



The Carlton Residents Association Inc
A0034345G ABN 87 716 923 898

Carlton Residents Association Annual Report 2009

Historically, the Carlton Residents Association (CRA) has been a strong force for the good in Carlton. We care about Carlton - and if we don't who will? CRA is an inclusive, democratic, non-party political, egalitarian community group working to sustain all that is remarkable about Carlton - our historic identity and cultural diversity. CRA 'holds the line', monitoring, informing and advocating on matters which concern us all - inappropriate development, traffic management, parks and gardens, services etc. CRA provides a strong voice and is a conduit for community action to preserve and sustain Carlton. In the absence of Ward Councillors, CRA represents your views at community, council and government level.

CRA operates through a series of Reference Groups which reflect the interests and energy of members. Members and Friends are invited to join a Reference Group to lend support, or be kept 'in the loop'. Members may choose to establish a new Reference Group on any area of interest which might enhance and sustain all that is wonderful about Carlton. Obviously issues of concern will change over time.

Members are reminded that the CRA Committee meets on the third Monday each month. Late in 2009 a decision was made to issue a standing invitation to all CRA members who are concerned about **any** issue to raise the matter with the CRA Committee at any monthly meeting. This invitation will be extended by email prior to each meeting as a reminder to members.

Reference Group Reports

1. Planning

At the beginning of each month, the CRA Planning Group 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)
- whether the proposed development threatens residential diversity (e.g. oversupply of student housing)

In 2009 there were 140 planning applications for Carlton. The Planning Sub-Committee considered most of these in detail and raised 13 objections. The bulk of these objections were based on the amenity and urban design grounds described above, and a small number also included heritage concerns. Permits have since been issued for 8 of these applications, usually with conditions more favourable for the community, 2 applications have lapsed or been withdrawn, and 3 are still under assessment. Of particular concern to the Sub-Committee is an application for "Change of use from student accommodation and cafe to 39 dwellings with a reduction in the standard car parking requirement", which is in effect an application to formalize a non-compliant use of the building. This development, as for other student accommodation, has low standards of residential amenity not considered appropriate for general residential properties, and if given a permit would be no better than a slum tenement. There have been hundreds of such student apartments constructed over recent years in Carlton; approval of this application would create a precedent for yet more sub-standard housing in Carlton. The Planning Group, with the support of Carlton Residents Association, will continue to strenuously object to this application. We are grateful that David Higgins has volunteered as CRA Planning Group Administrator.

2. Community Centre/Library (Kathleen Syme Centre)

We continued to intensely lobby for a centrally located Community Centre, where **all** Carlton's disparate groups can develop and be community. CRA and City of Melbourne efforts continue to be stymied by the State Government. Innumerable direct approaches to local MP, Hon. Bronwyn Pike, resulted in continual diversions. Acting on her instruction, CRA sought official reconfirmation by the Doyle Council of the So Council decision to purchase the building as a Community Centre. Premier Brumby, Ministers Pike, Andrews, Wynne, Batchelor and others prevaricate and mislead with infrastructure policy spin, and redirect

us to seek a community centre in a Council and State Government project “*Opportunities for Carlton*”. This addresses endemic disadvantage of Carlton’s public housing tenants through provision of essential services. Infrastructure will be on or adjacent to the Lygon St Public Housing Estate on the far northern perimeter of Carlton. These needs must be addressed *in addition to* the complementary needs of Carlton’s wider community. The search for an appropriate community space in central Carlton has been decades long. The Kathleen Syme Centre is the ideal premises where learning and social needs of the whole community can be met. It presents a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire a significant, centrally located, stand-alone building for Carlton. The City of Melbourne fully supports the concept and is prepared to purchase the building. CRA recently met again with Minister Pike to urge her, as our local MP, to proactively assist the community in this matter. Our Council is willing. Our need is acknowledged. **All that is required is that the State Government cooperate.**

3. Growing CRA

In September, the Growing CRA Reference Group was established to find better ways of engaging people which would involve them working in the Reference Groups and taking up financial membership. Its report circulated to the Committee in December will be considered in 2010.

