



Warrandyte Community Association

INC. A0042350W

PO Box 75, Warrandyte 3113

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AGM 11th NOVEMBER 2012

It has been the busiest year yet for the Warrandyte Community Association with activity on bushfire awareness, state planning concerns and meetings with State and Local Government and Departments on a range of issues.

Our website has been totally remodelled to accommodate the 'Be Ready' Fire Ready Communities project and is accessible on www.warrandyte.org.au.

2011-2012 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Office Bearers

President	Dick Davies
Vice President	Jonathan Upson
Deputy Vice President & Public Officer	Bruce Davidson
Treasurer	Kerrie Boyle
Secretary	Doug Mealy

Committee Members

Richard Aumann
Ken Crook
David Dyason
Fiona Elliott
Cr David Ellis (Manningham)
Merilyn Evans
Lynda Gilbert
Jozica Kutin
Warwick Leeson
Doug Seymour (from 26 January 2012)
Meindert Withoff

Ken Crook and Lynda Gilbert resigned during the year. Our thanks to them and to all the Committee for their contribution during the year.

BUSHFIRE AWARENESS

The Warrandyte Community Association was awarded a 'Fire Ready Communities Grant' in May by the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development. Government funding of \$86,200 has been supplemented by funds from Manningham Council, Nillumbik Council, the Warrandyte Community Bank and the Community Market Committee, making a total of \$100,200.00

The 'Be Ready Warrandyte' – living with bushfire risk Bushfire Planning Project's main aim is to carry out a survey of households in the Warrandyte, North Warrandyte and South Warrandyte areas to assess the current level of

community awareness and knowledge in regard to bushfire safety preparedness.

The survey will lead to a 'Findings Report' which will establish what the local community does and does not know about bushfire safety and survival, and identify the barriers preventing them from developing bushfire survival plans. The Findings Report will form the basis of a clear strategy outlining how households can be informed and educated about bushfire survival plans in the future.

The survey has been completed with 653 responses covering the 2870 households in Warrandyte, North Warrandyte and South Warrandyte with additional responses from Park Orchards and other nearby areas.

A preliminary Findings Report will soon be lodged on the WCA's 'Be Ready Warrandyte' website at www.warrandyte.org.au. A complete analysis will be commissioned to enable interested parties such as the CFA and community organisations to 'datamine' for some time to come.

Project oversight is by a Project Management Committee consisting of representatives of the WCA, local CFA brigades, CFA Districts 13 & 14, RMIT University, as well as the Manningham Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator and Emergency Management Officers, Fire for Manningham and Nillumbik.

Feedback from local Community Fireguard Leaders is that most people do not have an *effective* Bushfire Survival Plan. It seems that while we think we have, under scrutiny or bushfire conditions it falls apart. This project aims to help residents plan properly to rectify this situation.

Based on survey outcomes, the Project will develop a 'toolkit' and resources targeted to the practical needs of the local community based on the key elements of an effective bushfire survival plan.

Project Management is by the Warrandyte based 'Good Work Group' which has developed a strong communications plan and online presence to inform the community of the objectives, progress and outcomes of the project, as well as on other relevant bushfire awareness and safety related issues.

Besides online communication, the campaign so far has developed posters, cartoons, car-stickers, leaflets and roadside flashing signs together with meetings with community leaders, media releases and video.

WCA developed a code of conduct, privacy and complaints/feedback policy in order to better comply with the Government grant.

Controlled Burn in State Park

Residents were concerned about being unaware in advance of a controlled burn in Pound Bend State Park. WCA considered it unsatisfactory if notice of such burns is confined to the CFA website. Prominent signage should always be erected on major roads in the vicinity of a controlled burn.

STATE PLANNING ISSUES

Urban Growth Boundary:

State Planning Minister Matthew Guy's "*Review of Urban Growth Boundary Anomalies Outside Growth Areas*" in June 2011 was seen as potentially weakening provisions in the Green Wedge. (WCS considers the term 'Green Wedge' to be generic and encompass both low density residential and specific Green Wedge zones).

