**Zoom Meeting between Lord Mayor and Resident Groups**

By Ian Mitchell

On 24 Apr 2020, the Lord Mayor Sally Capp organised an online Zoom meeting with Melbourne’s Residents Associations. Also joining us was Councillor Nicholas Reece who chairs the Council’s planning portfolio.

The aim was to update everyone on steps being taken by Council and us all in addressing the Covid-19 challenges.

I advised of EMG’s EMERG initiative to support the vulnerable in our community though our wonderful volunteer ‘buddies’. Council responded with these words, ‘We were heartened to hear that many of you are supporting vulnerable members of your community by offering meals, companionship and support, which helps relieve the social isolation many of our residents are feeling at the moment.’

I indicated our desire to produce a Covid-19 special magazine with a grant from Council to defray costs. The Lord Mayor replied that Council had just endorsed a community grant program, whereby organisations and community associations may receive up to $5000 to aid their work in supporting members of their community who have been affected by Covid-19.We have since applied for and received a grant of $2500 for which we thank the City of Melbourne.

I requested signage in parks to encourage social distancing especially as folk passed each other on the paths. This was supported by several other resident groups and will be investigated by Council.

I raised the temporary extension of building construction hours. The response was as follows. ‘Following discussion about maintaining compliance within permitted construction times, we can confirm that there are now 20 extra compliance officers to support our building team’s work. We would like to ask you to remind your members that they should call our customer service helpline on 9658 9658 to report any immediate issues or concerns so our team can investigate as soon as possible.’

Homelessness is a pressing issue, even more so at this time. In response, the City of Melbourne, State Government and service providers have been working together to house people during Covid-19. The city has seen its rough sleeper population dramatically plummet from more than 300 to fewer than 15. With an increase in funding from the State Government, Council has been able to find temporary accommodation for people and is exploring how it might be possible to retain these expanded services and housing provision once Covid-19 recedes.

Council officers have been made aware of the increase in dumped hard rubbish in our city streets, and you can report dumped rubbish by calling the customer service line or online through this [link](https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/Pages/report-issue.aspx).

Regarding shopping trolleys, for Coles trolleys, you can call 1800-TROLLEY (1800 876 553), and for Woolworths trolleys you can call 1800 641 497, or report via their online service at [trolleytracker.com.au](https://trolleytracker.com.au/).

I raised planning issues regarding rezoning the area at the top of Wellington Pde South between the office/residential tower at 279 Wellington Pde South and Flinders St. Cr Reece is to review this.

I felt the meeting was useful and helped develop closer ties with Council and Resident Associations.

I thank the Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Councillor Nicholas Reece and Resident Associations’ representatives.