



EPHING CIVIC TRUST

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Newsletter

August 2021

August General Meeting via Zoom

General Meeting - 17th August

Due to the postponement of the Local Government elections (see box), there will be a regular General Meeting of the Trust on Tuesday 17th August. Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions at the time of writing, this will need to be a virtual meeting over Zoom. Everyone can participate – either online, or by phoning with a landline or mobile.

The meeting details are:

Tuesday 17th August, 7.30pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 862 5294 9271

Passcode: 343005

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86252949271?pwd=Vjdqb0VzcFh2ZnlTWDFDZUFvNTIIZz09>

OR

Phone Number: 8015 6011

Local Government Elections

These elections (delayed from September 2020 due to COVID-19), were due to be held on 4 September 2021. Following the most recent outbreak of COVID in Sydney, and the lockdown during the lead up to the elections, the State Government have postponed them until 4 December.

The Trust will have a Meet the Candidates meeting for Hornsby Shire Council on Monday 15th November in North Epping, and one for City of Parramatta on Tuesday 16th November in Epping.

FROM THE PRESIDENT, JANET MCGARRY ▶▶▶

With the delay in the long-awaited local government elections, it seems timely to reflect on the role of council in the life of our community. I have been particularly reminded of this in the last couple of weeks through two issues that the Trust has played a large part in.

First the good news story - the prosecution of a developer and tree removal company for the illegal destruction of mature indigenous trees at 52 Essex Street in Epping. You can read more of the details of this case on page 4, but what this successful prosecution has demonstrated to me is several important factors when dealing with council. Firstly, I have no doubt at all that except for the quick observation of our former vice-president, the late Margaret McCartney, and her persistence in contacting, lobbying and following up with council staff, nothing would have happened with this developer. They would have got away with what has been found to be illegal actions.

Council cannot have eyes everywhere – all residents have a role to play in noticing things that look out of place and reporting them. Commenting on Facebook, or having a yarn to your neighbour over your garden fence, is never a

replacement for actually speaking up. But council also needs to be proactive, not reactive. The planners and planning panels are happy to pass developments, and say there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect the environment, or heritage, or residents' quality of life. They are much more reluctant to enforce conditions of consent or go as far as take people to court.

And finally, when there is a success, council (not the community through the Trust) should be publicising this far and wide. And be willing to step up and put the fine money back into the community.

On the not-so-good news side, you'll also read later about a boarding house DA for Kent Street. This case is ongoing but suffice it to say that the council has not covered themselves in glory. Residents have pointed out numerous deficiencies in the Council report on the DA. Unfortunately, Council has failed to acknowledge these inaccuracies and submit an amended report to the Land & Environment Court. Is it any wonder residents get disillusioned and feel the odds are stacked against them?

Membership and Committee Thank you to the many members who promptly renewed this year - and nearly half of you have also added a donation which makes a big difference to the Trust's funds. If your membership is still due, you will find a reminder with this mailing/email. And, if you know friends, relatives or neighbours interested in local issues, please tell them about the Trust and encourage them to join. You can find out all the necessary information at <https://eppingcivictrust.org/membership>

Development Applications

2-16 Epping Road and 2-4 Forest Grove, Epping (DA/397/2020) – the Austino Site

Artist's impression of Austino development



Following the refusal of this DA by the Sydney Central City Planning Panel in December last year, the developer has appealed to the Land and Environment Court. In April, the applicant lodged an amended DA – with some major changes to access to the site, and other minor adjustments. However, substantial issues remain and the Trust made a detailed submission. The case was due to be heard in the Land and

Environment Court in early August, but this has been delayed until October as the council has requested more time to consider the plans and community feedback.

73 Kent Street (DA/180/2021) – Boarding House

This DA epitomises so much that is wrong in local planning. It proposed a large block-like building for 19 lodgers on a site currently occupied by a single dwelling, on a residential street. The planning rules for boarding houses are controlled by the State Government, which is currently amending them to prevent them being abused. For example, for-profit operators try to squeeze micro-units onto residential blocks, as in the case of this DA.

The DA was refused by the Local Planning Panel in May, however the report by the council's planner was inadequate. It totally failed to consider numerous examples of how the DA failed to meet the planning requirements, which the community clearly articulated with more than 70 submissions opposing the development.

Predictably the applicant has rushed to the Land and Environment Court to try to force through approval. At the time of writing a mediation conference is due in late July.

