

# CRRA·CHRONICLE

CARDINIA  
**RATEPAYERS  
& RESIDENTS**  
ASSOCIATION INC.



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Reg No. A0045097F

Issue No. 2 MARCH 2005

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

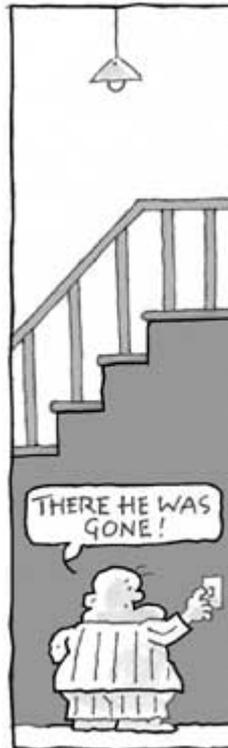
Transparency is the newest buzz-word in our Shire of Cardinia - and a virtue demanded of Council by CRRA for over a year now. We could be forgiven for confusing "transparency" with "exposure" as we are bombarded with photographs and articles about Mayor Runge and our elected representatives via local press coverage.

What is transparent to many of the "simple" folk of this Shire is that council elections are due at the end of the year, ward boundaries and representation are being reviewed, and major changes are likely to be made.

If the present councillors wish to be re-elected we suggest that, in the name of transparency, they consider supporting the following public demands well before election day:

- Produce a responsible and transparent budget, the draft of which is available to the public at least one month before final publication. They might refer to the City of Casey budget as a model that is crystal clear and free of bureaucratic obfuscation.
- Change the time of Council meetings in accordance with public demand from 4.30 pm to 7.30pm.
- Cease the insidious practice of constantly going "in camera" at Council meetings. The decisions reached at these secretive cabals have all too often been tossed to a stunned public as a fait accompli.
- Immediately make public the status of the proposed new shire offices and the future for the centre of Pakenham. The continual denial of this information to ratepayers and even to the ward councillor is a disgrace.

So much for transparency in Cardinia. Council would be wise to change its practice of rubber-stamping unpopular and expensive administrative initiatives if any of its members hope to hold office next year.



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## TRANSPARENCY

*Yesterday upon the stair  
I met a man who wasn't there-  
He wasn't there again today.  
How I wish he'd go away.*

Now that is transparency for you.

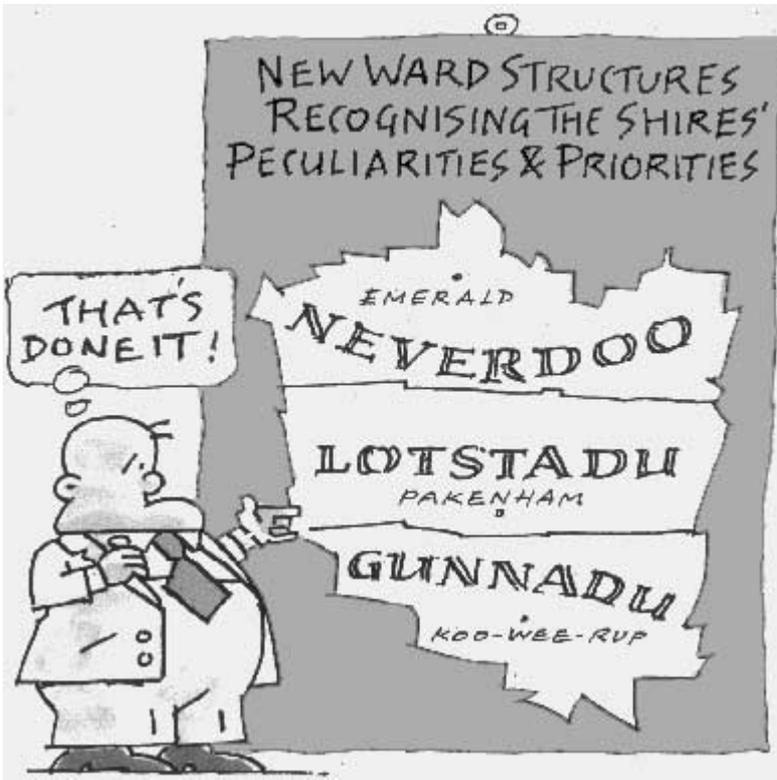
When Tony Abbott hangs transparency and accountability from the same hook, he reduces transparency to visibility, which it isn't, though he might mean that the subject he is referring to is transparently visible. If he intends to mean anything at all.

