East Melbourne Group
**Annual Report to Members – 2020**

On behalf of the EMG Committee and Subcommittees, I present our annual report to members.

As I view our heritage buildings, wonderful streetscapes and parks and gardens, I think what a wonderful suburb we live in. Over 60 years the East Melbourne Group has worked hard to maintain these assets and to build the community spirit that encourages and appreciates these.

As ever, the last year has been a busy one for the East Melbourne Group.

Hopefully our monthly update newsletter has kept you in touch with our activities. I am delighted we have recommenced our Magazine.

Your Committee and Subcommittees have given much of their personal time to help make East Melbourne a better place. I thank them and their families for this untiring volunteer work.

I am sad to say our Secretary Stuart Hamilton is leaving the suburb and the Committee. Stuart joined EMG in 2007, and has been on the Committee since 2008. He was EMG president for three years 2009-11, and Secretary for 6 years from 2014 to now. He has been an enormous support to the EMG in keeping the wheels turning and getting things done. He has also been a great personal support to me prompting me with tasks to be completed, wise counsel and timely suggestions. He will be sorely missed. Thank you, Stuart. We wish you and Sue our very best.

Darin Shade has left the committee. Jennifer Stanisich has also left the Committee. We thank her for her contribution particularly in the Social Subcommittee. Charlie Hohnen has left the Amenities Subcommittee. Charlie has provided many years of Amenities and behind the scenes editing assistance. Thank you, Charlie. I also thank Vice President Murray Hohnen, Treasurer Greg Watson, convenors Greg Bisinella, Sue Henderson and Anita Steinbarth for the great work in their Subcommittees.

Our Administrator Carolyn Fyfe does a great job providing cheerful and valuable assistance to Members, potential members and Committee. She is usually available Tuesday and Friday afternoons at the Hut.

***Heritage and Planning (Greg Bisinella)***

The Heritage and Planning team have had another year full of reviewing, responding, representing and objecting to planning and heritage matters.

We continue to face significant challenges in ensuring we maintain the integrity of our suburb. There is a push for greater height, bulk and density of the built form in East Melbourne. It is a product of our growing population, greedy developers, ambiguous planning laws and a planning system that supports those with the financial means to pursue applications through the system.

As an example, we spent 5 days at VCAT opposing the application to demolish the old Cricket Victoria buildings at 88-94 Jolimont St and build a 30-metre-high commercial building. Our case was supported by heritage and planning expert witness Trevor Westmore. We were opposed by the applicant represented by a Senior Counsel, 4 expert witnesses and the Melbourne City Council Barrister. A decision on the application will be made in the next few months.

Thanks also to the EMHS and particularly Barbara Patterson and Sylvia Black for their advice and support on several planning matters. They attended VCAT and collaborated on most of the significant planning applications in East Melbourne this year.

The proposed multi-storey commercial development at 204-208 Albert St is progressing to a VCAT hearing in May this year. The well-coordinated group of objectors supported by the East Melbourne Group is led by VATR residents and EMG members Adam Stevens and Brad Marsh. A Barrister has been engaged, expert witnesses approached and fundraising undertaken.

We encourage you to contribute to the fundraising efforts by contacting VictoriaAndAlbertResidents@gmail.com. There will also be upcoming events to raise further funds for this important fight.

On behalf of the Heritage and Planning Subcommittee we thank you for your ongoing support and the opportunity to represent and advocate for you over the past 12 months.

***Amenities (Susan Henderson)***

The Amenities Subcommittee works with local political representatives, City of Melbourne Council, Police and MCG representatives as the voice of East Melbourne residents. We consult residents and promote the concerns of our community. We instigate and support initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of EM residents and improve the infrastructure of our suburb.

*Aircraft Issues*

The Aircraft Group, which reports to the Amenities Subcommittee has been working continuously to protect our residents from the increasing concern of large and small aircraft over our suburb. The key submissions were also supported by the Coalition of Residents and Business Groups of the City of Melbourne (CoRBA). We are encouraged by the successes of groups in other parts of Australia and several major cities in other countries.

