

# TOWARDS A PORTARLINGTON CURRICULUM

PUBLIC PEDAGOGIES INSTITUTE

[www.publicpedagogies.org](http://www.publicpedagogies.org)

KAREN CHARMAN  
MARY DIXON  
ROBIN BELLINGHAM  
JAYSON COOPER

CITIZEN RESEARCHERS  
JASMIN MONKS, TANIKA BROWN, DARCY WARK,  
EDEN VINCE, SAVANNAH BOOTHROYD, ZARYAH  
SCOTT AND OLIVIA GOURLAY.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY.....1

THE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AND TOWARDS A PORTARLINGTON CURRICULUM.....3

PORTARLINGTON.....4

LAYERS OF KNOWLEDGE.....9

KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATION.....13

KNOWLEDGE OF IDENTITY.....16

KNOWLEDGE OF A TOWN.....22

KNOWLEDGE OF HOME.....28

KNOWLEDGE OF WATER/THE SEA.....34



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Public Pedagogies Institute acknowledges the Ancestors Elders and Emerging Leaders of the Wadawarrung peoples and the Kulin Nation.

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet and communicate from is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. The Kulin people's living culture had, and has, a unique role in the life of these regions. PPI supports the aim of Reconciliation Australia to build better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the benefit of all Australians. As non-Aboriginal residents and visitors to this southern land we understand and respect the significance of recognising the traditional owners.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THIS PUBLICATION

The researchers from the Public Pedagogies Institute would like to thank the City of Greater Geelong for funding this project. Specifically, our thanks go to Amanda Stirrat (Community Development Officer, City of Greater Geelong) and Fiona Bramham (Community Development Project Officer City of Greater Geelong) who have made significant contributions to the on the ground work.

We acknowledge also our thanks to Wayne Johannsen, the Principal of Bellarine Secondary College, whose willingness to commit to the project ensured the success of the students as Citizen Researchers. We thank Cheryl Linford for facilitating the student contribution. We wish to thank all of the interviewees for their more than generous time. A special mention needs to be made of ARCARE and the Portarlington Neighbourhood House.

# THE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AND TOWARDS A PORTARLINGTON CURRICULUM

+  
—  
02  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+

*The Knowledge Project* is one of a number of projects undertaken by researchers at the Public Pedagogies Institute. The Public Pedagogies Institute is a not for profit organisation whose primary concern is learning and teaching outside of formal institutions. The Knowledge Project consists of researchers from the Institute interviewing, photographing and holding an event called a Pop up School in order to bring to attention the knowledge held in a specific area. The Pop up School is a public community event. This event invites people from the community to come along and teach a skill.

Represented in this booklet is the result of these multifaceted approaches to understanding the distinct knowledge base in Portarlington. However, this booklet is by no means exhaustive and that is why we use the word toward as we recognise that more knowledge than what we have gathered is present in the town. Further, knowledge is not static. As more people arrive to live in Portarlington new knowledges arrive with them.

In this project we worked with the Bellarine Secondary College who have a number of students who live in Portarlington. Some of these students became what we have termed 'citizen researcher's'. This contribution to the project included the students learning how to be a social science researcher, undertaking interviews in the community, capturing the town through photographs and analysing the results. The student contribution to this project has been invaluable. The richness of the knowledge generated through the approach of the citizen researchers has reinforced the strength of what might be understood as inter community engagement. Specifically, students interviewed much older residents of Portarlington and this inter-generational exchange demonstrated the continuity of knowledge over time. At times these inter-generational interviews were quite moving as the students discovered historical layers to their town and the older residents were heartened to hear that what they had enjoyed of Portarlington when they were young is still happening today.





# PORTARLINGTON

Portarlington is located in and forms part of the Bellarine Peninsula and is part of the City of Greater Geelong. Located 26 km east of Geelong 43km across Port Phillip bay from the centre of Melbourne<sup>1</sup>. One of the most distinctive features of Portarlington is the sweeping view of the bay and the distant skyline of Melbourne. The houses are built to face the water. This gives an indication of how the bay has been utilised over time. Portarlington is located on the lands of the Wadawurrung people. The community is nestled around the water. As the Bellarine Peninsula expands so does the outskirts of the town. In our conversations with people who live in Portarlington the green wedge that separates this town from Drysdale is strongly valued. This wedge does create a sense of arriving in a distinct town. As geographical boundaries expand this demarcation of leaving one area to arrive at another is becoming precious. At the time of the 2016 census 3,619 people live in the town. In 2018 the population has almost doubled to 7,915<sup>2</sup>. What accounts for this growth? 'Sea change' is the term that springs to mind. However, people have been coming back and forth to Portarlington for many years as a holiday destination and for some eventually as a permanent place to live. The demographics of the town tell a story of an aging population and our interviews attest to many older people who are recent arrivals. In 2018 the median age was 58<sup>3</sup>.

One of the strongest themes that emerged in this work is the sense of a community that is strongly self-resourced. People volunteer their time and this volunteering is epitomised in the Neighbourhood House. The capacity within the town to communicate is supported by the Portarlington Community Email Tree.

The town is known to visitors for the caravan park that is adjacent to the foreshore and the Portarlington mussels. The mussels are celebrated each year as the Portarlington Mussel Festival. This festival sits alongside the National Celtic Festival and the Portarlington Maltese Festival.

