



The Carlton Residents Association Inc.

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CRA ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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, regularly emailed *eflash* newsletters and letterboxing, we continued to provide a regular flow of news and information of relevance to CRA members and the Carlton community during 2012, to encourage community involvement on important matters.

Highlights of 2012 included the re-election of CRA member, Dr Jackie Watts, to the Council of the City of Melbourne, in her own right, Council agreement to develop and fund the *Kathleen Syme Community Centre-Library* as a community resource for Carlton, and Federal funding allocation of \$20m to refurbish the Viewing Promenade at the Royal Exhibition Building.

In summary: CRA Committee members 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.

Council elections again showed the failings of the unique electoral model for Melbourne which received wide media coverage, but minimal response from the State Government. We were involved in organizing 'Meet the Candidates' Forums hosted at the Church of All Nations, for the State by-election mid-year and Council election in October.

On-going lobbying to ensure the Kathleen Syme Centre was not handed over for exclusive use by service providers to public housing tenants was a major challenge in 2012. Our lobbying for adaptive reuse of the vacant Carlton Police Station to house community facilities was unsuccessful.

Melbourne's escalating population growth continues to attract inappropriate housing development in Carlton, which required much time consuming response from the CRA Planning Group, including at VCAT. Developers regularly seek to overturn the established height and heritage overlays. The Baillieu Government's roads centric transport policies, including the controversial East-West Road Link, led to a program of geotechnical core drilling along the probable route of the road, in anticipation of a business case in 2013. The long-sought rail line to Doncaster is again off the agenda.

CRA maintained an active role in monitoring and involvement with the Public Housing Estates Redevelopment through membership of the Community Liaison Committee, 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), continued to be pursued by CRA in 2012, through the *Carlton Alliance* working 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 2012, at Dimattina's Restaurant. Our Christmas Party was again held at LaMama. A Members Forum was included at each Committee Meeting for members to raise any matters of concern.

Reference Group Reports

Community Centre-Library (Convenor: Greta Bird)

Our primary objective during 2012 was to ensure the Kathleen Syme Centre (KSC) would be developed as the long sought Community Centre-Library for Carlton. To our deep dismay, in early 2012, Council officers required further community ‘consultations’, and invited various service providers, primarily to public housing tenants, to compete for access to KSC. A series of community workshops were scheduled around the question: “Should KSC be a Library or a Health and Services Hub?” Service providers stridently opposed a library, despite the fact that their clients’ greatest need is for **library services - literacy, language and social inclusion**. Libraries are the front-line to overcoming language and literacy difficulties and have a well-documented positive impact on learning, employment and social problems which beset the disadvantaged.

A regrettable consequence of the CoM consultation process was that it resulted in unproductive and conflicted ‘competition’ for space. Carlton needs a Library and Community Centre as a most essential and empowering community resource for all. Options delivering specialized social services to public housing tenants would exclude most other people in Carlton.

The consultations, well attended by CRA and other Carlton community members, resulted in overwhelming community support for comprehensive library services. CRA, together with Carlton Arts, Business and Schools communities’, again addressed Council at the Future Melbourne Committee meeting on 14 August, and reiterated the strong case for a direly needed library-community centre. We were overjoyed when Council endorsed and unanimously voted that KSC will be refurbished to provide full library services for Carlton and shared, non-exclusive use of community space (confirmed by Council on 11 Sept.). The building will be named the ***‘Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre’***. Detailed designs and a tender report will be prepared for presentation to Council in May 2013.

Carlton Alliance (Convenor: Philip Watts)

The Carlton Alliance (CRA CA Reference Group members and North Carlton representatives) continued to meet monthly as a ‘Working Group’, at the Princes Hill Community Centre, to explore the feasibility of reunification of North Carlton (3054) with Carlton (3053), within the City of Melbourne.

While minimal progress was made towards reunification, a significant outcome was the greatly increased interest and attention paid to North Carlton by City of Yarra councillors and officers. The area had been largely neglected for years prior to CA public meetings, letterboxing and media publicity, which highlighted issues in North Carlton, including heritage, streetscapes, planning, infrastructure etc. Community activism was also revitalised. Just 30% of rates collected in North Carlton have been applied in the area.

