

2014/2015 Presidents Report

It is now over 5 years since the current metamorphosis of the Surrey Hills Progress Association commenced to actively engage in all things relating to the preservation and improvement of Surrey Hills. This is my first year as President of the Association and it is only in hindsight that the realisation of the magnitude of what has been achieved in this year is put into stark relief. So much work for so many rewarding outcomes.

We have continued to take a balanced and positive position on a wide range of issues and have maintained close working relationships with the City of Boroondara and its officers in the pursuit of our aims.

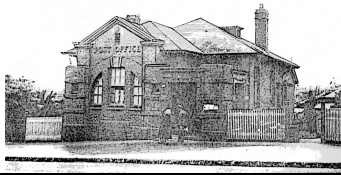
There have been a number planning Amendments which have been incorporated into the Boroondara Planning Scheme this year which represents many years of detailed work, into which the Association has had significant input. These Amendments have applied mandatory height and setback limits to proposed development of commercial properties in Activity Centres and Commercial Corridors within Boroondara, applied Heritage Overlays to parts of Surrey Hills and applied new Residential zonings. All of these amendments have had a profound effect on the preservation of the fabric of Surrey Hills and its community. We still have to face the fact that we live in an area which is now considered to be in the inner ring of Melbourne suburbs, which places it firmly in the sights of the developers. It is also substantially an old area ripe for urban renewal. This means that the association in the future needs to be vigilant in reviewing and assessing any proposals or planning permit applications and actively defend its turf in order to protect what makes Surrey Hills one of the areas premier suburbs.

To review the activities of the Association in more detail I have divided the projects into two categories, community and planning.

Community

Anzac Dawn Service

There is no doubt that the most important community project was the organisation of the Dawn Service on Anzac Day 2015 at the Shrine in Surrey Gardens, commemorating the centennial of the landings at Gallipoli in 1915.



Of the 51 'deceased' soldiers who are named on the stone memorial in the Surrey Gardens, I believe there are four, from Surrey Hills/Mont Albert and we specifically wanted to honour the four, (E P Hasselbach, R J Hayes, W W Head and G H Leven)s at the Service. Hasselbach, Head and Hayes were all presented with gold medals in the Surrey Hall on 12th September 1914 before they departed for the war. Ironically they all died in the first week of the Gallipoli campaign.

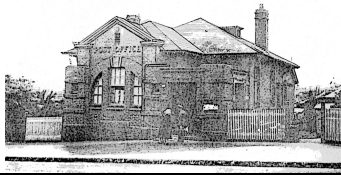
The preparation for the Dawn Service was oriented towards an attendance of 2-300 people and I am sure that we would have been happy with a lower turnout. To see the crowd begin to grow from 5.30am and swell to an estimated 1000-1200 was astounding, and it did stretch our resources. The success of the event, its planning and structure was a testament to the work put in by the committee and the significant personal involvement of Greg Buchanan and Lynette Giddings and we also acknowledge the involvement of the City of Boroondara and the Gallipoli and Beyond Committee. It was determined at a post event review that we will organise a Dawn Service in 2016, using the lessons learned to make the next one even better.

The Shrine in Surrey Gardens.

In 2013 the RSL, in an attempt to correct mistakes on the original plaques installed at the Shrine in Surrey Gardens, added replacement plaques which added further mistakes- 19 names were missing and 14 spelling errors had been introduced. We believe there was no reason to cover the beautiful original plaques, or to replace the small plaque that identifies John K. Blogg's work. Prior to Anzac Day 2015, in conjunction with Boroondara, the Association facilitated access to the Shrine and the RSL replacement plaques removal. We also financed the replacement of broken bluestone tiles and the repainting of the shrine exterior. This was all achieved prior to Anzac Day to ensure the Shrine looked it's best for the Dawn Service.

Working Bees

Two working bees were successfully carried out in August and October 2014. The first was part of our ongoing Station project and involved replanting the south bank in the car park adjacent to Bedford Avenue, after the poor survival rate from previous plantings. We were well supported by Boroondara who provided both labour and copious quantities of mulch. I am pleased to report a high survival rate of the carefully selected plants after a full year in the ground. Thanks go to Ewan Warmsley, Lynette Giddings and Justin Begg who provided outstanding logistical support.



The second working bee, in October, was a clean up of the garden beds and some planting in the areas surrounding the Salvation Hall in Guildford Road. Many hands did make light work and we were ably supported by church members. This is one very tangible way in which the Association can express its thanks for the use of the hall for our monthly meetings. Lynette brought her admirable organisational skills to this task for the second year.

Speed Limit in Union Road.

Last year the Association canvassed the City of Boroondara to consider the application of a 40KM/hr speed limit on the commercial section of Union Road between Canterbury Road and Montrose Street. The response from Council on the 25th March 2015 was very positive.

“Council officers will be preparing a detailed application to VicRoads seeking approval to lower the speed limit to 40 km/h along Union Road between Canterbury Road and Montrose Street.

This application, which will propose the use of electronic speed signs, will be subject to VicRoads approval and funding. The application will be lodged by September 2015 in line with VicRoads requirements for consideration of applications for the 2016/2017 financial year.

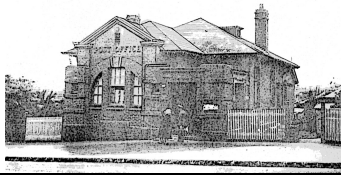
A further letter will be forwarded to stakeholders once a decision has been made by VicRoads.”