Cynicism aside, what does transparent mean in that minefield of Modern Business Practice? Since it is one of the 'feel good' words in the lexicon of MBP, it is not intended to mean anything at all. Indeed it is a blanket laid over a deliberate void of explanation. If you cannot see what is intended the fault is yours. What it does NOT mean is that you can see through the writer and his or her argument; rather, the imprecision of the word fogs up the brain. Part of World's Worst Practice. Get rid of it.

peter w



CR. **gully bull**  
© REX HAVOR 03-05



**CHANGES TO WARD BOUNDARIES**

In November this year you will be voting for ward candidates for Council - this time to serve for three years, and subsequently for four.

There are two types of municipalities: subdivided and unsubdivided. Cardinia to date has always been subdivided into wards. There are currently seven wards each with one councillor.

For truly democratic representation it is important for all voters to be equally represented, and to achieve this each ward should have the same number of voters. You can imagine what occurs in a growth corridor when the number of voters may increase dramatically. I have been advised that the imbalance between voter numbers in different wards in Cardinia could be as high as 30 percent when only 10 percent tolerance is allowable. To address this problem ward boundaries are shifted.

The Democratic Reform Act 2003 of the Victorian State Government stipulates a review of the boundaries every two years by the Electoral Commissioners, and the Victorian Electoral Commission held a public meeting on 24 February at the Shire Offices to inform ratepayers about the review.

One thing is certain: there will be changes when you vote in November 2005. There will not necessarily be one councillor per ward. There may be more, but if this occurs my tip is there will be fewer wards.

Keith Ewenson

**CRRA PRESIDENT'S UPDATE ON CURRENT ISSUES IN CARDINIA SHIRE**

**Draft Budget.** CRRA has forwarded a request to Council for earlier community access to the 2005-2006 Draft Budget. Council has responded that budget details will be released in May with information sessions held prior to that, allowing more time for community comment. We have also requested removal of the \$100 municipal levy. Council's response is to ask for alternative suggestions on how the \$2.2 million revenue from the levy could be raised. Please send us your suggestions, which CRRA will coordinate and send to Council.

**Draft Local Laws 9 and 10.** CRRA has registered its objection about Council's failure to consult with the community on new local laws relating to such issues as use of recreational vehicles, restrictions on keeping of animals, septic tanks, and open-air burning. As a result - but not without much wasting of time and money - consultation will now occur and new laws will, we hope, reflect community attitudes and needs. Submissions to Council are due by 30 April.

**Pakenham Golf Course.** Council's proposal to sell Pakenham Golf Course for development of a 600-lot housing project has proceeded since June 2004 behind closed doors, with the chosen developer now named. This secretive process will culminate in late April in a five-day hearing to be held in Melbourne, restricting access by interested residents and objectors - surely the ultimate insult to the community. Council's excuse - there is no room for the hearing available at Cardinia. (see STOP PRESS page 8.)

**Review of Ward boundaries.** The review is to be conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (see article in this issue by Keith Ewenson). Council has made a submission, but it is unlikely that the end result will be influenced in any way by community opinion. The most effective action ratepayers can take is to focus on selection of candidates for the November council election who will represent the interests of residents and ratepayers, and ensure that future councillors are left in no doubt of what the community expects of them.

*For truly democratic representation it is important for all voters to be equally represented,*



**CALL FOR OPENNESS IN COUNCIL**

This is the first in a series of brief articles from one of our ward representatives. We will be inviting other councillors to contribute to future issues.

I was first elected to council (then Pakenham) in March 1987, one of three representing Pakenham township. The Shire population was 24,500, and we had twelve councillors. The council consisted of four ridings (wards) and elections were held every year for one third of the councillors - i.e. one councillor per riding in rotation, allowing some consistency of experience to remain at the council table.

Councillors made all decisions other than administrative and very little power was delegated to council staff. Councillors were involved in all aspects of local government and were held accountable by the community they served.

The council had four standing committees, Policy and Resources, Community Services, Planning and Regulations, and Accounts

Supervisory. Elected councillors chaired all meetings which were open to residents and ratepayers, who were welcome to stay for afternoon tea and mix with the councillors.

After one year the chairman of the Planning Committee would become Shire President, following a rotation system and seniority within the riding.

