

CRRA·CHRONICLE

**CARDINIA
RATEPAYERS
& RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION INC.**



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EDITORIAL

Among many factors that have contributed to human disasters in history is the dead hand of apathy. Apathy is lack of interest or a will to do anything. Its symptoms include indifference, despair, gullibility, frustration and that saddest of human attitudes, fatalism.

What has this to do with Cardinia? Well, in November there will be council elections and ratepayers will have their one opportunity to give some of our current elected representatives the heave-ho – an opportunity many ratepayers have looked forward to for some time.

As election day looms we can expect a flurry of advertising and showy initiatives to gain our votes for councillors who, in the opinion of many, have not performed in ratepayers' best interests during their term of office.

Hence the observation on apathy, which, alas, is far too prevalent among us 'simple folk'. How often do we hear 'Nobody listens', 'Nothing is ever done', 'What's the use?' about council priorities and bureaucratic inaction?

The only way to change all this is to elect a council which will represent ratepayers' needs and aspirations, not those of the 'get rich quick' members of society whose pressures result in flawed planning, ugly developments, unwanted prestige projects and environmental degradation.

Well before November, let us encourage, and promote as best we can, candidates worthy of our trust to stand for council. Let us also examine the efforts of our present councillors and whether or not their votes on all issues at council meetings have been in the best interests of ratepayers in the whole shire.

Come November, away with the apathy and let's vote in a council in which we can take pride and which will genuinely work for a better Cardinia for us ratepayers and residents.



*I invite you to work
with Council to
help build our
Shire.*

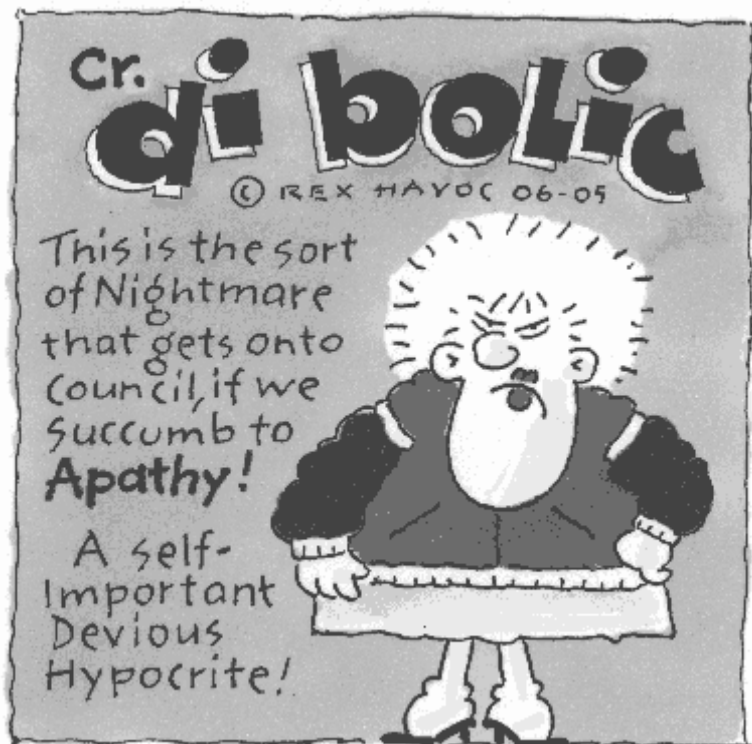
A FEW WORDS FROM CR GARRY RUNGE, MAYOR OF CARDINIA

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the CRRA Newsletter. These are exciting times for Cardinia. We've come a long way to provide the services our new and existing residents need, but there's still work to be done. We're doing our best to share the cost equitably, so this year we've eased the burden on pensioners with a \$50 rate rebate. Together with other subsidies, the average pensioner will pay just \$6 more in rates this year. The Emerald library is under way, with tenders for construction closing this month. We will pull out all the stops to deliver this urgently needed facility for the hills on time and on budget. We asked the public to tell us what you want from our new local laws on public amenity, and we've listened, redrafting laws to reflect residents' concerns. The shire's largest-ever road construction project will be completed mid-year, with 50 km of our most important rural roads from Split Rock Road in the north to Caldermeade Road in the south constructed at a cost of \$13 million.

As part of the state government's designated urban growth corridor we face a lot of challenges to provide facilities for new and existing residents, but also a lot of opportunities to build an economically and socially strong community. I invite you to work with council to help build our shire.

