



MINUTES
Ordinary General Meeting, Tuesday 21 May 2019, 7.40pm

Present: Kevin Chamberlin, Mary Chapman, Sebastian Clark, Bill Cook, Stephen Farrugia, Carolyn Fyfe, Alba Gatto, Peter Gerrand, Valerie Gerrand, Janet Graham, Michael Horscroft, Jan Lacey, Dan McDonnell, Nick Parissis (guest, Melbourne North PCCC), Jane Poynter, Lorraine Siska, Jacqueline Stevenson and John Widmer

Apologies: Nicholas Atkins, Marg Leser, Jacques Péril, Margaret Péril, Madeleine Scully and Geraldine Suter

The Chair, Kevin Chamberlin, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Leading Senior Constable Nick Parissis, Community Liaison Officer and Secretary of the Melbourne North Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC), who would speak about his role for up to 15 minutes and then answer any questions.

1. Guest speaker: Leading Senior Constable Nick Parissis

Nick Parissis told the meeting he had joined Victoria Police as an 18-year-old and it was the only job he had ever had. After graduating he was stationed at the old Carlton Police Station from 1992 until it closed, so he had been in the local area for 27-plus years. He was in Carlton at the time of the underground wars, later the subject of the first *Underbelly* television series. There had been good times and bad, including one life-threatening occasion when his life had flashed before his eyes. Since the move to Melbourne North Police Station he has been responsible for Parkville, North Melbourne, Carlton and Kensington. West Melbourne, i.e. south of Victoria Street, is not in his area, being the responsibility of the Melbourne West Police Station, on the corner of Spencer and La Trobe streets.

The Melbourne North area encompasses 11 high-rise public housing estates, which can be challenging, Melbourne University and several hospitals. There is a lot of work at the hospitals regarding property crime. Victims receive treatment at the Royal Melbourne and Royal Children's, which can be distressing for everyone, including psychologists. Melbourne Zoo can attract undesirables who break into cars. Nick had an interesting experience at the zoo helping when an orangutan escaped from its enclosure — thankfully, the keepers managed to tranquillise it before it got him!

Nick also attends the Melbourne Showgrounds and works night shifts in the CBD. Most crime involves theft of and from motor vehicles and general theft, mostly opportunistic, and issues related to drugs. Street robbers mainly target international students and people not paying attention while using smartphones. He cautioned that people needed to be more careful and always be aware where their possessions were. Burglars prefer unlocked doors to having to break in.

The police respond to traffic congestion and noise when they can. Nick's advice about noisy motorbikes was to note the registration number and report it to VicRoads. However, riders sometimes remove the noisy exhaust before the bike is checked.

Nick has undertaken the community liaison role since 2000. This involves developing positive relationships with vulnerable young people, from kindergarten age to teenagers, and working with schools, mentoring the young people and trying to stop them getting into the juvenile justice system. Once in the system they often go on to commit more serious crimes, and the aim is to prevent recidivism.

In 2002 he was invited to a morning breakfast, where he ‘volunteered’ for the PCCC, which tries to mobilise residents’ groups and agencies and find solutions. Jan Lacey is the NWMA representative and is the PCCC chair this year. The group has received some awards.

Nick organised the Camp for Kids program for 10 to 16-year-olds, which has been very successful. At the camp they do role-plays enacting the consequences of burglary and theft. They also do bike-riding, which is very popular; some kids haven’t ridden a bike before. Participants include those from families with a historical fear of the police, often from overseas.

Their attitudes towards the police change greatly after attending a camp. Nick read out a positive letter from the parents of an 11-year-old with health and anxiety problems, saying what an improvement there had been in their child. Another thing the PCCC runs is the annual Christmas food and toy drive. Donated gifts are passed on to Ronald McDonald House in Parkville and The Venny Communal Backyard in Kensington. Nick described this as an “awesome experience” for the police officers involved. “I do have one of the best jobs in the world,” he concluded.

The discussion was then opened up for questions and comments.

Jan wanted to reinforce how involved community groups are in the Melbourne North PCCC. There are about 20 groups including Muslim groups, and representatives sometimes come to speak at PCCC meetings. They can bring anything to the table and the member groups work effectively together. Nick agreed that much had been achieved.

Carolyn Fyfe, the NWMA representative in the **Docklands Security Group**, raised a pressing concern about that group. She said it hadn’t met since November last year and when it did the meetings were all about corporate matters, when they were having fire drills and so on. There was originally supposed to be a Flagstaff PCCC incorporating Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation but that didn’t happen so Carolyn had joined the Docklands Security Group. The manager at Flagstaff attends Nick’s PCCC. There are serious crimes in West Melbourne including murders.

