



ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

It is with pleasure that we present the 60th Annual Report of the East Melbourne Group Inc. (EMG) for the period April 2012 to February 2014.

The Annual Report highlights important projects and challenges the committee of management has worked on over the past year, the 60th anniversary of EMG's foundation. The Treasurer is presenting the financial reports separately.

Our President for most of 2013, Bernard Wheelahan, resigned during the year for personal reasons. We thank him for his work for the Group in particular in ensuring we reviewed our priorities in the light of community views. Joanna Pace and Stuart Hamilton, our 2 Vice-Presidents, have shared the work over the last few months, with Joanna being Acting President. Lorraine Holtschke, the Treasurer also resigned and we thank her for her work in the first part of the year.

MEMBERSHIP

As at 31 December 2013 we had 435 members from 285 households.

HERITAGE & PLANNING

Heritage and Planning began this reporting year with involvement in two VCAT cases. The first one was in respect of 31-33 Agnes St (Marlion House) and the second one concerned an application by the Catholic Education Office for a general liquor licence for its development on the St John's site. The outcomes were mixed but in both cases EMG was pleased to have put the Applicants to the full proof of their cases. We were also pleased with the way the cost-sharing arrangement with residents worked.

We note that following much pressure from EMG and EMHS Valetta is finally being renovated. Mosspennoch is still in limbo. Late last year the owner of the Hilton site, Thakral Holdings Group, was taken over by Brookfields Asset Management. New plans submitted to the Council relating to Mosspennoch represent an increase in height and apartment numbers over the previous plans. EMG has formally objected and the current plans are being challenged at VCAT by a neighbouring resident.

The largest new development in East Melbourne is the one at Dallas Brooks Hall. EMG formally objected to the plans late last year, largely on the grounds that the design was inappropriate in a heritage precinct. This project is distinguished by the large number of stakeholders. Committee members have attended four meetings with the developers who have amended their plans several times. We understand that Mirvac will be lodging plans with the Department of Planning in the very near future.

In addition, there have been many perennial issues which include overdevelopment of small blocks, dual occupancy, imposition of extensions on the streetscape and retention of historic fabric in the design of extensions.

PARKS & GARDENS

The Parks and Gardens Sub-Committee monitors the state of parks, gardens, median strips and children's playgrounds in East Melbourne and Jolimont. It maintains regular contact with City of Melbourne management, City Wide personnel and representatives from the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), which manages Yarra Park.

Vice-President Stuart Hamilton was reappointed as a community representative on the Yarra Park Advisory Committee. He is able to raise issues concerning the treatment of Yarra Park as well as monitoring the progress of the \$22 million Yarra Park Management Plan. The water recycling plant in Yarra Park has meant considerably better outcomes for the trees and grass than before so that notwithstanding the run of hot dry weather, Yarra Park is looking the best it has for some time.

We have been monitoring the MCC's tree replacement strategy to ensure that necessary renewal is carried out sensitive to the heritage and amenity values of Yarra Park.

Unfortunately the longer-term use of Yarra Park as a car park remains for us to continue to fight. In this context, we continue to advocate for reduced parking and sensitive parking management.

We all await completion of the redevelopment of Fitzroy Gardens and hope that the water recycling facility is as successful as Yarra Parks and we see the benefit of the redevelopment of the depot area when it is finally open later this year.

Committee members took part in community consultations arranged by the City of Melbourne about the Council's Urban Forest Strategy, dealing with such issues as the amount of tree cover, species selection and strategies to improve the appearance and sustainability of East Melbourne and Jolimont.

We have taken up several smaller issues concerning the other parks with the Council on behalf of members.

AMENITIES

The Amenities Sub-Committee meets each month to address East Melbourne and Jolimont residential amenity issues, including liquor licensing, traffic management, parking and policing. The demands on resources in the community will become even more pronounced in years to come, as the Dallas Brooks and Peter MacCallum sites are redeveloped as multi-unit residential complexes.

