



ANNUAL REPORT 2014

In presenting the Trust's 44th 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.

[The version of this report provided to financial members contains the full listing of names, withheld from the public version 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: 323 households with 567 individual members. Membership at 31 December: 263 households with 438 individual members.

- General Meetings were held on 18 February, 20 May, 19 August and 18 November.
- Committee Meetings were held on 14 January, 8 April, 8 July and 14 October.

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

On 8 January 2014 the Final report of the NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel chaired by Professor Sansom was exhibited for public discussion and comment. The Panel recommended: 1. The amalgamation of Hornsby and Ku-Ring-Gai Councils; 2. Combine Auburn, Holroyd, Parramatta and the western third of Ryde into one Council; 3. Move the northern boundary of Parramatta to the M2 Motorway (this would result in Epping being solely in one council).

The February Newsletter reported that as a result of heavy amendment in the Upper House by Labour, the Greens and the Shooters and Fishers Party, the Minister for Planning, Brad Hazzard withdrew the NSW Planning Bills on the 28th November 2013. While the Epping Civic Trust and our colleagues in the Better Planning Network (BPN) were able to take comfort from this we still need new planning legislation that will serve our needs over the next few decades.

Epping Town Centre Urban Activation update: The Minister's approval of the Epping Town Centre Plan will amend the Parramatta City and Hornsby Shire Local Environmental Plans and it will become law. Before the Plan can be fully effective the relevant Councils will have to draft a Development Control Plan (DCP) for the Epping Town Centre.

As part of the NSW Government's North West Rail Link project, a private company Thiess John Holland Dragados has been contracted to construct tunnels and a Services Facility at Epping. This is on the site of former office blocks between Beecroft Road and Ray Road. Residents endured demolition during November-January and construction works commenced on 5 December 2013. Early works in 2014 included a shaft for access to the stub tunnels and for future tunnelling, removal of pedestrian access along Beecroft Road, ingress and egress slip-lane on Beecroft Road for trucks.

Councillor Lorraine Wearne reported that the State Government has decided to prepare a Master Plan for the Council's Rawson Street Car Park as part of the work on the Epping Town Centre Urban Activation Plan. Planning NSW has commissioned Architectus to prepare concept plans and options for the redevelopment of the car park and surrounds. We are advised that the purpose of this work is to provide background information for future reference when redevelopment at this location may be considered.

Hornsby Council's Acting Manager, Strategic Planning Katherine Vickery reported that the Epping Urban Activation Precinct (UAP) Amendment will be finalised by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) early in 2014. Following its finalisation Council will consider a report presenting a draft Development Control Plan for Epping.

The DPI will be progressing heritage provisions for Epping as part of the Epping UAP, including three new heritage conservation areas and new heritage items. Final details of the heritage provisions will be available when the Epping UAP Amendment is finalised by the Department.

April / May / June

The May Newsletter reported that the Epping Town Centre Urban Activation Precinct (UAP) came into effect on 14 March 2014 with its rezoning and plans published by the NSW Government. The UAP will involve a major change to Epping's Town Centre, with 3,750 new dwellings over the next 20 years.

The rezoning allows buildings between 8 and 22 storeys within a 400 metre radius of the railway station, for mixed commercial and residential uses. It will result in a 40% increase in people in the area, loss of houses in at least nine streets and at least 35% more cars in the area in the opinion of Epping Civic Trust.

Buildings up to five storeys in selected residential areas are allowed within the Hornsby Local Government Area. It will also involve four new conservation areas, an expanded Epping/Eastwood Heritage Conservation Area and 17 new heritage items.

Local road upgrades are planned, including the intersections at Essex Street and Epping Road as well as Carlingford and Beecroft Roads, while parts of Epping Road will be widened. Widening the bridge across the railway line at Bridge Street is still under consideration.

The May Newsletter also reported that the Planning Bills put before the NSW Parliament last year by the then Planning Minister, Brad Hazzard were now dead. As members will recall the Trust and our associates in the Better Planning Network (BPN) had serious concerns with the draft bills. The Government was clearly overly influenced by the developer lobby. As we now know the Government has suffered serious consequences as a result of its relationship with lobbyists. The new Premier, Mike Baird, has publically stated that he is aware of the community concern about the influence of business lobbyists on government policy.

