

December 2013 - January 2014

Seasons greetings everybody

Our DCA Christmas party is on Wednesday, December 11 at the Harbour Kitchen on Victoria Harbour from 7.30 pm. It's a wow of a night and everybody attends. Invitation flyers will be going to residents shortly. See you there. You can contact us about it on the email address below.

There's a lot to mention.

There's a groundswell of objections from Yarra's Edge residents to the proposed tram bridge over the Yarra, close to the residential towers. The purpose of the bridge is to connect the Collins St tram at the end of Victoria Harbour with Port Melbourne and the Fishermans Bend development. There are other options for tram service routes. Objections have been lodged with authorities and the DCA has lodged a supporting objection.

I attended a presentation by Lend Lease of its development concept plan for their large Batman's Hill site. Whilst they have been awarded the development rights, the proposed building plans have not yet been submitted for approval by the Minister. So they are engaging in the public consultation stage before that occurs, which is good. We hope we'll be able to have some effect.

Just to clarify, the large site lies between the rear of Southern Cross Station and Collins Square and extends from Collins St to Flinders St. It is below the level of the Collins St overpass. The two proposed towers are a reasonable height. One is commercial and the other residential. Aspects always of concern to us are the amount of open space, building separation, wind tunnel effect and parking.

They say 1000 car spaces will be provided on-site. The other elements will be addressed later in planning applications. We would like to see more public open space than the 40m by 40m in the plans – part of which is a separate small area.

The DCA has responded to the Local Government Electoral Review saying the ward system should be adopted for the City of Melbourne. Under the present system there is no councillor representing any particular area especially so in our case where none of the councillors lives in Docklands. We have also supported a call by other community groups for limitations on campaign contributions/ donations with proper transparency and for the re-introduction of attendance voting with postal voting optional, to increase interest and participation.

The quarterly meeting of the Owners Corporation Network was held on November 21. Regarding serviced apartments, in the Watergate case council's appeal to the Supreme Court hearing is set down to go before a Full Panel of the Supreme Court, with three judges, on December 2-3. A decision may not be handed down until the new year.

Other matters discussed included strata management and greater public notification of developer plans proposed by the DPCD following discussion with Minister Guy.

The Inner Melbourne Planning Alliance is due to meet again on December 12. The newly-formed alliance is in the process of setting up structure and procedures. A main topic at present is the Fishermans Bend re-development with Port Phillip residents having made a major submission.

Speeding cyclists on the Esplanade and NewQuay Promenade continue to be a problem, despite the problem having been raised with both the police and council. They scare pedestrians who can't hear them coming. They refuse to fit bells or use them although required by law to do so. The problem is exacerbated by there being no speed limit for bicycles or any registration requirement. The State Government needs to step in.

Places Victoria is putting on a public display in its offices at 710 Collins St of the plans for development of Western Park, at the end of Docklands Drive. Times are 3pm to 7pm on December 5 and 10am to 2pm December 7.

If any reader would like to become a member of the DCA or has any suggestions they wish to put forward regarding activities or issues, they are welcome to contact us on docklandscommunityassociation@gmail.com

If you would like to talk to me about any aspect you are welcome to call me on 0412 097 706.

Safe and merry Christmas and happy new year to everybody

Roger Gardner
President DCA

Response to Article in The Docklands News – October 2013

Introduction

The front page article headed 'DCA Rules Chaos' is highly inaccurate and misleading, as answered below. The heading 'chaos' is a gross exaggeration. Over ninety percent of our rules and sub-sections are valid, with amendments to the remainder to be ratified.

The DCA

The DCA is a respected organisation acting in good faith and dedicated to representing resident community amenity. The DCA has record membership, a good committee team and receives praise for its work. At the DCA AGM held last week the article was described as scurrilous. Shane who attended at the back was given the opportunity to comment but failed to provide a meaningful response. The meeting was conducted with discussion without dissent; office bearers and other committee members were re-elected unopposed.

The article

I was not shown the article before publication and was given no right of reply. Unfortunately we have no way of telling our side to the wider readership unless and until we are given the right of reply in the next issue which is not for another month. The article can prejudice the DCA's and my standing with Authorities and others.

The rather emotional article appears to reflect grievances held by the editor Shane Scanlan, referred to further down. He has admitted he is no longer a resident of Docklands.

When originally asked why he was requesting early documents and conducting the enquiry into the DCA, he just said he wanted to scrutinise and failed to give a reason.

I did offer to show minutes he asked for but he didn't take up the offer. My remarks to him personally which he has chosen to publish were contained in a private email.

In an email to Shane on Sept 23 which he didn't repeat I said quote-

'I think the manner of your request could have been handled better. We could be forgiven for taking offence. We all have to live together and get on here'.

I regret the need to have to go to this trouble but it is necessary to correct statements in the article and to counter the maligning of the DCA and myself.

