



MELBOURNE SOUTH YARRA RESIDENTS GROUP INC.

Established by the residents of South Yarra in 1969

Bulletin: AGM Report

The MSYRG AGM was held on Sunday 13th November at St Martin's Youth Theatre. It was well attended and as it was the first time since lockdowns that an AGM was not held via ZOOM at the close of the meeting the committee and attendees enjoyed a Meet N Greet in the foyer

The Election of Office Bearers and Committee. Gayle Gledhill was elected as President with James Syme, Vice President, Pam Dethridge Treasurer and Jan Armstrong-Conn Secretary. The committee was re-elected – Michael Butcher, Andrew Bennett, Phil Lukies, Anne Roso David Parker, with one new member Elizabeth Allwood

President's Report by Gayle Gledhill

Nearly a third of our 2021/22 year was spent in lockdown, and much of the remainder of the year was punctuated with ongoing covid 19 restrictions. Despite these challenges MSYRG did not suspend activities, but in contrast, it has been one of our busiest years.

Pleasingly the long-awaited City of Melbourne South Yarra Heritage Review was progressed through the year. The review is vitally important as the last heritage review was conducted in the 1980s. Without updating the heritage classification, many buildings in South Yarra are without proper heritage protection. MSYRG submitted a detailed submission and much of this was incorporated into the City of Melbourne report submitted to council last week. Our thanks are extended to Michael Butcher, James Syme and Paul McSweeney for their persistence, time, and energy over several years with this long and complex review. Their efforts were supported by several street captains – and we also thank each of those that contributed many hours to this project. As we receive updates about the Heritage Review, we will issue Bulletins to members with the key inclusions.

Other members of our team have been active keeping you up to date. In the last year we have issued over 40 member Bulletins. A huge thank you goes to Jan Armstrong for coordinating these bulletins and keeping the information flowing. In addition, one of our other committee members Anne Rosso, monitors Planning Alerts from the City of Melbourne and forwards these Alerts to nearby member residents. The reason we do this is it provides an early warning to nearby residents that a planning application has been submitted. It gives a 'heads up' if you will, for potential objectors to assess if an objection is warranted. It provides extra time to commence preparations well before the formal 14 day notice or advertisement period of the application.

Regarding planning objections, I would like to highlight that the MSYRG has developed and updated a guide on how to lodge a planning objection. The guide represents several years of collective wisdom. It is very accessible on the MSYRG website: www.msyrg.com.au We encourage you to refer to it if you considering preparing an objection to a planning application.

During the year we have also been very active in engaging with local authorities. We have initiated or attended in excess of 20 meetings with the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, the City of Melbourne Community Liaison Officer, our local State Member, Vic Police, Cross Yarra Partnership for Metro Rail and other Residents and Community groups

In addition, we have developed a new engagement avenue with the City of Melbourne public events team. We have been frustrated on many occasions with oversights by public event organisers – particularly in relation to resident parking, street closures and late or unclear notifications during

public events. We are trying to build a more proactive approach and provide the event's organisers with a residents' perspective. It's early days yet, but we are hopeful this proactive approach will yield positive results.

All these meetings have significantly raised the profile of the MSYRG, and we expect that in the coming year, our voice will be a little louder and more resonant with our public bodies.

Over recent months, our voice was heard in relation to a planning application for redevelopment of Poolman House, the residence on large grounds at the corner of Domain Road and Punt Road, with a 'general residential' zoning. An application was submitted to redevelop the site as a private club and boutique hotel, restaurant, bar, capacity for 400 patrons 7 days a week, operating hours until 1am through the week and 3am on weekends. In a general residential zone! If approved this would have been a very dangerous precedent in our neighbourhood and indeed for the wider Melbourne area. With the help and support of many members here today, the MSYRG was able to spearhead a vigorous objection both to the City of Melbourne and at VCAT. Our actions involved extensive engagement with the City of Melbourne, individual councillors and our local State Member. Town Planners were engaged to provide advice and prepare objections on behalf of the MSYRG to the City of Melbourne and VCAT.

We are delighted that rather than preparing for a 10-day VCAT hearing which was scheduled for the end of November, the applicant has now withdrawn the application. We are hopeful the application will not be resubmitted, but there are no guarantees.

The reason I highlight this application is not just because of the enormous amount of time, energy and financial resources it has consumed through the year, but because it representative of an increasing number of applications which are well outside Planning Policies and guidelines.

Planning applications tend to fall into three categories

- Those that ask for approvals and are within the planning policies and guidelines
- Those that are - shall we call it - 'creative' in their interpretation of planning policy
- And those that are well outside planning policies and guidelines

What we have witnessed in recent years is that applications in the latter two categories are increasing. Preparing objections to these applications are exceedingly time consuming. In most cases require the engagement of specialists and as most of us know they are very costly.

The current system places the financial burden on the objector rather than the applicant. Many of these applications are unreasonable. The burden of time and money to prepare an objection falls on you as a neighbor and all of us as a community. Our pocket of South Yarra is highly desirable. These types of applications are increasing, and that increases the burden on all of us individually and collectively. The point we will be making to State and Local authorities over the coming months is that we are not anti- development. We do support a system whereby an application should be afforded proper process and consideration. But the current system needs to be changed so that applications that are submitted are more reasonable, and more aligned to planning policies and guidelines.

Most importantly that the financial burden of objections should not be wholly placed on the party that does not stand to gain from such proposals - and particularly where applications are unreasonable. We don't expect immediate results, but we are committed to raising these issues.

In the year ahead we will continue our regular communication with you through our Bulletins and Alerts. If you feel that there are issues in that should be brought to our attention, we would love to hear from you: secretary@msyrg.com.au And in our new post covid era, we look forward to more activities and events that bring us face to face and build our community. We will be drawing on the City of Melbourne's new Community Liaison officer Rei Chin to explore these opportunities.

All of our efforts last year and these plans for the forthcoming year are not possible without two things.

Firstly, the support and hard work of our committee. What a team! Thank you to James, Jan, Pam, Anne, Phil, Andrew, David, and Michael all of which contribute several hours per month to support the MSYRG. We also look forward to welcoming Liz onto the committee. Congratulations Liz on your election.

Secondly you - our members. Thank you for your support in being here today, and also through the year.

We would like to expand our membership base. Our membership fees are modest at only \$40 per year for an individual or a household. The fee covers the costs of administrating our communications, IT and necessary insurances. Please spread the word and encourage your neighbours and friends to become members. As our membership grows so does our voice.

During 2022/23 the MSYRG committee are committed to continuing our ongoing communication with you, engaging with local authorities, and focusing on planning and on heritage and also our community. With your support we look forward to making our home South Yarra an even better place to live.

Other News

The CoM South Yarra Portal. www.participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/south-yarra-neighbourhood-portal CoM intends this new initiative to be a one-stop space that covers all relevant, information for those who live, work or study locally. It will also be a way to have your say on things that are impacting you locally

Metrorail online information session was held last Tuesday to explain the disruptions for the road and tram network on St Kilda Road from the 17th November to the 17th December. During this time St Kilda Road around the Domain Road area will be closed to north bound traffic, cyclists will be diverted, and buses will replace 9 tram routes. There are likely to be significant traffic and public transport impacts for the duration of the works. Details of the changes and the scheduled works can be found at <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/disruptions/st-kilda-road-disruptions>.