Altona – Seaholme Neighbourhood Profile

May 2015
Altona – Seaholme Neighbourhood
Past, Current and Future Development
A. Location
The geographic boundary of Altona-Seaholme is predominantly formed by the open space, industrial land and the coast.

The north east boundary of the Altona-Seaholme is formed by Kororoit Creek. It then heads south along Millers Road before skirting Cherry Lake Reserve and turning north along McIntyre Drive and on to Lugg Street. It then runs south along Brook Drive, turning west into Belmar Avenue and north at Maidstone Street. At Morrow Street, the western boundary follows Galvin Street, Purnell Street and Grant Avenue, then the northern edge of the Kooringal Golf Course, down Queen Street to Truganina Explosives Reserve, where it meets the southern coastal boundary.

B. History and development

First people
The Yalukit-willam lived in the area now covered by Hobsons Bay and extending across to Albert Park before white settlement. They were one of the six clans or language groups of the Bunurong people who are the traditional owners of the coast and land extending across Port Phillip Bay, the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port. 1

Yalukit-willam: The First People of the City of Hobsons Bay, a publication written by Dr Ian Clark2 and commissioned by the Hobsons Bay City Council, refers to the first people as “semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers who moved around within the limits of their territory to take advantage of seasonably available food”. The region offered a varied diet including fish, birds, eels, eggs and snakes. According to historian Susan Priestley, “Evidence of the rich diet of coastal Bunurong is often in the form of middens (or rubbish heaps of discarded shells). It is known that a large shell midden existed near Altona, but it was later destroyed.” Priestly also noted that two Aboriginal burial sites were found in Altona in the last century although there is no information as to whether these have survived.3

European history
The European history of Altona is linked back to the early 1800s. “Batman arrived in 1835, bartered 600,000 acres of land, which included all of Altona, from the natives, and with J. P. Fawkner founded Melbourne.” 4

Two pastoralists who arrived in Altona soon after were Robert Wrede and Alfred Langhorne and a little later, William Cherry, after whom Cherry Lake was named. Alfred Langhorne built the Altona Homestead in Logan Reserve in 1942 and when he died in 1874, Langhorne owned four square miles of farmland in the area. Among the farming activities in the neighbourhood were dairy cattle, sheep, pigs and fowl. “Cattle continued to graze on much of what is now Altona and Laverton well into the twentieth century.”5

According to the Hobsons Bay Heritage Study6, a number of roads such as Kororit Creek Road started life as tracks used by pastoralists and farmers to get to markets. “From the 1840s at least, stepping stones on the lower reaches of Kororit Creek connected the track to Point Gellibrand and to the pastoral stations on the bay at Altona... The stepping stones were a component of the route called Skeleton Creek Road, but now called Kororit Creek Road, which connected Williamstown, across Altona, to properties at the Skeleton Creek in the 1850s.”
Horse racing began at the Williamstown Racecourse (near the mouth of Kororit Creek and now part of Seaholme) in 1858. It was once the third largest track in Victoria. In later years, Phar Lap ran there and the final racing meeting occurred in 1940.\textsuperscript{7}

In the 1880s, developers purchased land in Altona for housing, marketing the estate as a seaside resort. To help promote and attract people to the area, they built the Altona Pier and extended the Williamstown railway line from the Williamstown racetrack to the beach. While some housing blocks were sold, most were left undeveloped. “By 1891 there were possibly five new houses, and much of the estate’s land was still being used for dairy or agriculture.”\textsuperscript{8}

Parcels of the Altona Bay Estate land were later sold to another developer and were subdivided into more than 3000 lots. The area east of Millers Road was named Seaholme. The first auctions were held in 1918 although development could not described as rapid. By the 1930s there about 400 houses built in Altona and on the Seaholme Estate was “a shop and 29 dwellings.”\textsuperscript{9}

The privately-owned railway that serviced the area had had something of a chequered history. Having closed in 1890 due to low patronage, it was reopened and extended in 1899 to service a new a coal mine in Maidstone Street, Altona. Eventually, Victorian Railways took over the line and it was electrified in 1926.\textsuperscript{10}

This early connection with coal mining is referred to in the Hobsons Bay Heritage Study. “The most successful coal mine was began in 1906 by the Altona and Morwell Coal Development and Option Co. Ltd who sunk a shaft in what is now Harrington Square Altona.”\textsuperscript{11} It was later closed when the State Electricity Company decided to develop coal at Morwell instead.

