

Councillors' feedback...feedback...feedback



Barry Thompson

Council 'modernisation': You might have seen an early-April article in the local 'newspaper' about changes to council boundaries. Mayors Burman of Hornsby and McCaffrey of North Sydney were airing

their views on amalgamations. Cllr Fogarty of Willoughby gave his view in a letter to the same paper the next week. The matter was further discussed at the May meeting of NSROC. The issue is contentious. It reared its head last year when the Association of Consulting Engineers advocated the formation of 11 super-councils around Sydney. Their view was that fewer stronger voices might attract more attention from other levels of government at the same time as marshalling greater skills for planning and resource management at the local level. The NSW LGSA (Local Government and Shires Association), under President McCaffrey, responded by proposing a committee to consider 'modernisation of local government'. Willoughby Council subsequently decided to run a Councillor workshop to consider the impacts of 'modernisation'. That workshop is scheduled for May 18.

The next State government may find the idea of amalgamations advantageous locally, across Sydney and in regional areas. I will leave it to you to imagine how the North Shore might be reorganised. Outside Sydney, many shire councils have been declared economic basket cases – and the future prospects of many towns are

at stake. 'Modernisation' might involve some new variations of old ideas, such as greater collaboration among autonomous Councils. ROCs (Regional Organisations of Councils) have been in existence for some years with what I regard as very mixed results, despite strong support of the local NSROC by Willoughby. Following the 2011 State elections, Willoughby Council will need to be on full alert to ensure it is not disadvantaged in any upcoming bunfight and to assert its position as a well-run, transparent, regional centre intent on delivering worthwhile outcomes for its residents and other stakeholders. The pace of change on this issue would probably be timed to force actions at the next local government elections in September 2012. As I have said previously in relation to other issues, watch this space!

Heritage Wins: As part of Heritage Week, Council recently presented awards for built heritage outcomes in our city over the past two years. Entries for the awards were again of a very high standard. I am pleased to inform that two of the winners were local, one in Artarmon and one in Naremburn. Artarmon's commendation came for the adaptive reuse of the old 'council depot' building on Reserve Rd to become 'Home HQ', our new bulky goods shopping precinct. Naremburn's award came for the extensions to St Cuthbert's church –wherein the church was literally 'turned around'. Both projects were worthy winners and will be major assets for our area in the future. I congratulate all involved for the innovation, resource efficiency and flair of their work.

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Kate Lamb

Council has two important documents on exhibition right now. The **4 Year Delivery Program and Operational Plan & Budget for 2010–11** provides a better integrated approach

to strategic planning along with the current year's budgeted activity. It is nonetheless a complex document reflecting the nature of our responsibilities. Feedback closed on 21 May and details are on our website.

Every property owner in the city will have received a brochure advising of the exhibition of our **Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2009 and Amendments to Willoughby Development Control Plan**. It has been prepared as required by the NSW Government so as to bring standard controls and terminology into use throughout NSW and because of that, all properties are affected. In most cases this simply means a name change for your property's zoning (e.g Residential "2a" is now called "R2"). We have been required to provide for increased residential density and therefore some areas are proposed for 'upzoning'. Council's practice has been to select those areas closer to public transport, with the exception being Conservation Areas such as Artarmon. More details can be found on the Council website. at www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au.

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Before the last election, many people I spoke to seemed aware of the need to reduce private car use but said that because public transport was so poor it was hard to get about any other way. Others who didn't have ready or regular access to a car had even fewer options but have all the same needs – to shop, to visit doctors and to socialise and pursue interests. It is with great pleasure then that I can report that from 27 April and supported by our special e.restore rate, Council is providing a **free shuttle bus** on a limited number of local transport routes, in off peak hours. For residents of Artarmon, the Monday Loop connects Artarmon, St Leonards and all parts of Naremburn. Starting at 10.30 am there will be a bus leaving the from Hampden Rd shops (west side of the station) every 45 minutes with the last one leaving at 5.15 pm. The Friday Loop connects Chatswood, Artarmon and Northbridge, via the Leisure Centre. The first one will leave from the Dougherty Centre at 10.30 am and every hour thereafter till the 5.30 - which is one way only, to Northbridge. You can flag the shuttle down in any safe area other than a "no stopping" zone! This exciting development is a trial and we expect to be refining aspects of the service, depending on the level of patronage so please – help spread the word! You can pick up a Loop brochure at Council's offices or the Library.

It is with great sadness that I mark the passing of Captain Pieter Cordia, husband of the late Maylean (nee Heffron) and much valued resident of Artarmon. I loved them both and I like to think of them as reunited now.

Visit my blog - www.katelamb.blogspot.com ■



Stuart Coppock

Council has received a report for a proposal for a **solar power generation farm** on the Albert Avenue car park at Chatswood. It is proposed that the power generated will be around 350kw with possibilities

for expansion. The power will be distributed via private wire to council properties. It could supply up to 20% of the energy needs of the premises to which the power is to be supplied.

This part of Council needs to plan for imminent increase in energy prices. The recent Australian Energy Regulator Draft Determination proposes a network tariff increase of up to 172% for domestic customers. Small business on low voltage should expect an increase of 145% on network charge and Council should expect a network distribution charge increase of 150% for street lighting.

Council's **Asset Management Plan** is one of several plans now required by the State Government pursuant to their Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements. This report will be a good snap shot of the financial health of Council. The financial data will mean that a plan to allocate an appropriate sum of money to maintain infrastructure will be undertaken rather than have a sum in the accounts which was little more than a book entry. While this may seem somewhat abstract, it is a significant step forward for the financial well being of Councils.

The construction of **The Concourse** is on track and within budget as advised to Council. An additional borrowing has been advised to Councillors by the Council's GM due to shortfall in the funding plan. The borrowing is for a further \$25M that will bring the borrowings of the project costs to a level of 46%. The GM has also advised Councillors that it is expected \$20M of this borrowing will be received when certain DAs are approved in the Chatswood CBD.

Most of the difficult **Burley Griffin Incinerator** structural work is completed and the focus is now on the final finishes to the building. The lift shaft concrete works have now been completed and the excavation has been back filled. Works are now about to focus on the internal fit out (bathrooms), relocation of furnace door, new windows, repairing of guttering and flashings, installation and commissioning of lift and all of the essential services.

Council's **Audit Committee**, on which I am the Councillor representative, had its first meeting on 21 April. A work plan has been adopted and, significantly, an Internal Auditor has been appointed to assist with governance. This Internal Auditor is a part time auditor to the group of 6 councils in this Internal Audit, and with so many Councils in the Scheme only a small number of hours will be left for actual audit work. The Committee is aware of this issue and it will be a matter of review and report. The Committee will be looking for the development of comparative data across the Councils to assist the assessment of performance on issues such as service levels.

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