



CRA ANNUAL REPORT 2010

CRA is an inclusive, democratic, non-party political, egalitarian community group which helps sustain Carlton's historic identity and architectural heritage. We continued to provide a strong and credible voice to the State Government and the City of Melbourne throughout 2010 to monitor, inform and advocate for the Carlton community.

The past year has been particularly busy and challenging for CRA with Federal and State elections (including two 'Meet the Candidates Forums' in Carlton), rapid population growth and associated housing development pressures, and intense lobbying for a Community Centre/Library.

CRA operates through Reference Groups which focus the interests and energy of members and spreads the advocacy load. The committee met on the third Monday of each month in 2010, usually at Dimattina's Restaurant. A Members Forum was held at each meeting for members to raise any matters of concern.

REFERENCE GROUP REPORTS

Kathleen Syme Centre – Community Centre/Library (Convenor: Greta Bird)

Over the past four years Brumby Government Ministers, including Member for Melbourne the Hon Bronwyn Pike and Premier Brumby, stymied all attempts by CRA and CoM to acquire KSC for Carlton. In February 2010, Ms Pike again insisted that Council restate for the third time its resolve to purchase this vital infrastructure. The Lord Mayor and Council wholeheartedly reaffirmed this with the Government, to no effect.

2010, being an election year, we turned to the Greens Party and the State Opposition. Both were most sympathetic to and supportive of Carlton's dire need. Matthew Guy, then Shadow Planning Minister, assured that it would be a very simple matter for the State Government to excise KSC from the Royal Women's Hospital and transfer it to CoM. He added that it was outrageous that our elected Government resisted such a course of action over several years, and raised the future of KSC in Parliament. Further, he advised CRA on campaign strategies. Acting on his advice, we initiated a number of actions:

- informed politicians, electoral candidates, and the community with continuing, newsworthy media actions to enhance our campaign and keep the issue in the spotlight. The Melbourne Leader newspaper was particularly helpful in keeping the issue in the news, the Melbourne Times Weekly also published supportive articles, and we raised KSC as a pre-election issue on Jon Faine, Radio 774, and at the Meet the Candidates Forum at CAN.
- twice we distributed flyers widely, requesting people email that Premier Brumby facilitate the immediate transfer of the vacant KSC from the State Government to the City of Melbourne for Carlton's Community Centre /Library. The community responded magnificently.
- held a public rally at KSC which was addressed by Greens candidate Brian Walters SC and Matthew Guy. Both made strong commitments to transfer the building to the City of Melbourne. CRA now confidently expects the Baillieu Government to honour this commitment.

Recent assurances from CoM, particularly from Crs Peter Clarke and Ken Ong, reconfirm that Council remains adamant in its resolve to purchase KSC for the Carlton community and has budgeted for it.

Our latest information comes from the Melbourne Leader (20 December 2010):

New Planning Minister Matthew Guy has reaffirmed his commitment to sell the state-owned Kathleen Syme Centre for a Carlton community centre - but the project still hinges on the State Government's valuation. Mr Guy said the government was taking advice on what process was needed to sell the site. "If the centre can be sold to the (Melbourne) council, who have stated they want it, then it should be done," he said. He said details, including if the council would pay full price for the building, would be worked out later.

A council report tabled last week confirmed it was looking to buy the site for a community centre and was awaiting government notification on a purchase price.

A heritage building, the Kathleen Syme site has been largely disused since the Royal Women's Hospital moved in 2008.

Carlton Residents Association has long campaigned for the centre, with spokeswoman Greta Bird saying the association "confidently" expected the government to honour its pre-election commitments.

Planning Reference Group (Convenor: David Higgins)

At the beginning of each month, the 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 2010 there were 95 planning applications for Carlton. The Planning Sub-Committee considered most of these in detail and raised 5 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 1 (challenged by another objector - going to VCAT), 1 was withdrawn and 3 are still under assessment. With the added pressure from other parties objecting, concessions continue to be made to some of the larger developments in Carlton, but these will no doubt continue to be concessions rather than outright victories.