4. Carlton Public Housing Estates Redevelopment

CRA has maintained a watching brief on this major redevelopment project in our precinct throughout 2009. The Brumby State Government reversed its policy regarding integration of public and private housing on the Carlton Public Housing Estates to intentional segregation. At a pre-election forum in 2006, our local Member, Bronwyn Pike, enthusiastically stated that a social mix on the estates will “*break down the Public Housing ghetto*” and assured that “*there will be no net loss of open space*” for public housing tenants. An equitable public/private, “salt and pepper” mix of occupants was promised in the redevelopment as justification for the sell-off of 3.5 ha of land on the Estates for a 550 unit private housing development. However, plans on the Lygon/Rathdowne/Princes Sts Estate now reveal that, instead of the promised “salt and pepper” integrated mix of private/public housing, there is to be a strict delineation between private and public housing. The re-developed component (low-rise) of public housing will be built in one single row set apart along the western boundary of the redevelopment. The Stage 1 of the development is currently selling off-plan as a ‘gated community’ of 90 private apartments grouped together around an exclusive, central garden space, inaccessible to public tenants behind a 4.5m fence. CRA continues to lobby government departments, Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, and local Member, Bronwyn Pike, to provide Carlton with a truly integrated mix of social housing and private housing with green space accessible to all - as promised!

5. Police & Community Consultation Committee (PCCC)

CRA is an active participant in this key group. Matters arising from the PCCC activities follows:

- ***Losing our Police Station.*** It is likely that the Carlton Police station will move to Wreckyn St. North Melbourne about June/July 2010. Whether there will be a small police presence at Carlton during a transition phase is still to be determined. When the Station re-locates to West Melbourne, the PCCC proposed that a farewell function be held highlighting the history and heritage value of the site. PCCC reports that is highly likely that the Carlton Police Station will be SOLD and proceeds will fund the construction of the new station.
- ***The Melbourne Community Safety Audit Pilot Program.*** This is a joint initiative between the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police. Community members nominate a location where safety improvements are needed. A copy of the Community Safety Audit Pilot Program information pack can be downloaded from www.melbourne.vic.gov.au <<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au>> .
- ***Lygon St-Princes St intersection.*** Discussion on this matter will commence in 2010. Police would like to see a speed/red light camera at the intersection and propose that a business case be developed to submit to Vic Roads.
- ***Day Camp.*** A very successful kids camp (15 from local primary schools) was held, funded by a donation from Safeways.
- ***Open Day.*** CRA participated in the Open Day at the Carlton Police Station. This was such a successful collaboration that the PCCC has awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to CRA for assistance with the Police Station Open Day 2009.

- **Local Policing Activities.** Generally in Melbourne public order is strong and the crime rate generally is down. Whilst there is no increase in felonies there are constant issues such as *car thefts* (with successful arrests!) and concerns about the *safety of international students* but there are also educational programs, alerting students to steps they should take to assure their safety and that of their laptops. The PCCC is concerned about *liquor licensing* and the penalties that are placed on local businesses that trade after 1 am when they are placed in an ‘at risk’ category and can face heavy fines when infringements occur. Closing before 12.30 am effectively removes these businesses from the ‘at risk’ group. In response to ‘risks’ emanating from the CBD, Police plan to ‘task’ Carlton between 4 am and 6 am to monitor people moving out of the CBD, especially in the peak CBD ‘exit’ times from 2 am to 4 am. University student ‘O’ week is looming and Police plan to address meetings in student residences on safety and distribute Safety Package to students.
- **Driver Education/Training Program.** This will now cease as the Council has consistently refused to consider supporting it, even though other local Councils have done so. This is despite the support of RACV and other groups for driver education.

6. Newsflash

The purpose of the *Newsflash* is to report on CRA activities and views, provide information about and promote local events, activities and organisations and to generally help foster community awareness of happenings in the local area. During 2009, four editions of *Newsflash* were published. Calls for contributions are made on the first day of February, May, August and November. Copies are then usually available by the end of the 3rd week of those months.

