



*A club for life*

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Re: Enhancing Elwood Foreshore

#### OVERVIEW

Elwood Life Saving Club has been part of the area's social fabric for more than 100 years, having been established in 1912. Today the club plays a core role as an emergency service with volunteer lifesavers last year alone watching over 170,000 beachgoers, performing four rescues, tending to more than 30 first aid cases and taking 950 actions to prevent a more serious safety incident. The club also runs a Nippers program which teaches 300 children aged 5-13 vital water safety and surf skills, performs water safety duties at triathlons across the state, is a training hub in the area and has partnered with Elwood College to provide bronze medallion courses to more than 200 year 10 students in recent years. Elwood LSC's membership has doubled over the last 10 years – reflecting our strong connection and standing with the community.

#### OUR POSITION

Elwood LSC recognises its current clubhouse is no longer suitable for its existing 900 members, with storage and space constraints as well as maintenance issues already contributing to a cap on Nipper participants and restricting social and training activities. We welcome moves to address this issue however hold significant concerns and seek important detail on proposed changes to the Elwood foreshore precinct. Relinquishing our foreshore position given its importance to the functionality of our operations, practicality in watching over beachgoers and presence spanning 110 years is not supported based on the current proposal. The proposed "lookout tower" further fails to grasp the logistics of what our lifesavers need to keep beachgoers and visitors to the foreshore safe. The adequacy and location of parking, shared boat storage and notations flagging shared use of Elwood LSC's proposed new clubhouse are among additional concerns with the proposal.

*1912-2012 saving lives for 100 years*

Elwood Life Saving Club Incorporated (Established 1912 - Incorporated in 1986)  
John R Conabere OBE Pavilion Foreshore Elwood Beach PO Box 43, ELWOOD, Vic 3184

## CLUBHOUSE RELOCATION

Elwood LSC is not willing to give up its foreshore clubhouse position based on the current proposal. Our clubhouse has in various forms been on the foreshore since 1912 and we ask this tradition be allowed to continue, particularly given the redevelopment's objectives of honouring Elwood's history. Easy beach access is not only necessary for patrols so lifesavers have ready access to vital rescue and first aid equipment but needed for our wide range of club activities including Nippers, training across all age groups and various competition events. Splitting club activities across a lookout tower and clubhouse would create significant logistical challenges. This includes having patrollers split across multiple buildings as well as the beach when on duty which would make it harder to serve the public including to tend to first aid cases should the patrol tower not have a fully equipped first aid room. Having equipment spread across multiple locations risks hindering our rescue speed and capability in the event of an emergency with vital time lost travelling to retrieve equipment, boats and vehicles. With the clubhouse away from the foreshore carrying the large amount of equipment used in our Nippers sessions would also be problematic and create safety concerns, particularly for children carrying larger items such as rescue boards and increase damage to such expensive equipment. Equipment used for Nippers also includes a large barbecue, coffee cart and uniform sales stand which require power access. Each of these would be difficult to move such distances and significantly increase occupational health and safety risks to volunteers.

Further, moving away from the foreshore means we have less visibility of the beach and creates security concerns if the building is left even momentarily unlocked as volunteers move between locations. The importance of our foreshore location in building positive incidental connections and awareness about water safety education in the community should also not be underestimated, with the public regularly engaging with our volunteers during club activities. We note we do not have any detail about facilities nor the size of the proposed clubhouse as well as conditions of use, including the notation of the rooftop as "shared".