Six distinct knowledge areas have emerged through this project—**Layers of knowledge; Knowledge of a town; Knowledge of education; Knowledge of water; Knowledge of identity and Knowledge of home.**

1 Portarlington Victorian Places, 2014, [www.victorianplaces.com.au/abbotsford](http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/abbotsford), accessed on 10/12/2019

2 [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22097](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22097) accessed 2/1/2020

3 [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22097](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22097) accessed 2/1/2020





+  
—  
05  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+  
+















# LAYERS OF KNOWLEDGE

## THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF PORTARLINGTON

90,000 artefacts were found at the roadworks down the road...One was 43,000 years old. Artefacts tell a story. Some of the artefacts have travelled 260 kilometres which tells us that they were part of trade.

There are many layers to the knowledge in Portarlington about the establishment of the place. The Wadawarrung people understand the ways in which the bay line and coastline, and fresh water, salt-water, and varied terrain and resources helped them establish the area as a trade hub and one of the richest economies in the region. It is only recently that an interest has been taken by Government in the evidence of the early Indigenous settlers in and around Port, and in finding and protecting these ancient and profoundly significant layers of knowledge of trade, agriculture, fishing and settlements.

Traditional owner means it's your bloodline – only one family line survived invasion, colonization. Great Grandfather King Billie left and went to a community controlled by white people, but had he not done so, the bloodline would not have survived.

After Batman arrived, it was very harsh for Aboriginal people. Since my great grandfather there are no full-blooded Indigenous people on this country.

The pub was the first thing that was built in Portarlington Street. And it had umpteen owners. I remember my father wanted to buy it and it was \$600...for a three story pub.

The descendants of Port settlers after colonization can recount the order of development of the main streets and residential areas. It is said that the pub came first, and then the grocery store, bakery and bank were built next. Main streets in Port are named after Caroline Newcomb and Anne Drysdale, important local figures. Caroline Newcomb came to Port Phillip as governess to John Batman's children and Anne Drysdale was an experienced farmer. They became partners and highly successful landowners and farmers together. In 1855 Caroline Newcomb formed the Geelong Ladies Benevolent Society. These women may have helped to also establish a legacy of female independence in the area. One resident report's that 100 women from Port signed the petition for women to get the vote. The pier is another built feature of the town that holds a significance for both young and old. In spite of the fact that Council have made attempts to block or ban this, jumping off the pier is a tradition through several generations that still exists today.

I was born in Geelong. My father gave all the land to his sons and I got 5 acres, so I built the shop on the 5 acres

+

09

+

+

+

+





+  
—  
10  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+

Some of the stories of the establishment of Port have the significance of legend. For example, several stories circulate about the origin of the name 'Portarlinton', collectively adding to the mythology of Port.

Portarlinton was not a port or anything like that, it was the name of a ship's captain. The ship would put into the harbor and put in potatoes, peas etc. ....His job was to captain the ship ...he went backwards and forwards carting potatoes peas and sheep. Up on the hill he built a very nice home.

They say the town was named after Lord Arlington from England...but I don't know if that's actually true.

Another of these possibly true stories of Port is the one about the Ol' Duke Hotel. It is said that this also functioned as the town's mortuary, and that the bodies were stowed downstairs. A further Port legend is the story of the gaol, the existence of which is disputed, and of how misbehaviour was really managed:

There's a lot of controversy about the police station. Now people coming in – this is where it's wrong, people coming into the town say that building near the old Duke is the gaol. Portarlington never had a gaol. There weren't enough people to warrant a gaol. They were taken – they had here a lock up and a lock up is where a policeman lives, and back in the backyard there was a little room. That is still there somewhere. It's in somebody's backyard. Now I know for a fact because granddad's house was here, the fence there and the lock up was there and my mother and her sisters used to run down if there was a bit of a ruckus and peek through the fence to see what was going on, but in that time there were only in the gaol there was a drunk perhaps or an Aboriginal didn't have a bunk bed and he would go and get a bed at the gaol. The crime wasn't here. There weren't enough people to warrant a gaol, and as you say instead of putting them in gaol years ago there were boats – lots of shipping boats – big boats came into the Port, and if anyone misbehaved, the young blokes misbehaved, they would round them up and put them on the ship and they would be on that ship for a year. They would go probably right around the world and they had to work on that ship. They got fed on that ship. They got well looked after on that ship. And when they came back they left as boys and came back as men.

The establishment of fishing and farming industries after colonization are prominent in local knowledge. Scallops, mussels, potatoes and peas were important to the ongoing development of Port as a trade hub and a town. Port was the largest onion growing region in Australia and onions were transported all over Australia, and to New Zealand. Local fish store owners have been in the fishing business for five generations.

+

---

11

---

+

+

+

+

New housing is characteristic of the form of development that is now more common, and older residents note the acceleration of change that is occurring as a result. Their conversation paints strong images contrasting past and present.

...you used to drive into Portarlington and on the right there's these paddocks with the olive groves and the horses, well they're all going. We used to be at the end of town but now we won't be at the end of town anymore.

