

# THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
CASTLECRAG PROGRESS  
ASSOCIATION INC.

Seventy eight years of community development  
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*Castlecrag Progress Association*

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*Vice presidents:* David Harrop

Bob McKillop

*Secretary:* Elizabeth Lander

*Treasurer:* Diana Jones

*Committee:* Tina Hicks

Peter Moffitt

Howard Rubie

Gay Spies

John Steel

## General Meeting

**Tuesday 27 August 8pm  
at the Community Centre**

**Ian Rannard**

**will discuss**

**Market Garden Days  
in Willoughby**

**Refreshments will be served**

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6/77 Edinburgh Road,  
Castlecrag*

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membership renewals to the above  
address.**

**Membership fees for 2002  
are now due  
(see membership form on last  
page)**

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## A Development Application Near You!

Greg Woodhams, Director of Environmental Services at Willoughby Council, outlined the processes pertaining to development applications (DAs) at a well-attended Progress Association meeting on 25 June.

Mr Woodhams detailed the legal requirements for submitting and assessing DAs and gave particular attention to the notifications provided to neighbours about DAs affecting them. We were advised that Willoughby Council receives some 1500 DAs per year and, on average, there are 15 notifications for each DA.

An area of concern raised at the meeting was the adequacy of notification of DAs to neighbours, particularly where plans had been amended. The present advice offered little information on the level of compliance of the DA or its likely impacts. Greg advised that Council is in the process of preparing a Development Control Plan (DCP) that will set out the notification and assessment processes more

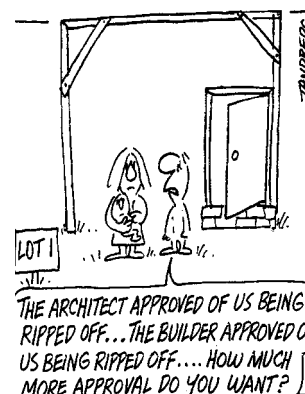
clearly. Notification of amended plans is a problem area because Council is under pressure to advise applicants of the outcome of their DAs within a strict timeframe. Residents felt there needed to be more information on the advice sheet regarding compliance and impacts (eg, a site analysis plan).

The most spirited discussion arose over Willoughby Council's policy of working with applicants to achieve 'solutions' with good environmental outcomes. In this process, the prescriptive measurements of the LEP and DCPs are used as guidelines, but particular features of the site are also taken into account in evaluating the DA. In defence of the policy, Greg stated that Willoughby Council has a much lower legal bill for DA challenges than councils that follow a more prescriptive assessment of DAs.

A number of residents expressed strong concerns over Willoughby Council's assessment approach. Examples of DAs being

approved that were grossly in excess of Council's DCP requirements for bulk and height were cited and there was a strong feeling that the cumulative impacts of these decisions were having an adverse impact on our amenities and the environment. The assessment of Council's performance in approving DAs was also raised. It was felt that there should be regular reporting to the public on the number of non-complying DAs and the number of SEPP1 objections approved by Council, to provide an assessment of the quality of the DA process.

**Bob McKillop**



## Willoughby Market Gardens

Local resident Ian Rannard has undertaken extensive research into the history of the Chinese Market Gardens that operated off Eastern Valley Way. Ian will be guest speaker at the General Meeting of the Progress Association. His talk will cover some of the last market gardens to operate in the Willoughby and Northbridge areas and their fascinating links back to the history of Old Willoughby.

Come along to learn about our history and chat with Ian about the 'old days'.

**Tuesday 27 August 8pm**

## Castlecrag Progress Association

**OCTOBER  
GENERAL  
MEETING  
Tuesday 27  
August 2002**

**Guest**

**Speaker: Ian  
Rannard  
'Market**

## Community Bytes

### *Tarasov Saga*

Long-time Castlecrag resident (of 35 years) Gary Nash (born Igor Ivashkoff) has written a book '*The Tarasov Saga: From Russia through China to Australia*'. It is the true story of his family's life. A review in the 'Australian Bookseller and Publisher' gave it FOUR stars and said: 'Saga is the right word to describe this extraordinary tale of a Russian family's changing fortunes throughout the 20th century .... the book is crammed with details of life in pre-Soviet Russia; in the extra-territorial Western communities within Chinese cities; in the Displaced Persons' camp on a Philippine island; and in post-war Australia ... the prose is simple and direct; the material riveting.'

The book is 280 pages long and carries 150 photographs. It is available through all good bookshops and the Castlecrag Newsagency.

### The Living Environment Information Nights

These free nights are a joint initiative of North Sydney, Lane Cove, Mosman and Willoughby Councils. Put the following dates in your diary:

**Birds in Your Backyard:** Wednesday 28th August from 7-9pm at the Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor St, Chatswood. Holly Parsons, from Birds Australia, will discuss what birds are

found on the North Shore and how you can design your garden to attract a variety of native birds.

Bookings essential: (WCC) 9777-1000.

