



Chairperson's Report 2022

MADRA Annual General Meeting, 16 August 2022

I'd like to acknowledge the people who have worked so hard to get MADRA started and then to keep it going:

The members of the Thinking Group – welcome, this was all your idea.

The first committee – particularly the executive team, who worked as hard as I've ever seen volunteers work to build an organisation from the ground up and give it such an amazing structure for everyone in this district to benefit from – your efforts have been absolutely second to none.

All the people in the different organisations, groups, clubs, professions, committees, emergency services and also the individuals who have helped in our efforts to recover and build resilience. There are far too many involved to mention, but your efforts do not go unnoticed or without our recognition, and they are much appreciated.

Our local elected representatives and agencies: Darren Chester, Tim Bull, Anthony Basford, Mark Reeves and the East Gippsland Shire staff, BRV and various other government and on-government agencies.

Whilst MADRA is an 800-strong association, these people I'm going to talk about now put their hand up to represent our community by going on the committee:

Phil Piper – Phil makes me feel like a tech whiz and has a wicked sense of humour. He is also leading our GIVIT foundation working group along with Julie Parker.

Rosy Morton – Rosy is interested in all things environmental and social wellbeing and she took on the responsibility of the Mouth updates – she's done a great job in keeping the community informed and updated about all things MADRA.

Kate Cowden – Kate looks after the ‘And District’ issues, for example, the poor mobile and internet reception out that way, on which she talks on relentlessly and at every opportunity – when she can get hold of us! But her real passion is people’s health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on youth.

Jeanette Obri – She gets all the town gossip from her role at the Tip and gives us a no-BS view of the issues we deal with. She is MADRA’s pub test and BS detector all in one.

Ken Grime – His letters, which are often signed ‘Paul Preston, MADRA Chairperson’, make me look as though I have a college education with a masters in letter writing. He pushes and prods with words and somehow makes whoever he is writing to agree that his way is the only reasonable and logical way forward. As he is a retired lawyer, I am glad he is acting for us and not against us.

Bryce Watts-Parker – Everything youth, environmental and technical, he has been a massive part of the first two committees. This town is in safe hands if young people like Bryce are steering the ship.

Carol Hopkins – Carol said last year that she was willing to help out in whatever way we thought best. She involves herself in all things Mallacoota and has taken a real interest in the overall idea of community-led recovery. Along with Jenny Lloyd, she is going to Adelaide soon to speak at a conference about disaster recovery. Good luck to you and Jenny.

Graham Dempster – I was rapt when Graham put his hand up for MADRA, because as we all know, whatever he does, he does really well. His volunteering capacity is unbelievable and I would suggest that between the Golf Club, MADRA, the Lions Club, various steering groups and subcommittees, he would put in upwards of 20 to 30 hours of unpaid community work a week – an unreal effort.

Peter Hancock – Pete put in some really big yards with the first committee, did a great job, and this year stepped up to Deputy Chair. He has been a wonderful help to me settling in – he was always on hand to have a chat and work through issues that arose. He is passionate and not scared to put his point of view forward on all matters, and I love his honesty and commitment.

A couple of other people to thank:

Meg Allan – Meg is the Mallacoota place manager. When we talk about the Shire, I think we forget sometimes that there are a lot of really good people employed by the Shire, and Meg’s one of them. We ask Meg questions about anything to do with the Shire and she will chase them down and get answers for us. Not only that, she asks if she can stay for the rest of our meeting to get a feel for what’s going on in the community, and she doesn’t have to do that. That’s the difference between having a local and someone who is just employed. Thank you, Meg.

Sabine and Maggie – They were our two admin people at last year’s meeting, until Sabine got another job just before Christmas. She did a great job and I really appreciate her time and help. So then it was up

to Maggie for the remainder of the MADRA year. She's been unreal pretending that nothing is a problem and we'd talk and catch up daily and work through a heap of problems. Maggie, thanks very much.

Once again, thanks to the whole team.

Projects

One year on from David Appleton's list in last year's report, I'd like to give a few updates:

- The Mallacoota Main Hall: upgrades are at the planning stage.
- The Mallacoota Mudbrick Pavilion: Also being planned.
- Genoa Bridge: has been rebuilt.
- Genoa Hall and tennis courts: work has been done, I'm not sure if it's completed.
- Genoa-Mallacoota Road upgrade: at the planning and consultation stage.
- Our Lakes Infrastructure is being built back better: Some jetties have been replaced and there is still \$2.8m to spend Once again, thanks to the whole team. community consultation will take place.
- Planning for the combined emergency services shed is underway.
- Fuel Management planning is ongoing.
- Support services for mental health, youth work, case work and social work: Services are ongoing and MADRA continues to advocate for these services to continue. I encourage everyone to seek out help if they need it.
- The Wilderness Workspace is well underway.
- Mallacoota and Genoa Streetscaping: planning and consultation is being carried out.
- The Skate Park: Work will begin in September or October and is planned to be completed by Christmas.
- Mallacoota Pony Club: lots of great work has been done.
- Mallacoota Golf Club: They are waiting for the rain to stop so they can carry out works on the grounds.
- Mallacoota Abalone Co-op has been rebuilt and reopened.
- A new Kindergarten has been completed.
- The Bunker Museum has received funding.
- MSEG's efforts continue to enhance the energy resilience of Mallacoota.
- Gipsy Point and Mallacoota's telecommunications: We have recently received an update to say the upgrades have been delayed; the project is estimated to be completed by mid-2023.