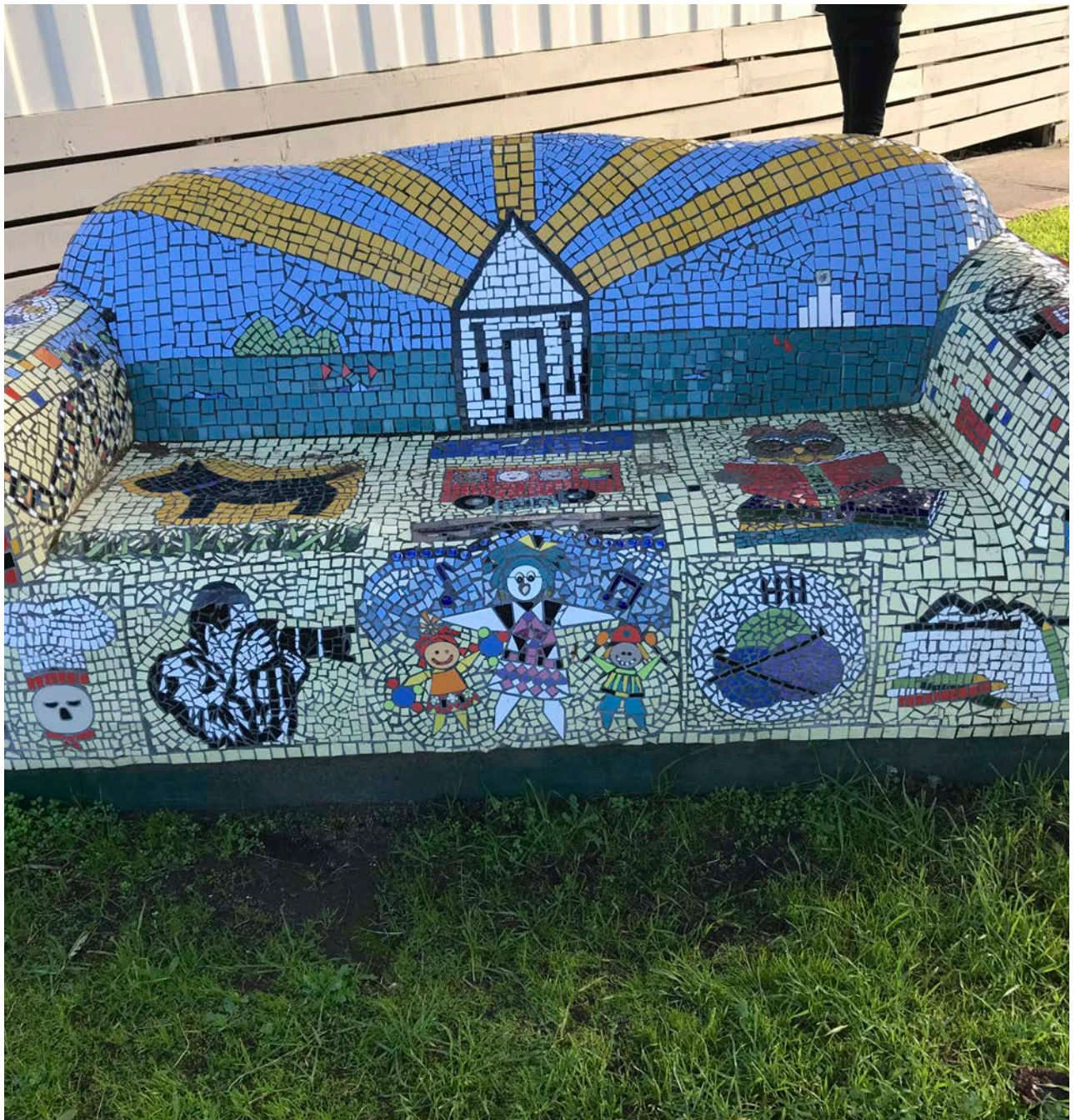
30 years ago we didn't have an influx of population. It was a lot more rural areas, whereas now a lot of the rural areas have been sub-divided... where I live on top of the hill, and I had a Sydney Harbor view the land below me was farm land, and it has now been created into 250 new housing estates. So there is an influx of new people, more different style housing.

...my aunt writes about the coach ride – how they waited on the main street for the coach and if they were really good especially for the kids. They could ride up on top where the reins and the horses were. She said looking down from that height down to the ground between the wheels was a bit scary.

..the only people we used to see would be the kids riding their horses. All I get now is cars and trucks and cars and trucks.



Younger residents note that the development of local public transport has not kept pace with the development of the town. The current transport system is inadequate for getting across to Ocean Grove to the surf beach and a potential setting for employment, and in to Geelong for work and entertainment.



# KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATION

One of the most interesting and exciting sites of education in Portarlington is the Neighbourhood House. This Centre has been operating for just over ten years. Initially the Centre was funded for a someone to work there for 10 hours a week, but this has subsequently increased to 30 hours. The centre offers 52 hours of programs and is run as a skill share model the Centre has approximately 650 members. Membership is \$2.50.

Our Centre is completely run by volunteers.

Great volunteer network. Someone can do an art class and it costs them \$2.50. Half the people in the art class will be in drawing sketching. If you respond to your community the finances will look after themselves

The Centre is experienced as offering real connection. Certainly, this Centre provides a space to connect with other residents of the town.

Then what this further facilitates is real relationships, real connections because people are not doing an eight-week course.

+  
13

Gives them flexibility if they can't come one week they don't have to pay.

+

We have a role in helping people forge connections that are not always in large groups. There is benefits in people coming to small groups. We get 80 year old's wanting to pair their Fitbit with their sleeping app.

+  
+  
+

Friendliness is the neighbourhood house

We don't get many old, old Port, primarily we see people who have been in Port 15 years or less.

The breadth and success of the Centre is the strong committee of management. This Committee of Management mitigates against the possibility of the Centre only having the vision of its one paid employee.

