

The Mayor, Councillors of the City of Greater Geelong (especially Kardinia ward Councillors Belinda Moloney, Bruce Harwood and Ron Nelson,) and Martin Cutter, Chief Executive Officer of City of Greater Geelong

and Leila Griffiths of the Urban Design and Heritage and her team.

Re the proposed Highton Village Urban Design Framework 2021 Edition

From Graham W L Hobbs (sole director U Wurth Pty Ltd).

Dear Mayor, Councillors, Martin Cutter and Leila Griffiths,

I refer to the letter 12 July 21 from Leila Griffiths, the 74 page Highton Village Urban Design Framework interim final July 2021, the Highton Traders session May 2021, the Highton Traders Session on Bellevue Avenue 24 June 2021.

I also attach and repeat the comments and submissions of myself and my late wife Dr Ulrike Wurth dated 26 September 2017, plus the speech of Dr Menzie Lipson of May 1991 as to the history of the Highton Progress Association established in 1909, plus my photo of the plaque at the north eastern corner of the Highton oval on Barrabool Road adjacent to the Highton Village Shopping center.

My current concerns and submissions are made in the context of the agreed consensus that the Highton Village Shopping Center is unique in Geelong's shopping outlets (and also in Victoria).

In my opinion and after constant usage since January 1979, the center works very well, with courteous pedestrian and vehicular flows despite increased traffic in Barrabool Road, Roslyn Road and Bellevue Avenue and Highton generally.

I do not wish reduced car parks, nor a monolith square 4 storey multiuse (shops, small residential apartments plus carpark levels, plus a relocated library) at the northeastern corner of Bellevue Ave and Roslyn Road, as I referred to 4 years ago.

Further the clocktower roundabout should be retained as the crossflow from Taylor Court onto Barrabool Rd and the western shops alongside Barrabool Road is effective, and the suggested alternative traffic configuration with people perched in the midst of fumes and passing traffic within meters of a very busy T intersection is unsuitable, unpalatable and unsafe for seated patrons with danger to coffee and meal bearers across and back to the eastern side of Bellevue Ave, where most of the coffee shops are located.

In respect to another proposal, (page 31) traffic proceeding west along Barrabool Road will make confusing and sudden indicating left turn signs at or just past the T intersection with Bellevue Ave, ie turning left into Bellevue Ave and then immediately through that intersection needing to slow and indicating left into a proposed siding alongside the curved Barrabool Road proceeding west.

Accidents in the center are rare at present and I would be very interested in the hard evidence of reported traffic accidents at that T intersection and the current clocktower roundabout which has been there since 1996. Clear signs exist but perhaps could be highlighted further on the road surfaces and the current hedges be lowered to have a clearer view of waiting cars coming across from Taylor Court or turning across Bellevue Ave to the shops running along Barrabool Rd.

I do note that Highton Village users are very familiar with local roundabouts and the traffic accordingly flows very well.

I refer to the major 5 way interchange roundabout next to the Barwon River bridge coming into Highton, the roundabouts at Bellevue Ave and Roslyn Rd ,Roslyn Rd and South valley Rd, Barrabool Rd and North Valley Rd , North Valley Rd and Mt Pleasant Rd and several roundabouts else where in Highton .

As Highton's fulltime solicitor from 1979 to 2011,I was not called upon to advise on many vehicular or pedestrian accidents, save a few tripping incidents in the Highton Village center despite acting for a number of owners and business proprietors of the Village community during that time.

Parking is a prime concern.

Vehicles seem to be our conveyancers of choice, now and in the foreseeable future.

I was dismayed for minimal provision for extra vehicular spaces for the 11 unit development in Taylor Court for residents and visitors ,plus limited parking for the multistorey white units just past the traffic lights at the T intersection at Bellevue Ave. This compounds the problems for Highton businesses users and nearby residents. Perhaps future permits should be made more appropriate and the Town planners alerted to these increasing problems.

The proposed footpath realignment and removal of a number of existing carparks on the Barrabool Rd curve west past the T intersection(pages 47-49)is unacceptable as patrons are exposed and nearer to fumes from the increasing traffic in Barrabool Rd and I would anticipate a reduction of patrons with possibly 50% less car spaces removed from just outside their businesses.

