



2018/2019 Presidents Report

This is my fifth year as President of the Association and it is my pleasure to outline the activities of the Association in the year ending 30th June 2019. We have continued to take a balanced and positive position on a number of issues affecting Surrey Hills.

We have successfully transferred the responsibility of the organisation of the Anzac Day Dawn Service; finalised the improvements to the Associations website; seen the completion of the improvements to the Shrine in Surrey gardens; completed the History Board project ; made submissions to Council on a range of issues and attended VCAT hearings in relation to the applications for planning permits to build multistorey apartment blocks at 352-358 Canterbury Road and 3 Norfolk Road.

To review the activities of the Association in more detail I have divided the Activities into two categories, Community and Planning.

Community

ANZAC Day Dawn Service. Future of the Dawn Service

It was always the intention of the Association to organise and fund four services. This four year period represented a centennial acknowledgement of the First World War (1914-1918). The considerable support of local residents gave rise to a number of approaches after the 2018 service relating to the future of the event. It was decided to seek alternative organisers for the event in coming years to support the continuation of the popular event, leveraging the community benefit achieved in the past, going forward. The responsibility for the organisation and funding of the 2019 Dawn Service was passed to a steering committee comprising Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre, MASH, with support from

Lynette Giddings and Greg Buchanan. The 2019 service was well attended and generally well planned and organised. We can be pleased with the involvement of the community with the project, which was commenced by SHPA for a specific 4 year period and the smooth transition to SHNC control.

Update of the SHPA website

A program to bring the website up to date and easy to read, making it a useful resource for residents of Surrey Hills, was finalised in the year. The information has been expanded to cover more of the Associations activities, both past and present, data on the history of Surrey Hills and of the Association and Annual Reports for the last 5 years have been added. Pages on heritage, planning, commercial developments and planning permit applications have also been included for both the municipalities of Boroondara and Whitehorse and updated regularly.

Shrine Maintenance and Plaques Upgrade

Although minor repairs have been made in the past, at over 100 years old the Shrine in Surrey Gardens needs to be maintained in good order to continue to be a fitting monument to the residents of Surrey Hills who fought and those that gave their lives in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. Works have now been finalised addressing issues relating to the fabric of the building, the interior of the building, including conservation of the Blogg sculpture and updating of the lists of service personnel on the Honour Roll. Thanks go to Sandra Dexter, whose research on the expanded honour roll included a list of local nurses who served, which was supplied to Council for upgrading and expanding the Honour Board. The updated Honour Board was completed prior to the Anzac Day Dawn Service in 2019. The Progress Association has worked with and supported the Boroondara Council in seeking funds to conserve and update the interior of the Shrine.

Design and Installation of further Heritage and Street Art Panels

A community strengthening grant was awarded by the City of Boroondara for the completion of the Union Road, Surrey Hills Heritage Project. The Union Road Commercial Precinct is of local historical significance. It is a long-standing local commercial/retail shopping area in Surrey Hills. It is important for the local community to be aware of and be engaged in the heritage of Surrey Hills to strengthen community ties with the past and in the last 5 years the Association has been financing and promoting projects which advance and strengthen that heritage and neighbourhood character. This grant application sought to complete the ongoing work already carried out, which lays the foundation of heritage walks around Union Road. The project was completed in the 2018-19 year.

The program added a further 3 History Boards to the west side of Union Road, making a total of 11, including the two boards on the station, and two explanatory mural plaques. There was some difficulty in gaining permission from building owners to mount the plaques, which required Planning Permits (5) from Council, due to the recently applied Heritage Overlay to the Union Road Shopping Precinct. The 3 new History Boards are located at 96 Union Road (Interdrape), the new Coles building and the Vintage Cellars building.

The history walk, “the step back in time down Union Road Audio Tour” was launched in October 2019 by the Surrey Hills Historical Society in conjunction with the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre. Developed with the financial assistance of a Boroondara Community Strengthening Grant, this audio tour is available for community use through the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre. The images accompanying the commentary are drawn from different decades over a one-hundred year period, so as you walk along Union Road you will be dipping in and out of its history.

Salvation Army Garden Working Bee

(Courtesy of Lynette Giddings)

Thank you to members from SHPA and the Salvation Army Church Chinese Corps for attending the Gardening Day. Excellent teamwork was shown today (even if I needed to get the whip out at one stage. Thanks to our generous Hosts Amy & Alan for the delicious 'Arvo Tea'. The weather was kind to us and it allowed us to move and spread 4 cubic metres of mulch into the gardens. We planted about 2 dozen indigenous plants supplied by SHPA via Ewan Warmlesley and some succulents and hardy bulbs in parts of the garden where it is drier.

Grateful thanks to The Tree Company for supply and delivery of the mulch and to Geoff White for supplying and delivering bags of native planting mix.

Station Planter Box Maintenance.

One of the first projects of the Progress Association some 10 years ago was improvements to the Surrey Hills Railway Station, including installation of a number of planter boxes. Over the years some plants have thrived and some have not. During this last year the Association funded the purchase of carefully chosen tube stock and new soil for the planter boxes. Justin Begg carried out the replanting and refurbishment of the planter boxes wooden surround.