Heritage Signs for Union Road

New heritage signs have been erected in Union Road, delineating the commercial area. Locations are at the junction of Canterbury and Union Roads and the junction of Union Road and Montrose Street. The style of the signs is similar to those in Surrey Gardens and Canterbury Gardens. Funding was provided by the Association and help, including erection, was provided by Boroondara Council. Thanks to Justin Begg for the organisation.

Planning

There have been significant changes to the Boroondara Planning Scheme in the last year which strengthens the Councils ability to protect the neighbourhood character of Surrey Hills and places limits on the level of densification of developments in both the planning process and the building regulations.



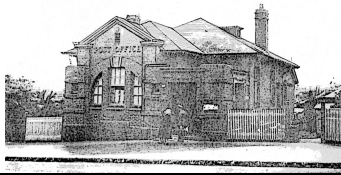
The Association has been very active in the area of opposition to three proposed large development projects in Canterbury Road; in support of the introduction of Heritage Overlays; in support of mandatory height limits and setbacks for commercial developments in the Surrey Hills Shopping Precinct and the Canterbury Road Commercial Corridor.

The three proposed developments in Canterbury Road were 348 Canterbury Road (car wash site at the corner of Norfolk Road), 352-358 Canterbury Road (between the car wash site and Red Rooster) and 298 Canterbury Road and 1A Middlesex Road (an L shaped development site facing Canterbury Road at 298 and 298A Canterbury Road and running behind the existing terrace of shops to Middlesex Road.) The original permit applications were for:-

- 3 levels of apartments (33) above 4 shops, a medical centre and a café at ground level with 2 levels of basement parking at 348 Canterbury Road;**
- 3 and 4 levels of apartments (56) above 4 offices at ground level and essentially 1 basement level for car parking at 352-358 Canterbury Road;**
- 4 and 5 levels of apartments (32) and 2 shops and essentially 1 level of basement parking at 298 Canterbury Road.**

The Association opposed each of the permit applications, which were refused by Council, and opposed the appeals against refusals to grant permits at VCAT. In all cases VCAT supported the Boroondara Councils refusal to grant planning permits.

Subsequent to the refusal to grant a permit a further application was lodged with Council for a highly modified development for 29 apartments above 4 offices and a café at ground level with 1 level of basement parking at 348 Canterbury Road. This was opposed by the Association. After further changes to the plans Council granted a planning permit. Although the granting of a permit was not supported by the Association, we can claim that our efforts helped to change the plans of a building which will now sit more comfortably on the site, with an overall reduction in its height, a significant reduction in 1 bedroom apartments, the elimination of the medical centre, a large set back of over 7 metres at the fourth level facing Norfolk Road and an improvement in the apartments internal amenity.



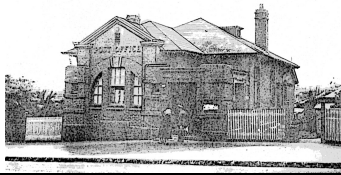
Probably of more importance is the timing of the refusal to grant planning permits to 352-358 Canterbury Road and 298 Canterbury Road/1A Middlesex Road. On the 9th April 2015 Amendment C108 (Activity Centre Strategy) was approved by the Planning Minister and incorporated into the Boroondara Planning Scheme. It imposed mandatory height limits of 11 metres to the Surrey Hills Shopping Precinct in Union Road and the Canterbury Road Commercial Corridor (Warrigal to Balwyn Roads), enforcing a mandatory building height 3.5 metres LOWER than previously required. The VCAT decision not to grant a planning permit to these two proposed developments means that any further applications will have a limited building height of 9 to 11 metres.

The Association has also responded to other issues of planning over the last year, including an attempt to protect 10 Bona Vista Avenue from demolition, in support of the application of Heritage Overlays north of Canterbury Road (Amendment C150) and challenging the basis and conclusions in a report entitled “Intensifying Melbourne - Transit-Oriented Urban Design for Resilient Urban Futures” prepared by Melbourne School of Design, Monash University which proposed significant medium density high rise development around Surrey Hills Station.

Thanks go to all those involved in preparing and presenting submissions to the Urban Special Planning Committee of the City of Boroondara, VCAT and Planning Panels Victoria, including Greg Buchanan, Justin Begg, Mark Haywood, Andrew Watts and Sue Barnett. It was a significant amount of work, prepared professionally, which has enhanced the standing of the Surrey Hills Progress Association and whose approach continues to be one of positive and constructive engagement, both with the community and the various planning authorities.

Acknowledgements

Community based organisations will only ever achieve their objectives with the active involvement of members and supporters. Once again the Surrey Hills Progress Association has been very well served by a large number of people and I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved.



Surrey Hills Progress Association Inc

To achieve a working relationship with the City of Boroondara Council is essential to properly represent the interests of the residents of Surrey Hills and I would like to offer the Association's thanks to Cr Jane Addis, the councillor for the Maling Ward for all her active help and co-operation covering a wide range of projects and topics in the past year and the support of many Council officers. Their support has been essential for the achievement of such positive outcomes.

Our thanks also go to the Salvation Army for the use of their facilities and we look forward to a continuing mutually beneficial alliance in the future.

Finally, my sincere personal thanks go to the members of the SHPA for entrusting me with the position of President over the past year. It has been a genuine privilege to be involved with this organisation as a member for the last three years.