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## CRA ANNUAL REPORT 2011

CRA is an inclusive, democratic, non-party political, egalitarian community group which acts to sustain Carlton's historic identity and architectural heritage. Through our quarterly *Newsflash* publication, website and regularly emailed *eflash* newsletters, we continued to provide information of relevance to CRA members and the Carlton community, to encourage community involvement on important matters.

A highlight of 2011 was the election (by count-back) of CRA member, Dr Jackie Watts, to the Council of the City of Melbourne, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Cr Peter Clarke. This was the first occasion in many years where a resident activist has been elected to the business dominated Council. Since election, Cr Watts has actively advocated for many matters of concern to residents across the City, including Council electoral reform, however she can no longer continue her leadership role in CRA and with the Coalition of Residents and Business Association.

**In summary:** over the past year CRA Committee members have 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.

On-going lobbying for a Community Centre/Library for Carlton continued at high level during 2011. Although the Council purchased the Kathleen Syme Centre in July for this purpose, its final use is still under debate. Adaptive reuse of the vacant Carlton Police Station to house community facilities was actively pursued.

Melbourne's escalating population growth continues to attract inappropriate housing development in Carlton, which has required much time consuming response from the CRA Planning Group, including at VCAT. Despite pre-election rhetoric, innovative transport policy has languished under the Baillieu Government, with roads-centric policies again to the fore. Lobbying for democratic electoral reform for the City of Melbourne achieved partial success with Government agreement to a review, now underway, of councillor numbers and the feasibility of return to a Ward structure.

CRA maintained an active role in monitoring and involvement with the Public Housing Estates Redevelopment, the Council's *Opportunities for Carlton* programs, Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building, and other parkland areas, Police Community Consultative Committee, etc. Reunification of Carlton and North Carlton (excised in 1993), was also pursued by CRA in 2011, through the *Carlton Alliance* group.

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 2011, usually at Dimattina's Restaurant; the November meeting was convened at KSC for the first time in several years. A Members Forum was held at each meeting for members to raise any matters of concern.

### ***Carlton Alliance*** (Convenor: Philip Watts)

At our 2010 AGM (Feb 2011) a question was raised with Guest Speaker, Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle, regarding the reunification of Carlton (3053) and North Carlton (3054) within the City of Melbourne. North Carlton had been excised without debate in 1993 by the Kennett Government for base political purposes. The reunification question attracted media publicity and a renewed interest among North Carlton residents to revisit the issue. This led to the establishment of the CRA Reference Group, *Carlton Alliance*, in March 2011, as an informal coalition of CRA members and North Carlton residents.

The *Carlton Alliance* Working Group met monthly throughout 2011, at the Princes Hill Community Centre. It provided a forum for common interests to be discussed, along with the development of ideas and documentation in support of reunification. A major task was to publicise reunification possibilities throughout North Carlton and Carlton via two letterboxed flyers, to encourage attendance at Public Meetings held on 24 July and 16 October at the Carlton Football Club (*Newsflash* Winter & Spring 2011). At both these well attended meetings the *Alliance* received overwhelming encouragement from residents and business to continue its work.

In November 2011, an information brochure was printed in support of a petition to the Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell, seeking Government support for reunification. Through street stalls, door knocking and media publicity, *Alliance* members gained publicity for reunification and signatures on the petition. This work will continue in 2012 in preparation for a further Public Meeting, later in 2012, to seek community ratification for reunification within the City of Melbourne.

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

A highlight of 2011 was CRA working with Fitzroy Residents Association, Residents 3000, Southbank Residents Association and Protectors of Public Lands, to make submissions to the Public Hearing on the draft World Heritage Master Plan for Carlton Gardens and REB. Our Federal MP, Adam Bandt, was briefed personally and is committed to raise the public profile of this historical and World Heritage site. A meeting with Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, also raised his awareness of our concerns eg. the need for formal community representation on the management committee. Activities in 2011 included:

- CRA's campaign against MIFGS using the South Garden continued. For the first time a competitor, Better Homes and Gardens, will hold a show in February but using only the REB; an opportunity to gauge public support.
- Notable media coverage included REB as the site of Australia's first parliament, including Alfred Deakin's descendants, Adam Bandt MP and community representatives.
- CRA and FRA initiative to reopen the REB viewing promenade to the public (Roam the Dome).
- Restoration of the Western forecourt transforming the western (Rathdowne Street) frontage to the REB.

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

On 4 July 2011, the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy and Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle, announced transfer of KSC from the State Govt. to the City of Melbourne. We were delighted to proclaim that the many years of passionate community campaigning for a centrally located Community Centre/Library for Carlton, by CRA and a cross-section of community members, was rewarded with success. However our euphoric celebrations ended in shock and deep dismay when Council identified alternate uses for KSC, to provide space for a range of specialized services targeted mainly at public housing tenants, such as health and aged services.