Source: National Library Australia, 1920,
Production of electrical energy: where should the first national power house be? Morwell or Altona, Arbuckle, Waddell, Melbourne
The neighbourhood was also home to an army training camp during World War 1, located south of the railway line between Bayview Street, Millers Road and the beach. Special troop trains were run to bring soldiers and visitors. It operated for only one year during 1916 and housed about 1,400 men.  

In terms of commercial activity, there is no mention of shops in the neighbourhood until 1916 when the Blomberg family opened a general store, woodyard, post office, newsagency and tea rooms in Pier Street. Several years later a cafe and hall were built on the corner of the Esplanade and Pier Street and in the mid-1920s a block of shops were constructed near Altona Railway Station.

In 1932, a small hospital opened in Pier Street, north of the railway line; Louis Joel being was the first doctor. In 1938 the hospital moved over to Sargood Street where it operated until its closure in 1996. The Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre now occupies part of the building (refer to section on Community and cultural activities).

Up until World War II, development of the neighbourhood continued to be reasonably slow. However, the period after the war marked something of a turning point. In response to the arrival in Australia of migrants and displaced persons, government hostels were set up and two were in Hobsons Bay, at Altona and Brooklyn. “Brooklyn Hostel mainly housed British migrants and it was here that one of Altona’s unique housing co-operative was started when one hundred hostel families started the British Migrant’s Association, which bought land at Seaholme. Members worked together to construct timber house frames in a woolshed at Brooklyn, before assembling them on house sites.” Among the new arrivals, migrants seeking to maintain some connection with their birthplace and countrymen set clubs and centres, including the Finnish Hall in a former Red Robin hosiery factory in Pier Street, Altona (the census shows that in 1971, 42 per cent of residents of the City of Altona were born overseas).

This period also saw the establishment of the petroleum industry, with the Vacuum Oil Company Ltd setting up their first refinery in Altona 1949. Eventually this became Mobil Refinery Pty Ltd and it remains a dominant feature of the physical landscape and economy.

Source: State Library Victoria, Newey, John A. compiler, Altona, group of soldiers, Date(s) of creation: [ca. 1913-ca. 1955]

One unusual feature of the neighbourhood which opened in 1954 was a race track, replaced in late years by Cherry Lake. It operated for only a brief period and was closed soon after in 1955 due to flagging attendances and safety issue (refer to the section on Environmental features for more information about Cherry Lake).

New industry attracted new residents and between the mid 1950s and 1960s, the neighbourhood’s population trebled, with Council reporting that 500 houses were being built annually.16

The Shire of Altona was proclaimed in 1957 after initially being part of the Shire of Wyndham. The council offices operated out of the Altona Homestead in Logan Reserve, moving to their current location in Civic Parade in 1963. Altona was declared a city in 1968 and changes municipal boundaries in 1994 led to the formation of the City of Hobsons Bay which incorporated the Cities of Williamstown and Altona.
C. The Current Environment

Land uses
The types of land uses in Altona-Seaholme are predominantly residential (GRZ2), public park and recreation zones (PPRZ), and public conservation zones (PCRZ).

There are also a number of public use zones (PUZ) scattered across the neighbourhood which are used for a range of facilities such as schools, council offices, a public library and health services. The public use zone – transport (PUZ4) which cuts an east west line through the neighbourhood is a rail reserve which provides a rail service from Laverton through to the Melbourne central business district.

The main commercial (C1Z) and mixed use (MUZ) zones run north south along Pier Street in the centre of the neighbourhood. There is a smaller commercial zone at Harrington Square at the western end of the neighbourhood, on the north side of the rail line. There are no commercial or mixed use zones at the Seaholme end of the neighbourhood.

Environmental features
In the mid-1990s, Melbourne Parks and Waterways together with the City of Hobsons Bay proposed the ‘Williamstown-Altona Coastal Parklands’, incorporating all Crown and Council owned coastal land between Laverton Creek and Point Gellibrand. Now called the Hobsons Bay Coastal Park and subsequently enlarged, it extends for 23 kilometres from Skeleton Creek in the west, passing through the neighbourhood, to the Stony Creek Backwash at Spotswood. It includes the foreshore areas of Seaholme and Altona, Truganina Explosives Reserve, Cherry Lake and the Altona Coastal Park.
This park is a major feature of the neighbourhood and includes the extensive coastline and shared pathway which extends across the bottom edge of the neighbourhood. The beaches are used for a range of sporting activities including swimming, wind surfing and boating.

**Truganina Explosives Reserve**
Located at the western end of the neighbourhood, Truganina Explosives Reserve was established in 1901 for the storage and handling of commercial explosives. In the early 1990s, the site was declared surplus and following a campaign by Council and local residents, the state government appointed Council as the Committee of Management of the land, for use as recreational parkland.