In addition, the group lodged submissions with the City of Melbourne on the New Municipal Strategic Statement (Amendment C162) and a revised Student Housing Policy (Amendment C163) and will be represented at the Planning Panel Review, which has been convened for the latter.

Justice Bell's President's review of VCAT, undertaken in 2009, generated a report to which Justice Ross responded in 2010. Comments from original submitters were then invited. The group made a further submission in this regard. Detailed submissions relating to the preceding can be viewed on the CRA website under Reference Groups – Planning & Development.

The general planning/development environment, to which we have been subjected to in recent years, was the product of government legislation aimed at expediting development. It is impossible to predict what changes may be sought by the newly elected government so additional vigilance may well be required.

A key issue for the group continues to be the significant effort we need to expend to digest and provide meaningful feedback to the City of Melbourne. As planning group members are all busy in our daily lives this will continue to be a problem, given the continued pressure of housing density and land use change in Melbourne and Carlton in particular.

Transport, Traffic & Parking (Convenor: Ian Bird)

Not much positive change occurred in Carlton during 2010: traffic levels increased and public transport overcrowding continued, reflecting our escalating population growth.

Former Brumby Government transport policies were encapsulated in the *Victorian Transport Plan* (VTP) released in 2008. This largely unfunded \$38 billion roads and public transport Plan was the centrepiece of ALP 2010 pre-election campaigning called "Its part of the plan". However, little physical progress has been made on any major projects over recent years, despite all the rhetoric. The incoming Baillieu Government announced a review of the VTP and the appointment of a *Public Transport Development Authority* to coordinate the various public transport modes and to undertake rail line extensions feasibility studies. The long-sought rail line to Doncaster is back on the agenda, which could result in long-term reductions on car traffic growth in Carlton from the Eastern Freeway. Flood devastation throughout much of Australia will probably severely limit Commonwealth funding to major transport projects in Melbourne, such as the massive Eddington east-west road tunnel proposal, much favoured by the roads lobby.

Locally, CRA continued to lobby for improvements to the Lygon St. – Elgin St. intersection with its complex and dangerous mix of cars, buses, bikes, trams and pedestrians. The Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study on traffic management and design options for this prominent 'black-spot' intersection.

Streetscapes (Convenor: Ian Bird)

No progress was made in returning median car parking to green-space, despite supportive policies defined in *Carlton 2010* and our continuing lobbying.

Street tree plantings in Faraday and Cardigan Sts., undertaken in 2009, survived the drought and are now well established, providing welcome shade and improving streetscape vistas. Plane tree issues (leaves, pollen etc) in Lygon St. appear to have been successfully dealt with by the Council with minimal impacts on the trees.

A Sunday closure of Faraday St. (Lygon-Drummond Sts) in October, for the opening of *Museo Italiano* at CoAsIt, demonstrated the feasibility of developing a piazza in this area of Carlton (as CRA had earlier suggested). However traders continue to oppose such innovations in our streets primarily because of a perception that there may be a loss of free on-street car parking, now largely occupied by their staff on a continuous basis.

Graffiti is a continuing plague throughout Carlton despite efforts by the Council to remove it, CRA's regular reporting of it and police action to apprehend the vandals. The law requires that Council obtain building owner approval before graffiti is removed from private property, which delays removal action as many buildings here are not owner occupied.

Melbourne@5million (Convenor: Ian Bird)

Rapid population growth continued to drive Brumby Government policies to 'fast-track' developments outside regular planning processes, during 2010. This resulted in an unprecedented growth in high density housing, including purpose built student housing. Many controversial developments were 'called in' to former Planning Minister Madden's office and approved outside accountable assessment processes. The role of the Council in planning matters was further undermined and VCAT interventions were more intrusive. These controversial policies are now under review by the Baillieu Government.

The State wide group, *Planning Backlash* (of which CRA is a member), continued to lead the charge for planning reform. CRA members participated in many meetings, workshops, rallies, letter writing etc, on planning policies and VCAT reform. Widespread community apathy on planning issues emboldened the former Government in its pro-development policies, which sidelined the community interest.

Pre-election, the Baillieu Government promised to 'listen to the community' on planning matters, repeal some legislation and return planning powers to the Council.

