

# East Melbourne Group

## Annual Report to Members

On behalf of the EMG committee and sub committees, I present our yearly report to members. The length and breadth of the work done on your behalf and on behalf of our special community is astounding and a great tribute to the volunteers involved.

I give my profound thanks to all members of the committee particularly to Tom Hogg our treasurer stoically sunning himself on a tropical island somewhere. Thanks also to our secretary the unflappable Stuart Hamilton who guides the Group's destiny with grace, decorum and good humour.

The forthcoming committee election and its aftermath will bring change. I would be remiss if I did not mention with many thanks the retirement of Jacinta Ryan our membership vice president who has made a strong contribution to the work of the group. Also Barbara Paterson who has, with distinction, guided the Heritage and Planning subcommittee for more years than she likes to count. Fortunately Barbara will remain on the committee.

Although Siusan Mackenzie has decided to take a break from the committee she has expressed willingness to continue to edit the community magazine. We will certainly miss the flair and energy she brought to the Group's social agenda.

Later in the meeting I will bring to members a Committee proposal that one of our members be appointed as an honorary life member

## Heritage and Planning

**Heritage and Planning rules** We await the outcomes of various proposed changes to planning and heritage rules at local and state level, which are still in the bureaucratic pipeline. In the meantime here are some particular issues which have exercised our minds this year -

**Overdevelopment** Government policy favours high levels of in-fill housing. But these developments, which are inherently opportunistic, can be problematic in East Melbourne where under utilised sites are small, impinge on heritage sites and have intrinsic issues with traffic and parking. One such site is 10 Garden Ave where the developer proposes a 5-storey, apartment building of mediocre contemporary design on a tiny, triangular piece of land squeezed into a significant art deco precinct. Over the last year there has been tinkering around the edges by the developer in an attempt to comply with Council planning policies but it looks as if this one will proceed to VCAT.

**Facadism** A current example is the application to develop 129 Powlett St where the proposal is to gut the heritage house, leaving only the facade, on the basis that the heritage fabric makes no contribution to the streetscape. We fear that the developer is anticipating proposed changes to municipal planning regulations.

**Towers** A recent application in Hoddle St proposes a cheaply designed, 10-storey apartment tower behind the facade of Ascot house which is in the Art Moderne style and relates to similar buildings in the precinct. This matter has attracted many objections on grounds of heritage, amenity and traffic. Council is deliberating on the application.

**Neglect of heritage houses** We are pleased to see work underway at last on the Mosspennoch site. Unfortunately Valletta remains an eyesore. This year EMG and EMHS have stepped up their campaign for the restoration of Valetta. Heritage Victoria is well aware of our concerns but has decided to wait until new heritage legislation is passed, hopefully by the end of the year, before taking enforcement action itself.

**Iceberg houses** So-called because there is more house below than above. In some of London's wealthier suburbs heritage protection stops property owners from 'going up'. Accordingly, some owners are

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maximising their property values by excavating multi-level basements under their houses and even pushing out under the garden. The result has been a nightmare for neighbours who are beset by drilling noise, cracking, mess and traffic chaos - for years. Consequently, Kensington Council has recently frozen new multi-level basement applications. East Melbourne has had an intimation of this trend with the development at 99 Hotham St which contains a significant underground component. The underground water table in East Melbourne makes the suburb particularly sensitive to this type of development.

### Social and Communications

**Community magazine** Three editions of the East Melbourne & Jolimont Magazine were produced in 2016 under the stewardship of Siusan MacKenzie. Illness and financial constraints impacted on our ability to produce the usual four editions in 2016. Gus McAllister took on the role of coordinating advertising. He has very successfully engaged new local businesses, working in a challenging environment with a very limited pool of potential advertisers. Caine Real Estate committed to a whole back page and their loyalty and that of other regular advertising supporters is to be applauded. Without the support of advertisers the magazine would not exist. The purpose of the magazine is to generate a sense of community connection and interest in local affairs. The production cost of the magazine is significant but a hard copy edition remains popular. The magazine was funded primarily by advertising fees and a contribution from the EMG. It should be noted that the design and print costs have not increased for several years. The magazine is delivered to each household in the suburb (including mail boxes deemed 'no junk mail') by a team of volunteers who each take responsibility for a designated route. The same approach to production, publishing and distribution will be maintained in 2017. Feedback on the style and content of the magazine continues to be overwhelmingly positive.

