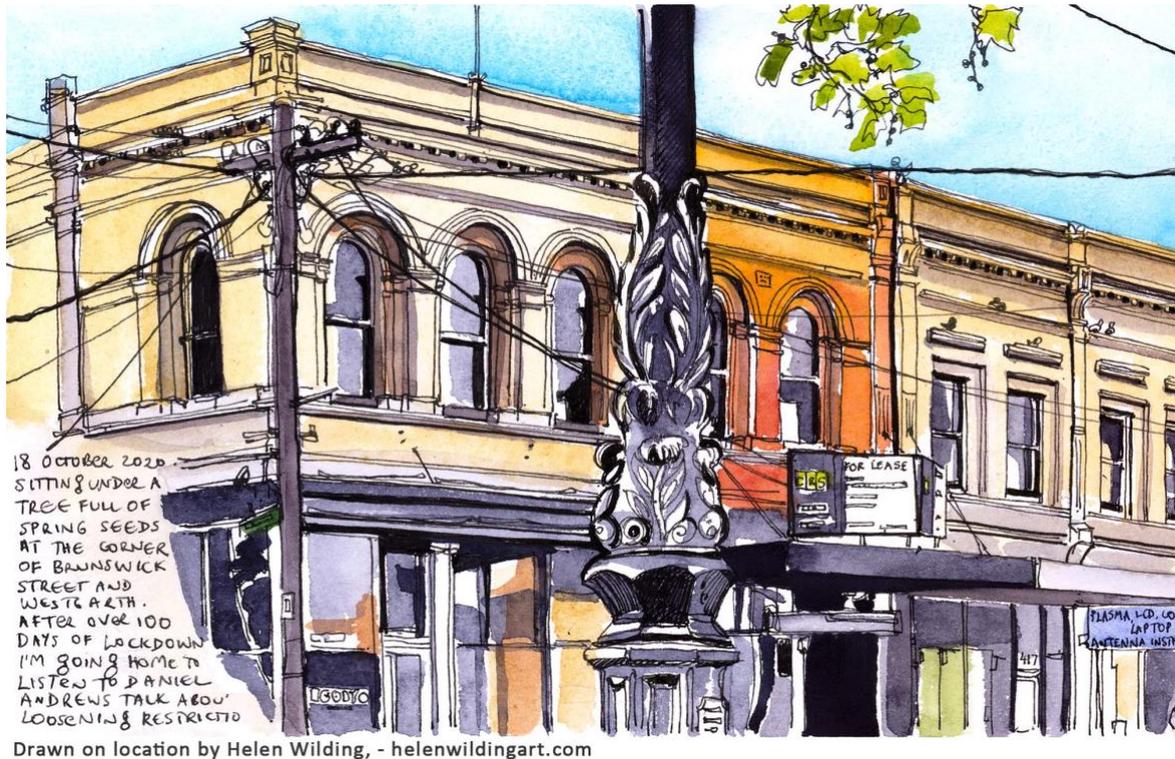


Fitzroy Residents Association Annual Report 2020-2021

Martin Brennan
Chair, Fitzroy Residents Association



The Fitzroy Residents Association was established in November 1969 in response to the planned large-scale demolition of Fitzroy and North Fitzroy by the state government. In the 1970s the FRA sought to maintain and renew our 19th century housing and associated architecture of Melbourne's first suburb. It also sought to reform the Fitzroy City Council and build community-based services and seek policies and plans that were responsive to community needs and interests.

The objective of the FRA is much as it was: to keep Fitzroy liveable and sustainable. Today we add 'equitable', ensuring that residents across a diverse demographic are provided with the support and services they require including social and affordable housing, and jobs. Our mission statement is to promote, protect and enhance residential amenity.

The FRA priorities reflect members' interests and concerns:

- Heritage Protection and Conservation
- Planning and Advocacy
- City Strategy, Policy and Guidelines
- Homelessness and Social Issues
- Climate Action
- Participation

This has been a challenging yet productive year for the FRA. We have been challenged by COVID19 and the resultant lockdowns but productive across a range of issues and opportunities that reflect our mandate to protect and support the liveability and sustainability of our suburb and the City. The FRA Committee has been unable to meet in person, and so zoom has become the platform and not the Union Club Hotel for our monthly meetings.



