



The Carlton Residents Association Inc.

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4 August 15

Mr Ben Rimmer
Chief Executive Officer
City of Melbourne

Dear Mr Rimmer,

Re: Issues for discussion at the CoRBA meeting on 12 Aug, on behalf of CRA

Thank you for this opportunity to raise deep concerns and frustrations encountered in relation to council officers, over many years, stymieing community initiatives and pursuing their own agenda.

- There is persistent lack of genuine community engagement, and as consequence, community cynicism towards the council. It is important that any engagement 'results' or findings are seriously considered or, if rejected, then at least CoM should state why.
- There are far too many examples of CoM officers, ironically in the Community Strengthening area, undermining the very outcomes for which the community has campaigned. The ultimately successful establishment of the Katherine Syme Library and Community Centre is a prime example of this. It owes its current form to the efforts of the informed community members in defending their needs and of sympathetic councillors wrestling against officers' agenda. This became clear during several expensive, unproductive 'sham' community consultations.
- The meddlesome counterproductive actions around the relocation of the toy library is a further example. The community found a solution to lack of space for the toy library (which is housed in a broom cupboard in Trades Hall), in collaboration with the Office of Housing. This followed appeals for space for a toy library at the Kathleen Syme Centre, which were rejected. Even when a suitable space was provided by the Office of Housing, the community had to take the matter to councillors in order to have council officers curtail counterproductive actions which threatened this outcome.
- The lack of due process in relation to Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show in the World Heritage Listed Royal Exhibition Gardens. Officers disbanded the community consultation meetings, stating that the event would occur regardless of persistent non-compliance issues. The contract with IMG was simply rolled on; well-founded community concerns were ignored.
- The Carlton Connect project. Officers actively dismissed genuine community concern in relation to planning matters around this site, choosing to support the non-rate paying University of Melbourne. MU has rapacious 'form' in ignoring the community in which it is sited. Council fails to recognise this.
- East-West Link: CoM was complicit in the Coalition government in support of this contentious project. There was strongly expressed opposition throughout the community, yet the CoM failed to speak out about the proposal to ruin Royal Park. Instead the CoM accepted with alacrity 'compensation' from the LMA, handing the park over for interchange for roads in return for financial benefit - \$13 million for parks and gardens capital works. All of this whilst spending in excess of \$200,000 preparing a suite of CoM amelioration strategies for the now abandoned project.

Leaving aside these frustrations, we have two questions please:

- What can be done to protect the community against the brutal attacks from councillors on issues raised at Future Melbourne Committee meetings by community members? CRA Member (planner and former councillor) Ewan Ogilvy has written to you separately illustrating this.
- What can be done about high insurance costs to residents associations, which largely swallow our reduced annual grants and effectively support the insurance industry, not the community. The current absurdity is that officers require residents associations to devote over 50% of their Council grant to fund insurance. This is a relatively new impost. Officers have been asked on numerous occasions to sort out this matter. The high cost effectively uses up council grants E.g. could CoM take out a joint indemnity, to cover all its residents associations.

Please Note: Extensive evidence and correspondence on all points raised below can be provided.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greta Bird".

Greta Bird
Committee, Carlton Residents Assn