



**The Carlton Residents Association Inc.**

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## **CRA ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

CRA is an inclusive, democratic, non-party political, egalitarian community group which acts to sustain Carlton's historic identity and architectural heritage. Our quarterly *Newsflash* publication, website, regularly emailed *eflash* newsletters and letterboxing, continued to provide a regular flow of news and information of relevance to CRA members and the Carlton community generally during 2013. The aim was to encourage community involvement in and knowledge of significant matters locally and beyond.

Highlights of 2013 included the Council allocation of \$7 million to refurbish and develop the *Kathleen Syme Library- Community Centre (KSLCC)*, \$2 million to refurbish the Neill St Reserve, on-going battles against inappropriate development, and activism against the costly and controversial East West Link and support for public transport. Two CRA members, Megan Gathercole and Brian Falconer, received Volunteer of the Year Awards from the Commonwealth Government.

**In summary:** CRA Committee members responded to numerous State Government and City of Melbourne policy documents, attended many meetings, rallies etc., to advocate for the interests of the Carlton community. We were involved in organizing a 'Meet the Candidates' Forum hosted by the Church of All Nations, for the Federal Election in September. Adam Bandt (The Greens) was re-elected as the Federal Member for Melbourne.

The redevelopment of the *KSLCC* commenced in late 2013, for projected completion in late 2015. The extent to which service providers to public housing tenants will dominate the building is yet to be fully revealed. The vacant Carlton Police Station was sold by public tender in mid-2013 and has been lost as a community asset.

Melbourne's escalating population growth continues to attract inappropriate housing development in Carlton, which required much time consuming response from the CRA Planning Group, including at VCAT. Developers regularly succeed in overturning the established height and heritage overlays for short-term financial gain. The Naphthine Government's roads-centric transport policies have prioritised the \$8 billion East-West Link and deferred indefinitely urgent public transport improvements and other roads projects. CRA continued to actively participate in the transport debate against the Link and in favour of public transport.

CRA maintained an active role in monitoring and involvement with many major matters in Carlton including the Public Housing Estates Redevelopment through membership of the Community Liaison Committee, the Council's *Opportunities for Carlton* programs and community website, World Heritage Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, other parkland areas including Royal Park, Police Community Consultative Committee, Coalition of Residents & Business Association, Carlton Alliance etc.

**Further details on these and other important matters may be found elsewhere in this Report.**

CRA continues to operate through a series of Reference Groups which focus the interests and energy of members and spreads the advocacy workload. The Committee met on the third Monday of each month in 2013, at Dimattina's Restaurant. A Members Forum was included at each Committee Meeting for members to raise any matters of concern. Our annual Christmas Party was again successfully held at La Mama in December.

***Carlton Alliance*** (convenor: Philip Watts)

The Carlton Alliance (CA) working group met once in 2013 and resolved to maintain a watching brief on the possibilities for reunification of North Carlton (3054) with Carlton (3053), within the City of Melbourne (CoM).

Over the past three years it has become clear there is an insufficient groundswell of support in North Carlton to further pursue reunification at this time. Negatives to reunification include undemocratic electoral processes within the business dominated CoM, lack of a wards structure and increasing satisfaction with City of Yarra's performance in North Carlton as a consequence of CA activities.

The feasibility of a Greater Melbourne City Council remains on the long-term agenda. This would integrate all the inner-urban councils into a single entity. However, this proposal lacks essential bipartisan support at present.

***Community Centre-Library*** (convenor: Greta Bird)

One of CRA's proudest achievements was City of Melbourne (CoM) acquisition of the Kathleen Syme Centre (KSC) in 2012. This eminently suitable, historic building, which was Carlton's first primary school, is being redeveloped for a full library services and shared-use facilities for all Carlton. It is expected to be in operation by late 2015.

CRA's long and arduous campaign for a Library and Community Centre is well documented. Council purchase of KSC for this purpose is solely due to the CRA led campaign. Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, stated publicly in 2011 that the State Government released KSC for Council purchase only as result of our extensive and persistent efforts. The Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre (KSLCC) will be a community facility in the broadest sense.

This was publicly acknowledged by Lord Mayor Robert Doyle in 2012. He guaranteed that it would provide full library services and shared-use facilities for all Carlton, that no service providers or agencies will be allocated permanent or exclusive use of space.