In addition, if the Woolworth semi trailer vehicles travel from Barrabool Rd and turn right across oncoming traffic around a curve, this is creating an unnecessary traffic hazard. Also if a Woolworth vehicle is emerging up from exit intersection at the second end of that Barrabool Rd curve, the potential for accidents is unacceptable as this is another awkward and dangerous traffic manoeuvre. Where are the papers and comments from Vic Roads? This is apart from the considerable legacy inherited from the Highton Progress Association who would be devastated at the proposal of creating a road alongside the Woolworth building and carving off part of the oval. One only needs to look at the width of a road and associated drainage and retaining wall and pedestrian walkway to image the considerable loss of preserved land and 7 healthy trees as starters . In short this proposal must be eliminated forever .

The possible removal of the recently updated Highton Library ( at considerable expense in excess of \$200,000.00 of ratepayers money) should be rejected forever. It is conveniently located next to the Roslyn Rd bus stop , , and relocating within a 4 storey mixed carpark , or at the distant Senior Citizens Center are unacceptable options.Trapsing up to 86 Barrabool Rd as away from public transport and the shopping center, and most users prefer to combine shopping and use of community facilities including the library and toilets.

My suggestion to minimize safety concerns with the interaction of large Woolworth semitrailers and other large delivery vehicles in the Village, is to invest in smaller vehicles, ,have increased frequency of smaller vehicles, organize deliveries during less crowded times ( eg not between 8.15-9.15 am and 3.00-4.00 pm in heavy school movement times), exit the Woolworth delivery vehicles into Roslyn Rd opposite the current loading bay, midway between the roundabout and the library .

I understand the previous shop owners and traders on the eastern side of Bellevue Ave paid a carpark levy for the existing free carpark area at the north eastern corner of Bellevue Ave and Roslyn Rd. Consequently the owners and traders would be upset and severely penalized if their customers were not able to use the free carpark within convenient walking distance of these busy shops. As stated in my joint submission of 2017, the proposal to construct a 4 storey carpark with 4 or 5 shops and possibly the library on the ground floor, with 6 residences on the first floor then 2 levels of carparking spaces with loss of spaces for ingress and egress in the structure and need to provide carparking spaces for the additional residents, does not add up to increased carparking spaces for the businesses, their employees and users of this shopping village. Often residents in our community have 2 vehicles per family unit. Who will pay for the proposed carpark, and would it be free parking as is the current status, which is an attraction for many Highton Village car users.

I mentioned in 2017 that perhaps some additional carparking spaces could be arranged along the eastern side of Bellevue Ave south from the Roslyn Rd roundabout intersection, but it is essential to retain as many trees as possible and I believe extensive and expensive drainage works would need to be investigated due to that land forming part of the natural Kardinia creek bed. We were involved with the severe floods of 1978 and 1980 which caused havoc in Highton.

As a summary, my suggestions to improve the Village's use include

1. Resurface and remark the existing carpark next to Nardi's
2. Level and remark regularly the footpaths throughout the Village.
3. Reduce the speed to 30 K/h in Bellevue Ave between Barrabool Rd and Roslyn Rd
4. Reduce the speed in oneway lane behind Woolworths to 10 k/h
5. Delete the proposal for a multistorey mixed carpark next to Nardi's
6. Retain the clocktower and roundabout with its cross movement from Taylor court behind the very busy Barrabool Rd.
7. Delete the proposal to have Woolworth semitrailers relocate their loading bay and carve off part of the Highton oval and create hazardous traffic, and dislocate the Library.
8. Acquire the two properties in Taylor court at the rear of the eastern block of the Bellevue Ave shops and create additional carparking spaces within easy walking distances of the shops.
9. Remove the 4 carparking places at the entrance of Taylor court as a tradeoff re 8 above.
10. Box in rubbish bins in laneway opposite Fish Mongers.
11. Designate 3 carparks for electric car charging stations (possibly 3 phase for speedie charges) plus one larger truck charging station, to meet part of future needs.
12. Keep residences out of this shopping area, as plenty of residences in Highton elsewhere and longterm parking spaces disappear.
13. Scrap the proposed Alfresco dining/eating area in the heart of the traffic mix near the existing clocktower for safety and health reasons.
14. Provide additional longerterm parking in Bellevue Ave and possibly use a small portion of the area in front of the Guide Hall, subject to land suitability.

15.Resize delivery vehicles and adjust nonpeak delivery times throughout the Village.

