

A man with a mustache, wearing a grey hoodie and a tan cap with a CFA logo, is leaning against a tree trunk. The background is blurred, showing a wooden fence and some greenery. White wavy lines are drawn across the top of the image.

# Country and Waters

**Ash Wednesday  
remembered,  
40 years on**

PAGE 4

*Howard Hughes reflects*

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER | **SUMMER 2023**

PAGE 3

Lights, camera, action for  
Anglesea Movie Club

PAGE 6

Young people lead positive  
environmental action

PAGE 8

Pouring in support for local  
businesses at crucial time



[surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://surfcoast.vic.gov.au)



Surf Coast Shire Council  
Acknowledges the Wadawurrung  
People, and the Gulidjan and  
Gadubanud Peoples of the  
Eastern Maar Nation as the  
Traditional Owners of the land we  
now call Surf Coast Shire.

We pay our respects to their  
Elders past and present, and all  
other Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander People who are part of  
our Surf Coast Shire community.

YOUR COUNCILLORS

Mayor, Cr Liz Pattison

lpattison@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0402 328 546

Deputy Mayor, Cr Mike Bodsworth

mbodsworth@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0427 337 558

Cr Gary Allen

gallen@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0438 637 274

Cr Paul Barker

pbarker@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0409 626 614

Cr Kate Gazzard

kgazzard@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0428 570 094

Cr Rose Hodge

rhodge@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0407 552 025

Cr Adrian Schonfelder

aschonfelder@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0400 169 741

Cr Libby Stapleton

lstapleton@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0400 271 574

Cr Heather Wellington

hwellington@surfcoast.vic.gov.au  
M. 0417 542 967

Newly-elected Mayor Cr Liz Pattison  
shares five focus areas for this year.



1. Climate Emergency response

We've witnessed recent extreme weather  
events on the Surf Coast, as spring rainfall  
and storms resulted in flood-damaged  
roads, paths, bridges, landslips and fallen  
trees.

We want to work with the community to  
adapt to our changing climate, and be  
better-placed to manage the impacts of  
climate change on community places,  
spaces and services.

2.Surf Coast Aquatic and Health Centre

I'm excited to keep gaining momentum  
on the Surf Coast Aquatic and Health  
Centre campaign, as we seek the final  
funding needed to make the vision a  
reality.

3. Accommodation crisis

The shortage of affordable housing is a  
national issue, which we're feeling the  
impacts of here on the Surf Coast.

In addition to addressing seasonal  
workforce issues, we've been working to  
identify Council-owned land that may be  
suitable for the development of social  
and affordable housing, including 2 Fraser  
Drive in Aireys Inlet and the Anglesea  
Community and Health Precinct

4. Integrated transport planning

This is how we get around our townships  
- whether it's by bike, foot or vehicle. I've  
personally experienced how much easier  
it is to move around without relying on  
cars.

Active and public transport deliver both  
environmental and wellbeing benefits. Is  
this something you can incorporate into  
your life more this year?

5. Social infrastructure planning

From parks, community buildings,  
sporting fields to playgrounds, it is  
important our community has visibility  
around how we prioritise investing,  
renewing and upgrading the places we  
love to spend time. These spaces are vital  
for community connection.

Local road issue?  
Bin not collected?  
Playground need  
maintenance?

Lodge a request

surfcoast.vic.gov.au/request

Lights,  
camera,  
action



Back L-R: Phil Attard, Deborah Harding, Ev Wuchatsch and Carolyn Tatchell.  
Front L-R: Wendy Stainton, Sheryle Luttrell and Gary Robinson. Absent: Pastor Michael Varney and Raylene Fordham.

Anglesea Movie Club is rolling out the red carpet for community connection, as its monthly movie night  
becomes a showstopper.

A recipient of a Council COVID-19 Recovery Assistance grant, the  
movie club attracts an average of 80 people to each event at  
Anglesea Memorial Hall.

"It's like sitting in a really big lounge room with all your friends,"  
club representative Ev Wuchatsch said. "There's a lot of laughter  
and chatter and clapping. It's a great reason to get together."

The growing success of the club can be attributed to the  
social connection it offers, with members enjoying a one-hour  
gathering before the movie begins.

"Our gala launch was held in November 2021 and we had 110 on  
the night. We squeezed it in at the right time, because density  
limits were lifted that week. It's why so many people came, to get  
out and see each other again. It's all about the friendships and  
relationships."

