



# ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

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## **NORTH & WEST MELBOURNE ASSOCIATION INC.**

ACN: A0004909Z

For those who live or work in North or West Melbourne

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### **COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT**

#### **Office Bearers:**

Chairperson	Bill Cook
Vice Chairperson	Geoff Leach
Secretary	Steven Lindsay
Assistant Secretary	Madeleine Scully
Treasurer	Michael Horscroft
Ordinary Members	Margaret Fried
	Lorraine Siska
	Jennie Newman

#### **Convenors of Work Groups:**

Planning	Geoff Leach, Margaret Fried
Social Issues	Bill Cook, Lorraine Siska
Environment	Kaye Oddie
Business	George Tyler
Traffic	Kaye Oddie

### **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR APRIL 2006 TO APRIL 2007**

This year has been a difficult one for the Association. We have lost one very major issue that we regard as being of a very high level of significance to our community. I am referring to the decision by the Melbourne City Council to demolish the Grandstand at the NMRR (North Melbourne Recreation Reserve), and then to carry out that dastardly act. We feel that there will be no cultural features left at the Reserve to build a picture of what the ground was like when VFL football was played at the ground and all the years of football and cricket being played for well over 100 years. Admittedly, this grandstand was not that old but it created links back to these times. A new modern facility cannot replace the aura that the Grandstand had in shaping the feel of the ground. It contributed heart and soul to the Reserve.

The way in which this decision was taken raises enormous questions for our community, and the Association, and the way we relate to the political structures in which we all have to operate. The nature of democracy in the City of Melbourne where a business (event based, big spending) oriented team controls the Council (the whole of the So team was elected to Council and forms a majority of Councillors). In our view there are no Councillors representing residents as such, which is a turn around from the last Council and our experience of previous Councils. This is compounded by Councillors and staff who are prepared to enter agreements (do deals) with one group of stakeholders (the State, the AFL and the Kangaroos), without any consultation with others, the North and West Melbourne Community and its components. They appear to have had no sense of process to manage an issue, other than to dominate, manipulate and control the opposition and bulldoze their view of the world through, regardless. Their views on heritage protection would seem to be out of the 1950's. Their support of shared facilities was entirely tokenistic with no guarantees to see that the community had any say in what the facilities were, where they were to be located on the site or how they were to be managed or utilised, despite being questioned on these matters on many occasions.

The State government view was that they should throw a couple of million dollars into the melting pot, support the position of the football club and allow a few tidbits to go to the residents, leaving the Council to make all the hard decisions. There was no sense of policy (apart from the political advantages of supporting football clubs with hopefully some spin off to individual voters). Their support of shared facilities was also tokenistic, again with no consultation with the community regarding what facilities should be included, where they might be located on the Reserve or how they were to be managed or utilised.

The nature of the Football Club appears to us to be that of a private company run by a small group of people who are not answerable to their Club members. They appear to have no respect for the history of the Club. The Club's viability appears to be very fragile and its future in North Melbourne most uncertain.

The remote AFL seemed to have little to do with the whole process, apart from putting money in and no doubt supporting the Kangaroos behind the scenes. They certainly did not answer emails.

The nature of the Cricket Club, which, while it is over 100 years old, appears to be run by a president, who has not fully consulted the members of his committee and has negotiated his own agreements.

The state press are only interested in the decision for a photo and its football implications. They were not interested in heritage, community sharing or preservation issues.

The role of spin. We do not argue that the Grandstand was not in a dilapidated condition. It was sadly neglected by the football club and Council for many years. It was, however, in a structurally sound condition and could have been renovated into something that could have really contributed to the quality of life for the North and West Melbourne community and at the North Melbourne Recreation Reserve.

At no time, with the exception of Cr Peter Clark and Cr Fraser Brindley, did any of the political authorities even acknowledge this. Their every word diminished the condition of the facility and justified the demolition of this potentially valuable community resource and the heritage it represents.

This set of players/issues did not make our task of trying to save the Grandstand an easy one, and we lost to their sheer bloody minded determination and obstinacy. The Grandstand is sadly, and perhaps unnecessarily, now demolished.