Following the WCA AGM on "Green Wedge Threat?" the WCA had a meeting with Planning Minister on 13 October 2011 to discuss this issue. Minister Guy categorically rejected any assertion that there is a threat to the Green Wedge areas around Warrandyte.

However he stated that State Government would consider requests from Councils to include some land currently not within the UGB. The Minister emphasised that identifying anomalies for change is a Council process. In fact, as Manningham City Council have already passed a resolution stating that there are 'no significant anomalies' in Manningham's Green Wedge then the Minister indicated that was the end of the matter, notwithstanding the Council amendment inviting additional landowner submissions.

Nillumbik Council has adopted a Green Wedge Management Plan and supports the existing Urban Growth Boundaries and will not be proposing any changes. However, whilst recognising the 'neighbourhood character' of the area, Council supports 'responsible tourism' and potentially easing restrictions on ancillary uses such as a café in conjunction with a small vineyard. The key issue is Green Wedge (GW) zone management.

WCA's understanding of the Minister's position is that identification of 'significant anomalies' will not result in any increase in residential land development in Manningham or Nillumbik. He further emphasised that the review is a one off process which will not be repeated in the life of this Government. In his view, the premise that planning zoning will never change is not realistic. However, given that there will be subsequent reviews, any weakening of the regulation opens the door for potential adverse development and must be monitored.

The WCA is concerned at any proposal to modify the boundaries of the Green Wedge zones of Nillumbik and Manningham. We understand that the purpose of the Review of the Urban Growth Boundary was "*to encourage new housing developments as well as land supply for local employment opportunities*" WCA

noted that 'the views of affected land owners' would be considered, whilst those of the general public, who also have a legitimate interest in the matter, would not.

The Review appeared to be an open invitation to vested private interests to promote ad hoc development without any balancing view from the community at large. The certainty created by existing 'Green Wedge' policy, a valuable planning legacy dating back to the Hamer Government, has been undermined. It is the firm view of WCA that the community of Warrandyte and the Warrandyte electorates, including Green Wedge landholders, need and deserve that certainty.

WCA would be fully supportive of the landowners in terms of assistance with agricultural sustainability and management of neglected land – things that we note are only fleetingly addressed in current legislation. We welcome opportunities to work with the State Government to find creative solutions to perceived problems.

New Reform Zone Review

Minister Guy went on to announce in July 2012 that planning zones are being "reformed" to ensure that they are still relevant and adequately reflect the "aspirations of all Victorians". The media release was titled – "*Planning zone reforms to target productivity*". The Minister sought community feedback until 28th September 2012 and indicated that the implementation of the zones would be in October 2012 with a further 12 month implementation period to consider where new residential zones should apply. The Planning Department received far more (presumably negative) submissions than they expected, and the Planning Minister is now saying the consultation period with the community will be much longer—potentially into the 2nd quarter of next year.

The new provisions make very significant changes to existing zones and introduce new zones which will likely have a very significant effect on the planning framework for Victoria.

For the WCA, there are three major concerns, first it is proposed that the minimum lot size for North Warrandyte and Warrandyte west of Tindals Road be reduced from from 0.4 ha to 0.2 ha (1 acre to ½ acre) with increased density putting further pressure on already overloaded arterial roads and potential catastrophic results in a bushfire. In the Green Wedge, , any use not explicitly stated on the list of prohibited uses would be allowed subject to council approval (or VCAT appeal). Last, the zone that will likely apply to the Warrandyte Township, requires councils to specify a minimum number of dwellings on a lot to no less than two effectively overruling the existing prohibition on dual occupancy

The WCA submission (dated 21 September 2012 see www.warrandyte.org.au) to the Department of Planning and Development was accompanied by 128 personal statements from concerned residents.