Responses to Specific Accusations

The article's opening statement that we have been operating without authority since 2009 is patently wrong.

To explain, the DCA constitution contains 37 rules and sub-sections contained in over 14 pages. These rules were accepted by Consumer Affairs in 2008. Of those the DCA decided in 2009 to amend only 6, some being short amendments to sub-sections [see below].

The committee at the time in 2009 didn't know that amendments approved at an AGM require CAV ratification. It is not stated in the rules which needs to be amended.

All the remaining 31 rules and sub-sections, which govern most of our operations and we continue to observe, stand and are quite legitimate as confirmed by CAV [Consumer Affairs Victoria] last month.

The CAV officer also stated that the few additional rules added in the 2012 legislation update do not significantly change things.

We do not have to 'scramble' to meet new rules as alleged as existing approved rules are deemed to stand under updated 2012 legislation and we are not required to update until such time as we may submit amendments which we plan to do in due course. This is confirmed by CAV.

Now to address the itemised allegations and significant distortions:

- The short term renter exclusion states in the rule that it applies to serviced apartments [not mentioned], which are invariably let for less than a week and the majority for weekends. Obviously these renters are not classified as residents.
- 'Dumping its social membership category' is a wrong and totally misleading claim. Clearly a member more interested in the social side is just as welcome as any other. What was changed was the differentiation and fee structure to have a single member type and fee for everybody instead of two, there having previously been one for social and one for voting right. In practice the distinction proved meaningless as everybody opted for the slightly higher voting fee. The single fee is also easier to administer and is normal for resident associations.
- Restricting copies of register of members is for good reason in that it contains members' private details including addresses, private telephone numbers and email addresses. The register is available for scrutiny.

- The next one refers to quorums for meetings. The implication is we're trying to manipulate numbers – again wrong. The quorum levels that had been set were way too high above the levels recommended by CAV and we reduced them accordingly. For example the quorum of 7 set earlier for a committee meeting was equal to or above the number of committee members thus making it impracticable.
- The statement regarding 12 months committee experience for office bearers was I believe meant to read preferred
- The exclusion of non-residents is simply because the DCA is a resident association.
- The time limits for committee nominations and proxy lodgement were not at my whim as implied but are stated in the approved rules.

I don't know what Shane's statement that I was one of two current committee members present at the meeting in 2008 is supposed to mean. I was not involved in drafting the rules at the time and was a member of the audience.

Motivation for the article

When you read it you wonder

- As to Shane's possible motivation, he has approached me on more than one occasion suggesting I back off criticising aspects of Docklands, asking on one occasion why I bothered to live here.
- I replied that as head of the DCA I speak up on issues adversely affecting residents such as developer plans, lack of open space till now, serviced apartments, parking problems and the like, and will continue to do so. The purpose is to rectify and obtain improvements. At the same time I try to make balanced comments.
- Whilst businesses are represented by the Chamber of Commerce, having until recently owned and operated a business I am sympathetic to the needs of them generally and they and workers can get a good rub-off effect from our DCA efforts.

Sincerely
Roger Gardner
President DCA

October 2013

I hope your team won the grand final. My mob wasn't allowed into the finals. But it was a great game!

Our DCA Christmas party in December will be booked shortly and we will keep you informed when we have further details.

Our AGM is being held at the Hub on Wednesday, October 2. The meeting will be preceded by an address by a strata lawyer. Topics include owners corporations no longer able to be sued for damages or diminution of value if they do not repair or maintain common property and a town planning roadshow featuring recent decisions regarding minimum apartment sizes and owner's rights to a view.

I understand from talking to traders that the wheel should be back in operation by March. It can't come soon enough for the traders who, with the tight retail market, have been doing it tough. The resumption will counter all the criticism and help lift the image of Docklands. Most cabins have been installed but apparently there are still some components to be fitted and, of course, there will be extensive testing.

A comprehensive review of Victoria's local government electoral system is underway. The Minister for Local Government has appointed an independent Local Government Electoral Review Panel to conduct the review. The panel will examine the local government electoral processes, participation, election integrity and electoral representation. A discussion paper to assist with consultations has just been released. It is available on the government website: <http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au>.

The panel will be holding public hearings and seeking written submissions as part of the review. Information on how to register for the hearings and make a submission is also available on the website and individuals are encouraged to do so. The DCA will lodge a submission. Amongst our concerns are developer donations for council elections and lack of a ward system.

The new community centre and library at the end of Bourke St has taken shape and it looks impressive. It will have a reasonably-sized park in front which we are grateful for considering the lack of open space previously in some areas. It is great to see the provision of facilities materialising after the long wait.