Aircraft noise in East Melbourne is as at times bad as if we were living near an airport. This is shown by analysis of measurements taken by one of our Committee members provided to our Federal MP, Adam Bandt. Low flying fixed wing aircraft and hovering helicopters are regularly recording high decibel noise levels. The Committee of the East Melbourne Group has been continuing the fight against this intrusion into the peace of our suburb, which often makes it unpleasant to be in our gardens and in our houses.

Committee representatives recently met with Adam Bandt, who convened a meeting with airport representatives and regulators. Paul Ferguson the CEO of Moorabbin and two representatives from Air Services Australia, from Canberra, attended. Paul Ferguson undertook to speak with operators from Moorabbin, to pass on our concerns. Adam, as well as the Committee, will also write to operators from both Moorabbin and Essendon Airports. Air Services will provide further advice about what measures can be taken to alleviate the problem. Adam thinks that ultimately it might be necessary to pursue legislation to provide an adequate level of protection for residents.

East Melbourne residents have been asked, If they continue to be disturbed by fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, to complain to Air Services Australia – 1800 802 584 or lodge a complaint form on their website -www.airservicesaustralia.com

COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS AND RESIDENTS

The communications sub committee worked very hard in 2013 to re-establish the East Melbourne & Jolimont 3002 Magazine. Unfortunately, the 2012 publishers unexpectedly withdrew their services and as a consequence, the autumn edition of the Magazine could not be published in March as anticipated. EMG received very positive feedback about the new look magazine and was determined to continue to produce a high quality but cost efficient magazine again from the middle of the year for our community. A review of the publishing approach was undertaken and it was determined to appoint a new publisher and advertising manager and maintain the existing A4 full colour format.

It is a credit to the advertising manager that the winter, spring and summer editions in 2013 have gone from strength to strength in terms of attracting advertising revenue which is always a huge challenge in our very small local community. A small grant from the City of Melbourne contributed to the magazine's production costs. Our aim is to achieve cost recovery through advertising. Each edition has been swiftly distributed to every letterbox in 3002 by a group of volunteers and we thank them sincerely. We could not afford to distribute it any other way.

In 2013 the committee was also responsible for driving the introduction of EMG's new logo. We acknowledge that this change is not welcome by everyone but the very positive feedback we have received from many for the new look logo is encouraging. We believe it presents EMG as a very contemporary association and will have appeal to a new generation of members, which is something we must encourage.

The new logo has been applied to effect in the new website and other marketing material. The website, which was launched in February 2014, is the first stage in EMG's effort to provide a more transparent and interactive experience for members. It is envisaged that in the future, the website will be used more frequently for communicating with members including gathering feedback and input on issues of community concern.

This past year has also seen the Updates issued in a timelier manner after each committee meeting. The new logo is also used on the Updates to provide a more attractive newsletter.

A process of community consultation also took place this year. This involved an online survey and two discussion groups. 117 survey responses were received, which represents five percent of the population weighted towards older residents. Given many responses would have been per household it is reasonable to assume it actually represents the views of more people.

Some people chose to take up the invitation to provide feedback by writing letters. The EMG committee is grateful to everyone who took the time and effort to respond.

The areas respondents believe are most important for the EMG to work on are:

- Preserving, protecting and enhancing historic buildings and the heritage character of the suburb
- Monitoring general amenity including such things as infrastructure, noise, graffiti, crime and bike lanes
- Ensuring planning and building works are monitored to protect the suburb from inappropriate development
- Preserving and protecting parks and gardens, median strips and roundabouts
- Monitoring traffic flow in the area

The data was also analysed to compare age groups and whilst there was small differences, for example younger respondents expressing interest in recreational and children's related facilities, the overall order of priority whether expressed by age, time lived in the suburb or membership of the East Melbourne Group are generally consistent.

Some of the improvements suggested are beyond the purpose of EMG such as 'Stop used syringes being found in laneways and improve supermarket and shopping facilities.'