The government position that the Bushfire Management Overlay introduced in November 2011 gives absolute protection to most of Warrandyte and North

Warrandyte is questionable given the CFA administration's patchy performance on planning issues in Warrandyte in the past. In any case, we would much rather have the CFA focussed on fire prevention and fire fighting than reviewing planning permits

The WCA organised several protests and demonstrations which were highly successful in drawing attention to these issues. There is no doubt that Warrandyte was one of the most active communities rising up to oppose these changes. Two articles in The Age were a direct result of the actions of the WCA, and the Warrandyte community. Local member Minister Ryan Smith arranged a meeting with the Planning Minister Matthew Guy where our concerns were raised. The Planning Minister was reluctant to be tied down on specific outcomes; a report of a three person review committee is due at the end of November.

Native Vegetation Management Framework

WCA met with Environment Minister Ryan Smith re a proposed review of the Native Vegetation Management Framework. The committee generally supported it in its current form. However the WCA has formally lodged a submission with the Department of Environment and Sustainability (dated 19 October 2012 see www.warrandyte.org.au) which amongst other comments, cautions against overreliance on vegetation models and warns against downgrading the Framework focus on smaller sites such as in North Warrandyte.

Bus Services

Concern over removal of bus-bays and the re-routing of Panorama bus services along unsuitable sideroads has been resolved with WCA assisting local residents with their campaign. Local member for Warrandyte and Minister Ryan Smith intervened on behalf of residents to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

WARRANDYTE FESTIVAL & WCAN EXPO

The WCA display at the Warrandyte Festival celebrated 10 years of active community engagement with a poster display in a brand new Gazebo under the by-line 'Caring for the Community'. Highlights are listed on the webpage (see www.warrandyte.org.au/about) and include campaigns on Bushfire Awareness, protecting the Green Wedge and Environment, Public Transport and Roads, Retirement Housing, Planning and Development and facilities for Youth. There have been regular meetings with Local and State Government on local issues and active involvement on the Yarra Valley Water Stakeholder Panel covering the sewerage rollout in Warrandyte and North Warrandyte.

It is pleasing to note that 'Creekside', the Warrandyte Community Retirement Housing Cooperative – a WCA initiative - won the Master Builders' Association of Victoria Excellence in Housing Award 2012 for the best multi unit development. George Costas the builder is over the moon and the WCRHC committee and residents are delighted after all the hard work.

WCA also participated in the WarrandyteCAN Expo and supported the WCAN campaign to eliminate plastic bags in Warrandyte.

WARRANTYTE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The WCA supported Manningham City Council efforts to update the Warrandyte Community Centre building in Yarra Street and increase its relevance and role in our community contingent upon the following three conditions being met:

1. That permanent (24 hour) tenants operating out of the WCC must not be 'for profit' enterprises.
2. That should a regional community hub such as the one currently being discussed to service Park Orchards, Wonga Park and/or Warrandyte come into being, that the MCC will neither close, nor reduce its financial commitment to, the WCC.
3. That any WCC advisory committee appointed to assist in the management of the WCC should be comprised of no less than 2/3 local Warrandyte residents and should also approve the appointment of permanent tenants.

In meetings with the Manningham Council, under the auspices of the 'MCC/ WCC Engagement with the Community Plan', WCA was concerned that the development seemed to have excessive influence from incumbent permanent tenants at the expense of the wider community. Also it was argued the wider community would continue to stay away if the present cost structure for casual users and difficulty of access remains. WCA also noted that, in addition to readily accessible meeting spaces, community groups need storage space for hard assets. (The WCA gazebo-tent and display hardware is an example).

WARRANTYTE BACKLOG SEWERAGE PROGRAMME

WCA acknowledges that whilst sewerage will improve water quality and the run off into the river environment, there are some concerns. Principally the financial considerations are plumbing connection costs, any possible rate increase and opt-out provisions for those with existing treatment systems. However, the major political impact may be to increase the pressure for sub-division on larger blocks. WCA will oppose any such subdivision proposals.