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CRRA NOW
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PAKENHAM GOLF COURSE - THE SAGA CONTINUES

The Panel Hearing for Council's proposal to turn Pakenham golf course into a 600 lot housing subdivision, in an area of particular environmental sensitivity, has recommenced. The hearing was adjourned part way through April to consider issues of salinity, high water table and the presence of the growling grass frog, along with a declared 'controlled action' on the site by the Commonwealth Government.

As under-resourced residents now return to battle over this issue, there are several points that should raise community alarm about the manner in which Council has proceeded on this occasion. Council presented its proposal to the community as a 'done deal' with the developer, Peet & Co. No community consultation was entered into and residents were provided with minimum information upon which to make decisions about the likely impact of such a proposal.

Council had already engaged numerous consultants, and as well, at the time of the hearing an eminent Queen's Counsel, barrister and solicitor, and administrative support. Council's Planning Manager attended the Panel Hearing full time. A conservative estimate of the cost of this process is about \$8,000 per day.

Council has a conditional contract with Peet & Co for sale of the golf course site and vacant land to the south for approximately \$24 million, with the first contractual payment due in July 2005. Council has already purchased a site for a new golf course, under power lines, for \$12 million. This proposal is not about net benefit to the community: the golf club at the new site will be charged full commercial lease rates and members will pay four times the present membership fees. This is purely about money with little regard for the broader community of Pakenham.

STOP PRESS

The Panel Hearing into sale and development of the golf course was completed on 9 July and Council should receive their recommendations by the end of August. Council is expected to submit their decision whether to proceed or abandon the development proposal to the Minister for approval in November or December. The Panel report will be released to the public in October. At the same time, a referral under Federal Environment Protection of Biodiversity and Conservation legislation is under way and will require a Council submission, a public consultation period, a final assessment, and a decision by the Minister for Environment and Heritage. At present no date for completion is set but it is likely to be at least the end of the year.

YOU AND THE NEW MUNICIPAL WARDS

When you vote in the municipal elections next November there will be four new wards. If you live in Koo Wee Rup or LangLang you need to elect one councillor for Port ward. If you live in Bunyip you also will elect one councillor for Bunyip ward. Those living in Gembrook, Cockatoo, Emerald and Beaconsfield Upper will be required to elect two council representatives for Ranges ward. Those living in the growth corridor of Beaconsfield, Officer, and Pakenham will be represented by three councillors for Central ward. Seven councillors, four wards. The Victorian Electoral Commission has endeavored to group communities of like interest.

Local government is the closest government to the people. It has the potential to considerably enhance the community, and whether this is achieved depends on you, the voters. You select the persons who will be caring enough to listen to your concerns and wise enough to administer a multi-million dollar budget for the municipality. You have the responsibility to select the persons you think should be your candidates and work for them to be elected. It is not an easy job to be a councillor in Cardinia. There is such a diverse array of communities spread out over nearly 1300 square kilometres. To give you some examples, the Port ward (Western Port) covers 575 sq km in area. The two Ranges councillors will cover only 338sq km encompassing areas from Guys Hill to Gembrook.

It will be interesting to see if the new arrangement will enhance the possibility that the group of councillors elected for three years will become a working team which endeavours to meet the needs of the majority of residents.

Keith Ewenson



You select the persons who will be caring enough to listen to your concerns and wise enough to administer a multi-million dollar budget

