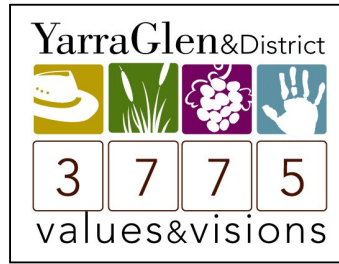


# Yarra Glen & District Township Group



GPO Box 232,  
Yarra Glen Vic 3775

## ANNUAL REPORT, 2007/2008

It is my pleasure to present the 2007/2008 Annual Report of the Yarra Glen and District, Township Group.

The Township Group was established in April 2006, following the completion of the Yarra Glen and District, Values and Vision Project. Members of the Township Group are community volunteers with a strong commitment to the environmental, social and economic advancement of Yarra Glen and surrounding districts.

The role of the Township Group is to act as an advocate for the communities in our region; to work with the Shire and other levels of government to achieve an orderly and supporting development of the town and district. We seek to support individuals and groups within the region and help them to achieve their objectives. Our work is supported by personal contacts with members of the community and with organized groups.

Our Committee meets monthly ( on the last Thursday of each month, 6 – 8 pm. ). These meetings are open to the community. From time to time we invite special groups to meet with us to consider specific issues or future plans they have.

The Township Group has had problems in raising its public profile and obtaining community recognition of its important role. It is still early days for the Group and experience in other towns indicates that this is unfortunately a common experience. The Group has the potential to be a strong uniting force for our communities and to present coherent ideas and views to all residents, the Shire and both State and Federal Governments.

During this last year the Township Group has been working with the Shire on the phased implementation of the **Yarra Glen, Recreation Masterplan** that has been adopted by the Shire. In the last few weeks we have seen the repair and establishment of walking paths, mainly in McKenzie Reserve, as the first stage of this programme. The works programme for the next financial year is being developed. We have a representative on the **Yarra Valley Rail Corridor Study** being undertaken for the Shire, although there have been no meetings in recent months. We have also been represented on the Advisory Committee for the master plan and development of **the Yarra Valley Racing Centre**. For these projects, the Township Group is seen by the authorities as the consolidated voice of the

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Town Community and this carries considerable responsibility. With very limited resources, we have given what support we can to the group working to establish a **Medical Centre for Yarra Glen**. This project was largely undertaken by Marjorie Woollands and Dorothy Barber with Norm Cronin doing most of the physical building. The Yarra Glen Chamber of Commerce was the springboard for this project.

Two issues of profound significance to our region and communities arose during the year and are ongoing. Of greatest significance to the wider community is **the Sugarloaf Pipeline** (now referred to as the "North /South Pipeline"). The other, **the Yarra Glen Truck Bypass** impacts the environment and traffic flows in and around the Town of Yarra Glen. Together, these have occupied most of the time of the Group and will continue to require active involvement. I will deal with each one separately.

### **The North/South Pipeline:-**

This is a State Government project to take 75gl of water from the Goulburn River near Yea and pump it in a 4m, buried pipe to Sugarloaf Reservoir. All environmental and planning approvals have been given by both State and Federal Governments and an alignment has been determined and I understand that work has started. The State Government has all the necessary powers to undertake this work. In our region, the pipe will come down through the Toolangi State Forest, through private farmland at Dixons Creek. From there it follows the alignment of the Melba Highway and Gulf Road, in many cases along or within private land. It will then follow the aqueduct to Steels Creek Road and from there along Steels Creek and Glenview Roads to the gas pipeline easement and from there to Sugarloaf. Many individual landholders are going to be impacted and the community at large inconvenienced.

The Township Group has taken the view that this is a seriously flawed project. We had several meetings with the group contracted to undertake the project. With the Shire, we held a public meeting in the Yarra Glen Memorial Hall, we supported Landcare and farmer groups in their opposition and we made submissions opposing the pipeline to the Expert Advisory Committee established by the State Minister for Planning. We have made the views of the community known to our local State Member of Parliament. But at this stage it is going ahead.

The State Government has established a **\$5,000,000 "Regional Benefits Fund"** to be available to impacted communities. They are establishing a mechanism for the distribution of these funds on the basis of applications made from the community. The incoming Township Group will need to consider suitable projects for funding.

### **The Yarra Glen Truck Bypass:-**

There is a long history to this project. The current project, which has now been funded by grants from the Federal Government (\$5m), the State Government (\$9m) and the Shire (\$500,000), involves three roundabouts and a new section of road running north from Healesville Road to Old Healesville Road, through private property to the east of the Yarra Valley Race Course. The Township Group was briefed by a team from Vic Roads and a **Community Report** prepared. Vic Roads have recently produced an "Information Update" which provides both information and an aerial photograph with the proposed route.

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At the meeting with Vic Roads, several issues were identified and since then the Township Group have been made aware of others which require discussion or explanation from Vic Roads. At this stage it is not at all clear just how the heavy north/south traffic will be directed to keep to the proposed bypass. There would still be considerable convenience for heavy traffic to use Bell Street or Armstrong Grove. Since the original planning for a Yarra Glen Bypass was proposed, there has been a significant increase in traffic, especially logging trucks, moving into Symonds St and the Eltham-Kangaroo Ground Road to link up with the Western Ring Road. The current plan will be a major problem for this east/west traffic. **We are recommending that the incoming Township Group take urgent steps to have open discussion with Vic Roads regarding heavy traffic movements in and around Yarra Glen.** We understand that in all the earlier discussions with Vic Roads during the assessments of the various options, the upgrading and landscaping of Bell Street was to be part of the project. This is now so much more important with the construction of the new supermarket. However, Vic Roads advises that there is no funding for the necessary development of Bell St.

A major point of concern is the placement and design of the roundabout at the southern entrance to Bell Street. It involves understanding the impact of the roundabout on the railway crossing, the Station precinct, the entrances to King and Bell Streets, the historic oaks on the eastern side of Bell St, and the way the roundabout can be designed to ensure that the heavy traffic will actually move into Healesville-Yarra Glen Road. Maybe we need to consider a stage 2 project to cope with this traffic?

All in all there is much work to be done and an active and representative Township Group will be essential to ensure that we as a community achieve the best outcomes. Hence, we are now proposing that the township group be made up from representatives of groups who have a specific involvement in the 3775 postal district in addition to individual volunteers. To assist in this work, we believe the Shire should provide administrative support to the Group to assist at meetings and help with the follow-up from these. A fully representative and well-resourced Township Group will be of great benefit to the town and to the Shire. The benefits would far outweigh the cost.

Finally I would like to thank the out-going Committee for all the hard work done over the year. Melinda Koth, Secretary; Steve Shortis, Treasurer; Mike Bainbridge; Veronica Holland; Noel Nicolson; and Jim Viggers, hard working members. Cr. Jeanette McRae has attended most meetings and has provided a most important linkage with the Shire. We have been fortunate in obtaining the services of two very competent Minute Secretaries in Lindy Montell and Bev. Gilbert. Thank you one and all.

Malcolm Calder, President      28 September, 2008.

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