Initiatives over the last year have included:

* Representations to political parties in the lead-up to the last federal election
* Representations to the responsible Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack, with the assistance of Senator Scott Ryan, Senator for Victoria and Senate President, based on a meeting arranged by John Gurrieri. Representations by MP, Adam Bandt.
* Submissions and input to the Graham Samuel review of the EPBC Act, the flight path design principles by AirServices Australia, to the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, challenging federal authority’s decision on flightpaths.
* Obtaining information under Freedom of Information demonstrating that decisions relating to flight paths over our area were made on an unsound basis and without proper consultation.
* Request to the City of Melbourne to strengthen and review the Fly Neighbourly agreement.
* Invitation for the new Aircraft Noise Ombudsman to meet with EMG to express our concerns.
* Questions at the Senate Estimates Committee by Senator Rice and Submission to the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman’s review of the consultation procedures used by AirServices Australia.

*Traffic and Parking Issues*

Street Parking for new developments is no longer available, stopping the reduction in spaces for resident permit holders. Inground sensors have improved the problems in Jolimont and the North East corner of East Melbourne. We will be calling for feedback on this issue in the next few months.

Illegal turns from Wellington Pde to Simpson St –These works will solve the safety issue of the illegal turns into and from Simpson St. As it stands it will cost 9 parking spaces along Wellington Pde and remove the current cross-over used by Vale and Berry St residents. We have objected to some parts of the design and are currently working with Yarra Trams and Vic Roads to improve the outcome for EM. The works are currently on hold.

We continue to lobby council and VicRoads for a 40kph speed limit throughout East Melbourne. It has recently been put forward again for consideration.

*General Amenity Issues*

We have met with both council and MCC to resolve the periodic issues of limited access for Jolimont residents to their homes during major events. A list for notification by SMS of road closures was trialled during last season. If you would like to be notified a few days before each event, please send your mobile number to admin@emg.org.au. We shall try to have this automated by MCG this season.

Footpath “Visual Aid” tiles – We have been working with council’s Infrastructure Design Team who have successfully trialled a new type of non-slippery tile, ready for installation in due course.

A netball ring has been installed at the other end of the concrete pad of the existing basketball ring in Powlett Reserve.

Car Share cars - We now have an agreement that we will be notified prior to the granting of new spaces and that they will be limited to the peripheral main streets or along parks, not outside private residences.

City of Melbourne Draft Transport Strategy consultation was attended by EMG and suggestions we submitted.

***Parks and Gardens (Murray Hohnen)***

The parks and gardens of East Melbourne continue to delight both residents and visitors. Across the board a high level of care and maintenance has been maintained and EMG’s Parks and Gardens Subcommittee quick to highlight shortcomings.

In the year gone by there seems to have been renewed emphasis on the suburb’s tree inventory with a prolonged campaign by City of Melbourne to make street trees safe and bring them into compliance with the range of clearance requirements for traffic and powerlines. Additionally, the Council has continued with its program to remove avenues of trees approaching the end of their lives and replace them with vibrant new ones of the same species

In Yarra Park we have seen the progressive reduction in parking as a result of security concern to the extent that the MCG (which is responsible for the park) can no longer raise from parking fees the amount needed to maintain the park. The shortfall is currently being met by the MCG from other sources and EMG has written to government advocating that a small levy be added to the ticket price for the relevant venues. It goes without saying that the cost of maintaining public parks has traditionally been the responsibility of government. We have made clear to the MCG, community opposition to loud intrusive events in the Park.

The Subcommittee met several times during the year under review and had the benefit of constructive interaction with representatives of Council. We also benefited from close connection to the Yarra Park Advisory Committee and the Council’s Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee, as a member of the Subcommittee was on each of those bodies.

***Social (Anita Steinbarth)***

In 2019 the Social Subcommittee held seven functions and raised an impressive $11,837. The funds raised contribute to the EMG’s running costs including funding the EMG’s planning and heritage matters at VCAT.

The number of functions held, and the amount raised was a remarkable achievement given that the Subcommittee only comprised four members. Despite its small size, it was the drive and ‘shoulder to the wheel’ approach displayed by the Subcommittee, with support from the full Committee, which enabled it to deliver successfully.