We also have various subcommittee and working groups. Here are just a few:

Subcommittees and working groups

Lyn Harwood who heads up the **Fuel Management Group** – it's amazing how she gets the different agencies together and able to produce outcomes, as seen with the areas of mulching around town – it's sometimes not easy to get all these agencies to agree.

The Wellbeing working group meets quarterly and includes MADRA committee members and agencies working in wellbeing and mental health supports. It keeps professional carers informed with developments and support opportunities for clients, as well as supporting each other.

The **Recovery Plan** is a one-person subcommittee and Jenny Lloyd is forever known by MADRA as 'The Keeper of the Plan'. This amazing document has recently been painstakingly updated.

Housing: One of the first things done in the second committee's term was to form a housing subcommittee, as housing was seen as a critical problem in our recovery. They have done an amazing amount of work – the tenacity, energy and compassion these people showed was unreal.

Email after email, phone call after phone call, meeting after meeting ... until finally, an online meeting on the 6th of April with Darren Chester and representatives from the Minister of Housing's office, Homes Vic, and DFFH was organised, which Ken and I attended. From that, there were some very positive murmurings re social and affordable housing being made by the relevant agencies.

Then out of thousands of emails, my favourite MADRA email arrived on the 21st of April announcing the commitment to build 10 social and affordable homes in Mallacoota. Unbelievable. Well done housing group. Also, you'll notice two short term modular homes located at 1 Betka Road. They have been put there for short-term use as an immediate solution to our housing crisis.

To think that over the next 40-plus years some people in our community will be better off because you guys worked so hard – that is a really unbelievable achievement – thank you.

Community meeting

Up until approximately a month ago, as a committee, we wondered if the District thought MADRA was still relevant and if people still had an appetite for community-led recovery.

So we decided to have a community meeting to gauge support and ask you, the community, what you thought. As a committee we thought it was really important to continue, to see that some of the really important projects and initiatives would be followed through and delivered.

We honestly didn't know if we would get 5, 10, 15 or 100 people turning up. The meeting night came, Wednesday 13 July – it was cold, raining and we thought the worst. But with over 45 people attending, a really positive and vibrant meeting was had, with the feeling that MADRA should continue.

Can I just say that the passion and commitment of the committee's personal comments and the locals' input at that meeting showed the enthusiasm for our ongoing recovery and resilience. This resulted in at least 4 nominations for the new committee directly from that meeting.

Airport

Then to confirm the importance of a community voice, the airport issue arose. Great, I thought, we were going to have a real cruisey run up to the AGM – now this!

There were a lot of theories and comments on what this meant – from closing the whole airport, to no change to the operational status – and everything in between. A multitude of emails, press releases, phone calls and regulations had to be consumed (mainly by Ken) to try and get a handle on what the facts were, then as a committee, we had to work out a strategy on how to achieve a positive outcome.

One thing I think MADRA has always done really well is to deal with the facts and not jump to conclusions. To cut a long story short, a Zoom meeting was organised last Tuesday between Darren Chester, who brought along a Minister's Advisor and two high-ranking CASA reps; and Anthony Basford, the Shire CEO who brought along the Mayor Mark Reeves, and also Fiona Weigall and Meg Allan; as well as Tim Bull, plus some of the MADRA committee members.

From the start it was obvious there had been some wires crossed as CASA could see no reason why it couldn't work with the Shire to iron out any perceived procedural or technical problems, and the Shire was more than willing to work with CASA to bring the airport back to its previous operational status and get re-certified. 40 minutes – done.

On Wednesday morning at approximately 9.00am, my second-favourite MADRA email arrived confirming that the Shire and CASA were going to do everything in their power to get the airport re-certified in a timely manner.

I think this proves the high regard that all levels of government and the relevant agencies have for MADRA as a community voice for Mallacoota and District, due to our reputation for working constructively and respectfully on the community's behalf.

Thank you to families and friends

Finally, to the people behind the MADRA team, family and friends – thank you for putting up with the constant emails, phone calls and meetings disrupting your lives. Without your support and encouragement, MADRA doesn't happen.

Please, everyone, encourage your family and friends to volunteer, it's one of the simplest and purest forms of human good, and quite simply, it makes small Australian country towns like ours an absolute ripping place to live.

Thank you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Paul Preston

Chair

Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc.

MADRA acknowledges All Traditional Custodians of this Land on which we live and recognises their continuing connection to Land, Waters, and Culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.