Level Crossings Removal

The dangerous and congested level crossings at Union Road and Mont Albert Road are being removed and will be gone for good by 2025. The level crossings in Surrey Hills and Mont Albert have seen *two* serious incidents since 2005 – including recent near misses. Around 22,000 vehicles travel through these two crossings each day, with the boom gates down for up to 40 per cent of the morning peak and up to 53 trains travelling through the level crossings. An expected increase in trains running on the Belgrave/Lilydale corridor will

result in more boom gate down time. The number of cars travelling through the crossings is expected to grow to more than 26,000 by 2026. Once these level crossings are gone, the Belgrave/Lilydale corridor will be level crossing-free between Ringwood and the City. Preliminary engineering advice indicates that the best way to remove these level crossings is to lower the rail line under the roads by building a trench. The level crossing removal project at Union Road and Mont Albert Road will deliver two new stations at Surrey Hills and Mont Albert. This will result in improvements to car parking, better transport interchanges, new and vibrant entrances and accessibility enhancements. The Project will improve safety for pedestrians and road users, a more reliable road network, slashing travel times and allowing for more trains to run more often.

The upgrade of the road and rail system at Union Road presents a unique opportunity for significant amenity to be created in Union Road. The Association has been discussing the proposal at our meetings through the year and attended a round table discussion with Boroondara Council to outline the Associations position.

What we know so far.....

Rail under Road

Preferred design finalised by February 2020.

Service relocation works likely in 2020/21.

Stations may be relocated to accommodate modern day design standards.

Project area is likely to be Robinsons Road to Elgar Road.

Site Investigations were started 8th July 2019 and finished in October 2019.

We look forward to examining the design plans in February next year.

Planning

The year has been one of the slowest in terms of commercial planning applications and objections. The planning applications for significant buildings have been concentrated along the two transport corridors of Canterbury Road and Whitehorse Road and included mainly apartments/retail and one serviced apartments block. The height of proposed structures creeps ever higher- now 5-6 stories are commonplace. Height remains an issue for Boroondara Council but is not a concern for VCAT.

352-358 Canterbury Road.

VCAT decision on a planning Permit Application Appeal to develop

Despite the best endeavours of the QC representing Boroondara Council and the efforts of the Association, VCAT overturned the Council's refusal to grant a planning permit for this property, and ordered a permit be issued. (details of the proposal were outlined in the last Presidents report and available on our website.)

1-13 Shierlaw Avenue, Canterbury

Use of the land as for 49 dwellings in the Commercial 1 Zone; buildings and works to construct a five storey building above basement car parking in the Commercial 1 Zone, Design and Development Overlay, Schedule 17 and Special Building Overlay; and buildings and works to construct a fence and a non-domestic disabled access ramp in the Special Building Overlay in accordance with the endorsed plans

Although the proposed development is in Canterbury rather than Surrey Hills, we took an interest in the opposition to the application due to its height and proximity to heritage buildings near Canterbury Station. The Council refused a permit on a number of grounds, one of which was the height. On appeal VCAT overturned the refusal and granted a permit.

426-430 Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills

Construction of a six storey building (plus basement) containing a Restricted Recreation facility, Food and Drink Premises and Serviced Apartments in the Commercial 1 Zone and Design and Development Overlay; • Use of the land Restricted Recreation Facility and Serviced Apartments in the Commercial 1 Zone; • Demolition, buildings, works and the use of the land for a Restricted Recreation facility, Food and Drink Premises and Serviced Apartments within the Public Acquisition Overlay; • Alteration of access to roads within the Road Zone Category 1; • Reduction in the amount of bicycle parking required; • Reduction in the amount of car parking required.

The Council refused a permit on a number of grounds, one of which was the height.

Acknowledgements

Community based organisations will only ever achieve their objectives with the active involvement of members and supporters. The Surrey Hills Progress Association is a very small group of genuinely dedicated residents and I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved in the last year.

We have continued to properly represent the interests of the residents of Surrey Hills.

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

I would like to thank Sue Barnett for her work as secretary and as the link to the Historical Society, for her valued contribution to the artwork and layout and content for the History Boards.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Lynette Giddings as part time secretary during the year, her organisation of the Salvation Army garden working bee and

her objection to the proposed 6 storey proposed development on the corner of Warrigal and Canterbury Roads

Thanks go Justin Begg for organising and carrying out the planter box updates on the Station.

Geoff White has been an invaluable link to the areas of Surrey Hills within the Whitehorse Council and we acknowledge his numerous updates of the developments within the Box Hill commercial zone and for his lodgement of an objection to the proposed development of 15 apartments on the corner of Stanhope and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert.

The redesign and improvement of the website appeared to be a huge task, but with the help and expertise of Alison Dews it proved to be a very satisfying one, giving rise to a very professional result. Alison has also been supportive in some of the more technical updates to the website.

Thanks to Phillip Dews for acting as Treasurer and Vice President for this year and for his involvement in lodging an objection to the Shierlaw Avenue development.

Finally, my sincere personal thanks go to the members of the SHPA for entrusting me with the position of President over the past five years.