Not only have we lost a grandstand. We are also in danger of losing the shared community facilities in the new development. Cost estimate overruns by the Football Club have forced the examination of reductions in the project and guess what the Football Club want to cut - the shared community facilities! The 'state of the art' gymnasium has been reduced to a too-small facility, inadequate for club or community use. The 'indoor ball games stadium' would be an unroofed court. Belatedly, the Melbourne City Councillors made an ultimatum that the originally proposed, shared community facilities have to be included in the development and the AFL/Kangaroos contribution paid in trust to the Council, or the Council's \$2m contribution will be withdrawn. The fact that \$4m of the \$7m to build the project is from the public purse seems to be irrelevant to the Football Club.

The project is in danger of falling over, especially as the Kangaroos could at any time move interstate to try to strengthen their future viability.

What should have been a win-win situation for us now runs the strong risk of being a LOSE LOSE LOSE - we lose the Grandstand, we lose the new shared community facilities and we lose the Football Club and even possibly the Cricket Club.

Ironically, the last Council in 2004 had committed \$1.95m to renovate the Grandstand for community use. The current Council reversed that decision and demolished the Grandstand. How circumstances can change? Eternal vigilance cannot be relaxed.

### **Where to now?**

- **Reform the Council.** This seems to be a common thrust from a number of Resident Associations in the City of Melbourne. We have taken them up with our Local Member and the Minister of Local Government.
- **Push the priority of heritage protection.** We have been caught short. We asked Council officers that the Grandstand be placed on the Melbourne Heritage Places Inventory in 1998. It was not done. We have now seen the result, with a local landmark, with identified historic significance, demolished.

The Council has also abolished its Heritage Advisory Committee in 2006, on which we were represented with other resident associations in the City of Melbourne, as well as other specialist members. Despite their protestations to the contrary, the City of Melbourne's priority for Heritage is not looking good. It is now years since the initiation of a major heritage review of the urban precincts within the Melbourne municipality was commenced – no major work has been done on it for over a year and the heritage of our local areas continues to be compromised by its incompleteness.

- **Do what we can to resurrect the project at the NMRR (North Melbourne Recreation Reserve) and maximize the benefits to the community.**

## **Other Major Issues**

### **1. The Queensberry Street School**

Out of the blue at election time in November 2006, a new proposal was made by the State Government to convert the site into a selective co-ed high school of 800 pupils. We were supportive of ownership being retained by the Education Department but we did not expect that such an excessive oversized inappropriate proposal for development would result. We have commenced discussions and negotiations with the Local Member, Bronwyn Pike, and the Department of Education. The signs are not looking good but there is much still to be done. We need to explore the provision of early childhood and primary education in the area to see that the school will not be needed in the future to cater for local children.

A publicly accessible master planning exercise would seem to be appropriate. We are cooperating with a number of other community groups – the Uniting Church and Curzon Street Children’s Centre to form a coalition to resist the proposal.

### **2. Democracy in the City of Melbourne**

The representation of residents on Council is not in our view democratic. The abolition of wards and the postal election have swung the Council to be much more representative of business and property interests than residents. We have commenced some action with Coalition of Resident Associations (CORA) to begin some discussions of possible action and have written to the Minister of Local Government, Richard Wynne.

### **3. Planning Scheme Amendments**

There has been less work done this year on amendments to the Planning Scheme and other macro planning activities. Res Code 3 is the only major amendment proposed and that was rejected by Council and referred back to a Panel Hearing despite a lot of support from the Resident Associations.

### **4 Social issues**

We have put in time working with the Homeless Action Plan instigated by the Neighbourhood Centre to adopt a Community Charter and Protocol as well as an Education program. Our concern has been to find better ways of working with the homeless and their carers, to promote the safety of our community, to inform ourselves of the nature of the issues and to try to ensure that there is no intensification of homeless people or facilities in our area.

Major activity this year has involved researching and publicizing conditions in some private rooming house accommodation in North Melbourne and in other places. This became an election issue and resulted in some financial policy decisions by Government to address the problems identified. There is a danger that this advocacy role will become dominant in the Group’s activities, which is something that we need to be alert to and to try and swing the emphasis back to supporting more directly our work on the promotion of our mutual quality of life in North and West Melbourne.