**Updates to members** Email Updates continue to be issued in a timely manner after each committee meeting to inform members of important emerging issues and decisions and EMG dates for their social calendars.

**Web Site** One of our projects for the year has been a soon-to-be launched revamp of our web site. Nick Thorne, a local designer, has assembled the new site. A lot of material will stay the same, but we will join the new century on aspects like membership and event payment online. Stuart Hamilton must take credit for bringing the project to its imminent launch.

**Social activities** The Social Committee is responsible for organising events that provide the opportunity for members to come together to meet neighbours, socialise and have fun. Some of the events raise funds which contribute materially to the EMG's on-going operations.

In 2016 the Social Committee raised over \$7000. While less than the previous year, it represents a mighty effort to undertake a range of events, which were accessible to the wider community, less costly and supportive of local business. Once again there was a relentless personal effort by members of the committee and other volunteers, including much food preparation, which contributed to the substantial fundraising contribution.

The Social Committee organised a program of events, which included:

- a barbecue for members in Powlett Reserve
- the Robert Russell Hustle laneway gathering which included food trucks, pop up bars and live music
- a winter Christmas-themed trivia challenge held at the St Peter's hall which attracted teams from interest groups across the suburb
- a progressive dinner for younger members which began at the home of Genevieve and Gary Morgan and included Hard Pressed and the Tippler & Co
- dinners at local restaurants Geppetto, Tippler & Co and il Duca
- a high tea at the Johnston Collection to view the Christmas exhibition

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- a 'Picnic on the Green' at Bishopscourt.

A Christmas function scheduled for Kere Kere was cancelled due to lack of registrations.

Each of these events achieved its objective to connect the broader community, attract strong participation and receive favourable feedback from participants in terms of enjoyment and value.

### Amenities

**Aircraft Noise** We have been successful in having City of Melbourne enter into a voluntary Fly Neighbourly agreement with some helicopter operators to limit helicopter flights over residential East Melbourne. In November, our local member, Adam Bandt, introduced a private members bill into federal parliament to address the issue of aircraft noise over our cities. We are hopeful that the bill will attract additional sponsors.

**LED Sign on corner Bridge and Hoddle Streets** We presented to City of Yarra the undesirability of this large and dominant advertising sign. City of Yarra agreed and refused the permit. Unfortunately, on appeal, VCAT found in favour of the applicant. This was a case of the more experts one can afford, the more likely the result will go in your favour.

**Tram Stop Advertising** We objected to the advertising on the Jolimont Tram Stop. We obtained some reductions in advertising, and subsequently withdrew from taking the matter to VCAT.

**Kerbside Café** In accordance with our policy of not supporting Kerbside Cafes with liquor outlets in the residential area, we and a number of neighbours objected to an application at 222 Clarendon Street. The Council refused the application.

**Bike Lanes** City of Melbourne has extended the Albert Street bike lanes from Powlett to Hoddle Streets. We worked with City of Melbourne to limit the reduction of parking required. We also worked with City of Melbourne to ensure a safe bike lane refuge in the middle of Wellington Parade South, on the corner with Jolimont Terrace.

**Parking** We have worked with City of Melbourne to ensure the Parking Permit system isn't abused. We declined to complain against the cost increase for second permits as it brought us into line with other suburbs, it is cheap parking close to the CBD and we didn't wish to seem precious. We are constantly trying to get more parking inspectors on site. We also evaluated a proposal for an in-ground car sensor system, and ultimately determined this was not in the best interest of residents.

