



The Carlton Residents Association Inc.

A0034345G ABN 87 716 923 898

12th Annual General Meeting, 11th February 2008

President's Report

This report summarises CRA diverse activities over the past twelve months. Details may be found in our quarterly Newsflashes and Reports available on the CRA website, which members are encouraged to regularly check: www.carltonresidents.org.au.

Planning Sub-Committee

CRA continues to be embattled with planning issues and is under constant challenge on heritage, historic streetscapes and community, from developers with short-term profit motives and from City of Melbourne (CoM) and State Government. The Sub-Committee meets monthly and reviews planning applications for Postcode 3053; it typically objects to 15% to 20% of applications. Inappropriate proposals during 2007 included:

- Shakahari, Faraday St. (opp. Brunetti): approval was again sought for a 2 storey extension with 4 units to be built above the heritage protected restaurant building, with waving of car parking.
- 106-110 Queensberry St (Cr Lt Cardigan St.): 7 storey, 115 room hotel; presently in mediation at VCAT and causing much concern to neighbours.
- 83-95 Rathdowne St, Carlton, Anti-Cancer Council (Piccolo Developments): construction of a six level building (plus basement) for the purpose of 57 dwellings, two shops and food premises, with a reduction in the standard rate of car parking provision.
- Uni. Press building in Drummond St: you will recall CRA's VCAT experience in 2006; the controversial 4 storey building is now undergoing construction; asbestos has been discovered.
- Public Housing Redevelopment: five tenderers are now shortlisted; building is scheduled to commence early 2009 with loss of 3.5 ha open space on the Estates to a private housing development of 550 units.
- Canada Hotel (opp Lincoln Square): yet another massive student housing project in Swanston St approved unanimously by Council despite CRA objections, is now under construction.

CoM has no policy regarding ongoing student housing developments in Carlton.

Carlton is being overwhelmed by student housing: International students are denied involvement in our vibrant local community; residents are being squeezed out which is leading to destruction of Carlton's traditional community. Yield and profits for these 'rabbit warrens' are much greater than for better quality housing aimed at the general population, hence their attraction to developers. Student housing has seriously distorted the housing mix in Carlton. Even small domestic sites are being converted to high density student housing. What will become of this mass of student housing in the longer term? Sub-standard units are not easily converted to public or affordable housing. They are small, poorly designed, and under individual title. The feasibility of combining adjacent units is virtually impossible. Approval of these building developments is the first stage in approving a future slum.

Community Centre News Update (Kathleen Syme Centre)

CRA has actively lobbied the City Council and State Government throughout 2007 to acquire the ***Kathleen Syme Centre*** (former Faraday St Primary School) as a Community Centre for Carlton. ***Our vision is for a Centre which will facilitate integrated activities – developing / building / sustaining community / creating well-being - space where Carlton can be community.***

CRA is regularly required to justify the Community Centre concept which we have done on numerous occasions. For the record we again outline identified needs below:

- library
- toy library
- visitor centre
- Carlton history display
- large spaces for cultural, social and commercial events/exhibitions/performances

- spaces for a variety of meetings
- business incubator
- permanent spaces for Arts, Literature, Fine Arts displays (Readings, La Mama, Museum)
- spaces for music, variety of performances, rehearsals, workshops
- range of activities to foster international student relationships with the Carlton community
- space for 200 plus for private & commercial events (we receive weekly inquiries)
- theatre/coffee shop

The saga of CRA's campaign for acquisition of the KSC as a Carlton Community Centre has been detailed in Newsflashes throughout 2007, including wholehearted community support for the proposal. Greta Bird and Jackie Watts recently met with Lord Mayor So to discuss the CRA campaign and to define urgent action now required by the Council to bring the Community Centre to a reality. The Lord Mayor expressed his strong support to acquire KSC, however we are deeply concerned at the actions of Cr David Wilson (Chair, Community Services) who continually undermines the CRA vision, despite his claimed support for a Community Centre in Carlton.

KSC Community Centre proposal has been further undermined by the University of Melbourne, which plans to purchase the entire Royal Women's Hospital (RWH) site, including KSC. Likewise the RWH CEO, Ms Dale Fisher, is fighting a rearguard action to retain the KSC for hospital purposes after the hospital has relocated to Parkville in 2008, even denying site access to CoM and CRA. The State Govt. advised CRA the building will be retained by the hospital until 2011. When available "*the interest of other Government services in utilising the site will be explored prior to possible sale being undertaken . . . there is no certainty of it becoming available for community use in the longer term*". **CRA argues why 'other Government services'?** Surely the Carlton community has priority for long sought services detailed above.