Nevertheless council officers sought confidential input from three contracted service providers – misleadingly referred to as '*the community*' in the CoM *Advertised Plan* (pp5-6), and from Aged Services. As result, approximately two-thirds of the building will be for service provision – not exclusive to any one provider, but leased for contracted times. CRA was excluded from these planning consultations. We are seeking membership of the KSLCC management committee when it is established.

Further information is available on the CRA and Council websites: [www.carltonresidents.org.au](http://www.carltonresidents.org.au)  
[www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/kathleensyme](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/kathleensyme)

***CORBA Melbourne*** (convenor: Rhonda Day)

The Coalition of Resident and Business Associations (CoRBA) was formed in 2007 because of residents' belief that the State Government and Melbourne Council did not adequately or equitably represent or take into account the views of the local community. Initially CoRBA met monthly at the Town Hall. Carlton Residents Association (CRA) was represented by Greta Bird and Jackie Watts. When Jackie moved into her role as Melbourne City Councillor, Rhonda Day attended.

The initial focus of CoRBA was reform of the structure governing the City of Melbourne Council, and its election processes. Despite the Ministerial review of Victoria's local government electoral system, the City of Melbourne (CoM) still retains some of the unique electoral arrangements which limit the participation and representation of the growing population of residents. It is still difficult for residents to have their views heard and the voice of business is predominant. The lack of ward Councillors to represent local views, the preference given to business votes and the lack of transparency of postal voting remain major concerns.

CoRBA provides a forum for representatives of community groups and business to present concerns to the MCC and to develop and implement joint action on community issues. The need for such action is illustrated by the failure of the MCC to oppose the East–West link which will significantly affect MCCs residents and infrastructure, including an estimated \$200 million deficit to Royal Park. This is in contrast to active opposition by other inner city Councils particularly Yarra. In a close vote in August 2013, nearly two years after the project was announced, MCC resolved, "Not to support the East West Link as announced" , a small win for residents.

CoRBA met three times in 2013, in May, August and November. At the **May** meeting time was spent in preparation of an agenda for a meeting with Minister Guy. Issues included the Melbourne Planning Strategy (MSS), planning decisions in regard to Southbank development, overall need for community consultation and delay in finalising the World Heritage Management Plan (WHMP) and MSS.

The **August** meeting was attended by Jennifer Kanis, State Labor Member for Melbourne. While the East-West Link was the key concern raised, other issues included the review of the Electoral System, the Environmental Management Guide, lack of infrastructure in inner suburbs and the status of the MSS and WHMP. The WHMP was subsequently raised in Parliament by Ms Kanis and approval announced by the Minister on 14 November, 2013. The **November** meeting considered a range of issues including: the impacts of the East-West tunnel and proposed links on local areas; the plans for sale of part of Queen Victoria Market and demolition of some buildings; public transport and pedestrian issues; and local heritage and planning issues.

### ***Opportunities for Carlton*** (convenor: Brian Falconer)

The OfC project has been funded by the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Office of Housing, and administered by the City of Melbourne (CoM). The project began in 2008 and involved various service providers associated with the Carlton Local Agencies Network (CLAN) and University of Melbourne under a *Memorandum of Understanding* with CoM. The aim was to positively engage with the changes occurring within the Carlton community, particularly for the disadvantaged. A range of priorities to improve education, employment, safety, health, and social outcomes, largely for public housing tenants, concluded in 2013. During the past year an amount of \$55,000 was distributed to local service providers to assist in their work.

In mid-2013 OfC morphed into the Carlton Collaborative Framework (CCF): *Shape your Carlton*. Consultants were appointed to work with the former OfC team (above) to develop a consultation strategy and new directions by 31 December 2013.

CRA representatives have regularly attended OfC meetings since 2008 and assisted where appropriate, including with the website. It is unclear what future role, if any, CRA might have.

***Planning and Development*** (convenor: Warren Green)

At the beginning of each month, the CRA Planning Group (Warren Green, Victoria Hamer & Denis Toth) meets to consider the previous month's planning applications for the 3053 postcode area. The committee is particularly alert to the following:

- overlooking or any other loss of amenity to neighbouring properties
- loss of amenity to the wider surrounding area (bulk, aesthetics, car parking)
- whether the application complies with the council's heritage overlay and height restrictions internal amenity (chiefly in multi-dwelling developments)

At the 2012 AGM we reported on 5 applications to which CRA had objected, but still remained unresolved. Their relevant outcomes were as follows:

**TP-2010-319** (69-71 Drummond St) refusal by CoM & VCAT - Property subsequently renovated.

**TPM-2011-30** (593-597 Swanston St) Queensberry Hotel - application to install 30 gaming machines: refused by CoM & VCAT. CRA made representation at VCAT.