Public Housing Redevelopment (Convenor: Greta Bird)

Building works on the Housing Estates began in 2010, following demolition of outdated 'walk-up' flats as far back as 2006. CRA's long expressed concerns regarding the inadequate State Government redevelopment policies are now a reality: over-development, loss of parkland and open space, deliberate 'gated' separation of private and public housing, potential social problems etc. Public tenants will be accommodated in a single high-rise building at the western edge of the Estate and not integrated into the overall development as earlier promised. Developer financial arrangements will lead to the introduction of private aged care facilities on the public housing estates, which will further intensify building densities.

CRA notes that in Carlton, 'off the plan' sales of private housing has been dominated by overseas investors, despite the lack of 'affordable' housing in Carlton and the general housing shortage. It is disappointing that, given the 41,000 long waiting list, this major public housing redevelopment project in Carlton includes no additional public housing places. Further, the Carlton community stands to lose 3.5ha of open space and parkland on these housing Estates placing greater stress on already limited public areas elsewhere in Carlton.

CRA made numerous submissions during 2010, which called on then Housing Minister, Richard Wynne, to implement a wide-ranging review of the directions of the redevelopment project. He ignored all requests to discuss the substantive issues or to act on them. Local Member, Bronwyn Pike, a strong supporter of redevelopment policies, finally admitted there were problems when questioned at the Candidates Forum in Carlton in early November. CRA had repeatedly pointed out these problems to Ms Pike over several years but without effect.

It is clear that major social infrastructure, such as the Housing Estates redevelopment, should not be left to the whims of profit driven private developers.

Coalition of Residents and Business Associations - Melbourne (CoRBA) (Convenor: Jackie Watts)
CRA Reference Group Coordinator Jackie Watts continues to convene this group of 16 resident and business groups in the municipality of Melbourne. The Council continues to withdraw or disband avenues of community engagement and CoRBA was established as a 'grass-roots' response to this. CoRBA is the sole mechanism through which residents and ratepayers in our municipality may meet regularly and work on issues of shared concern:

- **State Election** Prior to the election, CoRBA invited all candidates to respond to a questionnaire relating to our municipality. This was designed to elicit candidate responses and/or commitments and also ensure that local government matters were at least on the agenda at the State election. All too often a consequence of our status as the State capital city is that any interest at all in local concerns is obliterated. An emphasis upon economic growth in the State capital overshadows the needs of residents. Uppermost on the list of concerns for CoRBA members is the urgent need for electoral reform including a re-think on the actual structure of the Council. For example, given the huge increase in residents within the municipality, the current number of Councilors is inadequate and this is exacerbated by the absence of Ward representation. Further on a Federal level, CoRBA is of the view that we now have a sympathetic new MP Adam Bandt, who will be approached to take electoral reform matters up at the Federal Parliamentary committee level. The bottom line is that we have a right to the same treatment as residents in all other Victorian municipalities.
- **Heritage** CoRBA members are seriously concerned about the decline in support for heritage issues in this State. Obviously this is a crucial element amongst the broader discontent with planning matters in general throughout Victoria. We hope that this may be ameliorated with the change of government, especially since the new Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, has indicated that he is across the issues facing Carlton.
- **Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment: Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) 2010** Council is undertaking this Planning review. CRA Members will recall a recent meeting at which a CoM officer spoke to ostensibly inform the community so that we could make an informed response to the draft MSS. The MSS process has been a serious disappointment to all CoRBA members. In good faith, CoRBA and 142 other citizens or groups made submissions. Much to our dismay, CoM Administration failed to incorporate many community views into the document presented to Council for ratification. CoRBA and others objected to this and called for a serious re-writing of the entire document. Fortunately Council responded by creating a sub-committee of Council to review the matter. CoRBA has requested permission to address this subcommittee.
- **Consultations with Council** In the absence of Ward representation, CoRBA is alarmed that Council and/or CoM Administration has persistently eliminated or disbanded a range of avenues through which community engagement or consultations could occur. CoRBA intends to pursue this unacceptable trend in 2011.
- **Trader Groups** CoRBA is concerned the CoM Administration is attempting to merge all CBD trader precinct groups into one untenable group with a single funding source.