The above summary would use the allocated \$660,000.00 and minimize disruption to the Highton businesses, patrons and residents already struggling with the CV19 pandemic and its challenges. I believe the vast majority of businesses, patrons Highton residents and users love the unique ambience and facilities as it is and despair at major physical and economic disruptions.

I am happy to discuss any of my recommendations, observations and concerns on 0418437355, or by my email [graham,hobbs@outlook.com](mailto:graham,hobbs@outlook.com)

Kindly acknowledge receipt within 14 days,

Yours faithfully

Graham Hobbs

20<sup>th</sup> August 2021



PS

My comments are based on the following factors

As a continuous Highton resident and ratepayer and property owner since early 1979,( together with my late wife Dr Ulrike Wurth until November 2018) operating respective businesses as G W Hobbs Pty solicitor and Highton Veterinary Clinic until 2011 and 2010 respectively at 63 Barrabool Rd and subsequently from 1988 at 88 Barrabool Rd (now leased to Furlife)..

We purchased our home in Larcombe st in 1980 where I still reside. We were and I am still active in our community, and I have acted since 1979 for a number of owners and business proprietors and residents and Highton Village users and I use or pass through the Village almost daily.

I was instrumental in organizing the 1997 Highton Twilight Fair, and am a past President and member of the Highton Traders, and have a strong involvement with Kardinia Rotary Club which planned and established the unique Highton Village clocktower( 1996) and brass plaque for John Highett (2005).

P.O. Box 6088  
Highton Vic 3216

To City of Greater Geelong

Re: Submission Highton Village Design Proposal

from Graham Hobbs and Ulrike Wurth

We preface our submission as continuous Highton Residents since 1979, owners of real property operating our respective businesses (G.W. Hobbs Pty Solicitor and Highton Veterinary Clinic in Highton until recently. Initially at 63 Barrabool Road (now demolished and part of the carpark adjacent to the shops on the corner of Barrabool Road and Bellevue Avenue) and after 1988 at 88 Barrabool Road, Highton. We have lived in Larcombe Street Highton since 1981. We have used the Highton Village shopping centre since 1979. We are active in our community and have been and are observant of the development of the shopping centre and the development of the surrounding community. I have also acted for a number of the shop owners and business proprietors during those 38 years and my wife has attended to their pets during this time.

Generally, we do not agree with a number of the proposed changes and the rationale behind the proposals as set out in the Key findings December, Outcomes Report December 2016, Development Potential and Appendices 1 and 2.

When considering the Key Findings of 130 persons attending the first meeting and subsequent input of the design team, we submit :-

### **Parking**

We have always found a parking space, not always exactly outside the shop where we wanted to go. We have also asked a number of friends recently who said the only time they had difficulty was on Xmas Eve. The 3 options considered were :-

1. Within the reserve – by this we assume the land gifted to the City of South Barwon Council by the local Highton Progress Association in 1926 (see photo of plaque attached). The open space should be retained and not encroached upon any further. Car access to this area would be difficult also. Parallel parking in Roslyn Road, not angle parking is essential. Angle parking was removed in central Geelong for reasons of safety, the reasons also apply here.
2. The southern part of Bellevue Avenue in the drainage reserve south of the Roslyn Road intersection, must be retained for the tall trees provide shade, a green space and a carbon sink. This area could be utilised for long term parking provided that the trees were retained.
3. The proposed multi-deck car park at the corner of Bellevue Avenue and Roslyn Road has

many disadvantages :-

- (a) Considerable expense – what is the estimate, who pays for this, ratepayers, private developers?
- (b) Lifts, stairwells and fire escapes are required reducing the number of car parks
- (c) The number of car parks gained is not clear.
- (d) The current car parking at ground level is for 101 car parks. This would be reduced to 94 if the ground floor is used for shops and the relocated library or a community meeting place, and the first floor has car parks and the second floor has residences. We ask where would the vehicles of the residents be parked? If on site, this would further reduce the available car parks for the customers of the Highton shop keepers.
- (e) The infrastructure, dense concrete piles, lift wells and staircases and supports reduce the car parking spaces to 48 on each level from 101 in the current open and easily defined car bays.
- (f) The term of construction will not be short, thus removing 101 spaces during the construction period of 12 months or more (being a substantial portion of the available car spaces at the Highton Village.)
- (g) The three storey building would dominate the shopping centre.
- (h) The parking would no longer be free.
- (i) The area along Barrabool Road is already designated a high density residential area with many high rise residences planned. Are a few more residences really necessary? The shopping centre should remain a shopping centre with a village atmosphere (as per its historical name).