The Social issues Group has met several times over the year and raised a number of issues. Please see the Social Report for more details

## **5 PCCC**

Our relationship with the police has become strained as a result of our persistent efforts to get them to address the PCCC boundary issue down Victoria Street dividing North Melbourne into the Carlton PCCC and West Melbourne into the Melbourne West PCCC which also includes Docklands and Kensington, (the MCC part) as well. We have been arguing long and hard that this division does not enable us to address the issues affecting us holistically. The Police are taking a low profile on the Homeless Action Group, which raises issues that need to be addressed coherently across North and West Melbourne. Recent discussions on graffiti also emphasise the need for a common approach across both parts of our area. We have taken the issue up with the MCC and the Local Member, as well as with the Police. The Police response has been most disappointing

### **Organisational changes**

We have continued with the separation between the issues that we need to discuss at the monthly meetings and the business side of the operations - the money, the procedures, the follow-up, the legalities, the action decisions, the strategic planning. The business items are I think more efficiently completed by a smaller group, which comprises all the elected and nominated members of the Committee.

We are trying to develop our website as a base to expand our contact and communication with the membership and the community. We acknowledge that our shortage of volunteers has reduced our capacity to undertake many activities and we are trying to devolve responsibility for undertaking planning appeals and the preparation of submissions to individuals or groups who are likely to be most affected by the issue. This worked very successfully in the Armstrong Motors case where the objectors were successful in having an inappropriate development overturned at VCAT. Likewise, the residents around the North Melbourne Station in West Melbourne are taking responsibility to monitor and promote open space and traffic calming works around the new station

### **Shortcomings**

Our major problem is that we do not have enough people on the ground to do the regular routine work that needs to be done to keep our responses organized and timely and our intelligence current and well-based. Again, this year we are losing experienced people from the Association who have put in years of work engaged on our projects. We need not only to replace them, we need to add to them. We have too few people willing to work on our working groups and make them effective autonomous units. It is obvious from the issues referred to above that there is much work to be done. And, unless we get more support from individuals, our effectiveness must decline.

The future of the Association rests in your hands.

Money is also important to be able to do what we did on the grandstand in obtaining independent advice on what its condition was and what needed doing. Some of the other resident associations in the City of Melbourne charge much higher subscriptions than we do and have more discretion in considering their options. We acknowledge the contribution by the City of Melbourne to our income and thank them for their contribution. We also acknowledge that it is paid for us to develop our communications capacity such as the website development and not to undertake political campaigns that question Council decisions. It is unfortunate that when we

have disagreements with the Council that our willingness to accept their money comes into question.

Another aspect of this issue is to ensure that we can pass on our expertise to the next generation of Association leadership. Among our committee we have an accumulation of experience and knowledge. We do need to ensure that we find ways to pass it on.

The crunch is that we need more people to become actively engaged in Association work. We need more members to support this participation and to increase our credibility with the authorities.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Committee this year. They have had to find time for the extra meeting every month and all have had work to do beyond this.

Jenny Newman, (General and Social) thanks for your organisation of the social events for the year and for your willing enthusiasm to take on tasks.

Steve Lindsay, (Secretary) thanks for your persistence in getting the minutes done, your willingness to step in, and looking after the correspondence that has come your way.

Madeleine Scully, (Assistant Secretary) thanks for your ability to pick things up and run with them so effectively, especially on news gathering and organizing material for *The North & West Melbourne News* and website development.

Geoff Leach, (Planning) thanks for your work on planning applications, the website, water and other matters of interest.

Margaret Fried, (Planning) thanks for your work on planning, submissions, Latrobe Close, your energy and enthusiasm.

Michael Horscroft, (Treasurer), thank you for keeping all the payments up to date, recording the subscription receipts and membership lists, preparing the financial statements and completing the acquittals.

Lorraine Siska, (General member) I acknowledge your support in proofing my emails, supporting the PCCC and being the organizer extraordinaire for our social events and other tasks including the maintenance of our membership lists.

Our working group coordinator members require special mention.

Kaye Oddie, (Environment) your energy and capacity for work continually amazed me. Thank you for your efforts on the Grandstand in particular, but also for all the other things too numerous to mention.

To other non-Committee Members

Mary Kehoe, not a member of the Committee this year but thank you for your tireless efforts on 603 Queensberry St and deeply felt concern about heritage.

Beth Bennett, again not a Committee member but very active on the new North Melbourne Station Development and representing the Association on the Judy Lazarus Centre.

Rob Oke for auditing our accounts.

Paul Von Chrismar, Gary Bateman, and David Maddocks for their support in the campaign to save the Grandstand.

