

The Foreshore Committee reports:
Preserving the Magic of the Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve

When you go to the beach to sit, swim, read, walk, sail or just play with the children and contentedly think – Oh, how beautiful, aren't we privileged to be – STOP AND THINK – HOW COME THE BEACH IS CLEAN, THERE ARE DEFINED PATHS, STEPS AND STAIRCASES TO ACCESS THE BEACH AND NO NOISY JET SKIS AND SIMILAR NOISE POLLUTANTS?

We all acknowledge the Magic of Merricks – it is indeed, why most of us have a property here. Without the Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve, Merricks Beach Village would not exist. The Reserve is the cleanest and most visually beautiful beach on Western Port, edged with important indigenous and remnant vegetation.

This beautiful environment is still here to enjoy because for over 60 years a small group of volunteers have worked hard, and are still working, to preserve and enhance the Foreshore and incidentally the value of your property. The total area of the reserve is close to 100 hectares with a beach front of 5 kilometres. A big responsibility for a small volunteer committee. Don't take us for granted, come and help with the task of keeping Merricks pristine and beautiful.

This year the focus of work is the Reserve between Bluff Road and Merricks Beach Road – the gateway to Merricks. The Committee has received a total of \$11,500 in two grants to pay contractors to spray weeds such as ivy, blackberry and bridal creeper and to help with the heavy work – very necessary as most of the community who attend working bees are retired. Sore hips and knees predominate. This monetary amount must be part matched by 'community hours expended' at either working bees or by members of the Foreshore Committee putting in the necessary hours. To keep the Foreshore beautiful for everyone's enjoyment some of the Committee members expend at least 8 hours per week of volunteer labour.

In 2007/9 the focus was on the cliff top between Bluff Road and the Balnarring border. This area has been cleared of the majority of weeds and replanting is still continuing. Work is progressing In 2007/9 the focus was on the Cliff top around the Pine Slide to make a safer path and to remove weeds.



Volunteers at a working bee

At least once a year the Committee engages an arborist to check the Foreshore for dangerous trees and the acts on the report to make a safer environment.

Much of the long term effort of the Committee has been on removal of weeds throughout the Reserve and preserving the unique and important vegetation on the Big and Little Beach Blocks – situated on the Point Leo end of the Reserve and important for the local fauna and bird life.

The Committee is also playing an important part in the Koala Habitat Corridor – joining the Foreshore Reserves from Somers to Shoreham, planting manna gums to provide a food supply for the koala population. This corridor has recently been enhanced, when after a long legal battle 5 hectares of crown land, historically illegally fenced by a neighbouring farm, was incorporated in the Foreshore. This area, on the cliff edge to the west of Merricks Beach Road is in the process of being planted with indigenous vegetation.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. How do you become a member of the Committee?

The Committee is appointed by the Governor in Council. Terms are for 3 years and every 18 months there are notices on the Community Notice Board and in the local newspapers asking for nominees. An interview process is then held managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. If you are interested in becoming a committee member and have the time, the Chair, Bill Cleveland would like to hear from you.

2. What does the Committee do?

Relevant legislation and Victoria's Coastal Strategy govern the Committee's work. It is guided by the strategy and a local management plan approved by the Minister. The Committee is charged with:

- The preservation and maintenance of the indigenous flora and fauna on the Reserve
- Providing the infrastructure such as paths and steps to allow safe access to the beach
- Keeping the Foreshore free of rubbish

3. Where does the money come from?

Contrary to local belief, the Committee does not receive any money from the Merricks Beach Residents Association. All other coastal communities receive income from parking fees, camping grounds and boat launching ramps. Our only guaranteed income is the rental of \$1400 from the Yacht Club - giving us \$14 per hectare for upkeep. At present the committee is receiving about \$15,000 annually from the State Government, through the Beach Clean-up Scheme, all other money comes from applying for specific grants. This is why attendance at working bees is so important, as most of these grants require community hours as the input from the Merricks Community.

4. If for various reasons I cannot attend working bees what can I do to help?

- A donation would be very well received so the Committee could employ a contractor to work on your behalf. The hourly rate for a contractor varies between \$35-40. This donation would not be tax deductible. Please send any donations to The Treasurer, Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management, PO Box 65, Balnarring 3926.
- When walking your dog make sure you always carry bags and clean-up their droppings – don't pollute the Reserve, the Beach or the Bay.
- If you see people behaving irresponsibly, ring the police on 000 and drop a note into the letterbox at 71 Merricks Beach Road, giving details and if possible car registration numbers or email <bruceamil@melbpc.org.au>
- Remove pest plants such as sweet pittosporum, agapanthus, mirror bush, polygara and ivy from your gardens.

5. Can I hold an event on the Foreshore?

Certainly but you need to have a permit for insurance purposes. The cost is \$50 and some restrictions apply. Contact the Committee for details.

6. How can I have input into the Committee's priorities?

The management plan is reviewed every 3 years and community members are invited to have input. DSE manages the formal consultation process for the plan. The best place for input into Foreshore matters is by attending a working bee and talking to the committee as you weed or plant. The Committee would like to hear from you any time, not just when you lodge a complaint or a concern about a Foreshore matter.

President: Bill Cleveland 5983 2929	Treasurer: David Wharington 5983 5998
Secretary: Meg Paul 5983 5848 or 9882 4274	

Alex Campbell	Joyce Lawrence	Elaine Larsson
John Oswald-Jacobs	Brett Waters	Karina Webb
Paul Whittington	Nick Williams	
PO Box 65 Balnarring 3926	email< bruceamil@melbpc.org.au>	