I strongly believe in advocacy of community values - values that have and are continuing to fall victim to council's striving hastily to change the very face and landscape of this once beautiful shire. The council desperately needs to regroup and focus on steady planned progress, not by developers, but by council with the assistance and involvement of our community.

Only when the Cardinia Shire Council operates in an open and consultative style will we have true democracy at the local level once again.

Bill Ronald  
Pakenham Ward

**Only when the  
Cardinia Shire  
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**PAKENHAM GOLF COURSE**

Dear Sir,

My family and I have lived for many years on the outskirts of Pakenham overlooking the golf course. It is a peaceful area that is quite rural in character. It was a shock when the council proposed in June 2004 to move the golf course and construct 600 homes on 60 percent of the site, with 40 percent being reserved for lakes, public parks and cycle paths.

Council referred the rezoning of golf course land to an independent panel - an action one councillor described as "a responsible move that responded to public feeling" and another councillor stated "proved council's process was transparent" (Gazette 20 October 2004). Is this the same council who has chosen a developer "to move the project along" (recent article in The Leader), who has also announced that same developer will "conduct an unspecified number of meetings (with residents) to further explain the proposed development" (Gazette 2.March 2005)? And all before the outcome of the independent panel hearing is known! Or does Council know something the residents don't?

Headlines over the past months indicate that Council is sure the project will go ahead.

The golf course is certainly worth preserving in its current site. The lakes, public parks and cycle paths would be wonderful on the remaining land. We need every bit of green space we can salvage as suburbia spreads inexorably on. We hope an independent panel will be impressed with the 100 submissions against the planned development.

Yours faithfully

Diane Henderson  
Pakenham

**WHAT THE COUNCILLORS WANT**

In an enlightening article on 26 January 2005 *Pakenham Berwick Gazette* reported the wishes and priorities of each of the Cardinia Shire councillors for the year leading up to the next council election. For the benefit of readers who may have missed this article, we provide a sample of councillors' aspirations.

Cr Kate Lempriere (Toomuc Ward) would like to have more traffic lights in Pakenham and would like to see lots of development, including Lakeside becoming a suburb of Pakenham.

Cr Leonora Cox (Ranges Ward) wants Council to adopt new laws about use of motor bikes and other vehicles in rural

*It was a shock when the council proposed in June 2004 to move the golf course and construct 600 homes*

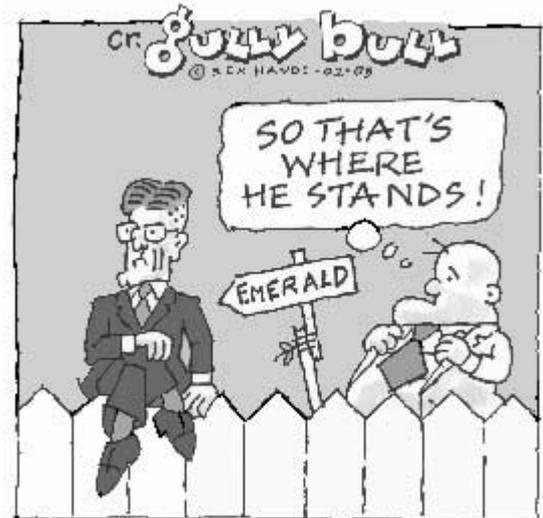
and residential areas (see elsewhere in this issue about new draft local laws).

Cr Bill Ronald (Pakenham Ward) wants council to work on reducing its debt to a point at which it is debt free, and would like to remove the \$100 municipal charge on our rates.



Cr Helen Ward (Bunyip Ward) plans to don her bikini and be the first to dive into the swimming pool at the new Pakenham Aquatic Centre.

Cr Doug Hamilton (Westernport Ward) includes in his goals "maintaining sound economic management of the shire's finances". We would like to remind Cr Hamilton that you can only maintain what is already in existence.



Cr Graeme Legge (Emerald Ward) is waiting to see what everyone else says before he says what he wants.

Mayor Garry Runge (Beaconhills Ward) would like to lead "a cohesive, effective council which works in the best interests of the shire". We can only wish him luck.



**WHEN IS A LOAN NOT A LOAN?**

At a Council Meeting on 21 June 2004 the Cardinia CEO claimed that "Simple people could not understand the complex nature of the Shire's finances". As one of the simple people, I have examined figures relating to the Shire's actual and projected borrowings over a number of years.

