

**THE EAST MELBOURNE GROUP INC
2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
REPORT TO MEMBERS
MURRAY HOHNEN, PRESIDENT
including reports by convenors**

In this report, I will try to do three things. The first is to remind members of where the Group came from and what our objectives are. The second is to highlight some of the achievements we have chalked up through 2015 as a result of tireless efforts of the Committee and Convenors of the sub committees that get the work done. And the third is to thank you for your support during the year and to share some of the thoughts we all have for the year ahead.

About us

Unusually for a community group, the EMG has been in continuous existence since 1953. Many of the things about the suburb that you love are things the EMG its members have fought to preserve and retain.

The purposes of the EMG are:

3.1.1 To foster wide community knowledge of, access to and engagement in local events, services and activities so as to improve the connectedness and well-being of the community.

3.1.2 To preserve, protect and improve the East Melbourne community's:

(a) residential character and amenity;

(b) heritage qualities and the inventory of graded historic buildings;

boulevards, streets, streetscapes, laneways, views and vistas;

c) public parks, gardens, recreational areas, significant trees and plantings,

including the careful management of East Melbourne's public spaces.

3.1.3 To increase and diversify membership and the participation of members in our activities so as to support our other purposes.

2015 a year of achievement

Membership

Summary: Membership in 2015 has increased to 421 members. This is an increase from 392 in 2014. Jacinta Ryan has assiduously pursued the task of recruitment with the able assistance of many resident members but in particular John Barry.

We are delighted to report that membership in 2015 has increased to 421 members. This is an increase from 392 in 2014. In every organisation there is natural attrition as people move away or move on and the EMG is no exception. It is the interest that we have in preserving our suburb that brings people together and so we are always pleased to welcome new members and also to expand the talents of the group we already have.

My task in recruitment of members was made easier by the assistance of many resident members but in particular my committee consisting of one, John Barry. Without John's assistance we could not have achieved the new members totalling 71 that we have.

Our goal in 2016 is to lower the membership median age whilst at the same time continuing to grow our numbers. We thank all for their support and look forward to seeing all the familiar faces back along with many new ones.”

Jacinta Ryan

Heritage and planning

Heritage and planning stands at the core of EMG's being and we have been extremely fortunate to have Barbara Paterson convening the sub committee. She is capably supported by Bill Gilles, Ian Mitchell and Theo Buskes and the local champions who energise opposition to unwanted development proposals. The group is already missing the energy and dedication of Elizabeth Hill who has moved to Queenscliff after more than ten years of visits to the City of Melbourne's planning section.

Reactively, the sub committee has the relentless task of reviewing all the planning applications that are lodged with the City of Melbourne, the Planning Minister and Heritage Victoria. In many situations there are EMG members on both sides of the fence and it is often necessary to exercise a degree of pragmatism.

Proactively the sub committee looks for every opportunity to secure changes to the planning regulations that are likely to support our objectives. During 2015 there has been a detailed review of the heritage provisions of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. In addition a review of the Heritage Act is in progress together with an independent review of the implementation of residential zone changes. Each of these initiatives present opportunities.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was the successful mobilisation of community opposition to the proposed high rise development at 10 Wellington Parade. We took the view that the development would become a marker for all developments between Hoddle and Simpson Streets. The VCAT appeal was supported by the City of Melbourne and involved local residents who donated their time and expertise.

Finance and governance

Summary: I would like to pay tribute to Tom Hogg, our Treasurer. Tom is a happy cross between an abacus and a philosopher. Under his careful administration we finished the year with a small accounting loss of \$960 but a small cash surplus of \$ 1068. This was a commendable result given there was a \$11,380 increase in certain episodic costs, largely town planning appeal expenses and acquisition of a new computer.

EMG's balance sheet remains strong with assets of \$76,894 comfortably exceeding current liabilities of \$ 3,876-the difference of \$73,018 representing net assets or our equity.

