



MERRICKS BEACH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

2025 Committee Report

Dear members

On behalf of the 2025 MBRA committee, I am pleased to provide the following report ahead of the 2026 AGM, to be held at **10am on 4 January 2026**.

It has been a busy year for the committee, not only in terms of meetings (of which there will have been seven by the time of the AGM, with almost all committee members attending most meetings) but particularly with the range of other initiatives and projects for which various committee members have taken responsibility throughout the year. Brief summaries of only the more significant of these are as follows:

- **Frankston-Flinders Road speed limit.** The efforts of the MBRA (together with other Westernport residents' associations) were ultimately successful in securing a reduction to the speed limit to 80km/h. There will always be exceptions, but, anecdotally, the new limit seems to have been accepted by motorists. It is unlikely that this outcome would have been secured without the generous and expert assistance of Eric Keys. Whilst we remain disappointed that our request for double lines was rejected, hopefully, reduced speeds will lessen the risk of an overtaking vehicle causing a catastrophe at our intersection.
- **Residents' survey.** In March/April, the MBRA conducted a survey of residents in order to obtain feedback as to both what the community expects of the MBRA, and how well we are meeting those expectations, and regarding residents' attitudes to a range of issues of direct and indirect relevance to our village. Some 324 responses were received. They will be used to inform the committee's broader agenda in the short and medium term. Thanks to Sarah Lawrence for her work conducting the survey and to Hilary Dixon for preparing a comprehensive report, which can be read at mbra.com.au.
- **Storm water management review.** The village stormwater management project – which had its beginnings in some well-considered and thought-provoking comments made at the 2024 AGM – has continued apace in 2025, with the completion by Wave Consulting of a comprehensive review of our stormwater issues and some short, medium and long-term measures to address them. The report (also available at mbra.com.au), which was funded by Melbourne Water and Bendigo Bank, was the subject of a residents' forum held on 3 November 2025. The committee intends now to seek further financial support to undertake priority projects, as identified by Wave Consulting, although there is a key role also to be played by individual residents on their own properties. For the committee, this project has been wonderfully led by Kriston Symons and Joyce Lawrence. The

community should be grateful, too, for the generous contributions of expertise made by residents Robyn Mitchell, Chris Chesterfield and Andrew Kelly.

- **Village drainage project.** In the immediate term, the committee has pushed on with much-needed upgrades to our drainage infrastructure. In part, this has involved negotiating with MPSC and its contractor, Fulton Hogan, to renew drains and pipes at key locations and other works. But it has also involved the MBRA's crossover replacement program, as part of which – finally – substantial work was undertaken in Wave Street during the Spring. There is still much to be done in the replacement program, and now that we seem to have overcome the design, permitting and other obstacles which had previously frustrated progress, the committee expects to be able to complete at least the priority locations in 2026.

We are all indebted to Bernard Barrett and Kriston Symons for the work they have done, and continue to do, on this project.

- **Road quality / traffic speed.** The application by Fulton Hogan of a different, paler grade of gravel to our roads has so far proved to be a mixed blessing. Aesthetics to one side, it seems clear that this gravel is harder wearing, creates less dust, and is less likely to wash into the drains when it rains. But – and it is probably wrong to blame the gravel for this – there can be no doubt that, since its introduction, the graders have pushed the gravel ever wider. The combined effect is that Palmers Hill Road, in particular, is now navigable by approaching vehicles at 'normal' speed. And, alas, what some of our visitors, delivery vans and tradespeople (and even some residents) consider to be a normal speed is what most of us would consider anti-social, at best, and downright dangerous, at the extreme.

There is no simple or easy answer to this. The committee continues to entreat Fulton Hogan not to widen the roads, but, as matters stand, even apart from the encouragement of Google Maps, it is clear that our 'improved' roads have become an even more attractive short-cut for through traffic from Balnarring Beach. The committee can only continue to seek to identify options to improve the situation (all suggestions are very welcome!).

- **Basketball ring.** As foreshadowed at the 2024/25 AGM, the committee had close regard to the results of the residents' survey before ultimately deciding not to pursue the installation of a basketball ring at the tennis courts reserve. The committee's resolution was in the following terms:

Having thoroughly considered all relevant aspects, including the feedback received from residents via email communications, in meetings with nearby residents and via the recent survey of residents, the Committee has determined that it will not at this time further pursue the potential installation of a basketball ring at the tennis courts reserve.

The Committee nonetheless records that it is desirable – and within its remit – to seek to identify and support any potential means by which to facilitate the younger generation to enjoy their visits to Merricks Beach and resolves to do so.