The area around the Truganina Explosives Reserve is part of an important wetlands system for migratory and wading birds. As mentioned, it forms part of the traditional land of the Yallukit-willam. Aboriginal remains and artefacts have been found at the reserve, indicating the area was a popular camping site. Artefacts that have been found include anvils, hammer stones and ground edge axes.

**Cherry Lake**
Formerly a seasonal swamp and a motor race track, Cherry Lake was made into a permanent lake in the 1970s to help prevent flooding of the nearby residential area. The surrounds are used for a range of recreational activities, as well as being an important water habitat that includes pelicans, swans and swamp hens. At the western end of the lake are areas of Chaffy Saw Sedge which provides important habitat for the endangered Altona Skipper Butterfly.

**Residential Development**
In general, the neighbourhood is a relatively quiet area, with few busy roads. The streets are often wide with some forming a grid pattern while others mimic the coastline.

Most residential development began after World War 11 and a large amount of the housing that was built in the 1950s and 1960s still remains. This tends to be single storey and clad in either weatherboard or brick. House blocks of this period were generous so houses are set back from the street allowing for larger gardens. Streets all have footpaths and nature strips and are often lined with mature native trees.
The neighbourhood is now attracting new residents, with its beach location, proximity to the city, good access to services and relatively cheaper housing compared to inner Melbourne suburbs. This has resulted in a change in the style of housing in recent developments.

Unlike the older housing stock much of the new housing is double storey. Along The Esplanade, many of the older houses have been replaced with large, imposing houses and as mentioned previously, there have also been several apartment blocks constructed in Pier Street, bringing a different ‘feel’ to the northern end of the street.

Infill development is also occurring throughout the neighbourhood. In most instances, the traditional houses are replaced by several town houses or semi-detached housing. Adding to the housing stock is a new social housing development (see photo) which has provided affordable housing for older residents.

Community and Cultural activities
The Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre plays an important role as a cultural hub for the neighbourhood. Along with gallery space for exhibitions, the centre is used by groups such as the Seabreeze Quilters to exhibit their work. In collaboration with Council, the centre also hosts bi-annual, multi-cultural arts exhibitions which celebrate those born overseas.

The Altona Homestead in Logan Reserve is the base for the Altona Laverton Historical Society. The Country Women’s Association has also recently been operating from the homestead.
Logan Reserve (where the homestead is located) is a well-used park which hosts a number of events including Summer Sounds (Council run live music events, over the summer months) and Movies by the Bay which is an Arts Victoria initiative.

The Altona Village Traders is a group with over 80 members. A key focus of the group is to support events and activities which activate Pier St and the foreshore area. Two large murals depicting the heritage of the area together with images of local residents and landmarks were commissioned by the traders.

Pier Street hosts a weekly street market on Tuesdays that offers an eclectic mix of wares ranging from plants, bedding and household goods to food items. The market recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

The neighbourhood is also a stopping point for the annual Round the Bay in a Day bike ride.

**Community Facilities**

*Hobsons Bay Civic Centre*

The Hobsons Bay Civic Centre and Council Depot are based in the neighbourhood. Before 2008, Hobsons Bay City Council had offices at the current Altona site and in Williamstown. Following extensions in 2008, most departments are now located in Altona.

*Altona Theatre and Altona Youth Hall*

The Altona Theatre is part of the Civic Centre complex. The space is available for hire and includes the theatre and some meeting spaces.

Just west of the Civic Centre on Civic Parade is the Altona Youth Hall. It is used for a number of youth related activities and other community groups.

*Altona Library*

The Altona library is one of five libraries in Hobsons Bay. Located in Queen Street, it is open Monday to Saturday and is wheelchair accessible. The library includes language collections in Chinese, Croatian, Greek, Italian, Maltese, Polish and Vietnamese, together with a small Portuguese collection. There is also an EnviroCentre which is for those interested the local and global environmental issues. In addition, a large meeting room (capacity: 60 people) is available for hire.

*Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre*

The centre has a gallery for art exhibitions and spaces where a comprehensive range of courses and services are offered. These include sewing, men’s cooking, health and wellbeing, creative arts classes, programs for children and young people together with health and legal advice. Rooms at the centre can be hired by the public.
Children’s services

Maternal Child and Health

The Maternal Child and Health centre is located at 27 David St, Altona and provides a range of services for the families of infants and young children.