The Social Subcommittee’s program included:

* a novel Anzac Day Concert at Holy Trinity which was a tribute to songs from both WW1 and WW2 and showcased East Melbourne’s talent;
* an Election Day Sausage Sizzle;
* Winter Dinner at the Athenaeum Club;
* our annual and perennially popular Trivia Night;
* an inaugural Younger and New Members Soiree hosted by EMG member Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM;
* Christmas Drinks at the Pullman; and
* A free Christmas Community BBQ held in conjunction with the East Melbourne Library.

Each of these events received favourable feedback from participants.

Not all the events had a fundraising goal and there will be a continued emphasis in 2020 on providing a variety of events focussing on connecting the broader community and on connecting members.

The EMG would like to thank local businesses who continued to show their support for the group by providing prizes to support our fund raising raffles and would like to offer big thanks to Caine Real Estate for their continued and valued support by sponsoring boards to promote our functions. We would also like to thank Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, Holy Trinity, the East Melbourne Library, the Powlett Reserve tennis courts and childcare centre, Epworth Cliveden and residents who graciously enabled the advertising boards to be placed on their properties to promote our functions.

In order to keep delivering events to Members and the community, the Social Subcommittee is very keen to have more members. If you are interested or believe that your partner or your neighbour or your friend would be keen to be involved and contribute, please let us know.

***Communications (Anita Steinbarth)***

Following a hiatus from Winter 2017, we were delighted to be able to produce a new look community magazine Summer edition edited by Susanna Louie. The magazine was received enthusiastically by Members and the community and feedback was overwhelmingly positive on its style and content.

The 3002 EM&J magazine strives to generate a sense of community connection and interest in local affairs.

The magazine is now self-financing with its cost funded by advertising revenues and a grant from Toyota Australia.

The magazine is delivered to every household and business in East Melbourne by volunteers.

We plan to publish three editions this year with a view to publishing four editions per year from next year onwards.

***Membership (Greg Watson)***

Our overall membership is 507 members which is a record for recent years. As the numbers we represent gives us more sway with decision makers and more financial capability, we are constantly working to increase member numbers. We continue to ask you to encourage your friends and neighbours to join the EMG.

Some of the items the Membership Subcommittee are working on are:

* A welcome letter to new members that could include some history of the EMG
* It has been suggested that when new owners or tenants move into the area, we give them a welcome pack which could include information about local shops, services, doctors, other organisations, exercise classes, yoga, tram and bus services, traffic movements around sporting events at MCG etc.
* We are looking to use Facebook and other social media more to push for new members by reporting more regularly what the EMG is currently doing.
* We plan to get information about the EMG on notice boards in community places like library, crèches etc

*Life Membership*

The EMG recognises a small number of individuals from time to time for their outstanding contribution to the work of the association by granting them honorary life membership. There are currently 12 such members. This year, the Committee nominates Don Heathcote to be an honorary life member. Don first joined the EMG about 1960. He was on the Committee for about 20 years on and off in the 80s and 90s and was secretary in1996 and Vice-President from1993 to 1995. He represented us at VCAT on many occasions and made many government submissions on our behalf. He has always lived in Jolimont.

***Subcommittee Opportunities***

We are seeking Subcommittee contributors for Heritage and Planning, Social, Membership and Communications. If you or someone you know would like to assist and be involved, please speak to me or Committee member. We have a lot of fun and make a difference to East Melbourne.

***Finance***

The 2019 year resulted in the Group achieving a surplus of $14,881 (2018 $12,647).

Subscriptions received were just above budget but a little less than the previous year.

We had 5 fundraising events plus the Election BBQ and the Community BBQ. We raised $11,837 which was well ahead of last year. Anita Steinbarth and the Social Subcommittee are to be commended for their excellent efforts.

We thank the City of Melbourne for their annual grant which helps defray some of our operating expenses.

The employment expenses for the year were $15,360 (2018 $13,320) as Carolyn worked more hours this year and helped at several social events.

There were no planning and heritage expenses incurred during the year but there will be costs incurred in this area in 2020.

The surplus for the year has been transferred into cash reserves which means there are more funds available to fund campaigns against major objectionable developments in the future.

At the end of the year we had cash reserves of $100,403 of which $9,061 were subscriptions paid in advance.

Based on our strong financial position the Committee is recommending that subscriptions remain the same amount for the 2020 year.

Thank you

Ian Mitchell
President

16th March 2020