Thanks to all who organized & manned our stall at the Spring Fling and to those who organized the Excellence Award presentation to Heather McKay in October. Our congratulations again to Heather.

To the membership, thank you for your support of the Association, for your participation, attendance at meetings and your financial backing. Please continue to promote us to others in the local community.

There is still much that we can do for the community. If you have an interest in any of the areas we have reported on, please put your name forward or come and talk to a Committee member.

The development of technology to assist in our ability to communicate and consult with a much more substantial range of North and West Melbourne residents and workers is high on the agenda as is attracting these constituents to become active members of the Association.

**Bill Cook**

### **SOCIAL ISSUES REPORT 2006-2007**

Like other inner city suburbs, North and West Melbourne continue to face the ongoing challenge of encouraging a sense of community in their local neighbourhoods as they evolve. The nature of the population is changing, through increased numbers of students, especially international students, families with young children, and expanded numbers of apartments. This has brought new expectations of local services, for instance, access to child care and primary schools, services for the elderly as well as requests for practical resources, like public toilets in or close to Errol Street, the main shopping precinct.

The diverse communities of North and West Melbourne also include people who struggle for acceptance in mainstream society due to unemployment, disability, alcohol or drug addiction, and homelessness. The availability of low income housing has been part of the area for over forty years although, for many years, the building of high rise estates has been replaced by using ordinary housing in suburban streets. The area is also the base for a number of supported accommodation institutions. The Social Issues Group continue to be concerned that disadvantaged people are provided with adequate support by the relevant local services but also that these services maintain a balance and harmony with the rest of the community.

### **The North & West Melbourne Community Working Group**

This group was convened in 2004 under the auspices of the North & West Melbourne Association to look at three issues concerning North Melbourne residents, particularly in Chapman Street with the properties belonging to the St Vincent de Paul Society:

1. The closing of Baillie House as an Aged Care Hostel. As one of the few aged care facilities in North or West Melbourne, this closure is a concern as we would like to see balance in the future development of our community.
2. We are concerned about the uses this building will be put to when it ceases to be an Aged Care Hostel.
3. Another property bought close to Ozanam House does not have a defined use or clear purpose.

An agreement was reached that a Master Plan for any future use of the site(s) would be implemented. We understand that this process has ceased to have any priority with the current Council and is a matter that we need to follow up.

### **Graffiti**

The problem is ongoing in many parts of the area. The Council has released a new policy, which toughens up its stance on the responsibility of residents to clean up graffiti on their property. The City of Melbourne will issue free cleaning equipment and a voucher for free paint to those who apply. The State Government has also tightened its legislation. The Association is following up with the Council on their policy to increase surveillance of street activity

### **Homeless Action Group**

This is an initiative of The North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre with a view to developing community cohesiveness. It is aimed at:

- reducing anti-social behaviour
- promoting an understanding of the effects of poverty on the homeless
- promoting a better understanding of the rights & responsibilities of living in an inner-city community.

The Association has been represented on the Group over the whole year. Two of the three Action Plans have achieved their objectives. A protocol has been developed to guide all stakeholders, including residents, as to how to handle situations that might arise. The protocol has been updated from an earlier one, which requires input from the community as part of its adoption by all groups including the homeless, their agencies, the police, the Melbourne City Council and the traders. It needs to be worked with more actively to promote awareness to all potential stakeholders.

The focus of activity this year has been on researching and documenting the conditions in a number of privately-run rooming houses in and around the area. The group has supported the documentation process and following through the legal and political ramifications of the issues involved, including the welfare of the residents involved. This culminated at that time of the State election last year in decisions being made to make new funds available to address some of the issues raised.

### **Judy Lazarus Centre - Transitional Release Facility**

This is a State Government Facility built in 2006 in Jeffcott St opposite the Melbourne Assessment Prison in Spencer St, West Melbourne. It provides a re-socialising program that is expected to curb recidivism and is for 25 male prisoners within 12 months of Parole. The centre is about to open and the management has volunteered to talk to the association about this development

### **Police Community Consultative Committee - (PCCC)**

We reported last year that our continued complaint about the division of North & West Melbourne at Victoria St so that we fall under two different Police Command Units & two different PCCC's was at last being looked at by Chief Superintendent, Mick Williams.