Nick said other groups did exist under different names but there had been a time when a certain superintendent was anti PCCCs and had tried to close the Melbourne North one down. Local member Ellen Sandell had interceded on their behalf. Nick thought a proposal for a Flagstaff PCCC would be well received and said there were police members who could attend. It’s not very taxing apart from the follow-up paperwork. Bill Cook noted that much time had been spent trying to get a Flagstaff PCCC incorporated into Melbourne North PCCC. The Docklands Security Group doesn’t serve the interests of residents, being more of a commercial consultation process. Nick thought he would be able to influence his superiors but suggested the NWMA approach Melbourne West Police Station. The area south of Victoria Street is called Melbourne West.

There was discussion about **private security cameras** and what the laws allowed. Nick said cameras were allowed if for the sole purpose of protecting one’s property, at the front of the house. Cameras solely facing the road, looking into a neighbour’s property or near a school are not permitted. Sensor lights are a mixed blessing as they can also aid burglars. To help identify graffiti writers would also be a reasonable use. The police have a lot of information on the database, including photos, which they can use to trace perpetrators. Magistrates will accept this as evidence.

Regarding **brothels**, Nick suggested contacting Crime Stoppers. This would generate a file and police surveillance might be set up.

Mary Chapman said she would like to thank the police for their help and patience when residents were opposing the operation of **Candelles Reception** in Victoria Street, with rowdy guests spilling onto the street late at night.

The discussion turned to the so-called **African gangs**. Nick asked what the definition of a gang was. He said it was true that they are predominantly African with the majority South Sudanese. The police are working with a think tank of elders — something has to be done. Parents are often unaware of their children’s whereabouts. They should ask where they have been, where they got their cash or new iPhone etc. The police are following up when a child goes to court, not leaving them without support, and they are now getting much more respect.

Nick said the antisocial behaviour often results from the different practices in their home country, where the whole village is responsible for caring for the kids. In Australia, the parents are not necessarily used to disciplining them. The police are trying to educate parents on how to support their children.

Problems arising from **St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre** were raised. One member said she couldn't go out between 10.00am and 4.00pm because of the students' intimidating behaviour in the streets. Nick said the school was for kids and older youths feeling disengaged from education at other schools. St Joseph's is pretty much their last chance. The police go in on a monthly basis — it's challenging because the students are not familiar with the police's role. In contrast to the scepticism expressed about putting disenfranchised and expelled students all together in one environment, another member reported a very positive experience of attending a dinner at the centre, which had turned out to be a fantastic night with students cooking the meal and approaching guests to talk to them. Nick said the police did get called out there sometimes and suggested residents call them, after which more resources would be deployed.

One member had noticed a lot of **police recruitment** vans. Nick said there was funding for an extra 3000 police. They are trying to attract different members of the community; currently police officers are mainly Anglo-Saxon. They are looking at doing some programs for recruits from other backgrounds, speaking about police work as a rewarding career.

The vexed issue of **noisy motorbikes** was revisited, especially involving Harley Heaven. Motorcyclists like to meet and show off how loud their bikes are. Nick suggested photographing the number plate of the noisy motorcycle or car if it's safe to do so and reporting it to the Melbourne Highway Patrol using the email address below. In regard to noisy gatherings of motorbikes, record dates and times and try to get an overall photograph and report it on the same email: Melbourne-HWP-OIC@police.vic.gov.au

Kevin thanked Nick Parissis for his informative presentation. Nick declined the invitation to stay for the rest of the meeting, having had a busy day, and left at 8.35pm. Discussion followed about asking the Chief Commissioner of Police to re-establish a Flagstaff PCCC.

Moved Jane Poynter, seconded Mary Chapman:

That this meeting request the Chair to write to the Chief Commissioner of Police asking that Victoria Police considers re-establishing the highly successful Flagstaff Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC). Given the success of the Melbourne North PCCC and the change in the community, including growth in residential development and population, we consider a review is justified.

Carried.

2. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Moved Michael Horscroft, seconded Peter Gerrand:

That the minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on 16 April 2019, having been circulated by email and taken as read, be confirmed.

Carried.

(a) Letter to Environment Minister

Kevin had written to Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, regarding noise, noise measuring technology and procedures. He was awaiting a response.