The three broad areas of improvement which, in the opinion of respondents generally, would make quality of life in East Melbourne better now are:

- Traffic management including administration of parking, through traffic and bike lanes
- Management of our environment to provide increased amenity for our diverse population including such things as more recreational facilities, community gardens and cafes and bars
- Noise management including construction, vehicles and aircraft

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Social Committee is responsible for organising events that provide the opportunity for Members to come together to have fun, meet new friends and socialise; and for raising funds which contribute materially to the EMG's on-going operations. This year the Social Committee delivered two very successful and enjoyable events: The Italian Wine and Cheese afternoon held at Il Duca and the Annual Christmas Drinks at the Park Hyatt. Both events were very well attended and feedback from Members was that these events were thoroughly enjoyed by all. Unfortunately the social activities were not as numerous as last year due to the cancellation of the Annual Winter Dinner because of the significantly higher than usual number of Members absent overseas or interstate at that time.

Despite the cancellation of the Annual Winter Dinner, the Social Committee contributed \$5,500 (net) to the running of EMG's operations and activities (2012: \$2,000).

We are deeply grateful for the generosity extended by our function venue providers and raffle prize donors. Their support, in many cases continuing and long-term, enables us to provide high quality functions to our Members at reasonable cost and enhances our fundraising efforts. We would also like to extend thanks to Members for their enthusiastic response, attendance and contribution to our social events.

EAST MELBOURNE GARDEN PARTY

At the end of February this year EMG hosted an event to connect the broader community; a garden party and picnic held at Bishopscourt in East Melbourne. The format for the event was determined by the evaluation of the 2012 Fiesta and community feedback gleaned from the survey EMG conducted earlier in the year. This all pointed to the desire for a low cost, accessible community event that was administratively easier to organise. It also provided an opportunity to celebrate EMG's 60 years of operation.

Caine Real Estate provided financial and in kind support in the form of signage to promote the event throughout the suburb. Along with flyers and a magazine story this attracted approximately 500 people. Feedback collected on the day indicates the garden

party concept was very well received by attendees. The combination of the relaxed Bishops court garden setting, entertainment suitable for adults and children, and the availability of fine picnic provisions prepared by a team of volunteers all contributed to the success of the day. A raffle, organised with support from Holy Trinity and with tickets sold before the event, also helped make the event a significant fundraising success.

GOVERNANCE

The Finance and Governance Sub-Committee reviewed our Rules in the light of the new State legislation governing associations. The result is being presented to tonight's AGM. We considered that the 'Model Rules' were not in all respects suitable for a community group such as ours, so we have proposed Rules which draw on our existing Rules, the Model Rules and of course the matters that the legislation require us to cover, as well as changes that we consider will improve our operation and our accountability to members. For example annual fees, currently set by the committee, would be approved by a general meeting of members. In future members would elect a committee, and the committee would elect office-holders. Other matters proposed to be changed include a more focussed statement of purpose to help us qualify as a community organization for various regulatory purposes, clearer classes of membership, providing for half of committee to retire every year (not all) for continuity purposes, giving the committee clear power to make policies and procedures, and having tighter definitions to protect member privacy.

During the year we reviewed a number of practices to ensure such things as declaration of any conflicts of interests and our membership database are handled appropriately. Subject to members supporting the new Rules we will proceed to revise our internal guidelines and procedures to make them consistent with those Rules and to update them to reflect good practice.

NEWS OF MEMBERS AND FORMER MEMBERS

We acknowledge former members who have died during the year including Nerida and John Sampson and Beryl Crusi.

We also congratulate members who have been honoured with awards in the Order of Australia – Phillip Ruthven AM and Peter Murton OAM.

THANKS

For most of the year we had a full strength Committee, which has meant our work has been shared between many willing hands. Many other members of the Group assist our work in other ways, including by joining our specialist committees, working on making the Garden Party such a success, and distributing copies of the East Melbourne & Jolimont 3002 Magazine, and we thank them for their support.

Carmel Bourke, our administrator, has been with the EMG for nearly nine years. We convey our thanks on behalf of the Group to Carmel for her valuable support.

East Melbourne Group Committee

March 2014