

# Reports to the 2003 AGM

## Bays and foreshores

To remain positive at year's end is not easy.

A quick look at the activities now present and those planned around the foreshores of Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays gives a clear indication of the intent of Government. The proven formula of public consultation and invitation of submissions has been worked through - and the authorities are now going ahead and doing whatever they like.

- Charter boats clutter the wharf built along Pyrmont Bridge Road.
- The "dismantled" coal discharge plant adjoining the Fish Market lies in ruins. It remains hard to believe money will be found to restore this piece of Blackwattle Bay history.
- A huge marine repair centre will be built under the western end of the Anzac Bridge so small yacht repair businesses now sited at various locations can be shut down.
- The Australian Heritage Fleet's restoration yard is to be kicked out of Rozelle Bay. The only relocation sites offered to date will severely limit its capability to continue its internationally acclaimed rebuilding of historic vessels.
- A large catamaran "service centre" with a proposed 3-storey building will block off views of the western end of Rozelle Bay.
- The "Super Yacht Marina" is now regarded by Waterways as a catalyst for a Marine Precinct. It was promised at Public Meetings that this infrastructure was a temporary necessity for the Olympic Games and would be gone by autumn of 2001.
- A former container handling facility is to be turned into a dry boat storage with a potential to hold 1200 small craft.
- Three large sites in the middle of

the proposed northern shore development of Rozelle Bay are being held aside for "future allocation".

In other words - Blackwattle and Rozelle bays are being lined up as sites for everything that other harbour-side suburbs want to get rid of.

Those who recall the overflow public meetings held in 1998 and 2000, addressed by Mat Taylor as head of Waterways, will remember his specific promise for removal of the Super Yacht Marina. We will have to keep reminding the Authority of this promise.

The whole process has been clever manipulation by vested interests, which formed the Maritime Forum. It is an organisation whose representatives had walked out of the public meetings realising their wishes would not be accepted by the people. The Forum then set to work behind the scenes with Waterways as "stakeholders". Residents did not quality for representation.

The glimmer of hope is that actual development plans of the new projects will have to go through a DA process. This may be an opportunity for opposition - always with the possibility that the Minister would step in and over-ride any normal approval process.

It all seems to go back to the advice given the Federal Minister for the Environment of the day, the infamous Ros Kelly, over the 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at Kingsford Smith Airport. If you remember, she acted on the advice of a senior public servant that calls for a Public Inquiry could be rejected on the basis of the receipt of 1900 submissions on the issue. These submissions could be regarded as sufficient public input.

It was a handy device because at a proper Inquiry people have to be prepared to testify under oath. The fact that 90% of the submissions opposed the project was neither here

nor there - the Government of the day went ahead and did what it wanted. The fact that Sydney now has an airport that restricts development of the Port of Botany Bay - and a port that restricts the further development of Australia's major airport - is glossed over.

It becomes very annoying, when we are told that while the decision might have been proved to be not the wisest choice, we have to "move on".

There is every chance that history will, once again, repeat itself.

- Collin Hills

## Foreshore walkway

While attending one of those meetings at which bureaucrats and lobby groups get together to talk about what the government should or shouldn't do, I was delighted to hear that someone had proposed a path around the foreshores of Sydney Harbour in the early years of last century. I'm not sure if I remember correctly, but I think this perceptive gentleman was the Hon. N.R.W. Nielsen, who was Minister for Lands from 1910 to 1911, and after whom Neilsen Park was named.

Later I discovered that Nielsen Park was established in 1911 thanks to the efforts of the Harbour Foreshores Vigilance Committee that was formed in 1905 to urge the return of foreshores to public ownership.

Well, I thought, The Glebe Society is obviously the inheritor of a long and honourable tradition. When I recalled that we are said to have an even more elevated political champion in the person of the current Premier, I was tempted to believe that we couldn't lose! Surely a walkway from Bicentennial Park to the City was just a matter of time.

But, as the saying goes, it's not over till the fat lady sings. When I discovered a couple of weeks ago that the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) had deferred its promised

briefing to The Glebe Society on its plans for the Blackwattle Bay section of the foreshore walk I realised that the fat lady has laryngitis.

SHFA's difficulty seems to be achieving agreement with the other Government authorities involved. This is a pity because just about all the pieces of the jigsaw are in place so far as the western side of Blackwattle Bay is concerned.