Melbourne Council unveiled four possible models it has developed for the Kathleen Syme Centre, without reference to the general community. Residents and service providers are to be consulted in 2012 as to which council model is preferred. Following CRA lobbying two models now include library options. This will force a choice between comprehensive library facilities for the entire Carlton community, or space for services for Carlton's disadvantaged. KSC cannot accommodate all the identified facilities and services required for Carlton. The primary purposes for the KSC must remain focused on the entire community – the 82% of Carlton's residents who pay rates and also need facilities. CRA has developed and presented a strong and united 'vision' over many years for the KSC with the support of the Arts and Literary community, schools, local businesses and traders and a cross section of community members. The 'vision' for KSC is for a centrally located Community Centre / Library which will facilitate integrated activities – developing / building / sustaining community / creating well-being - space where all Carlton can be community.

It is a travesty that intense community competition has been encouraged by the Council for the limited space of KSC. CRA proposed to Council a solution to avoid this conflict – that it acquire the vacant Carlton Police Station, to house urgently required community resources. The building has been declared surplus to police needs, is ideally situated, eminently suitable for adaptive re-use by a range of local community organisations. Federal Member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt, has flagged federal funding possibilities for refurbishment. This provides a rare opportunity for Council to acquire additional much needed space, to fulfil all of Carlton's dire needs, and to provide services currently available in all surrounding suburbs.

### ***CoRBA-Melbourne*** (Convenor: Greta Bird)

A major success for CoRBA (Coalition of Residents and Business Associations) in 2011 was to press the State government and the Council to initiate the current Victorian Electoral Commission review of the City of Melbourne electoral system.

CoRBA sees the review as one small but vital step towards Melbourne being accorded the same level of scrutiny and review as applied to all other Victorian municipalities. Having wrangled this opportunity out of the authorities after years of effort, it is important as many people as possible put their views forward to the review.

Council Election year 2012 will be very busy for CoRBA members who will be working to raise the profile of the constituent 'voice' - ie. those of us who actually live and work in Melbourne, approximately 40% of the total number of voters. CoRBA intends to ensure that issues and concerns which are shared by constituents across the municipality eg. transport, traffic, tunnel threat, planning, density, streetscapes, greening, community engagement, public safety etc are brought to the attention of all candidates.

### ***Melbourne@5million*** (Convenor: Ian Bird)

Rapid population growth of Melbourne (currently 1500 per week) was regularly debated in the media during 2011. Government and business argue it is vital to economic growth, however the general population remains sceptical. Unprecedented growth in high density housing, along with overloaded public transport and congested roads, are of widespread concern. Transport infrastructure is greatly lagging Government directed population growth.

The Baillieu Government pre-election promise to 'listen to the community' has not materialised and policies enacted by the previous Brumby Government continue to dominate population, transport and development outcomes.

The role of Planning Minister, Hon Matthew Guy, is as interventionist as his ALP predecessor, Justin Madden. All major planning decisions in Carlton remain under the control of the Planning Minister or VCAT.

CRA has continued its active participation in the state-wide community group, *Planning Backlash*, in lobbying (meetings, rallies, letter writing etc) for a greater role for Councils and the community in planning decisions.

### ***Newsflash and Website*** (Convenor: Lyn Cracknell)

During this year Reference Group members have continued to produce the layout for the quarterly Newsflash. Unfortunately, Jean Evans resigned from the group during the year. Jean is thanked for her contribution which has been invaluable and will be greatly missed. Ellie Florence, a journalism student from North Carlton, joined for the last issue of 2011. Robyn Dalziel will continue her valuable contributions. It is very pleasing that Jill and Roger Bamforth have also recently joined the Reference Group bringing with them journalism and editing skills.

The printing has remained with *Docucopy*. The number printed has been increased to 400, which the production cost savings can support.

The CRA website is also managed by the Reference Group members using Adobe Contribute. The major issue is keeping articles up to date.

Comments and contributions on both of these productions is always welcome.

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

Opportunities for Carlton entered its third year, and the outcomes captured in the OFC project's midyear report show over 40 initiatives have been generated in the community, with over \$160K in OFC grants and over \$450K in additional government funding to Carlton based projects. These many initiatives have included:

- A focus on digital inclusion - with the new Carlton community website now sustained through local business sponsorship ([www.carlton.vic.au](http://www.carlton.vic.au)) and the set up of a small social enterprise recycling ex-government computers for resale to local low income households.
- A formal partnership between University of Melbourne, Carlton Local Agency Network and City of Melbourne to respond to Carlton community needs - setting of initiatives with student volunteers, local employment pathways at the University and infrastructure access.
- And many more projects around employment, environmental action, community training and skill development, and social connection - including the Carlton Men's Shed and Carlton Connected Communities (Bendigo Bank).

