

## President's Report to the AGM, 21 March 2012

When Port People was first formed in 2005 it brought together the passion and enthusiasm of many people who cared about Garden City's open spaces. They didn't want their park to be subsumed by buildings. The people took on the bureaucracies, the powerful invisible "them" and persuaded them to look elsewhere for a more appropriate place for the intended development.

Having secured the short term future of the park the group then sought to ensure that future generations could also have some space to just "be". They campaigned and saw to it that the park was included in the Heritage Register: the best protection guarantee available. Having been noticed and listened to, Port People was able to go on and take the next step. They called for the park to be given some TLC, rejuvenated and restored to become space to be proud of. They achieved a fabulous outcome for our community. It is now a place to meet, play and celebrate.

To quote the activists of past years, "People Power" can rule.

When we took stock of the group at about this time last year it looked as though perhaps the life of Port People had come to a natural end. The job was done. Energy was low. But when we flagged this to the community, you said, "I'll help", "I care", "Count me in".

It had been the group's ambition for some time to celebrate its success at saving the park, and the resolve of local people, but we didn't have enough arms and legs to get it off the ground. And then we did. Celebration in the Park (11 December 2011) was quite some party. So many of Port Melbourne's community groups came together, with their dogs, to meet, share and celebrate. It was a fabulous achievement. With the support of funding from the City of Port Phillip and Port of Melbourne Corporation, you the people worked together to make something fabulous.

Garden City Reserve is still our focus. We are still having to be vigilant in making sure it gets the care it needs so that it can continue to flourish. But as a gateway community there are other issues that also attract our attention. Some of them are massive projects like the proposed redevelopment of Fishermans Bend; some of them are smaller, like the fencing off of the Elder Smith Reserve on Williamstown Rd, but all of them shape the way we live, our community, our environment.

Without the input of community groups such as Port People, I believe that our living spaces will become used and abused, that projects would be completely driven by developers and the bottom line, and that we will end up with a place we don't want to be in. Port People has shown that it is possible for the people to have influence, to show direction, and to set the parameters. However, groups such as ours take passion, energy and commitment. These are the things that you bring to the conversation. Make them count. Be involved.

So where to from here?

Some of the other things we are already working on include:

- The Port Melbourne Waterfront Urban Design Framework which incorporates 1 – 7 Waterfront Place
- The development of Webb Dock, the freight it handles, the traffic it generates, the trucks that park, the noise it emits
- Heritage Guidelines, their implementation,
- Elder Smith Reserve and
- Community projects like the proposed beautification of the Walter St footpath

Part of the group's ethos is to share information and experience. We will continue to develop our relationship with Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association, working with and supporting them on many projects.

We plan to facilitate one or more walking tours in Garden City Reserve sharing information about its history, founding members and plantings.

With the amazing energy of our members we plan to host another Celebration in the Park.

Perhaps our most ambitious plan is to host a discussion that will set out a Community Charter which identifies what it is that people want from buildings, developments and social infrastructure. My aspiration is that from this we could develop a guide or blueprint with tangible outcomes that will help shape the look and feel of our area, something that would define what people want and how they see their future living environment. My belief is that if you have a point of view, it's time to let others know what you are thinking, what your needs and values are and be proactive about shaping your future. It's too late once the horse has bolted.

I think its fair to say that we've got a lot on our plate. There's a lot going on. With your support and input however big or small, we can achieve good outcomes for the future of our community. Please be a part of our success.

I would also like to express my thanks and gratitude to the members of our committee and working group. You rose to the challenge we set ourselves and nailed it. We've had a great year and I am excited about what we might achieve in the year ahead.

Helen Kuchel  
Chair  
Port People Inc  
March 21, 2012