Unfortunately, this situation has not been resolved and the Police attitude remains inflexible towards allowing some integration to occur. We believe that if we are to gain more coherence in the way that we are able to influence the development and management of social issues and the welfare of people in our community, then we must be served by a PCCC that does not divide us down the middle and have such different modus operandi and foci. We have written to the Chief Commissioner and raised the matter with our Local Member and the Melbourne City Council.

### **Social Issues Group.**

We have this year continued the separate meeting of a "Social Issues Group" to consider and develop Association positions on related matters. Discussions have centred upon issues around Haines Street, the notion of the development of a Flagstaff Hub at the Bowling Club, the need for toilets in the area and other matters discussed above. The Group has acknowledged that it needs to consult and network with some of the key people in the area and keep informed of the complexities in understanding what is happening in our community.

Such an agenda may cover matters such as graffiti, the homeless, supported and low income accommodation issues, policing, community health, begging, toilet provision and any other issues that the group may wish to raise. We see it as important that we gain a picture through this group process that encompasses all parts of our area on all social health and welfare matters affecting our community.

Interested Association members are welcome to join.

**Bill Cook**

## **PLANNING REPORT 2006-2007**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Planning group aims to influence the form, nature and intensity of development in North and West Melbourne with the objective of improving current and future amenity. Planning issues divide into strategic and more local matters.

Over the last year, the issues in terms of planning scheme amendments and individual applications have reduced - but this may be temporary. There were no new planning scheme

amendments, and two reported as ongoing in last year's report (West Melbourne Structure Plan (C96) and Residential 3 Zone) are still awaiting government approval or advice.

We have been involved in a number of individual planning applications, several of which wound up at VCAT. The number of planning applications appears to be less than previous years. We believe that at least in part this is due to the past hard work resulting in planning scheme amendments that give more guidance and make developers more realistic.

There has also been a decline in the number of permit applications for large-scale apartment building or proposals for high occupancy student accommodation. But overall, our capacity to make constructive submissions in planning applications is also down from a few years ago because the Planning Group now has only 2-3 people, compared to double or triple that a few years ago.

## **STRATEGIC ISSUES**

### **West Melbourne Structure Plan – Planning Scheme Amendment C96**

The West Melbourne Structure Plan recommended changes to the height controls in several areas of West (and North) Melbourne. After a Panels Victoria hearing, it was put forward to the Minister for Planning for approval. The government has not responded.

### **Residential 3 Zone (R3Z)**

The North and West Melbourne Association, together with the Parkville Association and Carlton Residents Association put considerable effort into R3Z submissions. However, the City of Melbourne voted not to directly support the Residential 3 Zone. R3Z controls were intended to introduce mandatory 9 metre height limits, or 10 metres on a sloping site, in some residential areas to preserve the existing built form and character. Instead of using the stated process of R3Z, where applications to apply the zone would go directly to the Minister, the City of Melbourne Planning Committee have requested a Panels Victoria hearing and in the meantime progress has stalled on implementing R3Z in our area.

### **Towards a Better Public Melbourne – Draft Urban design strategy**

In July 2006, the City of Melbourne released a draft Urban Design Strategy, Towards a Better Public Melbourne, for comment. The strategy is the vision for a better public realm. The Association made an extensive submission. If the strategy were formally incorporated into the planning scheme it would have a positive impact on our public spaces.

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Some of the key planning applications are mentioned below; several are ongoing.

### **1. Armstrong Motors (243-251 Flemington Rd).**

The City of Melbourne rejected the application for a four storey above ground building with a three storey underground car park. The applicant appealed the decision to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). After a four day hearing, where many local residents presented submissions, the tribunal also rejected the application. Importantly, in the tribunal

members' report, neighbourhood character was given as one of the key reasons for rejecting the application. This was one of the criteria the Association sought to be given increased emphasis and weighting in the Municipal Strategic Statement through the C60 planning scheme amendment. The decision re-affirmed the importance of getting involved in planning scheme amendments and taking communal action.

## **2. 420 Spencer St**

The Department of Sustainability and the Environment granted a permit for a 13 level building with ground floor retail, serviced apartments, dwellings and car parking. The building designed by Fender Katsalidis preserves the façade and some elements of the current heritage building. The Association had unsuccessfully argued for reduced height.

