

## ***Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association***

**Annual General Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

### **Annual Report to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

In preparing this report and reflecting on the previous year, it became important to **note the widening role of CRRA** and the many matters that have required attention, response or active participation. It has gradually become evident that many residents although not formal members of CRRA, are relieved to know that it is possible to seek assistance, advice or support on issues that affect them. Therefore, our increasing responsibility is to voice concern on occasions when the best interests of ratepayers and residents is not receiving due priority or their views are not being recognised.

During the last twelve months, **submissions regarding a variety of issues** have been lodged with Cardinia Shire Council, an appointed Panel, VCAT, Department of Planning and Community Development and other government bodies including the Federal Discussion Paper concerning a Sustainable Population for Australia. It was very disappointing to note the VCAT refusal to uphold the rights of Beaconsfield residents who objected to location of a hotel and gaming machine facility adjoining their community centre, kindergarten, neighbourhood house and surrounding residential area. On the other hand, it was great to witness the success of Cockatoo residents as they stood firm against great odds and prevented the Council demolition of their historic former kindergarten and Ash Wednesday shelter. Unfortunately Federal Minister Tony Burke had little to report after lengthy national consultation concerning future sustainability for Australia's taxpayers, ratepayers and residents, as he virtually recommended a 'rearrangement of the deckchairs' type of solution to the problems occurring in every local municipality affected by rapid population growth.

In addition to a CRRA written statement submitted to the **Growth Area Authority logical inclusions** process, a further verbal submission was personally presented to the September 2011 Melbourne hearings of the Planning Minister's Logical Inclusions Committee, and that submission was indeed contrary to the proposal put forward by the Cardinia Shire Council Planning Department who recommended further expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary almost to Nar Nar Goon at Mt. Ararat Road both north and south of the Princes Highway. Copy of the CRRA submissions can be viewed on the CRRA website. Most residents would not be in favour of the latest State Government planning authority's unsustainable proposal to create car dependent communities on outer suburban fringe development similar to Los Angeles style ribbon suburbs.

Relationships and interaction with **elected local Councillors and the Council administrative body**, although not always with satisfactory outcomes, have remained harmonious with one exception in the early months of 2011, when it became necessary to question the legal circumstances of an individual councillor. Unfortunately the matter was not resolved to the expectation of many residents and ratepayers.

Regular **attendance at Council meetings** by several CRRA committee members has been important, especially at the time the Council budget is drawn up, and it has been our aim to have an ongoing dialogue with Council and staff concerning financial priorities, planning matters and individual ratepayer concerns. We would like to see more ratepayers taking an active interest in general Council meetings and improved circulation of the budget documentation for community access is recommended.

We are concerned about possible implications of **changes to State planning policy as it relates to local Councils**. The changes are aimed at speeding up planning process, limiting the need for notice to be displayed concerning planning permit applications and bypassing the right of residents to object or receive information concerning changes of use or developments in their local area. The new rules will allow developers and consultants a free run through to fast approval which is government justification for the implementation of changes to planning policy. We would like to see local councils inform residents about the possible loss of residents' rights but no information is forthcoming other than from the State planning authority Department of Planning & Community Development.

**The coming financial year is likely to come to a crisis point** for most ratepayers unless the Council is prepared to seriously consider the CPI calculated for municipal councils by the MAV (Municipal Association of Victoria). In a property revaluation year, taking into account rising costs of electricity and water services, property maintenance, car fuel and other rising general costs for mortgage burdened families, we will be strongly advocating for adherence to the CPI for Councils which is likely to be calculated similar to the previous year figure of 4.6%. We realise that Council works on the basis of constant provision of new infrastructure to service State government growth policy, however that growth has become intolerable and unmanageable from a financial point of view, as we the ratepayers are expected to continually absorb the rising costs, regardless of whether we reside in the growth corridor or in rural towns where servicing of roads, drainage and other needs are lagging behind. The reality is that population growth is costing more than we can afford to pay. Creating ambitious four year plans based on borrowing and debt, serviced by increased rate revenue to fund endless new infrastructure and services provision is no longer a viable policy. It is time to identify a more fair and sustainable formula.

**CRRA has continued to network with other community groups** around Victoria, e.g. Protectors of public Lands, Ratepayers Victoria, Planning Backlash and Victorian branch of Sustainable Population Australia in order to keep up with trends in government planning, community lobbying activity and other matters. A newsletter has been circulated to keep members informed, and the CRRA website has been updated whenever possible. We could improve on the use of these functions if more help was available. **It is time to thank the 2011 Committee** for their patient support, and particular thanks to the two committee members who have assisted with research and relevant information, also thank you to Bill Whitbourne for his assistance with the newsletter and management of the CRRA website. We would also like to record our appreciation for the use of Pakenham RSL Hall on many occasions during 2011, and also to John Hales for being available to open and close the building on many late evenings.

Gloria O'Connor, President,  
Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association inc.

12<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

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**2012 CRRA COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM**

I/we wish to nominate.....Date / /

For position of .....Date / /

Seconded by .....Date / /

I agree to and accept the above nomination .....Date / /