



From Rights to Responsibilities

Bob McKillop's President's report on 1997

The past year has been a challenging and constructive one for the Progress Association. Your Committee was elected last March amid the emotional and divisive debate over the Foreshore Building Line. It made a commitment to facilitate open debate on the issue and to incorporate different points of view in its submission to Council on the FBL, which it met; a detailed submission on the FBL issues was made to Council based on a draft debated at the June meeting.

The Committee also drew up a list of key issues to address and I can report with satisfaction that we covered these matters largely as intended. Perhaps the most important of these was the CPA response to the draft Plan of Management for the Griffin Reserves and Walkways. Another matter from 1996 was the proposed changes to the CPA Constitution. These changes were put to the October meeting, but again failed to gain the necessary two-thirds majority.

A second issue that has been controversial in Castlecrag over recent years is the responsibility of the CPA in commenting on development applications (DAs) to Council. The Committee prepared interim guidelines to help define *community interest* and to establish a clear and transparent process for making responses. These Guidelines were published in *The Crag* No. 116, September '97 and debated at the October meeting. The new Committee will further review the DA Response Guidelines and seek endorsement by members.

We also implemented a suggestion to conduct a survey of Castlecrag residents to assess their views on a number of issues affecting Castlecrag and the Progress Association (*The Crag* 117, November/December). The responses provided the Committee with valuable feedback on the attitude of members and residents in general to key issues affecting Castlecrag. The results were reported at the February '98 CPA meeting.

The survey respondents generally gave a strong endorsement to the role of the CPA in protecting the unique character and environment of the suburb. A key theme was the strong response by residents that they came to live in Castlecrag because of its natural environment features. Two areas of concern stood out: the importance of the Griffin Reserves and Walkways to the character of the suburb and the increasing traffic problems.

Council has now established a 9-member Advisory Committee on the Plan of Management for the Griffin Reserves (see back page). Following discussion on traffic issues at the February meeting, I have now met with senior Council officers to establish a planning process to identify and resolve priority issues.

Reflecting on the year as a whole, the optimist in me sees a positive progression towards a more inclusive and constructive approach to the issues which bind us together as a community. Throughout the long and divisive debate over

the FBL, we heard much about the rights of individual property owners and often, too little about responsibilities to the wider community, the environment and future generations. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the crass individualism which often marred this debate is on the wane and there is a growing recognition of our responsibilities to maintain the quality of life which attracted us to Castlecrag.

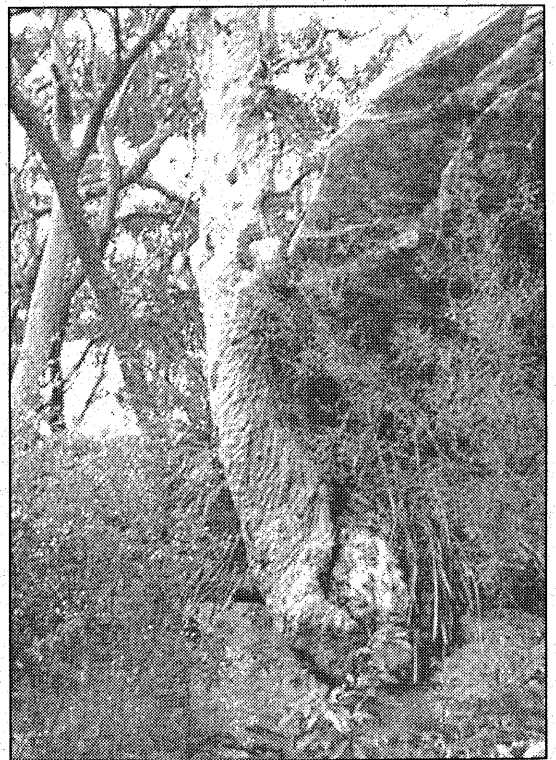
In March '97 I was one of four 'new faces' elected to the CPA committee. With six continuing members, we had a balance of continuity and change; and we brought a diverse range of interests and talents to the workings of the CPA (along with a gender balance). It has been a delight working with the Committee over the past year and I wish to express my appreciation to them for all the time and effort they have put into the smooth running of the Association.

