

Councillors' feedback...feedback...feedback



Impacts of the Global Financial Crisis on our City

Events play out in all sorts of ways, most for the best but others not so fortuitously. Just as St Leonards was left

with a construction site for many years as the 1987 recession delayed the completion of the Forum, so we are seeing a delay in the completion and opening of the retail component of the Chatswood Interchange and a possibly longer one in the construction of its residential component. Similarly, development of the hotel site adjacent to Civic Place has been delayed. It was hoped that its construction would occur concurrently.

Other Chatswood CBD projects have been affected also. Council's planners have slated two sites for commercial office development. One, in Railway St, has been vacant for many years. It was to be developed as part of the railway enclosure masterplan of the late 90s. Its owners have repeatedly told Council that there is insufficient demand for office space to warrant development. Recently they have applied to the State Government for permission to convert the site to residential. Council will strenuously defend its planning position, conscious that Chatswood's future as a commercial centre of significance may be at stake. It will remind the State government that commercial development is essential if our city is to fulfil its role in job creation as part of the State government's own plans for Sydney's development over coming decades.

The second site is the Thomas St car park site, recently sold by Council. That site was to house a public car park to be gifted to Council, as well as agreed proportions of commercial and residential floor space. That project has always been large enough to be subject to the State Government's call-in

mechanism and Council was hoping that the project would progress with agreements among all parties. Financial and circumstantial pressures have now conspired to cause the developer to seek changes to the planning agreement, seeking an increase to the size of the residential component and diminution of the commercial. And, if the adjusted project goes ahead, it is likely that the car park and residential components will be built first, with the commercial awaiting an upturn in the market.

Council and Councillors will have some tricky decisions to make over coming months. We will be seeking outcomes that:

- assist urban consolidation, through development around established transport nodes;
- recognise the need for development to assist economic recovery in Sydney and NSW;
- and safeguard the interests of our own city.

As is being shown in Ku-ring-gai, just saying 'No' will prove not to be the right answer.

Population Policy

Whether residential development in our city is currently economic will become apparent in coming months. It would seem to me that Willoughby is such a desirable place to live that 'build and they will buy' is a likely scenario. Council seeks revenue from developers to augment Council infrastructure so that it can accommodate the new arrivals. Our ability to do that has been compromised by recent State Government decisions and legislative changes. Of similar concern is the pressure such development places on local State Government infrastructure (eg. hospitals and schools). We are seeing a major redevelopment of the Royal North Shore Hospital. Council also has had discussions with Department of Education and Training (DET) about the state of our public schools and their plans for expansion to meet growth in numbers which have for some years now exceeded DET forecasts. The school prob-

lems are being addressed, if belatedly and partly due to the Federal 'Education Revolution'. Nonetheless, there are limits to which the local infrastructure base can be expanded. At the same time, we hear that the flow of immigration to Australia is at unprecedented rates. Perhaps it is time for Local Government to take a stand and demand that all levels of government get serious about agreeing on a Population Policy that will underpin a sustainable future for this country.

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Kate Lamb

Recently I spent two weeks up north. We drove from Darwin to Broome and back in two weeks. What an eyeful the Kimberley is – and so very different from suburban Artarmon!

The trip was organised by my daughter who has been working in Darwin since the beginning of the year and who has, in that time, become nicely oriented to the country and culture. The scale of the landscape and its amazing variations of texture, colour and form really do have to be seen to be believed. En route, we visited a number of community-run galleries displaying Aboriginal art works. Most of the galleries were located within communities and these were similarly varied. Some were clearly thriving, some were chaotic and some pretty depressing. I bought two paintings, a basket and a carved boab nut which I am going to donate to our Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO).