Midway through 2009, the Committee made some key decisions regarding the *Newsflash*:

- Hard copies would be printed - rather than just emailing it to CRA members
- 400 copies would be printed – making it available, not just to CRA members, but also to the wider community. Consequently, multiple copies are available in a variety of locations around Carlton.
- The outside cover would be colour printed, and the inside page, black and white – to maintain the quality of production even though colour printing increases costs.

As well as informing the members of activities the *Newsflash* is used to publicise CRA activities to: State and Council elected officials, and bureaucrats, the media, business and general community (library, La Mama, CoAsIt, Churches, Readings, street stalls etc) and to encourage new memberships.

In 2009, the cost of printing these copies of the *Newsflash* was paid for by a grant of \$5000 from the Melbourne City Council. In 2010, the grant has been reduced to \$3000. Current and past copies of the *Newsflash* are available on the CRA website. As always, we rely on your input to make the *Newsflash* an interesting and informative read! The CRA editorial Team wishes to thank all contributors during 2009 and appeal to many more members to consider assisting us all to keep up-to date on what is happening in Carlton.

7. Traffic, Transport & Parking

Passage through State Parliament of the *Major Transport Facilitation Bill*, in late 2009, foreshadows the probable fast tracking of transport projects following the State Election in November 2010. The new legislation removes many traditional checks and balances, such as appeal rights and environmental protection requirements. The \$38 billion *Victorian Transport Plan*, announced in early 2009, includes aspects of the controversial Eddington East-West Link rejected in 2008. It is possible the \$10 billion road tunnel component of the proposed Link, with major impacts on Carlton and Parkville, could be back on the agenda again in 2011. At the local level, we finally achieved a long-sought 40kph speed zone through the Lygon Street Precinct (See also PCCC report on lighting and cameras).

Other CRA activities were related to cycling. Firstly, responding to the proposal to allow commuter cycling in the Carlton Gardens. This matter was referred to COM officers for a report on better options for cycle paths on roads and gardens. Secondly, by raising the matter of inadequate warnings to residents about the impacts of the Jayco cycling event in Carlton. Thirdly, the CRA was successful in lobbying for much-improved bike parking facilities outside Lygon Court on Lygon St.

8. Streetscapes

Following CRA lobbying over several years, the Council completed street *tree plantings* in Cardigan and Faraday Streets, including a major refurbishment of the roundabout. 'Make-good' tree plantings around College Square on Swanston were also completed. The Council continued arboreal work on Lygon St. trees to minimise the impacts of pollen, seeds and leaves on el-fresco diners. These trees significantly enhance the ambience of the Precinct; opposition to them from some traders appears diminished. CRA proposals for enhanced median greening and additional tree plantings have faced vigorous opposition from both traders and some residents. *On-street parking* continues to be their priority despite the high level of under-utilized off-street parking. The CRA remains puzzled by this.

CRA actively supported the Council with its recently introduced and on-going graffiti clean-up program. This costly task continues as new *graffiti vandalism* reappears on a daily basis. The CRA alerted the Council to a range of *billboard advertisements* around Carlton, which did not have a Council permit. These included semi-permanent real estate hoardings on apartment buildings, which have since been removed. CRA also succeeded in inducing Council to enforce its own by-laws on a range of street advertisements around the University of Melbourne. The University was required to apply for retrospective permits on Grattan St. and Swanston St. Sadly, the large poster advertising the University at a great height, visible throughout the length of Elgin St., does not apparently require a permit since it is on University property.

9. Events

In 2009 several very successful CRA social dinner meetings were held to both inform and entertain members and guests. In the absence of a community centre in Carlton, local businesses and organisations have provided meeting facilities. CRA sincerely thanks *Dimattina's*, the *Clare Castle Hotel*, Church of all Nations (CAN), *La Mama Theatre*, and the ever generous *Brunetti* who have supported CRA by providing marvellous suppers over many years. CRA is grateful to guest speakers and councillors, who have agreed to speak at various CRA events, enhancing our understanding of issues and increasing our pleasure in what our community has to offer. CRA plans more collaborative events in 2010 to bring together members and others in our community such as Carlton Gardens Tennis Club, local school parents and Carlton Parkville Probud. CRA will host a dinner every three months at a local restaurant with a guest speaker.