For the financial year ending June 2000 actual borrowings by Council amounted to just over \$6 million. By June 2004 this figure had quadrupled to over \$24 million. Budgeted borrowings over the next five years rise steadily, reaching a peak for the year ending June 2008 at almost \$49 million - an eight-fold increase in just eight years. Expected borrowings will fall in the following year to just under \$40 million.

In a letter to Cardinia Ratepayers and Residents Association on 20 August 2004 the CEO stated that "Council's current level of debt is \$24.6 million. It is proposed that this debt will peak next year at \$34.5 million and then decline over future years". This statement is repeated so often that you must wonder why it does not match the budgeted figures.

For us "simple folk", here is the explanation. From information provided by Council Officers, it appears that "interest only" loans are not considered as part of total borrowings. With interest only loans the set rate interest is normally paid monthly or possibly quarterly. The principle is only paid at the end of the loan period.

**So, when is a loan not a loan - when you are the Shire CEO and are having to spin the information to reduce its importance?**



**FIDO SUBMITS TO SHIRE OFFICERS!**



The Building Cardinia Fund set up to finance Shire projects is an example: in 2004-05 the Shire will borrow \$6.935 million for a three-year interest only loan. The principle will be repaid, providing land sales by Delfin are on target, in February 2008. The interest payment is part of the cost of borrowings in each annual financial statement.

Similarly, it is believed that the loan required to finance the Henry Road sewer is also an interest only loan and the sum of \$4

million will be repaid when the water company takes the asset over in 2007.

So, when is a loan not a loan - when you are the Shire CEO and are having to spin the information to reduce its importance? Obviously a debt of \$34 million sounds better than one of \$45 million budgeted for 2005-06.

Ed Chatwin  
Emerald

**CARDINIA FELIX**

*In Pakenham did Council push  
A costly leisure dome decree,  
Where they and friends might sport themselves  
In manner fit for those in power,  
Without constraint and with contempt  
For simple folk within the Shire.*

*By Beaconsfield the wooded streams  
Mid pastures green the creeks do run;  
Hints of false gold, ambitious dreams,  
Of mayoral heights and gaudy robes.*

*Maryknoll, the bode of saints,  
The reek of conflict lately gone,  
Back to your dreaming sunny fields  
And nightly cattle lower the moon.  
Take heed! The price of future peace  
Lies in your constant vigilance.*

*Quiet Emerald and looming threats  
To sully a small paradise.  
Foul winds of change, "Progress for all!"  
Heed not the cost; an urban blight;  
Unwanted schemes; gigantic debts  
To fulfil an ego come what may!  
Let children and grandchildren pay  
For one's servile complicity  
And trappings of secular might.*

*The die is cast with crooked dice -  
Lang Lang, Garfield, Bunyip too,  
Nar Nar Goon and Cockatoo,  
What sort of future lies in wait  
The secret guile of scheming Lords?*

*White summer grass, cherished farms,  
Small creeks and wattles azure-framed,  
Eagles, wrens, the boobook owl,  
Has time and "progress" rung the knell  
And doomed us to a fate most foul?*

*Wake up my friends, come bare the sword  
Which destroys some but also cleans.  
Rid us of arrogance and greed,  
Take heart and join us to strike down  
Those who would harm prosperity!  
Write! Vote! Away with apathy  
Join battle for the common good.*

J.D. (with thanks to S.T.C.)



**PEPI'S PADDOCK - PARADISE LOST**

Cardinia residents in other wards may wonder why the disposal of this last decent piece of public land in Emerald is still a concern for other residents. Pepi's paddock exemplifies what is missing in Cardinia Shire - councillor responsibility to constituents, community consultation, truth and democracy.

The land came to Cardinia Shire under the Emerald Land Exchange agreement with the State Government, by which two other public reserves were swapped for Pepi's paddock and \$12,000 paid to the Government as the difference in valuations.

Despite the fact that the two exchanged reserves remain in public ownership, Council claims that they paid \$750,000 for the land. This claim is used by CEO Welsh to justify the sale of key parts of Pepi's paddock "to keep it revenue neutral". The prime section of what could have been a magnificent park and viewscape has been sold with only "goat" territory left behind as a "someday" park.

