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*all about community*

**unChain Newsletter**

**March Quarter 2013**

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## **1. AGM 2012**

The Annual General Meeting of unChain was held on 28 November 2012 and elected a new committee comprising of:

- President: Catherine Sharples, [president@unchain.org.au](mailto:president@unchain.org.au) 0421 221 242
- Vice President: Peter Holland, [hollandp@me.com](mailto:hollandp@me.com), 0411 470 651
- Secretary: Richard Roberts
- Treasurer: Janaka Williams
- Member: Sue Cleveland

Jim Tuttle was also elected as a second member but unfortunately due to heavy workload he has recently resigned. The Committee is currently looking to co-opt a new member.

The then President's (Peter Holland) report to the AGM said this about unChain's activities in 2012: *unChain remained active in the press and at Council. unChain made formal submissions on many issues such as the Triangle, the Foreshore Master Plan, the Budget, the St Kilda Harbor, and the*

*St Kilda Festival. unChain was often quoted in the local press. Most importantly unChain supported our two councillors in a sometimes difficult four years in office. (However) I am conscious that unChain did not nurture our membership and supporters. There are various reasons for this - one being that there was not a single 'big' issue like the BBC Plan for the Triangle. We were slow to get a new website and to begin our forums. I think that this is an important issue for the new committee to address. Things that the committee could consider include:*

- *A regular newsletter*
- *Better use of social media*
- *More frequent social events/fundraisers*
- *Setting up working groups on issues*
- *Regular forums*

*So what has happened since the AGM?*

## **2. The Committee**

The new committee met in Dec. basically to form and to discuss administrative issues related to the changes to the incorporations act and how they may impact Unchain Inc. Most of us had been heavily involved in the 2012 council campaign and so we then took a well-earned summer break. We have since met in Feb and March and will continue to meet on a monthly basis. We will have to make some changes to our incorporation rules and that will be put to members at a special general meeting later in the year. We are also looking at how to revitalise our membership.

We had one forum (on the metropolitan planning strategy) and more are in the pipeline. We have had a comedy night featuring Matt Okine and we have formed two subcommittees to look at particular planning issues relating to the Port Melbourne UDF and sheiks tower and the Metropolitan planning strategy. We are setting up working groups on the Triangle and the new website. We will also be looking for people interested in the campaign for a Master Plan for Fisherman's bend – more later in this newsletter.

## **3. Quarterly newsletter and membership**

Many members have indicated that they would like to hear about what is going on with the committee and the council. In response we plan to send a quarterly newsletter directly to members as well as to post it on our website. The aim of the newsletter is to keep members up to date with what is happening with unChain, with the unChain Councillors and with the Council generally.

There are currently 70 registered members of Unchain and so we are looking for feedback and involvement from the membership. The committee are unable (and don't want to) do everything so feel free to comment on anything in this newsletter and/or volunteer for anything that strikes your fancy – any good social event organisers out there, we'd be keen to have a social committee?

**The 2012 Council Elections** Firstly HUGE thanks to all of you who contributed to a successful campaign, as you are aware unChain supported 7 independent candidates and 3 were elected. Council is now made up of 3 unChain, 1 Liberal and 3 CAPP councillors. While we were hoping to win one or more extra seats, this is an amazing victory considering that we were running against all 3 major parties and there was no major issue (unlike the Triangle in the 2008 elections). Our unsuccessful candidates, Catherine Sharples, Peter de Groot, Richard Roberts and Mary Galic, did a wonderful job. We should acknowledge the good work done by all our candidates and our volunteers.

In Catani ward Serge Thomann (unChain) won easily with over 50% of the first preference votes. In Point Ormond ward Jane Touzeau (unChain) got 46% of the vote and enough of Christofakis' (Green) preferences (38%) to easily defeat Salina (CAPP/Labor) by 437 votes. In Carlisle ward Vanessa Huxley topped the vote with 24%. She then received enough preferences from Spillane (Liberal), McLoughlin (CAPP) and Spiegel (Liberal) to defeat Baxter (Green) by 568 votes.

The 3 CAPP Councillors had narrower wins. In Albert Park ward, Stevens (CAPP/Labor) defeated Birrell (Greens) by 86 votes after allocation of the preferences of Sharples (unChain) and Mills (Liberal). In Emerald Hill ward, Horvath (CAPP) defeated Roberts (unChain) by 80 votes after allocation of preferences of Griffith (Liberal). In Sandridge ward, Voss (CAPP) defeated Turner (Labor) by 29 votes after allocation of preferences of de Groot (unChain).

