



Point Lonsdale Civic Association Inc.

PO Box 28 Point Lonsdale VIC 3225 Reg. No. A0017883S

Email: plcasecretary@gmail.com Website: www.plca.org.au

Representing Point Lonsdale Residents since 1910

7 September 2014

Hon. Phil Honeywood
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, Nicholson St
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Subject: Submission by Point Lonsdale Civic Association re Historic Places Investigation

The Point Lonsdale Civic Association (PLCA) wishes to make a submission regarding the Historic Places Investigation (the Investigation) that is being conducted by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (the Council). PLCA has been promoting the interests of Point Lonsdale residents since 1910 in areas such as the natural environment, historic buildings, provision of public facilities and ensuring that developments are compatible with the character of Point Lonsdale. This is achieved in part through liaising with local government, government authorities and other organisations. We also disseminate information on these matters and provide a forum where residents may discuss views and problems. We have some 430 members who are residents or interested in the future of Point Lonsdale (total of 3,200 residents in Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff).

Historic Place – Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Area

We have noted the definition of “historic places” in the guide on the Responsibilities of Committees of Management in relation to Historic Places on Public Land published by the Department of Environment and Primary Industry (DEPI). It states that:

Historic places are non-Aboriginal places that provide a tangible link to our history and help us to understand and appreciate our past. Generally the term “historic places” refers to sites, areas, land, landscapes, buildings or other work, and groups of buildings or other works and may also include contents.

The focus of our submission is the area around the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse which we believe is a clear example of an historic place that has been inadequately managed in the past. It also is a

place for which, consistent with Terms of Reference for the Investigation, there are opportunities improve management arrangements to conserve, protect and enhance the historic, community and educational values of this historic place.

The historic place of concern around the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse includes the lighthouse and related buildings, the coastal area to the south and west of the lighthouse and the area of land abutting the lighthouse which is known as the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve, all of which is public land and is approximately 12 hectares in area. The historic links in this area go back to the start of the post Aboriginal contact period and include extensive maritime activity associated with the entrance to Port Phillip Bay as well as events such as assistance provided by the Aboriginal community to William Buckley in the 1830s. Also, there has been significant military activity in the area of the lighthouse particularly during the First and Second World Wars as indicated in part by some remaining military structures. Finally, the lighthouse itself may need to be managed as an historic structure in the near term as it is likely to cease to be a staffed operation.

The coastal area around the lighthouse is jointly managed by DEPI and the Borough of Queenscliffe. In 2012 the Borough of Queenscliffe was appointed as the Committee of Management of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve replacing a DEPI managed Committee of Management.

Neglected Historic Place

It is of concern to the community that much of the historic area associated with the Point Lonsdale lighthouse has been neglected and that no attempt seems to have been made to preserve the military structures. Of particular concern is the fact that for many years the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve has been neglected with dilapidated buildings (old Toc H camp) that have been vandalised in more recent times and which are surrounded by temporary fencing. Much of the land has been left barren and is weed infested and facilities such as toilets are in very poor condition.

Halt Inappropriate Development on Historic Place

This year the Borough of Queenscliffe Council has developed a range of options to redevelop the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve (the Reserve) that includes different types of accommodation and facilities. The community is greatly concerned about some of these options put forward by the Borough particularly a large scale boutique accommodation, restaurant and thermal spa. Feedback provided by the community is that such a redevelopment is totally inappropriate for this historic place.

The option preferred by the majority of the community is that the Reserve and the whole lighthouse area be developed as an historic area with signage and improved walking paths leading to the historic sites and other points of interest. The whole area needs to be improved with coastal type revegetation and improved with facilities such as toilets, picnic tables, parking, ship viewing areas etc. The derelict Toc H camp buildings need to be removed.

It is considered that a development such as a boutique accommodation and thermal spa, or indeed any form of accommodation and restaurant, should not be allowed to proceed on the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve until after the Historic Places Investigation has been completed and

recommendations considered by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Opportunities to Improve Management of Historic Places

It is submitted that the following opportunities should be considered by the Investigation in relation to situations such that outlined above:

1. There appears to be inadequate controls to prevent large scale commercial development in historic places of the nature under consideration by the Borough of Queenscliffe for the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve. It is submitted that any such proposals should be reviewed by an independent authority such as or similar to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council. Secondly, it is expected that such a review would take into account local community views and give considerable weight to those views in its determinations.
2. There needs to be greater enforcement of the requirements of management authority responsibilities for historic places including authorities such as DEPI and Committees of Management. In the case of Committees of Management, DEPI has provided guidelines on their custodial responsibilities in relation to the Historic Places on Public Land. Experience in Point Lonsdale would indicate that these guidelines have not been enforced. It is submitted (1) that DEPI should enact greater enforcement of these guidelines in relation to Committees of Management and (2) that great enforcement should be applied to DEPI managed sites such as via audits by the Victorian Auditor-General.
3. At present it appears that there is considerable flexibility applied as to how a Committee of Management uses income generated from the management of public land such as in the case of historic places. It is submitted that there be a greater scrutiny of the expenditure of income generated from historic sites to ensure that the maximum amount possible is allocated to the maintenance and improvement of the historic site that is managed.

We would be interested to expand on any of the above matters if greater clarity is required.

Finally, we would welcome your advice on any action that PLCA should take now to progress its view that a development such as a boutique accommodation and thermal spa should not be allowed to proceed on the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve until after the Historic Places Investigation has been completed and recommendations considered by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Yours sincerely

Fay Agterhuis
President
Point Lonsdale Civic Association