

Wye River Separation Creek Progress Association – AGM 2017

President's report 22 January 2017

2016 has been a year I don't think any of us here will ever forget. To say it's been difficult is putting it mildly. First of all the fire and the devastation it caused. Then the massive clean-up, the loss of so many of our beautiful trees, the battles with insurance companies, BAL ratings and retaining walls, and then the deluge, the landslips and the repeated closures of the Ocean Road. It hasn't been easy. Our environment has changed and we are having to adapt to that change, which presents challenges for us both as individuals and as a community. We are not alone in this, as other communities who have endured major bushfire and other natural disasters have reported similar sentiments of loss and dislocation. We are each responding in our own ways, but the primary focus of the Progress Association is still to protect and enhance those features that make the built and natural environments of our townships so special.

Our AGM last year was the first big community get together after the fire and since then there have been literally hundreds of gatherings big and small, official and unofficial here at Wye, in Melbourne and work groups meeting at Colac and Geelong. The amount of work that has been done and the support we have received has been quite phenomenal, as has been the commitment of volunteers and the passionate involvement of many members of the community. This will all be talked about at the forum following the official AGM, but I'd just like to acknowledge and celebrate the renewed sense of community, the offers of help given and received and the working together, and the new friendships made and old ones strengthened. It's been wonderful to be part of it

The Progress Association has had a busy year. One of our key roles has been to keep everyone informed about events and decision-making in our community, and our email list has had a thorough workout. We have sent out 48 communications to our members this year, thanks to the wonderful work of our tireless secretary Matt Jackman. We also work closely with the other community groups and some of our committee have been very active members of the initial Bushfire Recovery Group and now the Community Resilience Committee.

The committee has met 8 times during the year and we have actively and regularly engaged with COS, DELWP, EMV and the other agencies involved in bushfire recovery. We have kept a close eye on community infrastructure and are absolutely delighted to see the Riverwalk finally become a reality with unimpeded public access to the river bank. Thirty years of effort have finally paid off! I'd like to thank Minister Neville for her personal commitment to making it happen. If you haven't already been up there please take a stroll up through the Big 4 and have a look. The new playground and beach furniture are other terrific assets for the community to enjoy.

This year we look forward to the re-opening of Paddy's Path, and encourage the work of Paul Greene, the tourism group and others to create new walking tracks and more things to do in our townships.

There has been a lot of concern expressed throughout the community about the extent of tree removal on both public and private land and the implications for landslip risk. We have shared those concerns and look forward to working with the Shire to maintain the trees at Harington Park and other land they own. We are also really keen to move forward to a period of revegetation, weed control and environmental restoration. We'll be hearing more from the CRC and the Council about the plans for this at the forum following this meeting.

I would like to say thank you to our hard working committee, in particular our Vice President Ian Angus for his sage advice and our Secretary Matt Jackman for the amazing amount of work he has put in, keeping us in order, maintaining our website and sending out the emails. And the rest of you for your many and varied contributions, and the work you do for the benefit of our community.

I'd also like to say thanks to our members for supporting us and to encourage anyone here who is not a member to join. The Progress Association has been providing a voice for this community for more than 40 years and we're here for the long haul. But we are only as strong as our membership base and in this case it really is true the more the merrier. So please see John and Toni if you would like to sign up. And please get in touch with us during the year if there are issues of concern, good or bad.

Thank you for coming and I look forward to working and playing with you all this year.

Juliet Le Feuvre

President, WRSCPA