

Hackett Community Association Chair's report 2016-17

Slim Dusty wrote a song *Looking Forward, Looking Back*. My report tonight is along those lines. It is important to reflect on our activities over the past 12 months and then from this we can look at our priorities for the next year.

LOOKING BACK

Change of chair - I would like to first thank James Walker for his work as Chair from 2013 to August 2016. James has been with the HCA from its inception in 2003. He was instrumental in organising the 50th birthday party celebrations in 2013, with one of the key outcomes being the development of a history about the first 50 years of Hackett. Thank you also to Greg Haughey took over from James, but then retired as Chair in February 2017 with his move to Perth. Greg did a lot to expand the communication efforts of the HCA with the website and the Hackett Community website. Greg continues to manage these websites for the HCA. Greg was also very active in organising events like the contact days and Party at the Shops.

Neighbourhood Watch – thank you for the on-going support for including news about the HCA in their monthly newsletter. It is important that NGOs work together to improve their local community.

Party at the shops - held on 29 October 2016 was well attended by many hundreds of people. There were attractions for children, music, dancing, food, raffles and stalls. This is one of the main events organised by the HCA and, subject to volunteers, we will aim to continue this in future years.

Community contact days – the HCA participated in the St Margaret's Church Diversity Day on 27 August 2016 and organised another contact day at the shops on 20 April 2017. The April event was well attended, with local organisations providing stalls to promote their activities. Several ACT House of Assembly members attended and discussed issues with residents.

Community Survey – 77 people completed a survey provided during the party at the shops. The report of the survey is on the Hackett Community website. On the question related to improvements over the next two to three years, toilets at the shops received the most votes, followed by more diversity in shops and improved playgrounds. Revamped local shopping centre, more community events and activities, diversity of housing and community garden were the next most popular categories.

Communications – in addition to the contact days and party at shops, the HCA uses a variety of avenues to communicate with residents, including two websites - one for the HCA <http://www.hackett.org.au/> and <http://hackettcommunity.com.au/> for the broader Hackett community and businesses. Facebook is also being used with just over 100 followers.

Trees at Hackett Oval – the trees on the eastern side of the oval provide a valuable visual backdrop and amenity for this area. However, the pines are nearing the end of their useful life and will need to be removed over the next 5-10 years. The Government has agreed to prepare a plan for their removal and replacement with appropriate species.

Enhancing open spaces – there are 6 open spaces in Hackett which provide important recreational value for residents (these include spaces on Bragg/Brennan St; Madigan to Mackenzie; Harris /Gilbert/French; Maitland/Gilruth; and Calwell/Stanley St). In the 2017 ACT election, the Labour and Greens proposed an *Adopt a Park* Scheme. Under the HCA, residents prepared a draft plan for the Bragg/Brennan st park and submitted to the ACT Government. The plan proposes the involvement of local residents to enhance the tree and shrub cover and developing a nature playground for children. Discussions with the ACT Government continue, though the Adopt a Park scheme appears to be on hold.

Names for the open spaces – The Government has agreed to consider having names for these open spaces, with the Bragg/Brennan St park the first one. Naming provides a sense of identity and can help emergency services locate an area. There are guidelines to be followed i.e. can be in accordance with the naming theme for Hackett (notable deceased Australian scientists); or the name of a deceased person/family who made a significant contribution to the local community; or a word or characteristic associated with the history of the local area. The HCA will facilitate proposals for naming these spaces.

Street names – in correspondence about the naming of open spaces, the ACT place names section noted that French St was named after three people - Charles French horticulturalist; George French, soldier in Qld and NSW Military Forces in late 1800s; and Cpl John French who won a Victoria Cross, in 1942 at Milne Bay. The street signs did not have the VC symbol on it, but this was recently added.

Fix my street- the ACT Government provides the on-line *Fix My Street* page to enable residents to report all matters related to damaged municipal facilities ranging from broken lights, rubbish, dangerous trees etc. However for residents who don't have on-line access, the HCA has lodged requests including tree pruning, improved lighting

for bus stops along Phillip Avenue and illegal dumping of rubbish at bins near the change rooms at the oval – these bins are now locked thus preventing this illegal dumping.