The movie club idea came after the local social group for older,  
isolated and more vulnerable people - an initiative of Anglesea  
Community Network - ceased in 2020 due to COVID-19.

"They had a movie shown on a TV with afternoon tea, and up  
to 30 people went," Ev said. "When Council put in the fabulous  
equipment at the hall after extensive community fundraising, we  
thought we could run a movie club and it gathered momentum.

We spoke to Film Victoria and to Winchelsea Movie Club  
members, who provided much helpful information.

"We put in the grant application with Council and it grew from  
there."

Anglesea Movie Club membership for 2023 is \$77, which covers  
10 events across the year, starting with a screening of British spy  
drama Red Joan on 17 February. The hall is transformed into a  
theatre, fitted out with themed decorations for each movie.

Ev said community support has been invaluable, with donations  
from local people and businesses including Abacus Visual which  
provided promotional items. Anglesea Men's Shed helped create  
event equipment, Anglesea Historical Society and Anglesea  
Snappers contributed photos to slideshows, Pivotonian Cinema  
donated posters, a popcorn machine was loaned, and the movie  
club is auspiced by Anglesea Community House.

To join Anglesea Movie Club and view its 2023 program, visit  
[anglesea.org.au/community/interest-groups/anglesea-movie-club](https://anglesea.org.au/community/interest-groups/anglesea-movie-club).

Council is pleased to play a supporting role to the club in this  
social connection initiative that increases people's participation.

Winchelsea Mud Hut Renewal

Council is continuing to work with Winchelsea community members on a suitable replacement for the  
Winchelsea Mud Hut.

Located in the Barwon River Gathering Space, the much loved shelter – which is closed due to its failing structure – was  
scheduled to be replaced in January 2023 however we found a microbat family living in the hut which requires investigation. We  
also received a petition at the December Council meeting about the design of the replacement hut.

We will provide further community engagement opportunities in February and March, with feedback to help present options to  
Council on how the new structure will look.

For all engagement opportunities, visit [surfcoast.vic.gov.au/yoursay](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/yoursay).



# Ash Wednesday remembered

Champion surf lifesaver Howard Hughes was on the waves off Fairhaven when he first saw the coils of smoke rising above the Otways from Deans Marsh on 16 February, 1983.



Clearing of the Hughes home slab

Searing heat and wind were making the day ferociously hostile, and the Aireys Inlet Fire Brigade second lieutenant made a grim observation to his wife Jenny.

"I'll be fighting this fire before the night's out," he said.

The day which became seared into Surf Coast history as Ash Wednesday held him true to his word.

By its end a spark at Deans Marsh had exploded into fireball nightmare which scythed across the Otways to Lorne and then up the coast through Big Hill, Eastern View, Moggs Creek and Fairhaven to Aireys Inlet and Anglesea.

"When it came, it came that hard you were running for your life and salvaging what you could," Howard, now 75, remembers.

"The smoke started to blow, you could hear it like tanks coming up the hill and it was like a war zone with gas cylinders going off.

"I'm telling ya, entire house roofs were flying around."

While Howard answered the call with the CFA, Jenny evacuated from Aireys with their sons Steven, Trevor and Peter, first to Anglesea, then Torquay, then Geelong.

Neither had any idea how the other had fared until Howard picked up the *Geelong Advertiser* the next day and saw a picture of Steven at an emergency response centre and knew his family was safe.

Jenny told the *Advertiser* 10 years ago of her experience and recalled having looked back towards the Surf Coast while evacuating to Geelong: "It was just red, absolutely red, raw red sky and we thought 'oh gosh is there anything left in there?'" she said.

**Much of Victoria burned on Ash Wednesday. Across the state 47 people lost their lives and 2,080 homes were razed.**

On the Surf Coast the inferno, accelerated at first by a blistering northerly and then an aggressive south-west change, tragically claimed three lives. It torched 41,000 hectares, and Howard and Jenny's Aireys home and Howard's parents' Fairhaven home became two of 729 obliterated.

Howard's surfboard factory numbered among the 53 'other buildings' consumed, along with the Aireys fire station and pub.

Howard and Jenny Hughes became two of many across the region who came to

symbolise strength and spirit through the arduous haul of recovery.

Within a few weeks they were rebuilding on their house slab and theirs became the first home rebuilt in Aireys Inlet. Howard built his new factory with thousands of bricks reclaimed from the gutted home of his next-door neighbour, the famed opera singer Dame Joan Hammond.

Howard and Jenny were married for 43 years before her passing late in 2013.

