



MERRICKS BEACH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

2022 Committee Report

Dear members

Your committee is pleased to provide the following report ahead of the 2023 AGM, to be held at 10am on 8 January 2023.

Roads and drains

Rain, rain, rain! Has there ever been a wetter Spring in Merricks Beach? But beyond limiting our ability to enjoy the beach and the magnificently rustic character of our village, the frequent extreme rainfall we experienced this year has had very significant consequences for some residents, and has adversely affected all of us, at least to some extent.

The impact upon the condition of the roads has been quite severe. Wet and soft gravel is highly conducive to the development of pot-holes. But the graders cannot operate to fill these pot-holes when the roads are too wet. To make matters worse, the grade of gravel used on our roads was in short supply for most of the year. So, for lengthy periods, the streets could not be graded and were consequently difficult for us to navigate; whether by car or by bicycle.

The issues we have had with the roads were notably exacerbated by our drains not working as well as we would like. There were a number of causes of this, but the most prominent are poorly maintained (or non-existent) driveway crossovers – so that the water is forced onto the road instead – and the silting-up of the drains due to the volume of water that *has* run off the roads.

Maintenance of the drains (but not of crossovers) is the responsibility of the Shire Council. But pressure on Council finances will always prevent it from doing enough maintenance, or from doing it often enough. As a result, the Committee has resolved to seek to have Council commit to a master plan of drainage works, on the basis that the MBRA would co-fund these works. To the extent that their crossovers need replacement or repair, some residents would also be required to contribute. We expect to provide members with details of this proposed plan prior to the AGM for discussion at that meeting.

Tennis courts

The rain has also adversely affected the program for the MBRA's major project for 2022, which was the completion of the renovation of the tennis courts. First, the wet spring delayed our contractor on other projects. Then when they did get to Merricks Beach, the heavens opened again, which made it impossible for them to lay the concrete. It is, of course, very disappointing that the new surface will not be in place before Christmas. However, at the time of preparation of this report, our expectation is that the courts will still be usable and that the new surface will be laid in mid-January.

Four years ago, our tennis courts were in a state of advanced disrepair: the surface was extensively cracked and uneven, and it had become worn so that, apart from anything else, it became very slippery after any rain; the grass surrounds were higher than the asphalt, causing several reported tripping incidents (and probably even more that went unreported); tree branches overhung the courts, resulting in a constant build-up of leaf and twig litter on the playing surface; the area between the courts and Foam Street was overgrown; and a number of the fence posts had rusted through, so that the wire was (barely) holding up those posts, rather than the other way around.

The MBRA committee, with the support of the vast majority of members, resolved to ensure that the courts would continue to be a valuable community asset for many years to come. Through grants obtained from local and federal government, the generosity of many residents, and not a little fiscal rectitude on our own part, well over \$100,000 has been raised, and spent, in order to make good on this resolution. On behalf of the whole Merricks Beach community, the committee acknowledges and thanks the donors, who are listed at the end of this report.

Dogs

As members will be aware, following discussions with the Foreshore Committee of Management, the committee considered it timely to undertake a survey to gain a better understanding of the views of Merricks Beach residents and other beach users regarding the often-vexed issues arising from use of the beach by dogs and their walkers. Whilst, ultimately, the regulations concerning dogs on the beach and foreshore are within the remit solely of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, plainly, many residents have an interest – often a strong interest – in those regulations and any changes that may potentially be made to them. Therefore, the purpose of this survey was to enable the MBRA to take at least a high-level sounding of attitudes so as to inform any consultations in which it may become engaged.

The survey results were sent to members in November and are available on our website (mbra.com.au). Predictably, they reflect a wide range of views. The committee will continue to consult with the Foreshore Committee of Management and also, to the extent potentially relevant, with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council which is currently reviewing its own regulations for dogs in public places. Many thanks to Andrew Taylor for his expert assistance with the preparation of the survey and analysis of the results.

Other events and issues in 2022

At this time last year, we were all hoping that 2022 would be a more 'normal' year, after 2 years of lockdowns and other COVID effects. So it has proved to be, although some pain remained, not the least of which was the difficult decision to cancel the sand-modelling competition, leaving us with 600 sausages, and a lot of onion, to give away.

Also in 2022:

- The Davies Cup competition was held - we had thought on asphalt for the last time.
- It definitely *was* the last ever Queen's Birthday weekend plant giveaway – stay tuned for, we assume, the King's Birthday weekend when the MBRA will again offer members indigenous plants for their gardens. Many thanks to Richard Anderson (at Merricks Nursery) and committee member Simon Jaski (and all others who helped) for making this happen.
- The MBRA became affiliated with Tennis Victoria, which, amongst other things, has enable us to cancel our costly standalone insurance policies.
- The committee has been in discussions with the Shire Council regarding maintenance of the Foam Street walkway. Pleasingly, the council has moved from saying "not our responsibility" to a more helpful position.

- Significant renovation of the MBRA website was undertaken; we are still on the lookout for someone who is willing and able (ie, can use WordPress) to help us with keeping the website up to date.
- The committee met on 7 occasions during the year – happily, all meetings could be conducted in person.

Finally, on behalf of all members, I'd like to thank the members of the committee in 2022 for all they have done, and for all the precious personal time that they have devoted, in the service of our village and its people.

My particular thanks to Kathy Clarke, our secretary, to our treasurer, Ian Breadon, and to Bernard Barrett our roads, drains and tennis courts maestro. Thanks also to Sharon Muhleisen, who has recently retired as editor of Merricks Matters (applications to fill the role are very welcome!).

Best wishes to all MBRA members and Merricks Beach residents for Christmas and the holidays. May it not rain (too much).

Peter Cash
President

18 December 2022

The MBRA acknowledges and thanks the generous donations and grants for the renovation of the community tennis courts made by:

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Commonwealth Government – Stronger Communities Programme

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