconveniencing locals and visitors alike. In 2014, we undertook a parking study and lobbied the shire to fix the problems. In December, the shire introduced parking signs and enforcement as a first trial. There have been improvements, and we expect the shire will use the trial to improve further, and to work on the root cause of parking problems, which appears to be spill over from campers.

### **Fire regulations**

Early in the year there was confusion about fire regulations. Some owners faced the prospect of being unable to build or rebuild on their land due to fire impact. We told the shire of our concerns, supported by a critique by Prof Mark Stokes of a bushfire management overlay policy that was later substantially modified. We also financially supported (\$500 donation) the ground-breaking work done by Cate Cotter, who successfully

lobbied the State Government to enable landowners to build on their land in fire affected areas.

### **Harrington Park**

There was confusion and division within the community over the Harrington Park project. We were pleased to see the shire assume responsibility and supervision of the works. We wait with interest the results of the shire investigation into what happened and what can be learned to benefit similar projects in the future.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

In 2013, we started to proactively engage with our stakeholders. In 2014, we continued.

We met face to face with the shire 4 times, including the prior CEO, the acting CEO and the new CEO. We made sure there was continuity of prominence and focus on our issues as the regime changed, and acknowledge the support of Cr Russell the mayor at the time.

We met with Otway coast committee 4 times, face to face and by telephone.

We supported Vicroads in setting up a community drop in day prior to the 4 day closure and remain in close contact.

We met with DEPI regional management face-to-face and worked closely with their staff on Paddy's path.

We flagged our concerns to Telstra in March when their system struggled and again when it failed during a long power blackout in June.

### **November Mini forum**

The committee responded to past summer failures proactively by setting up a mini forum in November where we asked our stakeholders the simple question - "Are we ready for summer?" We heard from DEPI, OCC, CFA and their preparations. Cr Delahunty attended from the shire.

Bill Mundy from Telstra explained how the Telstra system was substantially upgraded shortly before the mini forum and how they had improved backup arrangements in the case of power blackouts.

### **The future**

Of course, much remains to be done. There are ongoing challenges with high rates, Harrington Park, weeds and feral animals, and the long delayed Riverwalk. Juliet LeFeuvre is working with DEPI on a future workshop on fire and regeneration.

I will be taking a year off from the committee while I attend to some personal business, but the committee will continue with talented and committed members. It is well connected into other community organisations, for example the surf club through Denis O'Brien, the social club through Sherryl Smith, the CFA through Jeremy Tatchell, the Foreshore campers through Pauline Wilson, Estuary watch via Juliet LeFeuvre and the Community Planning Group via Ian Angus.

I would like to acknowledge the considerable work done behind the scenes by the executive: by Toni Lawson as Treasurer, by Harry Lewis as Secretary and Ian Angus as Vice President. Ian has been a particularly valuable support to me personally during the year.

I am confident that the Association is in good shape to meet the coming year's challenges.

Rex Brown  
President  
January 2015