

# Gatekeepers of the community

The Warrandyte Community Association has played a big part in local issues for more than a decade. Brianna Piazza goes behind the scenes to talk with the man at the helm, Dick Davies, to find out what makes the WCA tick

**BP: Hi Dick, can you tell me how the Warrandyte Community Association was established and what does it stand for?**

DD: The WCA was established in 2001. Our committee is made up of residents and we follow up community issues and concerns that people bring to us.

Some say our mandate is very proactive – we work to *promote* all aspects of community life in Warrandyte, to *defend* its character, and *protect* the green wedge and the environment.

Yet the mandate very much reflects the feeling at the time the WCA was created – the feeling that community values were under attack. It was around the Kennett years and the sentiment was that things were going to be privatised and sold off.

**So who does the WCA represent?**

We don't claim to represent the Warrandyte community as a whole. We represent principally the views of our members, which is a few hundred people.

However, a lot of people will agree with what we say and do, but not everybody.

**What are some of the issues that you regularly have to deal with?**

A big thing around here is planning and environment. People say you can't stay like this forever and we're not against development but we're against inappropriate development. A lot of people choose to live in Warrandyte because it's a



bush environment and we want to maintain it.

It's an issue that comes up when we have our regular meetings with Manningham and Nillumbik councils. But if there's one thing that affects the whole community, whether people are right, left, green or something else, it's bushfires. After the 2009 fires we had a series of meetings, including a forum where we had 280 people and 18 different groups turn up.

That formed a basis of the submission we made to the Royal Commission. We also had 700 people attend the meeting with Kevin Tolhurst, a Melbourne University fire expert. So a lot of the issues we deal with really do impact the entire community in one way or another.

**Tell us about one of WCA's achievements?**

The biggest concrete achievement is the Creekside retirement village. As Warrandyte people got older they couldn't work on big blocks so they had to move out. So we thought we had to do something to give them an appropriate

retirement housing option in Warrandyte.

A property was put aside but after the commissioners moved and sold it off for private development we had to start all over again. In the end we established the sub-committee to see it through and people were very happy with the result – it even won a couple of prizes.

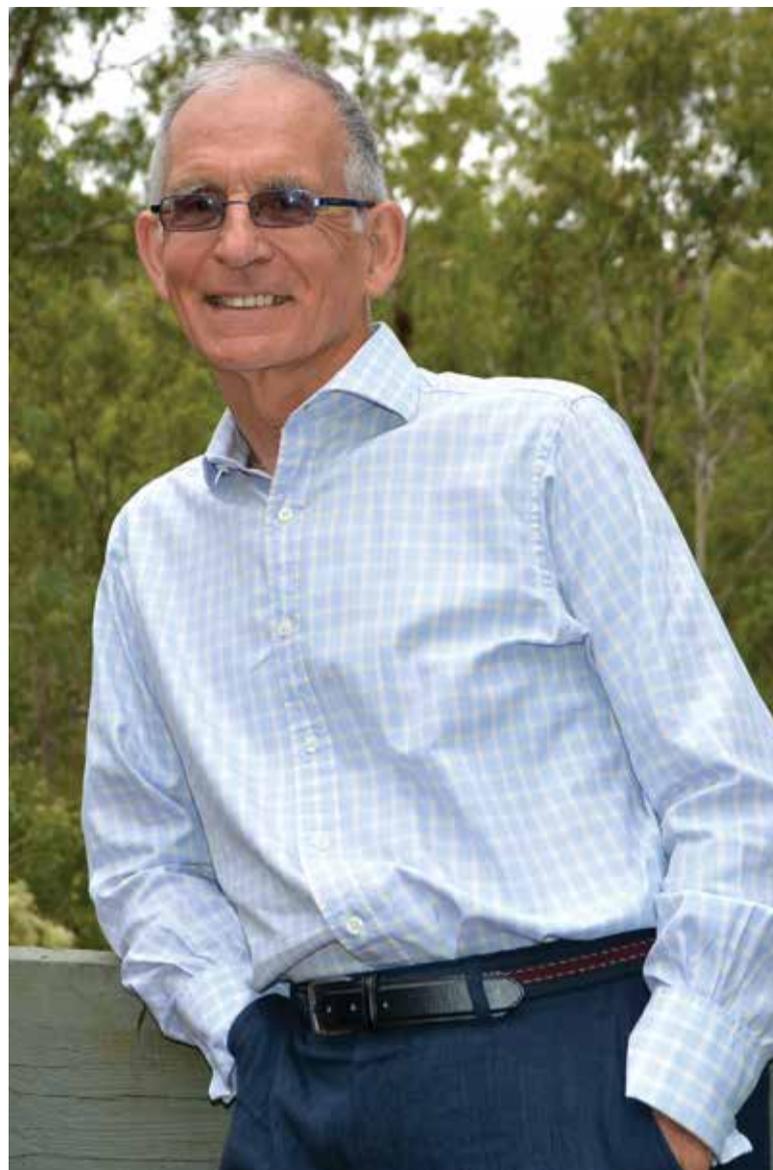
**How significant is the association's work to the daily lives of Warrandyte residents?**

It's when you haven't got an organisation that's raising issues and following things up that stuff falls in a hole. When you have planning issues, for example, there'll always be two sides. What we can do is to provide a forum and liaise with the council or with other organisations or at the very least tell people what to do and who to go to. So I think if we weren't here all sorts of things could happen.

**Would you encourage businesses and residents to contact the WCA when they have concerns about something affecting the community?**

We're keen to have more people supporting us. We have over 400 people listed on our membership list but not all are financial and under new legislation we have to ensure members are financial. So if residents have issues regarding Warrandyte, we would urge them to become a member and contact us. For businesses, we would say if they talked things through beforehand and got the WCA on their side then they would find people in the community probably wouldn't oppose their submission.

● You can find out more and contact the WCA by visiting [www.warrandyte.org.au](http://www.warrandyte.org.au)



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