By having a committee where things get thrashed out you hope that you end up with a bit of a broader vision.

I think it's important because the model allows structure to their everyday week so even though they like to travel they do things when they are back here. Because the model allows then to come every week they know if they don't turn up on a Friday there is not going to be anyone in the office and it's not just if they come in they lick envelopes while important work happens. They know they are really needed.



When people say to me Neighbourhood Houses have to run like business,  
I think why there are thousands of businesses but very few Neighbourhood  
Houses.

There is a local Primary School that has 237 students. There isn't a Secondary School. Secondary age young people have to attend a school outside of the local area.

The first school began operation in 1873 in the Wesleyan Church later relocating to Temperance Hall and finally in 1881 to the site the school inhabits today. This school initially offered primary and secondary education but lost its secondary component in 1932 as attendance fell during the Depression<sup>4</sup>.

...it's a lovely feeling, the school. The children are very happy. We live not far from the school. We walk past often and not once have we walked past there when the children have been out to play that someone hasn't said, good morning, how are you, it's a lovely day, isn't it?

+  
—  
14  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+







# KNOWLEDGE OF IDENTITY

Portarlington has undergone significant changes as has been noted elsewhere. The people here have significant knowledge of the importance of identity. This is related to the identity of individuals, of communities within the larger community and also the identity of Portarlington itself. This knowledge is activated in strategies to maintain identity and in support of Portarlington as it grows.

## IDENTIFICATION OF 'IDENTITY'

Statistical data for the population of 7,915 recognises this included 1,163 people were born overseas<sup>5</sup>. The most common countries of birth were England, New Zealand, Malta, Scotland and Netherlands. Most importantly. 88% of those born overseas arrived over 10 years ago.

- + — 16 — A major insight from the statistical data is that around the age of the population. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 12.2 % of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 36% of the population.
- + This statistical data belies, however, the complex and well recognised multiplicity of identities to be found in Portarlington. In conversation other lively identifiers-
- + OOTS (Out of Towners), Boaties, retirees are brought to life. They are considered
- + in these conversations for what they bring to Portarlington and what they need.

## OOTS

In summer the population of Portarlington soars and visitors from Melbourne and Victoria and beyond come for a beach holiday. These OOTS (Out of Towners) are an important part of the economic strength of the community. Also, many OOTS become residents. Many of the residents of Port recount their first encounters with the place when they came to stay in the caravan parks:

My husband and I started coming and when my daughter was born, she came too. And we did that for many, many years and until one year we came, my husband was told he had a week's holiday due to him at work and they said if you don't take the week off, you will lose it, and I said to him, well, if you stay home, you'll only work. I said, I think we'd better take the caravan down the beach. So we came down in September, which was unusual for us, and we had the week here and we happened to be walking up the street and we looked in the – I don't know why we even did it, but we looked in the estate agent's office and Josie said to me, "go and have a look at it, it's a nice little block", she said, "you might like it". I said, "well, I don't think we'd be buying it". But anyway, we wandered down to

the Court, which is off the highway, down the other side of town there, and we looked at it and we thought, oh, that's – it looks alright. We thought, well, if we buy it, it will only be as an investment, and so we paid \$6,000 for this block of land and the one next door to us later got sold for \$32,000.

And for a more recent arrival:

I had 56 years in Ballarat. My family were all around Ballarat...a memory from holidaying down here when my aunts both had caravans down here over the Christmas time and I really loved it, I don't know. But I had a longing to come to Portarlington

Portarlington has many facilities for the huge summer influx. Portarlington is a small friendly community where everyone is known:

In winter everyone says-G'day, hello, morning, hello, you don't stop and have a conversation but it's just a greeting

This behaviour is not always familiar to OOTS:

but my grandchildren come and stay with me quite often on holidays and we'll do the beach stuff. I used to walk every day on the beach I don't anymore but we'll go, they love the beach and they keep asking, "Why do you stop and say hello? Do you know that person?" "No." "But why did you stop?" "Oh, we just stop to have a chat, that's what you do." They're not used to that.

For the OOTS who have taken residence in Portarlington this recognition is a defining characteristic of Portarlington

Where I lived in Melbourne in a suburban main strip, and lived there for years, shopkeepers may have recognised you when you went in, but it's totally different feeling, these people know your name, what you're doing

And for others the difference between OOTS and local residents is the issue

In comparison to Melbourne, you can go down the street to your local shops in Melbourne and not one person will say hello. You go down here and you walk by someone and someone smiles and says hello and it's just natural.

And it's the same thing, like we walk on the beach every day and at Christmas you speak to people and you can tell the Melbourne people because they won't speak back. If you say hello they will grunt at you.

+  
—  
17  
+  
+  
+

## RETIREEES

The statistical data identifies the large number of people over 65 who made up 36% of the population in 2016. In real terms this was 2,863 people out of a population of 7,915. The association 'Staying in Portarlington' is an advocacy group which provides support and information 'for people who choose ageing in place by living in a residence of choice'. Many of the retirees come from elsewhere - from the farming community, from Melbourne and further afield. The physical landscape is a determining feature of the choice to retire to Portarlington:

+ my aim and goal was to retire near  
18 the water.

+ However, it is also the community:

+ I came here because it was a little  
+ seaside village years back when I first  
+ knew it and I wanted it to be that all  
+ the time.