CRA now confronts significant stumbling blocks:

- insistence by RWH that hospital functions remain at KSC even when the building is remote from the relocated hospital in Parkville. These functions could be relocated anywhere within a 1 km radius of the new hospital; there is no reason for their location in a high profile public building in Carlton.
- Health Minister's time line for relocation of KSC functions of 2011 is untenable. Prioritising all other possible uses of KSC above Community use is unacceptable to CRA.

CoM strategy has been one of acquiescence to the above unsatisfactory situation. We have much ongoing work to achieve our goal of a Community Centre for Carlton.

Melbourne 2030

M2030 continues to cause widespread alarm throughout Victoria. Its principle, to limit urban sprawl, is excellent, however it is a deeply flawed policy which allows wholesale destruction of heritage, streetscape and community amenity, in the name of increased urban density. **Planning Backlash** is an umbrella group of over 100 residents groups from throughout Vic. concerned at inappropriate development under guise of *M2030*. CRA joined with a representative group from **Planning Backlash** that met with Planning Minister, Justin Madden, on several occasion during 2007. He appointed a Panel of three, chaired by a health expert (the relevance escapes us) to "audit" *M2030* implementation, but not to question its policy base. This Panel is yet to publically report its findings. We are not hopeful much will change. Our main concern is the way *M2030* is applied in Carlton, to justify all manner of inappropriate development proposals, which result in costly and time consuming battles at VCAT which we cannot win against current Govt planning policies.

Cardigan/Faraday Streetscape Greening

CRA has lobbied CoM over the past decade for the return of selected median car parking areas to greenspace (*Carlton 2010* vision document). Last April we addressed the Council Planning Committee to establish median greenspace in Faraday and Cardigan Streets, adjacent to the Eastern Precinct student housing monolith, to soften the visual impact of the 11-storey building and to improve the main pedestrian entrance to Carlton from the Tram Terminus on Swanston Street. **This area of Carlton currently has no greenspace.** The Committee directed the Engineering Dept. to explore the options and report back. We participated in meetings and a Public Forum on the matter.

The Carlton Business Association (CBA) argues strongly against any greening proposals because of loss of a few on-street car parking spaces, despite the large number of under utilised off-street spaces. At the Planning Committee meeting on 5 Feb. 2008 the Engineering Dept. proposed to enlarge the tree islands in

the medians on Faraday and Cardigan Streets to provide 52 additional trees with loss of just 12 car spaces. Although not our preferred option, in a spirit of compromise, we agreed to support the proposal as a first step towards improved streetscapes. Both CRA and CBA made impassioned presentations to the Committee offering diametrically opposing viewpoints on the proposal. Disappointingly, the business dominated Committee supported the CBA stance and voted against even the most modest streetscape improvements on the casting vote of Chair, Cr Ng. The matter may be referred to a full Council Meeting on 26 Feb. where we will need a visible presence of CRA members. We will continue our lobbying of Councillors on this important environmental issue. The overwhelming dominance of private cars in our streetscapes must be challenged.

Carlton's Parkland

World Heritage Listed Carlton Gardens: the organizers of the **Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show** (MIFGS) have successfully made Carlton Gardens their permanent home, with State Govt. support. CRA's objection is not to the Flower and Garden Show per-se, but to the highly damaging hardware, building and farm equipment which have become an integral part of the event. Proposals that these constructions be restricted to hard standing areas around the Exhibition Building have been rejected. Former Planning Minister Hulls amended the Melbourne Planning Scheme for commercial events on public parkland to be approved without planning permission. This removes our democratic, third party appeal rights to VCAT! CRA supports the very active Carlton Gardens Group in its continued campaign to remove at least the hardware sections of the show from the Gardens.

Parkland Neglect: nothing could further demonstrate the seriously skewed financial priorities of CoM than its controversial decision to disband its dedicated Parks and Recreation Group in 2007. Financial emphasis is now on "Events" funding, such as the Grand Prix. The neglect of World Heritage listed Carlton Gardens in the interests of commercial imperatives and closure of public open space for private profit, will likely be the future of all our parks and gardens.

Princes Park: the destructive and noisy "Big Day Out" was successfully transferred to Flemington Race Course following two years in Princes Park. Redevelopment proposals for the Carlton Football Ground are being monitored. Current proposals are modest and will not impact the Park. Resiting of the Council Depot to within the Ground will free up additional green space in the Park. Water mining of the main sewer for parks and gardens watering has unfortunately been disbanded because of lack of State and Federal Govt. support.