With 2023 marking the 40th anniversary of Ash Wednesday, Council is bringing together a public commemorative event to be on 16 February at the Aireys Inlet Community Centre.

Alongside presentations and displays the event, from 11.30am to 1.30pm, will provide a space for people to come together in memory, reflection, tribute and learning, and to acknowledge the community spirit which fortified the region's recovery.

People can find more information via [surfcoast.vic.gov.au/AshWednesday](http://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/AshWednesday).

The event will support our Council Plan theme to foster thriving, connected, healthy communities.



## Options needed to ease Learn to Swim limbo

**Former swimming teacher Kate Eddiehausen says it shouldn't take a mixture of luck and determination to find suitable Learn to Swim lessons for kids.**

Kate taught in pools for six years and now as a mum of three young children is one of many seeking better alternatives for lessons and advocating for our Surf Coast Aquatic and Health Centre.

"We want kids to learn to swim so we need to make it easy to access lessons," Kate says.

"We all have many competing demands on our time so it is important to have enough pools, teachers and lessons available to suit all timetables, budgets and preferences.

"I know many children who are not attending swimming lessons since the Torquay Swim School closed, and others who are travelling much further afield. Many families are waiting in limbo without any feasible options.

"This is really unfortunate after the gap in lessons caused by pandemic lockdowns."

Provision of Learn to Swim facilities is a major focus for the new Surf Coast Aquatic and Health Centre, with design including two indoor warm water pools.

The centre has been a long-held community ambition, aligning with our Council Plan theme of fostering a healthy, connected community.

A recent Royal Life Saving Australia report has highlighted need for access to classes, estimating 10 million Learn to Swim lessons were cancelled due to pandemic disruptions.

The report says many of the affected children are likely to disengage from programs, but families trying to make up for lost classes, combined with a shortage of opportunities mean not enough Learn to Swim opportunities are now being provided.

Access to infrastructure will also present major challenges into the future. Royal Life Saving Australia estimates in the next 10 years up to 40 per cent of public aquatic facilities owned by local governments will need to be replaced at a cost of more than \$8 billion.

Kate is a member of the aquatic centre Community Reference Group and is supporting advocacy for the centre as Council seeks \$4.5 million in additional funding.



## Celebrating 60 years of Rip Curl Pro Bells Beach Local junior surf champ first Victorian ever to claim an ISA world title

**Willis Droomer is a name you're going to be hearing more of.**

The Jan Juc teenager is rapidly rising through surfing ranks, with his most recent triumph taking out the under-16 International Surfing Association (ISA) world title in El Salvador in June last year.

Not only was it his first time competing in an international competition, but he's the first Victorian to claim an ISA world title.

"It was unexpected, as I was competing against a lot of good surfers. I didn't target a result, just thought I'd see how I go but with each round I got more comfortable and my confidence grew. To win was amazing and something I'll remember forever. It was crazy having all of the Australian team run up to me on the rocks," the 16-year-old said.

Willis said with the win came the weight of expectation going into competitions.

"I feel like I have to keep improving faster than I was before. I have to keep it rolling."

He's now getting ready to compete in pro junior competitions around Australia, and will try and gain entry into the coveted Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach.

"The trials competition won't be easy to win as I have to compete against adults, but I'll definitely try."

Whether he competes or not, he'll be at Bells as much as he can to watch his surfing heroes vie to ring the famous bell, as the event marks its 60th year.

"It's pretty amazing to have all your favourite surfers that you've been watching online in competitions for years surf your home break."

The Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach event period runs from 4-14 April 2023. Find out more at [worldsurfleague.com/events](http://worldsurfleague.com/events).

You can see Willis's name up on the Rising Star board in the Australian National Surfing Museum.

**AustralianNationalSurfingMuseum**

Keen to be "In the know" with events happening on the Surf Coast? Head to [surfcoastevents.com.au](http://surfcoastevents.com.au)  
Sign up to the e-newsletter and follow: **SurfCoastEvents** **SurfCoast\_Events**



IN BRIEF

JOIN THE RESPONSIBLE CAFES BUZZ

Coffee, tea or hot chocolate? Whatever your preferred takeaway drink, it's always a good choice to grab it in a reusable cup.

We know our community is passionate about doing better for the environment, which is why we partnered with Responsible Cafes - a not-for-profit program designed to support local cafes to reduce their plastic waste.

Most single-use takeaway coffee cups can't be recycled and there are challenges composting many of the ones marked 'compostable', which means they are also diverted to landfill.

