

# accord news

ISSUE 4- June 2010

## Housing Accord's first six months

The end of May 2010 marked six months of the Bass Coast Housing Accord in operation. Using data from the Bass Coast Visitors Centre which coordinates property listings and the central website, a successful picture emerges. Since the start of December 2009, approximately 190 properties listed on the Accord have been leased at some stage to Theiss Degremont/Aquasure staff and the Victorian desalination workforce across the municipality. Wonthaggi and surrounds, which includes Cape Paterson, Kilcunda and Dalyston, have had a large number of properties leased at an average of \$420 per week. Inverloch has also had a pleasing share of properties leased and has

had a similar average weekly rental rates. Average weekly rental rates in Phillip Island and San Remo have been almost \$40 a week cheaper and have been able to attract good numbers of workers to lease properties there, despite the extra travel times to the desalination plant site. There has been a small number of properties leased in Grantville and surrounds, however this region is well-placed to attract new workers as its vacant Accord-listed properties have the lowest weekly rental rates in the municipality. There remains a good number of vacant properties across Bass Coast preparing for increasing number of workers expected to peak at the end of this year.

### Housing Accord May activity

May 2010 saw 24 Housing Accord properties leased and nine new listings in the period.

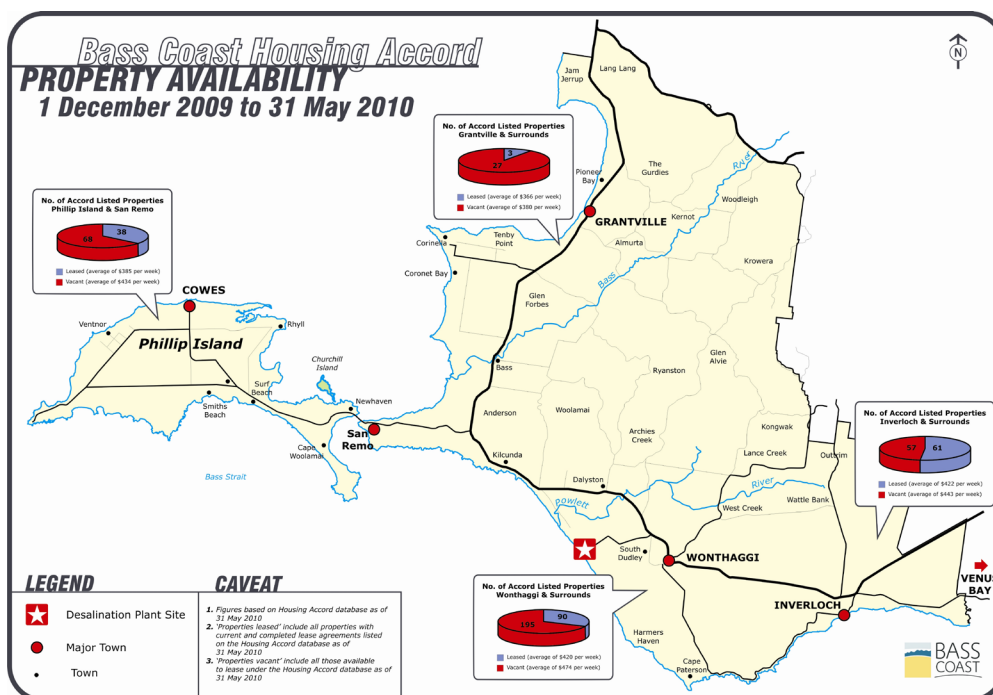
This brought the total at the end of May to 161 properties currently leased, with 316 remaining vacant.

The average rent of leased properties has continued to drop. Landlords looked to adjust their rents to attract workforce tenants who are prepared to consider value for money on the Accord website listings.

Activity on the Housing Accord website was down from the previous month, but there were still 2718 visits from Australia. The majority of viewers were from Victoria and metropolitan area.

The Housing Accord website has been operating for six months as the central listing site for Accord properties and has been visited more than 15,000 times.

When the 'visit basscoast' website became operational in December 2009 it was visited 700 times for the month. Visits increased rapidly in January and have remained steady ever since with an average of 2800 visits per month. Most users have been located in Melbourne, followed by Brisbane, Sydney and Perth.



# Housing Accord and Bass Coast service providers

Luke Wilkinson, Social Planner with Bass Coast Shire Council, met with the Bass Coast Service providers network on 2 June to outline the operations and principles of the Housing Accord.

The Bass Coast Service providers network is a collective of organisations within the municipality who work with the community. They comprise not-for-profit entities from the private and government sector and cover a range of diverse services such as health, welfare and justice, and deliver services to a range of populations such as youth, the aged, migrants, families, children and the unemployed.

The presentation outlined the development of the Bass Coast Housing Accord and the principles its members abide by. Many participants were unaware of the Housing Accord and were complimentary of the efforts by real estate agents, the Council and the Victorian Desalination Project to work towards minimising the impact on the long-term and permanent rental market in Bass Coast.

As members of the service providers network are dealing with the community at the grass-roots level, who rely on permanent rental accommodation in Bass Coast it was a valuable opportunity according to Mr Wilkinson to get accurate information out to the community about the intentions and operations of the Accord. It was also a forum to advocate for service providers to empower their clients and communities to go through appropriate channels, ie, Consumer Affairs Victoria, if Bass Coast permanent renters have legitimate grievances.



## Desalination Project Update

Since our last update a number of significant changes have occurred on the plant site.

More than 1.3 million cubic metres of earth has been excavated and dunes to minimise the visual impact of the plant are close to complete.

The plant site is temporarily home to 18 cranes, working to erect the 2,500 tonne structural steel frame for the reverse osmosis building.

The first of two underground tunnelling machines has arrived on-site. The machines must be assembled before the construction of the seawater intake and outlet tunnels begin in a few months.

There are now just over 1100 people on the plant site, which includes management staff, subcontractors, labourers and tradesmen.

Recruitment will continue steadily with peak workforce at the plant site expected by November 2010.

### Feedback ...

The 'Accord news' is a monthly e-bulletin. The deadline for the next edition is 1 July. Contributions by Accord members are welcome. Contact Luke Wilkinson on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or [l.wilkinson@basscoast.vic.gov](mailto:l.wilkinson@basscoast.vic.gov).

## Consumer Affairs Victoria links in

Bass Coast Shire Council briefed Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) in May on the progress of the Housing Accord. Regional Coordinator for Gippsland, Chris Childs, said that CAV

operates to protect and promote the interests of consumers. They can assist the Housing Accord by being available to advise and educate consumers, tenants, traders and property owners on their rights, responsibilities and changes to the law. They can also conciliate disputes between consumers and traders,

tenants and property owners, and if necessary enforce and ensure compliance with consumer laws. Currently tenancy rights workshops are being held throughout the Bass Coast. Chris Childs can be contacted on [chris.childs@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:chris.childs@justice.vic.gov.au) or by phone (03) 51165704.