16 Victoria Street, Epping (DA/474/2021)



This attractive home in a Heritage Conservation Area has been the subject of two DAs in recent months. Both have included unsympathetic adaptations to the heritage fabric of the house, and the surrounding site. The number of applications like this in HCA areas is very frustrating. There are clear guidelines on what can and can't be done to houses in these streets, and it is a case of buyer beware if people want to make different changes.

Epping Schools

In May, within days of each other, two major planning proposals were put on exhibition by Schools Infrastructure NSW. There was voluminous paperwork, and a brief, poorly advertised period for locals to lodge comments.

Epping certainly needs new school facilities. In fact, these should have been planned when the suburb was up-zoned, and delivered by now. The proposals are not in themselves intrinsically wrong, but they both contained elements that could be better. And they will, together when fully open, only increase the number of primary school places in West Epping by 500 students. The Trust does not think this is sufficient. We are also frustrated that there is no mention of where these students will go to high school – a pending bottleneck in years to come.

Epping South Public School

A brand-new school is proposed for the old TAFE site on Chelmsford Ave. This site has been empty for many years and was acquired by the Department of Education in 2019.

But it comes with many challenges – access is down a narrow suburban 'laneway', key pathways have serious stormwater issues, it is a sloping site that includes valuable remnant Sydney Blue Gum forest that must be preserved. The plans are a compromise that will haunt the final outcome – there are no sports facilities (except one multi-use court) for up to 1,000 children. The buildings are planned in stages, which will impact the school's operation from day one. And the parking/access way is grossly inadequate and will affect local residents.

Some of these issues could have been better addressed in the proposal, and it is very concerning that City of Parramatta Council may have to pick up the tab (and the workload) for many enhancements to surrounding roads and pathways. Surely this infrastructure should be part of the project and not fall to ratepayers?

Schools Infrastructure NSW have an ambitious schedule for this project, with work to start in October 2021 and the school to open in January 2023.

Proposed Epping South School Site - A Brief History

The land at 86 Chelmsford Ave Epping is proposed for a new public school in Epping. But what was on this land before today?

The land was part of an 1823 original grant to James Dunlop, a Government astronomer of Parramatta. Over the next one hundred years, subdivided parcels of this land were owned by the Mobbs family, the Eyles family and the Catts family (of Catt's Nursery fame). In 1898-99, an old colonial home with servant quarters was erected and called 'Cambewarra'. The name Cambewarra is derived from 'a site on the hill with fine views all around'. Vistas from the top of Mobbs Lane looking west and south west today are indeed worth viewing.

In 1914, the property was purchased by Mrs Kathleen Hill who lived there. The winding forked drive entrance from Mobbs Lane to the homestead was lined by pine trees, and very tall eucalypts.

The image below is a 1918 Hill family photo taken from Edenlee St, Epping looking west. The pine trees along the drive to the Cambewarra home were dwarfed by a line of eucalypts.



▲ Photo from 'ABC' of Epping, Alex McAndrew

The site was popular for rabbiting, picking blackberries, gathering mushrooms or catching crayfish down at the creek (now Mobbs Lane Reserve). Mrs Hill's daughters also kept a few horses, and had hundreds of birds in aviaries. Potential buyers in the 1950's suggested that a Drive-In Theatre be established, but the Hill daughters refused to sell. It wasn't until 1956 that they finally accepted an offer from the Channel 7 television station. The land was then subdivided, with the old house finally demolished between 1958 and 1961. This parcel of land was sold to the Crown in 1974 to build a Carlingford annex of the Ryde Horticultural College. Later in the 1980's it became a NSW TAFE campus. When the campus was no longer required, it was sold to the Department of Education for the possible location of a new public primary school.

Source Material:

1. An ABC of Epping – A Handbook for Residents by Alex McAndrew (2001)
2. 'From the Skies Aerial Photos of Sydney in 1943' - RTA CD ROM

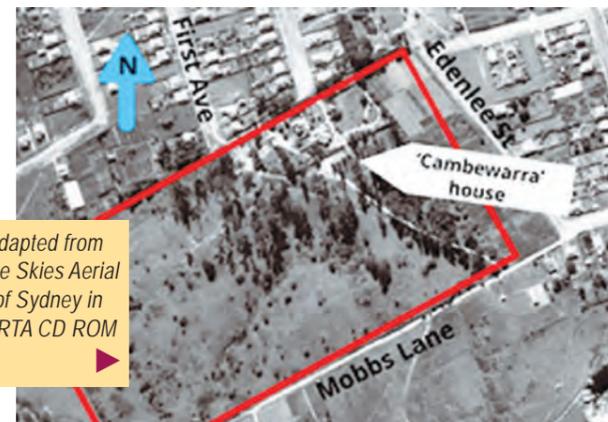
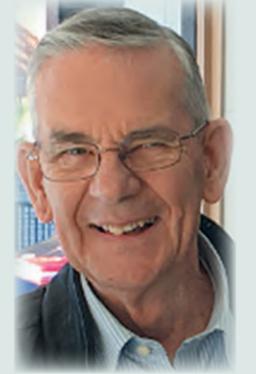