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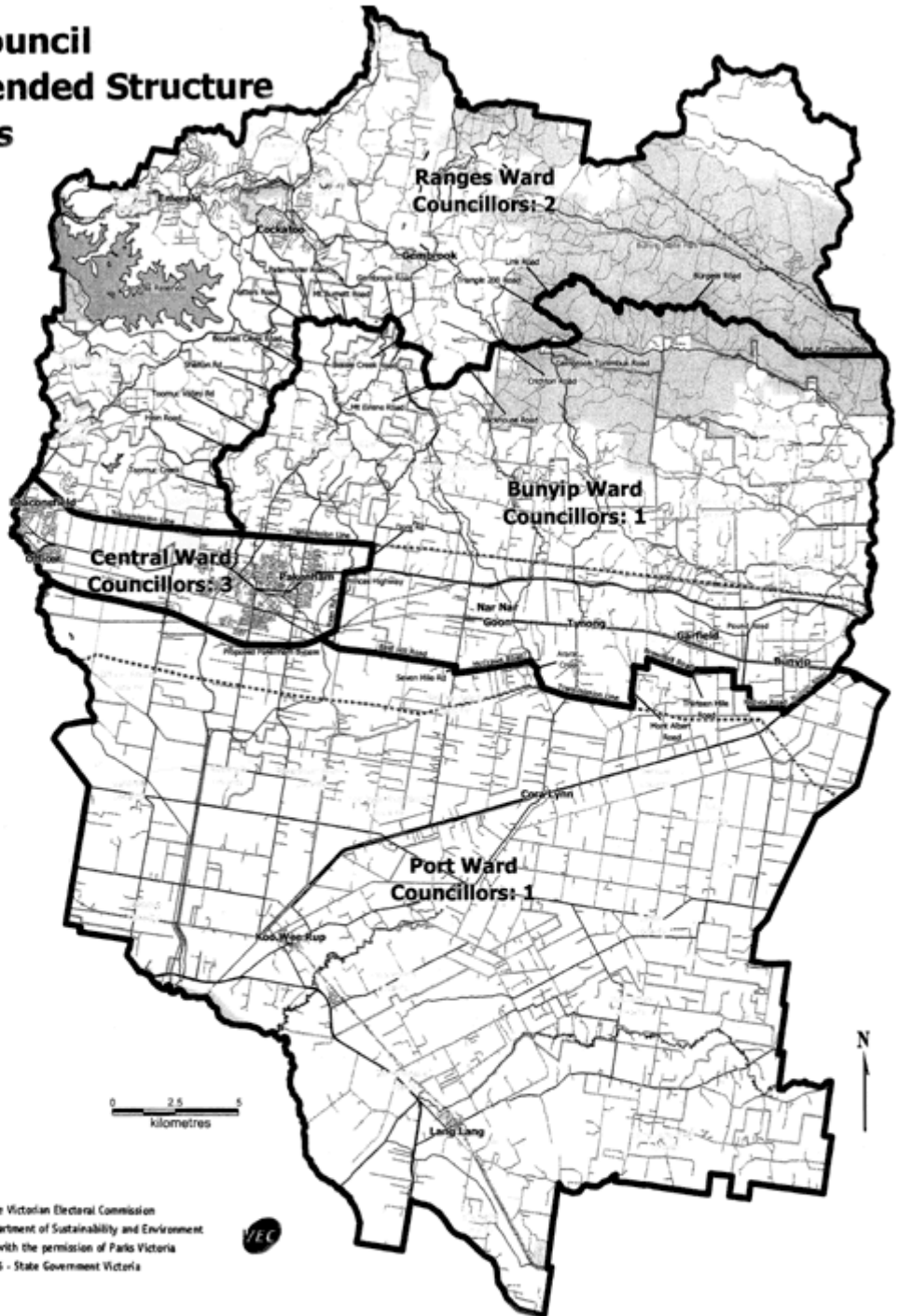
Cardinia Shire Council Map of Recommended Structure Seven Councillors Four Wards

