

Progress Association AGM 17 January 2016

Welcome & Acknowledgements

Welcome to the annual general meeting of the Wye River & Separation Creek Progress Association.

I am chairing this meeting in the absence of our President Juliet Le Feuvre, who sends her apologies due to a long-standing overseas travel commitment.

We welcome special guests to our meeting and the Community Forum: Lisa Neville, Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Water; Jane Garrett, Minister for Emergency Services; Simon Ramsay MP, Member for Western District, who is attending today and representing Sarah Henderson, Federal member for Corangamite and Richard Riordan, State member for Polwarth; Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley; the Mayor, CEO and Councillors of Colac Otway; and senior managers from support and services agencies.

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands in our region and pay our respects to their Elders both past and present and any here today.

In Memoriam

It is customary to acknowledge – in memoriam – those we have lost from the community during the year:

Harry Dowd
Caroline Green
Kate Lawson
Chris Lever
Eric Lewis
Derek Markham

Challenge, Compassion & Resilience

This is a challenging time for our community and the Christmas Day fires and their aftermath have impacted dramatically on the lives and circumstances of many individuals and families. Many have lost much; and some have lost everything. They have the best wishes, prayers and support of the entire community.

At the meeting held here two weeks ago, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley observed that the community of Wye and Sep was demonstrating both passion and compassion in the face of extreme adversity. It is part of what makes our townships special.

The Association has received many expressions of support. Last week, a young Sep Creek family sent a cheque for \$250 along with their annual subscription, as a statement of support and encouragement; and we will hear, through the Forum, of the plans for recovery and rebuilding in the challenging times ahead.

The year in review

Following the adoption of new rules for our incorporated Association at last year's meeting, Consumer Affairs Victoria formally confirmed the changes.

The Committee is classifying and scanning the historical records of the Association, dating back to the sixties, that have been kept by former President David Henshall and we record our appreciation of his dedication.

The Committee met eight times during the year and your Association has continued to engage directly and constructively with external stakeholders and agencies, including Colac Otway Shire, Otway Coast Commission, Telstra, Department of Water Environment Land & Planning and VicRoads. We record our appreciation of their reciprocity, even if we don't always agree or secure the particular outcome we seek.

We publish the e-link to Colac Otway Shire on our website, and provide monthly summaries of Council's agendas and meetings, with particular focus on issues affecting Wye, Sep and Kennett River.

Colac Otway Shire CEO Sue Wilkinson attended our meeting in June where we canvassed openly and frankly issues including high season parking congestion at Wye River; maintenance and re-vegetation of Harrington Park; improved communication with OCC and foreshore caravan park users; allocation of capex funds to specific safety works and improvements; and the quantum and application of rates levied on Wye and Sep properties.

Brydon King and Jonathan Brett attended our meeting in September to discuss our submissions to Council on the shire's wastewater management plan.

We raised our strong concerns about progress on the River Walk with Council, the Big 4 park operators and the OCC. It is a matter of extreme regret that the principal parties to the negotiations failed to reach agreement on the alignment and construction of the River Walk, resulting in the forfeiture of allocated funds for the project from Regional Development Victoria.

The Progress Association views the River Walk as an item of unfinished business for 2016. As stated on our website, we will continue to agitate for the Walk to be clearly delineated, consistent with the terms of the commercial lease, so the community has unobstructed access to the river and the riverbanks.

Re-construction & Recovery

We will hear about plans and strategies for the post-fire re-construction and recovery during the Forum. Suffice to say at this point that the Progress Association stands ready and able to contribute, in whatever capacity is useful and productive, to the tasks ahead.

Ian Angus
Vice-President