The FRA continues to seek development that respects our streetscapes and heritage and ensures buildings are sustainable. We support residents in seeking changes where they are needed to proposed developments through the Planning Decisions Committee of Council and VCAT. We are not opposed to development but seek input where it is needed to ensure an outcome that contributes to residential amenity and liveability.

During 2021 we have been a party to several VCAT hearings that require significant input from those familiar with planning law and procedures and can provide expert responses to heritage, architectural integrity and Environmental Sustainable Design.

Whilst we experienced difficulties during the pandemic and lockdowns we did pose the question 'What next?' and this remains foremost in the minds of many. We had planned to play a part in providing input into answering this question, but restrictions prevented us from holding a 'PubTalk' in 2021.

We did however continue to address issues and opportunities that our members and friends are interested in and concerned about including the residential and commercial developments proposed for our suburb, seeking to ensure they provide a positive addition to our streetscapes and neighbourhoods and which respond to a zero-carbon future. The FRA provided input into a range of Council agendas and issues including the City of Yarra 2020 – 2021 Budget and the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Strategic Review. The FRA also made submissions to the Yarra City Council's Planning and Development Committee.

The over-reach by many developers continues to challenge the FRA and the Council. We therefore have sought along with other like-minded resident associations to protect our heritage, environment and the public realm and ensure that current and future residents are accommodated in buildings fit for purpose and respond to the local character of our neighbourhoods.

The FRA was active in protecting our neighbourhoods from over-development and ensuring that future developments meet the needs of current and future residents. Developments, be they residential or commercial, need to be sympathetic to the neighbourhood character in height, mass and heritage response as well as meet high standards of environmental performance.

Development pressures across Yarra are activating residents. New groups and associations are forming. Newer groups include the South Smith Street Action Group, the World Heritage Precinct Protection Coalition and Protect Clifton Hill. Fitzroy residents will also be aware of People of Gertrude Street.

At our first FRA committee meeting in 2020 portfolios were allocated to support the priorities and activities set out in Plan FRA 2020-2024.

Martin Brennan – Chair & Secretary: Community Partnerships & Strategic Planning

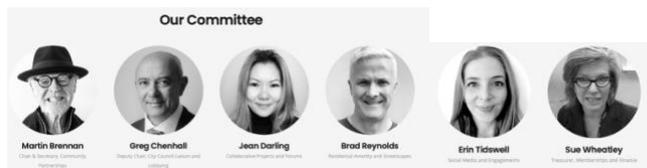
Greg Chenhall – Deputy Chair: City Council Liaison & Heritage

Sue Wheatley - Treasurer: Memberships

Jean Darling – Collaborative Projects & Circular Economy

Erin Tidswell – Social Media & Engagements

Brad Reynolds – Residential Amenity & Statutory Planning



During the past 12 months there were many initiatives and issues addressed by the Committee and a number deserve recognition and are drawn to the attention of FRA members.

Yarra City Council



In November 2020 Yarra City councillors were sworn in following their election across our 3 Wards, Nicholls, Langridge and Melba. Elected to Council were: Melba Ward: Cr Claudia Nguyen, Cr Edward Crossland, Cr Herschel Landes; Langridge Ward: Cr Anab Mohamud, Cr Gabrielle de Vietri, Cr Stephen Jolly; Nicholls Ward: Cr Amanda Stone, Cr Bridgid O'Brien, Cr Sophie Wade. Cr Gabrielle de Vietri was elected Mayor and Cr Claudia Nguyen, Deputy Mayor.

Following the election of councillors in November 2021 and the election of Cr Gabrielle de Vietri as Mayor, Martin Brennan, FRA Chair, was invited to make a presentation to the Council on what he considered to be the opportunities and challenges faced by a newly elected Council with the onset of the pandemic and the introduction of lockdowns. He focussed on the need for Council to embrace the 'art of politics, the science of policy and the empathy of administration'.

We congratulate Cr de Vietri on her year as Mayor and welcome Cr Sophie Wade as Mayor and look forward to engaging with her and fellow councillors.

City of Yarra's Rainbow Advisory Committee



Cr Gabrielle de Vietri, Cr Sophie Wade, Cr Amanda Stone, Cr Edward Crossland and Board members.

