

## PGLOA AGM Chairman Address 2020

Dennis Gee 7 Sep 2020

This is the 19<sup>th</sup> year of PGLOA. The basic objective of our Association is to be a voice for our community on issues involving the City of Busselton, Government authorities and land developers; and to promote the precinct of Port Geographe as a desirable place to live. I will review some of the issues and achievements over the last two years.

### **Sand and Wrack Management**

The big issue in the last two years has been the seasonal accumulation of seagrass wracks on the coast line, leading to questioning of the performance of the reconfigured breakwaters. We have done our own technical study, we have made submission to the Technical working Group on breakwater performance, demonstrating that the Western Beach is filling naturally. We have responded to the five current proposed actions. We have objected to one specific proposal to remove sand from Western Beach, and have questioned the quantum of sand nourishment at Wonnerup Beach. But we support actions to enhance the amenity of all beach usage along the coast, providing that our SAR payment is not used for that purpose.

Overall we consider the re-configured breakwaters are performing well, but we believe that bi-annual dredging will be required in perpetuity.

### **Finished Floor Levels**

The vexed question of finished block levels still remains unresolved after two years. It is stifling further development within the precinct, whilst elsewhere the district is experiencing a high level of real estate and residential building activity.

To recap, present finished-ground levels are around 2.5 meters above AHD. State Planning seeks to prescribe FFLs of 3.8m AHD for new blocks following the recent rezoning. There has been only one small advance. The five-block subdivision of Lot 38 (between Port Lane and Stinger-Free Pool) of Qube Property Developments, which was part of the original zoning, will proceed with the current block level. Just in the last few weeks a determination of 3.4 m AHD has been made for the remainder of the undeveloped land in the heart of Port Geographe, which is contentious. The situation for Aigle Newport remains unresolved. In fact we believe there is a real danger of yet another walk-away.

We still believe the guidance of SPC is overly prescriptive, it is not supported by actuarial data on sea levels, and is inconsistent with planning guidelines elsewhere in the city, and other government organizations elsewhere in the State. We believe that BCC can and should take a leadership role in resolving this issue.

### **Landscaping**

We take some satisfaction that the work we have put into our series of *Pride of Place* reports over recent years has resulted in enhancements of parks and gardens in the precinct. These areas include the Western Groyne, Burgee Close, footbridge abutments, Layman-Lanyard POS, and Layman Road tree planting. We compliment BCC on these projects.

This year we are pleased to note the BBQ on the western port entry and the replacement of canal wall caps in POS is included in the 2020-21 Budget. And the fractured pavements will be rectified. We continue to press for a range of immediate and longer-term actions, like Sensations Beach, more multi-use pathways, and the curation of undeveloped public lands in the heart of Port Geographe.

Expenditures on parks, gardens and streets are those that would normally be expected from our rate contributions, and augmented by the Port Geographe Development Reserve Fund (PGDRF), whose objective is to provide extra capital for the development works within the Port Geographe rate area.

Funds for the PGDRF have come primarily from developer contributions, and in 2015-16 received a boost with the return of developer bonds bringing the balance up to \$1.65M. In response to PGLOA representations, the City agreed in 2018 to reinstate a contribution equivalent to 25% of SAR receipts, which it placed into the PGDRF at an approximate level of \$60,000 per year.

In the last three years there have been major draw-downs on the PGDRF, applied to new gardens in un-developed POS, and reticulation connections between the three deep water bores in the precinct.

The balance in the PGDRF at end 2019-20 was about \$150,000, which approaches its basic sustaining level, and will be unable to support many further major projects. The City has informally indicated that capital works in Port Geographe may be limited to cash aliquots of about \$50k p/a.

PGLOA acknowledges it has been well served in regard to landscaping in the last three years. But we argue that it will be entirely appropriate to augment future works from recurring income from rates, or more logically – a redefined SAR – as is done in most other SAR areas.

### **SAR Issue**

We remind everyone that our Special Area Rate (SAR) is not applied to parks and gardens, as it is in all other SAR areas in the City. It goes into the Port Geographe Waterway Management Reserve Fund (PGWMRF) which helps to service management of what is a major community asset that anybody can use.

The redirection of the Specified Area Rate (SAR) remains the major longer-term issue for PGLOA. The 2015 Management Agreement between Busselton City and Department of Transport created a situation where all our SAR contributions go into dredging the entry channel of a public facility. We fully understand that to change the deployment of the SAR will require a revision of the 2015 legal agreement between BCC and the State Government. However, a basic principle from which we do not waver is that the SAR should be used for the benefits of the residents, and for the betterment of the precinct.

### **Waterways and Boats**

Redevelopment of the trailer-boat facilities has resulted in an ever-increasing use by recreational boaters. Success brings issues and opportunities.

PGLOA continues to seek boat-speed compliance by skippers in the waterways. We have on-going discussions with marine safety officers of DoT to address the matter. We want to see more speed-limit signs throughout the waterways, publicity campaigns on speed observance, and the use of radar speed cameras.

Recall that all of our SAR goes to dredging the channel of a public port, whilst the facility is used by tens of thousands of boaters from all over the region. Consequently we continue to advocate the user-pay principle, and see a moral obligation for recreational boater to contribute to waterway management. The perennial question of a launching fee needs to be answered.

### **Communications**

We wish to engage with all landowners in the precinct.

We do this by the *Waters Edge* newsletter and the PGLOA website.

Both contain a wealth of information.

We have frequent engagement with the current developers.

We have periodic meetings with the Mayor and City Council executives where we usefully discuss issues, without trying to tell the City what to do on matters not directly affecting Port Geographe. I thank the City for this liaison and am pleased to record they have responded favourably to many of our initiatives.

### **Thanks**

Finally I wish to thank the members of the current committee who have given their time and passion to issues that I have covered. Especially I want to thank retiring Secretary Peter Brinsden who must step aside. But I am encouraged by the talent of those remaining on the committee, and those who have nominated for office-bearing positions.