



13 November 2019

## Val Polley Presentation to Riverside Opening

I did not foresee this day when Dick ask me to attend a meeting held by MCC on Ageing Well in Manningham way back in 2006. However, let me say how greatly honoured I feel to be asked to perform this ceremony given that my role is only one of many in the saga of providing retirement housing in Warrandyte. Let me touch on the major points:

Back in 1978 there were plans to build an 800-unit retirement village on the corner of Alexander and Warrandyte Roads. That fell apart when the then proposed North-East link route was planned to run right through the area.

In 1983 the Stiggant Street social retirement housing was built in Stiggant Street and it was also about that time Louise Joy and Jean Chapman raised concerns about the plight of other elderly residents forced to leave Warrandyte if downsizing.

In 1987 an inter-church council committee under Stan Fishley, Uniting Church Minister, investigated the need for retirement living suggesting 30 single storey units would be needed.

In 1992 The Diary started a campaign to have suitable land bought for a retirement village with the support of Phil Honeywood. This was backed by all 3 ward councillors, Louise Joy, Vern Denford and Val Polley.

In 1993 the church led Warrandyte Community Retirement Housing Project launched a survey looking at senior's housing needs. Searches were made for suitable land.

In 1995 D & T Council offered \$350,000 towards purchase of appropriate land. The Kennett Government sacked all Councils and installed Commissioners.

In 1996 the commissioners commission a consultant report into retirement housing for the whole district only to make the promise of the funds conditional on the choice of site and then the offer was withdrawn in 1998. It's at this time that six units for retirees is built on the corner of Everard Drive. The community retirement project was at a crossroads and there it sat!! The Diary carried an article in October, written by Cliff Green with cartoon by Jock with the headline '*Don't get old in Warrandyte, you'll have nowhere to live!*'

In 2003 Cr Patrician Young noted that while Manningham had a number of retirement homes it had not been possible to find a suitable location in Warrandyte.

In 2004 Louise Joy raised the possibility of using land at St Gerard's Catholic Church for retirement housing but the land was ultimately approved for an extension to the cemetery. The dead and not the living!!

So that brings us to the Ageing Well in Manningham. As a result of that evening I convened a meeting in Warrandyte at which a committee was formed to look into retirement housing options – again.

# Warrandyte Community Retirement Housing Co-operative Ltd



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I was joined initially by Sarah Wrigley, David Ellis, Marjorie Lapworth, Doug Seymour and Ivan Fulton with Andrew Yen and Simon Kearney shortly after. Together we investigated a number of sites identified as possibilities such as the land at the roundabout and the Keen's cutting land (now developed). However it was not until the offer of the land in Anderson Creek Road was made available following an article in the Diary that real progress was made, and the Warrandyte Community Retirement Housing Cooperative formed to purchase it. Not an easy task in itself.

Membership of the Board has changed overtime as directors have come and gone. In addition to those earlier names Dick Davies, Richard Aumann, Barry Holding, Lesley Ryall, Brian Ims and Jock Macneish have all played, or are playing a part in the enterprise.

Despite verbal support from Council and government no monetary or physical help was forthcoming. The learning curve of establishing a retirement village is enormous requiring legal, industry and monetary help. Without the generosity of a backer willing to underwrite the project Creekside in Anderson Creek Road could never have been built. Simon Kearney must be acknowledged here for his willingness to take the gamble on an untried group and project and he is owed a debt of gratitude. Likewise with Riverside which could not have happened without a local family offering to sell their land for a second complex and local community members willing to back the project with funding. They are to be commended also.

Creekside was designed by local architect Adie Courtney, garden design by Bev Hanson and built by Costas Constructions to general acclaim and several awards. It literally broke new ground and was initially met with some scepticism and doubt. At its Open Day I was intrigued to overhear one elderly lady berating her son because she had originally put a deposit on a villa only to have him talk her out of it! She was not best pleased. But its original residents still live there and its acceptance and acknowledgement by the general community is now widespread.

Which brings us to this lovely development called Riverside. Thanks to the Ims family, neighbour support and the financial backing of those committed backers we stand here today to celebrate the completion of the second retirement complex built by the Warrandyte Retirement Housing Cooperative. Again designed by Adie Courtney with a Hanson garden design and built to exacting standards it is an outstanding example of what can be achieved through community effort.

However in saying that I want to give a major heartfelt vote of thanks to Andrew Yen. Andrew came into the project as a (relatively) younger man. He brought experience, enthusiasm and drive to the project management thus ensuring both projects reached completion. He stayed unruffled by problems that arose (rocks at Creekside, drainage at Riverside) dealt with difficult clients, builders and Council. His contribution has been outstanding, and a special vote of thanks should be accorded to him.

I hope I've acknowledged all the major players, but thanks are due to others who contributed such as Claire Dawson who kept the books in order for a number of years and Paul Johnstone, lawyer for the Riverside project. Also the banks, Bendigo Bank for Creekside and Australia Bank for Riverside.

This project epitomises why I love Warrandyte and its community. It didn't wait for government, Council or others to fill the need. It worked hard over decades to find a solution, ignoring failure and keeping going. Then all those named individuals then worked together to bring the vision to fruition. Long may the Coop continue, and I hope there will be a YarraSide somewhere in the future.

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I consider the model of small clusters of retirement housing within the community and close to facilities is an excellent one when there is no broad-acre land to be had. I hope it is a model that can be adapted and adopted successfully into the future.

So thank you to everyone who has played a part in this retirement project and for making me part of today's opening.