The project conducted major community network meetings in 2011 - the first in March focussing on Sustainability in Carlton, with the ideas from the community resulting in Carlton featuring in the Council's Key Strategic Activities for 2011/12 with Council trialling a sustainable living and behavioural change program within the Carlton precinct (Eco Carlton). The November network meeting included 90 participants discussing transition for the project - particularly mechanisms for community participation in decision making. The network identified ideas on the skills and governance structures needed to support ongoing community lead action - and 2012 will look to establishing revised strategic governance structures for the Carlton community and stakeholders.

### ***Planning*** (Convenor: David Higgins)

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)

The efforts of the Planning Committee for 2011 were focused on 3 ongoing 2010 objections which had escalated to VCAT hearings and an objection to a major development lodged for the ETU site in Swanston St. The bulk of the 100 plus applications lodged in 2011 were for works of a minor nature, devoid of serious planning concerns.

The objection to TP-2011-112 for 514-520 Swanston St Carlton – ETU site, was based on the amenity, urban design grounds and heritage concerns. After CoM issued a permit for a 15 storey development, the applicant appealed the decision at VCAT. A subsequent mediation session, attended by the CRA, resulted in approval being granted for a 17 building (9 storey height limit) with other concessions relating to the original 21 storey proposal being gained.

Of the 3 outstanding CRA objections from 2010, all contested at VCAT, two were finalised, TP-2010-318 (73-81 Cardigan St) and TP-2010-630 (52-54 Rathdowne St – Silver Top Taxi site) and the remaining one, TP-2010-319 (69-71 Drummond St) is still in the process. Significant concessions were gained for residents at VCAT in regard to overlooking of private space (TP-2010-318) and for visual bulk and overdevelopment (TP-2010-630).

With the added pressure from residents objecting, concessions continue to be made to some of the larger developments in Carlton, but these are more likely to be concessions rather than outright victories.

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

\* PCCC members participated in and assisted with funding the Carlton Local Agencies Network (CLAN) "Harmony Day" which is held on the Carlton public housing estate to celebrate multiculturalism.

\* The PCCC community patrols project began in the Carlton housing estate in July. Volunteers were called for and will receive training from Victoria Police in response to detecting suspicious behaviour and acting on suspicions.

\* In August, assisted Drummond Street Services in the coordination and running of the Ramadan youth soccer tournament.

\* PCCC collaborated with University of Melbourne security to conduct a bicycle safety and marking day at the University of Melbourne with a view to reducing the incidence of theft of bicycles from the University.

\* A Community safety forum was held in Carlton to address the rise of robberies in the area. In excess of 70 people attended.

\* PCCC has collaborated with Carlton Rotary Club to launch a breathalyser project in local licensed venues.

\* In November, the Carlton PCCC/Melbourne North Police Camp for kids was held. 16 children from the Carlton and Kensington primary schools attended the weekend camp accompanied by three police members and a local youth worker. The camp focuses on team building, consequences of actions, problem solving and resilience.

\* In December, the PCCC/ Melbourne North toy/food drive was undertaken for the ninth year. Donated items were passed on to the Church of All Nations support agency in Carlton, Ronald McDonald House in Parkville and the Vinny support service in Kensington.

\* In February (as in previous years), PCCC members will conduct presentations to newly enrolled (local and international) students at the University of Melbourne. Presentations focus on safety, responsible behaviour, responsible consumption of alcohol and driving laws.

As a post script, it is appropriate to note that the PCCC membership is expanding with new members including the Carlton Football Club, Urban Communities and North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre.

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

The vulnerable but resilient state of the now vacant Carlton Police Station in Drummond Street was amply demonstrated through the recent theft of copper pipes and fittings from the building. Though it is now in the 'ownership' of the Dept. Treasury and Finance having been ceded by the Dept. of Justice; it appears that Victoria Police is still responsible for its care and maintenance. This looks like something of a black hole but the vigilance of CRA members is helping to keep tabs on the historic building and the CRA committee has made several representations lately to the authorities reminding them of their responsibilities.

Since the Kathleen Syme Centre is now used by City of Melbourne for its own purposes, rather than the promised provision of space for the Carlton community, the demand for space for community resource groups remains. Many of these groups, and others, have now lent their support to our campaign for the acquisition of the Police Station by City of Melbourne. We understand that an expression of interest has been made by the council to Treasury and Finance; this is encouraging in that it is, at least, the first step along the acquisition process.

It is interesting to note that the original architectural plans for the Carlton Police Station, copies of which we have obtained, were also used in the building of stations in Geelong, Kyneton and more locally, Richmond. The Geelong station is now a private home and thanks to the current owners we have been able to see some of the interior architectural features restored to their early glory. It is to be hoped that the Drummond Street buildings can be equally restored during any adaptive re-use to which they may be put. But this requires better security than now provided so that further theft does not rob the buildings of whatever heritage still remains. Carlton Police Station is more than the Hawthorn bricks and mortar, the bluestone and basalt of which it is built – its added charm and historical importance is enhanced by its remaining internal design and décor.