Protectors of Public Lands (Convenor: Colin Macnamara)

CRA continued an active involvement with the State-wide group *Protectors of Public Lands* and participated in rallies, meetings and lobbying on public land matters. In December, we compiled a submission for Carlton to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Investigation of Public Land in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Given the paucity of public open space in our precinct, and the many decades over which our meagre space has been under constant threat from acquisition and encroachment, it is crucial that the CRA maintain a watching brief. The CRA has been alarmed at the potential loss of public land around Princes St posed by the proposed East West Link Tunnel for on-off ramps, fume stacks etc. As noted above (Transport & Traffic Ref Group) the Baillieu Government plans to review the entire Transport Plan. In 2000 the Northern Central City Corridor Study, concluded that an East-West link was not required.

Melbourne General Cemetery Friends (Convenor: Jackie Watts)

CRA remains enthusiastic in its support for a resumption of the original concept of the MGC as a passive recreational space for the people of Carlton as well as a burial place. This original vision for the MGC remains under the constant threat as those managing the site operate under pressure to make the MGC self funded. More and more sites are offered to the public in inappropriate locations when perhaps capacity has already been reached. CRA objected strongly to the 'real estate' banners which appeared late in 2010 around the cast iron perimeter fence advertising new plots. We were successful in having this inappropriate signage removed.

The new Mausoleum construction site is evident. The entry from Cemetery Road is now closed and will probably remain so until the completion of the works towards the end of 2011. We are relieved that that the National Trust and Heritage Victoria successfully lobbied for six level of crypts be placed below ground level. However, another 6 levels of crypts will loom over the cemetery.

Growing Carlton (Trader Liaison, Reunification, Friends etc) (Convenor: Jackie Watts)

As one of the poorest postcodes in Melbourne, CRA struggles with membership issues. However, some progress has been made in introducing the “Friends of the CRA ” membership category for those who love Carlton but no longer live or work here. CRA has also forged a relationship with the Parents and Friends Group at the Carlton Gardens Primary School and initial discussions have also begun about the possibility of re-unification of Carlton with various groups in North Carlton. Carlton was divided during the Kennett era municipal amalgamations. No one wanted the split and we are determined to undo this unfortunate demarcation. Kensington successfully lobbied to rejoin the CoM following a similar division, and we are hopeful that Carlton can achieve the same result for our divided community.

Newsflash and Website (Convenors: Jean Evans, Lyn Cracknell, Robyn Dalziel)

The CRA website and *Newsflash* are the public ‘faces’ of CRA. Both are widely acknowledged and appreciated. The *Newsflash* has been produced ‘in-house’ since January 2010 without professional assistance, which has effectively led to significant cost savings without compromising the quality of the production. The CRA website is also now managed ‘in-house’ by the reference group members, using Adobe Contribute. Feedback and input to these productions is always welcome.

Media/Design (Convenor: Robert Charlton)

During 2010 CRA launched several very effective campaigns to inform, to garner support and to persuade the media, the community and the politicians to respond to our appeals for action! Professional design input has clearly improved the effectiveness of CRA campaigns in 2010.

Carlton Gardens Group (CGG), affiliated with CRA (Convenor: Margaret O’Brien)

Thank you to City of Melbourne and Museum Victoria managers, for providing the information for this report. The opinions, though, are CRA’s own. CRA and CGG (CGG now affiliated with the CRA) no longer have membership on council’s gardens’ advisory group. This means we don’t have information on or involvement in council’s gardens’ activities. We consider this a great lost opportunity both for community and for council to tap support and local intelligence. We hope council will reconsider the decision to reduce community representation on the Gardens Advisory Group.

It is pleasing that there is much positive to report. Clearly the rain has revitalised the gardens and especially the new par-terre and scroll gardens, show case the city front of the REB. It is wonderful. However, after the prolonged drought many old and heritage trees have died and others are stressed and under threat.

1. Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS)

It is with regret we report the continuing annual use of the Carlton Gardens by the MIFGS. This high impact and commercial event adds additional and unnecessary burden to fragile trees and gardens. The southern gardens’ closure and reduced access for MIFGS set up and use, is increasingly unfair to huge numbers of the public. CRA continues to advocate against the MIFGS use of the World Heritage Carlton Gardens. CRA seeks council to get agreement from the new government to not renew the MIFGS licence in the Gardens, but rather support MIFGS on another site or at least its total relocation to REB and adjacent Museum spaces.

2. Restoration of significant heritage elements

CRA commends Museum Victorian which manages this World Heritage site and the CoM for their efforts and the notable improvements over the past year. We are advised that asphalt work in the Eastern Forecourt is completed, and planting, part of the Western Circle Project, is underway. The temporary fencing is due to be dismantled at the end of February, when the area will be open to the public. See:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/reb/about-us/world-heritage-world-futures/blog/>. The Western Circle restoration was funded by the Victorian Property Fund on the approval of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The CoM contributed to the funding of the water tanks and harvesting scheme, and in return will receive an annual average of 27% of the water which will be sufficient for the restored parterre gardens, fountains and lake maintenance. We are particularly pleased that copies of the original Victorian cast iron perimeter gates have been put at the Rathdowne Street entrance in front of the REB. (We are aware that the original gardens’

gates and fencing is around the Melbourne High School and Genezzano). CRA supports further replacement of original fencing and gates at significant locations around the gardens.

We are pleased to note that UNESCO now requires all those managing World Heritage sites, such as the REB/Carlton Gardens, to prepare a Statement of Outstanding Universal Values (SOUV) and the Federal Dept of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is finalising this. We are also pleased to note the Museum intends to conduct a local residents' information session at 5pm on Wednesday 2 March incorporating a short walk around of the Western Forecourt followed by a regular meeting in the Museum. The Museum is responsible for the Carlton Gardens Master Plan Improvement Program and is awaiting news of a funding application they have made to the Federal National Historic Sites program.

Note that the World heritage Management Plan, a requirement by UNESCO, includes an Interpretation Plan. We are not aware that an Interpretation Plan has been prepared. Such a plan would be a pivotal tool for the public's and tourists' understanding of the heritage significance of the World Heritage site, both the Gardens and the REB. The CRA continues to advocate for the old curator's cottage in the northern gardens, called Guilfoyle's Cottage, to be resumed for community use as an interpretation centre.

3. New plantings

While the Museum manages the 'formalities' related to WH obligations, the CoM manages the 'parks' aspects of the Carlton Gardens. The CoM advises that new trees have been planted along the north boundary, eastern side, some replacement trees have been planted on the N side of the playground and in the SW area. CoM has obtained a heritage permit to re-instate the curved pathway at the SW corner and to undertake associated landscape works. Although trees have been planted in anticipation, this restoration is as yet unfunded. In the RH of the SW side of the first lawn area, new trees have been planted in groups of three and the species chosen (*Ulmus procera* (English Elm), *Pinus halepensis* (Aleppo pine) and *Quercus robur* (English Oak) are part of the 1880's palette in the original planting style. These groupings of three trees match those in the East lawn on the side of the Carlton Gardens. CRA supports the CoM's ongoing replanting program. There are still many gaps in avenues where heritage trees have died and not been replaced.

4. Public Amenity

Anyone spending time in the Carlton Gardens will observe that there is an intense competition for this scarce public open space in our precinct. Tension is likely to increase as the government, local and State, press for increased urban density in our municipality. For example, CRA is aware of the recent public lobbying by a bicycle rider seeking use of Gardens because of congested roads and footpaths. CRA understands the temptation, but would not support commuter cyclists in the Gardens. Experience is that too many cyclists ride too fast for Garden paths to be safe for pedestrians and other gardens' users. CRA view is that transferring risk from the roads to the gardens is not a solution to cyclists' safety. CRA though, supports council's and government's program of ongoing improvements in amenity and safety for cyclists.

