



## President's Report

Ashfield Community Action Network  
General Meeting  
February 10 2025

Two Thousand and Twenty-Four has come and gone and we greet 2025 as a substantial, cohesive volunteer group supported by a strong membership, focussed on enhancing and promoting our great little community. At times, it seems we are a de facto arm of Bassendean Council, considering we lost our Ward representation in the local government amalgamation fiasco some years ago.

In representing our diverse community, we have been successful, maintaining a strong working relationship with the Town's administration, with kudos to the Town's CEO and his team.

We remain committed to our regular program of culturally inclusive events and social occasions designed primarily to maintain community cohesion and well-being. Our revamped Face Book page features the pleasure our community derive from these events.

Also, we continue to champion our environment, and our connection to it. Identifying unused land and creating community parks and green spaces is a feature of our Network and with support from the Town, they are thriving.

Notably, we were recently successful in securing a significant grant, sponsored by Dave Kelly MLA. This funding will be put to great use enhancing Gary Blanch Reserve. Once Council approval is formalised, we will acquire and have installed a range of high-quality physical workout equipment of the type that transforms human movement into fitness and wellbeing. We envisage a 'Fitness in the Park' program that will encourage our community to participate in regular but casual fitness activity.

The 'Lookout' Park remains a work-in-progress. The park will reach its full potential when some shrubs and saplings are replaced with appropriate native, bird attractant flora, that will enhance the purpose of the park - that of a community lookout - taking in the magnificence of the Ashfield Flats wetlands, the river valley and the Darling Ranges beyond. We look forward to once again hosting our annual Anzac Day dawn service here in April.

The issue of the Ashfield Flats Master Plan remains vexed. Whilst we advocate strongly to maintain the existing heritage trail along the river, the plan, now adopted by the Town, will see it removed and replaced by a fenced pathway, remotely positioned up to 100 metres from the river and obscuring any significant view of the estuary. It is noted this



same path and fence, hastily erected by the then State Planning Commission in 2018, following a sham community consultation, was quickly removed following a packed community meeting convened by Dave Kelly MLA, and hosted by the Town.

If we seem to have 'trust' issues, this is brought about as, last year, AshfieldCAN committee members were told categorically that the fenced pathway would not form any part of the final master plan, and the heritage trail would remain. We were also advised, at a capacity community forum, that the Master Plan was to be considered no more than a concept document, despite being presented earlier to Council as a definitive Master Plan based on strong, unequivocal science. Seemingly, there is a duplicity at play here that is difficult to comprehend.

Regardless, at the Annual General Electors meeting held earlier this month, on behalf of AshfieldCAN, I was able to have a motion passed seeking to enshrine the riverside heritage trail which, whilst formalised and bituminised in 1990, has been in continual use, linking Ashfield to Bassendean from a time when the horse and cart formed a large part of our transport system. The motion also called for the historic dairy farm pastureland running the length of the Ashfield Flats to be acknowledged as forming no part of the iconic wetland, as is insinuated in the Master Plan. This area does, however, provide an opportunity to enhance the Town's large tree canopy, remnant examples of which can be seen flourishing within the parkland.

A community member speaking against the motion stated the importance of the heritage trail was 'overstated' and it had only been a feature since the 1990s. Herein lies a problem. Proponents of the plan and those with a vested interest, mostly live outside of Bassendean or are not regular users. They fail to appreciate the trail's history and the strong connection with our Derbal Yerrigan riverside walk. People travel to Ashfield Flats, not to walk through bushland, but to enjoy the unique continuity of our only riverside walk, and all it has to offer.

That the motion was passed with an overwhelming majority means naught, as it has no binding effect on Council when the motion is considered at the Ordinary Council Meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, commencing at 6pm. I would urge those with an interest to attend.

On the issue of my representation of AshfieldCAN at General Elector's Meeting, I was disappointed when given the opportunity to speak to the motion. The Motion was carefully crafted, with input from AshfieldCAN committee members. The Mayor, who presided over the meeting, should have been aware that, according to the agenda, three minutes was allocated to me, however only two were allowed. The continual interjections resulted in the presentation running over time, seem disjointed and therefore confusing. Personally, I felt humiliated, and others expressed their concern the tenor of the meeting was at times mocking, dismissive and disrespectful, not just to me but others who expressed genuine concerns on a variety of matters.



In a democracy, we have the ability to maintain the status quo or not. This opportunity arises in October.

Robert (Bob) Brown  
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AshfieldCAN  
February 10, 2025.  
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