



In presenting the 45th 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 names of the many members and supporters who provided valuable service in 2015 are removed from this public record version for their privacy – full details were acknowledged to members in the Presidents report, and at the AGM].*

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: 263 households with 438 individual members. Membership at 31 December: 243 households with 396 individual members.

- General Meetings were held on 17 February, 19 May, 18 August and 17 November.
- Committee Meetings were held on 13 January, 14 April, 9 June, 14 July and 6 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**

Members were advised in the February newsletter that the Trust has been a voice for the community of Epping and surrounds for 44 years and has always played a positive and active part in the planning decisions for the area. However times are changing and the Trust is now finding that it is increasingly dealing with government at the State level and with powerful developers. This requires a higher level of professionalism and expertise.

The Rawson Street car park and the Pembroke Street / Chambers Court area are identified as public lands under Local Environmental Plans. The Trust was reliably informed that the Councils are already under considerable pressure from the owners of adjacent properties some of whom have submitted concept plans which include encroachments upon these public lands and exceed development controls.

Roadworks planned for Epping Town Centre include a second right turn lane from Beecroft Road into Carlingford Road; Road widening on the eastern side of Beecroft Road; New traffic light controlled pedestrian crossings on both Carlingford and Beecroft Roads and a new pedestrian path on the eastern side of Beecroft Road to link with the existing path leading to Epping Station.

Major roadworks planned include construction of a raised central median on Epping Road from Langston Place to Essex Street; An additional west bound lane from Essex Street to Blaxland Road; Removal of right-turns from Epping Road into Essex Street, in either direction to improve traffic flow and no right turn at Langston Place into Epping Road.

Epping to Chatswood Rail Tunnel: The Trust wrote to the Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian on the 30 October 2014. In our letter the Trust outlined cogent reasons why the Epping to Chatswood rail tunnel should not be modified to accommodate the North West Metro at this time.

The Minister responded to the Trust on 5 January and replied that “terminating the NWRL at Epping would not deliver the full benefits of rapid transit to our customers”. The Trust was also disappointed that the Northern District Times (NDT) did not run with our press release on this matter. This was despite the strong case put forward by the Beecroft/Cheltenham Civic Trust, community transport groups and in letters to the Editor.

On 5 March Parramatta City Council held a public consultation session together with a free sausage sizzle barbeque run by the Epping / Eastwood Lions Club in Boronia Park Epping, to collect ideas from the locals on how best to improve Boronia Park and Duncan Park. Council accepted most of the Trust’s recommendations for a new Masterplan for both parks.

#### **April / May/ June**

Parramatta City Council considered a development proposal to demolish the existing two houses at 5-7 Grandview Parade, Epping and build eleven self-care housing dwellings under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability). The Trust understood that this type of development cannot be refused for this site if the application satisfies the planning controls in the policy. However this proposal appears to be an overdevelopment of the site with issues around bulk and scale, overshadowing, tree retention and access to specified facilities. The Trust raised these issues with Council in a submission.

Cllr Lorraine Wearne reported: I am saddened to read in the paper that the recent storms have given rise again to the cry of “if there is a large tree on your block, cut it down”. Of course we need to be sensible about where large gum trees are planted but remnant vegetation trees should be protected if possible. We have had a number of trees poisoned recently and Council is determined to prosecute people that kill or remove trees without permission. People who do not like or want trees should not buy property in areas where trees are a significant part of that areas attraction.

Following protests from the Save the Epping Pool Group (SEPG) and the Trust, Hornsby Shire Council deferred a decision on its proposal to demolish the Dence Park pool until its meeting in June. In the interim, it was suggested that the Trust provide support to the SEPG in their efforts to keep the pool open and in particular provide assistance for the group to print a leaflet and undertake a letterbox drop prior to the Council meeting in June.

On 26 June Trust President, Graham Lovell and Committee Member, Graeme Wyber met with senior management staff at the Office of the Minister for Transport, to seek improvements to existing bus services in and out of Epping Railway Station during peak hours. In attendance were the Minister’s Special Advisor and two senior managers who had investigated all affected Epping bus routes following a meeting over a year ago. Several alternatives were tabled to ease the frustrations currently being experienced by commuters.

Some of the recommendations will be trialled in the near future, while other suggestions may take longer due to the involvement of other government departments such as the Roads and Maritime Service. The Trust will be kept fully informed of the plans and actions to ensure a better bus service for commuters of Epping and adjoining suburbs.