Jamie Gardiner is the FRA representative on the Rainbow Advisory Committee. The Rainbow Advisory Board has been established by the Yarra City Council to address how Yarra can become a more inclusive city, and further develop its role as a centre for LGBTIQ+ business and community.

Yarra City Council's Heritage Advisory Committee

Greg Chenhall, FRA Deputy Chair, will complete his two year term as a member of the Heritage Advisory Committee in mid 2022. Input was provided on the World Heritage Buffer Zone (or Environs Area), the thematic study of Yarra's LGBTIQ+ cultural heritage and the protection of our suburb's heritage buildings.

Brunswick Street Streetscape Masterplan



In 2019 the FRA provided input into the Brunswick Street Streetscape Master Plan to reinvigorate the street and improve public space. The Council deferred funding the implementation of the Plan but have recently sought responses to public space improvements on the Kerr Street and Brunswick Street corner. We look forward to

the continued roll out of the Masterplan given the urgent need to respond to the impact of lockdowns and the need to revitalise our iconic shopping strip.

Car parks for parklets



The Council has unanimously supported the availability of car parks for parklets. Despite some debate over the fee and its structure those who made submissions to Council all endorsed the need for parklets. Whilst targeted support for our restaurants, cafes and hotels is needed as they come out of lockdown there needs to be certainty for both business and Council in the fees to be levied for the use of public space. The Council has however waived parklet fees until June 2022 thus enabling access to State Government funding in support of outdoor dining.

Graffiti takes a short break....



Graffiti Management is a complex issue in the City of Yarra but its impact is straightforward. A concerning increase in tagging has followed the removal of lockdown restrictions and the Council together with the residential and business community will need to respond with new initiatives. The FRA Committee worked with the Council administration on the Graffiti Management Framework 2020 – 2023. It has a continued focus on prompt and effective removal of graffiti from Council assets, the protection of Yarra's heritage buildings and public street art. The Framework includes some protection of private property and states 'Council will work with the community to remove graffiti from private premises where it has a significant

impact on public amenity (for example, where it is offensive), and / or is a shopping centre, a gateway or an area of high prominence’.

Planning matters



The FRA believes that a review of the City’s planning decision-making process is needed to ensure it is fit for purpose and provides an opportunity for the community and all councillors to participate in a rigorous and deliberative process that delivers the best outcomes for our City’s built form. Planning underpins our personal and collective references to the past and to our future. What we conserve, what we rebuild and what we create is fundamental to our City’s sustainability and liveability.

Yarra City Council has a Planning Decisions Committee (PDC) of three councillors. It is in their hands to decide on the impact of developments and the interpretation of the current planning instruments as well as those that are intended and those that are anticipated in the future. It’s a rabbit warren of competing interests and a myriad of planning schemes with their clauses, amendments and overlays.

The decisions made by PDC therefore underpin our City’s future. A review and reform process should initially be undertaken internally and its recommendations made the subject of community consultation. Some suggested topics for consideration include:

- An increase in the number of PDC members from 3 councillors to a minimum of 5 attending.
- A review of a PDC decision at a full Council meeting if supported by a majority of councillors.

- Planning Applications that are valued in excess of \$10m need to be referred to a Compulsory Conference of the Applicant, City Planners and Objectors prior to being considered by the PDC.

Yarra Planning Scheme Rewrite – C269



Amendment C269 is a rewrite of the high-level planning policies of the City of Yarra. The FRA has participated in a community planning process under the banner Yarra Planning Coalition comprising resident groups and individuals from across Yarra. The 424 community submissions, including the FRA's submission, informed the Coalition on what locals wanted for their neighbourhoods. The Coalition was represented at the recent Panel Hearing by expert witnesses, and some 26 individual/community groups provided thoughtful and detailed submissions. The Planning Panel will now advise Council of its response to the submissions before being referred by Council to the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, for approval. This participatory consultative process invested heavily in by residents should inform the Panel, Council and the Minister that we need to protect our shopping centres, heritage buildings and streetscapes, our landmarks and provide more certainty in Yarra's future planning.

