

# CRRA



# NEWS

Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.

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## Issue No. 7 JULY 2007

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

Ratepayers should remember that when the Cardinia Shire Council Council changed hands in November 2005, there was existing debt in excess of \$49 million which had been accumulating over several years. There was optimism that the newly elected Councillors would be able to do something about this dangerously high Cardinia Shire debt level. But it now appears that the influence of policy making bureaucracy coupled with the heavy weight of government expectation has been too great to overturn. In addition, division of opinion among councillors on this issue prevents a consensus being achieved to aim positively towards debt reduction.

In the meantime, the draft Council Budget and Strategic Plan 2007/08 has been formally adopted and most Cardinia Shire ratepayers will be aware that the \$50 remaining half of the unpopular municipal charge has been removed. The \$100 levy imposed by the previous Council was an inequitable means of raising revenue and kept rates artificially low. Now we know exactly where we stand and that rates will increase by an average of 7% which will include the revenue that was lost by removal of the levy!

The questions ratepayers need to be looking at are why this incessant need for such increased revenue every year and what are we receiving in return for our increased payments? Increased property values are small comfort to residents who like where they live and do not intend to sell up and move. The situation is more difficult for property owners within the urban growth boundary where land is rezoned to a Residential One with massive rate increases, will force some residents to sell to developers.

The Council have made it clear that they are under pressure to provide infrastructure to accommodate the growth and development that is predicted to occur in Beaconsfield, Officer and Pakenham over the next 5-10 years. Most of the outlying towns are likely to be affected also.

While there was some debt reduction in 2006/07, Council debt is still very high and will be carried on to the 2007/08 budget. This debt will not come down while the Council spending program continues to be linked to government policies of growth and expansion. Cost shifting from other government levels is a matter for concern, and it is clear to many ratepayers that we are being taxed via our rates.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**Pakenham Outdoor Pool** Works are on schedule for the re-opening in November. The amenities block is looking good following restoration and repainting and the new children's waterplay pool will be a popular feature.

**PB Ronald Reserve.** The long awaited masterplan has been available for public comment recently. Future works will include relocation of the skate ramp, replacement of the old works depot with car parking and provision for sporting practice and fitness activities. More written detail should have been available for the benefit of interested residents.

**Feasibility Study for an Emerald Swimming Pool** The recently funded study is a good start, but looking at the ongoing growth corridor projects in the Council Budget, Emerald residents may have a long wait for any practical progress towards a pool.

**Hard Waste Collection.** To the satisfaction of the many residents who worked hard to lobby Council on this issue, a kerbside collection on a twice yearly schedule will replace the trial of the voucher system.

**Green Waste Bins** This service is good for those who will use it, but many residents received a bin which they did not ask for. It seems the ACCC had to explain to the Council the rules covering provision of unrequested services. Letters have now been sent to all ratepayers who did not respond to the 2006 green waste notice, asking whether they wish to participate in the green waste service, no invoices will be issued and unwanted bins will be retrieved. If you have not received a letter, please advise CRRA.

**Proposed sale and development of the Pakenham golf course and adjoining public land.** At a Special Council Meeting on 5th June, four councillors voted to extend the contract with developer Peet & Co. for a further three months. This was the third extension of the contract, and it was opposed by Councillors Chatwin, Owen and Ronald.

The Minister for Planning has not yet made a decision on the Council's application to rezone the golf course land for housing development, but at a cost so far of \$493,000 spent on consultant fees, panel hearing costs and legal representation, this must rate as the most expensive planning amendment attempted by Cardinia Shire. Surely a sound amendment would proceed on its own merit and should not require the financial support of almost half a million dollars?

**the \$50 remaining half of the unpopular municipal charge has been removed.**

**\$493,000 spent on consultant fees, panel hearing costs and legal representation**

### What's On ?

**Thursday 16th August** - 'The Future of Food' (informative film about Genetically Modified agriculture and its social impact) Pakenham Public Hall, 7 p.m.

(Also at Berwick Old Cheese Factory 15th August, Warragul McMillan Campus 13th August)

**"Highrise" Development on the Move.**

An application to build a multi-purpose four storey complex in **Emerald** was refused by Cardinia Shire Council and, as customary, the developer has appealed to VCAT. A large group of residents vigorously opposing the development met in Emerald on 16th June and Councillors Ed Chatwin and Graeme Legge represented the Council and the residents at the VCAT hearing on 25th June. The decision has yet to be announced.