We are working with Council to stop future parking zones being excised from the 3A/3B Zone.

**Stationers** Initial meetings have occurred for a volunteer group to assist in improving the surrounds and litter of the Jolimont Station.

**Fitzroy Gardens sub-station fence** A permanent fence was erected to exclude people from the verandah of this live substation. Not necessarily the most elegant solution but EMG's suggestions for a more sympathetic design were not taken up by Council.

**Snap, Send, Solve** This iPhone application has proved very successful in getting problems in the suburb identified, reported to the right authority and rapidly fixed with feedback to the person reporting the issue. Examples have been graffiti, parking over stayers, a major leaking drain causing a pothole and loss of water.

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**Graffiti** Members of the team have been successful in having graffiti and rubbish removed, especially using the Snap, Send, Solve application. It is an ongoing problem.

**Swan Street Bridge** We consulted with the authorities to have the widening of this bridge done with some Heritage awareness. The final design is a reasonable compromise.

**Police** We have met with and continued to develop good relationships with Victoria Police. There is anecdotal evidence of an increase in house breaking so members are urged to be on their guard.

**Fertility Clinic Wellington Parade** After many complaints from EMG, a bubble exclusion zone was passed by Parliament and seems to be effective in stopping the harassment of patients and residents in general.

### Finances

**Operating performance** Financially 2016 may be described as a much more subdued year than 2015 inasmuch as both revenues and operating costs were down –Revenues by \$17,000 and costs by \$15,000 the result being a net deficit of \$1000 compared with a small surplus of \$1000 in 2015 (See table below)

**Commentary** While members' subscriptions have held up well, the principal drop in revenue occurred in fundraising functions, largely due to not being able to run the annual Christmas function because of the unavailability of Bishopscourt in December.. This has been rectified in part by the success of the Picnic on the Green in February 2017

Other revenue items were also down due to the write -off of obsolete stock exceeding net sales revenue, while in 2016 we did not receive a grant from the City of Melbourne which in the prior year was worth \$3000

However on a brighter note costs were also contained -notably with the net cost of producing the magazine reduced by \$6000 over the previous year, while computer costs were also less than in 2015 as that earlier year had included the expensing of the purchase of a new computer

**Financial position** The EMG. continues in a strong financial position with total equity only marginally down by the accounted loss of \$1000. Total assets of \$75,000 comfortably exceed total liabilities of only \$3000.

Liquid assets at balance date of December 31 were \$ 10,000 with a further \$63,000 being held on term deposit.

#### Selected key revenues and costs

EMG has three main sources of revenue net of the costs directly associated with earning them. There are four main categories of costs

The principal revenues and costs are shown in the following table that compares year to year outcomes (rounded to nearest thousand dollars).

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ITEM	\$000 2016	\$000 2015	Change
<b>KEY REVENUES</b>			
1 Members' Subscriptions	21	21	--
2 Net Fundraising from functions	7	14	-7
3 Other (Donations Interest Grants Net sales)	2	12	-10
<b>Total Main Revenues</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>-17</b>
<b>KEY COSTS</b>			
1 Employment Costs	17	14	+3
2 Net cost magazine	5	11	-6
3 Planning appeal expenses	1	9	-8
4 Other Insurance, Computer, Internet, 'phone	8	12	-4
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>-15</b>
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-2</b>

### Membership

Last year we had 421 members. 27 did not renew and 19 left the area either permanently or to another location. A number of our members passed away during the year. Offsetting the losses we succeeded in recruiting 70 new members bringing the total to 453. Among these are 11 life members and 13 associate members.

We thank all those who have renewed and remind them that it is that time again so we look forward to seeing everyone and more in the coming year. Thanks also to Shelley Faubel and Siusan Mackenzie for their support and constant encouragement.

Murray Hohnen  
President