In making this resolution, the committee was very conscious that it would disappoint many residents, especially younger residents. Nevertheless, it had become clear that the support for this proposed new recreational infrastructure did not approach the level of community consensus that the committee felt to be essential in order to proceed. In line with the second part of its resolution, the committee is keen to find ways to enhance the Merricks Beach experience of younger residents and, again, suggestions are very welcome (especially from those younger residents).

- **Electrification.** It seems like only yesterday that we were celebrating the roll out of mains gas lines throughout the village. But, like it or not, we are in the midst of an energy transition and whilst gas is not yet going away (unless you are building a new house), it is no longer cheap, plentiful or the future. With this in mind, early in the year, the committee

explored whether a community battery project might be beneficial for Merricks Beach. With thanks to Ian Breadon for attending a 2-day seminar in order to inform the rest of us, this proved not to be the case; a community battery would function primarily to help to stabilise the grid, but the amount of electricity that could be stored is hopelessly insufficient to make any real difference during a blackout.

However, these discussions led the committee on to consider whether it should play a role in informing and assisting residents who may wish to undertake a personal energy transition away from gas. As a result, a seminar was provided by Goodbye Gas, who also undertook very well-received home visits (F2F and virtual).

- **Uses of funds.** As will be apparent from the financial statements provided with this report, the MBRA continues to be in a strong financial position. Whilst the committee anticipates expending its current accumulated funds over the next year or two in support of important community storm water drainage projects, it also took the view that, in the shorter term, it should make funding available to the community through the agency of the village's other community organisations. To that end, it approved grants of up to \$5,000 each to the Foreshore Committee of Management and the Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve, as well as purchasing and donating two new BBQs to MYC.
- **Planning restrictions?** As we are all aware, the current State government has ambitious targets for the construction of new housing. To facilitate achievement of those targets, it has adopted policies aimed at making house construction easier. Regrettably, these policies override – or, more accurately, are preventing the implementation of – the village character guidelines over which MPSC had laboured for many years and which the MBRA welcomed only a few short years ago.
The options for residents who may be concerned by proposed developments that appear to be outside the guidelines, or which they may consider will not be in keeping with the generally low-key streetscapes of Merricks Beach, are extremely limited. As the MBRA has found, lodging a formal objection - the sole means within the planning process by which a protest can be registered – seems to have little or no effect. Where possible, residents who want to protect our environment might seek to encourage other residents who are building to consider those guidelines in planning their design, but it is not possible to do even this where the owners are new to the village as their identity is usually unknown.
Although he is known to be sympathetic to these concerns, our local representative on MPSC, Cr David Gill, is our only avenue for influencing decisions that will impact the look, feel and amenity of our village. Come to the AGM and ask him about it!
- **Tennis courts seating.** The committee recently approved some modest expenditure to replace the existing seating at the tennis courts reserve. The new seats – which, fingers crossed, will be in place before Christmas – will be of very similar design and appearance to what is there now, just less splinters. In addition, committee-members and some other residents have undertaken a substantial clean up of the area, building on the work done by an arborist during the Spring.

In addition to these projects and issues, during 2025, the committee also executed on all of its key responsibilities, including:

- The 91st annual running of the Merricks Beach sand modelling competition in, thankfully, good weather conditions and with a well-behaved tide. And the Ken Rowe trophy was awarded for the first time. Thanks to the Sand modelling Sub-committee, Sue Rutley, Tim Roberts and Di Hall. Sue has informed the committee that the 2025 competition – on 28 December – will be her last. There will be much said about Sue's unbelievable contributions to the community on the day, and at the AGM.

- The MBRA Committee put on the traditional sausage sizzle immediately after the sand modelling competition (using the new BBQs!).
- The Davies Cup tennis competition was also held in December 2024.
- Another very successful King's Birthday weekend plant giveaway was conducted, once again facilitating the maintenance of our local environment through the distribution of free indigenous plants to members. Many thanks to Richard Anderson (at Merricks Nursery) for generously making available time to curate the plant selection and to dispense his inestimable wisdom about planting and growing them.
- Thanks to editor Joyce Lawrence and her contributors, three fabulous editions of *Merricks Matters* were published.

Lastly, on behalf of all members, I'd like to thank the 2025 committee members for all they have done, and for all the 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, each of whom have advised the committee of their intention not to seek re-election for 2026. Both have made very substantial contributions to the MBRA over the past several years and it is in no small part due to their efforts that the MBRA is in the strong position – financially and otherwise – that it now enjoys.

And my very personal thanks to our vice-president, Kris Symons, and to the indispensable Head of Infrastructure, Bernard Barrett. A very great deal of what the MBRA has achieved in 2025 has been down to Kris and/or Bernard's efforts.

Best wishes to all MBRA members and other Merricks Beach residents for Christmas and the holidays.

Peter Cash
President

3 December 2025