**TP-2011-805** (93 Barkly St) 15 objections, refused by CoM.

**TP-2012-767** (13-23 Faraday St) 5 storey / 9 apartments, refused by CoM.

**TP-2012-1044** (139-155 Queensberry St) 15 stories in an area which has an eight storey discretionary height control. CRA objected, refused by CoM, overturned by VCAT and permit issued; a disturbing decision. CRA made representation at VCAT.

During 2013 the Planning Committee reviewed 133 planning applications for postcode 3053 most of which caused little to no concern, however CRA did lodge 9 objections. The following are applications to which CRA objected and for which decisions have been issued:

**TP-2013-18** (331-335 Lygon St) 8 objections: Installation of canopies to street-front, refused by CoM & VCAT.

**TP-2013- 63** (183-185 Palmerston St) 5 objections. Additional dwelling at rear. Applicants amended design addressed CRA's concerns, however refused by CoM.

**TP-2013-574** (138-150 Rathdowne St) 4 objections. 3 storey including shops and 13 dwellings. Approved by CoM. Conditions imposed CoM addressed CRA concerns.

**TP-2013-709** (100-108 Drummond St) 2 objections.. Alterations to existing building. Amended design addressed CRA's concerns, CRA withdrew objection. Approved by CoM.

The following are the applications to which CRA objected and decisions are still awaited:

**TP-2013-317** (63 Nicholson St) 4 objections. Construction of a 4 storey dwelling at the rear of the medical centre. Protracted negotiations by CoM with applicant, redesign anticipated.

**TP-2013-630** (15-31 Pelham St) 65 objectors. Convert offices to apartments and convert existing 4 storey building at rear to 8 stories by adding 4 new stories. Major streetscape and heritage issues. Has been under assessment since August. CoM decision anticipated in the near future.

**TP-2013-736** (152-154 Queensberry St) 6 objections. Construct 16 stories in an area which has a 9 storey discretionary height control. An inappropriate development on many grounds. Comprehensively refused by CoM. Applicant has subsequently appealed to VCAT.

**TP-2013-893** (106-112 Queensberry St) 7 objections. 6 storey apartment building. Same building envelope as previously approved for a hotel on the site. CRA concerned about overlooking adjacent residence in Little Cardigan St. Approved by CoM with conditions addressing CRA's concern. However, subsequent appeal to VCAT by another objector.

**TP-2013-947** (123 -127 Bouverie St / 116 -128 Leicester St) 15 storey student accommodation & retail development by Melbourne University. CRA objected on grounds of excessive height, CoM currently assessing application.

The effect of objections from individuals, adds considerable weight to an objection lodged by CRA, so we encourage all members to keep this in mind when inappropriate development is proposed. Outright victories may be rare, but serious concessions are often achieved.

Further information on the above applications should be available on the CoM website: [www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/BuildingandPlanning/Planning/Pages/PlanningRegisterSearch.aspx](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/BuildingandPlanning/Planning/Pages/PlanningRegisterSearch.aspx)  
 Planning Committee monthly reports and summaries are available on the CRA website: [www.carltonresidents.org.au/referencegroups/Planning.html](http://www.carltonresidents.org.au/referencegroups/Planning.html)

### ***Police Community Consultative Committee*** (convenor: Richard Tisher)

The aim of PCCC is to enhance the partnership between police and the Carlton community to reduce crime and improve quality of life and safety. The Carlton PCCC includes representatives from Melbourne North Police, residents groups (including CRA), City of Melbourne, University of Melbourne, Carlton Rotary Club, Royal Melbourne Hospital, State Member for Melbourne and others.

PCCC met monthly in 2013 and dealt with many important matters including: ‘Camp for kids’, family violence, Christmas toy & food drive, Rotary breathalyser project, traffic operations, ‘Harmony Day’, neighbourhood development, crime analysis etc. (further details have been published in *Newsflash*). The committee is seeking a ‘Patron’ to increase the public profile of the PCCC in the Carlton community. The inspiring leadership of PCCC by Leading Senior Constable Nick Parissis is gratefully acknowledged.

