



# Newsflash

Autumn 2007

## *Annual General Meeting*

The 2007 AGM was held on 19<sup>th</sup> February upstairs at Dimattina's Restaurant. The President outlined the diverse activities over the past year, and the Treasurer reported on our financial position. The following Committee was elected: Greta Bird (President) Jackie Watts (Vice President), Warren Green (Treasurer), Colin Macnamara (Secretary) Anne Ritter, Murray Dovey and Robyn Dalziel (Ordinary Members).

Following formal business, Cr David Wilson, Chair of MCC Community Services Committee, addressed the meeting on the theme 'Working together in Carlton'. He spoke of our need for a sense of belonging to a community, which includes shared ownership of issues, shared responsibility, and tolerance to others. People need to be involved in the community to enable a shared vision to be created. Cr Wilson explained how the City of Melbourne is developing a sense of community for residents by some of the services it provides, however some projects fail to proceed because of lack of political will, lack of budget, or the practicality of getting an issue/project implemented. In answer to a question of how to get issues raised, Cr Wilson stated that lobbying councilors is effective. He expressed strong support of Carlton's need for a Community Centre, and stated ideas should be emailed to him.

Grateful thanks to Brunettis for again providing a delicious supper, and to Dimattina's for their wonderful venue. A schedule for CRA meetings throughout 2007 is attached; please note general meeting dates.

## *Community Centre Update*

Minister Bronwyn Pike's assistant had a general perception that "Carlton now consists mainly of student housing blocks" and queried our need for a Community Centre!! We continue to pressure Council and State Govt to provide a long sought Community Centre for Carlton's residents, business, the 15,000 workers who come here daily, and visitors. We are negotiating to activate Premier Bracks' pre-election promise of State Government funding towards a centrally located Centre in partnership with Melbourne City Council.

The current focus is to acquire the historic Carlton Primary School, known as the Kathleen Syme Centre, cr Cardigan and Faraday Sts, when it is vacated by the Royal Womens Hospital next year. This building is a Carlton icon and ideal in location and size to house the diverse activities that CRA and Carlton Business Association envisage as essential for our community: meeting rooms and hall (Readings book launches etc), library, business incubator, offices, Information Centre etc. We need active and widespread support to bring this exciting initiative to a positive conclusion in the near term. We understand the current plan is to sell off the school to developers for luxury apartments. It would then be lost to our community forever.

## *Planning matters*

**VCAT:** As outlined in our Summer Newsflash, we have begun a campaign for the reform of VCAT, and have contacted other City of Melbourne residents associations and the State-wide activist group 'Planning Backlash'. There is widespread support for VCAT reform which may be aided by the recent resignation of its controversial Presiding Judge, Justice Stuart Morris. Residents' Groups are fed up with being sidelined and unfairly overwhelmed by wealthy developers at VCAT. CRA is part of a concerted campaign to ensure State Government ministers listen to the community on planning issues.

**Recent Planning Issues in Carlton:** Despite Cr Wilson's address on communities, he spoke in favor of yet another massive student housing project in Swanston St (Canada Hotel opposite Lincoln Square). Such rampant housing developments are destroying neighborhood character. Melbourne University's policy of transforming itself into a post-graduate university is resulting in plummeting numbers of international students. It was interesting to learn that MCC has no policy with regard to ongoing student housing development in Carlton.

**Residential Diversity:** Carlton is being overwhelmed by student housing; isolating international students in these ghettos is doing them a gross injustice. Students are denied involvement in a vibrant local community, and at the same time residents are being squeezed out, leading to the destruction of our 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. To continue building ever more student housing in the hope this will somehow attract students is the logic of a cargo cult, and has distorted housing construction in Carlton.

Even small domestic sites have now become high density student housing e.g. Cnr Swanston St and Palmerston Pl. We recently addressed the MCC Planning Committee on this issue, to no effect. A recent planning application now on appeal to VCAT is for conversion of two small terrace houses opposite St Mary's College in Swanston St to yet more high density student housing. Such land use is unsustainable: floor area is broken into a multitude of tiny NO bedroom apartments, each under separate strata title. What will become of all this 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.

### *Public Housing Panel Report*

Planning Minister, Hon Justin Madden, recently signed off on the rezoning of the Public Housing Estates for the proposed redevelopment. There will be 246 public housing units and 550 up market private units for sale into the city real estate market. Following the Panel Report, Housing Minister, Hon Richard Wynne, agreed to an improved mix of public housing units as follows: 121 x 1 bedroom, 72 x 2 bedroom, 33 x 3 bedroom and 20 x 4 bedroom. This will provide accommodation for around 570 people, compared with 576 people prior to the redevelopment. Although there is no net gain in public housing despite the 35,000 long waiting list, there is now no net loss as was earlier envisaged (90-200 spaces lost). Overall, community activism faced down the proposed reopening of Drummond St through the estate, improved open space-parkland configurations and added 3 and 4 bedroom apartments to the accommodation mix. CRA (and others) push for 'affordable' housing on the Estates for inner city workers was not agreed to. Massive overdevelopment and substantial loss of open space remain. Rezoning of the three sites to Residential 2 now takes these outside any further formal input from the community. Rebuilding is scheduled to commence early 2009. Andrea Oribin has generously agreed to represent CRA at future Community Liaison Committee meetings.

### *Grand Prix on Lygon Street*

Lord Mayor So's decision to bankroll this event to the tune of \$100,000 caused distress to some councilors and many Carlton residents. CRA has campaigned for years to traffic calm Lygon St so as to make it a more pedestrian and bike friendly zone and discourage hooning behavior by motorists. A pedestrian was recently killed by a hit-run driver. The sight of a Formula 1 racing car on Lygon St encourages 'rev-heads' and does nothing to confront local air and noise pollution problems and broader global warming issues from excessive car usage. We expressed these views to MCC during its debate on the issue. It seems the Grand Prix is not financially viable and requires massive public funding to prop it up.

### *Vale Margaret Erickson*

With great sadness we record the death of a much loved and valued CRA member. Margaret, a long-time Carlton resident, was an acknowledged advocate for social justice, heritage and environmental issues, and professionally a much lauded retired senior psychotherapist at the Royal Children's Hospital. Among her many activities, Margaret was at the forefront in saving Queen Victoria Market from developers in the 1980s. Her funeral at Springvale, attended by many Carlton friends, included the following eulogy reading as a fitting farewell and acknowledgement of her remarkable and inspirational life:

#### *The True Gifts*

*A true gift is the giving of yourself. We give of ourselves when we give the gift of words – encouragement, guidance, praise and inspiration. We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the mind – ideas, clear purpose, principles, high ideals. We give of ourselves when we give gifts of action – honest deeds, brave opposition to violence and injustice, practical help to those in need, an examined life. We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the heart – love, kindness, joy, understanding, forgiveness. We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the spirit – vision, beauty, aspiration, peace, faith. The only true gift is in the giving of yourself. And this, Margaret, you have given to us all. Vale, Margaret, we will miss you.*

A memorial service to celebrate Margaret's life will be included at morning worship at the Church of All Nations, Palmerston St, next Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April, 10a.m. Her CRA friends are cordially invited to attend.

**Greta Bird**  
President



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