**Friendly Frogs:** Wednesday 9th October from 7-9pm at the Mosman Council Chambers, 573 Military Rd, Mosman. Lothar Voight, from the Frog and Tadpole Study Group, will discuss what frogs are found in Sydney and explain how to make a frog pond to attract frogs to your garden.

Bookings essential: (MMC) 9978 4043.

### *Winter Close in Castlecrag*

On **Friday 27 September**, social researcher, author and columnist **Hugh Mackay** will be visiting Castlecrag to speak about his new novel, *Winter Close*. Set in a fictitious street in Castlecrag, *Winter Close* is a penetrating look at life in suburbia and at the nuances of human relationships, the varieties of intimacy and the blurred boundaries between the roles of friend and neighbour.

Hugh Mackay is a Castlecrag boy. He grew up in Raeburn Avenue in the 40s and 50s, and he returns to the Crag to talk not only about *Winter Close* but also about some of the forces that are changing the face of Australian society.

This significant literary event will be held in the **Castlecrag Community Centre on Friday 27 September**, from **6-8pm**. Wine, cheese and

savouries will be served and signed copies of *Winter Close* will be on sale. Admission is free, but please reserve a place by contacting Constant Reader bookshop: phone 9438 1763, fax 9906 4639 or email bob@constantreader.com.au.

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## Undergrounding Powerlines

Overhead powerlines have been a matter of concern in Castlecrag since the founding of our suburb. Walter Burley Griffin campaigned strongly for the undergrounding of powerlines when designing his estates and the Progress Association made this a priority issue when it was founded in November 1925.

Their campaign was unsuccessful and unsightly overhead wires continue to detract from the natural beauty of the suburb.

When Optus planned to further increase this visual pollution by adding its Pay-TV cables to the existing poles in 1996, the Progress Association led community opposition to this scheme, including challenges to Optus contractors preparing to roll-out cables without Council approvals. The action gained a reprieve for the Griffin Conservation Area, but other areas of the suburb were subjected to the rollout.

The Castlecrag action and similar responses by other communities on the North Shore led

to the formation of *Cables Down Under* as a lobby group to seek the removal of overhead cables in Sydney. In response to ongoing pressure, the NSW Government set about preparing an achievable plan to remove overhead cables. The Federation of Willoughby Progress Associations congratulated the Premier on this initiative in April 2002 and Kim Yeadon, the Minister for Energy, subsequently responded to its letter outlining details of the Government's review. A Steering Committee is developing an appropriate policy and program on undergrounding electricity cables in urban and regional centres, including the procedures for prioritising future undergrounding projects.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has released an interim report that examines key issues relating to costs and benefits of undergrounding electricity networks and identifies options to fund the works.

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (31

July 2002), the report indicates that neighbourhoods should be given the opportunity to have their overhead powerlines buried. Various options for recovering the costs of undergrounding are canvassed, including the use of local government levies and recov

## Fenced In

In a much quoted statement, Walter Burley Griffin declared:

*"I want Castlecrag to be built so that each individual can feel that the whole landscape is his. No fences, no boundaries, no red roofs to spoil the Australian landscape: these are some of the features that will distinguish Castlecrag."*

In recent decades this shared landscape uninterrupted by fences has in some parts of the Griffin Conservation Area been marred by a proliferation of unsympathetic fences including high timber paling, brush, and metal fences.

Commissioner Nott in a Land and Environment Court case about an illegal fence in the Griffin Conservation Area late last year stated that Willoughby Council should not only retain the Griffins' design intention at Castlecrag but should move to reinstate it (*The Crag* no.141). On a site inspection during the court case, Commissioner Nott saw for himself the Griffin legacy of shared landscapes and beautiful vistas that a lack of fences makes possible in the Griffin Conservation Area at Castlecrag. He also saw the unsympathetic alienating fences, many with graffiti, that prompted his belief in the value of recovering 'the Griffin vision'.

Encouraged by the Commissioner's words, the reinstatement of 'the Griffin vision' has begun already. The applicant for a DA for a property in The Rampart with an existing unsympathetic fence adjoining the walkway will be replacing this fence with a more appropriate weldmesh pool fence. This will greatly assist in reducing the alley-like appearance that the existing fence and some other fences have created in this part of the walkway. The applicant, Willoughby City Council officers and Councillors are to be congratulated on this excellent outcome. The Walter Burley Griffin Society hopes that this will be the first of many such instances, and that with time all the unsympathetic fences will be removed.

In the nationally and internationally significant Griffin Conservation Area, the ideal is for no fences in order to conserve Griffin's most important objective at Castlecrag of making the built form subordinate to the landscape. Conditions to curb the excesses of the past and gradually enhance amenity are not uncommon in other council areas. For example, in the Paddington Conservation Area, Woolahra Council requires some owners lodging DAs for extensions to remove an unsympathetic closed-in verandah or to restore their terrace house's facade.

**Adrienne Kabos**