(b) Submission re legacy artwork for Metro Tunnel Project

With the help of the screen, Peter Gerrand walked the meeting through his submission 'Inputs to artists for the North Melbourne Station' sent to Rail Projects Victoria on 30 April and later circulated to Association members. The text was contained on three pages, as required, but there were 19 pages of pictorial attachments. The Geelong & Melbourne Railway Company (G&MR) 1857 plaque formerly displayed on a wall in Laurens Street is now somewhere in storage. There are 600 locomotives shown in the 1924 map of the railway sidings. Tallia Gilarry had asked if she could circulate the letter to Council, which the Association had agreed to. Peter said there could be two or three artists vying for the artist position.

Moved Jane Poynter, seconded Stephen Farrugia:

That the submission 'Inputs to artists for the North Melbourne Station' be endorsed.

Carried.

As requested, Kevin had written to Evan Tattersall, CEO of Rail Projects Victoria, with two requests: (1) that the role the railway yards played in the social life and work of local people be appropriately recognised in an interpretation at the Arden site, separately from the Legacy Artwork Program; and (2) that Harold Freedman's *History of Transport* mural be relocated from the Spencer Outlet Centre to a more suitable railway or transport-themed site, preferably Arden. In his reply, Mr Tattersall repeated the mantra about using clay brick, bluestone, timber, steel and glass to reflect the industrial and manufacturing history of the site but other parts were more responsive.

Mary Chapman said the art program should not just be sculpture but part of an integrated urban designed open space with interpretation of the past use. Peter said the Association had provided a lot of information for the artist(s) appointed but we didn't know how much would be incorporated. Kevin suggested waiting to see what the artists came up with. He found it surprising that Evan Tattersall didn't know who owned the mural when it was still with Heritage Victoria.

(c) West Gate Tunnel Project Community Liaison Group

As resolved during discussion about Moonee Ponds Creek, Kevin had written to the West Gate Tunnel Authority and had received a reply inviting the NWMA to join the Community Liaison Group (CLG). Kevin had contacted the Parkville Association. The Kensington Association would also be affected by this. It was agreed that the NWMA should be in the CLG. Peter volunteered to be the NWMA rep, pointing out the substantial interface between this group and the Metro Tunnel Community Reference Group.

Moved Jane Poynter, seconded Jacqueline Stevenson:

That the Association take up the invitation to join the West Gate Tunnel Community Liaison Group and nominate Peter Gerrard as the NWMA representative.

Carried.

(d) Affordable housing

Kevin had written to Tallia Gilarry, our Community Engagement Partner at the City of Melbourne. Jan Lacey noted that the summary of the Lord Mayor's 'community conversation' had referred to affordable housing but there was no mention of follow-up. Kevin said he would forward any response straight to Jan to analyse.

3. Committee report

There was no report additional to the matters arising from the minutes, as above.

4. Reports from affiliated organisations

(a) Melbourne North Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC)

Jan reported that there had not yet been a reply to a letter sent by the PCCC to the Police and Planning ministers about the impact on police response times of the many road closures and major works in the area. For example, by the time the police attended a recent burglary, where two young women were being threatened, the thieves had fled with stolen goods. More police resources have been requested to counter these traffic disruptions.

While Nick had mentioned new recruitment to the police force in his presentation, Jan said that unfortunately North Melbourne had not received any of the newly graduated recruits. An added demand on resources is the complexity of the local population, which includes international students, tourists, city visitors and a general growth in numbers.

Crime figures were up a little since the last meeting, mainly comprising thefts from cars, but that was seen as a blip resulting from the International Flower and Garden Show in Carlton. The figures were fairly stable otherwise. The problem seemed to be an increase in the activities of a few individuals rather than an increase in offenders.

They had discussed why the road toll was going up. In an effort to combat this, police on bicycles stationed themselves at the Haymarket, and despite being in uniform and highly visible they caught hundreds of people using mobile phones in just a few hours. Police will continue to prioritise identifying and apprehending phone users.

(b) Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek (FMPC)

John Widmer's May 2019 report began with a photo of the white-faced heron on the banks of the creek. John said there had been 20 mL of rain at Macaulay Station in Kensington during the downpour on Friday 10 May and feared that all the rubbish collected in the litter trap would have been washed down into the bay. More concrete columns were to be constructed in the creek. Did Transurban regard Moonee Ponds Creek as *terra nullius*?

There were photos of the litter trap taken on 16 April and today (21 May). The litter trap does not appear to be working effectively. Callum at Ellen Sandell's office had agreed to hold a file of photos and John hoped the office would follow this up with the minister.

