



# Objections delay hospitality staff plan

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THE future of a \$10 million plan to ease the southern Mornington Peninsula’s crippling staffing shortages by building worker accommodation in Sorrento will not be decided until the new year.

A permit for the 34-bedroom former aged care home Sorrento Lodge in Beach Road to be turned into worker accommodation was approved by Mornington Peninsula Shire Council in February, but progress halted when objectors concerned about traffic, noise and neighbourhood character took the matter to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The state government has now called in the matter because of issues raised during the VCAT hearings over policy and planning objectives, with Planning Minister Sonya Kilkenny referring the matter to a priority standards advisory

committee.

Suze Jones from Sorrento Lodge said it was disappointing that the accommodation would not be ready in time for summer.

“We just want it up and running, there is a such a need for employees to be able to stay down here to work,” she said.

Jones said the lodge would benefit so many, and the staff accommodation model could set a precedent to resolve widespread staffing shortages.

About half of the 77 beds in the proposed worker accommodation development are expected to be taken up by staff working at the redeveloped InterContinental Hotel, with the rest available to other employers.

Mornington Peninsula Shire mayor Cr Steve Holland said the council was “acutely aware” of how difficult it was for some businesses to attract staff because of the shortage of affordable housing.

“We have been advocating to the state govern-

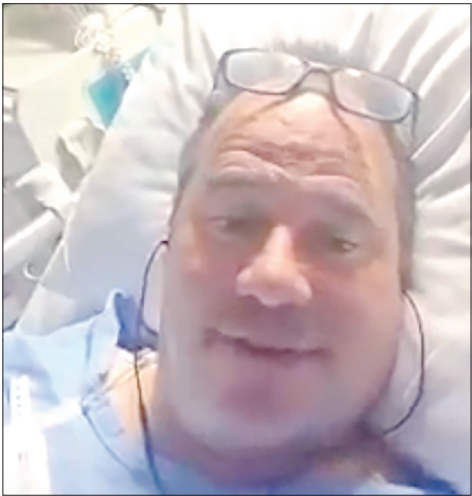
ment for policy changes that would encourage the provision of key worker accommodation to safeguard local jobs and businesses,” he said.

“The Sorrento Lodge proposal would go some way towards easing the situation, which is a significant problem on the southern peninsula. We await the planning minister’s decision.”

Developers Trenerry Property hope to develop the former Sorrento Lodge into affordable accommodation for workers because of difficulty attracting staff for the busy summer periods.

The company, which has joined Victor Smorgon Group and the Kanat Group on the Sorrento project, also recently bought the mid-century Burnham Beeches in the Dandenongs, and owns the InterContinental Hotel, Sorrento.

Sorrento Lodge, in Ocean Beach Road, has been closed for three years, but once redeveloped will provide basic accommodation for workers for around \$35-40 a night – or about \$280 a week.



HASTINGS MP Paul Mercurio posted a short video from his hospital bed after undergoing surgery for a heart complaint.

# Council by-election follows state poll

*Continued from Page 1*

“Together, we made a conscious choice not to answer ‘those’ questions around your personal beliefs, from the local media and others who sought to do harm rather than genuinely understand. It was undignified and beneath you Briony,” Clencie wrote.

The News was one of several media organisations that unsuccessfully sought comment from Hutton (and later Clencie) about her links to church groups and Liberal Upper House candidate Renee Heath, a member of the City Builders Church who Liberal leader Mathew Guy had said would be banned from the party room if elected (“Liberals full of promise, all quiet on Labor front” The News 10/10/22).

Heath was elected and the ban has since been overturned.

“We are a nation of Christians, Muslims, Catholics, Hindus and non-believers. Your beliefs Briony are one of mutual respect, interest and understanding. Not hate, nor judgement. To those who tried and continue to sow conflict, they choose to destroy instead of to build. Shame on them,” Clencie’s post continued.

Elsewhere on the peninsula Nepean was won by Liberal Sam Groth, after being held for one term by Labor’s Chris Brayne; and Liberal Chris Crewther won Mornington, held by fellow Liberal David Morris since 2006 (“Turf war splits peninsula Liberals” The News 22/8/22).

Kate Lardner, who stood as an independent in Mornington, received 22.42% of first preference votes, ahead of Labor’s Georgia Fowler, 21.98%, but lost to Crewther by 1.4% after distribution of preferences.

“We see victory not in crossing the finish line first, but in giving people in our community hope for a better way of doing politics,” Lardner said, adding that her team had “achieved a significant shift in our community towards active democracy”.

“But we still have much work to do in engaging people further, for future elections.

“I’m not sure what will come out of this movement we have created, but I look forward to being a part of it and seeing where it ends up.”

# Decision saves family from homelessness

PENINSULA Community Legal Centre has welcomed a decision by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal that could help protect renters facing eviction in the toughest rental market Victoria has ever seen.

VCAT has refused to grant a possession order to a landlord who wanted to sell an investment property with vacant possession, because to do so would effectively render a family of five homeless.

Importantly, the renters had not breached their tenancy agreement. They had also attempted to find alternative accommodation but, because of the tight rental market and the general economic climate, there was nothing suitable available.

“The VCAT decision recognises the impact that Victoria’s rental crisis is having on renters who are unable to find affordable alternative rentals when their landlord decides to sell up”, said Ash Galvin, the manager of PCLC’s tenancy practice.

“In weighing up the competing interests of the rental provider and the tenants and the impact of a possession order on each of them, the tribunal found that it was not reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances to make a family of five homeless”.

PCLC is seeing an increased number of clients who are facing eviction or experiencing homelessness across Melbourne’s south-east with many being forced to sleep in their cars, tents or couch surf. An estimated 1000 people are sleeping rough in the community on the Mornington Peninsula alone.

PCLC CEO Jackie Galloway said renters were on the frontline of Victoria’s cost of living crisis.

“More renters are being pushed into homelessness because they can’t find a rental they can afford. Many of our clients give up after making up to 100 applications for a home,” she said.

PCLC is hoping the VCAT decision will mean

that more tenants will be able to remain in their current rentals in situations where they would face homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing.

Ninety-six per cent of the almost 1000 clients PCLC assisted through its tenancy and advocacy program over the past 12 months experienced financial disadvantage.

Galvin said that with the scarcity of housing across Victoria and the cost of living crisis expected to worsen, the rental crisis was only going to get more serious for local tenants.

“We would encourage anyone who is facing eviction from their property and would like free legal advice to get in touch with PCLC to see whether we can help,” he said.

For free legal advice contact the Peninsula Community Legal Centre on 9783 3600 or [pclc@pclc.org.au](mailto:pclc@pclc.org.au)

Liz Bell

MORNINGTON  
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# CHRISTMAS SERVICE

JESUS CHRIST - THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

All welcome to worship with us on  
**Christmas Day - Sunday 25th December 9.00am**

Mount Martha Community House Centre - 466 Esplanade, Mount Martha

Please contact our Minister for more details:  
Rev Matthew Cole - 0400 999 343  
[www.morningtonpc.org.au](http://www.morningtonpc.org.au)

And she  
will bear a son,  
and you shall call  
His name Jesus,  
for He will save His  
people from their sins.  
(from the Bible, the book of  
Matthew, chapter 1, verse 21.)