Following Council elections in October 2012, the Alliance resolved to maintain a ‘watching brief’ on reunification and to review the situation in 2013.

Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building (Convenor: Margaret O’Brien)

This year CRA worked with a group consisting of Fitzroy Residents, Residents 3000, Eastenders and Protectors of Public Land to improve the care of the Gardens and this is especially evident in the condition of the lawns and the tree replacement program.

The group continued its campaign against the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show using the South Garden in a manner which adversely impacts this World Heritage listed site.

Another long running campaign to reopen the viewing promenade at the base of the REB dome came to fruition with the Federal Government's announcement in its May Budget - "The Government will provide \$20.0 million in 2011-12 to Museum Victoria as a contribution towards the protection and promotion of the World Heritage listed Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne.

Melbourne Museum Manager Brett Dunlop has been appointed project manager responsible for spending \$20m over 4 years to renovate the Royal Exhibition Building and to increase public awareness of the historical importance of this unique World Heritage site. At a meeting with community representatives on 19 November, Brett commenced his progress report by acknowledging Adam Bandt's contribution towards securing the funding in the May Federal Budget and representatives of the community delivered an enthusiastic round of applause for Adam, who was in the audience.

For more extensive information please see www.carltonresidents.org.au

CORBA-Melbourne (Convenor: Rhonda Day)

CoRBA, (Coalition of Residents and Business Associations) started in 2007, and meets monthly. Its primary goal is to bring democracy, equitable representation and good governance to the City of Melbourne (CoM). In 2012 participants have been largely from the major residents' groups.

CoRBA has made significant gains in achieving a review of the electoral system. It is still pushing for ward representation or similar, genuine consultation, effective dissemination of information and directing the bright light of public scrutiny at Council processes and decision making. The primary focus in 2012 was the Council elections and development of a comprehensive Candidate Questionnaire, in consultation with the residents groups. While response rate was low we have a benchmark for measuring the respondent's achievements against the election rhetoric. We also have a detailed documentation of the key priorities of the community.

CoRBA also initiated a schedule of meetings with Kathy Alexander, CEO, which has the potential to raise the profile of community concerns within Council and question Council-administration interaction. The 2012 agenda included; need for a Public Lands policy –over 900 events are held on public land in the CoM; probity issues such as the display of election material at the Town Hall; heritage and planning issues; and the East-West Tollway, its effects on local parks and neighbourhoods and associated residents' actions.

The reality for CoRBA, as for all community groups, is that it is difficult to keep consistent attendance and commitment unless there is an immediate, galvanising issue. In 2013 the East-West Tollway may provide that issue.

Newsflash and Website (Convenor: Lyn Cracknell)

During this year the reference group members have continued to produce the layout for Newsflash. Jill Bamforth has provided invaluable editing resources. Robyn Dalziel will again be able to provide editing support in 2013.

Jill has also written the Carlton Stories: 'The Poppy Shop' 'Watts Corner Shoe Store', 'The Opportunity Shop' and is working on further stories for inclusion in 2013. These stories are then being passed on to the Carlton community website with acknowledgement of Jill's and CRA input. Brian Falconer has been instrumental in organising this. In addition Jill is writing extra stories for the website which will also be acknowledged.

Docucopy moved from Carlton and printing is currently with Digital Printing, in Drummond Street, for the same price. The number printed has generally been 300.

The website is also managed by the reference group members using Adobe Contribute. The major issue is keeping articles up to date.

Comments about both of these productions are always welcome.

Opportunities for Carlton (Convenor: Brian Falconer)

OFC entered its third year, and the outcomes captured in the project's mid-term report show over 40 initiatives have been generated in the community, with over \$160k in grants and over \$450k in additional government funding to Carlton based projects.

An intense evaluation was conducted by external consultants and the task of producing a governance structure to underpin and guide the further implementation of this neighbourhood development model is a key priority so that the developments achieved so far are sustainable in Carlton, and the knowledge and experience gained by OFC Carlton is transferable to other neighbourhoods in the City of Melbourne.

