



# Meeting Minutes - Sisters Beach Community Association

## Call to order

A meeting of the Sisters Beach Community Association was held at Pear Tree Cafe on 26/08/21 commencing at approximately 6.15pm.

## Attendees

Jono Vincent, Ben Saward, Mark Loughran, Stan Turner, Jeff Newling, Jenny Stetch, Geoff Blackburn, John Cumming, Fiona Loughran, Jim Vincent, Nina Vincent, Michelle Mundy, Peter Mundy, Sam Cleland, Jenny Brazier, Cyril Smith, Nigel Weeks, Charlotte Weeks, George Weeks

## Members not in attendance (apologies)

Lynn Hutchison, Judy Taylor, Collin Hocking

## Reports

The President, Jono Vincent, introduced the association to new members and reported some of the projects the community association has been involved in including lobbying government for mobile/internet reception, working with Council to implement virtual fencing (for devil's and other wildlife protection), the development of the skate park, an annual Australia day event and color fun run, installation and servicing of defibrillators (at shop and boat ramp), and organising community meetings to discuss issues of concern such as freedom camping, the large scale subdivision and a Council motion to develop a second access road.

## Unfinished business

Currently there is no unfinished business and no projects are currently underway.

## New business

### 1. Community Association Executive Positions

The President, Jono Vincent, explained that anybody is welcome to nominate another community member to stand for election to be appointed in an executive position including President (currently Jono Vincent), Treasurer (currently Ben Saward), or Secretary (currently Mark Loughran, assisted by Fiona Loughran).

Note: Stuart Gula was originally appointed sharing the position as President with Jono Vincent, however, Stuart needed to relocate to Western Australia in 2020 and could no longer be of service.

Both Jono Vincent and Ben Saward clarified they are thrilled with the outcome of the skate park project, which took a lot of time and effort to bring to its eventual success. It was explained that initially, the hardstand was not up to standard due to the contractor not making allowances for the pooling of water on the court.

After the many achievements over the years, since 2012, Jono Vincent said he welcomes others to be nominated to take on the position as President.

Ben Saward clarified that although he is proud of what has been achieved, due to his personal commitments, currently he does not intend to stand for election again as treasurer.

The secretary, Mark Loughran also welcomed new members to be nominated to take over the secretary position if desired.

Community members are invited to nominate fellow community members before or during the next community association meeting and a vote will be carried out by secret ballot and the results will be counted and announced in the next meeting.

## 2. Stormwater

The President, Jono Vincent, opened discussion about Wynyard Waratah Council (WWC) charging for Stormwater infrastructure if within 30 meters of an outlet.

It was clarified that:

- in the past there was no charge, yet it had been identified there was some Stormwater infrastructure at Sisters Beach
- the rate is about 50% of what is being charged in Wynyard
- the sewage is managed by Tas water, while Stormwater is managed directly by council
- Jono recently had a meeting with the council and showed them photos of the flooded areas in front of many houses along Irby Boulevard
- Jono was told that the price of the stormwater charge is dependent on the value of the property
- Jono was told that in total, the council aims to raise \$30,000 per year to cover the depreciation and upkeep
- Some streets, such as Stockdale Avenue, do not have any Stormwater infrastructure and therefore have not been charged (see map attached which shows where stormwater infrastructure is)

Many community members being charged for Stormwater are unsatisfied, and Jono clarified that Council have said that if community members are not happy with the level of service they are receiving they should contact the council to voice their concerns. Jono proposed that the SBCA could either write a letter on behalf of the community or arrange a meeting with the GM re: the

standard of the stormwater infrastructure and being charged for an amenity that largely is unfunctional and does not work.

Concerns were raised by Stan Turner that 4 houses are connected to one drain at the vicinity of his house on Irby Boulevard, and a 5<sup>th</sup> was being connected by a new development in the area.

Concern was raised by community members about the new development behind Irby Boulevard and the question was raised if this new development would also connect to the current Stormwater facility, and what about the sewage?

A community member asked if the sewage already installed is large enough to cope with all of the new houses in the new development? Jono clarified that the council is responsible to make sure of this when passing new development in its roles as a planning authority.

Concern was raised by John C about the deep drain behind Irby Boulevard from Stockdale Avenue to Postman's Court. John exclaimed it is dangerous (especially for young children), and asked who owns it? Jono and Ben answered one course of action would be to go and see Sam at the council about it. Fe Loughran said she noticed it was full of water in the summer as well. It is believed the drain is on private properties beyond Irby Boulevard houses.

SBCA will check with the council to see if there are any stormwater improvements budgeted in the 2021/22 Council Budget Estimates.

### 3. Atlantic Salmon farming expansion

Mark Loughran gave an introduction and report about the Government's Atlantic Salmon farming expansion plans and in particular how it could affect the community with the proposed expansion between Rocky Cape and Stanley, and beyond to the islands off Smithton and King Island.

