

No 101 September 2024

Ingenia withdraws planning application

Ingenia Communities have withdrawn their application to amend to the planning permit covering the Swan Bay Holiday Park in Swan Bay Road. The application sought to amend its current Camping and Caravan Park Permit to allow one third of the 200 plus cabins across the site to become permanent dwellings. This looked like residential development by stealth.

A plethora of objections to the amendment were raised by local residents, SBEA and others at a recent City of Greater Geelong Planning Information Meeting. There are many issues for permanent residents at this site. The closest shops are 13 km away, there is no public transport, daycare, library, medical services and even the water supply cannot be guaranteed. The holiday park is the 17th, and last, in line on a private water line built to supply farmers and the caravan park - when it had no more than 80 part-time residents.

Central to SBEA's concerns was the lack of any progress made with the Landscape Management Plan that was a requirement of the site's endorsed Planning Permit in granted in 2014 - indicating a lack of awareness or failure by Ingenia to fulfil its obligations to protect the ecological integrity of this site.

After Queenscliff, Swan Bay Caravan Park is currently the most developed patch of land on the shores of Ramsar-listed Swan Bay and is located on precious coastal saltmarsh, grassy woodlands and moonah woodland. What started as a small and low-key caravan park is now a substantial development of approximately 200 cabins with a very small number of camping sites. During a meeting with three SBEA members, Ingenia's Operations Manager indicated they would like to further develop the site over time.

Thank you to those SBEA members who also submitted objections. We are also grateful to those who offered valuable advice to SBEA during the process. We will continue to closely monitor this situation.

Following the withdrawal of their planning application, Ingenia released a letter to the community which we reproduce in full at the end of the newsletter.

Welcome to new members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Swan Bay Environment Association Members Jan and Rick Molloy, Michael Robinson and Giselle Roux, Liz Milla, Gail Wilmot and Rosanne Ott. SBEA Membership has been growing steadily and we are excited to be getting close to 200 Members!

We greatly appreciate the support of all our Members, which enables us to advocate more effectively to protect our local environment, as well as the contribution of many active Members who volunteer regularly at the Nursery, with Habitat Restoration and Pocket Park Planting.

Membership renewals: After a few initial issues, the new online Membership system is now making the process of becoming an SBEA Member and renewing membership more streamlined. A handful of members are yet to renew Membership for 2024. Members can easily check if membership is up to date and when membership is due for renewal by clicking on the *Membership* tab on the SBEA website homepage and choosing *Member Login*. Your login is your email address. Passwords can be set or reset by clicking on *Lost your password?* SBEA website link swanbayenvironment.org.au If you have any membership queries, please don't hesitate to contact me at evamutton@bigpond.com

Nursery News

Despite some chilly weather, Nursery volunteers enjoyed a great outing to the Bellarine Landcare Nursery at Drysdale on July 25th where everyone was taken on a thorough tour of the nursery by its manager, Fiona Love. This was followed by a lovely and informative walk to the neighbouring Basin Reserve with Sophie Small from Bellarine Landcare.



Above: Fiona Love showing us the Bellarine Landcare Nursery in Drysdale.

Top right: *Bossiaea cinerea* in flower at the neighbouring Basin Reserve.

Centre right: Amazing Grass Trees in the reserve

Top right: Walking through the Basin Reserve with Sophie Small.



Nursery Sales

Sales have been huge at the nursery over the last couple of months. There have been unexpected large orders for The Point offset conservation area, St Leonards Golf Course and Riverview Caravan Park (Barwon Coast). It has been good to move on advanced stock that needed planting, but the nursery's sales area is now pretty empty. Luckily, we have been busy propagating and should have many new plants ready by spring.

Landcare grant supports completion of pocket park project

During 2024 Jacqueline Court pocket park (see photo) was revegetated and it is looking really great thanks to such a hard-working group of volunteers!

Now, as a result of a successful funding application to Landcare, we are delighted to announce that during winter 2025 we plan to complete the whole Pocket Park project by revegetating Mason Court and the other half of Douglas Court.

So please keep an eye open for the two community consultations and the working bees that will be coming up over next year!



Heathland stories: A printing workshop

Our final Nature Art workshop for 2024 will be a treat. We will commence at the fascinating Trust for Nature covenanted property in Point Lonsdale for a short walk and talk with Janet Johnston, a regular 'Ariipa' volunteer. Andrew Brookes, who owns the property, is hoping to welcome us there. 'Ariipa' is a unique remnant sand heath, a time capsule which gives us some understanding of what was here 200 years ago.