Planning (Acting Convenor: Warren Green)

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 unresolved application for TP-2010-319 (69-71 Drummond St) met with refusal by VCAT so it is yet to be seen whether a fresh application will be lodged. The number of applications for postcode 3053 during 2012 was approximately 80. The large majority of which caused little to no concern, however CRA did lodge objections to the following:

TPM-2011-30 (593-597 Swanston St) this application by Queensberry Hotel was for the installation of 30 gaming machines. The application was refused by CoM. The applicant's appeal to VCAT resulted in a mediation meeting being held, at which CRA was represented, however no resolution was achieved. The matter has been referred to a full VCAT hearing in March at which CRA will be represented.

TP-2011-294 (411- 415 Cardigan St) there were three objections and the assessment has since been suspended.

TP-2011-805 (93 Barkly St) as a result of objections, a modified proposal was submitted which largely addressed CRA's concerns and the assessment is continuing.

TP-2012-767 (13-23 Faraday St) this is a proposal for a 5 storey / 9 apartment development, which has generated considerable concern to neighbours and CRA. In short, it is an over development of the subject site. Current status - early stages of assessment.

TP-2012-1044 (139-155 Queensberry St) this application seeks approval for a mixed-use development comprised of ground floor retail and 14 stories of residential apartments. A total of 15 stories in an area, which has an eight - storey height limit. CRA has lodged an objection. The application is still listed as being in the advertising phase.

The effect of objections from individuals, adds considerable weight to an objection lodged by CRA, so we encourage all members to keep this in mind when inappropriate development is proposed. Outright victories may be rare, but serious concessions are often achieved.

Further information on the above applications should be available on the CoM website.
www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/BuildingandPlanning/Planning/Pages/PlanningRegisterSearch.aspx

Police Community Consultative Committee (Convenor: Richard Tisher)

PCCC activities and achievements during 2012 include the following:

Some achievements:

- 16 primary school students from local schools (grades 5 and 6) attended a school camp in November and another PCCC camp, which is financially viable, is planned for December 2013.
- a good range of donations were received for the annual toy drive with PCCC picking up the costs of delivery.
- there is the continued advice to international students provided by Nick from PCCC and there will be a further briefing in March 2013.

Other matters:

- PCCC has received a report for MCC on the work being done on "Opportunities for Carlton". There is available a booklet entitled a mid-term review on this matter. At present the MCC group is looking at models for; grants applications; support for leadership development; neighbourhood watch; and safety concerns.
- Harmony Day, which occurs on 21st March during Cultural Diversity Week, requires community support and we are asked to publicise the event.
- Carlton Rotary reported on their Breathalyser Project which has received \$44,000 for them to install units in hotels. They have found that single owners are generally receptive but that hotels part of a chain operation are not so receptive BUT the club is persevering !

With respect to Crime in the area:

- with the warmer weather there comes an increase in property crimes
- more plain clothed police are targeting high rise areas to monitor for drugs and property offences
- a greater number of police will be targeting roads over the holiday season and there will be an increase in booze buses.
- j-walking in Swanston is another matter being targeted.

Police Station (Convenor: Jeremy Hill)

The future of the historic Police Station remains uncertain, despite our best lobbying efforts during 2012 to have it returned to community use. The Council resolved not to acquire the building. The State Government has no evident plans for its use, despite the desperate need for space for service provision to Public Housing tenants and others in Carlton. The building remains with the Department of Treasury and Finance for disposal.

Lack of essential maintenance is leading to building decay. We continue to monitor the site for security breaches and critical maintenance matters, and advise the Department accordingly. It is depressing to witness such a fine historic building falling into disrepair.

Parkland and Public Land (Convenor: Ian Bird)

CRA representatives participated in several Community Consultations during 2012:

- development and refurbishment of the Council's Neill St Reserve (near the Rathdowne St. Public Housing Estate)
- parkland and children's adventure play area, to be developed on land reclaimed from the demolition of the old Royal Children's Hospital (Corner Gatehouse St and Flemington Rd)
- we participated in several rallies to protect Royal Park from inappropriate development and infrastructure.

