

Port Geographe Landowners Association Inc



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News Bulletin of the Port Geographe Landowners Association August 2017

Welcome to this edition of *Waters Edge*. As usual it goes to members and landowners via an expanded mailing list.

Special Area Rate (SAR)

The SAR issue has occupied most of our time. Just to recap, all landowners in the SAR capture area pay a surcharge on their annual rates ostensibly for the purpose of maintenance of the waterways of Port Geographe and the adjacent coastal areas. SAR monies are reserved in the Port Geographe Waterways Management Reserve Fund (PGWMRF). After the boat ramps were installed Busselton Shire made a community contribution to reserve funds related to Port Geographe to help with this obligation, but this ceased in 2003.

The obligation for landowners to pay SAR, which PGLOA accepts, dates back to the original Management Deed of 1991. It was reaffirmed in the New Management Deed of

2015 between Busselton City Council (BCC) and Department of Transport (DoT).

Under this new deed BCC contracts DoT to undertake waterway and coastal maintenance. Under the newly configured groynes this amounts to about \$1.6M annually. DoT (that is the State) meets the majority of the annual costs, and invoices BCC for their annual contribution.

Currently the PGWMRF, which holds our SAR monies amounts to \$3.42M (including interest). BCC is budgeting to dispense \$310,000 in FY 2017-18. Last financial year we understand our entire SAR contribution went to dredging the port entrance.

PGLOA agrees the new Deed is beneficial to BCC, in that the State takes over the majority of the financial obligations of BCC in respect of

waterways and coastal maintenance. But we are aggrieved by several intentional or unintended consequences.

- PG landowners are the only ratepayers in WA who contributing to the maintenance of a significant community asset
- BCC is not contributing any money to the waterway maintenance of a popular community asset
- There is no cap on the amount of SAR money that can be invoiced by DoT
- Recreational boaters and commercial operators from all over the region use the facility without any user payments
- The extent of coastline for which the SAR can be channelled for maintenance extends far in excess of any impacts of the reconfigured groynes
- The SAR envelope, initially drawn to capture port users has evolved into an arbitrary envelope that captures a great majority of non-canal lot owners.

These consequences collectively amount to an unfair discrimination against Port Geographe landowners.

In pursuit of remedies to correct these iniquities, your committee sought to engage with Councillors, specifically the Mayor Cr Grant Henley. This engagement has been done through a series of meetings for which we are grateful, and through written correspondence. The Mayor verbally acknowledges the unfairness of the present situation, but is unable or unwilling to progress the issue. Our formal letters (which are on the PGLOA website) specifically address matters of policy and principle. All we get back are responses from the administration on operational matters.

However PGLOA wishes to emphasise the strongly empathetic responses we receive from Crs Bleechmore and Tarbotton.

To remedy these matters we urge:

- The community contribution from the BCC be reinstated

- Consideration be given to a user-pay principle for the use of the port waterways
- There be a formal cap on the amount of SAR money that can be appropriated in any one year
- The physical envelope of the SAR boundary be reviewed with community consultation
- The BCC defines its medium- to long-term strategy with respect to the growth and deployment of PGWMRF.

PGLOA will continue to pursue these remedies through whatever means available to it.

Pride in Our Community

In March 2015 a working group of PGLOA produced a comprehensive review of landscaping features of the Port Geographe precinct (www.portgeographe.com.au). A copy together with requests for rectification of defects was forwarded the BCC. On 22 May 2107 we received a formal letter stating that the following works are scheduled in the 2017-18 BCC budget.

- **Footbridge ends:** the area on the western side around Burgee Close will be reticulated for development of grass and peppermint trees. Similarly the eastern side will be landscaped with native vegetation.
- **Lanyard Bvd entrance off Layman Road:** this area will be reticulated for grass, trees and native shrubs. There will be some “hard landscaping” such as pathways and ornamental jetty piles.
- **Median Strips in Lanyard and Keel:** median strips in these streets will no longer have woodchips which are proving a nuisance. Some trees will be replaces, weeds sprayed and some grass mowing when required.
- **Western BBQ:** a BBQ area will be established on the western side of the port entrance that will complement that facility on the eastern side at the end of Spinnaker Bvd.
- **New water bores:** currently large parts of Port Geographe landscapes are reticulated

with scheme water. Over the next two years bores will be developed for reticulation.

PGLOA welcomes these developments in response to our initiatives. It should be noted that the money will come from the Port Geographe Development Reserve Fund and not the Waterways Management Reserve fund which is built from your SAR contributions.

Layman Road Trees

Layman Road through Port Geographe is one of the principle access routes to Busselton, and as such should present a distinctive entry statement. This can be done by an avenue of trees to replace the present sheoaks that are unsightly, dirty and destructive.