Council kindergartens

There are four Council operated kindergartens in the neighbourhood, offering four year old kindergarten programs. Three year old programs are also delivered at all centres except for Altona Kindergarten. The centres are:

- Somers Parade Centre, 4 Somers Parade Altona
- Altona West Centre, 14 Lindwood Avenue, Altona
- Altona Centre, 89 Blyth Street, Altona
- Seaholme Centre, 2 Parkside Crescent, Seaholme

Private children’s centres

Goodstart Early Learning Altona (24 Upton St, Altona) is operated by a private provider and is the only childcare centre in the neighbourhood. It also offers an accredited kindergarten program for four year olds.
Seniors Facilities
A senior citizens centre is in Queens Street (opposite the library and Louis Joel centre) and the Port Phillip Retirement Village is located at the western edge of the neighbourhood, adjacent to the Kooringal Golf Course.

Schools
There is a total of five primary and secondary schools in the neighbourhood.

There are three government schools including Seaholme Primary School, Altona Primary School and the Altona Prep – Year nine campus. Within the municipality, post Year nine schools are located in Altona North, Laverton and Williamstown.

There are also two Catholic schools within the neighbourhood, St Mary’s Primary School and Mount Saint Joseph Girls’ College for year seven to 12.
Health Services

Medical Services

There are five medical centres in the neighbourhood; all are located in Altona. They include:

- Pier Street Medical Centre, 125 Pier Street, Altona
- Civic Parade Medical Centre, 65 Millers Road, Altona
- Altona Medical Centre, 110 Queen Street, Altona
- Blyth Street Medical Centre, 74 Blyth Street, Altona
- The Clinic, 55 Blyth Street, Altona

Dental services

The neighbourhood has three dental surgeries:

- Altona Complete Dental Clinic, 88 Railway Street, Altona
- Altona Bay Dental Clinic, 31 Somers Parade, Altona
- Altona Dental Group, 134 Queen Street, Altona

Pharmacies

The neighbourhood has three pharmacies:

- Tyrell’s Pharmacy, 65 Pier Street, Altona
- Tom Sarros Pharmacy, 88-90 Pier Street, Altona
- Martin Didzy’s Pharmacy, Harrington Square, Altona

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<td>Altona College P - 9</td>
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<td>St Mary Catholic Primary School</td>
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<td>Seaholme Primary School</td>
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Open space, parks and recreational facilities
Altona-Seaholme has extensive areas of open space along the coast (refer to environmental features for more detail about the Hobsons Bay Coastal Park) which incorporate sections of the Coastal Trail.

**Altona Coastal Park, Burns Reserve and Altona Sports Club Reserve**
These three reserves are located to the north east end of the neighbourhood, near the Altona Boat Ramp in Seaholme.

Altona Coastal Park is mostly undeveloped open space, at the mouth of Kororoit Creek. It is the site of the former Williamstown Race Course which opened in 1868 and operated up until 1940.

Burns Reserve is a designated dog beach and is adjacent to Altona Coastal Park.

Altona Sports Club Reserve is Council owned land where the privately managed Altona Sports Club and provides meals, function rooms and lawn bowls.

**Altona Boat Ramp and Cresser Reserve**
Altona Boat Ramp Reserve includes a boat launching area and space for the safe harbouring of recreational boats. Altona Yacht Club and Altona City Boating and Anglers Club are located in Cresser Reserve which is adjacent to the ramp and has a barbeque and picnic spaces together with a children’s playground.

**H.C. Kim Reserve (Millers Rd, Seaholme)** has three soccer fields, a club pavilion and is the home ground for the Altona City Soccer Club.

**Fell Reserve (Millers Rd, Seaholme)**
Fell Reserve is adjacent to Kim Reserve and provides green space that can be used for informal play.

**McIntyre Reserve (Nordenne Ave)** is a small neighbourhood park in Seaholme which includes a children’s playground.

**McIntosh Reserve (between Cambridge Street and Parkside Crescent, Seaholme)** has a children’s playground. Seaholme Kindergarten shares a corner of the site.

**Cherry Lake**
Cherry Lake reserve includes a 3.5km paved circuit path for walkers and cyclists. There is also a children’s playground, BBQ and picnic facilities, toilets and a sensory garden. The lake is used by recreational fishers.

**J.K. Grant Reserve (Civic Parade, Altona)**
The reserve is adjacent to Cherry Lake and is one of the largest sporting precincts in the municipality. It includes five sports ovals and pavilions, cricket practice nets, a hockey pitch and basketball court, tennis courts and bowling greens. Also on this site are several halls used by a range of groups including scouts and girl guides.
G. Nevitt Reserve (Sugar Gum Drive, Altona)
This reserve is adjacent to Grant Reserve and includes athletics facilities, a small pavilion and informal grassed spaces.

R. Rush Reserve (Brook Drive, Altona)
The reserve includes a sporting oval with cricket pitch and a children’s playground.