The Owners Corporation Network Victoria (OCNV) is up and running with stage one involving liaison with major buildings in the inner city and Docklands. Its purpose is to exchange information and to develop policies for submission to government. We are liaising with interstate counterparts who, with their greater experience, are able to guide us in our gradual development. I have been appointed president of the Victorian group.

Regarding serviced apartments, in the Watergate case, a date is to be set for the Court of Appeal to hear the appeal launched by the City of Melbourne against the Supreme Court judge's finding in favour of the operator.

The Community Urban Planning Alliance is scheduled to meet again on October 9. The alliance with representatives from inner city associations, architects and professional planners is intended to provide reviews and submissions on major projects. The

Fishermens Bend Urban Renewal Area Vision and Interim Guideline has been released for comment. Representatives from areas such as Docklands and Carlton can provide input based on experience of projects in their areas. Another major project coming up is the redevelopment of the E-Gate rail area. So far, there has been a significant lack of community consultation and transparency. An important element is for the wider community to be able to comment and have input into the effect of these major projects on their areas and things like infrastructure and other urban planning issues, like transport and schools.

If any reader would like to become a member of the DCA or has any suggestions they wish to put forward regarding activities or issues, they are welcome to contact us on docklandscommunityassociation@gmail.com

If you would like to talk to me about any aspect you are welcome to call me on 0412 097 706. Y

Regards to all
Roger Gardner
President DCA

September 2013

The DCA "Meet and Greet" party held at The Nixon on July 25 was a great success with guests attending from all parts of Docklands. The DCA now has a record membership and growing. We will be holding a Christmas Party in December as usual.

The still inoperative observation wheel raised its head again in the media. On being interviewed, I said the continuing lack of completion is hurting business badly and holding Docklands to ridicule. Apparently there is still no estimated completion date. It seems to me they could do with more workers on the job. I also said it is not the only distinguishing feature of Docklands which is a work in progress and will be enhanced by the major redevelopment of the Esplanade.

The Premier and Minister Guy held a media presentation on July 29 announcing the planned development of Western Park, which is located at the end of Docklands Drive at Bolte Bridge. I attended and was afforded the opportunity of meeting the Premier and speaking privately for a short time with Matthew Guy about some planning issues. The plans for the park were detailed in the last Dockland News. Work will start by mid next year and be done in stages over a few years.

Presidents of Southbank and East City community associations and myself met with Planning Minister Guy on August 13 addressing issues including developers not adhering to planning guidelines and unsatisfactory siting of selected buildings, including the proposed hotel on the Waterfront City Piazza.

Concerns expressed by us included tower massing, lack of adequate separation, the need for more open space, and for greater community consultation and transparency during the planning process, including reasons for ministerial override of guidelines.

Regarding consultation and transparency, a suggestion was made to erect notice boards on sites informing of development applications lodged, as done in NSW.

Reference was made to a Singapore document proposing more sensitive development including more spacing.

Views expressed included that communities within the City Zone are entitled to the same rights of criticism of planned developments as are afforded to those in outside areas. I am to see a department director to clarify current respective roles in Docklands developments between the planning department, Places Victoria and the council.

I attended a media presentation by the Minister and Lord Mayor on August 23 of the partly constructed Community Centre and Library on Victoria Harbour at the end of Bourke Street. I joined the inspection tour. The three-storey building by Lend Lease is very impressive and surprisingly large.

Another welcome surprise was that there will be a sizeable park at the front on an area already reserved for the purpose. This is good news considering the lack (until now) of green open space. It is gratifying to see attention now being given to the provision of public amenities in Docklands.

Recently, I attended a meeting of representatives of a number of community groups of inner areas including Kensington, North Melbourne, South Melbourne, Carlton and Docklands together with a couple of architects, the purpose being to establish a community urban planning alliance to have input into major development projects. The group is in the process of formulating terms of reference.

The Owners Corporation Network for inner Melbourne, which I chair, is due to meet again shortly. We are finding reports on happenings from counterpart organisations interstate to be very informative.

As previously reported, they have been established for more than 10 years in NSW and Queensland and have input and influence in State Government planning. There is a similar association in Canberra.

They all are closely following developments with short-term rental, serviced apartments in Victoria in terms of the Watergate Appeal and the legislation foreshadowed by the Minister. We have had an approach from an OC Chair in Perth to be kept informed and seeking guidance on establishing an alliance.

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Regards to all
Roger Gardner
President DCA

Media Release:

New park, pavilion and playground to boost Docklands' liveability

Monday 29 July 2013

Docklands will get a brand new park and community oval under an \$18 million Victorian Coalition Government initiative for Australia's premier urban renewal precinct.

Premier of Victoria Denis Naphine said Western Park will include a new football oval, community pavilion and children's playground, as part of stage one of the four part My Docklands plan, which aims to improve community infrastructure in Docklands.