PGLOA has sought to influence the tree planting and has achieved some success. The divide between Masthead Loop and Layman Road, from which sheoaks were recently removed, will be planted with Red Flowering Gums *Corymbia ficifolia*. We understand the tree seedlings have been purchased and are ready to plant.

Doubt still surrounds the timing and the replacement species for the actual median strip of this section of Layman Road. It may be red gums or poplars, but happily it won't be peppermint trees (*Agonia flexuosa*). PGLOA committee is unanimously opposed to peppermints. It has also urged that the replacement be done in one operation so as to avoid a "dogs breakfast".

But we are informed unequivocally that the bund on the southern embankment of Layman Road opposite the Aigle Royal development will be planted with peppermints as "offsets" against the removal of peppermints elsewhere in the City.

The area on the eastern side of Layman Road opposite Keel Rte corner has now been planted extensively with peppermints and native understory. This is a program of Parks and Wildlife Authority in conjunction with Geocatch, to eradicate invasive species and

rehabilitate this remnant patch of natural bushland.

Ford Road

PGLOA has an interest in current proposals to provide an alternative road access into Busselton called the *Eastern Link*. This link would still bring traffic into the central business district. We strongly advocate the Ford Road proposal be re-opened as this provides the opportunity to reduce through traffic along Layman Road, and at the same time ease congestion at the main city entrance.

An important traffic study by Sinclair Knight Merz in 1995 recommended the gazetted road easement linking the main roundabout and Ford Road be developed as a second entrance. On appeal to EPA in 2005 it was approved with a low-level bridge costing about \$3.3M. Even today the development of Ford Road would be significantly less than the *Eastern Link* proposal, especially with optimal use of causeways.

The proximity of the RAMSAR wetland to the proposed development should not be used as an objection. The causeway would have no more impact on the integrity of the wetlands than would the *Eastern Link*. Moreover, there are several instances along Layman Road where man-made creations have enhanced the numbers and diversity of waders and waterbirds.

By taking Ford Road entrance off Bussell Highway opposite the Nannup turnoff, and signing it as the *Tourist Entrance to the Jetty and the Caravan Parks* would totally alleviate the current congestion being experienced at the small roundabout at the entrance to the CBD, mostly caused by caravans and RVs. It would also take all of the traffic from Port Geographe to the light industrial and sporting areas away from the CBD entrance. And it would take most of the traffic from eastern Busselton to Bunbury.

The poorly thought out alternative being promoted by BCC will only add to congestion. The Mayor's statement of 21 April *Ford Road Plant not effective* does not stand up to logic,

and flies in the face of the well thought out 1995 traffic study.

Busselton – Margaret River Airport

PGLOA also has an interest in the airport expansion as it contributes to the growth of the area. The committee supports the airport expansion citing long-term economic benefits and limited environmental impacts associated with additional freight and passenger flights.

The Environmental Review document has been released for public comment, and submissions close on 14 August 2017. The Environmental Review Document can be downloaded from the EPA's website; www.epa.wa.gov.au

Some of the main points of the Environmental review Document are:

- The Airport Proposal is planned to allow international regular public transport (RPT) and freight operations.
- Boeing 747 and Airbus 320 and 330 aircraft with wings spans up to 60metres.
- Average projected movements five flights (10 movements) per week in 2018 -19 rising to 15 flights (30 movements) per week in 2038-39. Night flights to be capped to 5 flights per week.
- 4% increase in traffic 2018-19 rising to 10% increase in traffic in 2038-39
- Helicopter operations was 15 in 2015-16 and projected to increase to 96 movements per week in 2018-19. The increase is mainly emergency services usage.

- Five flights per week during the hours of midnight to 6am will allow flexibility for commercial airlines operating RPT particularly in the initial period of operations as Busselton - Margaret River Airport becomes an established destination. It is expected that flights will revert to day time services over a period of 3-5 years from commencement of operations.

The Environment Review indicates flight paths will have no significant impact on health, welfare and comfort of people; and impose no constraints on future urban development.

PGLOA Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting is set for 7pm on Monday 18 September at the Busselton Volunteer Sea Rescue facility on Geographe Bay Road, East Busselton.

We urge you to spare two hours of your time to attend the meeting to hear about the current issues and to have your input to future strategies.

Attached overleaf is a nomination form for a committee position. As usual we will welcome any nomination. If anyone is quietly entertaining the idea of joining the committee, and wants to discuss it further, feel free to phone me on 97515364 or 0428931460.

With compliments of the Chair of PGLOA

Kevin Strapp
3 August 2017