



Progress 3127

Newsletter from the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association

September 2026

President's message

There's been plenty going on in postcode 3127 to keep our Association busy as we emerge from another long Winter into beautiful Spring.

From big picture planning issues, like advocating to keep the Box Hill Brickworks site for parkland and arguing for sensitive redevelopment of the old St Joseph's site in Kent Road, to proposals to turn Mont Albert Village into a more pedestrian friendly precinct and participation in local events like the Pop-Up Piano concert in the Plaza, we've been active in making a contribution and putting forward a local perspective. I hope you enjoy the updates in this edition of our newsletter. Feel free to contact us at shmapa3127@gmail.com if you would like more information or would like to join us.

Phillip Dews, Acting President

Anzac Day Dawn Service

SHMAPA has been responsible for organising this well attended local service at Surrey Gardens for the past 12 years. We are now moving to establish a standalone Surrey Hills ANZAC Day Association to promote the event's continued development and ensure its sustainability.

We are planning a general meeting on Thursday 22 October, 7:30pm at the Balwyn Community Centre (and by Zoom) for anyone interested in being involved.

If you would like to attend the meeting or contribute in any way please contact our Secretary, Yvonne Bowyer, at shmapa3127@gmail.com



Photo: Ray Gruchy

Box Hill Brickworks rally

The campaign to save the Box Hill Brickworks site for parkland gained great momentum on Sunday 23 August at a public rally attended by residents, local Councillors and state politicians from various parties and independents. The crowd was estimated at 1,500 people,

In July the government rezoned a large part of Box Hill for more high-density housing, estimating that Box Hill will double its population within 15-20 years.

The rally heard that growth isn't just about how many homes we can build. It must be liveable and that includes providing green open space especially for residents living in apartments. It's about places to walk, to meet friends, to play and to get outside and connect with nature. As a former landfill, it was stated that development of high-rise

housing at the Brickworks site represents a high risk to human health and the environment. The alternative use, as passive open space and a nature park, follows many similar examples around Melbourne.

Whitehorse Council Mayor, Cr Kirsten Langford, confirmed Council's commitment to negotiate purchase of the site, at one stage leading the crowd in a chant "This is the place for open space". Local people, including Fatima Ali, 2026 Whitehorse Young Citizen of the Year, also addressed the gathering.

The high point of the rally saw Liberal leader Jess Wilson MP announce a strong commitment (if elected in November) to join with Whitehorse Council to bring the new park to reality - including \$20 million to assist remediation of the site.

Mont Albert Village has a new drawcard under the veranda of the old railway station building: a piano, free for anyone to play. The instrument arrived via the ABC's series The Piano, thanks to the efforts of retired local music director Richard Gerner. The arrival was celebrated on Friday 24 July with a launch concert extending into the evening. It is now a fixture of the Plaza with many passers-by stopping to play an impromptu tune.



Mont Albert Village upgrade

The transformation of Mont Albert Village into a more pedestrian-friendly precinct, reported in our last edition, has commenced.

In August, Whitehorse Council invited community feedback through a public meeting hosted by the Mont Albert Village Business Association at the hmh Advisory offices, along with pop-up consultations on the street on busy Saturday mornings.

The draft plans feature wider footpaths, fresh surfacing, new streetscape furniture and garden plantings.

Feedback on the proposal has been positive overall, with discussion continuing on some of the finer details.



The project will move to detailed design stage later in the year. Residents can view the draft plans and project description at yoursay.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/hamilton-churchill

Fast-tracking concerns

The State Government's Development Facilitation Program (DFP) fast-tracks a wide range of development proposals, bypassing local councils and removing residents' rights of appeal to VCAT.

One trade-off is that a development must contribute to social and affordable housing in the form of 10% of the dwellings, although this can be waived by paying a special government levy.

An application via the DFP has recently been approved for the St Joseph's site in Kent Road, Surrey Hills. See our submission at www.shmapa.org.au/team-3

Boroondara Council has raised serious concerns about the DFP and is proposing the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the peak body for Victoria's local councils, advocate to the Victorian government to seek an immediate pause and review of the program.

Whitehorse Council, at its meeting on 14 September, also raised serious concerns with the program.

Our Association acknowledges the need to boost housing supply.

However we share Boroondara and Whitehorse Council's concerns with the DFP, that sees significant departures from building height controls, reduced public consultation and loss of appeal rights and provides minimal council input into key planning decisions.

Still blooming after 30 years

Thirty years ago, Nell Rose-Byrne returned home to Alice Springs from London and found herself at a crossroads. She had always loved flowers, so floristry seemed like the natural path for her.

At age 30 Nell began a three-year floristry apprenticeship in Adelaide, eventually completing her Certificate III at Hilton Florist (Kellee Flowers), where she learnt the foundations of the

trade and developed skills that would shape her career.

An opportunity came along to purchase Mont Albert Florist. "I had already been working here part-time, so I knew the business and the customers and how everything worked," she said. "That was 18 years ago. Thankfully I'm still here, still learning and still blossoming!"

Mont Albert Florist offers beautifully crafted flower arrangements for all occasions, bouquets, a large range of giftware, hampers, cards and plants.

"Every person is different. Everyone has their own taste, personality, budget and idea of what the perfect flowers should look like," she said.

Mont Albert Florist is located at 1 Hamilton Street. Customers can book online at montalbertflorist.com.au or phone 9890 1122.