## **3. Howard St**

The Association appeared at VCAT opposing a four storey residential development at 38-40 Howard St, next to the existing childcare centre. The Association unsuccessfully argued it was out of character with the streetscape, was too high and had inadequate setbacks and poor internal amenity. Local residents and families connected with the childcare centre also objected to the development. The decision highlights the difficulty of preserving streetscapes and encouraging sympathetic development. The Association was also unable to get better design outcomes for a three storey development at 131-133 Howard St when the City Of Melbourne granted the permit for two town-houses that effectively increased the scale and height of the streetscape and had poor treatment of the façade, especially at pedestrian or street level.

## **4. Media Puzzle Sign, 7-11 Store corner Errol and Queensberry**

Media Puzzle made an application for a large billboard on the side of the 7-11 store AFTER the sign was erected and after the Association raised the issue with the City of Melbourne. The application was refused, and we are currently waiting for the sign to be taken down. This is an example of how some issues reappear. When the original application for a 7-11 store was made in 2000/2001, the then applicants agreed to certain restrictions in signage and lighting, in recognition of the heritage area.

## **5. 225-227 Adderley St**

Residents of Railway Place and Adderley St have been fighting an application for a fourth storey on top of a pair of apartment shells at the rear of 225-227 Adderley St. This is part of a warehouse conversion that was mostly completed a few years ago. The application had overlooking and other issues. It is important that this is a Residential 1 Zone and had the Residential Zone 3 been overlaid, the proposal would not have been allowed. There are other areas in North and West Melbourne where higher heights are allowed.

## **6. Ukrainian Church Child Care Facility**

The Ukrainian Church is seeking a permit for a childcare centre in the existing presbytery building on the Cathedral site in Canning Street. The matter is currently at VCAT, with the Association and local residents disputing the design on a number of grounds including failure to

meet Department of Human Services child care design standards and requirements, inadequate open space and car parking provisions, and noise and detrimental impact on neighbouring residents.

## **7. La Trobe Close – Chetwynd, Courtney and Howard St**

The Office of Housing recently advertised for expressions of interest from developers to provide social and private housing on the existing site. This is a very significant sized development and the Association has written to the Office of Housing and our local Minister, Bronwyn Pike about the project. Amongst other matters, it is vital that useable open space is a feature of the development and therefore the park area is retained. It is acknowledged that North and West Melbourne lack green spaces. The open space is used by locals for games and recreation. Approaches were made for the reinstatement of play equipment, but the Office of Housing has, until recently, used the area for car parking. It remains an excellent site for a pocket park but the proposed redevelopment looks like increasing housing density.

### **THE FUTURE**

Planning in its broadest sense includes many of the key issues in our area, such as the redevelopment of the North Melbourne railway station, the City of Melbourne Bike Plan, the North Melbourne Recreation Reserve facilities, the sufficiency of childcare facilities, the Queensberry St Printing School and the Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital redevelopment. The Planning Group is concerned with all these issues, and others.

Looking ahead – the State government has commissioned an “East-West transport link needs assessment” to study Melbourne’s transport network. The report is due in 2008, but rumours circulate about a tunnel beneath Royal Park with the potential loss of more parkland to freeways. North and West Melbourne are situated in the middle of major transport routes – rail, road and tram – therefore residents have a special interest in the outcome.

We welcome people with an interest in planning issues to get involved.

**Margaret Fried  
Geoff. Leach  
Kaye Oddie**

### **TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT REPORT 2006-2007**

Traffic, transport, parking and streetscape issues have been attended to over the year.

#### **TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

##### **Haines Street**

Vic Roads illegally has tried to install controlled right turn traffic signals in a designated ‘Local Street’ – in Haines St at its intersections with Abbotsford St and Curzon St. It was stated that the signals were to “minimise bus delays”. However, Council checks showed no disruption to bus travel along Haines St and Council has called for their removal. NWMA concern in alerting Council to the illegally installed signal lamps was that they were to facilitate through commuter traffic, in the light of the new signals to be installed nearby in Arden St, at Laurens St.

### **Laurens St/Arden St**

NWMA has supported the proposed traffic signals at the intersection of Laurens and Arden Sts. These signals will facilitate movement of trucks to/from the Laurens St industrial area on to arterial roads and reduce their detrimental impact on residential streets in West Melbourne and complement the proposed redevelopment of the North Melbourne Railway Station public transport hub.