## LOOKOUT TOWER

The proposed lookout tower shows a lack of understanding about how Elwood Life Saving Club's volunteers operate in keeping beachgoers safe and the resources they need to do so effectively. Proposing what is effectively a radio room on stilts serves no benefit to our lifesavers nor their ability to ensure the safety of tens of thousands of beachgoers each year. To be effective this tower would need additional facilities beyond a radio control room. These include a first aid room, toilets, kitchen facilities and air conditioning plus storage for multiple rescue boards, at least one inflatable rescue boat and beach trailer, a patrol storage trailer, all-terrain-vehicle and additional rescue equipment. Such provisions are absent from the redevelopment plans and appear impractical to accommodate based on the indicative sizing of the tower. These inclusions are the same as what would be required in the new clubhouse also, giving rise to questions about the worth of duplicity when they could all be accommodated in the one building if the clubhouse position on the foreshore was to be retained with an expanded structure to combat existing storage and functionality limitations. The proposal does not detail how the beach would be accessed from the tower and clubhouse when towing equipment like boats and our patrol storage trailer. It should be noted the proposed lookout tower would sit at the south end of Elwood Beach, looking over a stormwater drain outlet and a section of Bayside Council foreshore which is not popular for swimming. There would be suboptimal visibility of the main Elwood beach and negligible if any visibility of the stretch of beach which meets Point Ormond, meaning less surveillance to ensure the safety of beachgoers in this popular section of foreshore.

The photos below were taken on Melbourne Cup Day, 2 November 2021 and show the area we can currently view from our patrol room, as well as demonstrating how popular the foreshore is on a nice day.



#### SHARED BOATING FACILITIES

We do not support shared boating storage. Elwood Life Saving Club is unique from surrounding clubs being an emergency service provider, with distinct storage and access needs. Our lifesavers can be called on for service at Elwood or beyond at any time of the day and night, which means we must have easy and fast access to our inflatable rescue boats. These boats have specific storage requirements to prevent damage which depends on whether they are inflatable or rigid hull, our boat motors are equally valuable and dedicated fuel storage is a necessity. Further, we have two water safety trailers used to carry boats to triathlons and emergencies which would need to be housed alongside our boats and motors. We cannot leave such valuable equipment in a shared facility where it is susceptible to damage or interference. Currently Elwood LSC has eight inflatable rescue boats and 10 motors worth a combined \$190,000. Should this equipment be placed in a shared storage facility we are highly likely to face insurance complications or at the very least premium increases.

## PARKING

The Elwood foreshore precinct already suffers from a lack of parking during peak periods, with the problem noticeably worsening due to increased beach attendance during the pandemic. In particular our members have observed an increase in the number of visitors from outside the area, many of whom have no option but to drive. Increasingly beachgoers stay for long periods and come equipped with large shade shelters, umbrellas, tables, chairs and eskies. It is impractical for them to ride or walk with so many items. Restricting their ability to drive in turn limits their access to enjoy Elwood Beach. Our existing allocated parking spaces for members on patrol are already limited and regularly illegally occupied. The plans seem to indicate an overall loss of parking which would further aggravate this problem. The revised positioning of the carpark is not suitable. Our members require parking close to the clubhouse for safety, particularly those leaving training courses and meetings throughout the year which run into the evening. Such access is also needed so members can load and unload gear as well as for trailer access when moving boats, boards and other equipment.

## STORMWATER

Stormwater pollution significantly limits the ability of the public to enjoy Elwood foreshore and the bay. Our lifesavers advise swimmers of EPA water quality readings as part of our beach signage and play a key role in educating the public about the impact of stormwater pollution on Port Phillip Bay. We welcome measures to better deal with stormwater and pollution of our beaches.

## CONCLUSION

Elwood LSC would welcome further engagement from Port Phillip Council, specifically a thorough needs analysis to determine our club's requirements for growth and functional operation not only now but into the coming decades. Victoria last year recorded its highest number of drownings in more than 20 years, with 61 lives lost. People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities represented 35 per cent of all drowning deaths, making them twice as likely to drown than people born in Australia. Elwood LSC is committed to preserving life and looks forward to a strong working relationship with those involved in redevelopment plans for Elwood foreshore to continue this mission. Representatives of the club are available to outline our position in further detail at upcoming Port Phillip Council meetings and would appreciate time to develop a comprehensive document outlining the club's existing and future needs.

Kind regards,

David Rylance  
President Elwood Life Saving Club  
(On behalf of Elwood Life Saving Club Committee)