Thank you to the customers who bring their own cup, and to the more than 20 Surf Coast cafes which have joined as a Responsible Café. To sign-up, visit [responsiblecafes.org](https://responsiblecafes.org).



INTERSECTION WORK IN TORQUAY TO START

Work on completing the intersection of Rosser Boulevard, Coombes Road and Surf Coast Highway in Torquay is expected to start in February.

The upgrade will include extension of Rosser Boulevard west from the Quay2 residential development to connect into the highway, installation of traffic signals and installation of lighting over the intersection.

Work is expected to take eight months and will also include creation of bike lanes on all approaches to the intersection and indented bus bays on the north and south-bound highway departure lanes from the intersection.

The Surf Coast Highway will remain open with traffic management in place. Access to and from Coombes Road to the highway will be temporarily closed, with detours via Messmate Road.



Paige (left) and Alexandra (right) are proud of their short film.

Young people lead positive environmental action

Young people across the Surf Coast and hinterland are playing a lead role in spreading the word on the need to act on climate change.

Anglesea's Alexandra Keogh and Torquay's Paige Firth are participants in the Surf Coast Youth for Climate Program, which culminated in December with a mini film festival in Aireys Inlet - a collaboration with Surfers for Climate.

Fifteen young people from across the shire created short environmental films, with Alexandra and Paige's The Sink making its debut.

"We knew we wanted to create a metaphorical film which symbolises our climate. In the beginning of the video, someone walks into a bathroom and leaves the sink running," Alexandra said.

"As the film progresses, new people make their way into the bathroom, doing actions such as blow drying their hair and leaving the room, again ignoring the overflowing sink. As the last person enters, they realise the bathroom has flooded and turn off the tap. Happy with their solution, they leave the bathroom oblivious to the damage that has been caused."

The 16-year-olds described the Youth for Climate Program as an amazing opportunity.

"We had a lot of fun working together and participating in two film-making workshops as part of the program," Paige said.

"They helped us form new friendships and gave us the confidence to create our film and share it. We count ourselves lucky to show our art and our views on the climate with a larger audience at the film festival."

Youth for Climate, which recently ran for its third year, aligns with our goal to protect our environment and help our community to thrive through environmental leadership. It also fosters a place where people with clever and creative ideas can make a difference in their communities.

The program was enabled through the Victorian Government's Engage! funding.

Surfers for Climate continues to make positive waves in the community, with a series of climate conversation events. Local panel discussions with renewable energy experts and film screenings have sparked important discussions on emerging climate solutions and fossil fuel alternatives that can help protect the coast. We partnered with Surfers for Climate on the events.



Reserve flourishes with project partnership

A passionate community-led project has fulfilled a mission to give a Torquay recreation reserve some soul.



Andrew Crowley shares how a community-driven project is flourishing.

Community members felt Great Ocean Views Reserve was unremarkable and under-used when they came together in 2017 with a vision for activating the space and making it more practical and attractive.

Five years on it has an irrigated fruit orchard, an expanded picnic area with new shelter, redeveloped playground, realigned pathways creating a ball game lawn space, feature trees and users aplenty.

A community-driven redevelopment project has flourished with the support of Council's Community Projects and Partnerships Team.

"The reserve looks so much better, cared for and functional," community working group spokesman Andrew Crowley says.

"The playground space is very active with children and families and the orchard has been established and is an investment in the future and a great multi-generational community connector.

"We look forward to the day when people can grab a lemon or lime for cooking, or when one of the kids picks a mandarin on the way to school.

"And the new grass kicking area has been a highlight of the project, encouraging physical activity and providing a space for fun ball games for everyone. On grand final day the space was used for kicking the footy, and across Christmas for family games of cricket.

"This is what parks are supposed to do."

Our Council Plan supports provision of social infrastructure and open space to enable healthy lifestyles, and our Community

Projects and Partnerships Team exists to enable and empower community groups to realise aspirations and get things done.

The Great Ocean Views Reserve working group made a key first move by registering a proposal via Council's Community Project Proposal web page in 2017.

By March 2018 the project had progressed to investigation phase and Council had helped prepare a landscape plan, development stages and a detailed budget which enabled the group to seek \$89,000 in overall funding.

Contributions of \$6,000 from Torquay Community Enterprise and \$7,000 from Lions Club of Torquay were boosted by Australian Government grants of \$10,000 from the Stronger Communities Program and \$40,000 from the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund, and a Council allocation of \$26,000.