Legend

-  Proposed Boundary
-  Locality Boundary

Map Symbols

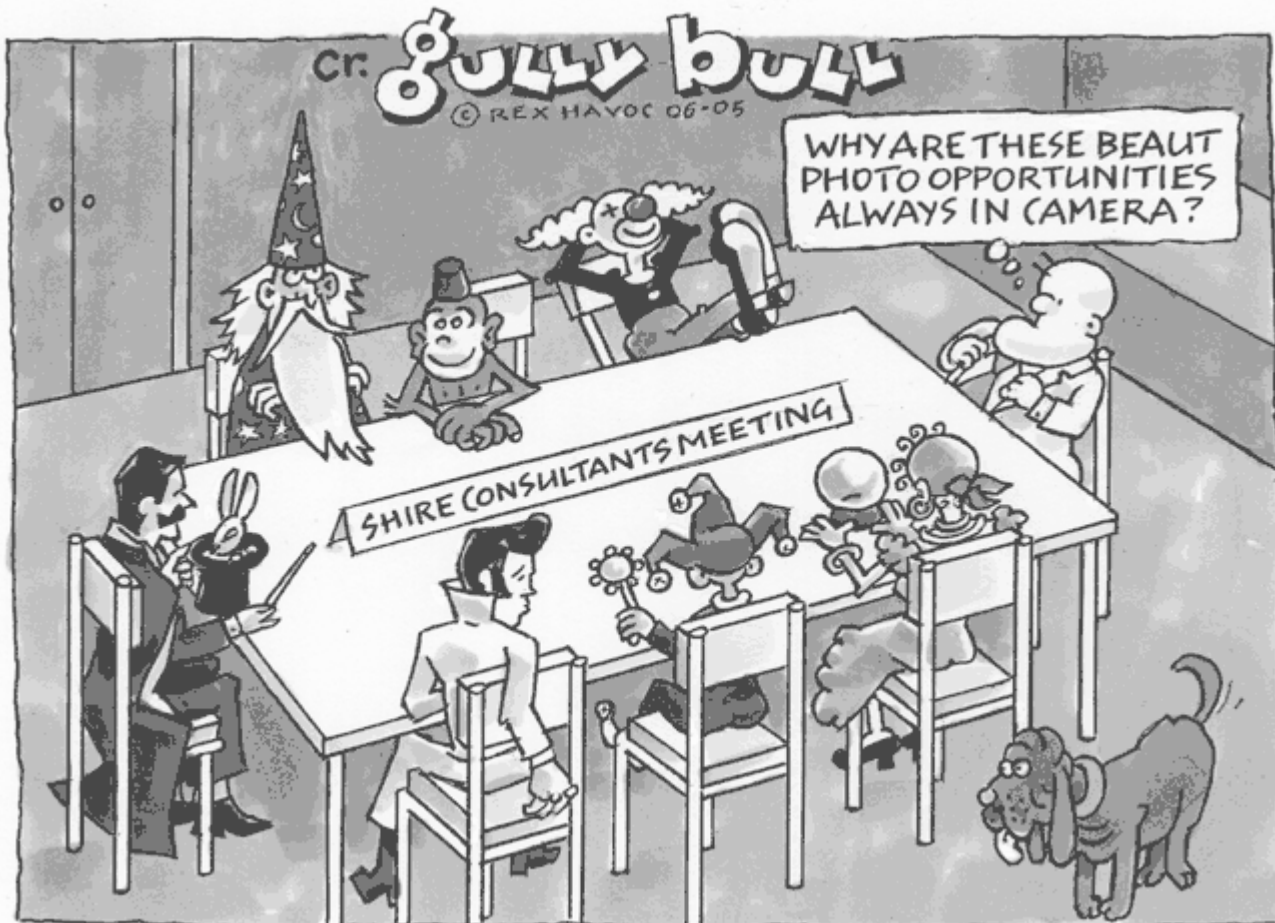
-  Freeway
-  Main Road
-  Collector Road
-  Road
-  Unsealed Road
-  River/Creek
-  Railway Line
-  Lake
-  Transmission Line
-  Parks and Reserves



Map prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission
VICMAP spatial data from Department of Sustainability and Environment
Parks digital data used with the permission of Parks Victoria
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Ward	Councillors	Voters	# Deviation as at Jan 05	*Projected Deviation at Sept 05	area_sqkm
Bunyip	1	5,812	+4.31%	+0.02%	320.637
Central	3	15,092	-9.71%	-3.36%	48.6744
Port	1	5,467	-1.88%	-6.34%	574.61
Ranges	2	12,632	+13.35%	+8.21%	338.155
Totals for all Electorates	7	39,003	-9.71% to +13.35%	-6.34% to +8.21%	1,282.08
Average		5,572			320.519



COUNCIL BUDGET: THE LAST OF THE BIG SPENDERS?

Cardinia Shire Council's 2005-06 Budget was presented at a Council meeting on 20 June 2005. Retired ratepayer, Ed Chatwin, was among those ratepayers present who were not happy with Council's plans to spend our rates. Mr Chatwin had been invited by Council to make a submission on behalf of ratepayers.

Setting aside the typing errors and wrong information in the budget papers, Mr Chatwin emphasised three main areas in which he felt Council is falling far short of its responsibility to live within its financial means and to be accountable to ratepayers:

- Potentially costly indecision over the future of Shire headquarters: the current indication is that more than \$12 million is to be spent buying back the site of the present Shire offices from the State Government and refurbishing the offices.
- Lack of transparency surrounding the Building Cardinia Fund, which is based on interest-only loans. There is no indication of where the increase in contributions of some \$40 million is to be spent. Interest commitments on the loan require detailed explanation, for they appear to be excessive in the extreme.
- The Recreational Land and Facilities Fund: Cardinia borrows at 6.8% and deposits the funds in cash reserves at 4.5%. Even 'simple folk' would question why you would do this and where the money is to go.

