

## **Media Release from Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.**

With the approaching November Cardinia Cardinia Shire Council election, Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association (CRRA) has identified a number of issues which were endorsed unanimously by members at a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008 as important to the residential and business community of Cardinia Shire and relevant for consideration by intending candidates.

- 1. Capping of rates increases and better management of Council debt level** is required.
- Form a **more equitable balance between provision of new infrastructure and maintenance of existing assets and infrastructure**, roads, drains etc.
- 3. Prioritise public open space requirements** – no sell off of community open space.
- Action on **increased traffic problems and carparking in Pakenham CBD** and also **increased traffic volume in Kooweerup**.
- Need for **greater support of small business** in Pakenham and across the Shire, including greater focus on tourism.
- Emphasis required on **equitable provision of services** throughout the Shire.
- Move to **obtain capping of existing level of electronic gaming machines** in Cardinia Shire.
- Need for **improvement in sustainable environmental practice** – ensure consistent enforcement of Council Local Laws.

All candidates nominating for election to Cardinia Shire Council will be asked to comment on the above issues and will be invited to a Meet the Candidates evening to be held at Pakenham Public Hall on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

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## **Background on CRRA 2008 Council election issues.**

2008/09 rates are at 5.8% and do not appear to be hurting many ratepayers. However, Council forward plan 2009/10 and forward to 2012 forecasts rates at 7%. Dependent on Council financial position, those rates could rise much higher. **There is no limit to rates increases**, therefore a realistic cap on rates is required.

There is no indication of serious intent to deal with the high level of **Council debt**. Many ratepayers would rather see spending curtailed and more financial commitment to reduction of the debt.

Council spending on new **infrastructure and services** to meet the needs of rapid population increase in the Cardinia Shire growth corridor is contrasted with a decrease in the level of government funding. Council should take a strong stand instead of taking on more debt and raising rates.

Council owned **community open space** is an invaluable long term asset and should not be sold off for short term gain. Developer provided open space must be retained and used for the purpose it is given.

**Car parking in Pakenham CBD** needs urgent attention. Instances of **serious traffic problems**, including law and order issues, are becoming more frequent. Areas of responsibility between Council and Victoria police need clarifying. **Traffic congestion in Kooweerup** is serious and needs management until a bypass can be constructed.

**Support for local business** is improving but a lot more should be done to promote the Shire's tourist attractions and places of interest. A proactive Council policy and an information centre are required.

There is clear need for increased provision of services as the growth area expands which adds to Council expenditure, but **equitable provision of services** throughout the Shire should be the aim.

Council has power to refuse a gaming venue application but the number of gaming machines allocated for the Shire is controlled by State government. Council should lobby the government for a **cap on the existing number of machines**.

Council commitment to **sustainable environmental policies** is not always demonstrated in practice. Council should take a stronger role in environmental responsibility and ensure compliance with planning requirements and Local Laws.