The most unusual result was in Junction ward. Bond (Liberal) received only 23% of the first preference votes – significantly less than the sitting Councillor Middleton (Greens) who got 29% of the vote. unChain (Mary Galic) preferred Middleton. However former CAPP/Labor Councillor Dick Gross gave his second preferences to the Liberal candidate and these preferences pushed Bond over the line.

In November the councillors elected Amanda Stevens as mayor and Serge Thomann deputy mayor. The councillors seem to have hit the street running and are working well as a team. They are currently working through two vital long-term issues: the appointment of the new CEO and finalising the Council plan.

**To Contact an unChain councillor:** Cr Jane Touzeau – **0432 287 634**  
[jtouzeau@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:jtouzeau@portphillip.vic.gov.au) Cr Serge Thomann – **0432 299 372**  
[sthomann@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:sthomann@portphillip.vic.gov.au) Cr Vanessa Huxley – **0406 890 739**  
[vhuxley@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:vhuxley@portphillip.vic.gov.au)

#### **4. Marina Reserve and the 'Skating Facilities'**

The unChain policy at the elections in 2012 said: *The development of the*

*Marina Reserve in St Kilda shows how parkland can be developed. There has been extensive community consultation about developing the reserve for a range of foreshore users, including providing skating facilities for young people. By reducing the size of the bitumen car park, we can more than compensate for the loss of green parkland for new skating and playground facilities'.*

unChain campaigned in the 2008 elections to move a proposed skatepark from an inappropriate location close to the St Kilda Park Primary School to a better location. In March the Marina Reserve was opened with great skating facilities and a toddlers playground. There will be significant plantings later in the year.

There will be plenty of fine-tuning in the future. There will be an Advisory Committee with resident and skater representation. The Council has advertised for expressions of interest but has not yet appointed the resident representatives. In the meantime contact Serge with any thoughts (if you are lucky he will show you the skateboard donated at the opening of the park by the nine-year-old boy who is the Australian under 18 champion and a future world champion).

**The St Kilda Triangle** In 2008 Port Phillip elected a Council with a mandate to terminate the Babcock Brown Citta contract for the Triangle and to begin consulting with the community concerning the future of the Triangle. The result was a vision that involves public open space, a creative arts focus, maintained views, improved beach access and is an affordable proposal. It rejects domination by alcohol venues and large retail and/or commercial development. The Council also commissioned a Palais Theatre Requirements Study (2012). The study assessed three possibilities for the Palais ranging in cost from \$26.5 million to \$130 million.

In March the Council requested the Minister to approve the exhibition of an amendment to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme as the next step in the process. One aspect of this is that it will restore the rights of citizens to make an application to VCAT if they think that the Council is not fulfilling the provisions in the amended Planning Scheme. There will be an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed amendments and to make submissions to Council. unChain will set up a committee to examine the draft amendment and to prepare a submission from us.

In a separate development Cr Serge Thomann asked two planning and project management experts to prepare a paper on how significant projects are developed and funded. We understand this is being circulated to the other councilors and to council officers.

## **5. Melbourne Metropolitan Policy**

The Victorian government has commenced preparing a new Metropolitan Planning Strategy to manage Melbourne's growth and change as it moves beyond a city of four million people. A Ministerial Advisory Committee chaired

by Professor Roz Hansen prepared a Discussion Paper to prompt debate around Melbourne's future. The strategy will consider where new housing and business activities should be concentrated as well as transport connections, health services, schools, sports grounds and parks. You can see the Discussion Paper at [www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au)

unChain held a forum on the new metropolitan planning strategy. unChain made a 51 page submission on the that considered matters such as: You can see the unChain submission at [www.unchain.org.au](http://www.unchain.org.au). If you want to make a comment, contact Peter Holland at [hollandp@me.com](mailto:hollandp@me.com)

## **6. Residential Zones**

Many residents in Port Phillip are concerned about multi-level apartments being approved in inappropriate areas of our municipality. We therefore welcome the Minister's announcement of the biggest changes to planning zones in 30 years. The new zoning system should enable Councils to identify the areas that are appropriate for more intensive development and those that are not.