There are some features of the financial performance of 2015 that deserve particular comment:-

- The generous response of members who doubled voluntary donations to \$3416;
- The residents who donated \$2,900 to help defray the costs of EMG's successful appeal to VCAT against the proposed high rise development at No 10 Wellington Parade;
- The volunteers , particularly committee members, who contributed expertise and time both in advising the Committee and representing EMG at the VCAT meetings, which saved on our planning costs;
- The 12% increase in revenue from members' subscriptions, (an extra 71 members);
- The volunteers who ran a variety of community focused social functions-providing a range of enjoyable community experiences as well as contributing to revenue.

For the last two years we have had a stable fee structure of \$50 per head, \$100 per household and \$150 per business. The Committee is proposing that fees remain unchanged for the year ahead in the expectation that an upward review is likely to be needed in 2017.

Trading overview

2015 saw continuation of the satisfactory financial performance of 2014 in that we recorded a small accounting loss of \$960 (versus a small profit of \$163 in 2014)

However when non-cash items of \$2028 (comprising provisions for write off of obsolete stock of \$1804 plus provisions for long service leave of \$224) are omitted ,EMG recorded a small cash surplus of \$1,068 for 2015

This was a commendable result given there was an increase in certain episodic costs of \$11,380 largely incurred by town planning appeal expenses and acquisition of a new computer.

Balance sheet

EMG's balance sheet remains strong with assets of \$76,894 comfortably exceeding current liabilities of \$3,876-the difference of \$73,018 representing net assets or our equity (NB EMG does not have any long term liabilities)

Our liquid position also remains strong with \$11,831 in cash-at call –equal to about one and a half month's trading expenses -with a further \$61,355 held on three months deposit- totalling \$73,186 in cash and near-cash funds-an increase of \$3112 over the same items at the end of 2014.

Selected key revenues

Revenue is essential for the operation of any organisation; EMG has **three main** sources of net revenue (IE net after deducting costs directly associated with earning those revenues)

The net revenues are shown in the following table. (Rounded to the nearest thousand dollars)

ITEM	\$000 2015
1 Members' Subscriptions	21
2 Net Fundraising from functions	14
3 Other Revenues (Donations, Interest, Grants, Net Sales)	<u>12</u>
TOTAL NET REVENUES	47

Key costs

EMG in 2015 had to meet three main costs of operation totalling \$34 thousand which are largely determined by the policies adopted by the Committee.

Employment Costs	14
Net Cost of Magazine (net of advertising revenue)	11
Town Planning Appeal Expenses	<u>9</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	34
In addition there were three cost items of a largely administrative nature	<u>\$12</u>
TOTAL COSTS	46
CASH SURPLUS	1

Comments

There are some features of the financial performance of 2015 that deserve particular comment: -

- (i) The generous response of members who doubled donations to \$3416,

- (ii) The residents who also donated \$2,900 to help defray the costs of EMG making a successful appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal against the proposed high rise development at No 10 Wellington Parade
- (iii) The volunteers , particularly committee members, who contributed expertise and time both in advising the Committee and representing EMG at the VCAT meetings, which saved on our planning costs
- (iv) The 12% increase in revenue from members' subscriptions, (an extra 71 members).
- (v) The volunteers who ran a variety of community -focused social functions-providing a range of enjoyable community experiences as well as contributing to revenue.

The Committee each year has to generate funds for the Group to carry out its mission of protecting the ambience of East Melbourne -the most liveable suburb in Melbourne, consistently and independently voted the world's most liveable city.

Looking forward - subscriptions

We have had a stable fee structure of \$50 per head, \$100 per household and \$150 per business for the past two years 2014 and 2015

The approximate overall cash breakeven projected for 2016 suggests that we can also maintain that same fee structure for the third year of 2016.

However the Committee considers that an upward review of fees is likely to be needed for the following year 2017.