Mary reported that the City of Melbourne was meeting with Melbourne Water in two weeks regarding vegetation clearance at the Arden Street and Lloyd Street section of Moonee Ponds Creek.

(c) Coalition of Resident and Business Associations (CoRBA)

Bill Cook said the main event emanating from CoRBA was a meeting held with Robert Larocca, chief of staff of the Minister for Local Government, Adem Somyurek. There had been six people representing the CoRBA position at the meeting, including Councillor Jackie Watts. This group had met previously and drafted a full agenda around the need for reform of the electoral structure that operates within the City of Melbourne.

It was aimed to create a window of opportunity for Premier Daniel Andrews to gain credibility. It is required to be implemented before the next Council elections (October 2020). There is ample evidence that the electoral system is flawed. Objectives include equitable representation, greater participation, addressing voter disillusion, improving State Government credibility, developing consistency across the state, and generally improving system validity.

Ten reform options were listed:

- (1) Repeal of the *City of Melbourne Act*
- (2) Align the *City of Melbourne Act* with the *Local Government Act*, i.e. with all other municipalities in Victoria
- (3) Delete deeming provisions in the *City of Melbourne Act*
- (4) Delete the allocation of two votes for businesses
- (5) Align all election donation legislation across the state; the same rules should operate at both state and local government levels
- (6) Delete the one-month residency clause granting the right to vote in the *City of Melbourne Act*
- (7) Align the local government unsubdivided ballot format with that of the State Legislative Council, including consistent rules for optional preferential voting
- (8) The Deputy Lord Mayor position should be removed from the Lord Mayor election (similar to Geelong, where the deputy is elected by the councillors)
- (9) Change the ballot order methodology from alphabetical listing to random order
- (10) Review the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) with a view to ensuring consistency with the Australian Electoral Commission.

The chief of staff listened to them. He argued that the *City of Melbourne Act* was considered as part of the Local Government Review. Little change was recommended. As the review recommendations had failed to pass the upper house before the last state election, it was unclear how the matter would be handled by the government in the new Parliament. He was awaiting a formal statement about how the government might proceed. But basically he thought the structure was working well and no change was required. Changes to the VEC needed to be referred to the Special Minister of State; they couldn't be addressed by the Minister for Local Government.

So there appears to be no interest in change, even the matter of donations working uniformly across local government areas. The matter will be reviewed by the State Government but it doesn't look as if there is much chance of reform.

Discussion followed, including about the Melbourne University expert's finding that the VEC's electronic system was flawed.

Bill added that there had been a separate CoRBA meeting, which had been encouraging in that input had started to be gathered from around the table. Even with only three groups present there seemed to be issues in common, such as problems arising from noise pollution.

5. Discussion of correspondence circulated in the past month

Jan mentioned the **summary of the Lord Mayor's 'community conversation'** in North and West Melbourne. She found it disappointing and full of bureauspeak. For instance, the Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne, Community Consultative Committee had met only once, yet the following response in the summary did not acknowledge this:

"With respect to the Abbotsford Street housing renewal project, City of Melbourne officers regularly meet with the Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority (VHHS) through the Community Consultative Committee and monthly meetings with the project lead. The City of Melbourne will continue to advocate for meaningful engagement between all stakeholders during the design and precinct planning phase."

Jan pointed out that there was to be no public housing on the estate, only private dwellings plus 'community' housing.

No mention of community members' dissatisfaction with plans for the estate was recorded in the summary. The selective references to "community members' ... disappointment in the engagement undertaken by the State Government for this project in 2017" and a suggestion for "better lighting on the public housing estate" also seemed inadequate.

Michael Horscroft said he had heard the Abbotsford Street public housing estate was due for demolition in June. Dan McDonnell added that he had seen trees being measured in preparation for their removal. He had spoken to the workmen and discovered that the Department of Health and Human Services would be demolishing houses by the end of this year but the site would be empty for two to three years after that.

6. General business

John Widmer said he would like to thank everyone for their kind words and letters following the loss of Enid Hookey, his beloved wife of 40 years. He hoped everyone would come to celebrate Enid at the wake, which was going to be a musical morning at the Kensington Town Hall, 30–34 Bellair Street, between 9.00am and 12.00 noon on Saturday 15 June. John repeated Enid's words to "keep doing what you're doing".

7. Time, date and venue of next ordinary general meeting

Tuesday 18 June 2019 at 7.30pm, at the Bastow Institute, 603–615 Queensberry Street, North Melbourne.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.