We encourage community groups (services or arts) seeking space from which to offer their services to contact the Association in support of our campaign.

## ***Public Housing Estates Redevelopment*** (Convenor: Warren Green)

### **Stage 1 – Rathdowne / Lygon Precinct**

This stage was completed in June 2011. All but 12 of the public/social apartments have been allocated, and allegedly there are no outstanding displaced tenants from the old walk-ups. The remaining apartments are comprised of 4x2 bedroom and 8x1 bedroom and are currently being used to temporarily accommodate displaced residents from the high-rise blocks, due to the upgrading works being undertaken. The contracts on all but 2 of the private apartments have settled and presumably are occupied.

Internal upgrading of the existing high-rise blocks continues on a floor by floor basis concurrently with the upgrading of the surrounding public space in the precinct.

### **Stage 2 – Keppel / Cardigan Precinct**

Construction commenced in May 2011 and is due to finish in August 2012. The resulting accommodation will comprise 50 public/social and 98 private apartments. All but 6 of the private dwellings are under contract.

### **Stage 3 – Elgin / Nicholson Precinct**

The CLC Design Sub-Committee's last review of Stage 3 design took place on 11 August 2011. The review resulted in a few minor changes one of which was the inclusion of a Community Room facility which was lacking in the earlier design.

The adopted design differed from the original DHS Development Plan sufficiently to warrant the submission of an amended Development Plan for planning approval. This will delay commencement, albeit not dramatically. The changes have been viewed favourably, with a better design resulting. It would appear that lessons were learnt from Stage 1. An obvious improvement is that the open space provided has been integrated with the two types of accommodation, not gated open space like that provided at Rathdowne St.

It is expected that building works will start in the latter half of 2012, however the upgrading of services and site infrastructure will commence shortly.

### **Michael Henry Report**

Michael Henry was engaged by the DHS to undertake a review of the functioning of the CLC. He has reported to the Minister who has, allegedly, accepted all but a couple of his recommendations. We are hoping to see documented evidence of this process shortly.

## ***Streetscapes*** (Convenor: Ian Bird)

Council's Urban Forest Strategy, introduced in 2011, promises a renewed interest in streetscape greening. There are limited possibilities to implement such a policy in Carlton because of the great sensitivity of business and some residents to any loss of on-street carparking to green-space. Permanent street closures offer interesting possibilities, however again the demands of motorists dominate such considerations.

Street tree plantings in Faraday and Cardigan Sts., undertaken in 2009, have greatly enhanced the ambience and liveability of these areas. These plantings, along with the effective maintenance of trees in Lygon St, confirm the environmental and aesthetic values of streetscape greening.

CRA has continued to report graffiti vandalism and commends the Council for its generally rapid response to remove it. Compared with nearby suburbs, Carlton is relatively free of graffiti, due to the vigilance of CRA and residents.

***Transport, Traffic & Parking*** (Convenor: Ian Bird)

The election of the Baillieu State Government in November 2010 promised new directions for transport policy and a move away from the roads-centric policies of the previous Brumby ALP Government. Unfortunately no positive changes occurred during 2011, with continuation of policies which the Government was highly critical of when in Opposition. Seemingly in response to charges of inaction on transport policy, in November 2011, the Government re-announced the controversial Eddington \$10 billion East-West Road Tunnel (with potentially major impacts on Carlton), as its top priority transport project for Melbourne. This proposal was roundly rejected by the community in 2008 in favour of public transport priorities.

On the positive side, a feasibility study is underway regarding the long-deferred rail line to Doncaster. However, a pre-election plan for a Public Transport Development Authority is yet to materialise, despite enabling legislation being passed in Parliament.

In Carlton, traffic levels continued to grow reflecting Melbourne's rapid population growth and inadequate public transport. The installation of new tram stops along Swanston Street, Carlton, and the earlier introduction of Copenhagen style bike paths, has effectively 'traffic calmed' this area of Swanston St. Traffic lights were installed at the Elgin/Drummond Sts intersection with similar treatment foreshadowed for Elgin/Cardigan Sts intersection. CRA continued to lobby unsuccessfully for improvements to the busy Lygon/Elgin Sts intersection, with its complex and dangerous mix of cars, buses, bikes, trams and pedestrians.

New car parking meter technology was introduced by the Council on a trial basis in Carlton, which includes remote sensing of metered and unmetered parking spaces and pay-by-phone options. Outcomes are yet to be reported.

**Presented at the CRA 16<sup>th</sup> AGM, 20 February 2012**