Dear Editor

The DSRA committee wishes to respond to the claims made by East Coast Alliance (ECA) and their supporters who signed the letter in issue 37 of the GOBC news. Although ECA’s involvement in orchestrating the letter was deliberately hidden, the letter was sent to an ECA email list by Jennie Churchill in her capacity as ECA secretary. ECA’s letter responded to the DSRA committee’s article in *The Mercury* on Sept 14. We believe ECA’s letter misrepresents us. We are writing to clarify our stance.

Our *Mercury* article began by providing context, ie the Association’s physical proximity to the Cambria proposal. We stated that “the DSRA represents the community immediately adjacent to much of the proposed development”. ECA claims this line misrepresents them. However, they don’t mention that we made it clear on multiple occasions in the article that we were speaking as ‘the committee’ not ‘the association’. The truth of this matter can be determined by anyone who reads the article.

Members of our community don’t have a unitary response to the proposed development at Cambria (or probably to any other community issue). We have members who strongly oppose the idea of the development, others who are strongly supportive, as well as people everywhere in between these extremes. Given this diversity of viewpoints, no matter what processes we implement to survey our members, the committee will never be able to speak for everyone. Some people will always be able to say, “the committee doesn’t represent me”. Therefore, we wrote the article as ‘the committee’ not as ‘the community’.

We are in the challenging position of having to balance the interests of all our members. We don’t only represent those who oppose the planning scheme amendment; we also represent those who support it. Therefore, we haven’t taken a stance of opposition or support for the amendment. Instead, we are working to address the concerns of our members by advocating for protections in the Specific Area Plan (SAP). Our approach is a pragmatic one – much of the proposed development can proceed regardless of the planning scheme amendment that is now before Council.

We have made significant progress in terms of further refining the SAP. For example, the planners/developers have altered their submission to Council to preclude extracting water from the Dolphin Sands aquifer, increase setbacks from 5m (as per the current planning scheme) to 50m and add further restrictions of the existing airstrip regarding number and frequency of flights, flight paths, hours of operation, noise and types of aircraft. Crucially, they have also limited the building footprint to 0.2% of the land area. These amendments to the SAP reflect the key concerns of our members. However, more can be achieved, especially if we work together as a community rather than wasting time fighting among ourselves.

We dispute ECA’s implication that we haven’t consulted with our members. ECA’s letter states that “no meetings have been held and no votes taken to determine how – and indeed if – members would like to be represented by the DSRA”. This is partly true but extremely misleading. It’s true that we haven’t held a meeting on the issue, but we have held a vote. When determining how best to respond to the planning scheme amendment, we asked the community to vote for their preferred method to give us feedback (see Issue 18 of GOBC news for details). The community voted overwhelmingly for an online survey. The results of the survey informed the committee’s submission to Council regarding the Cambria planning scheme amendment and our subsequent actions. Many of the signatories to last week’s letter took part in the survey. However, they added their names to a letter which implied that they hadn’t been consulted.

The DSRA committee is concerned about the polarisation of our community triggered by responses to the proposed Cambria development. The planning scheme amendment is now before Council. From there it will go to the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC). It’d be great if we could unite and work together at the TPC hearings to argue for further protections in the SAP for the long-term benefit of the community.

Robyn Moore, Secretary/Treasurer DSRA on behalf of the Committee