10. Population Growth (*Melbourne@5million*)

CRA continues to collaborate with state-wide activist groups, *Planning Backlash* and *Protectors of Public Lands*, on 'big picture' planning and environmental issues. The impacts on infrastructure and planning of Melbourne's rapid population growth, currently around 2000 per week, will increasingly engage us in our primary task to protect Carlton's historic buildings and streetscapes from the predations of inappropriate development. Major revisions to the *Planning and Environment Act*, to expedite development and for job creation purposes, will increasingly impact Carlton in the future.

11. Carlton Gardens

Key actions in the World Heritage Carlton Gardens for the 2009 are as follows:

World Heritage developments

Carlton Gardens and the Royal Exhibition Building (REB) were declared a world heritage site in April 2004. World Heritage listing requires the responsible government to develop a management plan for the conservation, protection and preservation of the REB and Carlton Gardens. The plan includes conservation, interpretation, environs and master plans. The conservation plan (permitted uses) is not finished and the interpretation plan (public information and education) has yet to commence. After several years delay, the much anticipated World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA) Strategic Plan was approved by Minister Madden in late 2009. The WHEA strategic plan is intended to protect the *remaining* heritage values in the 'buffer' zone around the Carlton Gardens/REB. Note that CRA and CGG and COM were of the view the Piccolo development at the corner of Queensberry and Rathdowne Sts was not appropriate and that the development would not be permitted if the draft WHEA plan were in force. VCAT actually approved the development.

The *parterre* and *scroll* beds in the southern gardens, a principal heritage feature identified by the COM in its Master Plan for the Gardens were in fact planted during the past year. The flowers and shrubs selected although in sympathy with to the original plantings were modified to cope with drought, possums and

reduced maintenance. The colourful garden beds showcase the fountain and the REB. The result supports heritage values, pleasing locals and visitors alike.

Impact of Climate Change and drought

The City of Melbourne has increased its efforts in the care and maintenance of the city's gardens and parks as a response to the long-term drought and the implications of climate change. Despite these efforts, increasing numbers of old and heritage trees are stressed or dead. New plantings are difficult. However, The Carlton Gardens should, within the next year, benefit from the *REB Western Circle* restoration drawing on water from the underground tanks included in these works. Nevertheless, despite these improvements, CRA recognizes the continued discrepancy between infrastructure and maintenance standards adopted in the Carlton Gardens compared to those adopted in the Fitzroy Gardens. CRA argues the City of Melbourne has an obligation to develop and maintain the Carlton Gardens to the same level as the Fitzroy Gardens. To do otherwise constitutes a very real threat to our precious heritage Gardens. In order to allow recovery of degraded areas in the Gardens, the City of Melbourne has reduced permitted uses of gardens including prohibition of ball games on lawns and periodically cordoning off areas. CRA strongly supports such preventative measures. Given the obvious degradation from drought, disease, possums and increased usage, as well as the increased significance and public recognition through World Heritage listing, the CRA together with other concerned groups, is of the view is that the COM must further increase resources for the Carlton Gardens

Community consultation on heritage gardens and public parks

CRA is concerned that the level of community consultation on heritage gardens and public parks, now reduced to a single advisory group for all municipal gardens in our city, is woefully inadequate. Given the diversity of the various gardens and the impact climate change overall, this discrepancy is indeed unfortunate. Further, this change in the Council consultation process effectively shuns public involvement or in-put at a local level about the Carlton Gardens. Note that Carlton Gardens has no representative on the Gardens advisory group. Given its world heritage status and its chronic commercial exploitation, this omission is alarming. CRA has asked CORBA - Melbourne to discuss the implications of this reduced community access, with view to better representation.

During the year, the COM increased monitoring of the gardens for users infringing council's by-laws by cycling in the gardens and walking dogs off leash. Carlton Gardens has no dog off leash arrangement. The COM's Events Advisory Group (EAG) provides Council with advice about the event. The EAG includes representatives from the community, including CRA and CCG, recommenced and met in November 2009. The CRA and CCG are encouraged that Council has reconvened the EAG. It is the sole formal avenue for the passage of information on the impact of the event on the gardens and the surrounding communities.