The Residential Growth zone enables new housing growth and diversity. It aims to provide housing at increased densities in buildings up to four storeys. The General Residential zone preserves urban character while enabling modest housing growth and housing diversity. It consists of single dwellings and some medium density housing with a 9 metre height limit. The Neighbourhood Residential Zone restricts housing growth in areas identified for urban preservation. Its purpose is to recognise areas of predominantly single and double storey residential development. It intends to limit opportunities for increased residential development and to manage and ensure that development respects the identified neighbourhood character, heritage, environmental or landscape characteristics. This zone will have a mandatory height limit of 8 metres.

The Minister announced in March that the implementation of the new zones will commence on 1 July 2013 and will be completed over a 12 month period. Councils will have to consider their existing strategic plans, housing strategies and related work in the application of the zones. Each Council must determine how the three residential zones are to be applied but the Minister must approve the determination of each Council.

The government says that it is restricting non-residential uses in the Neighbouring Residential Zone and the Residential Growth Zone. The potential problem with the new zones is the wide range of discretionary uses (Section 2) allowed in residential zones. These may allow offices, shops or small supermarkets in areas that the residents thought were residential. Although the local Council may refuse a permit for a commercial use in a residential zone, the developer may succeed in an application to the VCAT. It will be important therefore for Councils to develop policies that protect the residential character of residential areas. Councils must ensure that these policies are strong enough to withstand challenges at the VCAT.

## 7. Fishermans Bend

The discussion paper for the new metropolitan strategy discusses the urban renewal currently underway in Southbank and the Docklands and the proposals for Fishermans Bend. Fishermans Bend is being planned for 80,000 new residents and neighbouring Southbank another 80,000 residents. In contrast Docklands has 'only' 15,000 residents.

Fishermans Bend has been rezoned as part of an expanded Capital City Zone. This means that the Planning Minister, not the Council, is the responsible authority for large-scale developments (buildings with a height of 4 storeys or more, or 60 or more dwellings or gross floor area over 10,000 square metres).

unChain believes that we must learn from the experience of Southbank and Docklands in planning for Fishermans Bend. Already there are concerns. Developments are being approved by the Minister well before consultation with the local community on a Master Plan. There are reportedly plans for at least 17 towers in the Montague section of Fishermans Bend alone. This is not how Fishermans Bend should be redeveloped.

We should aim to build a community at Fishermans Bend, not just houses and apartments. There should be a high-density precinct, but this does not necessarily mean high-rise buildings. Fishermans Bend should aim to provide affordable housing, with a mix of housing tenures and a mix of people. Community infrastructure such as child-care centres, schools, parks, transport links and health services must be included from the outset. There must be stronger compliance on height controls, rejuvenated streetscapes, more public spaces, encouragement of walking, cycling and public transport and the provision of better local amenities for residents, workers and visitors. We should perhaps be aiming at a 'creative' industries precinct, perhaps anchored by a university campus.

There must be a Master Plan for Fishermans Bend. Places Victoria will coordinate the planning for the area and will chair a Project Control Group with input from the Department of Planning and Community Development, the City of Port Phillip, the City of Melbourne and other stakeholders.

We have been told that it will not be until the middle of the year that the first draft of a Master Plan will be completed. There has been little or no community consultation on this to date. We have also been told that it has not yet been decided what level of community participation will be involved in developing a final Master Plan.

unChain and unChain councilors will be lobbying for a Master Plan to be developed with substantial community involvement. This should be done as a matter of urgency. We will be vigorously arguing that there should be a moratorium on any approvals of high rise developments at Fishermans Bend until the government has approved a Master Plan that aims at avoiding the problems of Southbank and Docklands.

We welcome anyone who wants to be part of this campaign. If you want to participate, contact Peter Holland at [hollandp@me.com](mailto:hollandp@me.com)

## 8. South Melbourne Market Roof

The unChain policy for the 2012 elections said that *'unChain supports the construction of a roof over the existing market car park based on Environmentally Sustainable Design principles'*. Council has now built a new roof that covers the existing car park and water-proofs the building. This was a significant project that cost \$4.4 million.