It is worth considering the role of the so-called community consultative process in this deal. In 2001 the Emerald Village Committee asked local representative Cr Legge to request a delay in Council's decision on the sale of Pepi's land. He declined to pass on the request, but subsequently took a motion passed by the Committee, "that Pepi's land sale be abandoned and a joint Council-community committee be formed to investigate and review the use of Pepi's land" to the next Council meeting. Cr Legge then voted to sell the land.

The Emerald community has continued to push for continued public ownership of Pepi's paddock. Council has repeatedly ignored the wishes of the Emerald people and Cr Legge has continued to vote for the sale of new parcels of land. Allocation of a lot number to a new lot that duplicates the number of a lot previously approved for sale underlines Council's total disregard of any consultative process. CEO Welsh unfortunately neglected to bring to a ratepayers' meeting the valuation of this new lot. Cr Legge's response to this fiasco - that if Council decisions are made before stakeholders are consulted, motions passed at stakeholders' meetings cannot override those decisions. - So much for democracy.

Brian Hannan

Letter to the Editor.

**PLEA TO SAVE TOOMUC VALLEY**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to update you and your readers about a fight that residents have been waging in this Shire for over seven years.

***Pepi's paddock exemplifies what is missing in Cardinia Shire - councillor responsibility to constituents, community consultation, truth and democracy.***



***This proposal benefits nobody but the owners and shareholders of Rinker Corporation at the expense of the people of Cardinia.***

Multinational corporation the Rinker Group, owner of the Readymix hard rock quarry in Mt. Shamrock Road, Pakenham, is seeking a major expansion of their operation into the Toomuc Valley. They intend to mine millions of tonnes of additional basalt rock by removing several metres off the Mt Paradise ridge line over a two kilometre frontage. Residents have been strongly opposed to this proposal for its impact on Upper Beaconsfield, Toomuc Valley and Upper Pakenham, and the loss of a major environmental icon in the Shire. Make no mistake, this proposal benefits nobody but the owners and shareholders of Rinker Corporation at the expense of the people of Cardinia.

In January 2002 Readymix was directed to undertake an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) by then Planning Minister, John Thwaites. We were told this process would only take a few months. After more than three years the EES is still dragging on, with a Panel Hearing to be convened in 2005. We have been disappointed and disillusioned by the way this EES has been conducted. We believe the so-called "independent expert reports" supplied by Readymix are incorrect and biased in numerous areas, with the State Government department overseeing the process in meek compliance. In late 2004 we decided we were no longer prepared to participate in what amounts to an organised charade at taxpayer expense, and formally withdrew from the EES. We believe this is the first time a community group has ever taken such a drastic action, an indication of the level of frustration we have encountered.

Our advice to all residents in Cardinia who are battling various issues is that the little people DO MATTER, and no amount of corporate or government arrogance should stop you from fighting with all your might. We DO pay taxes, we DO live here and of course, we DO vote! We ask for your support when the time comes for submissions to the planning panel. We will be putting forward our strongest possible case. By writing a short submission you will be letting the bureaucrats know that our shire and way of life are not for sale.

Any resident wishing to be involved with our fight is welcome and should contact Secretary Sue Robertson on 5942 7482, Chairman Neville Bassett 5942 7284, Treasurer Joy Carberry 5942 7298 or myself on 5942 7316.

Yours faithfully,

Save the Valley Committee  
A sub-committee of the Toomuc Valley Residents Association Inc.  
Registration no. A0024421K  
Dan Quagliani, Vice Chairman

**THE EMERALD FUTURE COMMITTEE**

After the demise of the Emerald Village Committee, a small group of residents responded to a call in 2003 for its revitalization by forming a working party. It was decided that Emerald needed a group to work with both residents and council to better the community as a whole. This group would consult with residents on major and minor projects in the Emerald district and provide council with details of what our residents need and want.

The group will also work with other township committees in the shire to gain knowledge and ideas on how to improve our community and enhance some of the great attractions we already have. The Cardinia ratepayers are a great voice for all residents, and an Emerald voice will only help in achieving our outcomes.

To decide on how and who will help Emerald on this committee, a public meeting will be held on the 5th May at 7:30pm in the Community Hall Emerald, to elect committee members. Details will be published in local papers. This group will not be a puppet of council.

***This group would consult with residents on major and minor projects in the Emerald district and provide council with details of what our residents need and want.***

At the moment Emerald has very little voice in its future. What we hope to achieve is a voice and opinion that council can work with and not just go ahead and do what it thinks is in our best interests.

