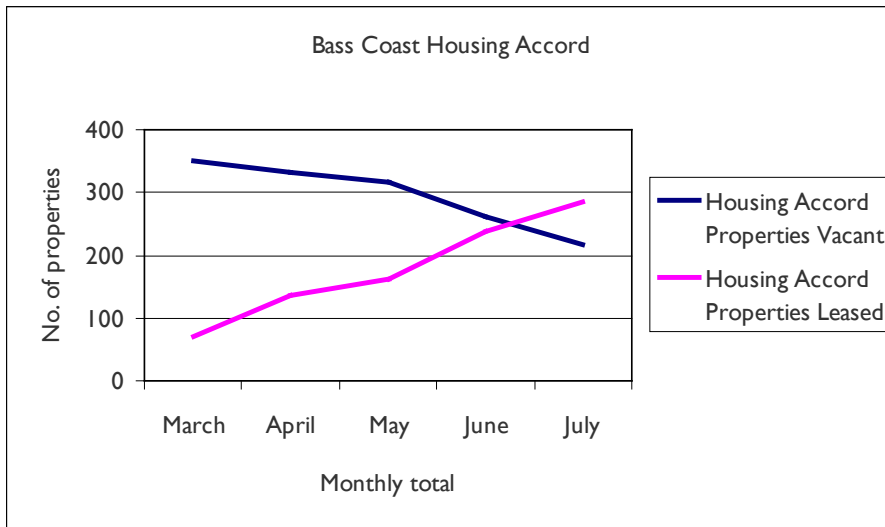


## Strong growth continues



### The leasing of Housing Accord properties has grown strongly in recent months.

The rapid growth in leasing housing accord properties continued in July and for the first time tipped the total balance of more properties being let than vacant.

By the end of the month accommodation figures from the Victorian Desalination Project revealed:

- that 58 housing accord properties were leased in July
- the total number of currently leased housing accord properties had risen to 289.

The number of vacant properties had dropped 217. Most of those leased during the July period were priced either below \$400 per week, or between \$400 and \$500 per week.

Employees and agents reported that good quality, well-priced properties were getting harder to find within a reasonable distance from the construction site.

Therefore, Bass Coast Shire Council has written again to non-resident holiday homeowners who expressed interest in leasing their properties in late 2009 to again consider making them available.

The Housing Accord Website revealed a slight decrease in internet traffic than the previous month to around 2450 visits.

The majority of views are still originating from Victoria, particularly Melbourne. There is interest continuing from interstate, mostly Sydney and Brisbane.

### Workforce update

There are now more than 1200 people working on the desalination plant site, including professional engineers, tradesmen and labourers, administration staff and subcontractors, like cleaning and catering providers.

Over the next few months, workforce numbers on site will increase even further as professional staff currently based in Melbourne relocate to the area, to provide support during peak construction later in the year.

The desalination plant site is a hive of activity, with more than 720 tonnes of the 2600 tonne structural steel frame erected and installation of the plant's acoustic roof system begun.

'Wonthaggi Maggie', the first of two tunnel boring machines, has started work carving the 1.2km underground intake tunnel. The second TBM, 'Rocking Ruby' is set to begin work on the outlet tunnel later this month.



# Housing Accord in focus



Last month's e-bulletin heard from Stockdale and Leggo Wonthaggi. This month we hear from South Coast First National which has offices in Wonthaggi, Inverloch and Venus Bay. It has been involved with the Housing Accord since its inception, attending all meetings with the Shire and Thiess Degremont prior to the commencement of the project.

Jill Mur from South Coast First National reports "in those early days Southcoast was venturing into uncharted waters, subsequently our approach was to avoid the false perception of a forthcoming rental boom circulating at that time. These rumours were giving Landlords false expectations and unsettling tenants.

Our aim was to ensure stability in our rental market. *The current market is certainly buoyant but sensible.* Over the past months we have formed an excellent working relationship with Thiess Degremont and have maintained a fair/sensible rent policy.

The initial rental enquiry was for longer-term Executive and Management members of the project. With the construction now gaining momentum we are receiving demand for shorter term leases such as three, six or nine months, which combines with the holiday property market

We envisage this type of demand will continue throughout the balance of the project.

The Housing Accord has encouraged new properties to the rental market and In our view has generally achieved its goals. We are pleased that a vast number of our holiday properties will still be available for the forthcoming holiday season partly due to the shorter offseason requirements.

Our property management staff do appreciate the courteous approach of the workforce and the appreciation of their efforts"



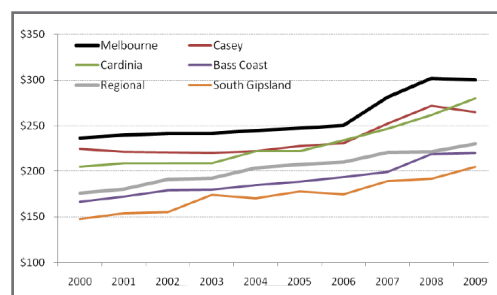
## Protecting the local rental market

Apart from providing quality accommodation for the construction workforce, the Housing Accord has served to protect the permanent rental market in Bass Coast. The end of July saw almost 290 Housing Accord properties currently leased to the workforce.

Without the addition of almost 500 properties mostly made up of vacant holiday homes, any attempts to use the existing permanent rental market to accommodate the workforce would have been extremely chaotic and resulted in many negative social consequence for long-term Bass Coast residents renting.

Promoting rental affordability has been a long term priority for Council. Part of the role of the Housing Affordability Desalination benchmark assessment will be to monitor trends from 2009 to 2012.

Stage one of the benchmark assessment completed in November 2009 used data from the Office of Housing to demonstrate that there has been a steady increase in median rents over the past nine years for three bedroom houses (see below). Stage two due to be completed at the end of this year will track if and how this trend has changed.



## Feedback ...

The 'Accord news' is a monthly e-bulletin. The deadline for the next edition is 2 September. Contributions by Accord members are welcome. Contact Community Strengthening on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or [a.mitchell@basscoast.vic.gov.au](mailto:a.mitchell@basscoast.vic.gov.au)