There is ongoing development of retirement accommodation and community associations which reflect the interests and needs of retirees:

Port is a place where a lot of people came to retire, usually from the farming industry, and for the older aged people, it's a lovely little place, it has the older ideas.

There is a growing recognition of the need to consider a younger community. The building of a new primary school reflects that need.

## SUPPORT OF IDENTITY

There is a large number of community organisations which support small groups within Portarlington:

Girl Guides,  
Lions Club,  
Neighbourhood House,  
Ports Arts Network,  
Portarlington Bayside Miniature Railway,  
Portarlington Business Development Association,  
Portarlington Community Association,  
Portarlington Mill,  
RSL Portarlington & St Leonards Sub Branch,  
Senior Citizens Club,  
Staying in Portarlington (SIP)  
Bird Watching Club,  
Community Garden,  
Country Women's Association,  
Dog Group: Wolfers & Walkers,  
Film Society,  
Garden Club,  
Music Café @ St John's,  
Nordic Pole Walkers,  
Pedal Group,  
Photography & Armchair Travel,  
Play Group for Pre-schoolers,



Portarlington Maltese Pensioners Association,

Portarlington Ukelele Collective,

Portarlington Bayview Probus

Portarlington Golf Club,

Portarlington Demons Football and Netball club,

Portarlington Bowls Club,

Portarlington Rugby Football Club,

Portarlington Cricket Club,

Portarlington Tennis Club,

Portarlington Sailing Club

These groups are also supported by large festivals which attract visitors from outside the area - The Maltese Festival, The Celtic Festival and the Mussel Festival, Portarlington Triathlon.

## IDENTITY OF PLACE- PORTARLINGTON

The knowledge of the town of Portarlington is addressed elsewhere. Here it is interesting to note the layered and sometime contested nature of the identity of Portarlington. It is identified as a seaside, historic, coastal town. It is part of the shire of Geelong and also part of the Bellarine Peninsula. There is friendly rivalry with Drysdale.

we've got all the shops we need. We've got a supermarket, we've got a chemist, we've got beautiful clothing shops. We're not far from Drysdale with bigger supermarkets. But also, you can – you can be here in the town, which is comparatively quiet to – compared to

Geelong and obviously Melbourne. But you can go just a short drive and you can see the rolling hills and the cattle and the sheep, so you can feel like you're in the country. And you've got all your beautiful beaches just in stone throw around you. It's beautiful.

However, Geelong is seen as far away, and Melbourne can be seen across the bay and now with a regular ferry access may be increased. But these links are not seen by all as valuable:

we should put a fence up down there and people have to have a passport to come in, we expect it that way.





# Portarlin

PARK INFO

y Parks  
Healthy People

ington Pier

FORMATION 13 1963





# KNOWLEDGE OF A TOWN

Origin stories are significant for all communities, not least for Portarlington. Settler beginnings are sketchy. A long-time resident told the story of a Captain Portarlington who, as legend has it, was the one of the first English settlers. However, like all origin stories this one is contested.

A ships' Captain built himself a house. He would go off into his ship captaining job and then come back for holidays. The name of the gentleman was Portarlington. He would take cutters outside the heads and over to Tasmania and up to Sydney.

They say the town was named after Lord Arlington...they had a return to town a couple of years ago and some Lord came out from England, but I don't know if it's true.

Although outsiders use the full the name of Portarlington local people refer to the town as Port. Despite the Council amalgamation in the early nineties that has seen Port become part of the City of Greater Geelong there persists an identification with the distinct geographically bounded town. If there is a greater sense of geographical connection it is with the broader Bellarine Peninsula. This connection was spoken about in a number of different ways. Recreationally the connection is through a walking and cycling trail.

The trail goes right through from St Leonards to Point Arlington. At the moment you have to get off your bike and walk around on the sand but now they are opening that up.

Young people spoke about the frustration of having to go into the centre of Geelong to get a bus back out to other towns. Specifically, access to Ocean Grove is difficult by public transport. Ocean Grove is a faster growing town in terms of economic development and has the capacity to offer part time employment opportunities to young people.

There emerged the knowledge of a sense of neglect of the town and its history. Importantly there is the knowledge of how to re-dress this by reflecting the towns past back to the community in photographic images, brochures the eventual publication of a book on the history of the Port<sup>6</sup>. This in turn speaks to the knowledge of how to ensure the history of a town is preserved and importantly publicly represented.

I came down here in 2002 I discovered that there was nothing written about Portarlington, just a little picture actually. All of the other towns in the region had a history written.

+  
—  
22  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+

There was a double railway line on the pier that's how they used to bring the vegetables on and off...that railway line is still here its buried under the sand.

Portarlinton was the largest onion growing region in Australia. The onions used to go by cart to the pier loaded onto the Edina and taken across to Melbourne, transported up the east coast and across to New Zealand.

The port has been central to the development of the town because it was the only way to get in and out of the town, across the water. They used to bring the horses across when the footy ground was a race-track.

The pier has been replaced so many times. They say it is not safe...we used to jump off the pier on New-Year's day.

We can't cope with the numbers of people who come for the summer. Last summer we had 45,000 people here, we can't cope with that. We love tourists we need tourist. But I think tourism at the moment needs to be looked at. The effect on the environment, pollution, car parking, safety.

I feel that it is quite an accepting community.

It takes a long time to be a local.

Years ago, to get bus shelters we had to hop in a mini-bus and drive to the Council offices.