Epping will be a focus of the \$8.3 billion North West Rail link [NWRL] between Cudgegong Road and Chatswood that will service the rail needs of North West Sydney. Construction is underway with the first tunnel boring machine scheduled to be in the ground by the end of October and the first of 100,000 concrete segments for the tunnels expected to be produced by May. The NWRL will include eight new railway stations. It will be a metro-style, fully-automated, single-deck, privatised operation with tunnels too small for modern double-deck rolling stock and thus it will not be integrated into the Sydney Metropolitan rail system.

Planning NSW is now headed by a new Minister, Pru Goward. Minister Goward has moved with speed to restructure her department and we look forward to a new approach to the review of the planning system and more attention to input from the community. It is pleasing to note that Rob Stokes, Member for Pittwater has been appointed as Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning. Minister Rob Stokes has a PhD in environmental planning law. We hope that this is a fresh start for planning in NSW and the Trust is looking forward to working with the BPN to bring its views on planning before the new Ministerial team.

July / August / September

Guest speakers at the 19 August meeting were Hornsby Council's Planning Division Group Manager Mr James Farrington and Manager Strategic Planning Mr Fletcher Rayner. They gave a PowerPoint presentation about Council's Development Control Plan and responded to the Trust's submission.

The Trust lodged a submission to the Draft DCP for the Hornsby Shire part of the Epping Town Centre which was on exhibition in June. We found some inconsistencies in the Plan with regard to advice given to the Minister when he approved the rezoning of the Town Centre earlier in the year.

For instance the Council proposed limitations on the size of commercial floor spaces contrary to NSW Planning guidance that there should be no set limits. Setting limits could discourage some commercial enterprises that would like to establish businesses in Epping.

Improved access to the M2 Motorway from Epping: Following a resolution at the last general meeting the Trust prepared a briefing note on this issue. In summary, the Trust's position was:

1. That Transurban installs a modified traffic management system for the Epping on and off ramps on the same basis as the currently under construction Lane Cove Road east on-ramp.
2. That the Roads and Maritime Service includes in its current works program a two lane left turn from Carlingford Road onto Beecroft Road.

A meeting was held with the local member Greg Smith MP on the 27th July as a first step in progressing the issue. The Trust also briefed the Manager of the Hills M2 Motorway, Dom DeConti. NSW Roads & Freight Minister, Duncan Gay, was the only response we received.

October / November / December

Hornsby Shire Council (HSC) has prepared a Draft Plan of Management for West Epping Park, which includes revised categorisation mapping for future management of the Park, and an Indicative Master Plan for the upgrade of the site. Council has committed to redevelop the site to include a synthetic sports oval for soccer, cricket and a new amenities building.

The Indicative Master Plan also provides for improved parking facilities and vehicle circulation, a new network of footpaths to improve linkages in the park and to increase pedestrian activity, new children's play facilities, and a public plaza space for community gathering and informal recreation.

Hornsby Council at its meeting on 8 October 2014 approved an amendment to the DCP in response to concerns regarding the interface between the five storey zone and heritage conservation areas. The amendment will include additional transitional measures to assist in mitigating the impact of five storey development on adjoining Heritage Conservation Areas. Once in force this will require developers to consider the design impacts of development on adjacent heritage conservation areas against criteria set out in the heritage part of the DCP.

The Trust Committee at its meeting on 14 October 2014 decided to write to the Minister for Transport and express its opposition to the 'upgrading' of the Epping to Chatswood railway tunnel. The Trust is of the view that the upgrade is unnecessary at this time. While the Trust has no objection to the work going ahead to connect the new line to the existing tunnel lines as part of the current program, it believes that the connection should be mothballed until the Harbour tunnel is built and the North West metro is extended to the City.

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

GRAHAM F. LOVELL – President

Full report presented at the AGM held on Tuesday 17 February, 2015