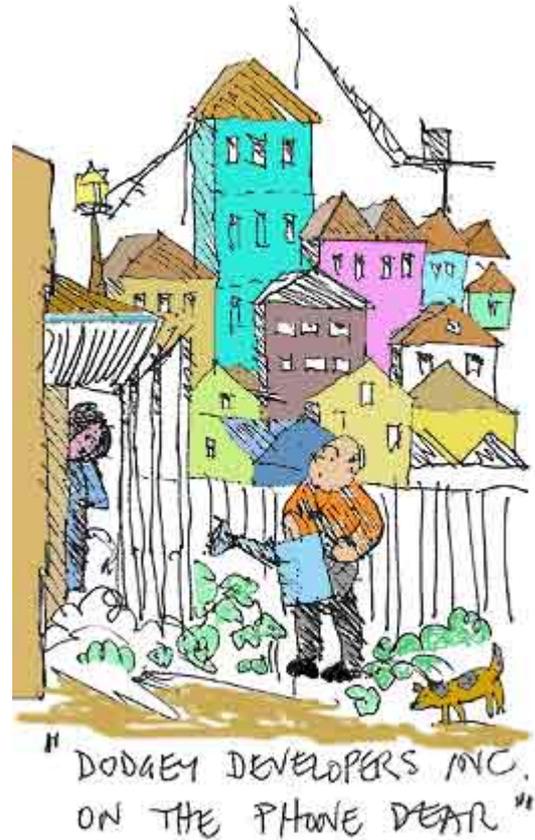
A number of **Beaconsfield** residents are objecting to double storey unit style development in what has to date been a neighbourhood of established homes. It appears that owners of older style houses on generous size blocks are being approached by developers attempting to persuade them to sell. Unfortunately, planning regulations cannot prevent this type of activity which will probably become more common as the growth corridor development rolls forward.

**A Review of Melbourne 2030 ?** When State government introduced this policy in 2002, five-yearly reviews were planned. Resident action groups throughout Melbourne and outer metropolitan area have been awaiting the review as a chance to bring attention to the problems being created by this policy. Recently, State Planning Minister Justin Madden announced that the review will not take place. Instead a committee has been appointed to assist the government in an audit of Melbourne 2030 with the focus being on how to further implement the policy. Submissions from the public will be accepted in August. Obviously Minister Madden and the government do not want to admit that Melbourne 2030 has created far more problems than it has solved.

**Can we afford New Shire Offices?** With an initial estimated cost of \$1 million for design of new Council offices, ratepayers should be concerned about the total cost of the project. Ratepayers waiting for road maintenance and drainage works, others who are facing special charge schemes for road making costs and many of us who perhaps will have to postpone property maintenance in order to pay the increased rates this year will probably agree that new Council offices are unaffordable at the present time. The portable buildings currently accommodating staff may not be ideal, but both ratepayers and staff alike have to endure the inevitable disadvantages of living and working in a municipality that is debt strapped yet under enormous pressure to spend on growth infrastructure.

**Lack of Schools, Education a Loss.** The following education concerns voiced by Patricia, parent of two primary school children, are no doubt shared by many parents in Pakenham and district. The Shire of Cardinia has a serious education problem which I and others, have been trying to bring to the attention to the Government and Education Department for several years now.

**Beaconsfield residents are objecting to double storey unit style development**



Currently our primary schools are at their limit, with the Ministry of Education promising more schools to come, but with no guarantee of when, where or whether they will be in time to deliver decent public education to the tens of thousands of new residents being encouraged into this area over the next couple of years.

Our secondary schools are a different matter. They are beyond breaking point now. Cardinia Shire is ranked as having one of the highest secondary school drop out rates in Victoria. That fact, along with the huge youth delinquency problem evident in newspaper reports and when visiting the main street, should be sufficient proof to the government and Ministry of Education that our schools in this Shire are seriously letting our teens down.

Secondary schools are too overcrowded and teachers cannot give students the time, skills and leadership they so desperately need through their developing years. Without that leadership from teachers and peers, students are left without direction, and ultimately we are passing out to the wider world young adults with a seriously bad attitude to life, and NO skills to help them become mature, proactive and successful adults. A good school with solid, stable education environment is so badly needed in our Shire, and therefore we have to stand up to the governing bodies and make them hear our pleas. We need more public secondary schools and we need them now.

**\$1 million for design of new Council offices**

**CRRA Meetings**

Thursday 23rd August - Pakenham Public Hall, 7.30 p.m.  
Thursday 18th October - Emerald Library, 7.30 p.m.  
Thursday 14th November - Pakenham Public Hall, 7.30 p.m.  
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