



ANNUAL REPORT 2013

In presenting the 43rd Annual Report, I would like to thank the Executive Committee and some members for their good work and support during the year. In particular, the following deserve special mention:

Alan Swales as Treasurer & Valma Swales as Assistant Treasurer for maintaining the membership list and organising distribution of the Newsletter; Chris Dunkerley and Graham Medhurst as Vice Presidents; Chris Dunkerley as Secretary; Ron Dunstan as Minutes Secretary and for his community spirit; Committee Members, Helen Strasser, Anne Dean, Ruth Evans, John Goddard, Brian Berry, Graeme Wyber, Caroline Barnes and Andrew Christie.

My special thanks to Ivan Drury for auditing the financial records; Alan & Valma Swales and [*] who prepared the Newsletter for distribution; Chris Dunkerley for maintaining the Website; [*] Dunstan for typing the Minutes; Ruth Evans as Trust representative on Parramatta Council's Heritage Committee; Graham Medhurst for representing the Trust at Better Planning Network and to Brian Berry for attending the rally against the NSW Planning Bills.

Also my special thanks to: Those members * who delivered the newsletters and leaflets: saving the Trust over \$1,000 in postal charges. [*Names in members version – redacted here for privacy]

I also wish to acknowledge with many thanks the outstanding work of your Local Government representatives – Cllr Lorraine Wearne of Parramatta City Council and Cllrs Michael Hutchence and Robert Browne of Hornsby Shire Council. Their reports at our General Meetings and in the Newsletter were very much appreciated. The Trust also gratefully appreciates the publicity given by the Editor and his staff at the Northern District Times on important issues during the year.

Membership at 1 January was 256 households with 430 individual members. Membership at 31 December was 323 households with 567 individual members.

- General Meetings were held on 19 February, 21 May, 20 August and 19 November.
- Committee Meetings were held on 8 January, 9 April, 9 July and 8 October
- Public Meeting was held on 18 April to discuss the NSW Government's Urban Activation Plan for Epping's Town Centre.

My sincere thanks to every member who continued to support the work of the Trust and maintain their membership.

Matters dealt with and items of interest during the year

January, February, March

Parramatta Councillor Lorraine Wearne reported that a plan for the Epping Town Centre was being prepared by the State Government without community consultation. This plan is now a fact and has been prepared with heights of up to 27/30 storeys. Epping has taken more than its share of housing growth with the Channel 7 disaster (thank you Mr Sartor) and the Eastwood brick pit development.

Cllr Wearne said Parramatta Council recognised that Epping is a growth centre, predominantly residential with some mixed use in our LEP. We planned for heights to 12/14 stories. To suggest that double this height is appropriate and can be achieved in Epping can only be as a result of pressure by interest groups and lack of real planning input on issues such as overshadowing, traffic, parking, access, urban design, and public interest to mention a few.

This year we commenced a meeting cycle of four General and four Committee meetings which have proved to be accepted by both the Executive Committee and Members.

April, May, June

A huge public meeting convened and chaired by the Trust was held on 18 April at the Epping Church of Christ Hall with 518 residents attending to discuss Epping's Urban Activation Project by Planning NSW. The rezoning Plan means a 40% increase in population, 55% more home units to become the majority dwelling type, 35% more cars, buildings up to 22 storeys high and the loss of single dwelling houses in at least nine streets.

Traffic gridlock in the Epping Town Centre was raised by many questioners, with local resident traffic and parking needs also to the fore. In addition questioners raised excellent issues with the capacity of local schools, parks, health services, power and water/sewage to cope with the huge increase in population. The 22-storey height of towers was also a key concern.

Almost 10,000 flyers about the proposals and the public meeting were delivered by Trust members and I sincerely thank all those who helped with its distribution.

Speakers at the meeting included local NSW Epping MP, Greg Smith, NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure officer's David McNamara and Simon Bennett, and Epping Civic Trust's planning consultant Adam Byrnes.

Graphic designer Jane Buchan was appointed to improve the design and layout of our Newsletter commencing with the May issue which has proved to be a great success and has saved me countless hours producing it six times a year.

The NSW Government released its White Paper outlining proposals for a new land use planning system. The white paper was on public exhibition until Friday, June 28. It was expected that a draft Bill would go before Parliament in September.

