



The East Melbourne Group Inc.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

It is with pleasure that I present the 59th Annual Report of the Committee of the East Melbourne Group Inc. (EMG) for the period May 2012 to March 2013.

The Annual Report highlights important projects and challenges the committee of management has worked on over the past year. The Treasurer is presenting the finances separately.

Our President for 2012, Margaret Wood, moved out of East Melbourne late in the year and tendered her resignation as from 31 December. I thank her for agreeing to return to the Committee after many years' earlier service, and in particular for ensuring our Finance and Social Committees could do their work effectively. Joanna Pace, as Senior Vice-President, became Acting President in accordance with our Rules on Margaret's resignation. Unfortunately Joanna in recent weeks has not for personal reasons been able to undertake all the duties of Acting President, so I have convened recent committee meetings and with the leave of this Annual General Meeting will be available to chair it.

MEMBERSHIP

As at 31 December we had **448** members, a 10% increase on the number 12 months earlier. We started a membership campaign during the year to increase but also broaden the membership base.

HERITAGE & PLANNING

Our Heritage and Planning Sub-Committee has considered a varied and interesting number of permit applications this year. Two proposals in particular have attracted a large number of individual objectors as well.

Since late 2011 we have been involved with the proposed development at 33-41 Agnes St. Jolimont. The issues here are parking, and heritage – the design and height of the building are inimical to the surrounding Jolimont precinct. The matter is listed for a VCAT hearing on 18 April.

More recently, the application by The Catholic Education Office for a general liquor license for its St John's site, several years after the original building permit application, has drawn the ire of local residents. The matter is headed to VCAT on 30 April.

The parlous states of Valetta and Mosspennoch have also been much on our mind. We are pleased that Heritage Victoria has granted a permit in respect of Valetta and that the owner has lodged plans with CoM. The future of Mosspennoch is uncertain now that Thakral Pty Ltd, which intended to restore Mosspennoch and convert it into 6 apartments, has been taken over by Brookfields.

We were intrigued by the proposal to erect a 4-storey residence on a 16 square metre site, a former garage, in Hayes Lane. The proposal found favour with CoM for its advanced environmental credentials. Nevertheless, several nearby residents have objected to the proposal.

We note that the issue of retention of historic fabric has been a prominent one in many of the heritage reports emanating from CoM this year and that applicants are being encouraged to preserve it wherever possible. An attitude we endorse.

No disrespect intended to Norm Smith, but we objected to the statue which has appeared at the northern end of MCG Avenue and prominently carries Australia Post signage. In our view this is contrary to the strong restrictions around advertising in heritage places. At least another 5 statues are planned and the Avenue is to be renamed 'The Australia Post Avenue of Legends'. We are very concerned that Heritage Victoria granted a permit for these works as a result of an unpublicised application and we have told them so.

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, which manages Yarra Park.

Stuart Hamilton continued as a community representative on the Yarra Park Advisory Committee (YPAC). 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. Mark Jenkins, the Convenor of the Parks & Gardens Committee, also meets with the MCC monthly. The water recycling plant was completed and the benefits, combined with major landscaping works, are beginning to show. Despite the run of hot dry weather, Yarra Park is looking the best it has for some time.

In the longer term, a tree replacement strategy will be implemented, and we will need to work closely with the MCC and other groups such as Friends of the Elms 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.

Stuart is also a community representative on the City of Melbourne Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee. This committee has overseen work on the Fitzroy Gardens water recycling plant, and the return later this year of a significant section of the depot to public park use, which is now well advanced.

Of the other major parks and open spaces, we have recently taken up with the Council such matters as safety in Darling Square, the state of the elms along the railway reserve in Wellington Pde, and in Hotham St, and action is promised. Council responded positively to earlier representations that we and locals made about shade in the Powlett Reserve play area.

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.

We have achieved some very good outcomes this year, including improved communications with Council – some departments now regularly contact EMG/Amenities of their own volition with notifications that affect our community. This new collaboration has resulted in a number of achievements, including reasonable parking decisions for outside Mosslenoch on Clarendon/George streets and the Clarendon Clinic on Albert Street.