Mr Chatwin suggested that the \$100 municipal levy could be removed if costs of maintaining open spaces, parks and other infrastructure

items in the Pakenham Growth Corridor were born by users of these facilities within the corridor.

Ratepayers present also targeted other areas of day-to-day expense, which are being increased by more than \$3 million.

Mr Chatwin added that an urgent review was needed of the Shire's community and welfare services, in which there have been significant cuts compared to last financial year. These cuts come as the Shire continues to spend a fortune on doubtful infrastructure projects and big-ticket items.

Despite these issues, the budget was passed with no changes other than timing, only one Councillor requesting any amendments.

Council is falling far short of its responsibility to live within its financial means

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MALaise IN CARDINIA'S NORTHERN CORRIDOR.

Cardinia Council is at last on the verge of building a library in Emerald - Stage 1 of a 5-stage Community Precinct to service the northern corridor of the Shire. Residents have been discussing the concept with successive local councils for 15 years. Why so long? Here are some of the reasons.

- Emerald has always been on the perimeter of whichever municipality it belonged to. At one stage it was half in Sherbrooke and half in Pakenham, but always remote from Shire offices.
- Local governments have a streak of arrogance which impedes recognition of regional needs.
- Modern business practice is sensitive to legal attack and defends itself with excessive secrecy. Local government is no exception. So the concept of partnership with communities is thwarted and distrust is bred.
- Legislation dividing Victoria into Corridors of Growth and Green Wedges was intended to concentrate industry into areas that would not impinge randomly on Melbourne's 'lungs'. It is being interpreted as a green light for all development, including development of essential infrastructure, to occur in the growth corridors alone.

The backlog of infrastructure development in Cardinia's northern corridor has been growing steadily for a long time. Although blame cannot be laid entirely at the feet of Council, as the current authority Cardinia has the duty to rectify the deficiency. With Stage 1 of the Emerald Library, they have finally started on this task.

However, over the past four years Stage 1 of the project has been shrinking. First, space allocated to adult learning in the name of University of the Third Age disappeared, then the Toy Library was diminished. The community is alarmed at the prospect of any further whittling away of the original proposal.

Council's response is that, with another four stages to be addressed, these and other local interest groups will have ample opportunity to be satisfied.

Personally I feel the Library project has enough momentum to avoid being impeded by anger at what appears to be a 'dumbing down' of the Shire's second largest township. Local interests would be better served by pressuring Council to proceed with Stages 2 to 5 with as much haste as they can muster. There is a vital role in this for the embryo Emerald Township Committee.

PW



The backlog of infrastructure development in Cardinia's northern corridor has been growing steadily for a long time

BLAST THE QUARRY!

Residents of beautiful Toomuc Valley are up in arms. Their struggle should be of concern to all residents and ratepayers because of lack of satisfaction over many years to residents in the operation of the Mount Shamrock Quarry. Their fight, against the invasive nature of Readymix Holdings practices at the quarry, includes a long history of complaints about constant noise from blasting, dust, environmental damage, and churning up of roads that are inadequate for heavy transport.

Quarry owners now propose to extend their desecration of one of Victoria's most beautiful valleys by another 20 hectares, a move which not only exacerbates current problems, but will further degrade the area. Among points raised by the Toomuc Valley Residents' Association are:

- The site is one of Victoria's most significant Aboriginal heritage sites.
- The blasting, which was due to end in five years, may now go on indefinitely.
- Blasting will no longer be cushioned by the existing quarry walls.
- There will be a detrimental impact on underground and surface water and a reduction in flow to Toomuc Creek.
- Huge manna gums hundreds of years old will be lost and native bush deprived of water. No aquatic survey has been done on the potential threat to endangered species.
- The area is a tourism precinct. Quarries and tourists don't mix.
- Traffic problems will continue for another 20 years.

If you would like further information please contact: Secretary, Save the Valley Committee, 650 Toomuc Valley Road, Pakenham 3810.