On the matter of 'continuity and change' within the Committee — we are mindful of the claims in some quarters that the Committee is not adequately representative of our members and have made a special effort to be more inclusive. The survey results endorse our stance in this regard. On the other hand, the knowledge and experience of some Committee members on Council policies and processes highlights the importance of 'institutional memory' within the Committee.

Given that I have held the position of President for only a year and that we have important unfinished business, I have decided to stand for re-election again for this year only.

Editor's note: Bob McKillop was re-elected President at the recent AGM unopposed. For a listing of the 1998 CPA committee, see back page.

PIC: Determined Tree: Sailors' Bay foreshore reserve



'Which bank' leaving Castlecrag

Castlecrag will lose its branch of the Commonwealth Bank on which much of our community has relied on for its convenience and friendly service for many years.

The May 1st closure will create much inconvenience for Castlecragian clients — particularly for aged residents and small businesses, who must be wondering how they will manage their banking now, given that the Northbridge branch of 'which bank' is impractically positioned on a busy 'clearway' and the Willoughby branch has also departed.

The Commonwealth Bank has had an agency or branch in Castlecrag since 1937, when John Chandler opened an agency in his business at the Griffin Centre, moving to the Chandlers' newsagency in 1941. It remained there until a temporary branch office was opened where the Quadrangle now is, before relocating to the present building. Remember when the byline for Commonwealth Bank advertising was 'branches everywhere?'. At the current rate of closures, will it eventually become 'what bank'? (Ed.)

State Planning Reforms set for July

Important reforms to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act due to come into effect from 1 July would give developers the ability to tailor their proposals to an overall plan suited to local needs, rather than prescriptive centralised planning, according to Dept. Urban Affairs & Planning Minister, Craig Knowles.

Mr. Knowles cites his move to become the consent authority and the appointment of a 'place manager' on Sydney Harbour as a sensible step, addressing tasks previously carried out by more than 20 separate agencies. He sees this kind of move towards 'place management', and its emphasis on holding a single authority to account for development, being repeated in areas with mutual interests (for example Parramatta, river catchments and regional centres).

Asked if the changes could avoid the planning disaster of another East Circular Quay, Mr Knowles stated 'What we can be confident of with the new system, particularly now that the harbour has a designation of State significance, is that right upfront there will be clear imperatives associated with how we will manage the harbour, so if anyone (proposes such a scheme) they will know well in advance what the rules are'.

Changes will include: entry for private certifiers on small-scale developments once monopolised by local councils (to come into effect as of Jan/99);

- Conditions on State Government agencies to provide all conditions and licence requirements upfront, resulting in one approval — an integrated consent;
- Cutting the previous 32 heads of agreement to five for any development.

(extract from *The Australian Financial Review* 2/4/98)

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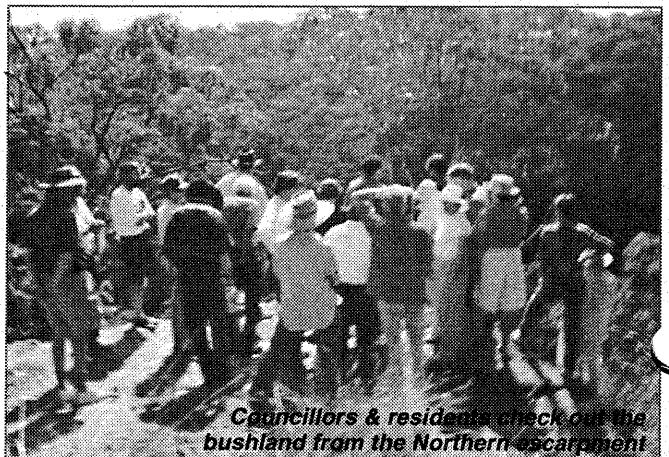
FBL Property Inspections

Willoughby City Council conducted an FBL Workshop on 24 March, where Councillors examined and discussed some individual property maps. The discussion included affects the FBL would have on the individual properties if the proposed FBL line was applied or differentiated.

The complainant residents had applied to have their properties inspected by Council, with a view to differentiation of the Foreshore Building Line from what was basically the Mitchell McCotter Consultants FBL Review, which had been exhibited by Council last year.