Given the high numbers of people who have come to Port post retirement there is growing knowledge of aging. Knowledge of the challenges of what could be negotiated with ease begins to be a challenge.

It just feels like a village doesn't it? When you first come in one row of shops and the pier and the You Yangs in the distance it's, it's got a lovely feeling, lovely vibe.

People move to Port and it's all great for five, six, seven years but as you do get older you can't drive as much, or you can't drive at night anymore and that's where I have seen the community really step up.

The phenomenon of returning to the town is not recent. This phenomenon has been occurring for generations. Residents who now live at the Arcare, formally Ann Nichol House, the main, aged care facility tell a similar story to those newly arrived retirees. In our interviews at Arcare one resident told the story of coming to Port frequently in the late 1940s.

My dad come home from work one day and said we are going to Portarlinton for Christmas. My sisters and I looked at him and said where's Portarlinton? We came to Portarlinton in a rattly old car. We did that for many many years. My sister's and I spent every Christmas down here to well after I was married and even then, my husband I started coming too. We came down for a week and bought a block of land.

There is strong knowledge of the changes occurring in the town. Specifically, of how housing development is creating this change and what needs to be done to protect and maintain Port as a distinct place. One way these changes have been described is that Port has been a slow burn.

But one thing that I am annoyed at though, we – we're on the Geelong roads and you used to drive into Portarlington and on the right there's these paddocks with the olive groves and the horses, well they're all going. We used to be at the end of town but now we won't be at the end of town anymore.

The only people we used to see would be the kids riding their horses. All I get now is cars and trucks and cars and trucks.

We lost three older women recently. A few that have rented in Port all their lives, could afford to be on a pension or a Centrelink payment and rent something small in Port, volunteer and now rents have gone up to the extent where we have lost them because they have had to move to other areas.

Swings and roundabouts because the new people who are coming into the community who probably bought those houses they want to contribute to the community.

There was 12 of us, it was basically a group that we all sort of thought the same thing, some sort of a protection of Port as an area. We need to protect the centre. I don't know what the radius was that they came up with was, but they had some lovely ideas. I felt that they were cuddling Port with their ideas.

Knowledge of economic hardship in the town is responded to through a food relief program. This knowledge creates a different perception of the town than that of a seaside holiday and retirement area. Residents who are struggling to make ends meet sits uneasily with the imagined more affluent population.

Food relief has been an issue in Port. There was an organisation that stepped up and we have received funding recently to do something for people who are facing housing stress. We are working with food relief if you are struggling financially with food, I am guessing you don't get out very much, so it is also a way of chatting to people. So, what we have decided to do is have a lunch for them before they go in for food relief. The Neighbourhood House is going to fund that until our money runs out.





+  
—  
26  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+







+  
—  
27  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+



# KNOWLEDGE OF HOME

A deep connection to Portarlington as a place to call home is a significant aspect of knowledge in the town. Many who now live in Port have not come there by accident but due to its powerful pull, initially from the attractiveness of the location or a family connection, and then from the community. At the same time, Indigenous people have a more deeply conflicted relationship with Port as home due to the wide ranging and profound implications of colonization. Because a shared understanding of the specialness of Port exists across the diversity of its population, there also exists a shared concern for its protection.

## TRADITIONAL HOME

We are the only family in Victoria that have five generations living on their country.

+  
—  
28  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+  
+  
Many Indigenous people of Portarlington have settled there as members and descendants of the Stolen Generation. As a result of the 1886 amendment to the "Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria" – commonly known as the Half Caste Act - many of the children removed from their homes were placed in Geelong because there were a number of children's homes and orphanages here. Due to this and to other impacts of colonization, the City of Greater Geelong is home to a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, but most are not living on their traditional country and Port has a minority of traditional custodians. Therefore, Indigenous people of Portarlington have a deep but also complex understanding of Portarlington as their home.

The Wadawarrung was one of the richest economies - fresh water, salt water, varied terrain

Port has a small but enormously important population of traditional custodians – the Wadawarrung – who have knowledge of this country that is thousands of years old. Wadawarrung country was and is rich in diversity and so was an attractive and a productive place to make home. Its varied terrain helped the Wadawarrung develop a strong economy and to develop intimate and deep knowledge of the history and ecology of home, including ways to manage fire on that country and to use it to look after and sustain country. While today fire is often seen as a hazard, the Wadawarrung people knew where and how a slow burn would regenerate land and allow water to come down. Local Indigenous people note that this knowledge is at last slowly being acknowledged and that they are being called on by local Government to assist in developing plans for the environmental protection of Port and its surrounds.

Language is connected to mother earth. This country tells us our language. We



can open our ears and hear the language by the sounds that come from the birds or movement. An example is the kangaroo, his name is goim ngurgang... this comes from his movement... Language wasn't difficult, it wasn't hard, because the Country told us our language.

Because language is connected to mother earth, the history, knowledge and the feeling of home as a place are all inseparable from language. We can open our ears and hear the language by the sounds that come from the birds or movement.

## HOME IN ALL SEASONS

It's just a different energy here in Portarlington. Because we have the Mussel festival, we have the show, we have the Celtic festival, there's so much more activity here than St Leonards, because I used to live there for a while and it's pretty inactive and just a bit dulled down I feel.