New initiatives include the redevelopment of Wellington Parade, the last unimproved gateway to the City (no work has been done since preparations for the 1956 Olympic Games). After the Amenities presentation to the City of Melbourne, \$100,000 was allocated for an initial scoping document that will include input from EMG, VicTrack, MCG/MCC, Wellington Parade businesses and other stakeholders to develop a schedule of works. With residential/urban renewal a hot topic, this will be a \$12 million-\$15 million project and may allow EMG to influence appearance and such issues as traffic management.

We have monitored and, where appropriate, objected to liquor licenses and kerbside cafes that could have an adverse effect on residential amenity. An example was the proposed restaurant/bar/kerbside cafe at 10 Hotham Street, featuring plans for licensed outdoor seating for up to 24. VCAT approved a restaurant, against strong objections, while the kerbside cafe was rejected by the City of Melbourne. EMG argued that Council should protect residential amenity, not facilitate business in residential areas. The proposed development has since been changed to residential.

We have contacted relevant authorities and politicians in a push to reduce light aircraft and helicopter noise over East Melbourne and Jolimont. Members will be advised how

they can register online such noise intrusions. The greater the number of reports, the more likely we will be able to reduce flight numbers, hovering, low flying and noise.

EAST MELBOURNE & JOLIMONT FIESTA 2013

EMG hosted a community Fiesta on 25 November in Powlett Reserve. The aim of the event was to bring the 3002 community together for a day of fun in the park, with something for everyone, and to raise awareness about local service providers.

The event generated tremendous community interest and the call for volunteers and exhibitors was very well responded to, especially by younger members of the community. Local business provided essential financial and pro bono support which enabled the event to be run at almost negligible cost to participants. Caine Real Estate was the major local supporter with Mercy Health, Citywide, East Melbourne Dental Group, The Australian Clothing Company, Epworth Health, Freemasons, Smith & Rowe and IGA supermarket providing funds for specific aspects of the event. Business supporters also provided numerous and significant prizes for events and a raffle. The City of Melbourne provided welcome sponsorship through a community partnership program funds the majority of which was used to pay for infrastructure and other event management requirements.

It is estimated up to 3000 people attended throughout the day and the general consensus of opinion seemed to be that the Fiesta was a huge success. Whilst many people would like to see it become an annual event EMG is of the opinion that it would be too difficult to raise the necessary funds annually and too onerous a task for the volunteers on the event management team. Instead the event organiser has committed to a 2013 Spring event on a smaller scale with the aim of harnessing the community spirit and interest shown by our younger members and once again providing an event with 'something for everyone'.

EAST MELBOURNE JOLIMONT 3002 MAGAZINE

A new look magazine was launched in 2012 with four seasonal editions produced and delivered to all 3002 mailboxes by a team of volunteers. Our aim was to produce a magazine of interest to the broader East Melbourne community that was cost neutral and in a style that would stand out amongst advertising mail drop pamphlets and be unique to East Melbourne in content.

A member of the EMG committee, Siusan Mackenzie, took on the role of editor and she worked with a publisher who was responsible for layout, advertising sales and print production. A review of the magazine at the start of 2013 determined that it was not commercially viable for the publisher and they withdrew their services. As a consequence the Magazine has not been published so far in 2013.

EMG received very positive feedback about the new look magazine and is determined to continue to produce a high quality but cost efficient magazine for our community. Whilst City of Melbourne provided a grant of \$3000 towards the production of the magazine

that only went a small way towards total production costs which rely on advertising to achieve EMG's aim of being cost neutral. EMG is currently considering a range of other production options with a view to linking the magazine readership to its updated website.

In the meantime the email-based **News Update** will continue to be produced after each Committee meeting for members with current news of interest.

WEBSITE

EMG aims to update its website in 2013 making it a more useful 'go to' site for residents, members and committee members. EMG will be seeking the services of a volunteer to take responsibility for maintaining the site.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Social Committee arranged 3 functions since the last AGM:

- the Winter Dinner, which this time was a gala black tie evening at Melbourne Club in its heritage dining room, which was attended by the maximum allowed of 150 guests, with classy floorshow Puttin' on the Ritz' arranged by EMG committee member & entertainer John Lidgerwood
- a Christmas Cocktail Party at the new function centre at the Richmond Football Club attended by around 100 guests.
- a new Summer 'Meet & Greet' in Powlett Reserve outside the Hut, giving members an opportunity to look inside!