Council decided to hold 17 property inspections on Saturday 4 April in Northbridge, Castle Cove and Castlecrag, with the majority of inspections being in Castlecrag. Councillors including the Mayor, Pat Reilly, used a Council bus to visit the properties throughout the day. After a lunch stop at Harold Reid Reserve they continued to Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecrag, where they met with a group of local residents concerned for the effects of lowering the FBL, who were addressed by Dr. Harley Wright, Chair of the Middle Harbour Catchment Management Committee. The Councillor paused to admire the beautiful Sugarloaf bushland vista from the Northern Escarpment before continuing on to finish their inspections in Castlecrag.

It is expected that Council will make their recommendations regarding individual FBLs and the 100 metre option at their meeting on 28 April, to be appended to the original Mitchell McCotter FBL review. (Ed.)





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NATIVE or ALIEN: 'the horns of a dilemma'

From an address given by Professor Carrick Chambers AM, at the recent AGM of Castlecrag Progress Association.

Castlecrag is an outstanding example of a suburb where careful planning and subdivision resulted in a district where residents have the opportunity of living in close association with Australian nature.

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin pioneered those ideals here in Castlecrag — planning that resulted in most subdivisions enjoying a view or glimpse of the Middle Harbour and / or an association with the native vegetation of our peninsula.

The care and responsibility for this experiment is now in the hands of successive generations of owners and managers of this land, and also with those who control and administer legislation of what one may or may not do with these lands — the State Government of NSW and the Council of the City of Willoughby.

There are many examples of Australian suburbs which have been developed in bush areas. Relatively few have succeeded; many have failed. Even amongst those that have succeeded, I see subtle changes transforming these places to something not intended. They often become dominated by a totally different vegetation, either native from another part of Australia or from other lands. In some of the developments that have failed, the changes are not subtle but major.

The Griffins were not concerned that Castlecrag should only have its own native local vegetation and indeed they planted some exotic species. The Griffins did, however, have a genuine appreciation of the Australian open woodland vegetation of this peninsula. It would be interesting to have a rigorous study documenting the species and varieties that the Griffins introduced. Some of those plants I have heard it said date from the Griffins' time, we now recognise as bushland weeds, and I feel that the Griffins would now agree with our removing them. The Canary Islands Phoenix palms and the Madagascan coral trees would be in this category.

Why do bushland suburbs fail?

We can surely learn from some of the causes for failure:

1. Frequency of disastrous bush fires, deliberately or carelessly lit, or started by lightning strikes.
2. The fear of bush fires by residents and managers, and the consequent over-clearing of natural vegetation.
3. The insistence by councils and fire authorities on excessive fuel reduction burning, which can be detrimental if on a frequently repeated cycle.
4. The subtle transformation of vegetation by replanting using only alien species, either from elsewhere in Australia or from other countries.
5. Soil enrichment which can damage many native species and favour introduced plants.
6. The invasion of bushland weeds.
7. Changing building regulations and changing fashions in building developments. Structures may now occupy much greater footprints over the land. Taller buildings

and unsympathetic roof-lines result in greater shadow and all too often, loss of amenity for neighbouring properties.

All these, and no doubt others, are only too familiar to members of the Progress Association!

When the Castlecrag area was planned, the Griffins brought with them an appreciation of nature which they had developed in Chicago in the USA. They soon became fascinated by Australian nature. One only has to look at the fine drawings, often on silk, by Marion Mahoney Griffin to recognise a new sensitivity towards the informal beauty of the open, transparent canopies of eucalypts that she painted. I would hope we would all agree that these are very much the character of Castlecrag, a character that I feel must be maintained for this peninsula.

The bush fire issue

Fortunately Castlecrag is not as prone to bush fire as are some areas of Sydney, but we cannot afford to be complacent. The lessons from fires in other areas is that the great majority of houses which were lost burnt *after* the main fire passed, ignited by smouldering embers, etc. Therefore we should get the basic protocols in place and ensure that all residents are fully aware of them. Council has a responsibility to provide sound advice in this area.