5. Planning for the World Heritage Gardens' future

CRA continues to feel alarm at the longer term survival of the Gardens. We are surprised that neither the CoM nor the Museum seem to have empirical measures on the numbers of people using the gardens. The CRA maintains that these statistics on numbers and uses is essential for effective planning. For example, in addition to high and increasing public use and the annual appropriation by MIFGS, the northern gardens are used as break out space by hundreds of thousands of students on museum curriculum visits.

CRA strongly recommends, that a comprehensive review of the Carlton Gardens Master Plan, be conducted. We applaud the efforts and investments in the Fitzroy Gardens made by the CoM and the State Government but note with considerable concern the 'poor relation' treatment of the Carlton Gardens - which actually has World Heritage status. With World Heritage status comes additional responsibilities and, of course, opportunities to leverage the international profile. The CoM and the State government invest readily in marketing to tourists and our Public Gardens feature strongly. Yet this marketing mention, is not always translated to active support and budget funding. The authorities fail to recognize the causal connection between overuse, inappropriate commercial exploitation and eventual degradation. Fitzroy Gardens continues to be the bench-mark. We commend the new Fitzroy master plan. We all, council, government and community advocates, including the CRA, must persist to ensure the Carlton Gardens reaches the same standard as Fitzroy Gardens or even exceeds that standard, as befits our only World Heritage Gardens.

Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC) (Convenor: Richard Tisher)

The PCCC has had a successful 2010 and most recently over the Christmas period conducted a food and toy drive to benefit the disadvantaged in Carlton. At recent meetings the Police reported that a campaign to target bicycle thefts at The University of Melbourne is underway, and that changes have been made to the pedestrian crossing times at intersections in Carlton in order to allow elderly persons adequate times to cross streets. Issues to be explored by the PCCC soon include positioning and costing of a safety camera network in Carlton. CRA is pleased to note that our representative, Richard Tisher, will assume the role of PCCC vice-chairperson for 2011.

Police Station Redevelopment - a new CRA Reference Group (Convenor: Jeremy Hill)

Now that the Victoria Police operations have ceased at the Police Station in Drummond St, Carlton, the future of this key heritage site in Carlton is uncertain. CRA intend to exercise a watching brief.

Opportunities for Carlton Project Liaison (OFC) (Convenor: Brian Falconer)

The OFC is funded by the State Government and administered by City of Melbourne. Its objective is to build social infrastructure, largely for Public Housing tenants. During 2010 several projects were implemented or planned. These funded initiatives include or will include:

- *Carlton Digital Inclusion (CDI)* is a partnership involving the Church of all Nations, Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Melbourne University students, the DHS Public Tenant Employment Program and the City of Melbourne.
- *Carlton Public Housing Estate Workshop* A grant of \$45,000 was allocated to refurbish an existing workshop at 510 Lygon St. with the view to eventually establishing a *Men's Shed*, a *Computer workshop*, a *community room*, a *bicycle shed* and space for a *Men's Health for Harmony project* steering group to meet.
- *Carlton Community Website* A Carlton community website is now operating, but to remain financially solvent it will need sponsorship from local businesses. Residents may register online for this publication.
- *African Employment Challenge Report*. This report details the achievements and challenges of the *Carlton Horn of Africa Project*.
- Another initiative in the pipeline for 2011 is the establishment of the *Bendigo Bank Carlton Connected Communities Fund*.

The 2010/11 OFC Grant Round received 10 applications in total, relating to a broad range of future community projects. Six projects will share funding of \$33,930. These are:

- Community Space on the Public Housing Estate (i.e. Office of Housing Property)
- Carlton Neighborhood Learning Centre - to advertise the Carlton Community website via a postcard mail-out to residents and businesses across Carlton.
- Carlton Housing Estate Childcare Workers Advocacy Group (Church of All Nations) - to advance employment opportunities and foster skills development to women of CALD backgrounds who are facing barriers to employment in the Children Services sector.
- Green Renters Group will present 10 workshops for renters in Carlton on sustainable living in rental accommodation - how to live green and save money.
- Meld Magazine will produce an on-line international student orientation guide to Carlton.
- Getting Back On Your Feet – will provide increased support to assist isolated, low mobility clients sustain healthy activity levels.

Presented at the CRA AGM 21 February 2011