Artist Sue Anderson (stepping in for Julie Ryan) will be conducting the printing workshop at Kirk's Place around the corner. Sue is a well-established expressionist landscape painter and printmaker and was our first workshop facilitator for our Nature Art series in 2023. She is also an enthusiastic and encouraging teacher of art. Sue is currently part of a group exhibition at Australian Galleries (27th August–14th September).

As usual, the workshop is for beginner or more experienced artists. Bookings and further information on the link below <https://events.humanitix.com/heathland-stories-a>



SBEA receives community grant

Our Gardens for Wildlife program and Indigenous Nursery are grateful recipients of a \$2,000 Community Grant from the Borough of Queenscliffe.

Gardens for Wildlife will be using the money to create some new signage to promote the program. Gardens For Wildlife participants will be able to fix the new sign to their letterbox or fence creating greater awareness of the program within the community. The nursery will use their share to purchase a much-needed new propagation table.

Our thanks to the Borough of Queenscliffe for their continued support for SBEA and our work.



What to plant instead of *Gazania* sp.

*It may come as a surprise, but *Gazania* sp., a common plant around the Borough, has become an environmental weed. In this article our Nursery Manager, Sarah Roberts, looks at the plant, the problem and suggests some alternative species to plant.*



Gazanias at The Springs. Inset: Gazania flower.



Along Point Lonsdale foreshore.



Gazania lawn, Queenscliff Cemetery.

What are gazanias?

Gazanias are hairy, spreading, perennial herbs that grow about 30cm high. Native to South Africa, they belong to the daisy family (Asteraceae) and have a distinctive bright yellow or orange inflorescence. Gazanias thrive in coastal environments due to some of their adaptive characteristics and their ability to spread in different ways. Their grey/green lance shaped leaves often have a darker, smooth, waxy top and a hairy, white underside. The grey leaves can reflect a lot of light, and the hairy underside increases humidity around the leaf which reduces loss of water through evaporation in hot dry environments.

Gazanias can flower throughout the year producing a lot of seeds that are attached to fluffy hairs that float off in the wind. They can also spread vegetatively through their horizontal or underground stems that can produce roots at their nodes.

Gazanias have become environmental weeds due to their ability to displace native flora and alter vegetation structure. They are spreading fast around the Borough of Queenscliff as well as other places in Victoria. The plants escape from gardens and public plantings and also emerge from dumped garden waste.

Gazania species are sold in commercial nurseries, planted in many home and council street spaces and in Point Lonsdale they can be found along the foreshore and throughout the cemetery.

Plant these instead of gazanias

Queenscliffe Indigenous Nursery has many suitable alternatives that can be planted instead of *Gazania* sp. The species listed below have similar adaptive features enabling them to cope well on coastal fringes that are dry and exposed.



Cushion bush Leucophyta brownii
Asteraceae Family
Up to 1m high.
Pale globular daisy inflorescence.
Silver foliage that reflects light.
Stem claspng foliage reduces water loss.
Resists wind and salt spray. Drought resistant.



Silky Guinea-flower Hibbertia sericea
Dilleniaceae Family
30cm-1m high.
Bright yellow flower in late winter/spring.
Stems and leaves are hairy (reducing water loss in hot dry environments).



Pale Everlasting Coronidium scorpioides
Asteraceae Family
Up to 30cm high.
Disc shaped daisy inflorescence
Grey/green foliage that reflects light.
Hairy leaves reduce water loss. Can spread via underground stems that root at nodes.



Karkalla Carpobrotus rossii
Aizoaceae
Succulent creeper.
Large pink /purple flower.
Water and carbohydrate storage in stems and leaves.
Suitable for dry salty coastal fringes.

BUY LOCAL INDIGENOUS PLANTS TO REPLACE THOSE GAZANIAS IN YOUR GARDEN

If you are after some new plants to pop in your garden and replace those gazanias, you can buy them from our nursery.

Location: 79 Nelson Road, Point Lonsdale

Price: just \$3.00 each

Opening times:

Wednesday from 9.00am-12noon and the 3rd Sunday of each month from 10.00am-12noon.

Enquiries to Sarah Roberts, Nursery Manager: 0401 281 448

A project to entice some superb friends



In keeping with the mantra to ‘keep the common things common’, SBEA committee member Will Johnston has an idea for new project where we can all play a role.