Often, many people see 'fuel reduction' as a simplistic solution to the bush fire problem. There is no time in this talk to deal with fuel reduction in detail, but please take one message:

If it only occasional, fire will stimulate both seed germination and vigorous new growth. If fuel reduction is too frequent it will however, drastically reduce biodiversity and increase inflammability. While many species germinate after fire, we now know from recent botanical research that it is smoke, not fire, that stimulates germination of many native species.

The subtle transformation of our district to a foreign vegetation is in my opinion unnecessary and undesirable, and certainly should be avoided for the dominant plants. Great care needs to be taken in the planting of those trees that will eventually dominate the landscape.

Remember the beautiful transparent and constantly changing nature of most of the trees native to this peninsula. This is the character I believe we must at all costs maintain.

On careful management of natural assets

What can each householder in Castlecrag do:

1. to maintain the native bush character of our district
2. to maintain the tradition of the Griffins so that we may, if we wish, enjoy plants from other regions within Australia or from other countries without disrupting the Australian character.
3. to avoid artificially creating potential fire hazards.
4. to ensure that whatever is planted is not, in the long-term going to destroy a neighbour's amenity (and of course this also applies to planning a building) such as to block a glimpse of the water.
5. to reduce the ever-increasing problem of bush weeds.

Native or Alien (continued)

At present we lack a simple illustrated account of our vegetation — ie the natural plant communities and the species that make up the communities in our district. Urgently needed is an account readily available to each new land-owner coming to Castlecrag.

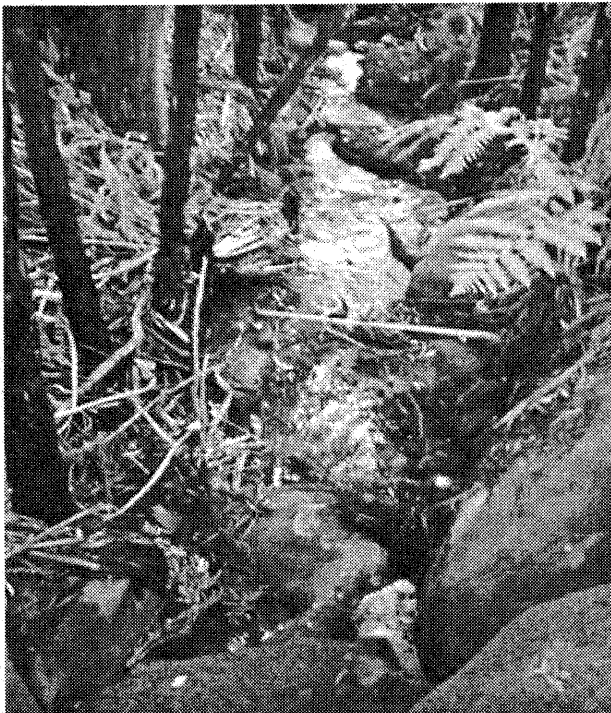
The question of maintaining the Griffin tradition and enjoying some plants from other regions is difficult and challenging:

- Many of the foreign plants people grow in their gardens are fire-prone, just like the eucalypts.
- Many are completely opaque, unlike most of our local species, and so destroy the amenity of pleasant views.
- Most of the alien plants offer little in the way of habitat for native animal species.
- Some are a fire hazard, but others of course are fire-resistant and even protective against fire.
- Most from other countries will require much better nutrition than will be provided by the natural soils of this area.

One solution is to maintain the aliens as a tub garden.

Another is to confine the areas of enrichment to intensive small patches of vegetable and flower garden that are adequately connected to a drainage system.

In some situations, it may be best to confine the introduced fire-resistant species to be those close to buildings leaving the more distant areas to be kept native.



PIC: After the wet: the Haven Amphitheatre creek

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How can we prevent weed invasion?

There is no easy answer to the control of bushland weeds. Every solution involves hard work. Many species are very much on the increase.

Many of the invading species are succeeding because of soil enrichment and overflowing sewers are one of the main causes. Take a boat trip and view Castlecrag from the water and you will easily see where drainage has spilled over down a slope by the bright green vegetation.

