

CRRA



NEWS

Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.

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A MERRY CHRISTMAS and

As taxpayers and ratepayers, we contribute the revenue used for administrative governance at Federal, State and Local level.

We cannot personally supervise the paid administrative bodies, so we elect individual representatives who are paid to do so on our behalf. This requires a level of trust that elected individuals will at all times uphold our best interest, and also an expectation that administrative bodies will consistently respond to the needs and requirements of the citizens who provide their income. We know that in practice this does not always work, but it is important to keep in mind this basic blueprint for our democratic process.

Just over twelve months ago, ratepayers and residents of Cardinia Shire used that democratic process to bring about changes in their local Council. In years to come, 2005/06 will be identified as a time of remarkable transition and change of direction in the governance of Cardinia Shire Council. The task of turning the ship around was an enormous responsibility and credit is given to the new councillors and 2006 Mayor, Councillor Ronald, for their ongoing commitment to the job at hand. Acting CEO Garry McQuillan faced the daunting responsibility of implementing required changes and also fostering a cooperative attitude among the staff. A fresh approach to Council meetings, recognition of community input, a more responsible budget with a focus on maintaining existing facilities, 50% removal of the municipal charge, and funding for restoration of the Pakenham outdoor swimming pool are just some of the gains to be noted. Many others have taken place, but there is still more to be done if the expectations of ratepayers are to be met in the coming year, with a balance needed between the cost of State government infrastructure requirements for growth corridor policies and the urgent need for responsible financial constraint in our Council's budgeting priorities, as there is still a high debt level. With Councillor Lempriere as Mayor for 2007 and the formal appointment of Mr. McQuillan as Chief Executive Officer, CRRA will closely monitor the progress of our local Council.



AROUND THE TOWNS

Emerald Village Committee has developed a Strategic Plan which resulted in a joint Speak Out session with consultants appointed by the Council. Residents now expect to see the issues identified and, more importantly, action being taken. There has been a strong community reaction towards a badly designed "dubious conglomerate" development planned for the main street which was totally out of keeping with the Council approved village atmosphere of Emerald. To their credit, Council planners arranged for a temporary vegetation overlay on commercial properties in order to protect the many fine trees which would have otherwise been destroyed.

The Council has initiated a feasibility study for a long awaited community swimming pool in Emerald. Many residents reject Cr. Legge's recommendation that it be built on the site of Emerald Secondary School and they propose an alternate site on Pepi's Paddock, previously sold off to commercial interests by the former Council CEO, if it can be re-acquired.

Improved facilities at Emerald Lake Park will include a new bridge, additional carparking plus other upgrades, and a bi-monthly craft market is being planned. Now finally recognized as a jewel in the Shire crown, this park is within easy reach of the growth corridor and is well worth a family visit.

"After 10 years of inaction in our Ward, at last things are happening. Much of this is due to re-established village committees and the election of a new Council. Thank-you to Cr. Bill Ronald, Cr. Ed Chatwin and their supporters for their hard work in creating a new 'caring' Cardinia at long last."

*John Dudley,
Emerald Village Committee.*

Reports from **Kooweerup** indicate that heavy traffic congestion through the town continues to be a major problem which is expected to become worse when the Pakenham bypass freeway opens. The promised Kooweerup bypass is the only solution to these problems and it needs to be a top priority. Residents are not satisfied with the proposed relocation of the V Line Bus route through the town which includes the loss of three carparking spaces in the main street business area. Appropriate consultation or negotiation may resolve this issue.

Meanwhile, the Community Centre remains under used until a management committee can be appointed to run the facility in a more user friendly manner. While Council continues to charge high fees for its use by community groups, the centre cannot be used to its full potential.