STOP PRESS

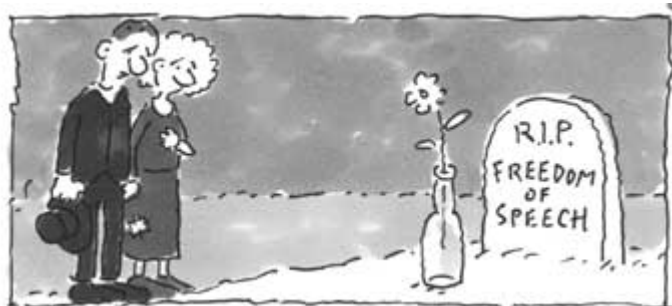
Save the Valley group successfully persuaded their local councillor to introduce an alternative motion to that previously put forward. Four other councillors supported Cr Lempriere with the result that the submissions will be reviewed by Council and a panel hearing will consider all viewpoints before a decision is made. The important thing now is to ensure that the hearing takes place locally and not in the city. Residents are working on it!

CONFIDENTIALITY OR FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

A statement released by the Cardinia Ratepayers and Residents Association has expressed serious concerns about freedom to speak candidly and openly at public meetings in Cardinia Shire. The concerns follow legal action by a senior council employee against a well respected Gembrook resident who had asked the Ward councillor a question about the employee's contract. The councillor apparently passed on the details of this enquiry to the employee.

Subsequently, another member of the public mentioned this legal action when asking a question at a recent council meeting, and was subjected to a very nasty verbal attack at the close of the meeting.

Following a mediation hearing, the Gembrook



resident is not permitted to answer questions or discuss the matter further. However, the Cardinia Ratepayers and Residents Association takes the view that these matters should not go unreported, and advises all residents and ratepayers to be cautious when speaking in the presence of Councillors or senior council officers.

Recently revised confidentiality policy indicates a growing culture of secrecy in Cardinia Shire affairs which, with the litigious atmosphere now existing in the council, is contributing to an 'us and them' perception in the community. Many citizens are likely to be inhibited in future in expressing opinions or contributing to debate and discussion in community affairs.

HOW TO GET THE COMMITTEE YOU WANT

It couldn't happen in a democracy, but there are ways in which you can get the committee you want elected, regardless of public opinion:

- Place advertisements where most people won't see them, not on recognised notice boards;
- Be vague about the number of volunteers you want on the committee;
- Don't publicise the names of people nominated; instead let the candidates you want elected handle the nominations;
- Don't make it known that people who live outside the locality can be nominated in case the candidate you want is joined by others;
- If you find that some concerned people have distributed a list of candidates showing their interest in the locality, and the list doesn't include your preferred candidates, just smile;
- To prove your honesty, show your audience the box that will be used to collect voting slips;
- Don't count the votes at the meeting so those attending can record the results; instead say it is too complicated for simple folk and take the box back to your office for counting.
- Since you know the outcome you want, you can dump the box and its contents;
- Your decision, which was not going to depend on the election anyway, can be released in your own good time.

So there are ways of getting people who will never argue with you on to a committee. But, of course, they would never be used in a democracy.

B.B., Emerald

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Sir/Madam
Re: Bunyip State Park

The management plan for Bunyip State Park is now being reviewed, with the first part of the review covering the recreational component. Currently the Park is totally dominated by trail bike activities and to a lesser extent 4WDs. The visible damage caused is reprehensible and the long term effects may well be devastating. On any given weekend day we can have up to 200 trail bikes just in the Tonimbuk-Tynong North area, and the noise is unbelievable.

Recently revised confidentiality policy indicates a growing culture of secrecy in Cardinia Shire

The Bunyip Recreational Framework Community Advisory Group is a group of people with an interest in Bunyip State Park, including trail bike, 4WD and walking groups. As a member of the Advisory Group, I represent the interests of residents who border on or reside within the Park and who are collectively concerned for the Park's flora and fauna, and their habitats.

The Tonimbuk Road-Diamond Creek corridor is considered an area of Very High Environmental Value, one of the reasons why Diamond Creek with its surrounding wetlands was chosen as a release site for helmeted honeyeaters. Also present in this corridor are nesting sites of powerful and sooty owls. The whole area adjacent to and south of Tonimbuk township and Tynong North is zoned Special Protection Area #1.

I have raised and will continue to raise these issues with the relevant authorities, but I feel it is a lost cause: the motorised recreational groups are large in numbers and their voice often appears louder than ours.