"The Coalition Government is serious about putting the community heart into Docklands, and nothing will better achieve this than the development of open public spaces," Dr Naphine said.

"The new Western Park is budgeted, planned and paid for and will commence construction within the next nine months. It will bring the western end of the Docklands precinct to life and turn unused, windswept space in to a fantastic new sporting and community hub.

"Western Park will feature a football oval overlaid with two soccer pitches, a community pavilion for spectators, children's playground and new exercise circuit. It will be the first of its kind in Docklands."

Minister for Planning Matthew Guy said the My Docklands plan is a four stage approach to delivering greater community and public open space. With Western Park as stage one, stage two will deliver new netball courts and barbeque facilities, stage three will see the private sector developing waterfront land parcels and stage four; an exciting plan to build a light weight, cycling and walking bridge across Victoria Harbour.

"The ultimate connection across Victoria Harbour in stage four of the plan would be a major attraction for Docklands and would create a 3.7 kilometre running and walking track, comparable to the well-established Royal Botanic Gardens' 'Tan', which is 3.87 kilometres long," Mr Guy said.

"As Melbourne embraces its waterfront it is essential that public space and public attractions exist to give all Victorians the opportunity to see the beauty of our new waterfront suburb."

When finished, Docklands is expected to have attracted in excess of \$17.5 billion of private investment and be home to an estimated 20,000 people with 60,000 workers and millions of visitors annually.

Media contact: Rochelle Jackson 0419 986 643 rochelle.jackson@minstaff.vic.gov.au

COMMENTS:

"Whilst the plan has some very good features, the pedestrian bridge included in the plans for Western Park is clearly contentious with boat owners not happy. To put it simply, too low and boats can't get through and too high means pedestrians would have to climb. Arguments arose before when a rail bridge was suggested for port facilities ; that proposal was subsequently canned. Somebody in authority has suggested the idea of a bridge that can be raised and lowered but that appears to have problems including boats milling around waiting for the raising, which has caused accidents elsewhere.

The plans state the bridge would be ten years away but obviously there will be objections and debate'.

Roger Gardner

August 2013

Greetings Everybody. Hope you were one of the many who attended our mid-year “meet and greet” party on July 25. It was a great night!

Council recently launched a national project called Smart Blocks which is an initiative to use resources, particularly power, more efficiently in common areas of apartment buildings, to save owners corporations a lot of money and reduce environmental impacts. You can read more under the title Smart Blocks on the net. It contains a number of very useful ideas.

We continue to get complaints from pedestrians about cyclist behaviour especially on the stretch along the water-side of Harbour Esplanade and NewQuay Promenade. I've reported it to council and Victoria Police saying during peak periods to and from work cyclists race like they're in the Tour de France. Some don't stick to the bike lanes. Some take a short cut down NewQuay promenade. The scary thing is they come up and race past without warning. The bikes are quiet and most don't use bells. If you walk across a bike lane you do so at your peril.

A senior level police instruction has since been issued for the area bicycle patrol to attend to the issues. We thank the police for that, given it is not easy. Council replied that unfortunately the problem is widespread and they do what they can but enforcement of regulations is in the hands of the police.

I replied saying: Currently there is no sign warning cyclists off the pedestrian area along the western side of the Esplanade between Victoria Harbour (NAB) and Footscray Rd. As there are the dedicated bicycle lanes alongside, could a sign be installed on the pedestrian area please.

Also cyclists should be told to use bells – they rarely do despite bells being compulsory. Bells warning of close approach would be a big help.

We would hope that police increase patrols of the cycle lanes and surveillance especially in peak periods.

Regarding serviced apartments, Minister Guy stated on the 7pm ABC TV News on Friday, July 19 that he opposed serviced apartments being in residential buildings and would regulate against it this year.

This “came out of the blue”. At the request of the ABC, I commented in the news segment on behalf of affected residents, referring to problems with serviced apartments. The segment can be viewed on the ABC News website. A lot of support has been received for Mr Guy's statement including from interstate where similar situations apply and are being pursued with governments.

Liaison with other community groups is growing, especially with inner-city areas which have common problems such as high-rise density, lack of adherence to planning guidelines and open space. The chairs of Southbank group and City East, together with myself, are scheduled to meet with Minister Guy on August 13 at which we will take the opportunity to address these issues.

I recently met with an architect who proposes that representatives of inner suburb community groups get together to develop submissions to the State Government to have input into planning for new projects such as Fishermen's Bend and E-Gate and development guidelines generally. I am to organise.

It is great to see that council has allocated \$11.1 million in its 2013-14 Budget for Docklands projects including completion and fit-out of the new community centre and library, plus construction of the boating hub and family services.