The Government's election promise to give planning powers back to the people appeared to be a sham. If the proposals in the White Paper become law, the community will only have a say at the initial local planning stage and will then be locked out.

We made a detailed submission to the White Paper on 25 June raising twelve points of objection but key amongst these was our objection to the proposal to restrict community input to the strategic stage or 'upfront' as the Government has put it.

The Trust's position is that the community must have provisions in the planning laws that will allow it to bring developers into line when they transgress. The loose planning regime proposed in the White Paper and draft bills will not achieve this. As one letter writer to the Sydney Morning Herald said, "the whole State will become a developer's paradise".

Trust consultant Adam Byrnes was guest speaker at the 21 May General Meeting who prepared an excellent submission to Planning NSW on our behalf in response to Epping's Urban Activation Project.

July, August, September

Councillor Lorraine Wearne reported in the August Newsletter that Council is about to place a new Development Control Plan for the Town Centre at Epping on public exhibition. This plan is to set guidelines for the future development of the Town Centre and it is very important it is in place prior to the commencement of the new zoning plans for Epping being prepared by the State Government.

Clr Wearne said Council will shortly be carrying out consultation with the residents of Tomah Street in relation to a proposal to plant trees on either side of the road, not on the footpath, but on either side of the road pavement area probably in boxed surrounds similar to Epping Avenue and Kent Street.

Fletcher Rayner, Manager Strategic Planning, Hornsby Council said Council has exhibited an amendment to the Housing Strategy Development Control Plan and draft Hornsby Development Control Plan to identify the traffic improvements on the Key Principles Diagram for the Carlingford Road precinct.

The following improvements were proposed: • Signalisation of the intersection of Carlingford Road with Hepburn Avenue; • Continue with the proposal in the Housing Strategy DCP to prohibit left turn movements from Keeler Street into Pennant Hills Road; • Installation of traffic calming devices in Keeler Street; and Provision of an intersection treatment/roundabout on Keeler Street at Hepburn Avenue or Rickard Street.

Bus access to Epping Station: We are determined to improve the Carlingford Road gridlock in the morning and afternoon peak periods which need urgent attention by the NSW Government. Buses need priority to stop the long delays of up to 20 minutes heading east in the morning and west in the afternoon.

Major footpath upgrades were constructed in Beecroft Road north of the laneway where the bus stops are located and at the corner of Bridge & Rawson Streets, Epping.

October, November, December

Local Government in NSW is undergoing a period of reform. The NSW Government established the Independent Local Government Review Panel in March 2012 to look at ways of how to strengthen the effectiveness of local government in NSW.

This Panel published a Report with its recommendations on the future directions of NSW Local Government. The Report recommended a reduction in the number of Councils in the Sydney Metropolitan Area from 41 to about 15 and to create major new cities of Sydney, Parramatta and Liverpool.

Creating a major new City of Parramatta involves adding the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Auburn and Holroyd enabling a population of up to 800,000.

The major proposed boundary change in Epping involves Parramatta City Council extending its boundary north from Carlingford Road and on the eastern side of the Main Northern Railway Line, to the M2 Motorway.

The Trust wrote to Parramatta City Council outlining its broad agreement to some parts of the variations to the DCP covering the Parramatta Council side of the Epping Town Centre and Conservations Zones.

This included agreement with the proposed variations that aligns parking for new developments in the Epping Town Centre to that applying on the Hornsby side of the CBD. On the issue of the extension to the Heritage Conservation Areas, the Trust voiced its strong agreement with proposed variations to consolidate planning provisions across other Conservation Areas within Epping/Eastwood.

The Trust pointed out that as with many planning instruments it will be in the way that these amendments are interpreted by developers and planning staff that will determine its ultimate ability to protect the heritage of the Epping/Eastwood area.

NSW Planning Reforms update: It had been expected that the NSW Government would introduce its Bills for a radical new planning system for the State into Parliament in the second week of September.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption, the NSW Heritage Council, the Law Society of NSW, the Royal Institute of Architects, the Environmental Defender's Office, Shelter NSW and many others, including of course the Local Government sector, have raised very serious issues with the reforms.

Following severe criticism of the changes and the admission of mistakes by the Planning Departmental head, the Minister for Planning & Infrastructure, Brad Hazzard, held back his Bills for changes to be made.

Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone for the support and encouragement I have received this year.