We love to watch the people coming into town at Christmas time ... Christmas time, all the caravans arrive. It's exciting

Many who feel a strong sense of home in Portarlington love it for the energy of the dramatic transformations it goes through during the course of the year. In summer the seaside setting, seafood and interesting history and community bring a huge influx of people and many residents feel proud to call such an attractive place home. Because the summer also means litter, parking, and water pollution, part of living in Port is a concern for the sustainable management of tourism for the future. In winter, while many appreciate the contrast with summer and the quiet this brings, for others it also means finding creative ways to sustain the economy and the life of the town. The Mussel Festival and the Celtic Festival are part of the identity of the town and are creative initiatives that bring new life in the off-season and help to sustain many businesses. For many the fact that Port is on a peninsula at the very edge of the Greater City of Geelong means that this independence and creativity are essential life skills – In the absence of services and Council support, the town must know how to sustain itself.

It teaches them to be creative

I imagine that people who live here have thought about how do we keep the town going all through the whole year, not just for the summer period. And I'm particularly thinking about cafes and restaurants. And so, I guess, having those festivals throughout the year is a strategy to bring people in.

But it is a big growth area and I think we are the forgotten lot because we are on the end of the line, and you've got to be honest Geelong Council don't really give damn about us.

+

---

29

---

+

+

+

+

## RETURNING HOME

I bought the block here in 68, but I bought the block some time after my cousin had the grocery shop, so I used to come down here for holidays.

I've been here for 3 years but I've been living in The Bellarine since 2013. I've been in Drysdale, Ocean Grove, St Leonards and here. But then I've got heritage here.

Port is notable for the number of residents that have made it their home due to a historical and a nostalgic connection that left them with a hankering to return there to settle or retire. For many, the place created a sense of longing through family traditions of holidays spent in Port, an Auntie or a historical family member who lived there or in nearby towns, stories of Port told by parents, and knowledge of local pioneering heritage. Once people move to Port themselves, this longing translates to a sense of belonging. The feeling of a long-standing family or childhood connection to the town provides a deeper sense of home.

My grandparents came out from Scotland in 1834 and settled in swan bay and....basically anything from Portarlington to Queenscliff was all their farming.

...And her son, my grandfather, was born in 1886 in The Bellarine. And then my lovely mother – and I'm pretty sure all her siblings – her 2 sisters and 1 brother, were all born in Drysdale. So, I'm meant to be here. I feel this great sense of belonging.

Australia Day this year, I dressed up in costume with – along with 4 other people. I was Caroline Elizabeth .... And that was really amazing because

she was around in the 1840's, when Anne Drysdale ... the property they built. So, I've learnt about history, yeah, in The Bellarine.

I just brought my mum here once for a drive from Torquay, we used to have a caravan in Torquay. And we sure the ... and they were pink and purple and I say's to mum, oh I'd love a holiday house here. So, 12 years down the track we brought a block of land here.

...my father, who lived in Sandringham when he was a young man, used to come across fishing all this way across. And he'd always talk about Portarlington. And so, it grew up as this mythological town in – I never got to come here. So, I, for some reason associated it with people who are in the fishing industry and particularly in the mussel industry for a long time.

I'm originally from Sydney and I lived in Adelaide for a while and I moved to Brunswick until the girls went to uni and moved on and did what they wanted to do and it was time for me to retire. I've always loved the water and somehow managed to get to the water... So, my aim and goal was to retire near the water...Cape Patterson and that's where

I was going to retire to but it's too isolated. And then friends have had a property that – down here – a holiday house, and I visited them a couple of times. So, when the time came, I came down and spent a week or so down here and went home and then came down and spent another week and wandered around and thought, I can definitely live here, this is exactly what I want.'

'I just said to Brendan, I'm over – my husband, I'm over travelling. I want to settle now and I'm going to Portarlington. Whether it was a memory from holidaying down here when my aunts both had caravans down here over

the Christmas time and I really loved it, I don't know. But I had a longing to come to Portarlington.

I have only lived here six years – my mother was born here. My grandfather had a shop here. He was a saddler and the shop is where the Chinese restaurant is now. My mother went to school here, then she went up country and married up country, but grandfather stayed here so we used to come down from the country as kids, and I can remember Portarlington 85 years ago, and it is a very different Portarlington to what it is now.

## DISCOVERING HOME

My favourite part is driving home if I've been somewhere and coming to the hill. Come down and up the hill... And every time I – every time I get to the top of the hill I go, oh, I live here.

It gives me a sense of peace on days when it's calm and a sense of turmoil – you can see the waves breaking other days. It's a bit like life, it's – you can look at it and reflect. So, you can walk along – walk along the beautiful tracks, there's tracks everywhere. Swim in the summer. You go on the ferry. But I think it's just the serenity it gives you when you – when you view it. It's beautiful.

...you can be here in the town, which is comparatively quiet to – compared to Geelong and obviously Melbourne. But you can go just a short drive and you can see the rolling hills and the cattle and the sheep, so you can feel like you're in the country. And you've got all your beautiful beaches just in stone throw around you. It's beautiful.

Portarlington, I'm embarrassed to say,

is a relatively new discovery for me, even though I've lived all my life in Melbourne. I would've come through Geelong on numerous occasions but never come this way.

Other residents in the town do not have a historical connection to it but have also made it their home due to the powerful pull of Port. Just as the bay line and coastline were inviting and are important to the sense of home for Indigenous people, many newcomers speak of the way they felt that the town's unique location, pocketed between hills and sea, and separated from surrounding towns by a green wedge made them feel like they had discovered a hidden gem, invited them in and made them feel serene and at home. For the Maltese community in Port who had previously lived surrounded by water in Malta, this may also be part of Port's attraction. For some, the location has it all: It is beautiful, safe, welcoming, has everything you need, and is accessible to Geelong and to Melbourne if you want them.