Remember the suggested options put out by Places Victoria a year or two ago for development of Western Park – the vacant land at the end of Docklands Drive? There was also a suggestion that the Melbourne Football Club might set up a training ground there. Well nothing's happened and it's now a dump for soil and rubble with, at the time of writing, large rubbish bags hanging on the fence. This needs fixing. We've raised the matter with Places Victoria but without response as yet.

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Regards to all
Roger Gardner
President DCA

July 2013

Afternoon All

For information, particularly for those affected, on Ch2 7pm news on Friday night Minister Guy stated his opposition to serviced apartments in residential buildings saying he would bring in regulations against it. At the request of the ABC, I gave comments which went to air in the same segment. The link is shown below.

Regards
Roger Gardner

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-19/a-battle-looming-over-tourist-rentals-of-high-rise/4832160?section=vic>

Greetings everybody.

The DCA "Meet and Greet" party on Thursday July 25 at The Nixon is getting closer! It'll warm you up. Invitation notices will be mail-dropped in a couple of weeks.

Council has advised there will be fireworks every Friday night in July in Victoria Harbour. That's really taking an increased interest in us. Besides providing enjoyment for everybody, hopefully it will help the restaurant trade.

On the serviced apartment front, council has lodged an appeal against the Supreme Court judge's decision in favour of the Watergate operator. It is not yet known when the appeal will be heard.

Mention has previously been made of the lack of street parking, which is being exacerbated by the gradual loss of vacant lots currently being used for open air parking, due to increasing development. A case in point is the shortage of parking near the post office in Bourke Street, where centre of the road and kerbside parking is usually occupied. In addition, there are complaints that the post office itself is too small in space and manning to service the whole of Docklands. I previously may have referred to the complete lack of resident parking permits where car spaces are not provided in buildings. DCA will take that up with council.

I attended for the first time the meeting of the standing Docklands Security Committee, held in June in the NAB building. It was well attended with representatives from the police force, the community and business including major companies. Crime stats were presented by the police which indicated some areas of crime are down over the last year. A report was given of a practise exercise conducted to test the response to and handling of a major emergency occurrence in Docklands, involving various services. Whilst successfully conducted, a procedure is yet to be set on how to notify building managers, all of whom may not happen to be aware of such an event if and when it occurs.

The May 29 meeting of the Docklands Community Forum addressed a number of items including the status of the proposed school and the calling of tenders for a private school. The plan is to provide a "vertical" school in a non-exclusive building. I hope it will include an adequate play area. The DCA received a reply from the Education Department similar to others saying they are working on plans for future school requirements including for new developments in E-gate and Fishermens Bend. Other items discussed included suggested changes to meeting procedures, water activation and update on amenity plan.

The OC Chairs Group had a strong attendance at its June quarterly meeting. Items discussed included performance of OC managers, insurance, ways of significantly reducing power costs and serviced apartments including update on the Watergate case. Liaison with community associations is important. On behalf of the group I am in regular contact with interstate counterpart organisations to exchange information and action updates. The organisations in NSW and Queensland have been established for 10 or more years, have premises and staff and have input into government planning. It was decided to formally register our group which will increase clout with authorities.

Liaison with city groups including Southbank and Eastenders continues. We are due to meet with Minister Guy in August. A community group has been in contact regarding the expansion of Web Dock which entails increased truck movements on the other side of the Yarra. It does not appear to have significant impact on Docklands.

West Melbourne concerns include how will growing rail traffic fit in with E-gate redevelopment; trains are noisy and give off diesel fumes; lack of access to Docklands for work and shopping, including from North Melbourne station. A combined submission to government is needed, to include these items and suggestions for the redevelopment such as adequate open space, less dense high-rise and adequate road traffic planning.

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Regards to all

Roger Gardner
President DCA

June 2013

There's quite a lot going on as usual.

Our DCA "Meet and Greet" party arranged for Thursday, July 25 is getting closer. The venue is The Nixon in Bourke St opposite Etihad Stadium. Invitations will be issued to everybody closer to the event.

Places Victoria has called tenders for provision of a primary school in Docklands much to the delight of parents here with young children. It is for a private school which appears to indicate a lack of government funds for a state school.

The DCA works in with other community groups in the city, with particular emphasis on planning and infrastructure. A meeting arranged with Minister Guy has been postponed for a couple of months due to other commitments.

Key issues include high-rise density, traffic density and lack of parking, which are particularly relevant to Docklands.

Pressure is being applied to make developers adhere to government guidelines in terms of spacing, overshadowing, sunlight, privacy, vista provision and wind tunnel reduction. Another key issue is the complete lack of transparency and community consultation.

An example at the moment is a controversial major development in Docklands which was found out about only through a backdoor source, despite it having been under review by both Places Victoria and the council.

A justified objection has been lodged, despite the fact that the Minister, Matthew Guy, who has sole approval authority, does permit objections for anything over 25,000 sqm, which applies to most of the developments in Docklands. Community groups around Melbourne are "up in arms" against this system. We are awaiting a response from Places Victoria.