You may be aware that the AHO, located in Northbridge, is unique in Australia. Whilst there is a fair bit of rhetoric about Councils achieving economies of scale in resource sharing projects, there is less evidence of it on the ground. This initiative has grown from a germ of an idea and the cost was originally

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shared between four Northside Councils. There are now seven of us as well as a country cousin – Armidale-Dumaresq! The main role of the AHO is to advise us in protecting and promoting our Aboriginal heritage. This is done through documenting sites, educating and informing the Council staff whose work impacts on the sites. These sites are under threat every day from development, vandalism and natural erosion. The AHO provides us with a direct link through to the Metro Land Council, representing the traditional owners of the land we live on, the Guringai people. A further very important role is that of providing education services especially to our young people through school programs. The Office has an informative website: <http://www.aboriginalheritage.org>

I have just returned from the Local Government Association's Annual Conference in Tamworth. Regional centres throughout NSW compete to host the conference as it provides a great boost to the local economy when 600 delegates arrive in town! You may have seen that Bob Carr used the opportunity to launch his commendable campaign against trans fats, doughnuts, biscuits and fried foods.

As usual, the issues at Conference this year were many and varied. However there was a focus on how we can, as a sector, better organise to deal with the State government's predations. Kristina Keneally, the current Planning Minister, delivered a polished but unresponsive address. The inexorable stripping of local government's planning responsibilities is to continue; our attempts to restore community participation in planning processes have been almost completely unsuccessful. Amongst other things, the Conference unanimously recommended cancellation of the CBD Metro in favour of constructing North and South West rail services including completion of the Chatswood – Parramatta line (although a number of Labor delegates left the room rather than be seen voting against Macquarie St!).

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Stuart Coppock

ABC site

Lindsay Bennelong Developments is actively marketing the site. The development is at the point of design resolution and this has produced some positive

things. It may well be that the motor vehicles showrooms will be changed to another showroom function. The community facilities could be placed into a special purpose stand alone building which is an added bonus. It has also been suggested that a hydrotherapy pool is to be included into the community facilities. All of this is of course subject to the design process and ultimately an application to Council to seek approval for these changes. However, it is positive information for this development.

Charter Hall project (Former Council Depot)

It is expected that the bulky goods centre located in the former Council Depot site (Cnr Reserve Rd and Frederick St) will open after Christmas. Certainly, there have been noticeable changes to the site in recent weeks.

Library at Tindale

The plans have been on exhibition and there have been very few objections. Council has still to approve the DA which will mean a post-Christmas opening.

Public Transport in the AIA

The State Transport Authority is advised that a new STA bus service will operate in the AIA. It will enter the AIA at Clarendon St (at the ABC site) and travel down Reserve Rd back to the Highway. This service complements the Artarmon Loop Service provided by Council.

The Artarmon Loop Service is currently carrying about 4,000 passengers a week. Tenders are out to continue the trial period. Expressions of

interest suggest that an improvement in operating costs might be possible- this would be a positive outcome as the service is currently well short of operating at break-even. As the funding for the service is taken out of the special e-restore levy, while the service operates at a loss, the cost of this takes money away from other e-restore projects. Officers are investigating how Council can get more value for the money that is being invested in this service.

Waste Depot Artarmon Industrial Area (AIA)

The Waste Depot in McLaughlin St has been approved by Council. Tenders for the new operation have been called.

Design Competition at St Leonards

Council has authorised a competition for a concept design for the use of the land that Council purchased to construct the Chandos St Bridge at St Leonards (adjacent to St Leonards Station abutting Chandos St) and land owned by Alto Ford which is adjacent to that site.

Local residents have suggested to me that the site should be a car parking station to take up commuter parking but the brief for the design competition is not that specific.


Civic Place

Civic Place is ahead of schedule and project costs have been as expected.

Impact of new planning laws at Chatswood

The size of developments in the Chatswood CBD will now mean that they automatically fall under the new 3A Planning Laws. Currently there are two such applications - the Thomas St car park and 7 Station St. What this means is that the applicant can submit a development application that does not accord with a Council's planning objectives and the State Department will decide the outcome.

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