### **Traffic Improvement**

Historically, Bellevue Avenue is a thoroughfare, being the main link between Barrabool Road and Roslyn Road with 7000 vehicle usage per day, which is one half of the increasing Barrabool Road traffic with 14,000 vehicle usage per day. The proposed onesided road would slow the traffic flow.

Currently the traffic flows reasonably between the pedestrians and two pedestrian crossing at the center of Bellevue Avenue, as often half the pedestrian flow stops vehicles on the eastern crossing, while vehicles often flow unimpeded through the western pedestrian crossing, and vice versa.

Perhaps pedestrian lights could be introduced, designed to coordinate with the traffic lights at Barrabool Road and Bellevue Avenue for a better traffic flow. This should be canvassed with the Highton community, as to whether this would enhance the safety of all concerned.

We note that 1700 vehicles travel left and straight ahead when proceeding from Taylor Court, a substantial volume. If the proposed traffic is diverted south into the Bellevue shopping center, the

traffic would be immediately increased from 7000 to 8700, an increase of 24%. The roundabout at the clock tower must be retained, otherwise more traffic will be directed through the middle of the shopping centre and on to Roslyn Road.

Currently the clock tower roundabout slows the traffic from Barrabool Road into Bellevue Avenue which is essential for safety and should be retained.

From our experiences in Geelong and overseas, roundabouts are much more effective in providing a steady safe and even flow of traffic. The roundabout around the clock tower enables cars to proceed across the centre and to the businesses and shops in the service lane along Barrabool Road in a westerly direction and to circulate through the centre.

We seriously question the evidence of removing the clock tower roundabout to improve safety. How many accidents have been proved to have occurred after the initial 12 months period once locals became familiar with this iconic and familiar feature of the Highton Village.

#### **Access Improvement and Usage (see Appendix 1 'various opportunities')**

1. Observation – definitely no angle parking in shopping centre, especially in Bellevue Avenue when it is dangerous to back out into considerable traffic flow with awkward lines of vision. Retain parallel parking as is (save the strip neatly fitting the sweeping curve of Barrabool Road north of the western Barrabool road shops).
2. Definitely no one way traffic from Barrabool Road to Roslyn Road, nor two way traffic likewise on the eastern side of Bellevue Avenue as more fumes and vehicles concentrated next to shops on the eastern side of Bellevue Avenue.
3. The current mix of businesses and shops on Bellevue Avenue are :-
  - On the eastern side
    - Bon Appetit
    - Bakers Delight
    - Eddies \$2.00 shop
    - Newsagent
    - Harvey Greengrocer
    - Butcher
    - Nardi's Cellarbrations
  - Only Bon Appetit could use additional Alfresco and their staff would have to cross the busy road, plus contend with increased traffic from Taylor Court.
  - On the western side
    - CBA
    - Bendigo Bank

Hairdresser

Chemist

In summary, only 1/11 long term businesses have any possible interest in Alfresco Dining and would use the proposed extra road space. ( or ten out of eleven businesses have no or little interest in Alfresco dining).

### **Proposed Central Median Space**

We do not believe the Geelong Mall and its major problems with drugs, assaults and security issues and abuse would resonate with the unique Highton Village, which has been created with careful planning previously. We were present in 1980's and early 1990's when problems arose before security cameras and a strong police presence cleaned up the village.

Have the surrounding businesses expressed an interest in Alfresco dining and spaces for young people? The oval, which also has a well used playground, could be used for the purpose of open space.

Do the traders welcome the increased after hours and weekend competition and or the presence of a market or "pop up" activities to detract from their present trading cycles and customers which would detract from their profitability?

The character of the village, easy walking, convenience to vehicles, is unique in all of the Geelong shopping centres. It is one of the few shopping centres that does not have empty shops and the business have all been running successfully for many years. There is also little turnover in these businesses, and we do not wish this mix to detrimentally change.

Further the Barrabool Hills shopping centre is adequately catering for the expansion and development especially up to the ring road, and the Waurn Ponds shopping centre has doubled in area and variety of shops.