We constantly read in the press of the water authority's concern that stormwater is illegally placed in sewers, causing these overflows in periods of high rainfall. Perhaps we should all be more pro-active, and this certainly includes Sydney Water's professionals.

Some of the plumes you will see come from heavily fertilised blocks of land, such as intensive lawn areas where run-off spills over into the bush-clad slopes.

The problem of bush weeds is complex. Many of us have successfully regenerated small and even large areas, returning them to the native vegetation. The outstanding example is the Sugarloaf Project.

What is needed is a better co-ordinated approach so that the same offending species are eradicated both on private property and on bushland reserves at about the same time, and that follow-up removal of seedling regrowth is also co-ordinated.

One suggestion is that every three months there is a Council co-ordinated blitz on one particular weed on both private and public land.

I am sure that all of you who have been associated with bushland weeding could draw up a timetable. We all have our pet hates! Creeping bamboos, privets, ochna, Virginia creeper, morning glory, asparagus fern, camphor laurel, African olive, wandering jew, wild ginger and phoenix palms, to name just a few.

Let me conclude with the ultimate question:

"Is it worth trying to protect the special character of Castlecrag?"

My answer, and I hope for all of you present your answer too, would be an emphatic yes.

This is not only a historic responsibility, but a duty which is most satisfying and indeed it is an honour to be one of the custodians for our time here. But if we are to succeed, one of the things we must do is provide better educational information for all members of our community.

(Editors' note: Professor Chambers is a teacher and researcher on conservation issues and botanical concepts and former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney).

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COMMUNITY BYTES

Carry on, Seniors

Our last issue carried an article about our Seniors' Transport Service which shops for or takes senior citizens to local shopping centres or medical appointments on Tuesdays and Fridays. We asked for more volunteer drivers for our flexible, occasional duty rosters from local residents who could find the time. We scored two new drivers whose welcome help will maintain our present client list, but we really do need more.

The offer is still open! With 4 more volunteers, we can start another week day for STS and therefore take on 4-6 more senior residents who could really do with a bit of assistance. It's very pleasant to do and we will be happy to hear from local people who find themselves with some free time. Please phone Adele Barnett on 9958 6034 (evenings) or phone/fax June Raymond 9958 4739, (evenings) to find out what it is all about. No obligation, we will send you info. so you can think about it.

A bit o' old rubbish

Among other things, Cleanup Australia Day (was March 1 this year) provides trivia buffs and consumer industry with some interesting info. about consumer trends. Not sure if fewer condoms than last year is a worry or not, but in Castlecrag, the following items were top of the heap: plastic drink bottles, drink cans, glass bottles, lolly wrappers, plastic straws, polystyrene pellets, assorted plastic bits (lots of shopping bags & drink bottle tops) and tennis balls. Also lawn clippings — great for spreading weeds through the bush — and the annual oddity on our rocky bay shores; smashed beer bottles, possibly hurled by a small but consistent group of equally smashed boaties. Thanks to all those residents who helped clean up this year.

May we remember to pick up the bits on the road that missed the rubbish truck and that all drains lead to Middle Harbour.



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Willoughby City Heritage Week

This year it will be quite special because it centres around Naremburn, with interesting events on Saturday 2 May and Sunday 3 May:

- *From Dog Town to Naremburn*: a photographic exhibition at Naremburn Community Centre tracing development of the suburb.
- *Flat Rock Gully Walk*; if you've never done it, you're in for a treat in this historical, sylvan beauty spot.
- *Bush Bards, Ballads and Billy Tea*; sit in Henry Lawson's cave, drink the tea and listen to yarns and songs in celebration of our bushland heritage and Australia's bard who frequented this cave when hard-up.
- *Naremburn Guided Walk*; discover the built heritage of Naremburn and inspect the interiors of several houses along the way.
- *Presentation of Willoughby Heritage Awards 1998*; Saturday 2/5 at Naremburn Community Centre.

We do not attempt full details of the Heritage Week Program here, we merely whet your appetite, because you will receive a brochure from Council in your mailbox. Prompt bookings for some events will be advisable. For more information and bookings, phone 9777 7900.

