

THE SURF COAST IN THE 21st CENTURY

THE Surf Coast Shire in the second decade of the 21st century would have achieved the delicate balance of maintaining its unique environment and developing its economy through an increase in tourism and suitable industry. Central to the *Surf Coast 2020 Vision - A Preferred Future* report is the role of

its towns. The report envisages each town retain and enhance its unique character by developing as far as possible within its present boundaries with green belts or buffer zones between. *The Echo* this week looks at the Anglesea and Aireys Inlet area.

The Anglesea of 2020

by John Rygiel

KNOWN throughout the world for its rugged beauty, the Great Ocean Road around Anglesea and Aireys Inlet/Fairhaven is in fact one of the most ecologically sensitive areas on earth - and by 2020 great pains will have been taken to keep it that way.

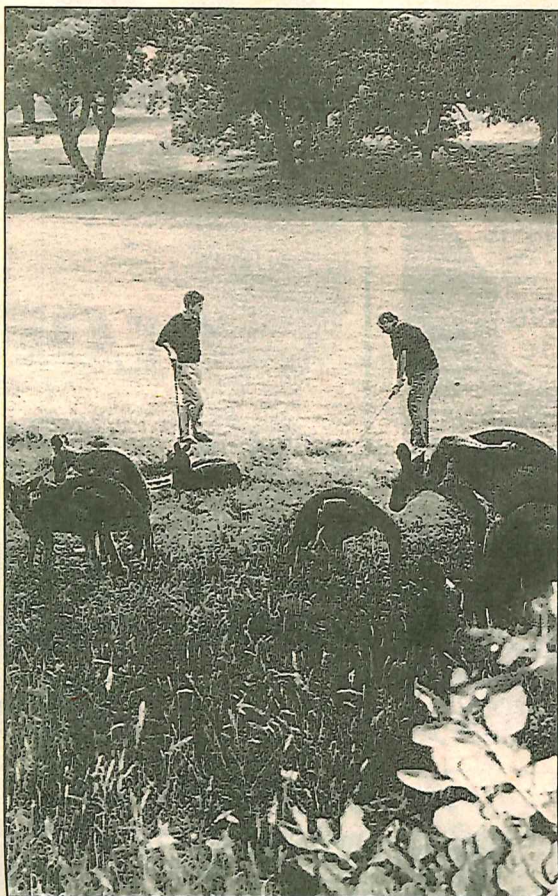
Nowhere in the Surf Coast Shire has the council's long-term policy of a balance between development and the preservation of the environment been more strictly enforced than in the Angair region.

While Torquay and Lorne have undergone sweeping changes as the Surf Coast has become a major tourist destination, Anglesea's charm in the second decade of the 21st century lies in its relatively unchanged character.

The town, like others in the shire, has designated tourist precincts to allow permanent residents the least amount of inconvenience from tourist activity.

With the placing of a green belt around the town, future housing, by necessity, has become more high density with existing land being put to greater use for residential development.

The Anglesea of the future has become a preferred retirement area and an emphasis has been placed on keeping elderly people in their homes for



Sport and nature ... golf, tennis, bush walking, horse riding and other outdoor activities will be very much part of the Anglesea lifestyle in the next century.

as long as possible by providing a wide range of support services.

There will also be more facilities provided for the increased number of younger residents such as a youth centre and indoor and outdoor sporting facilities.

Development in the town has focused on eco-

tourism, arts and well-being activities.

Tourism is based on outdoor activities such as bush walking, horse riding, beach sports, camping and games such as tennis, croquet and bocce.

The Anglesea Plaza fronting the town's shopping complex built in the

region's unique Surf Coast Design has become the town's hub.

The pedestrian square, with its tree shaded seating areas and outdoor cafes, is connected to the striking Tourist Information/Environmental Education Centre on the opposite side of the highway by an overpass.

A boardwalk constructed under the council's Stepping Lightly project, now runs from the centre to the river.

The arts are centred on the Anglesea Art House in the hills above the town where visiting artists-in-residence from all over the world come to live and work.

According to the Surf Coast 2020 report, by the next century Anglesea will be famous for its botanical gardens of heathland flora and its annual Angair Wildflower Festival.

The shire's growing wellbeing industry, which encompasses activities such as tai chi, yoga, meditation and massage, is headquartered in Anglesea with the old community health centre now the "Wellness Centre" with an indoor pool, hot sea baths and saunas encompassed by a peaceful, sheltered park area.

While development in Anglesea has been under tight control for more than two decades, in 2020 in what is now known as Aireys Haven, new construction has been virtually negligible.

According to the report, by then extensive indigenous revegetation

programs around homes will have mostly hidden them from the Great Ocean Road.

Apart from a couple of clusters of hostel/cabin types of accommodation, there has been no new building to house tourists.

Instead, local residents have been given rate incentives to offer bed and breakfast accommodation or make holiday homes available for short term rentals or for artists who prefer not to stay at the Anglesea Art House.

The only concession this fragile area has made to the enormous influx of tourists to the Surf Coast is the development of a tourist precinct at the lighthouse and the Painkalac Creek estuary.

A new shopping centre has been built for visitors and features cafes, galleries and gift/craft shops.

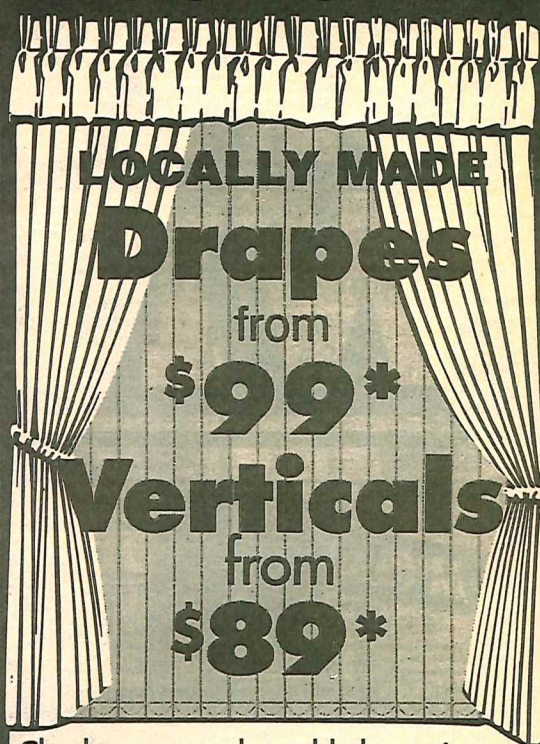
The old shopping area consists of small shops in a paved plaza and is used mainly by locals.

Boardwalks to protect the environment have been built around the creek and start at the ecotourism centre.

Visitors can go for walks through Angahook Forest and other park areas or use the hides strategically placed in the valley to study the bird life.

Despite its low key approach to tourism, Aireys Haven comes alive a couple of times each year with the region's Spring Wildflower Festival and as the starting point of the annual Lighthouse to Lighthouse from Split Point to Queenscliff.

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