Further ,why would anyone want to sit in the proposed extended central pavement area with traffic stopping and starting as pedestrians cross both ways, cars parking and leaving with resultant pollution and noise? Also are we to have safety fences to prevent cars accidentally entering this area and fences to keep children from running across the road?

There is a major public space available at the oval and the wellused childrens' playground near the tennis courts, and these areas should be used more in conjunction with the programmes and fixtures of the cricket and football teams, for fundraising activities. Attending other markets around Geelong which are closer to the suppliers would be sensible and save on carbon miles. There is already a farmers market at the scout hall in Barrabool Road.



## **Library**

The Library must be retained in its present position. See our previous detailed submissions, as per our attached letter 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to the Geelong Commissioners and the use of publicly donated land and the plaque in Barrabool Road acknowledging the foresight and long term vision of the generous Highton civic leaders in 1926. The proposed library relocation are vague and poorly documented in the proposed plan, apart from its demolition. There has been considerable public support for the retention of the Highton library.

## **Uniform Pavement Surfaces**

The uneven brick pavements should be replaced with similar paving as is used in the Geelong Playspace and other public playing areas for children, to minimize harm from any falls by the young and the elderly. Clear pavement marking should be established and regularly cleaned, maintained and painted.

The carpark behind the toilets in Bellevue Avenue should be resurfaced and remarked as quickly as possible, working 24/7 to reduce the time there is dislocation to the public and traders. Another set of similar public toilets could be provided at the childrens' playground near the tennis courts.

Council should consider purchasing nos 2 & 4 Taylor Court for carparking areas and to facilitate easier access for rear deliveries.

## **Trees**

The trees and greenery enhance the village character and should be retained and maintained. The 9 large pine trees on the north side of Roslyn Road are historic and must be retained and not removed for car parks or encroach on the public playing oval. Similarly the 7 gum trees along the western wall of Woolworths (next to the oval) should be retained.

## **Local History**

Local history references should be displayed, a series of older Highton photographs and images should be displayed with similar sized public art areas. The Highton Clock Tower should be retained and maintained as an essential statement of the village character. The Highton Kardinia Rotary Club (now Kardinia Rotary Club) expended considerable funds to obtain and erect the clock tower. There is a time capsule to be opened in 2097 by the Council and the local traders and Kardinia Rotary club which must be preserved. On the celebration of 100 years of Rotary International, a plaque was laid acknowledging the life of John Highett after which Highton was named. As past president of the Kardinia Rotary Club in 2004 – 2005, our club combined with Highton Rotary Club and the City of Greater Geelong to place that plaque in the center of Bellevue Avenue.

## **Proposal to re-route Woolworths semitrailers to the western side of the Woolworth Building.**

This would result in:-

1. removal of the library, it is not clear where this would be relocated ( possibly in the ground floor of the proposed 3 storey carpark/shops/residences).
2. Major and dangerous traffic congestion and confusion with the main Woolworth's car park exit into and from Roslyn Road only a few metres away from the proposed adjacent exit to be created into Roslyn for the use of semitrailers and other traffic. Traffic turning north into both entrances from Roslyn Road would have confusing traffic indicator signals, thus creating havoc and an unsafe traffic hazard in an already busy road. It is also opposite the busy medical practice at 237 Roslyn Road.
3. The semitrailer turning south from Barrabool Road (from the Ring Road) would create an unsafe traffic hazard, especially with traffic travelling in the opposite direction meeting a long slow turning semitrailer around a sweeping curve.
4. The semitrailer turning south from Barrabool Road (from the scout hall) would severely impeded traffic as it dipped and turned south slowly into the lower cutout road and then had to backup into the proposed new loading bays.
5. Cutting into the public space and walkway and into the oval area with a high retaining wall with a dangerous and an expensive retaining wall at the end of the football goal posts is unacceptable. Currently there is an existing gradual and safe footpath and space behind the goal posts that should be retained. This publicly donated land should not be used for commercial purposes and COGG has a longstanding obligation and duty to retain this public open space for our community.
6. Repositioning the current bus stop and shelter in Roslyn Road next to the Library.