### **July / August / September**

In the August newsletter editorial we again reminded members that the Trust is having difficulty dealing with the increase in development proposals in the Trust's area of interest. The designation of Epping as an Urban Activation Precinct has turbo-charged developer interest in the area and has meant that development applications are increasingly complex.

The Trust's workload is still falling on a small number of members and our limited expertise is severely impacting on our ability to produce a professional response. The Trust needs more active members, and in particular, people with expertise in journalism, town planning, architecture, landscape design, transport and civil engineering.

The Trust wrote to Parramatta City Council expressing concern that the unnamed laneway behind the Epping Hotel is not suitable as a 'Drop N Go' zone. This laneway is regularly banked up with cars as they drop people off, blocking regular traffic flow in Rawson Street.

The Trust suggested two alternate 'Drop N Go' zones to Council. These would be in Hunts Lane, with one situated just off the Bridge Street entry point and the other situated just short of the Rawson Street exit point. To assist the flow, Hunts Lane could be made a "one way" road from Bridge to Rawson Streets.

During busy periods Hunts Lane is considered to have reasonable vehicular access into Rawson Street. However, the Council responded that no changes will be made to the existing "Drop 'n' Go" Zone behind the Epping Hotel. Better Buses

Too many crossings? While three pedestrian crossings on Rawson Street are great for those on foot, they are causing a headache for vehicles. During peak periods, traffic is banked up to the roundabout intersection at Bridge Street causing congestion in the surrounding streets.

Bus routes to and from Epping Station via Rawson Street are also caught up in the congestion. The Trust recommended to Parramatta City Council that the following action be taken as soon as possible: Remove the middle crossing situated outside the Epping Club and install a signal at the crossing on the southern end of the Coles carpark to manage the flow of pedestrians. This could be deactivated at times not deemed necessary.

Local Government reform: The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 7 July 2015 that the Office of Local Government statistics undermined the Government's case for Council mergers. The article, by journalist Harvey Grennan, revealed that the bigger Councils are the worst financial performers.

Yet the Government case for amalgamations has as a primary criterion that bigger Councils are more efficient. It is understood that all Councils have now submitted their response to the Government's 'Fit for the Future' initiative and judging by these reports, three Councils want Epping within their boundaries. The only position taken by the Trust on this matter is that Epping must be fully within the boundaries of one Council area.

### **October / November / December**

Hornsby Shire Council approved a draft document titled "Epping Town Centre Public Domain Guidelines" and authorised its release for public comment. The Pembroke Street town square and cultural hub is identified as a key project in the Guidelines. The Council also approved expressions of interest being sought from developers to redevelop the public land at 10 Pembroke Street as a town square and cultural hub.

Public Toilet for Epping Carpark: Cllr Lorraine Wearne reported that finally we have received consent from Sydney Water and the electricity authority for installation of the toilet. It is to be installed at the top of the carpark where the existing trolley bay is located. The trolley bay and the disabled car space will be moved slightly downhill. The toilet is an Exeloo which is automatic and made of stainless steel. I have requested that a mural or coating that depicts trees or similar be painted or adhered to the outside surface so the structure appears more pleasing and part of the area.

Development proposal: 12-14 Bridge Street Epping - Demolition of existing buildings, amalgamation of land and construction of a mixed use building with retail area and approximately 55 residential units. This is presently no more than a proposal and no application has been formally lodged.

In the November newsletter Hornsby Mayor Steve Russell said, "Council resolved to progress with a Planning Proposal for property No.10 Pembroke Street, Epping. The proposal is to allow residential flat buildings on the site, with all premises on the ground floor to be reserved for community facilities". The Planning Proposal was exhibited until 13 November on Council's website and at Hornsby and Epping libraries.

Commuters who travel from Carlingford Railway Station to Epping Railway Station, along the busy M54 bus route, did not have a single bus shelter where they could escape from the various elements of nature. This is over a distance of 4.3 kilometres, comprising twelve bus stops.

Both Epping Civic Trust and Loftus Square Park Committee considered the most suitable mid-route location for an initial shelter would be in Willoughby Street, diagonally opposite to the existing one at Loftus Square Park. An identical shelter was found near Maitland Railway Station and transported to the site and will be painted to match the existing shelter. Funding for an engineer's report was given by the Trust, Park Committee and Cllr Wearne from Parramatta City Council.

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

**GRAHAM F. LOVELL – President**