Everyone who attended Wander and Wonder knows that the only problem on the northern end of Glebe Point is the strip of land owned by The Anchorage. Hopefully the City Council will demonstrate more urgency in sorting out this problem than did its predecessor. The Department of Education also seems favourably disposed to granting public access to the waterfront of the Blackwattle Bay TAFE campus.

The difficulties begin at the wharves along Pyrmont Bridge Road. Pioneer Concrete remains in possession of one end, and no decision has been made about tenants for the other wharves, probably because government authorities have different ideas on the matter.

Despite hopeful words about adaptive reuse of the coal unloader, it continues to rust and rot. It is said that the new plan for the Fishmarket will be unveiled any day now, but as yet we haven't seen it.

North of the Fishmarket are the Hy-Mix Concrete batch plant and a number of other freehold properties collectively known as "the Bank Street site". Any walkway here would depend on satisfactory negotiations between the Government and the owners.

And the last piece of the jigsaw on the city side is the land under the Anzac Bridge once proposed as a community park, and now the site for a harbourside car park and boat launching facility if Waterways' plans announced in March come to fruition.

The one bright light seems to be the interest in the walkway shown by the City Council. The Lord Mayor and two councillors as well as senior officials came to Wander and Wonder, and another prominent councillor wants to us to show her around.

While the chances of completing the walkway from Bicentennial Park to Bridge Road are excellent, we desperately need a champion like Nielsen who will push ahead with linking this section with Jackson's Landing at Pyrmont and from there to the City.

- Bruce Davis

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## Heritage and History

This committee has, over the last year:

- Gathered together, for the first time in one document: all buildings and places variously registered in Commonwealth, State and Local Government instruments as having heritage significance. Additionally, the document contains items identified by the National Trust and from various books on Glebe. It is available as a works-in-progress publication under the title of "Glebe's Treasures".
- Begun to investigate the varying strengths of protection afforded by these different Government and non-Government bodies. In most cases, this protection is very weak.
- Looked at ways to inform members about Glebe's heritage and increase their level of interest. This has resulted in:
  - A talk by Heritage Architect Hector Abrahams.
  - "Wander & Wonder", a walk of publicly accessible foreshores followed by a BBQ, where various members spoke of past efforts to secure such lands and of unsuccessful attempts to secure a future for "Bellevue". We were fortunate in having City Councillors and staff present.

For the coming year we see so much that can be done to further the task of conserving what is valuable and loved about Glebe. Many members this year have indicated an interest in Heritage and History, so our first task is to enlist anyone willing and able to help. Be prepared for a phone call on this!

Our combined endeavours may run over many fronts. We intend to:

- Develop and expand "Glebe's Treasures". Add items and give existing listings higher levels of protection. In developing what is basically a list, to add associated histories, early photographs and maps.
- Make the above information more accessible, perhaps putting it onto the web.
- Provide for the safekeeping and as a source of reference, the numerous publications, planning studies, academic papers and family histories that we have and will come our way.
- Continue the promotion of Glebe's heritage by walks and talks, recognising that Glebe's best protection is in an informed public.
- Attend to associated investigations, responses and submissions arising from the Committee's own work, or in liaison with other committees, or from public inquiry.

All the above has been made possible by Committee members – Liz Simpson-Booker, Jeanette Knox, Margot Patterson, Susan Ingram, Ted McKeown, Ian Pickles and Mack Williams. Thank you!

- David Mander Jones

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## Infrastructure defect reporting

Marcello Massi, the Place Manager of the City of Sydney in Glebe, gave me the opportunity to discuss with him the procedures associated with infrastructure defect reporting.

The amenity of the public domain, the provision of adequate and safe footpaths, removal of slip, trip and fall hazards, adequate lighting, maintenance of street trees, with a balance between the trees obscuring the street lighting and the amenity of the trees, are all regarded as matters of priority with Council.

Council has a sophisticated computerised system for managing complaints and problems concerning these matters, and it was pleasing to see it in operation. The program includes reporting back to the person

who initiated the comment, and where relevant, a photo is taken of the offending hazard, eg of tree roots causing a trip risk on a footpath.

Council adopted the access policy in December 1992 which aims to provide an environment which is accessible to all people including those with disabilities.