Addie's leaving home

Addie Saltis, long-time Castlecrag resident and active community all-rounder, is leaving Castlecrag. For more years than she would care to remember, Addie has served our community well. She has been a voluntary librarian, a local historian and a trained bush regenerator, working with National Trust teams in Castlecrag reserves, in Willoughby and in the Sugarloaf Project, while being a wife to Con and mother of 3 children. Addie was a founding member of the Castlecrag Conservation Society when it began 20 years ago. We will miss Addie and her lovely smile, but our loss is the gain of Russell Island in Queensland to where she and Con will move and where Addie will undoubtedly begin a new native garden.

Seen and Heard

This space is reserved for what you notice — in the garden, on walks, wherever in your day — something unusual, interesting, annoying, funny; a few lines only, something like a Column 8 snippet. Report *Seen and Heards* to the Editors by phone or drop it into the mail box (details on back page). We prefer you publish your name but it is O.K. to be anonymous (no gossip or slander, of course) and still share your 'good ones' with the rest of us. NB.: All items must be signed, have street address and if name to be withheld, will carry byline: 'Castlecrag Resident'.

While on the subject, the Editors would appreciate letters, poems or stories from Castlecrag residents — not necessarily topical — to publish when space permits. If you have an idea, please call us or drop it into our mailbox. All contributions must be signed and we favour the succinct. Young people are especially encouraged to write.

Superhighway Possums

Local possums are quite aware of the superhighway; the information service cables which cross Edinburgh Road, on which Ringtails have been seen strolling along to get from one side of the road to the other. The worry is that they are not smart enough to know which they may walk on safely. Can anything be done to help them?

Griffin Reserves Committee

Following the adoption of the Plan of Management for the Griffin Reserves, Castlecrag, and having called for nominations for the Advisory Group in the *North Shore Times* and *The Crag*, Council formally approved group members at its meeting of 23 March:

Bob McKillop (nominated by CPA), James Smallhorn, Patricia Starch, Joan Gibson, Gay Spies (nominated by the Castlecrag Conservation Society), Anne Finkelde, Katre Burke, Prof. Carrick Chambers (nominated by Walter Burley Griffin Society), Elizabeth Lander, Cr. Sue Randle.

In relation to community participation in management, the PoM states: *'the group is to provide input to Council's implementation of the PoM, especially in relation to community awareness and education, and priorities for action in walkways and multi-purpose reserves.'*

Its objectives are:

- To promote local knowledge and interest in the reserve system through leadership and direction by Council
- To provide a means by which residents, and others knowledgeable in the Griffin reserves, can be involved in management of the reserve system.

We wish the group well in its aim of helping ensure our reserves get the assistance they so badly need, in restoring them to better condition and to public use.

Next CPA General Meeting Tuesday 28 April 1998 at 8pm

at the Community Centre

The Agenda will include

- WCC Ward options; review draft CPA submission
- Traffic issues — report on meeting with Council officers
- Review of Conservation Areas — National Trust recommendations

Election of CPA committee 1998

Committee members for 1998 elected at the AGM on 5 April are:

- President: Bob McKillop Vice President: Howard Rubie
- Vice President: Adele Barnett Secretary: Elizabeth Lander
- Treasurer: Diana Jones
- Committee: John Steel, Kate Westoby, Craig McCarthy, Gay Spies, David Harrop.

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Our Constitution stipulates that a member of the Association must be a natural person who is a resident or ratepayer of the area (designated in Rule 1.3) being over the age of 18 years and has been approved for membership of the Association by the Committee. Two months membership is obligatory for a member to be eligible to vote. The names of the people applying for membership should be supplied with the membership fee. A person who was a member in 1997 will automatically be eligible to vote in 1998 as soon as the 1998 membership is paid (as long as the qualifying period has elapsed). A 'family' cannot be a member because a 'family' is not a real person. If a company owns a property in Castlecrag, then the directors of the company do not qualify for membership of the Association if they live outside Castlecrag.

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association Inc. (C/- Newsagency 6/77 Edinburgh Road) by Kerry McKillop (9958 4516) and Adele Barnett (9958 6034). Contributions and letters received will be considered for publication where space permits. The editors' decision to shorten or otherwise edit copy is final. The deadline for the next issue is 20 May 1998.