### ***Police Station*** (convenor: Jeremy Hill)

The historic Carlton Police Station was sold by public tender in June 2013. We understand from land title information that the title is registered to the Education Development Association which is a non-profit company and a registered charity. It comes under the auspices of Opus Dei, a Prelature of the Roman Catholic Church. Its aim is to promote education and the development of character in accordance with the principles and ideals of Christianity.

The Association is already known in Carlton through its Drummond Study Centre (296 Drummond Street) which assists people in their professional development. It also organizes rural activities, seminars and small-group discussions that play an important role in broadening the students’ outlook and sharpening the application of their intellectual and social talents. We expect it to be a benign occupier of the former Police Station.

Police Station buildings are in urgent need of maintenance and refurbishment which hopefully the new owners will undertake in the near-term. There has been no activity on-site since the sale.

### ***Public Housing Estates Redevelopment*** (convenor: Julie Harrison)

Carlton Public Housing Estates redevelopment which began in 2006 is now drawing to a close; the final private housing should be completed in 2014. It has involved major buildings works on the three Housing Estates: Elgin-Nicholson, Lygon-Rathdowne and Keppel-Cardigan.

**Redevelopment Project:** the overall project involved the demolition of 198 ‘walk-up’ public units which were replaced with 245 generally smaller units. Total bed numbers were unchanged despite the 40,000 long waiting list. Privatisation of public housing land allowed the construction of 550 ‘gated’ private units for sale into the general real estate market and a private aged care facility. Several new streets were constructed to separate public and private developments; substantial open green-space was lost on the Estates to private housing.

Stated aims of the mixed tenure project were to break down social barriers through a mix of public and private housing, however that did not eventuate. Likewise, a planned 700 sqm of space for community activities and service provision was not included.

**Project Review:** a research team from Flinders University, SA, reported on the project in December 2013. Tenants stated they had been denied the right to participate in decision making processes, and were simply told what would happen. Most rated the quality of the new buildings highly in comparison with the old walk-ups. They like the newness of the housing and the improved landscape surrounds, however regretted that there are no public laundries or clothes drying areas.

Some tenants reported positive changes in how people from outside the estate perceived those in the new buildings. Others said any change in stigma was minimal. Some emphasised the ongoing lack of public housing stock and the resultant concentration of tenants with multiple problems. They contended that they had been promised family-oriented buildings but instead many occupants had mental health and substance abuse issues.

Private buyers bemoaned lack of transparency insofar as the units being sold were situated on a public housing estate. Tenants and private residents expressed regret and frustration at the total lack of shared space where social interaction could naturally flow. Some stated that politicians and Dept. of Human Services (DHS) 'had yielded to developer pressure'.

The research team concluded that DHS should learn from the negatives of the Carlton experience and apply it to future Housing Estates redevelopment projects. Outcomes were much as CRA had predicted following the Panel Hearing in 2006.

### ***Newsflash & Website*** (convenor: Lyn Cracknell)

The Newsflash has continued to be published quarterly. The editorial committee has changed: Jill Bamforth was unable to continue and was thanked for her valuable input; Julie Harrison has joined the team; Robyn Dalziel has continued to contribute; Lyn Cracknell worked as Reference Group leader. On most occasions 300 copies have been printed and distributed to CRA members and members of the community.

Current information from Reference Groups is always included, along with articles relevant to Carlton and stories about the people and places of Carlton. These stories have been written by Jill. Again this year the stories have been shared with the Carlton Community Website.

In September, a series of discussions were held to revisit the purpose and editorial policy of Newsflash. The outcome of these was published as 'NEWSFLASH - EDITORIAL POLICY AND PURPOSE' and was agreed to by the Committee. The major issues involved communication with contributors regarding editorial decisions made about articles.

The Reference Group also manages the website – updating articles continues to be an issue. An up to date website is an important record of current issues and an archive for past activities. The CRA Committee has decided to redesign the website format and Idaho Design has been engaged to do this. 2014 will bring a new look for CRA's website.

Contributions to and comments regarding the website and Newsflash are always welcome.

***Parkland & Public Land*** (convenor: Ian Bird)

Design for the refurbishment of the Neill St Reserve was approved by the Council following substantial community consultation, which involved CRA. An amount of \$2 million has been allocated to the project for action during 2014.

