

Fitzroy Residents Association Inc.

Annual Report 2022



Drawn by Helen Wilding - helenwildingart.com

The FRA was established in November 1969 as a democratic voice to reflect and respond to the interests and needs of residents and work to ensure the livability and sustainability of the suburb and the City. We have been encouraged over the past year by the support of current members and the addition of new members.

This has added to our capacity to engage with the Yarra City Council and the administration and ensure that the range of services and programs provided by the City of Yarra along with the policies adopted by Council are responsive to residents.

We aim to be an informed and positive voice to the Council which contributes to the good governance of the City recognising the important role that local government plays in our system of democratically elected representatives at the national, state and local level.

The appointment of a Municipal Monitor in December 2021 with no adequate explanation, and recently extended, was a low point in the good governance of the City. Under the Terms of Reference of Appointment, the Municipal Monitor is required to advise and provide assistance and support to the Council in relation to the improvement of the Council's governance processes and practices across a range of councillor and administrative matters. We are still to be informed as to why the extension, and what 'improvements' have been recommended or implemented.

A number of changes to the format and structure of both Council meetings and the Planning Decisions Committee were criticised by the FRA. For example, a major change was adopted by Yarra Council in March 2022 that gives council officers more authority to make the final decision on statutory

planning (development permit) decisions.

The change reduces councillor decision making and thus the community's voice in decisions about new development proposals. One of the changes is the need for more than 15 objections (up from 6) so that a matter is reviewed by the Planning Decisions Committee of Council. The FRA was one of many Yarra resident groups to oppose the changes.

The FRA continues to be active along with other resident associations across Yarra in relation to Strategic and Statutory Planning. The FRA seeks to ensure that new developments are sympathetic to our streetscapes and respect our heritage buildings. They also need to be built now for a sustainable future. The support of the Minister for Planning and the Department of Planning is critical to the good planning for our future.



The FRA was therefore concerned that the request to the then Minister for Planning for built form interim Design Development Overlays (DDOs) for nine Collingwood / Fitzroy precincts received only the partial support of the Minister.

This resulted in five DDOs covering some of Yarra's significant activity centres relating to Fitzroy being excluded from interim orders leaving the door open for developers. The Minister was of the view, unlike the Council, that increasing development pressure required interim controls.

However the Minister did establish a Yarra Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee to expedite the planning amendment process, and the formal exhibition of C270 is now taking place to protect the streetscapes, heritage and environment of Fitzroy. The FRA has participated in a number of VCAT hearings and we continue to view its role as problematic to say the least and not providing a level playing field for residents or resident associations in seeking to prevent over-development.

On a positive note, the adoption by the Yarra City Council of the Zero Carbon Developments planning amendment is welcomed by the FRA. The proposed changes to the Yarra Planning Scheme will ensure that developments meet the need for a sustainable future. This initiative of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment, representing 30 councils from across Victoria,

would require developments to provide net zero carbon emissions, better water management, and protect and enhance greening and biodiversity, to be more resilient to the changing climate and provide for a healthier environment for the community. Currently 85% of carbon emissions in Yarra come from electricity and gas use in residential and commercial buildings.

A highlight of this year, and one that had been in the planning and proposal stage over the last two years of the pandemic, was the FRA inaugural PubTalk. The topic, 'Living through COVID' had as panellists Mayor Cr Sophie Wade, City of Yarra Unit Manager, Arts, Culture, Venues and Events Siu Chan and People of Gertrude Street advocate PK. They provided their perspective on 'Living through COVID-19' with a focus on building back better our shopping strips and Yarra's cultural and arts identity and activities.

FitzTalk has certainly had members and friends talking. Each edition of FitzTalk has provided a voice and a feedback loop for members and friends alike and has been widely distributed through our facebook network and extensive data base.