### **Additional improvement and opportunities and observations**

1. Purchase the 2 properties in Taylor Court (Nos 2 and 4) to create more public car parking space.
2. Still use the laneways with a 10 kph speed limit at the rear of Woolworths for safe traffic flow circulation, and access to the rear of the shops on the east of Bellevue Avenue for delivery purposes.
3. Clear laneways are required for emergency services
4. We have not experienced or noticed any problems being cyclists in Bellevue Avenue or seen any problems while driving and cycling along Bellevue Avenue through the shopping centre as it is now.

### **Dislocation and Expense**

As the local solicitor in 1980, I represented a number of traders and business proprietors in

Bellevue Avenue when the Barrabool Road barrel drain was installed. There were inordinate delays and with Bellevue Avenue closed, businesses were seriously failing as the traffic could not pass through the centre. We do not wish a repeat of this caused by lengthy dislocation and major disruptive works at the Highton Village, which I anticipate would be 1-2 years construction of the "proposed 3 storey car park" with at least 101 car parks out of action during the construction time of that building project alone.

We are also very concerned at the expense of the proposals and who will fund these unwanted changes to the Highton Village. These proposals appear to be an overkill and will destroy the unique Highton Village ambience and atmosphere created by many past and present traders and our community.

Has each proposal been costed and to what community benefit, except higher rates, for unwanted and unwarranted changes to the Highton community and businesses.

In conclusion, we do not agree with the majority of the proposals and require hard evidence to justify the major changes to traffic flow, removal of the clock tower and its roundabout, creating a 3 storey carpark, placing an alfresco area in the middle of a public thoroughfare (i.e. Bellevue Avenue) and taking away public spaces of the gifted oval and creating traffic hazards by changing the driving and backing space of the Woolworths semitrailers.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of our submission.

Yours faithfully,

Graham Hobbs and Ulrike Wurth

26<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## HIGHTON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION - "THE QUIET ACHIEVERS"

On May 10, 1991 the Mayor of South Barwon unveiled a Plaque at Highton Recreation Reserve to commemorate the early foresight of the Association in acquiring the land to be reserved for future public use. This article is based on a talk given by Dr Menzie Lipson on the occasion.

The Progress Association which was established in 1908 played an important part in the early development of Highton. We have been able to locate the Minutes of all meetings for the period 1913 - 1975; they provide a fascinating insight into the social history of the district and will be placed in the Geelong Historical Records Centre. The period prior to 1913 was covered in a report in the Geelong Advertiser November 3, 1931 prepared by A C Larcombe. It is a remarkable story of a small dedicated rural community and their efforts to provide amenities whilst retaining the beauty of Highton.

At a meeting on November 30, 1908 with W. Lawry in the chair, the Association was established the object being "to advance the interest of Highton generally". The first office bearers were President, E Philpott; Vice Presidents, E Watson and W Lawry; Secretary, T Horwood; Treasurer, A C Larcombe. Other members would have been J Horwood, J Harrison, W Johns, F Morriss and G Hobbs. Most remained active in the Association for many years.

By mid 1909 they had bought land at a cost of 18 pounds on Barrabool Road at the corner of Montague Street on which to build a Public Hall. They then arranged a deputation to the Premier of Victoria seeking a grant towards building the Hall. Without waiting for the outcome, they had plans drawn up and went to tender for the Hall accepting the lowest quote of 454 pounds. At the time they only had 33 pounds in the building fund! Undaunted, they went ahead and bought the property next door for 225 pounds in January 1910. The following month they held a bazaar which raised 190 pounds and shortly after they received a government grant of 100 pounds.

So by 1913 when the Minutes commence they had acquired all of the Barrabool Road frontage between Montague Street and Elizabeth Street which included a shop, a house, and the Hall. The latter, on the corner of Montague Street served as a most active Social Centre for the district over many years.

The Store, which included the Post Office, was rented successively to various tenants.

Some problems arose with this arrangement. One was an after hours trading infringement in the sale of tobacco and soft drinks. To comply with the Act, a partition had to be put up to keep this section separate from the rest of the Store. Another was with a tenant who left owing rent which, at the time was 31/6 per week.

The store and Post Office were finally sold in 1919 and the remaining debt on the Hall was paid off in July 1924.

In 1917 several "working bees" of members and local tennis players constructed a tennis court alongside the Hall. This was used by Highton Tennis Club and others for many years.

The "working bee" was a standard method used by the Association to get things done. It included such projects as fencing, tree planting, Hall maintenance and even tidying Highton Cemetery.