Mark clarified he (and other SBCA members) attended a meeting at Stanley Hall on 22<sup>nd</sup> of August (also held in Burnie on 21<sup>st</sup> of August), which was held by the organisation NWestTas for Clean Oceans, also supported by Tasmanian Alliance Marine Protection (TAMP) to discuss the expansion of the industry into our waterways and the expected impacts on the Northwest coast. Special guest speakers included Richard Flanagan, author of the new book, 'Toxic', producers of the film 'Paradise Lost', Louise Cherrie - scientist and former member of the Marine Farm Planning and Review Panel, fisherman Craig Garland and others such as actor Essie Davis from southern Tasmanian who have been impacted by Salmon Farms.

Without wanting to cover all detail of that (3hr) meeting, Mark clarified he wanted to open discussion about it, and to summarise some of the concerns which include:

- Eutrophication caused by a build-up of nutrients on the ocean floor and water column, mainly Nitrogen and Phosphorus based, which causes the growth of blue green (and other) toxic algae due to the sea water being overloaded with nutrients, and the sea floor building up with fish faeces and about 30% of the fish food that is not eaten, which ends up on the bottom of the ocean. This results in death of native sea life, as has already

occurred in such areas the D'entrecasteaux Channel (nearby Bruny Island), Macquarie Harbor and Storm Bay.

- Overstocking of fish pens and eutrophication also causes a drop in oxygen in the water which coincides effectively killing off the sensitive natural marine environment (and sometimes killing the salmon as well).
- Apart from the more obvious problem of eutrophication and oxygen depletion, there are also significant effects to the surrounding human population apart from the loss of natural marine habitat, including:
  - o rubbish such as plastic hose, rope, old nets, microplastics, being washed up along the coastline which has become a significant concern and danger to local communities (including for boaters)
  - o Atlantic Salmon, an introduced species from the Northern hemisphere, can have a significant impact on our wild fisheries when escaped, decimating local fish stocks.
  - o Seals being attracted to salmon pens, and then either being shot or other inhumane practices to keep them away
  - o Lights and noise of operations 24 hours a day/night including vessels going back and forth for feeding and also bathing of salmon in freshwater, repairing of nets and equipment, scientific monitoring of the salmon growth, disease, etc.
  - o Additionally, the large requirement for fresh water to bathe salmon regularly is a technique used to kill off infections of amoebic gill disease (and subsequent possible shortages of fresh water in the Stanley/Smithton area).

It was further clarified that:

- Benefits are very little for the local community from salmon farming, jobs are minimal as the companies are aiming to automate a lot of the procedures using machinery.
- The government is leasing out our waterways for very little financial return (compared to aquaculture areas in Europe, for example), and these areas will no longer be available for access of the local community (and surrounding areas will undergo significant environmental impact).
- The minister for Primary Industry and Water Guy Barnett is entirely responsible for giving the license for salmon farming and noted that Petuna is already approved to go ahead in the Stanley to Rocky Cape vicinity. Additionally, local councils have no say about a license being given, as this is a decision of the minister only.
- Unlike commercial fishing of Wild Fisheries, which have been a concern over the years, and as a result have very strict rules about quotas and techniques for commercial fishing, while Salmon farming has an adaptive management strategy, that is, there are no set rules in place, and instead the governance is adaptive as is needed (which sometimes does not happen, for example at Macquarie Harbor environmental disaster from salmon farming, and significant problems experienced elsewhere).
- There is a serious concern that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is closely tied to the Salmon industry and Government, and this is why two scientific advisers resigned in disgust in recent years and have now joined the movement to stop the salmon

farming industry from spreading into, and destroying, more pristine areas of Tasmanian coastal waters.

- Currently the map of 'allowed' Salmon farming from the department of primary industry shows the coastal areas currently being farmed in the South East and Macquarie Harbor, and the open area of the Northwest from King Island through to Rocky Cape National Park.
- Additionally, in the meeting at Stanley, it was clarified that this is only the beginning, the Government and Industry has committed to doubling by 2030. Senior members of the meeting who previously were involved in the planning of salmon farming, clarified that, in fact, all of the North West Coast is earmarked for the further expansion of salmon farming, and many other coastal waters around Tasmania.
- Stan Turner also added some important information that a major concern is that the Bass Strait does not have a current, the tides mainly just go up and down, but without much current along the coast, unlike the West coast and East Coast which has strong currents that help to clear waste from these waterways. There is a serious concern that eutrophication, rubbish, and oxygen depleted waters would more significantly impact Northwest coastal waters for this reason.
- Some of the political techniques of the salmon companies and the way they divide communities were discussed. For example, by sponsoring clubs and associations with money and grants, but when a member opposes salmon farming practices, then the company uses the association to quieten that member, otherwise the sponsorship is withdrawn. This has been a tactic in the South, as well as when marine equipment is damaged and the company must compensate (for example if a boat runs into a submerged object from salmon farming), then a non-disclosure agreement is often used to keep people quiet about such incidents occurring. The communities of the Northwest need to be aware of this.
- People from southern Tasmania travelled to the NWC to implore us to take action now before it is too late, and we find ourselves in the same situation as they are now in.

Lastly, Mark. L brought up the desire of some community members to introduce a Marine Park at Sisters Beach, possibly within a radius of 1000m from the boat ramp, where only line fishing could be permitted from the shore only. However, what would be the point of doing this, if the ocean is to become polluted, with eutrophication of the coast causing slime and algae to grow, and killing off the sea life?