### **BICYCLE PLAN**

The Melbourne City Council released its new **Bicycle Plan 2007-2011**, following consultation with user and other groups. The NWMA welcomed the Plan's encouragement and proposed improvements for cycling in the City as an alternate form of travel and for recreation. The NWMA submission raised concerns about a number of issues, including:

- the need for better signage on shared pedestrian/cyclist off-road pathways to reduce conflict and improve safety;
- need for recognition of commuter versus recreational bike paths;
- identification of 'Bicycle Black Spots' - the Arden/Wreckyn Streets roundabout being cited as one; Queensberry St (North Melbourne through to Carlton) being cited as another; cycling educational campaigns;
- building a bike link between the North Melbourne Railway Station and the Capital City Trail along the Moonee Ponds Creek, using unused road reservation and railway spaces; increased provision for bicycle parking in all existing and new commercial, institutional and residential buildings.

### **EASTERN FREEWAY/TULLAMARINE FREEWAY LINK**

The State Government was forced to acknowledge during the State election campaign that an inner north link between Eastern and Tullamarine freeways is one option to be considered by the Eddington enquiry (East-West Transport Link Needs Assessment) currently underway. The NWMA maintains that the topography of Royal Park would mean a freeway link would not be in a tunnel through Royal Park, but would cut a large swathe through Royal Park parkland, with possible flyovers connecting with the Tullamarine Freeway/City Link in Flemington.

### **PARKING & ACCESS**

During the year, the Council set up a review of parking, traffic and transport in the North and West Melbourne area. A Community Reference Group was first established, which included two NWMA members, representatives of the local business sector, the Neighbourhood Centre and the N&W Melbourne Sustainability Street group. The CRG has put forward some initial recommendations to improve parking, walking, cycling and public transport. An information day will be held and public consultation will be sought. One recommendation of the CRG for public consideration is adoption of a revised Residents Priority Parking Scheme, similar to that successfully introduced in Carlton, where eligibility for RPPS permits will take into account new as well as existing on-site parking provision.

**Kaye Oddie**

## **ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2006-2007**

### **Parks, Trees, Creeks and Rivers**

#### **Royal Park**

The revegetation of Royal Park is now showing signs of maturity and pleasingly attracting birds, even an echidna was sighted this year! The Wetlands is working successfully, in providing good habitat conditions for the water-purifying plants and invertebrates. Purified water from the Wetlands is used by Council to water the golf course and sports fields in the Park. The Wetlands, nearby remnant vegetation site and skink site are proving of valuable educational value for school and other groups, facilitated through the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee and the Council.

Planting projects for Royal Park are slowly being implemented, e.g. the former Nursery Site near the SNHC and Zoo. The northern entrance to the Zoo has had plans approved – unfortunately mostly to form a large asphalted car park, with relatively small amount of landscaping. The works, however, will provide much-needed safe and more attractive public transport access for Zoo and Park visitors arriving by train or tram.

Another asphalted incursion into parkland was also approved by Council during the year. This was the formation of an indented bus pull-in near the Urban Camp. The NWMA argued against the proposal, citing the alternative, shared use of the close-by SNHC dedicated bus drop-off zone.

The NWMA continues its input into such projects through Beth Bennett membership of the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Committee and its subcommittee, the Vegetation Management Working Group.

A few hiccups occurred during the year:

- Restoration of the Walmsley House near the Australian Native Garden in the Park saw newer, non-heritage sections painted pillar box red. Complaint by the NWMA and others to Heritage Victoria that the bright red colour dominated the muted green of the original 1862 prefabricated iron building (part of former Park Ranger's house) and that this was considered to be outside the conservation guidelines of the Burra Charter, that recommends new works are subordinate to old fabric, saw a repainting in a (slightly) softer colour.
- Naming of the Wetlands, in the west of the Park, near Oak St, as Trin Warren Tam-Boore or Bellbird Waterhole. The new Wetlands are not bellbird habitat area. Attempts to bring this ecological misnomer to the attention of authorities met with political stone-walling. In addition, the Aboriginal spelling is apparently not correct either.
- The redevelopment of the Royal Children's Hospital in Royal Park – sited on the sports oval to the west of the present site, but also retaining a large section of the existing site – will mean extended building frontage along Flemington Road. Helicopter flight path clearance has not been addressed to ensure mature trees in Royal Park, e.g. the so-called 'picnic circle' of large Spotted Gums to the north of the site, are not threatened. Recent briefings about the RCH development and approval for a large expansion of the Murdoch Institute on the site add to NWMA concerns about the impacts on Royal Park.