Tom Hogg

Social and communications

Summary: Under the energetic leadership of Siusan Mackenzie, the Social and Communications Sub Committee has accomplished a huge amount. The list includes-

- production and distribution to the entire community of four seasonal editions of the East Melbourne & Jolimont Magazine;
- maintenance of the EMG website;
- the distribution of Monthly Updates;
- the launch in collaboration with the East Melbourne Historical Society of a project to document the history of EMG;
- raising \$14,204;
- a barbecue in Powlett Reserve for new members to be introduced and see the Hut;
- three afternoon tea functions at the library including a film or guest speaker which enabled residents and people in care at Mercy Place to engage with the local community;
- a craft group which met monthly at the Maternal & Child Health Centre;
- a Walk on Wellington progressive dinner involving Tippler & Co, Il Duca and Persillade restaurants;
- a community trivia challenge held at the St Peter's hall which attracted 14 teams from neighbourhood and interest groups across the suburb;
- a workshop where David Woodward led members through EMG's strategic plan and its refinement to reflect members' concerns and feedback;
- a pop up recycle market in the grounds at Holy Trinity which attracted 32 stall holders;
- a wine and cheese event at the Victorian Artists' Society Spring Exhibition;
- a ladies who lunch race week luncheon at Tippler & Co; and
- a community Christmas Party at Bishopscourt, the home of Philip and Joy Freier, which attracted 700 people

Community Magazine

Four seasonal editions of the East Melbourne & Jolimont Magazine were produced in 2015 under the stewardship of Siusan MacKenzie. Siusan has now undertaken responsibility for the production of 16 editions of the Magazine. The purpose of the Magazine is to generate a sense of community connection and interest in local affairs and events. The production cost of the magazine was funded by advertising fees, generated with the support of an advertising sales manager, a grant from the City of Melbourne and a contribution by the EMG. The Magazine is delivered to each household in the suburb (including mail boxes deemed 'no junk mail') by volunteers who each take responsibility for a designated route. Advertising income is fundamental to the financial viability of the Magazine and EMG is grateful for the support of those local businesses who often take a corporate social responsibility approach to advertising. With such a small pool of potential advertisers in the suburb it is always difficult to attract new proprietors. This and the huge effort involved to produce each edition has influenced the decision to produce three editions in 2016. Feedback on the style and content of the Magazine continues to be overwhelmingly positive and pleasingly 2015 saw an increasing number of contributions from local residents.

Website

The website, which was launched in February 2014, has enabled EMG to provide a more transparent and interactive experience for members. It is envisaged that in the future, the website will be used more effectively for communicating with members and host a pay online facility.

Social Media

EMG established a facebook page in 2015 and although followers are not huge it is steadily growing and it has proved effective in spreading the reach of messages relevant to the broader community and a younger demographic. It could be used more effectively in future for advocacy campaigns and there will be a drive in 2016 to connect with the broader local community via social media.

Updates to Members

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. It is EMG policy that Updates are not used to promote third parties although some discretion is used in terms of supporting local business operators who partner with EMG.

EMG History

A project is underway in collaboration with the East Melbourne Historical Society to document the history of EMG. We expect this to be of interest to many in the community and be of historical significance. A launch event is planned for 2016.

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 and to engage and connect the broader community. Some of the events raise funds which contribute materially to the EMG's on-going operations.

In 2015 the Social Committee raised \$14,204.

The decision to undertake a range of new events, which were accessible to the wider community and less costly continued to significantly increase EMGs fundraising capacity. A relentless personal effort by members of the committee and other volunteers, including much food preparation and donation of prizes also contributed to the outstanding fundraising outcome."

Siusan Mackenz

Amenity

Summary: Sadly the year saw the passing of EMG's Senior Vice President, Joanna Pace. She was a shining light in the community, and we miss her enormous energy and her connection back into Council.

Joanna's work as convenor of the Amenities Sub Committee has been taken up by Ian Mitchell and the committee's agenda has included-

- aircraft noise over East Melbourne;
- graffiti removal;
- progressing the development of a liquor licensing policy;
- input to the Jolimont Station Tram Stop design;
- input to the Albert Street Bike Lane design;
- participation in the Police Safety and Security Committee (PSSC);
- working with City of Melbourne to address parking overstaying and shortage;
- objecting to the City of Yarra Signage on the corner of Punt and Bridge Roads; and
- assisted with investigations into water table issues near the Cnr of Hotham and Simpsons Streets.

- Aircraft noise over East Melbourne . We have worked at the three levels of Government and particularly with the Greens, and with authorities responsible for air safety and services.