Noting also that there is currently a moratorium on Marine Parks in Tasmania (currently further expansion of Marine Parks in Tasmania is banned), whereas the desire of those protesting salmon farming is for the minister to put a moratorium on the expansion of salmon farming, introduce Marine protective zones, and bring Atlantic Salmon farming onto land.

A key desire is to have the expansion of Salmon farming in Tasmanian coastal waters stopped and moving the industry onto land to be done entirely in closed off tanks, as is being successfully done in parts of Scandinavia that has also been through the same problems in the past.

Lastly, the key take-away of this problem currently, is that the community can do very little currently, as the Liberal Government has been voted in and the expansion of salmon farming is in their plans, and in the plans of the Labor Government as well.

The one thing the community can do is sign the petition that has been sponsored by the honorable Braddon MLC Ruth Forrest, as this is the only way the community can have a voice for the Minister to have to provide an answer about these concerns and the directive forward as is required by law.

*The petition states -*

*Your petitioners draw attention to the House:*

*We the undersigned are deeply concerned about the proposed expansion of the ocean- based salmon farming industry into the northwest of Tasmania and beyond.*

*Evidence of serious decline of native fish stocks, degradation of waterways and coastlines, secrecy over operations and public denial of responsibility for major environmental disasters highlight the potential for the salmon industry to be detrimental to the health of the marine and coastal environment of northwest Tasmania.*

*Impacts on our cultural heritage, our natural and scenic environments, tourism and our commercial and recreational fishing industries and associated employment opportunities will be significant.*

*Your Petitioners, therefore, call on the government to:*

*(1) Institute a moratorium on expansion of ocean-based salmon farming in Tasmania.*

*(2) Develop enforceable regulations designed to protect the health of Tasmanian consumers and the marine environment and establish a scientifically capable, properly funded, regulatory body independent of government and industry.*

*(3) Develop policy to better integrate ocean and land based aquaculture to minimise negative impact on Tasmania's marine and coastal environment.*

The paper version of the petition was handed around at the meeting, and it was announced that the petition can also be found online at this link, to be posted on the community association website. <https://lcep petitions.parliament.tas.gov.au/lcep et/Home/PetitionDetails/40>

#### 4. Wildcare Rehabilitation Project (Penny Foundation)

Geoff and Sam gave an update on the wildcare group's work. Collin Hocking, Lynn Hutchison, and other members of Wildcare have been involved in the rehabilitation of the paper bark growth area at the creek opposite the small playground just on the Eastern side of the main walking bridge.

Geoff gave an update on their new project (Collin Hocking was unable to make the meeting due to being locked down in Victoria due to Covid).

The Council intends to remove the playground equipment from the small park as it is no longer up to standard and is becoming rusty. It is their intention that any new playground equipment would be consolidated within the larger park. Feedback was requested from community members.

It is the intention of the wildcare group to rehabilitate this area once Council has removed the old equipment. A visual of the proposed project was presented, which includes plans to revegetate the area and include an open space picnic area for the community.

Jono said that public open space is in short supply at SB so revegetation should leave grassed areas for people to use.

Most in attendance were supportive of the project, with some pointing out that although the small playground might be outdated, some have had memorable moments with their families in it over the years, and some may prefer to have more privacy, so it is not certain that all of the community would support removal of the equipment. However it was noted that Council had made the decision to remove this equipment.

The Council had been working with the Wildcare group on a communications piece that would be distributed to the community next week. Sam has asked that people provide feedback to the council about the proposal.

Sam Cleland explained that he has worked for the bureau of meteorology and gave an explanation about a recent weather and tidal event which occurred in July where king tides coincided with a serious storm event, which did some damage, but not as bad as had occurred in the past. It was discussed a lot of sand has been washed into the creek, and the ramp to the beach area on the Eastern side has been affected.

## 5. Community Centre.

The last item for discussion raised by the President, Jono Vincent, is the Community Centre which has been a topic of discussion for many years.

The desire for a community centre had been expressed by many and it had been taken to the council. Council had recently undertaken community consultation on a proposed Community Centre and reported that there was little interest. The report can be found on Council's website.

Jono and Ben pointed out much time and effort was put in to organise, raise funding and finally have the skate park built, and that a community centre would also require a great deal of input and involvement from community members. They felt that a community centre was not something they personally plan to move forward with as executive members, but they would welcome new executive members or others in the community to take on this project. Jono said he thought that the funding could be obtained if enough interest was shown, with the new Wynyard yacht club and proposed Boat Harbour surf club as examples of multi million dollar publicly funded projects.

## 6. Firestation

Stan gave an update on the fire brigade. Some long term members are leaving and there are low numbers of volunteers. He expressed concern that if the numbers didn't increase the Sisters Beach station may be closed. He said that remaining members are planning on doing a door

knock to recruit new members. If anyone is interested in joining - please leave a message at the shop and Cyril will pass it on to members.

All members were thanked for their attendance. At approximately 7.30pm the meeting was closed and it was announced that a date and time would be set for the next meeting in which the election of executive members would take place for the Sisters Beach Community Association.