Council is aware of the need for and is planning for the provision of street furniture\* to be effective and to minimise clutter, and so add to the amenity of and ease of walking in Glebe streets. Council is aware of the problem of inadequate storm water gullies.

The issue of adequate lighting as part of the provision of a safe and pleasant environment involves discussion with Energy Australia, who own most of the light poles and associated fittings. Council has won an award for its "smart pole", which provides opportunities for lighting, signage and traffic lights on the one, slender and easy to clean, pole thus minimising some of the street clutter.

The fact that Council has already rectified some maintenance defects, and is planning a proactive program to avoid, or at least minimise, infrastructure defects through good management, does not mean that this will be achieved in a matter of weeks. Thus reporting infrastructure defects of immediate concern is still relevant.

**- Margaret Sheppard**

\* This is a term used to include bins, seats, parking meters etc.

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## Glebe Point Road

The Society reviewed its strategic ranking of Glebe Point Road to "high" because of its palpable decline during the last year.

I took on the role of coordinator for the project to "Rediscover Glebe Point Road's Vibrancy" and presented a plan to the Management Committee which has been reported in previous *Bulletins* (most recently no. 1/2003, page 9). The essence of the plan was that this was a medium term project that required a sound base of research, that would provide convincing data to stakeholders and a base for future studies.

I gained the agreement of the Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM) to assign graduate students to research the issue. MGSM focused this study on the business decline of GPR, with the understanding that future studies on community development and other issues may emanate from this foundation. A research team of four students was formed. This team reviewed Australian Bureau of Statistics data, interviewed stakeholders, compared Glebe Point Road to Norton and King Streets, conducted competitive analyses, reviewed literature, and conducted focus group meetings.

Their findings and methods are set out in a report which they provided to the Society. The Society has sent copies of the report to Council and Chamber of Commerce and will continue to push a cooperative effort between community, Council and the Chamber to revivify Glebe Point Road. The team identified that Glebe's identity may be captured in the phrase, "A Village in the City" and emphasised the egalitarian and Bohemian nature of Glebe Point Road as the Village's High Street.

**- John Gray**

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## Environment

The Sub-Committee was re-established at the beginning of the year. The initial task was to write a statement of the Society's environmental policy. The draft statement was published in *Bulletin* no. 4/2003, page 4, for comments from the membership, and after minor changes was adopted by the Society at the June meeting of the Management Committee. The major environmental issues in Glebe continue to be rubbish (and its non-collection) and graffiti, although members will have noticed significant improvements in both of these areas since our suburb came under the control of the Council of the City of Sydney.

**- Andrew Wood**

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## Glebe Society history

Preliminary work on a history of the Society has begun, mainly with a review of some early issues of the *Bulletin*. We hope to complete this

stage by the end of the year, and then check minutes and other papers against these notes.

Already, as a result of some of the initial checking, we were able to issue a facts sheet about Bellevue for use on the occasion of the recent foreshore walk. This information will be of use as part of the complete history.

We also hope to interview some members of the Society who were involved in earlier days or with particular campaigns.

**- Jeanette Knox**

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## Parks and gardens

Glebe is privileged to have a major foreshore park and many pocket parks. The suburb is also marked by some magnificent mature trees, planted as single specimens or as avenues. These parks and trees are an important part of Glebe's infrastructure but have been seriously neglected for many years.

In the year under review, the Society's work on parks and open spaces has targeted some of the most neglected areas. Foley Park and Kirsova Playground have been the focus of special attention by "adoptees". In both cases, Glebe Society members and local residents have undertaken weeding, litter collection and watering. The City of Sydney Council has had early involvement in review discussions and has been provided with background material, survey data and recommendations.

We are pleased to note that since the recent boundary changes, there has been a significant lifting of the standard of maintenance in Glebe's parks and open spaces. New trees have replaced the poplars which were removed from Glebe Point Road. Pruning has already considerably opened up Foley Park and the Diggers Memorial.

The recent drought ravaged much of the "public" vegetation in Glebe. The Society took the initiative in replacing the dead camellias in front of the Diggers Memorial prior to Anzac Day 2003. We are hopeful that the City of Sydney will quickly replant lost

shrubs in key sites such as the garden bed at the corner of Glebe Point Road and Parramatta Road, and the street gardens near Glebe Primary School.

One of the issues which the Society will be discussing over the forthcoming year is the establishment of a significant tree register and the consequent development of a Glebe tree trail.