The Melbourne Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS)

This event will again be held in early April in the Southern Carlton Gardens and in the REB. You will be aware that this event is no longer confined 'green' products but is increasingly a showcase for garden construction projects. These elaborate displays require infrastructure and construction works for this will commence in early March. As in previous years, there will be reduced public use and amenity in the Gardens during construction; post-event site demolition and repair work and the Southern gardens will be fully enclosed and public excluded for 2 weeks. In granting a license to host the show, the COM imposed specific protective measures. Enforcing compliance is altogether a difference matter. Because of the drought stress on the gardens, as well as the obvious loss public access for an extended period, the COM had decided not to re-license the event since it was considered an unnecessary additional stress. However, the State Government has enacted legislation to take control over the Carlton Gardens for events and, faced with this threat, the COM once again agreed to grant a new license. Nevertheless, the event also requires the approval of Heritage Victoria. We have not yet heard whether the new Heritage Executive Director, Jim Gardner, will grant this in 2010.

12. CoRBA – Melbourne (Coalition of Residents Associations and Business Groups in Melbourne)

There are a great many unresolved issues in our City, which confront all residents and ratepayers. The challenge for CoRBA is to ensure that the resident / ratepayer voice is actually heard by our elected representatives (i.e. Councillors and their staff. CoRBA argues that Council accountability and responsiveness to community concerns is inadequate and simply must improve. Electoral reform is of course the basis for this. To its credit, Council has attempted, on behalf of us all, to induce the State

government to act. It is shameful that State government has chosen to ignore the Council and the residents on this crucial matter.

However, it is a concern that the current Council has also decided to actually reduce our opportunities for genuine community consultation. On 15 December 2009, Council approved a new Committee structure. Now one committee, the *Future Melbourne Committee* will replace five other committees. (*Connected City Committee; Eco-City Committee; Economic Development and Knowledge City Committee; and People and Creative City Committee.*) Precisely how this change will enhance Council operations or processes is unclear. This situation is greatly exacerbated by there being no direct Ward representation in Melbourne. So the absence of Ward Councillors and the reduction in Councils committees will obviously reduce our access to Council and curtail our ability to voice our concerns to Council. Instead of conventional communication systems, Council and its Management seems committed to on-line canvassing of local opinion or large scale talk-fests at the Town hall of invited participants selected to shape policy. Such mediums may be expedient for management and cost-effective but, the question arises, are they what the community needs? Such mediums channel us towards particular outcomes and offer us specific choices but do not allow local knowledge to be heard.

During 2009, CoRBA attempted to hold the newly elected Council to its promises and continually worked to ensure that community views reached Council. In 2010 the focus will be upon ensuring that all candidates in the forthcoming State election are mindful of the concerns of the community in relation to local government issues and to remind them that local government processes are the basis of our democracy.

Note that CoRBA meets at the first Wednesday of each month at the Town Hall. Contact Jackie Watts on matters which are of concern to residents and ratepayers across the entire municipality so that they can be raised with CoRBA each month.

13. Friends of the Melbourne General Cemetery

This *new* Reference Group will commence in 2010. The cemetery was originally conceived not only as a burial place but also tranquil public garden, providing people with beautiful views across to the hills, water features, splendid trees and walkways. In recent times the push for economic 'self sufficiency' has degraded the gardens. In order to 'make ends meet', all the splendid design considerations and heritage values have been ignored. The result is that there are now many more graves than originally planned, jammed into all manner of inappropriate sites. Every possible nook and cranny has been used - and paid for! A new 'high-rise' mausoleum is to be built. CRA has contacted Heritage Victoria urging it to take a proactive role in designing and siting the building. More needs to be done to save the cemetery from further degradation. Now is the time. The State Government established a Cemeteries Reform project and a new Trust will control our cemetery - one of Victoria's Class A Metropolitan Cemeteries. To date the heritage value of the MGC has not been respected and we need a group of Friends to make sure that we achieve better future outcomes for this unique site.

All those interested in preserving this truly marvellous heritage resource for Melbourne and Carlton are invited to join. Contact Jackie Watts on 93478699

Presented at the CRA 14th AGM, 15 February 2010