"When the project was initially accepted it had no funding but from that point Council helped us to target a range of funding partnerships, and partnerships to deliver on our aspirations," Andrew says.

He encourages other community groups to seek to make visions reality with Community Project and Partnerships support.

"You need a well thought-out vision and a practical plan, and be patient and prepared that the project may take some time to deliver," he says.

"This provides Council with time to walk side-by-side with the community to make it happen."

Watch a video on the Great Ocean Views Reserve project: [surfcoast.vic.gov.au/GreatOceanViews](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/GreatOceanViews).

Would you prefer to receive your rates notice and this newsletter electronically?

It's simple, secure, saves time... and trees!

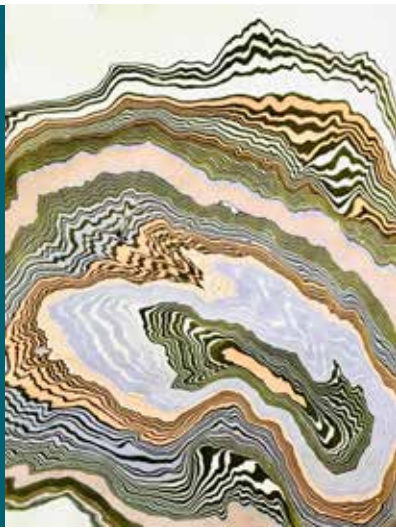
Property owners can complete the online form at [erates.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](https://erates.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

After you have registered, your next rates notice and Country and Waters newsletter will be delivered to your inbox.





## DEVELOP grants to foster shire's reputation as a creative hotspot



An Artists and Creatives Grant has proved to be a perfect stepping stone for Lorne multi-disciplinary artist Kim Wiebenga, who has encouraged peers to apply for 2023 funding.

The DEVELOP grants aim to support creatives from all artistic disciplines to explore new directions, innovative ideas and bold concepts.

Kim was a grant recipient last year, for an experiential project creating and enhancing free-formed natural patterns on paper, textiles and wood; plus methods of pattern weaving in yarn on a tapestry loom.

"Initially a friend of mine suggested I apply but considering I had never applied for a grant, the entire prospect seemed far-fetched," she said. "Despite this I did sense that I could be a good fit for the opportunity, as I was motivated to venture beyond my existing field of creative work."

The funding has enabled the artist to devote time towards creative development.

"My experiments have already led to some wonderful revelations," she said. "For any creative people considering applying this year, I would recommend being concise and practical with the application process. You can then substantiate this with your creative achievements."

Grant applications for 2023 open 1 February and close 28 February. Recipients will be announced late March. For more information: [surfcoast.vic.gov.au/seedfund](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/seedfund).

Seed funding of up to **\$3,000 for individual artists** and **\$5,000 for collectives** is available. First Nations artists and artists from diverse or marginalised groups such as LGBTQIA+ and CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) groups are strongly encouraged to apply.



## Pouring in support for local businesses at crucial time

Beach Hotel Jan Juc publican Jamie Collins said Council's pandemic support, headlined by an outdoor area, gave the business a much-needed boost.

Part of the Fresh Air Dining Program, five car parks outside the pub were transformed into an outdoor seating area.

"We went through Council and they were great to come on board and get the permits through quickly," Jamie said. "It was a stressful time for everyone and we were on edge running a venue, with all the changing restrictions. I was amazed at the support they provided, especially with fees and charges relating to alfresco, health permits and deferring A-frame permits. Without the outdoor area, I would have been borrowing a lot more money."

Beach Hotel was one of 45 businesses across the shire to receive a fresh air dining permit.

"Each lockdown when we had to close was heartbreaking," Jamie said. "It was costing us a lot on money in food. When JobKeeper kicked in we did takeaway food for the first time. The community support was amazing - the first night we did 70 meals, the next night we did 100, and one night we did 240."

"When we could operate the outdoor area, everyone embraced it - on a nice night and even in winter, people sat out in jackets."

With the Fresh Air Dining Program winding up, we encourage you to visit your favourite businesses, to assist local traders on their road to recovery.



**Confused on bin night?**  
**SCRRApp has you sorted.**

Download FREE from the App store or Google Play

### SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Wadawurrung Country

1 Merrijig Drive (PO Box 350) Torquay 3228

Phone: **5261 0600** [surfcoast.vic.gov.au/request](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/request)

**OFFICE HOURS:** 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

If you require a printed copy of online information referred to in any story, please call **5261 0600**



[surfcoast.vic.gov.au](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au)