Local state member Jennifer Kanis has asked to meet with the DCA – a date is yet to be arranged. It has been said the Docklands Community Forum is still finding its feet. I think it is time for some change and more control by the panel members.

I suggest the following: firstly that the agenda should be reviewed and signed off on by the panel in advance of the meeting. Proposers should be identified under each item. Hopefully consensus can be achieved despite the varying objectives of members.

The agenda for the May meeting contained a couple of items not directly related to community needs. It was found that the inclusion of one item relating to a developer was requested by a council manager.

The second suggestion is that matters discussed privately beforehand by the panel should be reported at the public meeting. Matters discussed are not momentous or secret and should be reported for transparency. If the panel is or is not in agreement on something then let it be said. Additionally, there should be less presentations and more discussion.

A West Melbourne community group has approached the DCA to initiate liaison for a combined on-going review of the redevelopment of the E-Gate rail area. This is important as it affects both West Melbourne and Docklands, in terms of residential and commercial development, open space and a possible bridge connecting the two areas. It is early days yet as the existing rail leases don't expire till next year but we need to keep abreast of planning.

A serviced apartment operator has lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court against the Building Appeals Board decision against the operation of serviced apartments in Watergate. The hearing outcome is awaited.

Finally you may be aware that the extension of the Collins St tramline is under way. This will facilitate access to the new community centre and library, due for completion by December.

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Regards to all

Roger Gardner
President DCA

May 2013

Greetings everybody

The mornings are getting cooler but we have had a great autumn!

The DCA is planning a mid-year "Meet and Greet" party for July 25. Stand by for further details in the next issue.

The next meeting of the Docklands Community Forum is scheduled for May 29. We hope that our suggestions are being heeded by Places Victoria and the City of Melbourne. We are given a number of presentations by them on relevant topics such as progress with community facilities and expenditure on Docklands.

The forum needs to be less of a classroom and more of a discussion group. Forum representatives have varying priorities but there is agreement on some items such as the need for a school and for waterways activation. The DCA has asked for the provision of a ferry service and update on the Esplanade redevelopment to be put on the agenda.

As reported in the last issue, Docklands has lost two major events so far due to the replacement of the Waterfront City Piazza with a hotel to be built on the site. Minister Guy approved the hotel going at the front despite community opposition with the general agreement being that it should be built at the rear where the big tent was. As there appears to be no other suitable central place in Docklands for these major events, the event organisers have had to find other sites in Melbourne. This is a regrettable loss due to another bad planning decision.

Arrangements have been made for representatives of combined inner city resident groups to meet with Minister Guy later in May on planning issues particularly high-rise development and infrastructure. A specific agenda is to be decided on at the next CoRBA (Coalition of Resident and Business Associations) meeting on May 8.

I met with Peter Seamer, the CEO of Places Victoria, on April 24 to give him a run-down on DCA and other matters. Peter, a long standing personal friend of mine, has been seconded to Places Victoria by Minister Guy for a period of six months.

He will then return to his position of CEO of the Growth Areas Authority. Amongst other things, he confirmed the Esplanade from NewQuay to Victoria Harbour has been fenced off for public safety preparatory to extensive repair works. This work has to be done before the redevelopment phase is started. Given also the high cost, the project will take a long time, but needs to be given priority for the sake of Docklands' vitality.

It will be good to see the Jim Stynes bridge constructed to add to development down on the Yarra. The boating hub is due to be constructed later. The library building is due for completion by the end of the year with the opening scheduled early in 2014. So provision of amenities is happening-gradually.

We'd like to see tennis courts at some stage. I believe the new multi purpose sports courts near the Hub are being used extensively for basketball and football. My wife and I attended the official opening of the Melbourne International Dragon Boat Festival at Victoria Harbour on April 7.

Following the win by residents against serviced apartments in the Watergate complex, we understand that action will be progressively taken in other buildings.

A letter objecting to additional high-rise density in NewQuay has been forwarded by owners corporations to Places Victoria with copies to the Minister, Lord Mayor and local MPs.

Following the demise some time ago of the police and community co-ordination committee for the Docklands area, I am following up with Victoria Police to seek attendance at another existing security committee. It is desirable that we keep track of level of offences and policing activities in Docklands and have the opportunity for input as appropriate.

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Regards to all
Roger Gardner
President DCA

April 2013:

Greetings everybody and happy Easter!

A few from Docklands including myself attended the major community forum on the Melbourne Planning Strategy held in the Peninsula, Shed 14 Central Pier, on March 2, hosted by the former Premier Baillieu and Planning Minister Guy and attended by some 600 representatives of community groups from around Melbourne.