The Brunswick Street Streetscape Masterplan adopted by Yarra City Council adopted in 2020 was the result of extensive community consultation, yet has had no funds allocated toward its implementation. The plan when implemented will provide improvements to the footpaths and public spaces along Brunswick Street (between Alexandra Parade and Victoria Parade), as well as the streets around Fitzroy Town Hall and Atherton Gardens. The improvements will create high quality public spaces, support a range of activities and deliver benefits including tree planting. The pandemic has had a deleterious impact on Brunswick Street, which is in need of an upgrade following the lockdowns. Whilst recognising budgetary constraints the FRA views the roll-out of the masterplan as a priority for business owners, residents and visitors and would help drive the local economy of our suburb and City.

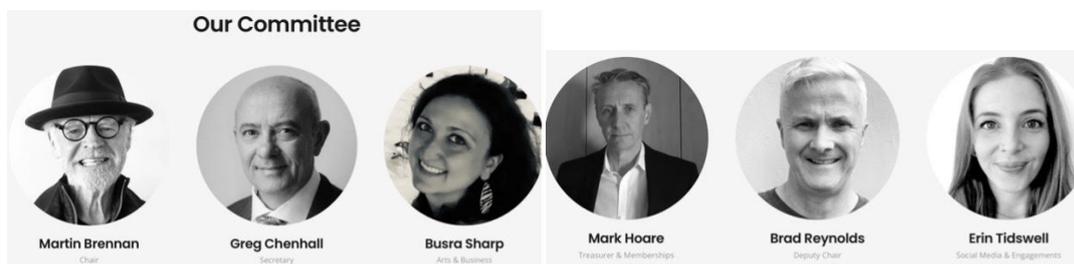


The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) late 2021 proposal to the State Government to redevelop its site in Fitzroy to create a Social Innovation Campus has raised a great deal of interest albeit many concerns. The FRA sees its role as providing up to date and informed news and views of the BSL to ensure that the outcome meets the needs and interests of us all. While some would prefer to have things stay as they are, the FRA thinks that improvements to the site are well overdue. The expectations of one of Australia's leading not for profit organisations working toward an Australia free of poverty and supporting those in need are worthy of support. However residents who have a passion and commitment for development that respects the streetscape and heritage values of our suburb will need to be considered. The FRA will continue to seek to engage with the BSL and residents.

The strength of the FRA lies with the Committee elected each year at the AGM. We have been a fortunate suburb and City to have had and continue to have residents of considerable experience, expertise and commitment to support the FRA's range of activities.

In 2021/22 the Committee has been active through zoom and face to face meetings and of course numerous emails and phone calls to ensure the wheels of the FRA keep turning.

FRA Committee 2021 - 2022



Martin Brennan — Chair

Martin joined the Committee 5 years ago and has lived in Fitzroy for the past 12 years. Before moving to Fitzroy Martin lived in North Melbourne for some 40 years and was a Melbourne City Councillor for three terms. His professional life was spent working with local governments across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands on the causes and impacts of climate

change. His interests include participatory local government and achieving equitable, livable and sustainable outcomes for the local community.

Brad Reynolds — Deputy Chair

Bradley joined the Committee almost four years ago. He has been a resident of Fitzroy for 16 years, and came from Sydney to Fitzroy and hasn't left. Bradley joined the FRA Committee with a keen interest in heritage protection and seeking improvements to community amenity including diverse and vibrant "high streets". He has represented the FRA on the Yarra community graffiti trials, and that resulted in an improved resident offer being provided by Yarra City Council in September 2020.

Greg Chenhall — Secretary

Greg joined the Committee as Deputy Chair and was Council Liaison in 2019 and 2020. In the 2021 to 2022 year he has taken on the role of FRA Secretary instead, He continues as a member of Yarra Council's Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) to provide an FRA perspective. He is the only member of HAC from South Fitzroy. Greg intends to work on furthering the connection with FRA members through his contributions to FitzTalk and the planning of PubTalk events for members.

Mark Hoare — Treasurer & Memberships

Mark Hoare has lived in Fitzroy North and Fitzroy for almost 25 years. He joined the FRA as a member in 2020 and then the committee as Treasurer in 2022. Mark is a CPA and has worked with leading technology companies providing digital transformation solutions. He is keen to work with the FRA committee and members to meet our objectives of improving the livability and sustainability of Fitzroy.