The guest speaker at this year’s SBEA AGM, Trust for Nature’s Doug Robinson, provided us with a very helpful phrase that delivered buckets of hope and direction. The phrase was ‘*keeping the common things common*’ and it got me thinking about a project we could undertake in our own backyards.

In my previous life as a teacher at The Geelong College the Year 4 Enviro Program undertook, at the suggestion of a nine-year-old, a planting project to entice superb fairy-wrens to the Geelong College Middle School property.

The wrens lived just down the escarpment, around the Barwon River, but there was no habitat for them on the school property. With guidance from indigenous plant experts planting began, and the project continued over six years of habitat creation before an observant young person claimed to have seen a wren in our school garden. I was sceptical, but she was right. Ten years later, breeding families of wrens remain a feature of the school landscape.

This story, and the birds themselves, bring both joy and hope, feelings we want to replicate in our community.

In Point Lonsdale, Queenscliff and around Swan Bay to St Leonards we have many families of wrens. But they rarely exist in people’s gardens.

If you have them, you are lucky. I live in Fellows Road across from where the Golf Course once was. According to my own observations there are no families of wrens between Fellows Road and the shops. In the Borough of Queenscliff wrens exist in the margins. The dunes, down Gill Road, on the golf courses, around Swan Bay and Lake Victoria.

But *exactly* where are they? And can we see their distribution grow back into our urban spaces? Can we have *superb fairy-wrens* (voted as Australia’s Bird of the Year in 2021) living alongside us, in our gardens providing endless joy, curing our blues with their sparkling blueness.

We invite you to join with us as we launch a new project: *Bring Back Wrens to Our Gardens*. We might need a catchier title, but it is a work in progress!

Mapping: I imagine, the first thing to do is to attempt to map the families of wrens in Queenscliff, Point Lonsdale, around Swan Bay, and St Leonards.

Please email me with your wren sightings and include any details such as:
Exact location/Numbers/Sex of the birds
(the blue ones are males, the brown ones with blue tails are non-breeding males, the females are brown)
Label the email WREN SIGHTING and send it to: johnstonwill5@gmail.com

Habitat: A friend (who is now uncertain about this fact!) told me that breeding wrens can move up to two hundred metres a year into new suitable habitat. So, we can start rolling out the welcome mat in our gardens by planting some wren-friendly habitat.

How? Contact our Gardens for Wildlife program and book a free garden visit from one of our experts who will help with what plants to choose and where best to plant them. For more information or to book a visit please see our website: <https://swanbayenvironment.org.au/gardens-for-wildlife>

That's a start. As an idea, the project has plenty of scope. Healthy wren habitat includes insects and dense shrubs, which in turn creates habitat for a host of other living things – those excellent little indicators of environmental health - the silveryeyes, thornbills, fairy-wrens, honeyeaters, finches, or the butterflies, dragonflies and moths – things that are quietly slipping away from our urban spaces.

The project might also provide a number of us with a powerful sense of purpose. Does anyone know of any budding young scientists looking for an engaging project? Might there be a school interested?

I am looking forward to seeing where this project takes us. Together let us strive to keep the common things common.



22 August 2024

Dear Community Members,

We are writing to you following the recent meeting at the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) Council offices, which was attended by representatives of Ingenia, Council's planning team and members of our local community on Thursday, 25th July 2024.

The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for dialogue on the historic and future issues at Swan Bay, a precious part of the Bellarine environment. As members of this community, we value the feedback we received during the discussion.

It was clear that the community holds strong concerns regarding the potential impacts of any future changes or development at Swan Bay. Ingenia acknowledges these concerns.

In light of the feedback received, we have decided not to pursue the proposal any further and subsequently made the decision to withdraw the application to amend the current planning permit. Accordingly, late last week, we formally advised the planning team at COGG of this decision.

We reaffirm that Ingenia sees the Swan Bay Holiday Park as an important tourism asset, which we intend to manage with care into the future. We also wish to advise that, at this time, there are no plans for future changes.

Additionally, Ingenia are committed to engaging with the local community on considerations that have been raised, including land management, the private water line, lighting and other related matters.

Thank you to all who attended the meeting, and we look forward to working with you, our neighbours and the local community into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Greer

**Operations Manager – Tourism
Ingenia Holidays**