The first two events raised a little over \$2000 (net of expenses), less than previous years, mainly because we could not hold a raffle at the Melbourne Club. Also, events were run deliberately on reduced margins to enable us to keep costs as low as possible for members. The final event was free.

GOVERNANCE

During the year we have formalised the role of a Finance Committee, and extended it to become a Finance and Governance Committee, with responsibility for looking at strategies to ensure we are making the best use of members' and other income, and reviewing our governance arrangements. We will be looking to amend our Rules in response to the new Model Rules for Associations legislated last year. As we currently do not use the old Model Rules we are not required to adopt nor modify the new ones within 12 months (i.e. before November) but we do need to ensure all matters that the legislation requires us to cover are included. We will be developing proposed changes to put to members, possibly at a special General Meeting, later in the year.

Also, early in its new term the committee will formally review the Strategy for the EMG through to 2020. In doing so it will actively canvass the views of both members and the wider community to ensure that it is best serving the needs of East Melbourne and Jolimont residents.

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

The Committee proposes to the meeting that it gives honorary life membership of the East Melbourne Group to **Joanna Pace**. Joanna Pace has lived with her husband Ottorino in East Melbourne since 1979, first in Gipps Street with their children, and now (for the past 20 years or so) in Simpson Street. Joanna joined the EMG in 1979 and has been a committee member since 2006. In recent years, she has been the group's Senior Vice-President and Acting President, with a focus on governance reform.

A member of EMG's Amenities committee since 2006, as convenor Joanna has spearheaded such initiatives as the newly announced Wellington Parade redevelopment project, worked closely with Council to manage our traffic and parking, liquor licensing and precinct policing, represented EMG at community consultative groups, and secured Council funding and support for the East Melbourne News and the EMG's community day event, Fiesta.

A former City of Melbourne councillor, where she was a strong advocate for disability and libraries, she was instrumental in achieving the funding for the East Melbourne Library and Community Centre rebuild. Joanna has long supported local events, groups and activities, including the First Sunday Lunch Group, Cottage by the Sea and the East Melbourne Historical Society, and she and Otto have been always very generous at East Melbourne functions with their world-famous Casa del Gelato ice-cream.

A dedicated community volunteer, Joanna's contribution to the East Melbourne and Jolimont community is significant and worthy of an EMG honorary life membership.

The Committee also recommends giving life membership to **Susie Norton**, who has been a tireless support of community-building events in East Melbourne, in particular acting as 'master' of ceremonies at most of our social events, beating the drum for fund-raising raffles in particular. Susie lived in East Melbourne for 17 years and was a member of the EMG social committee for ten.

As a former Lady Mayoress of the City of Melbourne, she is both influential and acknowledged for her commitment to charitable causes. She loves people, community, and anything to do with charity. Her day job is as CEO of Kids Tennis, which does outstanding work introducing disadvantaged kids to the game. At the other end of the sporting spectrum she is a Bombers tragic and is active on that social committee also.

Susie has a gift for fundraising for charity and other not for profits. Her infectious enthusiasm is irresistible. Her efforts for the EMG over the last ten years have made a significant contribution to our sound financial position today, and we look forward to her continuing contribution as an honorary life member of the Group

By leave of the meeting, at the end of my presentation I will move motions nominating Joanna Pace and Susie Norton to be honorary life members.

NEWS OF FORMER MEMBERS

I should record here the deaths of three former members – Arda Barry, Jim Leslie and John Lee.

THANKS

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their work during the year. Until Margaret Wood's resignation 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 Fiesta such a success, and distributing copies of the East Melbourne & Jolimont 3002 Magazine, and I thank them for their support.

Carmel Bourke, our administrator, has been with the EMG for eight years and continues to run the office at the Hut with dedicated efficiency. We convey our thanks on behalf of the Group to Carmel for her valuable support.

Stuart Hamilton

Vice-President, on behalf of the Committee

19 March 2013