Amendment C270



The request for built form interim Design Development Overlays (DDOs) for nine Collingwood and Fitzroy precincts was sent to the Minister for Planning, Richard

Wynne, in January 2020. The Council was of the view that due to increasing development pressure interim controls were needed while the council carried out strategic work and prepared an amendment to introduce permanent planning controls. The precincts cover some of Yarra's significant activity centres or shopping strips in Fitzroy, including Brunswick Street, Gertrude Street, Smith Street and Johnston Street. In August 2021 the Minister approved only four of the nine DDOs, and excluded five DDOs that all sit within Fitzroy. In October Martin Brennan, FRA Chair, met via zoom with representatives of the Minister for Planning and DEWLP to discuss the reason for not including all nine DDOs in the interim order. We were informed that the delay in approval of the request for interim DDOs was due to information needing to be sought from Council. This included the need for additional strategic work, the Council's timing for introducing permanent controls through a public exhibition and approvals process and the number of controls being sought. The decision to only approve four interim development controls was based on a view that the remaining precincts were not experiencing similar development pressure. The Minister has however established a Yarra Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee to expedite Amendment C270. The Council has indicated that it will establish a formal exhibition process early in 2022. We will continue to argue the case before VCAT for all nine DDOs to be considered as they are the clear intention of the Council and should inform future planning decisions and protect our streetscapes and heritage as well as environment.

1–9 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy



A 5 storey development has been proposed for a sensitive area of Gertrude Street, next to the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens. If it succeeds the development would impact on views of the Royal Exhibition Building. South Fitzroy is home to some of Yarra's most prized heritage buildings and the area around Nicholson Street and Gertrude Street falls within the UNESCO World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA). The proposed development at 1–9 Gertrude Street is within the WHEA zone of Greater Sensitivity. The FRA along

with the World Heritage Precinct Protection Coalition were party to the eight day VCAT hearing. A VCAT decision is expected in December 2021.

St Vincent's Hospital re-development



The St Vincent's Hospital Board of Management made application to Council to demolish the Aikenhead building on the corner of Nicholson Street and Victoria Parade, along with the partial demolition of the Daly Wing and Brenan Hall buildings and build a 'state of the art' research, development and education centre. The Yarra City Council refused a permit and the matter was referred to VCAT. A Compulsory Conference was scheduled along with a VCAT Hearing when the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, called in the application and established a Priority Projects Standing Advisory Committee to determine the future of the proposed redevelopment. No one disputed the need for a 'state of the art' medical research facility, but the FRA and many residents were concerned that the proposed building failed to respect the heritage values of the World Heritage Environs Area or to respond to the climate emergency with a building that had 'state of the art' sustainability outcomes. The FRA's submission sought significant permit conditions to ensure the integrity of the World Heritage Environs Area and the future of the heritage-listed Brenan Hall plus significant improvements to the Sustainable Management Plan. In November the development was approved.

Australian Catholic University



The Yarra City Council along with the FRA and local residents objected to the development proposed by the Australian Catholic University on the corner of Brunswick Street and Victoria Parade, Fitzroy as being unresponsive in its scale, height, architectural quality and site context. In what can only be described as a most unfortunate and inexplicable decision VCAT determined that the building proposed expressed ‘qualities’ through its architectural design, its ‘removal’ from the heritage character of Brunswick Street and its ‘unconventional podium’.

131–143 Smith Street, Fitzroy



The Yarra City Council’s PDC and VCAT seldom achieve resolution through consensus. However, a four-hour VCAT Compulsory Conference on the development proposed for 131-143 Smith Street, Fitzroy (see original proposal photo) resolved outstanding issues for Council and the FRA following a pre Compulsory Conference meeting with the applicant’s planning consultant. The revised development proposal responds to concerns relating to height, massing and architectural design. They include responsiveness to the heritage streetscape and

sustainability. Environmental Sustainable Design improvements include certification as a net zero carbon building.

84–104 Johnston Street, Fitzroy



VCAT determined, following a 5 day hearing back in September 2020, not to grant a permit for the proposed 11 storey mixed use development proposed for 84-104 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, opposite Coles Local. The refusal was based on the view that ‘a permit will not present an acceptable outcome in heritage and urban design terms’. This refusal was a win for the Council, the FRA and 175 objectors. The revised permit application now before the Council has been reduced in height from 11 to 9 storeys and the architectural design has been altered to reduce its impact on the streetscape. But how much is good enough is what the FRA will be considering over the coming weeks.