Eddington Inquiry

The State Govt established an inquiry in 2007 to assess the needs for additional east-west transport corridors to the north of the city. It is scheduled to report in March 08. The roads lobby (RACV, VicRoads, VACC, trucking industry etc) continue to argue for a \$10 billion tunnel to connect the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways with a link continuing further west to Deer Park. The *North Central City Corridor Study* (2001-2003), to which CRA made significant contributions, concluded such a link unnecessary. A rail line to Doncaster would more effectively reduce traffic congestion. Recently the CoM's *Melbourne Transport Strategy* (2005-2006), to which CRA also contributed, again rejected the E-W tunnel concept. It supported the long sought rail link to Doncaster and a N-S extension of the underground City Loop. None of this impressed the State Govt, which is heavily influenced by the roads lobby and the big end of town. We believe the Eddington Inquiry is predicated on a roads solution (funded under PPP), as a response to current traffic congestion. Sustainable transport options appear of little interest to the Brumby Government.

Book of self-guided historical walks around Carlton & North Carlton

Jeff Atkinson has applied for a Local History Grant to fund this project. If successful, he will ask CRA members and others to write up walks and background material.

Precinct Development Fund

The 'Cultural Precinct Enhancement Fund' was a pre-election announcement by (then) Premier Bracks of \$8m to be shared between the Chinese, Greek, and Italian 'precincts'. (It was at this meeting that Premier made his enthusiastic and now famous promise to support a Community Centre for Carlton). CRA submitted five imaginative proposals which invest in the development of our precinct to enhance its cultural, commercial and human imperatives. These were rejected in favour of a restricted range of Council proposals, which merely extend existing Council plans for Carlton, e.g. street lighting. Council staff are

also very keen to “do something” about Argyle Square. Having invested \$4m on Piazza Italia, the Council now proposes to commit Cultural Precincts funds to add further infrastructure to the Piazza, which is claimed to now require ‘activation’.

Lygon Street

Plane Trees: you will recall demands made in Spring 2005 by The Carlton Business Assn that the 180 plane trees in Lygon Street be removed because of hair and leaf drop. Botanical research revealed the hair and leaf drop contain irritants, but not allergens. A range of actions are being trialed and monitored, including increased tree trimming, more frequent cleaning of footpaths in peak periods of hair and leaf drop, and monitoring of the trees with traps placed in canopies.

Traffic Speed Zone: CRA has campaigned over several years for the introduction of a 40kph speed zone through the Lygon Street Precinct. *VicRoads* ignores all pleas to introduce such a speed zone which is common in other shopping strips around Melbourne. The tragic death of a pedestrian last year at the hands of a hit-run driver speeding at an alleged 100kph in Lygon St. refocused our efforts. We addressed the CoM Planning Committee on 5 Feb. 08 in support of Cr Fiona Sneddon who is leading a Council campaign for a 40kph speed zone in Lygon St. The Committee resolved unanimously to do whatever it takes to introduce the long-sought 40kph zone ASAP.

Coalition of Residents Associations (CoRA)

CRA Vice-President Jackie Watts coordinates CoRA. Its primary concern remains the So team’s continued resistance to electoral reform, despite the current totally undemocratic system. Lord Mayor So used his casting vote on three occasions to defeat motions favouring attendance against postal voting. He also opposed a State Govt. review of CoM electoral processes – compulsory for all councils except Melbourne.

CoM Place Managers

CoM staff restructuring resulted in loss of four of its five Place Managers in 2007. This downsizing will further distance the Council from ratepayers as did loss of Ward Councillors during the Kennett era.

General Meetings

General Meetings and dinners have been held upstairs at Dimattina’s Restaurant throughout 2007. Guest speakers included Cr David Wilson on Community (Cr Wilson remains adamant that CoM should lease community space for Carlton, not purchase KSC); Dr Martin Mulligan (RMIT) on the necessity of ‘community’ for well-being; Lloyd Jones from La Mama on the occasion of its 40th birthday, Dr Kate Shaw on student housing; and tonight Dr John Stone on the East-West Transport Needs Assessment. These thoughtful presentations on local issues have been much appreciated. The 2007 CRA Xmas party at La Mama was again a happy and successful get-together. *We express grateful thanks to Dimattinas and La Mama for continued use of their wonderful venues, and to Brunettis for providing delicious suppers. Please note schedule for General Meeting dates in 2008, attached.*

Vale Margaret Ericksen and Peter Allen

With great sadness we recorded the deaths during 2007 of these two much loved and valued CRA members and long-time Carlton residents.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to the Committee, Sub-Committees and other active members for their highly valued contributions, dedication and innovative ideas towards the successful operations of CRA during 2007. I took over the CRA presidency from Sue Chambers prior to the Council Elections in 2004 and have held the position almost continually since then. I am grateful for all the support and encouragement you have all given me during this difficult and uncertain period. The focus on the role of President has been overwhelming at times; the work pressures are unrelenting; the expectations are immense. I am worn out and will not be seeking re-election at this AGM. I plan to continue as an active member of the Association but not in a leadership role. It is time for a change with renewed energy and ideas for the challenges ahead.

Greta Bird

President