The planned Yarra Valley Water (YVW) backlog sewerage programme has been completed in Warrandyte and begun in North Warrandyte. Uncertainty continues about potential connection costs particularly for steeper blocks where the use of machinery to drill and/or dig trenches may not be practical. The WCA urges community members with concerns to contact YVW as they have shown themselves to be willing to listen to potential issues. As a result of WCA discussions with YVW, improved community consultation is occurring to help to allay fears and uncertainties. The YVW engineering team continues to demonstrate strong willingness to be responsive to community concerns.

TOWN PLANNING

Graffiti Policy:

Vexatious damage from graffiti “tagging” causes damage to public facilities and incurs a substantial cost to our community and councils to clean up, which is currently well handled. Whilst WCA is of the view that graffiti is a low level problem in Warrandyte itself, there are underlying social issues that should be addressed professionally and sensitively. Hence WCA is in favour of council policies that would encourage “graffiti art” in appropriate civic locations. WCA is happy to collaborate with councils on any development of this issue.

Old Dairy

The Graffiti inquiry led to an examination of Old Warrandyte Dairy now the ‘Dairy Coolroom’ which is neglected and vandalised with asbestos sheet torn out. WCA initiated negotiations on its future between Manningham Council, the Warrandyte Historical Society and Melbourne Water. Melbourne Water undertook precautionary measures to remove asbestos and condition and heritage reports are pending. Information panels may be installed whether it is demolished or retained.

Manningham Council Outdoor Advertising Policy

In a review of the Manningham Guidelines, the WCA policy is summarised as: minimal restriction on community organisation advertising; some restriction on commercially-sponsored community advertising, so community content does not become a Trojan horse for excessive commercial advertising; and there should be stronger restrictions on commercial advertising.

Proposed Development for 44 – 46 Yarra Street

The proposal by United Petroleum to redevelop the site at 44-46 Yarra Street as a Petrol Station with a shop and restaurant is opposed by local residents. Whilst not opposing a new petrol outlet *per se*, WCA has opposed this particular development as being excessive and out of character with the Township Heritage Strategy. In a straw poll on our website, 66% of local residents (sample size 142) opposed the development (see www.warrandyte.org.au/sample-four/). WCA has made a submission to Manningham Council, also available on the website.

246 Research Warrandyte Rd

WCA assisted residents in planning concerns about this development.

102-110 Harris Gully Road development

This proposed development has not proceeded so far but WCA expressed some concern that the planning application for a proposed nursery and café seemed to support strong bias towards the food provision component.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

WCA continues to meet formally on a twice yearly basis with Councillors and Officers of Manningham and Nillumbik Councils.

Council Elections

The WCA held Candidate Forums for Manningham and Nillumbik council election candidates in late September as we have done for the past 8-9 years.

The WCA was as even handed as possible; all candidates were given an equal opportunity to present themselves at each Forum. At each Forum, the WCA declared its intention to formally support one, or more, candidates in the council elections. The WCA decision was based on our knowledge of the candidates, their answers to questions at the WCA candidate forums last month, and responses to a written survey. The survey was sent to all candidates, with email addresses on the Victorian Electoral Commission website, covering a number of planning, public transport, and community issues. The WCA announced on the website (see <http://warrandyte.org.au/council-candidate-forums/>) that it would support two candidates for local council:

- Warwick Leeson, candidate for Sugarloaf Ward, Nillumbik Council
- Michelle Pini, candidate for Mullum Mullum ward, Manningham Council

The decision to support candidates was taken because in Council elections local residents have often very little knowledge of candidates who nominate, unlike the more widely advertised State and Federal elections. WCA has received some feedback with regards to the decision take this year to support council candidates. A few members have expressed the view that the WCA should remain “impartial” and not support or endorse candidates. Their views have been conveyed to the Management Committee.

Dick Davies

President

11 November 2012

WCA gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Warrandyte Community Branch, Bendigo Bank.