The lengthy strategy, issued by the Planning Department, sets out proposals for Melbourne's development and environment for the next 40 to 50 years. Amongst the ideas is a concept called "a 20 minute city" where local developments would be self-contained with facilities and services within easy reach. Feedback discussions were held at tables. It all sounded good but there was some cynicism about things like additional infrastructure to meet expanded population actually being achieved.

A smaller evening forum on the subject was held in a town hall meeting room on March 19 organised primarily by the Southbank Residents Group and attended by myself for the DCA and by the Eastenders [city] Group, with presenters from the department. Attendees from Southbank took the opportunity to strongly criticise the approval given by Minister Guy for a 108-storey skyscraper in Southbank, despite the fact that the council voted against it.

There is concern about further development plans for NewQuay put forward on the quiet to Places Victoria by MAB Corporation, which differ significantly from earlier master plans. Residents have not been informed and there has been no public consultation. What else is new! We found out through a backdoor source. This will be pursued.

On behalf of the DCA, I have met with the leaders of the Southbank and East Ender Groups to discuss common issues and joint action.

The DCA is preparing a letter to the Education Minister supporting the request for a school, using data supplied by Places Victoria. The quarterly meeting of the combined OC Chairs was held on March 7. Matters discussed included relationships with council and the State Government, OC fees comparison, how to reduce electricity costs and serviced apartments.

An interesting item related to a building in the city which is near nightclubs. The Owners Corporation set up a sinking fund, a fighting fund to pay for repairs to damage to the common areas caused by visitors to the building. It was approved through a ballot and a \$50,000 "war chest" was created. Their OC manager gave advice that the sinking fund should be possible.

One resident took the Owners Corporation to VCAT on it because he did not want to make contributions to the fund. The OC won. This is important because it provides a precedent for a fund to counter an external issue.

The bi-monthly meeting of the Docklands Community Forum was held on March 27. Council and Places Victoria officers gave a progress report on implementation of the Community and Place Plan. The

Council CEO Kathy Alexander has given an assurance that relevant managers will be contacted directly on items raised and requiring attention and will be followed up.

As reported elsewhere in this edition, a judgement was handed down in late March by the Building Appeals Board, ruling against serviced apartments in the Watergate buildings. It included a statement that residential buildings, which are classified as Class 2 under the Building Code, cannot be used for serviced apartments. This has wide ramifications.

Event and activity programs issued by Etihad, council and The Hub continue to be emailed to members.

If any reader would like to become a member of the DCA or has any suggestions they wish to put forward regarding activities or issues, they are welcome to contact us on docklandscommunityassociation@gmail.com. If you would like to talk to me about any aspect you are welcome to call me on 0412 097 706. You can also keep up with things on our website.

Regards to all

Roger Gardner
President DCA

March 2013

Presentations and community discussions are going on around Melbourne about the Melbourne Planning Strategy which has been put out by the State Government's Department of Planning and Community Development and Minister Guy.

It is a wide-ranging ideas list for the future for Melbourne over the next 40 or 50 years covering everything - socio-economics, infrastructure, culture, employment, climate change and so on – with a lot of generalities.

A forum for Melbourne communities was organised by the department, to be held in our own backyard on Saturday, March 2 at the Peninsula Shed 14 Central Pier.

DCA members were notified in advance to enable attendance if they wished. A central city forum also is to be held in the Yarra meeting room in the Town Hall on Tuesday, March 19.

This has been organised by the Southbank and City East Enders resident groups with the DCA invited to support.

I suggested to the chairs of those groups that it would be more beneficial for them and us to have combined action on issues of immediate interest and concern such as the Minister's easing of planning controls, car parking shortage, open space, traffic management and high-rise development. This will be the subject of further discussion.

I am meeting with officers of Places Victoria shortly to obtain supporting data for the need for a school in Docklands to help the DCA submit a letter of request to the State Government in support of the call.

Docklands has a severe shortage of car parking availability. Some residents are not provided with car spaces with their only option being paid parking which is totally unreasonable.

This has highlighted the fact that the council does not provide resident parking permits in Docklands as it does in other areas. Sure ours is a high-rise area with resident car spaces provided in many buildings but permits should be provided for those that don't. The DCA will take this up with the council.

Whilst on the subject, the shortage of car parking unfortunately will only get worse as more development takes place and more open space is built on. The problem is aggravated by the fact that most buildings do not provide visitor parking.

Council's policy is to encourage use of public transport and bicycles, which doesn't really help grandma when she comes to visit or most other visitors. Perhaps Places Victoria could buy back some of the unbuilt-on areas! Well, just a thought.

It is disappointing to see Peter Clarke having to step down as chairman of Places Victoria. He was a "friend at court" for us. He was prepared to talk with us, look into things and arrange meetings.

He was the one who told me he supported a linear park for the Esplanade but would not support putting old cargo sheds on there, which many of us are also against. We hope his view will be continued but we don't know now.