Many Advisory Group members strongly believe that no motorised recreation should be allowed in Bunyip State Park, but we have been told by Parks Victoria that this is not an option. We have tried to push for a protecting buffer zone to meet the huge population growth expected along the Princes Highway; however options required by motorised groups favour an unloading area constructed within 900 metres of residential properties.

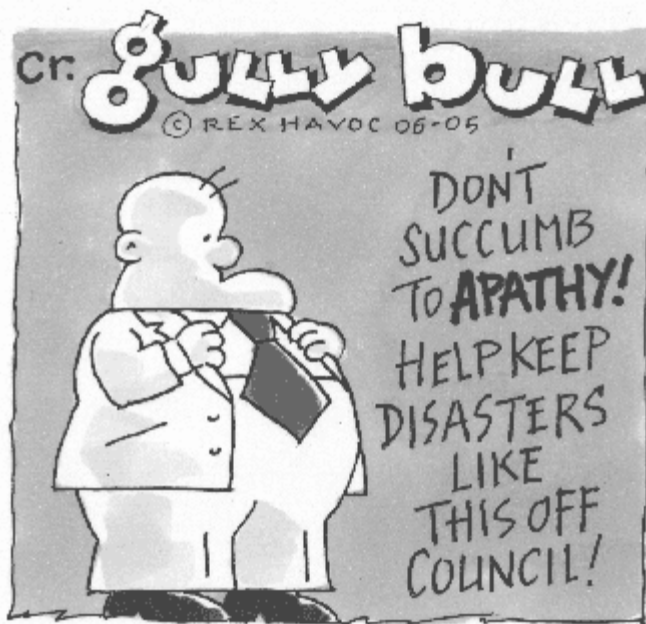
The Draft Recreational Framework Document for Bunyip Public Land is available on Parks Victoria Website:
<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>

Stephen Dobinson
Tonimbuk

Editor's note: Unfortunately submissions to the Draft Recreational Framework closed on 17 June 2005. Nevertheless, we urge residents to keep abreast of this issue and take whatever action is appropriate to protect Bunyip State Park.



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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

It is important that ratepayers and residents attend a Council meeting now and then to observe and understand how decisions are made. Many municipalities hold Council meetings in the evening when it is more convenient for community members to attend. Regardless of requests from CRRA to make Council meetings more accessible to the public, Cardinia Shire continue to hold meetings at 4.00 pm. Questions from the public are accepted for the General Meetings but must be in writing and lodged prior to 3.30 pm. The person asking the question must be present in the public gallery.

General Council Meetings

15th August
19th September
17th October
21st November

Town Planning Meetings

1st August
5th September
3rd October
7th November

Statutory Meeting 5th December

Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association: Next meeting Tuesday 26th July, Pakenham Public Hall Supper Room, John St. Pakenham, 7.30 pm.

This meeting will focus on the approach of CRRA to the Council elections to be held in November 2005.

August meeting at Gembrook, venue to be advised. September meeting at Pakenham, venue to be advised.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OR COMMUNITY CON?

While we are on the subject of consultancy, Kate Forster of Emerald has reminded us of a list of requests relating to community consultation that was presented to Council in January 1999 (Cardinia Environment Coalition Local Laws Submission 1999). The list aimed to ensure that community consultation on projects that affect ratepayers would be relevant, timely, accurate, and in plain English, while allowing interested ratepayers ample time to respond to documents released for community comment. The request asked Council to use consultation to foster a relationship of mutual respect and trust within its community.

Sadly, it seems community consultation has become just another 'weasel word', an excuse for 'busy work' while Council gets on with it or not, as they please.

What has happened to the Consultation Policy for which Council paid \$20,000 – yes, you guessed it, to a Consultant? Whose bottom drawer is it lying in?

STOP PRESS

Council is considering the introduction of green waste bins. What do you think?

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.



CONTRIBUTIONS AND ADVERTISING

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 : Quarter Page.....\$15.00 ;
Business card size.....\$10.00
Please provide camera-ready copy for advertisements.



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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF CRRA.
 Cardinia Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc.

I (Name)
 of (Address)
 Phone Email

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.

Signature of Applicant

Date **Annual Subscription: \$10.00**

Comments

Please send this form, with your subscription and any comments you may have to: The Secretary, CRRA, PO Box 161 Officer Vic. 3809.



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