50 year history – this was commenced by the Association in 2011, through the leadership of James Walker. He has compiled a lot of old photos, newspaper articles and stories which now need to be bought together on the website and hopefully in a publication.

Mr Fluffy blocks - Hackett had around 30 Mr Fluffy blocks which most have been sold. Some residents raised concerns about the type of developments that could occur on these. A lot of the concerns would appear to be due to information from ACT LPA not being readily available and understandable. A small group met with ACT LPA. In essence, blocks over 700m² can have single storey, dual occupancy dwellings, or a single dwelling up to two storeys – no apartments. The HCA looks forward to welcoming these new residents as they build and then move into their new homes.

Hackett Shops – the community survey identified the desire to have community toilets at the shops as well as general enhancement.

Toilets – in 2015 the ACT Government provided draft plans for the construction of toilets at the shops to be located in the paved area between IGA and Madigan St. Unfortunately, this would detract from this valuable space. It could possibly go on the grass near the bus stop but this would also impinge on valuable space. It will be a challenge to get the balance right, as both sites are where we hold the party – given the small size of the shops, this location will be very prominent.

Vacant shop (former King Ruby restaurant) continues to remain vacant which provides a negative feel to the shops. The HCA understands that any changes to the lease would incur a fee/levy in the order of \$30,000 – while any new shop will need to spend tens of thousands for fit-out, this additional cost may possibly act as a disincentive for new occupants and may be one reason for its on-going vacancy.

Bins – the Government provided three new bins – one unfortunately was placed in the middle of the open space (where we hold the party!). But having listened to HCA representatives, they moved it to a less obtrusive location.

LOOKING FORWARD

We need to consider the changing face of Hackett – the 2016 census showed our population was 2,991 (compared with 2,881 in 2006 and 3,968 in 1976). And with more children (21% under 14 years in 2016 compared with 16.5% in 2006) we need to consider opportunities for this group and their parents. Many of the issues commenced over the past year and earlier, will continue to be a priority for the HCA over the next 12 months and include:

- **50 year history** – aim to get content on website, and if sufficient funds available, released as a book
- **Hackett shops** – getting a new tenant in the empty shop, enhancing gardens and toilet
- **Commemoration of Sir John Hackett** - a plaque, sculpture or some other feature at the shops would provide important context about the suburb of Hackett. The HCA will discuss further with the ACT Government
- **Contact days and party at shops** – we will aim to have 1-2 contact days and a party at the shops each year. And 2018 will be the 55th birthday of Hackett
- **Open spaces** – get Government endorsement for plan to improve Bragg/Brennan st park. Facilitate community involvement for the other open spaces
- **Hackett oval tree replacement** – once the ACT Government provides a plan, the HCA will facilitate consultation with the community to get feedback and ultimately community endorsement
- **Bike riding area near oval** - Majura Pines mountain bike riding is a big attraction with many riders starting and finishing their ride at the Hackett shops – they can enjoy the great food at Wilburs or Siam Twist and get their bike serviced at Monkey Wrench. This recreational activity has got to be beneficial for the shops. Behind Maitland House near the oval is vacant space which may be suitable for a childrens' bike riding area, similar to the North Ainslie Primary School track. Further discussions will be required with the ACT Government and Blue Gum School to explore this option.
- **Membership** - in the 50 year history material, there is a newspaper article from 2002 about the formation of the HCA – over 150 residents attended a meeting to raise concerns about the shops and other matters. We currently have around 130 individuals on our mailing list. In some respects, Hackett would appear to be immune from large scale developments that occur in other suburbs. That does not mean nothing happens. It is important that the community participates in NGOs like the HCA, as this collective input can be more influential in persuading the Government to undertake activities to improve the suburb. We will try and double our membership.
- **Other issues** – Increased membership can bring new ideas to the association. We are always open to receiving ideas, or having issues raised that the association can bring to the attention of the ACT Government.

Chris Mobbs
Chair, Hackett Community Association
13 September 2017

Draft - subject to ratification at 2018 AGM