**- Liz Simpson-Booker**

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### Traffic matters

For a large part of the year traffic matters have been in abeyance pending the transfer of Glebe into the City of Sydney.

We are participating in the Cross City Tunnel Community Liaison Group for the western end of the project. The main concerns here have been with the construction activities in and around Darling Harbour. Noise and vibration have been particular issues as the work is largely carried out at night. Construction traffic is not being routed through Glebe and fortunately there has been little impact on our community.

The issue of tunnel stack emissions remains hot, with community groups alleging health risks and the RTA asserting that it is doing better than the Health Department and EPA Guidelines require. Nevertheless it would appear that the debate is still lively and Health are now undertaking further research into the issue. Stay tuned.

The proposal to beautify Broadway as a gateway boulevard to the city has emerged at last. While it seems a good idea on the surface we remain concerned that the proposed 50% reduction in traffic capacity on Broadway could force additional traffic onto the already congested routes through Glebe, especially Pyrmont Bridge Road. Accordingly we have objected to the DA along those lines and sought reassurance that there will be no adverse impacts on Glebe's local streets.

There has been an allocation to study the feasibility of a new ferry service to the Glebe area. This study has not yet commenced but we are attempting to monitor the situation ourselves.

**- Steve Stewart**

## Planning

It is a cliché to say Sydney is too big. The City has been bursting its boundaries since the proliferation of railways from 1870, and Glebe itself was left behind by urban expansion from 1900. However until fairly recently most of that growth was at the fringes. It has been disconcerting for Glebe residents to see much of it taking place as high rise apartments on our doorstep. Moreover, although the current building bubble is long overdue to burst, and despite the protests of the NSW Premier at levels of immigration, there is no likelihood that growth will cease.

What protects Glebe from becoming like Pyrmont? Firstly, largely because of the actions of The Society, Glebe is a large intact community in pretty good condition, nearly all of it within an Urban Conservation Area, and about one-fifth in public ownership. Secondly, again almost entirely owing to The Society, most of the industrial land on the waterfront, once its industrial use has ceased, has become open space. Thirdly, again entirely due to resident action, in 1983 Leichhardt Council adopted a Town Plan restricting most new development to two and a half storeys over parking (higher when part of the site becomes open space). The revised Town Plan, adopted 17 years later, made no difference to density but strengthened environmental controls.

With the transfer to the City on 8 May this year, none of these things has changed. Eventually the City will modify its own Town Plan to include Glebe, but this event is some time away. Until that occurs, the City is bound to apply the current Town Plan 2000.

The last waterfront industrial land in Glebe, Fletchers between Forsyth Street and Ferry Road, will be redeveloped with 135 units by early 2005, but one third of the land will become open space, thus hopefully completing continuous public access to the entire Glebe waterfront.

This does not mean development in Glebe will cease. It is likely that all the failures, such as Harold Park

Paceway and Max Factor, to name only the most extreme, will have another go, but unless there is a dramatic change it will generally be modest in scale and fairly local in effect.

It does not mean development around us will cease either. Pyrmont itself will soon be complete, but the Children's Hospital development will continue for several years. There is one major development under way in Broadway, and further toward the City the huge Kent Brewery site will be redeveloped over at least five years.

How can we ensure this type of redevelopment does not flow over into Glebe? By maintaining current densities and increasing, if possible, defence of our heritage and environment. For the next few years at least it is the development of the foreshores across the Bays from Glebe that is likely to concern us most. What happens on or near the water can have a profound effect on our quality of life and the attractiveness of the area, and we must be prepared to work hard to keep them.

I would suggest a couple of other strategies as well. Recent studies of Glebe Point Road (the same applies to St Johns Road) indicate Glebe is becoming too exclusively residential. We can actively encourage a better mix, especially small and home-based businesses, to ensure our much-lived commercial streets regain and maintain their prosperity.

Development does not just take the form of blocks of new units. Changes to existing dwellings continue to create problems of overdevelopment, overshadowing, overlooking and irreversible damage to structures whose heritage character should be respected. It may well be that we have to insist on stronger numerical standards, make heritage issues better understood, press for new heritage controls and/or extend the list of heritage items. In the meantime we need to make a special effort to include newcomers in our community and help them find solutions that harmonise well with what exists.

**- Neil Macindoe**