A City of Melbourne noise survey conducted with EMG and residents in September/October 2015 determined that "public amenity was being negatively affected due to noise from helicopters and other aircraft".

On 16 Feb 16, the City of Melbourne Future Melbourne Committee agreed unanimously to "endorse management seeking to develop Fly Neighbourly Agreements with helicopter companies operating in the City of Melbourne"

Whilst voluntary, this is a significant win for East Melbourne residents.

We are grateful to the Greens Councillors Oke and Leppert for driving this proposal at Council. We also thank the Aircraft Noise Sub Group for its excellent work.

We shall monitor the creation of the FNA's and the success and compliance with all FNA's established. In time we hope to extend FNA's to other aircraft types.

- Graffiti – we have had significant success identifying which organisations are responsible for dealing with different graffiti in East Melbourne. We have worked closely with these organisations in having graffiti removed. It is an ongoing problem, but we now have the processes for reporting it and monitoring removal.
- Liquor licensing – the current EMG policy of not supporting new licenses in the residential area has been successful in avoiding the acrimony and disputes of old, and avoiding the spread of licenses in residential areas causing so many problems in the CBD.
- Jolimont Station Tram Stop - we objected to the proposed brightly lit advertising signs on the tram stop. We await a decision.
- Albert Street Bike Lane – we have worked with City of Melbourne to ensure the proposed westbound bike lane and removal of a single car lane will have the minimum effect on residents.
- Police Safety and Security Committee (PSSC) – we have worked with the Police to ensure drug activities and inappropriate behaviour is reported and acted upon. The Police are investigating how Jolimont residents can more easily get to the homes during major event traffic restrictions.
- Parking – we are working with City of Melbourne to address parking overstaying and shortage. This includes call out of parking inspectors and potential use of in ground sensors and ticketing machines. We also corrected information being given out about Parking Permits.
- City of Yarra Signage. – in writing and by presentation, we objected to a large new flashing sign on the corner of Punt and Bridge Roads. City of Yarra were somewhat surprised at the strength of feeling from the affected communities and are revisiting the proposal.

- Watertable – we assisted with investigations into water table issues near the Cnr of Hotham and Simpsons Streets.
- **The Amenities Team** – we have an active team of volunteers who worked hard and achieved much to improve the Amenity of East Melbourne in 2015.

Ian Mitchell

Parks and gardens

The parks and gardens of East Melbourne are in relatively good health. The relevant authorities are kept up to speed by a band of EMG garden champions who take the trouble to report issues of concern to the relevant authorities and nag until action is taken.

We are indebted to Stuart Hamilton for the able way he makes our interests known to the Yarra Park Consultative Committee.

We retain the overall long term objective of securing the removal of cars from Yarra Park. At the same time and on a shorter time line, we are working towards improving the park and garden facilities for park users including dogs and their owners.

Some thoughts for the year ahead

Our membership goal in 2016 is to continue to grow membership and at the same time lower the membership median age. I set each of you here tonight, the task of recruiting one new member. Of course if you recruit someone under 40 you get double points.

The Social sub committee is already working on a range of social events for the year with some activities aimed at the younger people in our midst.

We plan to launch a Facebook site to help get our thoughts out in to the broader community.

I would like to run a second workshop for members seeking input on the all important issues of how we are travelling as a voluntary organisation with a broad agenda and changing demographic and attitudes to volunteering. In recent months at least one member has complained that our external image is undeservedly poor and that the suburb is facing a development crisis. I am sure the new committee will welcome a reality check on the way things are done.

On the amenities front, we will continue to work with the Council and other stakeholders on the range of amenity issues that will undoubtedly arise. Parking in the suburb is a current issue of concern.

It has been a privilege to work with the Committee, its Sub Committees, our administrator Carmel and the dedicated volunteers who do so much. I thank Stuart Hamilton for keeping the administration on an even keel. I keep reminding myself that with the exception of Carmel, we are all volunteers and do what we do out of respect for the very special community we live in. It is not an easy task but I can honestly say that along the way we are finding a bit of time to laugh and enjoy ourselves and mark the gains we make on our members' behalf.

Murray Hohnen