More discussion still has to take place to finalise details. I urge all residents to get behind us and help make Emerald the gem of the hills that it should be. With the help of many, not just a handful, we can achieve much... I look forward to the day when Emerald can again have a say in its future.

Greg Smith  
Emerald Futures Committee.

*Editor's Note: CRRA publishes this contribution in the spirit of co-operation between community groups and urges all Emerald residents to attend the meeting in May. We understand that the group has voted to become a Section 86 Committee of Council. Under the Local Government Act, a Section 86 Committee acts on behalf of Council, for example by caring for Council sites and facilities. CRRA questions this status for a Committee whose function is to present the views of residents on the development of their community.*

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**CONTRIBUTIONS AND ADVERTISING**  
 Deadline for next issue: **31 May 2005**  
 Articles (maximum 300 words) and letters (maximum 200 words) from residents in all wards are welcome and should be addressed to the Editor, CRRA Chronicle, P.O. Box 411, Emerald 3782.  
 Rates per issue for advertising are as follows :  
 Half Page.....\$25.00  
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 Business card size.....\$10.00  
 Please provide camera-ready copy for advertisements.

Your responses are important in determining CRRA's future actions. Please post or email to address on page 1.

What do you believe to be the three most important areas of responsibility in which Council should spend your rates?

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*desire to become a member of Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc. In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the association for the time being in force, to pay annual membership dues as determined by the Association, to uphold the aims of the Association as expressed in the Statement of Purpose, and to work co-operatively with the other members.*

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Comments.....

*Please send this form, with your subscription and any comments you may have to: The Secretary, CRRA, PO Box161 Officer Vic. 3809.*

**DRAFT LOCAL LAWS MUST BE CONTROLLED TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY**

Dear Editor,  
Participants in the Draft Local Laws Public Information Session held by Cardinia Shire Council on 15 February heard many clear, well-reasoned arguments backed up by fact, expert knowledge and research.

Why is it that these arguments all came from the 70 or so community members on the floor - not from the three Council staff fronting the meeting?

Five years after presenting us with what Doug Evans acknowledged as a "poorly written" draft, Council has done it again. When he was called on to account for the proposed changes, Council's lack of evidence, interest group consultation and use of expert advice was shameful.

So were the stories of suffering due to Council's poor enforcement of the current Local Laws.

Cardinia's administration still seems to have little understanding of basic Local Government standards. Or do they just not care?

The Council's disrespect for community input in proposing documents that lack consistency, key definitions, clarity, coherence and justification is appalling and adds enormously to the cost of the process. Numerous residents will now feel compelled to comment, involving massive time and effort when experts and representatives could



***The draft laws should be withdrawn and proper consultation undertaken prior to Council proposing their adoption.***

have quickly and efficiently assisted in creating informed documents. There is no guarantee much attention will be given to their comments.

These Draft Local Laws are now proposed by Council, and are not a first draft of many. The officer's report states: "For Council to proceed to make these proposed Local Laws it is required to firstly resolve to proceed to make a Local Law and then to publicly advertise its intention following which it must consider any submissions received". Council's intention was, and still is, to give the community the legally required opportunity to comment. Once. If major changes are then made there is no stated intention to allow the community an opportunity to respond again.

The draft laws should be withdrawn and proper consultation undertaken prior to Council proposing their adoption.

Kate Forster  
Emerald



**CRRA. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

- To act in the best interest of all ratepayers and residents in the Shire of Cardinia.
- To create a network facilitating communication, co-operation and support among ratepayers and residents, town groups and community groups within the Shire of Cardinia.
- To function as an educational body and to disseminate information on issues and processes affecting or concerning the Shire of Cardinia.
- To work for equity for ratepayers and residents throughout the Shire of Cardinia.
- To work for accountability in the administrative process of Cardinia Shire, all tiers of government and other relevant bodies.
- To work for improved democratic process and public participation in local government.
- To put LOCAL back into local government.



**STOP PRESS**

On the 15th of March  
a Directions Hearing held by a  
Government appointed independent  
panel in Cardinia, directed that the  
public hearing on the future of  
Pakenham Golf Course will be held in  
Cardinia rather than in Melbourne as  
promulgated  
by Council.  
Nice to see a victory for the community  
for a change.