As for recent years, great appreciation is expressed, in particular, to Charles Pinnuck, the Royal Park Officer (Serco Australia).

### **Pleasance Gardens**

Despite repeated follow-up requests from neighbouring residents, it is of concern that the rejuvenation of these popular Gardens will ever happen. It is now 4 years since initial plans went into limbo and any resolution of proposed plantings and further consultation seemingly abandoned by Council's Parks & Recreation Branch.

### **Street Tree Plantings**

Street tree plantings were somewhat restricted during the year due to the drought conditions. Tree plantings were undertaken in two streets:

- **Macaulay Road** footpaths (White cedar – *Melia azedarach*)
- **Ireland Street** (Water gum/Kanooka – *Tristanopsis laurina*).

Plans have been approved for a new centre-of-road median in **Abbotsford Street**, between Spencer and Queensberry Sts, to be planted with “a large species of tree”. The tree species is yet to be selected but the NWMA asked that Spotted Gums (*Corymbia maculata*) be planted to match those in the existing central median between Spencer and Victoria Sts and the infill footpath plantings be Plane trees. This request is to maintain the heritage pattern of street tree plantings in our area – whereby the same species is planted the full length of a street and that, as much as possible, equidistant spacing of trees is maintained. The NWMA also asked that consideration be given to forming a matching, central median in the remaining section of Abbotsford St between Spencer St and Railway Place.

Many of the trees in the **Melrose Street** centre-of-road median have suffered significant stress during the drought years. This median runs down the municipal boundary between the Cities of Melbourne and Moonee Valley. The NWMA contacted the City of Moonee Valley, which has responsibility for the central median, seeking mulching and watering of the trees and repair works to the median and its kerbing. After initial lack of response or action from Council staff, the new Greens councillor at the City of Moonee Valley, Cr. Rose Iser, has effected the introduction of watering and advises of proposed works to reinstate the median kerbing. Good news for the trees of Melrose St at last!

### **Community Plantings**

Members of the NWMA and wider community again participated in community plantings and a working bee, along the Moonee Ponds Creek in June & September and in Royal Park in June and October. The June planting coincided with the launch of the Royal Park Wetlands.

### **Maribyrnong River Trail**

The NWMA's interest in this further afield open space dates back to a NWMA/community planting several years ago along one section of the River banks, along the Maribyrnong River Trail, near Sims St. Council subsequently developed a vegetation upgrade plan for the longer section, from Hobsons Rd to Sims St. This will be implemented following the recent approval of reconstruction works to the shared bicycle/pedestrian path, near Sims St.

## **Final note**

This report is my last for the NWMA as, after 30 years of active participation, I am drawing a line under my involvement with the Association. I first joined in the late 1970s and it was heady days through the 1980s when Council, State Government, local resident associations and community worked together to develop many of the planning, heritage, traffic and landscape management policies and strategies that underlie today's planning schemes, conservation policies and master plans for our parks and gardens. Since then, I have tried through my work with the NWMA to ensure those policies and plans were upheld and implemented – to maintain North and West Melbourne's character, its built and streetscape heritage, social and physical amenity. But focuses change - within Council and community - and consultative mechanisms with removal of local ward councillors and Council advisory committees has diminished. So, after many enjoyable years of participating in the NWMA, it will be nice to have time to enjoy new (and maintain some old) interests. I wish the Association well in its future endeavours.

**Kaye Oddie**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

As in the past, acknowledgment is made of those in the community with whom particular liaison and involvement has been undertaken:

- to Rob Oke for auditing the Association's financial accounts and acting as our Public Affairs Officer
- to Heather McKay at the North Melbourne Library for her commitment to the interests of our area
- to the *North and West Melbourne News*, under the editorship of Janet Graham
- to our local member of state parliament, Bronwyn Pike for use of the photocopying machine
- to Melbourne City Council for their financial support to us as a community organisation and to the Melbourne City Council Officers for facilitating the copying of planning permit application plans.

The Committee of The North & West Melbourne Association would like to express our sincere and special thanks to Kaye Oddie for her enormous contribution to the Association, particularly on planning issues, and the depth of knowledge - across all areas - that allowed her to give such attention to the detail. Her expertise will indeed be missed and we wish her well in her future interests.