Public Housing Estates Redevelopment (Convenor: Warren Green)

Carlton Housing Redevelopment – overview 2012:

Stage 1 (Lygon/Rathdowne St) New Housing & Landscape Renewal Works

Completed Works:

- 84 public & 90 private apartments – completed mid 2011
- Rathdowne St Community Garden with 60 plots
- Central lawn, playgrounds and BBQ area
- 140 Neill St carpark and landscaping
- 480 Lygon St staff carpark
- 510 Lygon St carpark and landscaping
- 530 Lygon St landscaping and older persons exercise area. New Community Garden for older persons with 30 plots
- New fences along Lygon Street
- New Shop/Café
- 480 Lygon St landscaping (east side)
- 510 Lygon St under-cover play area
- 140 Neill St Foyer renovation

Stage 2 (Keppel/Cardigan St) – 50 Public & Private Apartments

- The new public and private apartments are complete
- Residents are moving into the public housing and private apartments
- The Hon Wendy Lovell MLC Minister for Housing officially opened the new public housing on 30/11/12.

Stage 3 (Elgin/Nicholson St) – 112 Public & 120 Private Apartments

- Sales of the Private Apartments are at approximately 80%
- Basement excavation and retention works are on track to be finished in December 2012
- Completion of private housing is planned for December 2013 and the public housing is planned for April 2014.

Stage 5 (Rathdowne St) – Australian Unity “Wellbeing Centre”

- Basement excavation and retention works are complete
- Basement floors are on track to be finished in February 2013
- Completion of the Aged Care & Wellbeing Centre building on Rathdowne St is planned for December 2013

Stage 9 (Lygon/Rathdowne St) – 105 Private Apartments

- LCC has lodged the planning application with the Department of Planning and Community Development
- LCC is preparing the marketing suite so that it is ready when the apartments are released to the local market next year.

Streetscapes (Convenor: Ian Bird)

The Council continued its program of street tree plantings in Carlton, including in Queensberry St. and Leicester St. Earlier extensive plantings in Cardigan St. continue to thrive, providing shade, habitat and aesthetic benefits. Council's Urban Forest Strategy remains in the Community Consultation phase in Carlton with further action foreshadowed for 2013.

The annual debate to remove street trees from the Lygon St. Precinct was again to the forefront driven by several vocal restaurateurs, with associated media publicity. The much loved ambience of Lygon St is critically dependant on the trees. Arguments about allergies, leaves in cappuccinos etc, abound for a few weeks each year. CRA argues the benefits of greenery far out weigh the minor nuisance factors. Traders seem unconcerned about motor vehicle toxic exhaust fumes which are much more injurious to health than street trees.

The arrest, jailing and unpaid community work handed down to members of a notorious graffiti gang early in 2012 had a noticeable impact on the regular defacing of buildings in Carlton. However some graffiti problems remain. Hopefully annual cleanup costs in future may reduce from the near \$1 million of recent years.

Transport, Traffic & Parking (Convenor: Ian Bird)

From a Carlton viewpoint, there were three significant events in 2012:

- The Baillieu Government's decision to develop a 'business case' for construction of the controversial East-West Road Link (tunnel, elevated roads, flyovers etc) was initiated. It charged the Linking Melbourne Authority with the task, which included a program of geotechnical core drilling at many sites in Carlton and Parkville. The Link is informally costed at \$13 billion.
- The Doncaster Rail Local Government Group funded an independent professional study of Doncaster Rail (along the Eastern Freeway centre median). The study assessed the project as cost effective and feasible, at an estimated cost of around \$1 billion. The Government ridiculed the study.
- The Government decided not to release its own \$6.5 million publically funded study of Doncaster Rail, citing 'commercial in confidence' reasons.

During 2013, the Government will probably seek business partners to progress the E-W Link and may release some design information to the public. It seems there will be no opportunity for public comment or input to the project. CRA was involved in organizing several rallies at drill sites along the probable route of the Link, in support of Doncaster Rail and in opposition to the costly and environmentally destructive roads project. Nearby City of Yarra has taken a very pro-Doncaster Rail stance; the City of Melbourne tacitly supports the road Link.

Government policy supporting the rapid population growth of Melbourne has resulted in significant congestion on roads and public transport. Despite policy rhetoric, there was minimal transport infrastructure funded in 2012.

In Carlton, traffic lights were installed at the busy and dangerous intersection: Elgin & Cardigan Streets. The Council's introduction of new remote sensing parking meter technology has been plagued with technical hitches; its future is unclear.

Presented at the CRA 17th AGM, 18 February 2013