A.H. Ford Reserve
The reserve includes an oval and playground.

Apex Park (Queen Street, Altona)
This park is on the coast and has grassed open space, a children’s playground, BBQ and toilets.

Logan Reserve (The Esplanade, Altona)
Located opposite Altona beach, the reserve includes a children’s playground, BBQ facilities and toilets. Also here is the historic Altona homestead.

G.H. Ransom Reserve (Queen Street, Altona)
The reserve has a playground and is also adjacent to the Altona foreshore.

Kooringal Golf Course (Wilga Avenue, Altona)
This privately owned 18 hole golf course sits at the western end of the neighbourhood.
Retail Centres

Pier Street
Pier Street in Altona is the main retail area in the neighbourhood. Recent development on the northern side of the Altona station has included some increased density which includes retail space at street level. Among business located in Pier Street are a post office, two supermarkets, banks together with several ATMs, real estate and property offices, fitness centres, florists, chemists, hairdressers and a range of cafes and restaurants (refer to page for information about the Pier Street Market and Altona Traders group).

Harrington Square
This shopping centre is adjacent to the Westona railway station and provides a range of services for the local area. These include a supermarket with liquor drive-through, a pharmacy, chiropractor, hearing clinic, hairdressers, laundromat, cafes and takeaway shops, legal, accountancy and property services, bakery, cake decorating and a dance clothing shop.

Somers Parade
This small shopping strip includes a dentist, bookshop, a cafe and takeaway shops, a hairdresser, milk bar, bookshop and two packaged liquor outlets.

Ford and Upton Streets
Ford Road is a very small centre with a milk bar, takeaway shop and a hairdresser. The Upton Street centre opposite the Altona Primary School is also small with a takeaway shop and medical consulting rooms.

Public Transport
A metropolitan train service that originates in Laverton runs via Westona, Altona and Seaholme stations linking the neighbourhood to the Melbourne CBD. During peak times, a direct service runs via Footscray and North Melbourne, terminating at Flinders Street in the city centre. At other times, a loop service operates, with passengers transferring to a Werribee line service at Newport station before continuing on to Flinders Street.

The community has voiced strong opposition to the introduction of the loop service. It is concerned about the lack of regularity of trains and is calling for a duplication of the single line track to help to remedy these problems. This has been a key advocacy point for the local residents Altona Loop Advocacy Group.
Route 903 Smartbus – Altona to Mordialloc (via Sunshine, Essendon, Preston, Heidelberg, Burwood, Oakleigh, Mentone).

NB At the time of this profile’s publication, the 903 Smartbus service was being reviewed by Public Transport Victoria.
Routes 411 and 412 - Laverton - Footscray via Altona Meadows, Altona, Millers Road

Route 411 - departs from Laverton Station, travelling through Altona Meadows and then on to Queen Street, Maidstone Street, Blyth Street and Millers Road. It continues on to Altona Gate Shopping Centre and then via Geelong Road and Buckley Street before terminating in Paisley Street Footscray.

Route 412 - follows the 411 route, with a slight deviation at Altona North, via McIntosh Road and Mills Street before linking up to Millers Road.
Route 415 - Laverton to Williamstown via Altona, North Williamstown
Departs from Laverton Station and runs along Queen Street, Maidstone Street. It then runs from the Altona Railway Station to Williamstown, via Millers Road and Kororoit Road.
D. What is ahead for Altona-Seaholme

The Council’s draft capital works program is reviewed annually and is therefore subject to change. The following is a list of planned or proposed works for the neighbourhood over the next five years:

- feasibility study for the Altona Foreshore including master plan, revetment (coastal retaining wall) and access design
- planning for the Stage 4 of Pier Street works including playground and pathway upgrades at Logan Reserve
- ongoing implementation of the Altona Central Sports Precinct Master Plan that accommodates multiple sporting and recreation activities including hockey, cricket, AFL, soccer, tennis, little athletics and dog obedience
- implementation of the Truganina Explosives Reserve Master Plan including restoration work on the residence at Truganina Explosives Reserve
- G.H Ransom Reserve play space and toilet upgrade
- car parking works at Kim Reserve
E. References

1. Hobsons Bay City Council (2003) *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study: Thematic Environmental History*
2. Clarke, I. (2001) *Yalukit-willam: The First People of the City of Hobsons Bay*
4. Altona Laverton Historical Society
5. Priestly, S. op. cit
6. Hobsons Bay City Council (2003) op cit
9. ibid
10. Hobsons Bay City Council (2003) op cit
11. ibid
13. Priestley, op cit. p.161
16. Hobsons Bay City Council (2003) op cit