The potentially serious impacts of road works associated with the East West Link on Royal Park have continued to engage several community groups, including CRA. The impacts of the Link include: open cut tunnelling; substantial loss of trees, parkland, sportsgrounds and remnant vegetation; disturbance to Zoo animals; access to the State Netball and Hockey Centre etc. These are serious issues largely ignored by the Linking Melbourne Authority. Many meetings, protests and submissions on these matters have failed to influence the destructive directions of the Link project which is scheduled to begin later in 2014, prior to the State Election.

***Royal Exhibition Building & Carlton Gardens*** (convenor: Margaret O'Brien)

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Precinct is Victoria's only World Heritage site. UNESCO declared the Building and the surrounding gardens to be of World Heritage significance, in April 2004. The Royal Exhibition Building is historically significant as the only major extant nineteenth century international exhibition building in the world. It has been the stage for highly significant and historic national events, including the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880, the opening of the Federal Parliament in May 1901 and as the venue for the Victorian State Parliament from 1901 until 1927.

It is a matter of disgrace that whilst the site was listed for World Heritage by UNESCO in 2004, ministerial approval required under legislation for a World Heritage Master Plan, was not satisfied until late 2013. Contrast this with the successful promotion over many years of the nation's only other man-made WH site, the Sydney Opera House; it is promoted as one of Australia's international icons.

A National Trust Heritage Festival will celebrate the significance of the site on the weekend of 10-11 May 2014. Coalition of Residents & Business Associations in the City of Melbourne and Fitzroy Residents Association will participate in collaboration with Museum Victoria and local schools. The South Garden was again closed from public access for a month (from early March 2013) to accommodate the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. This commercial enterprise adversely impacts the WH site every autumn, despite on-going campaigns against it.

***Streetscapes*** (convenor: Ian Bird)

A major activity for 2013 was CRA's involvement with community consultations and workshops associated with the Council's Urban Forest Strategy. The Strategy seeks to manage the consequences of rapid urban growth and respond to global warming and associated climate change. The plan is to double the tree canopy cover to mitigate urban heat-island effects and create healthy ecosystems.

In Carlton, on-going street tree planting has continued. Lygon St trees were again defended against the objections of several vocal restaurateurs. There is widespread support for the trees which significantly add to the ambience and shade cover of the street.

The costly and never-ending cleanup of graffiti 'tags' continued around Carlton, despite the best efforts of the Council and police to deal with the problem.

***Transport, Traffic and Parking*** (convenor: Ian Bird)

**East West Link:** this was the major issue confronted by the Reference Group in 2013. The controversial \$8 billion Link (tollroad) project will have serious implications for the northern central city corridor area and Royal Park. CRA was involved in numerous meetings with the Linking Melbourne Authority (LMA) and the Council. Lack of information and ‘sham’ consultations have characterised Link planning, much of it ‘on-the-run’. Critical information, including the Business Case and Traffic Analysis, remains ‘commercial in confidence’.

CRA has been heavily committed to submission and letter writing, lobbying, community information stalls, public meetings, rallies and drill-site pickets. A Comprehensive Impact Statement Panel Hearing will commence in March 2014 to assess the project and its associated 1430 submissions (99.5% opposed to the Link), including from CRA and individual members. State Government policy is to sign contracts and begin work just prior to the State Election in November 2014, regardless of Panel Report outcomes, political opposition (Labor & Greens) and intense community lobbying for better public transport. The Link has been widely assessed as irrelevant to Melbourne’s long-term transport needs; it is not part of any credible transport plan.

Regular updates on the EW Link have been published in *Newsflash* and *Eflash* throughout 2013.

**Doncaster Rail:** the EW Link decision above sidelined the long-sought rail line to Doncaster (and other critical rail projects). Following concerted pressure, the Government released its Doncaster Rail Study in March 2013. Overall estimated cost of around \$11 billion, including claimed essential enhancements to the existing rail network, resulted in the project being indefinitely deferred and the Eastern Freeway rail reservation turned over to future roads space. A 2012 study by the Local Government Group estimated Doncaster Rail could be built for \$1.3 billion (based on recent experience of a similar project in Perth) was dismissed by the Government. Despite being elected on a pro-public transport platform in 2010, the Government soon reverted to prioritising a mega-roads project in Melbourne as its major transport policy for Victoria.

**Death of Professor Paul Mees:** the untimely death of Paul Mees in June 2013 was a major blow to public transport policy analysis and advocacy in Melbourne. As a ‘friend’ and mentor to CRA on transport issues, Paul’s wise counsel will be sorely missed.

**Presented at the CRA 18<sup>th</sup> AGM, 24 February 2014**