

2018 Annual Report

2018 was a year of great change – for Epping and surrounds, and for the Epping Civic Trust. But at year end, the Trust is in a stronger position with new members and a renewed energy for lobbying for a better Epping. The Trust has stepped up and raised its profile both with council, local residents and other organisations.

Key issues during the year that the Trust addressed were:

Development Applications: These kept coming in thick and fast – from small residential applications, medium density unit blocks, and huge major projects in the town centre. The Trust made submissions on more than 15 applications, or responded to existing applications as they passed through the various stages of approval. We attended numerous Planning Panel meetings, speaking at most. Preparing responses to DAs takes time as there are numerous documents to read, and the devil can be in the detail.

By far the most contentious DA was for 44-48 Oxford Street, and involves demolition of a heritage cottage. Whilst ultimately the battle to save the cottage was unsuccessful, the process galvanised local residents and included a rally and petition. People became more engaged in the development issues in Epping, and discovered how hard it is for the community to have a proper say in what is happening around us.

This, and other DAs in the town centre though highlighted concerns in how council planning staff are approaching the development of Epping. Many residents do not realise that our elected councillors have limited say in developments. But council planners have a key role – through the application process and in their reports to the Planning Panels where the matters are decided. The fight to save the cottage, and other DAs, were worryingly short of any appreciation by staff of the concerns of residents, and too much weight was given to facilitating development over and above the zoning.

Council Liaison: The Trust has built an excellent working relationship with all our local councillors, but particularly the three from the City of Parramatta (in which most of the Trust area now sits). Approachable and supportive, Cllrs Wearne, Tyrell and Davis are to be thanked for their hard work for our area and genuine desire to see the best outcomes. Strong voices like these are needed if Epping is get the infrastructure funding it needs and deserves for community facilities run by council. They also have a key role to play in defending the Heritage Conservation Areas (essential buffer zones to stop the spread of high-rise development into the older residential areas), and making sure long-term planning for Epping achieves better results than we have seen to date.

Infrastructure: This is an absolutely vital topic in the coming year, so the Trust kicked off the topic with a survey on the future uses of the Rawson Street car park site and the Library site – two of the three essential council-owned areas (along with Dence Park). Thanks to all for your feedback – the report has now been tabled at council and showed you want these areas to be preserved and enhanced for community use in the future. At year end, council also bought the Boronia Grove Centre – an existing facility that can now be adapted for public use. 2019 will see important plans for this building and Dence Park be completed and it is essential council staff listen to what local residents want.

We also made a detailed submission to Council on their Operating Plan and Budget for 2018/9, and highlighted the fact that in our view Epping was being significantly short-changed in the amount of funding allocated towards Capital Works in our ward. We also commented on the Epping Town Centre Traffic Study, with our major point being that residential development should be limited until infrastructure and facilities were completed to support the increased population

Change at the Trust: At the February AGM, long-serving President Graham Lovell stepped down, and we later acknowledged his dedication and hard work at a lunch. New people joined the committee and have brought skills and energy. The Trust was incorporated as a not for profit association in May – part of important modernisation needed. The Trust's new website was launched, and we are using our Facebook page to inform more residents about our existence. This has led to a growth in membership for the first time in many years – up 17% to 397 members in December 2018. Two new sub committees were formed to look after topics in more detail – North Epping and liaison with Hornsby Council, and tree preservation. Another committee for west Epping will start in early 2019. Four busy General Meetings were held with a range of speakers and topics, and a noticeably higher attendance.

Further modernisation is needed to ensure the Trust is efficient and relevant. To that end, a fully online membership system has just launched via our website. This will make it quick and easy for people to join, and help with sending out information electronically.

2019 Budget: One of the ways to modernise the Trust is to have an annual budget. This allows members to see what the committee proposes to use Trust funds for and allows for efficient work during the year. The committee has approved the draft budget below:

Epping Civic Trust - 2019 Budget			
Income			
Membership fees	4000		
Donations	3000		
Bank Interest	500		
Total income	7500		
Expenses			
Hall expenses	160		
Newsletter Printing	1500		
Newsletter Distribution	150		
Other printing (flyers etc)	500		
Insurance premium	800		
PO Box rentals	254		
Facebook advertising	500		
Website maintenance/hosting	500		
Subscriptions (BPN)	70		
Presentation gifts	100		
Stationery/phone/postage	150		
Total Expenses	4684		
<i>Expert consultant expenses</i>	<i>4000</i>		

Thank You: To all members who have made submissions, attended meetings, went to the rally and voiced support on Facebook – thank you.

To those on the committee – Vice President, Mike Moffatt, Treasurer/assistant treasurer Alan and Valma Swales, Minutes secretary Ron Dunstan, Newsletter editor Judith Dawes, committee members Graeme Wyber, Leo Hart, Margaret McCartney, Anne Mulherin, Ruth Evans, Malcolm Watson – my appreciation and thanks. Also, to former committee members Emma Bush and Norman Jessup. Thanks to our band of volunteers who deliver the newsletter: Brian Berry, Ray Bush, Judith Dawes, Alan Swales, Joan Wilcox, Anne Ure, Graeme Wyber, Ron Dunstan, Ruth Evans, Rosemary Jackson, Sally Rickards, Claude Rigney and Noel Trompp. The Trust also appreciates the work of Ian Scott on the website, and our auditor Ivan Drury.

Janet McGarry
President