Image adapted from 'From the Skies Aerial Photos of Sydney in 1943' - RTA CD ROM

Congratulations to Graham Lovell, Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM), awarded for service to the Community of Epping. President of the Epping Civic Trust from 1976-1979 and 1981-2017.



WEST EPPING SUBCOMMITTEE

The bicycle crossing on Midson Road near Wyralla Avenue which forms part of the Epping to Carlingford Cycleway has been completed. ▶



Mitigation works to address traffic congestion issues around Epping West Public School have been completed in Ryde Street. ▶

The mitigation works in Ward Street, alongside Epping West Public School, have yet to commence.



Epping West Public School

The plans are to add two new buildings facing Ward Street, which will offer contemporary facilities and replace some of the demountables that currently occupy the school oval. Epping West Public School is grossly overcrowded with 1,300 students, but the school population will only drop to 1,000 after this \$28 million project. The temporary classrooms will not all be removed and the playground/sports area will not be restored. This is simply not good enough.



52 Essex Street, Epping – A Big Win!

In 2018, the developer who owned this block, moved to demolish the houses on it, and try and fit four new lots on the site. They had a DA from the old Hornsby Council days, and time was running out. The only problem was a stand of mature native trees at the rear of the site, which the DA required to be preserved. They were in the way. So, one day, a tree removal company appeared and the chain saws whirled. All were removed.



Trust vice-president, the late Margaret McCartney, saw the destruction. She tried to intervene on site, and she contacted council. By the time they arrived it was too late. But she did not give up. Over coming weeks and months, she lobbied council to take action. And not minimal slap on the wrist type of action, but actual proper legal proceedings.

One could almost say the Council was shamed into it, but finally they acted. The outcome, finalised in June 2021, was that the developer was convicted of illegal removal. They were fined \$200,000, and had costs awarded against them. The tree removal company was also convicted and fined \$50,000. The owner now needs to plant specified mature replacement trees, and maintain them. We will be watching!

But we are also calling on Council to spend every dollar from these fines on tree planting in Epping – street trees in the roads around Essex Street and beyond. Every dollar! Watch this space.

Development Contributions Plan 2021

In June 2021, the City of Parramatta passed an ambitious capital works plan across the Local Government Area, with the funding to come from the developer contributions paid from the numerous new buildings in Epping. The plan proposes over \$450 million to be spent on key infrastructure in Epping over the next 20 years.

The Trust supported the overall thrust of the plan, though our detailed submission highlighted notable omissions and questioned how much would actually eventuate. Worryingly, the State Government has plans to water down developer contributions that could sharply reduce these essential funds for councils to provide key services. This is not in the public interest.

Epping Community Centre

Long promised and yet to be opened, the new Boronia Grove Community Centre was due to be unveiled on 26 June. COVID restrictions prevented that, but the work has been completed, with a new deck area at the back overlooking Boronia Park. This section will become a café, and the council is seeking an operator. Meantime, post-lockdown, we look forward to seeing the Centre and we encourage its use by local groups.



USEFUL CONTACTS

Members who have concerns about issues in Epping are always free to contact the Trust through our email or website. However, if you have issues that you would prefer to discuss with our elected representatives, here are their contact details:

City of Parramatta Council,
PO Box 32, Parramatta NSW 2124

Councillor Lorraine Wearne
Phone: 0416 035 817
lwearne@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Donna Davis
Phone: 0447 745 402
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Councillor Bill Tyrrell
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Hornsby Shire Council,
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PARLIAMENT OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

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EPPING CIVIC TRUST
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Ordinary General Meeting dates for 2021

Church of Christ Hall, 31 Bridge St, Epping. 7.30 pm

- Tuesday 16 November - General Meeting - Council Election Meeting - City of Parramatta Council - all candidates invited.

Meet the Candidates meeting - Monday 15 Nov - Hornsby Shire Council (in North Epping, Venue TBC)