In 1924 the Association bought 4 1/2 acres of land on the Eastern end of the present recreation reserve at 100 pounds per acre. This was quite a courageous decision as, at the time, 100 pounds was still owing on the Hall. Typical of the spirit at the time, an anonymous donor covered the cost of laying water to the Reserve.

Half the cost was covered by direct donations from local residents and the rest came mainly from sports meetings on the new reserve and various functions in the Hall. For example, a concert arranged by the Ladies Committee raised 30 pounds, 18 shillings and five pence halfpenny. As admission price was probably about 1/6 they must have packed a lot of people into the Hall! The debt was finally paid off in 1930.

The Ladies Committee was a very active group helping the Progress Association with social functions and fundraising over many years. They terminated activities in 1963 with a credit balance of over 1400 pounds which was handed over to the Progress Association. The wife of the President of the Progress Association usually served as President of the Ladies Committee.

In July 1926 a tornado swept through Highton causing extensive damage and demolishing the Hall. In typical style, the Association established a "working bee" which, together with volunteer carpenters, dismantled the Hall on a Saturday afternoon. Financed by a Government grant of 350 pounds and 300 pounds from a Relief Fund, the Association had rebuilt the Hall by April 1927.

To mark its 25th Anniversary, the Association arranged a Reunion Banquet, a Concert and a combined Sunday afternoon service in the Hall during November 1933. At that time there were 23 members. Trees were planted along Barrabool Road to honour the pioneers of the district the project being funded and carried out by members. Over the years they did a lot of tree planting, R. J. Leigh being very active in this way.

Another example of the "Do it yourself" philosophy of the Association was evident in 1935 when a new light was required in the Hall. A motion was put that Mr. McGregor be asked to do the job. An amendment was moved that a registered electrician be employed. "The amendment was defeated and the motion agreed to".

Various social functions continued to be held frequently in the Hall providing a steady source of income. In 1939 the Hall was extended and other improvements made. A lending library operated by the Association for many years was housed in this area.

An annual function was a picnic to seaside resorts such as Barwon Heads or Torquay. Cars were not as common then so members would assemble at the Post Office with a few providing transport. The Girls Club were always invited and they provided lunch.

The Girls Club which was started in 1929 was an active social group for around 15 years and helped the Progress Association when called upon in this way. It was succeeded by the Young Ladies Club in 1944 which ceased to function in 1946.

Over the years, Association members waged a continuing battle against the spread of boxthorn along the roads. Wandering stock was also a problem.

The Progress Association played an important part in expediting such facilities to Highton as water, electricity and street lighting, mail delivery, automatic telephone, and bus service. At one time, it successfully opposed an application made to the Council to set up a knackery in South Valley Road. It had close contact with South Barwon Council, several of its members being Councillors at various times. At least two became Shire President.

The possibility of acquiring the remaining 8 acres for the Reserve was first raised by N. McDonald in 1948 when it was decided to approach the owner to obtain an option of purchase. This was followed by a conference in March 1950 with Council, Government, and Town Planning representatives to ascertain requirements for Government or Council funding. As it was not possible at that time to acquire the land in this way, the Association decided in May 1951 to go ahead and buy it.

It is not generally known that in October 1951 a motion to subdivide and sell off the Valley Road frontage was soundly defeated at a special meeting. This would have included most of the area now occupied by the tennis courts and the greens and new pavilion of the Highton Bowls Club. The total cost of 4,600 pounds was paid off by 1955 through direct donations, loans, and various fund raising projects. Full details were reported in the Geelong Advertiser March 9th, 1955, which expressed the view that the accomplishment "would be unequalled by any other district of comparable size".

Subsequent activities of the Association concentrated on developing the area and the Hall was used constantly for fund raising and social gathering.

Memorial gates were erected near the tennis courts in Barrabool Road to honour eight local servicemen who had lost their lives in two World Wars. One, N. White, had been President of the Association. Members planted trees leading into the Reserve from these gates.

The Oval was developed and the pavilion and toilets constructed. Members also helped to establish the Bowls Club. The Reserve was transferred to Council in the 1960's. The Hall and adjacent land was transferred 10 years later for \$25,000 most of which went towards development of the new Hall. Some of this was also used to finance construction of the Tennis Courts.

To conclude, the Reserve represents a most impressive achievement in community service and it is pleasing to see the Council recognise it in this way.