



National Trust of Australia (Vic) Mornington Peninsula Branch

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO MEMBERS AGM 15TH NOVEMBER 2008

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has focussed this year on achieving financial sustainability. Our Chairman, Dr Graeme Blackman, the board and the CEO, Martin Purslow have worked with Staff, Branches and members to produce a strategic plan which will provide a framework for the future direction of the Trust in Victoria.

The National Trust works to inspire a love of our natural and built heritage, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and to protect and enhance this inheritance for the enjoyment of future generations. Progress and development are rapid in our area therefore we have to be vigilant so that future generations can benefit from both heritage and change. Our job is to embrace this heritage and acquire a greater depth of knowledge and appreciation.

Protecting our heritage is fundamental to the Mission of the Trust and one of the tools that we can use is that of Classification. Classification does not ensure legal protection but it does mean that if an area or object is endangered in the future there is a solid research base from which to work. New classifications are referred to Heritage Victoria for consideration for Heritage Victoria classification in which case they are protected by law. National Trust Classifications are instrumental at the local Shire level, they are used in planning overlays and it is recognised that a National Trust classification is of significance to the public

We were delighted this year when, after, exhaustive research by Adrienne Smith, Greens Bush and Greens Road were reclassified and we thank Adrienne for this work. This work arose from an effort to prevent inappropriate development of the Greens Bush area and it has been a significant step in preservation. Updating old classifications and developing new ones will be of great importance on the Peninsula. We are eager to use this tool to promote recognition of our heritage on the Peninsula, this task requires thorough research in every case and we ask you to consider offering your services where there is a need for protection.

The Mornington Peninsula Branch of the National Trust has worked with the council to support protection of our heritage overlays and we have continued to support the work of local action groups where they have been involved in protection of our heritage. The Peninsula has represented a recreation area for Melburnians from the early times in our history but recreation implies an environment removed from the stress of everyday life so we will continue to work for preservation of our heritage built and natural. We hope that the new Councillors will work towards a harmony between the old and the new and we look forward to working with them after the election.

Fossil Beach at Mount Martha is one of the few heritage listed sites on our coastline and we have therefore urged the council to give this high priority in development of a coastal management plan. The draft coastal management plan, recently adopted by council, provides clear directions and a decision framework for future long-term management and development of the foreshore reserve.

This year we have been making considerable progress with our plans to reopen Endeavour Fern Gully at Red Hill. Endeavour Fern Gully is a National Trust property comprising 27.7 hectares more than half of which is indigenous bushland. The Branch has been striving for the last ten years to see this rehabilitated and in 2009 we will start to revegetate the pasture above the gully and protect this remnant of flora and fauna indigenous to the red basaltic soils of Red Hill. We thank members and friends who are growing plants for the project and if you would like to be a part of our friends group please leave contact details.

Members of the branch have been involved in the public consultation process to help plan the management of Devilbend since the late 1990s when the reservoirs, Devilbend and Bittern, were de-commissioned and the new management plan for the reserve is due to be released this month.

In an effort to ensure that the ongoing management of the reserve is informed by sound scientific information, the branch has entered into partnership with the Devilbend Foundation Inc. to seek funding to carry out a comprehensive scientific project, to be undertaken by Monash University's School of Biological Sciences. We believe it is important for the protection of the biodiversity of the reserve that all indigenous populations of flora and fauna are protected and enhanced not adversely affected by new activities, The Devilbend Reserve forms a central habitat core from which wildlife corridors radiate out to other parts of the peninsula, such as Greens Bush. The corridors, linking at present separate populations, would result in healthier faunal gene pools and indirectly help to maintain the sustainability of animal populations.

The branch has been delighted to be involved in the redevelopment of the Collins Settlement site which was reopened on October 10th this year. The Friends of the Collins Settlement should be justly proud of the result of their endeavours which is both attractive and informative. We hope that you will join us for our first event for 2009 which will be a picnic on the Collins Settlement site with a talk by our eminent historian Richard Cotter.

The draft Ranelagh Conservation Management plan has been approved by council for public exhibition. The plan was judged the best entry in the Planning Institute of Australia (Victorian division) Awards and we congratulate the council and the Ranelagh advisory group on this excellent achievement. The Ranelagh estate, designed by Walter Burleigh Griffin was classified by Heritage Victoria in 2005 and some of the original documentation can be viewed at the Architectural exhibition opening today at the Mornington Peninsula Gallery.

The committee has been represented on the panel developing the draft policy document for the Thematic Environmental History Project which will categorise relevant shire properties into themes for inclusion in the Shire planning scheme. The project will identify areas of discrepancy between the four original heritage studies and identify where additional fieldwork and research is required.

Membership on the peninsula remains stable at around five hundred and twenty memberships. We would urge our members to supply their e-mail addresses to our secretary so that we can keep you informed and in touch with our activities. We do also have quarterly Newsletters on the Victorian Trust website.

We have continued this year with our programme of luncheons and talks at the Briars which enable us to keep in touch with branch members. This year we have had the pleasure of Helen Broad showing us her photographic collection which she amassed over many years as photographer for the National Trust and Richard Cotter's insight into the indigenous history of the Peninsula.

I would like to thank Steve Yorke for his generous cooperation in sharing The Briars homestead with us. As you will be aware the Homestead and ten acres was donated jointly to the NT and the Shire by the Balcombe family and has been administered so effectively for many years by Steve.

I would like to thank all the members of the Branch Committee who have worked so hard this year to ensure that our heritage of yesterday is preserved and lastly I would like to thank the most important people, you our members who by your support keep our heritage alive.

Gillian Tolley
President

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