The roof will significantly reduce cooling costs and energy usage. Rainwater will be harvested and used for floor washing (the system that can store enough water to fill half an Olympic sized pool). The roof will include the installation of solar panels to contribute to sustainability. David Robinson of Locals into Victoria's Environment has been particularly active in lobbying for the solar panels.

The project is very significant because it is Australia's first large-scale community solar project. Initially there are 150 panels that will generate about 59,000 kWh per year for the market, which uses about 800,000 kWh per year. In March LIVE and the Council released a feasibility study to cover more of the area. Potentially 3000 panels could be installed generating about 1,280,00 kWh per year meaning that the power that is in excess of the market's requirements could be sold back into the grid. Residents who rent or cannot install solar panels on their roof would be able to invest in the project. David Robinson has said *"We expect that with the way the cost of solar panels is dropping and the cost of coal fired power is increasing there will be a financially viable way to cover the entire roof with solar panels. We will then need to sell something like 1,000 shares of \$1,000 to the community. Once done the panels would be installed and electricity would begin to be generated, and sold, to produce a return on the investment. We expect the project will be completed during 2013. We will then move onto our next roof."*

The feasibility study can be downloaded at: <http://dl.getdropbox.com/u/1097247/live/market-roof/feasibility-report.pdf>.

If you are interested in getting involved or providing feedback to David send an email to [david.robinson@live.org.au](mailto:david.robinson@live.org.au)

**Lease for Veg Out** Another community project is the community gardens at Veg Out. unChain members made submissions to Council supporting a long term lease for Veg Out in March 2013.

Veg Out is a non profit voluntary group with a large membership mainly of local residents. It has operated as a community garden of approximately 140 individual plots at the site of the former St Kilda Bowling Club however Veg Out was hampered by the lack of a lease.

In March the Council decided to grant Veg Out a lease for 10 years with an option for a further 5 year term, at a nominal rent. This recognised the significant community actions that Veg Out has been involved in. The lease ensures that the general public has access during daylight hours and artists using the adjacent studios will have the right to cross the land.

## **9. High Rise Controls for the Junction**

The unChain policy for the 2012 election said that; *'Council must urgently develop appropriate planning controls for the Junction and St Kilda Rd south'*.

The lack of detailed controls had, for example, allowed VCAT to approve an 18 storey residential tower at 2 St Kilda Road although the Council had rejected it as inappropriate for the area and not in compliance with the Planning Scheme. VCAT ignored the local policy and placed greatest emphasis on State Policy around urban consolidation in the much criticized Melbourne 2030.

In February the Council applied to the Minister for interim mandatory height controls to be applied to all new developments in St Kilda Junction. Council will then prepare a detailed Urban Design Framework and permanent planning controls for the area. The study will examine the size and layout of blocks, heritage constraints and opportunities for new developments. Council will also conduct a traffic and parking study, and in consultation with local community we will determine the future of this important precinct.

## **10. UDF for Port Melbourne Foreshore**

The unChain policy for the 2012 election contained an analysis of the need for an Urban Design Framework for the Port Melbourne foreshore and the issues around a proposed tower for Waterfront Place. This has been a very complicated issue, starting with a proposal lodged with Labor's Planning Minister Justin Madden for a 28 storey tower on the foreshore. unChain has made a number of submissions to Council on aspects of this issue.

After much work and consultation, the Council in March released for public consultation a draft Urban Design Framework for the Port Melbourne Waterfront and Design Guidelines for Waterfront Place. The guidelines propose a 10 storey limit for the site.

If you are interested in participating in this issue, please contact Peter de Groot at [Peter.DeGroot@bendigoadelaide.com.au](mailto:Peter.DeGroot@bendigoadelaide.com.au)

## **11. A small case study: Graffiti and the Cleaning of Barbeques and Public Toilets.**

The 'big issues' discussed above are very important. But often what residents want is for Council to do the basics and do them well. The unChain policy for the 2012 elections said; *'It is the responsibility of the elected Councillors to ensure that the level of rates imposed on ratepayers is not too high and that*

*ratepayers are getting good value for the rates that they are paying'.*

Many of Council services are 'contracted out' and the Council has an opportunity at the end of each contract period to set up a tender process to review the performance of the contractor and to ensure ratepayers get 'value for money'. For example, in January Council awarded a two year contract for cleaning barbeques and public toilets over \$2.8 million. It also awarded a three year contract for graffiti removal for over \$600,000.