Pakenham continues to be the focus of rapid (rabid?) expansion and development which is taking place faster than the Council can keep up with (whether they admit it or not) and instances of environmental degradation are common. However, the good news is that after 4 years lying idle and neglected under the regime of the previous Council, the outdoor swimming pool is now to be restored and re-opened in time for the summer season 2007/08. This is due to the tremendous efforts of Dot Murphy's Save the Pool Committee and the unswerving commitment to community needs of re-elected Councillor Ronald and newly elected Councillors Owen and Chatwin and a last minute funding boost by State government.

Bayles Fauna Reserve Management

Committee is looking for volunteers to assist with park maintenance, planting, weeding, animal welfare and staffing the museum. A Friends Group is being established to assist the small committee, and there are plans to enhance the reserve for the benefit of visitors but this can only be accomplished if help is forthcoming. Located on Kooweerup/Longwarry Road at Bayles, about 20 minutes drive from Pakenham, the Reserve is suggested as an interesting school holiday outing.

COMMUNITY VIEWPOINT

The traffic issues and parking problems at Pakenham Hills Primary School have finally been resolved and works will be completed in time for the new school year. At the 11th December Council meeting, Councillor Owen drew attention to the input of school parent Patricia Harris who constantly lobbied both Council and State government over this issue. Patricia says she is very pleased that the parking area at the school will be upgraded and reminds the Council that the final outcome is based on the plan she put forward to the previous Council well over 12 months ago. The value of persistent community lobbying cannot be underestimated on this or any other issue.

A blatant land grab in Tynong, supposedly justified by the need to relocate the Post Office, will see a three-quarter acre property, bought and paid for in 1979, reduced to a half acre because Council say that they have a legal right to reclaim part of a disused road area and sell it by private treaty. On the basis of existing title documents, Tas and Lyn say they believe they are the rightful owners of the quarter acre in dispute which was consolidated onto the title in 1910. Council, however, are referring to a 1913 title and in a blinkered, hard nosed manner refusing to recognise the earlier documentation. It appears a court case is the only alternative to resolve the matter, but Tas and Lyn are aged, not in good health having endured the stress of this dispute for over 12 months, and cannot afford to take it any further.

It is interesting to note that this item was first put forward to the previous Council on 14th November 2005 by a former senior administrative officer. It was not withdrawn or discussed, and has now been progressed via two "in camera" sessions of the current Council. A separate letter and email sent to Councillors by Tas and his son have received no response and the local ward Councillor has said he cannot be of help in this matter. Ratepayers, should carefully examine the detail of this issue.

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ISSUES OF CONCERN

Changes to the hard waste collection system.

Many residents say the tip vouchers are of no use to them and they would prefer to have the nature strip collection reinstated. Council says a survey showed 65% of residents wanted the new system. When did the survey take place and how many people were surveyed? While there will be differing views on this issue, it certainly sounds as though a review of this decision is necessary as there are many critical comments about the tip voucher system. Teresa Black is collecting signatures in Pakenham to provide community input to Council on this issue, and 200 signatures have already been forwarded from Beaconsfield. Contact CRRRA for more information.

Expansion of Ready Mix Quarry.

The resource that could not be accessed (the 'missing millions') will now become available as Readymix contract to supply, overburden to the Pakenham Bypass project. What a bonus for them, and does this equate to an additional 30 years quarrying for Readymix? Is the expansion across Mt. Paradise really necessary? No doubt these are among the questions being considered by the Wurundjeri community who have not yet given approval to the project.



Selling off 60 hectare Pakenham golf course and 31 hectare potential community parkland.

Council say they will build another golf course and buy more land for community recreation, miles away from the site they propose to sell. The central location and environmental benefits of this 91 hectares cannot be traded off. CRRRA strongly recommends that the 60 hectare Pakenham golf course remain where it is and the adjoining 31 hectare land be converted to accessible community parkland for current and future Cardinia Shire families. The land was gifted to the community by local farmers in 1977, it has cost the Council nothing and was always intended to be used for community recreation.

As recommended by DSE, a community plan for this parkland will be presented to the Council, and a strong petition will be delivered to the State government who are responsible for the final decision on the future of this community open space.