Erin Tidswell — Social Media and Engagements

Erin joined the Committee in 2018, soon after moving to Melbourne in January of that year. She is a keen advocate for supporting and protecting local resident amenity, heritage and culture — that is what makes Fitzroy such a desirable place to live. After working in the corporate media and marketing industry for ten years, Erin returned to study in recent years, and is now working as a qualified Social Worker in the mental health sector. She is passionate about community development and connectedness, as well as promoting positive social activism.

Busra Sharp — Arts & Business

Busra has been calling Collingwood home and Fitzroy her playground since May 2021. Before COVID-19 hit, Busra worked for some of Melbourne's most prominent arts organisations and festivals. Her career took a U-turn with the changing world — she now works in the digital team for the state government, supporting Victorian businesses. Busra believes in the transformative power of sense of community and shared experiences. By joining the FRA and the

Committee, she strives to create new connections between arts organisations, small business owners and Fitzroy residents — contributing to things that make Fitzroy tick.

And in conclusion, as this will be my *last* Annual Report as Chair and as a member of the FRA Committee, I thank committee members over the past seven years for their support and the many members who have provided feedback and assistance to the FRA and its activities. The FRA is well placed to continue its advocacy through its upgraded website, the publication of FitzTalk and the holding of PubTalks.

There will no doubt be more submissions to Council and numerous planning matters to consider! With our local and city wide know-how, the FRA will continue to give feedback to our Council to ensure both its legitimacy and therefore capacity to deliver what is best for all who live, work and visit this City now and into the future.

Martin Brennan
Chair

Report from the Deputy Chair (Brad Reynolds) for the period July to November 2022

As Deputy Chair of the FRA, I have had the opportunity to chair the FRA over the last five months.

From a personal perspective, I would encourage like-minded residents to join and participate in the FRA. An active member base, committee participation and community project work are a continual focus for the FRA Committee. We need member participation, and we know that the effort that every member makes helps to ensure the livability and amenity of Fitzroy. We are better together and we all benefit.

For a low membership fee per annum, the advocacy provided by the FRA across key projects is excellent. The continual challenge for the Committee is that we cannot do everything the community would like us to do. In short, too few people, many developments and Yarra projects. We have to make considered choices.

With the number of developments planned and underway, the FRA Committee has been thinking about greater efficiency and effectiveness. One of the initiatives for this year, 2022, has been the focus on community education. Our plan moving forward is to hold education sessions on topics relevant to our community especially planning processes and the management of these processes by the relevant authorities. Community mobilisation through knowledge is key!

Our next Pub-Talk will be on Planning - time, date and panel to be announced.



In my time as Acting Chair, the FRA has been actively involved in discussions, meetings and objections to the following;

- 1) Rose St Hotel; rooftop bar P624/2022
- 2) 28 Johnston St; 8 storey building PLN22/0028
- 3) 223-229 Johnston St & 368 Gore St; PLN21/0670
- 4) 165 Brunswick Street; Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL)

In addition to this the FRA continued work with the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) on their Development Plan Overlay proposal to the State Government. The BSL have put their planning process on hold while they review their overall strategic plan going forward. The BSL have committed to creating a reference group which would involve the FRA for their Fitzroy Project.

The BSL is working with creative folk on how to improve the site with some smaller interim projects. The FRA hopes to meet again with BSL soon to discuss the idea of a very photogenic development outcome for the site (i.e. a lower rise but still significant landmark) which conforms generally to Yarra's C269 planning amendment expectation.



In closing and given vandalism and graffiti have been a passion of mine, I would encourage all residents (owners and renters) to report graffiti/vandalism as soon as it appears. Quick, effective removal is the greatest disincentive to reoccurrence. Call 9205 5555 and report.

Always remember, the standard that you accept in life is what you walk past/choose to do nothing about.

Again, reporting is a small way to contribute towards the livability / amenity of your suburb and community.

Brad Reynolds
Deputy Chair