Because you've got that beautiful backdrop of the water... and you've Melbourne. And it's all there within reach of you, if you want. And if you don't, you can just live here ...

The drive through to Port from Geelong. It's very pretty. And you get a glimpse of the bay

Some have found the community equally inviting. The place is small enough to have retained an old-fashioned friendliness and sense of safety and community. At the same time, due to the historical nature of the town as a trade, economic and tourism hub and a place that

+  
—  
31  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+

people often actively choose to live in, the community is used to a certain level of transience, and so will accept newcomers relatively easily, although many note, that this changing.

I remember the first time I walked down the street here after we had moved in, and there was a very friendly atmosphere in the shopping centre, and this gentleman walked up to me and in those days men used to wear hats not caps like you kids wear back to front, but hats and he doctored his hat – and said good morning how are you? And

I went home and I said to my husband this is a beautiful place to live in.

(In Ballarat) (y)ou'll have your bunch of – group of friends and you will not break out of that – and someone won't break in and you don't break out ....Here in Port that is completely different. Everyone's so welcoming. Everyone will talk to you.

I think Port is fairly unique like that – there seems to be a nice open and acceptance of people moving in and out.







# KNOWLEDGE OF 'WATER/THE SEA'

Portarlington is a coastal town. The knowledge of 'water/the sea' includes that relating to fishing, to transport, to leisure activities and also to natural beauty. The knowledge of each of these readings of 'water/the sea' is often contested. Knowledge of 'water/the sea' is important for social and economic reasons. This knowledge is deeply embedded in experience and is developed through ongoing conversations and critiques.

## Fishing

+  
—  
34  
—  
+  
+  
+  
+  
+  
+  
Portarlington is known for commercial and leisure fishing. 60 percent of Australia's mussels come from Portarlington. Portarlington fish species, in general, include flathead, pinky snapper and snapper, garfish, Australian Salmon, whiting and squid .(<https://getfished.fish/portarlington-pier/>)

The 14th annual Portarlington Mussel Festival was held in January 2020. At the 2019 festival, over ten tonnes of locally harvested mussels were served to 30,000 visitors.

## Transport

The Portarlington Pier was constructed in 1859. From that time goods and people were transported to Melbourne. The run to Melbourne provided markets for large deliveries of potatoes and onions from around Portarlington. Stories of the history of transport across the bay still circulate

So, the onions used to go by cart from the farms down to the pier, they got loaded on the – onto the Edina, taken

across to Melbourne, transported up the east coast, to – across to – across to New Zealand so they went everywhere.

The SS. Edina, built in Scotland in 1854, travelled in her later years between Portarlington and Williamstown, via Geelong and Point Henry. She averaged 312 trips a year with 100 passengers a day. She made her last trip in 1938. <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/53f4a4f42162f40f6888311a>

The Adina ran regularly, so regularly that people set their clocks by the Adina, and she went up and down to Melbourne regardless of weather. If it was an easterly wind blowing the Adina was very rough, but apparently, they had little buckets and if you couldn't make it to the side you could use the little buckets.

A new ferry began operation in 2019 providing daily travel to Melbourne.

## LEISURE

A major attraction of Portarlington is the water. The leisure activities include boating fishing and swimming. The community has been involved in significant discussions about the pier, the water quality, usage of the area and also nearby facilities such as parking. The use of the area has provoked a significant body of knowledge about these issues and particularly the balance between economic and social drivers and the relationship between these. These issues also are linked to 'ownership' of these areas – local residents and user; the local council and larger industrial stakeholders.

One ongoing point of interest spans the generations- diving from the pier. An intergenerational conversation between two Portarlinton residents – one a secondary school student and the other a retiree- brings to life the importance of the pier and the ongoing and deepening of knowledge of the pier:

Retiree: We used to go swimming off the pier too, yes. We'd go down and watch the mussel boats come in and see them all being loaded on to the trucks to take to market, yeah.

Student: We still go swimming off the Pier. Yes, in summer time it's nice. Yeah, it's a bit more dangerous now because they've built the new pier, so the old pier has still got-

Retiree: Oh, well we used to be on that other side, where the little landing bit used to, so we used to dive off the top and then climb back on to the landing.

Student: They've taken away some of the ladders so it's a bit harder to get up now, so.

+

35

Retiree: Oh, that's terrible.

+

Student: We still find a way though. There's rope and ....

+

Retiree: If I'd have been there, I'd have been with you.

+

+

## NATURAL BEAUTY

Portarlinton is known for the beauty of its coastline. The community deploys their knowledge of the coastline and their commitment to it to work through multiple groups to ensure the maintenance of the coastline.

You've got all your beautiful beaches just in stone throw around you. It's beautiful. But at the moment it just looks superb.

Oh, it's very scenic, for the first time people that come here they say, how beautiful it is looking down the hill to the pier and to the beach and everything.

The water- It gives me a sense of peace on days when it's calm and a sense of turmoil – you can see the waves breaking other days. It's a bit like life, it's – you can look at it and reflect. So, you can walk along – walk along the beautiful tracks, there's tracks everywhere. Swim in the summer. You go on the ferry. But I think it's just the serenity it gives you when you – when you view it. It's beautiful.