We will continue however to push the issue. A polite request made last year to meet the new chair was not responded to.

Regarding the Waterfront City development by MAB Corp, in talking around, most seem to agree that the proposed hotel should be built at the rear of the area where the big tent used to be [in case you didn't know, it has been pulled down].

This would allow the piazza area with its facilities down to the water to continue to be used for events. Large events held there recently include the Carols by Candlelight and the Japanese cultural festival both of which attracted some 10,000 people.

It would be bad to see the hotel built on that front iconic area when it doesn't have to be!

The next meeting of Owners Corporation Chairs of buildings in the city and Docklands will be held on March 7.

The DCA has OC chairs on its committee. Issues overlap. The guest speaker will be the vice-chair of the Owners Corporation Network of NSW.

The DCA is looking at organising a BBQ in Docklands Park in late April.

If any reader would like to become a member of the DCA or has any suggestions they wish to put forward regarding activities or issues, they are welcome to contact us on docklandscommunityassociation@gmail.com

If you would like to talk to me about any aspect you are welcome to call me on 0412 097 706. You can also keep up with things on our website <http://www.docklandscommunityassociation.com>

PS Due to members relocating and illness etc we are always interested in more possible committee members – not a big job! We meet only two-monthly. If interested give me a call. Thank you to those who have already applied.

Regards to all,

Roger Gardner

President DCA

February 2013

Happy New Year and it is good to be back in touch.

The New Year's Eve fireworks display in Docklands at midnight was the usual great show but council's refusal to stage the 9.30 show for families was sad and there was disappointment.

The report by observers is that the crowd was down, certainly in NewQuay, which was only to be expected due to the 9.30 cancellation. I understand there was overcrowding at Yarra Park, with long queues for food and drink.

Interestingly, a 10pm fireworks display which accompanied the carols in the piazza at Waterfront City on the Sunday night before Christmas, drew a huge crowd with no security issues.

We still believe the crowd management excuse given by council for the NYE 9.30 cancellation was flimsy and that the real reason was to save cost despite the negative impact.

Our DCA Christmas Party on December 5 was a great success with a record attendance of 83 people. The DCA also had a record sign-up of new members. We may consider holding another "meet and greet" mid-year.

Priorities for Docklands facilities/amenities which have been identified by the Community Forum include the provision of a school, waterways development and redevelopment of Harbour Esplanade. The need for a school is exacerbated by difficulty in getting children into schools in surrounding areas.

Regarding redevelopment of Harbour Esplanade, we are told that Places Victoria and the City of Melbourne are continuing to plan for the long-term future of the area and intend to liaise closely with the community as part of this process.

In the meantime, Places Victoria is progressing wharf demolition and rectification / civil infrastructure works to ensure the Esplanade's safety in the short-term. An application to Heritage Victoria was being prepared for these works. As part of this process, Heritage Victoria requires the rectification works to be advertised for 14 days, which was scheduled to take place from Wednesday, January 23, with a sign appearing on-site.

The actual physical work on this large scale project is a fair way off. The preference of many is for a linear park from NewQuay to the Victoria Harbour Promenade. The question of what the stretch should have on it will be dealt with later. Suffice to say it will be the subject of vigorous debate, given what we know of council's plans for sheds.

Our current Planning Minister Guy has put through building planning reforms last year called the VicSmart Bill which makes it easier for developers. Objections to VCAT are denied for large projects.

The Minister loves high-rise development. When we add the revelations regarding developer donations for recent council elections, what hope have we got in trying to get some balance with developments?

The Minister has recently approved two more residential towers to go on the western side of the piazza. Concerns relating to overshadowing, reduced open car parking, reduced open space, wind tunnel effects, etc are ignored. There is widespread protest from around Melbourne and suburbs to the legislative changes.

A comment from an officer of Places Victoria has thrown some light on the reason for the sterility in our area. The officer stated that Docklands is just an extension of the city with its layout of rows of buildings. Not good!

It wouldn't be quite so bad if they provided some public gardens but they haven't, with the nearest being Flagstaff Gardens in West Melbourne. Hence our push for a linear park on the Esplanade to compensate.

In any event, Docklands is not just an extension of the city but a new major waterfront living, working and recreation area which should be made for residents, workers and visitors to enjoy.

The next combined meeting of OC Chairs in the inner city and Docklands will be held in early March. Numerous topics include strata management, the Melbourne Planning Scheme and the effect on building committees of the current OC legislation will be discussed. OC networks in other states, which are more advanced, are keen for us to expand and join forces.

If any reader would like to become a member of the DCA or has any suggestions, they are welcome to call me on 0412 097 706. You can also keep up via our website <http://www.docklandscommunityassociation.com>

Regards to all

Roger Gardner, President, DCA