223 Johnston Street & 369 Gore, Street, Fitzroy



The FRA objected along with the Yarra City Council before a 5 day VCAT Hearing to the proposed 11 storey building with 113 apartments, 159 car park spaces and 2 commercial tenancies on this site. With its extended frontage to Gore Street and narrow frontage to Argyle Street, the proposed development we believed would impact adversely on this neighbourhood and the heritage values of the Mac Robertson Complex. The proposed development would set a further precedent for future developments along Johnston Street and our fine-grained suburb with only pockets of higher development would be lost.

88 Kerr Street & 71–75 Argyle Street, Fitzroy



The FRA was a Party to a recent VCAT Hearing to determine the future of a proposed apartment development at 88 Kerr Street, 380 Fitzroy Street and 71–75 Argyle Street. The Tribunal issued an interim approval that has provided the applicant with the opportunity to address the issues raised during the Hearing by preparing amended plans. The opportunity has been accepted and will be referred to the PDC of Council. The changes cover height, massing, setbacks, improvements to the Kerr Street façade, noise attenuation and screening.

235 Napier Street, Fitzroy



Fitzroy is on the market for residential and commercial developments as property prices soar and planning schemes are in catch-up mode and fail to provide mandatory heights and setbacks, heritage protection, inclusionary zoning and sustainability plans that meet net zero carbon targets. A case in point is 235 Napier Street, Fitzroy where the sale of the site exceeded market expectations by \$660,000. At \$4.56m the sky is hardly going to be the limit. The FRA has submitted an objection to the Yarra City Council seeking a reduction in height and massing, responsiveness to its site and heritage overlay and improvements in its Environmental Sustainable Design.

South end of Smith Street, Fitzroy / Collingwood



The increasing number of over-developments proposed for the south end of Smith Street has resulted in the formation of the South Smith Street Action Group (SSSAG). Concerns were raised by the approval of a 13-storey building on the corner of Smith Street and Victoria Parade which may set a precedent for future developments. The Action Group has highlighted a number of developments over recent months and is seeking support for its efforts to protect the south end of Smith Street from excessive developments that would affect current and future residents. The FRA will continue to work with and support the SSSAG in its efforts to protect and enhance its neighbourhood from over-development.

World Heritage Precinct Protection Coalition



The World Heritage Precinct Protection Coalition formed in 2021 to protect the World Heritage Environs Area from excessive and intrusive development that impacts on the heritage values and status of this area. The Coalition has been an active advocate for the protection of the World Heritage Precinct and the impact of developments proposed at 1–9 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy and the St Vincent’s Hospital development on the corner of Nicholson Street and Victoria Parade, Fitzroy.

Thank you, VJ

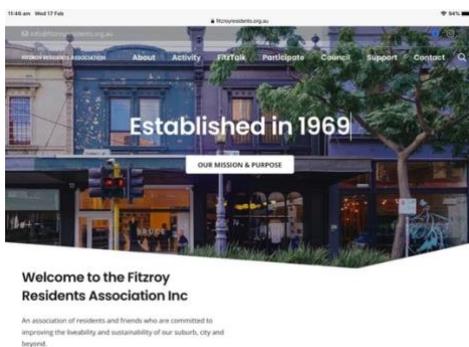


Yarra City Council CEO Vijaya Vaidyanath has announced her resignation from Council after almost a decade working for the City and the community. While there are many outstanding Council achievements during her time as CEO her overriding contribution has been her commitment, honesty, enthusiasm and recognition of the need for change. VJ leaves a legacy for another to build on. She will take up a new role as the inaugural CEO of Homes Melbourne at the City of Melbourne, delivering on that City's commitment to improve city-wide housing accessibility and affordability.

How we talk to our members and friends.



Find us on the web



<https://fitzroyresidents.org.au>

The FRA Committee acknowledges and thanks those who have provided on-going support to our association.

Michael Glynatsis, Aegean Greek Restaurant, has hosted FRA functions and events.



Helen Wilding, artist, has allowed us to use her sketches of Fitzroy in our social media and publications.



The Union Club Hotel, 164 Gore Street Fitzroy has provided a venue for FRA Committee and member meetings.

