

# Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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## From the President's Desktop....

The Trust's AGM on 24 June had, yet again, to be held via Zoom, and the Information Evening with the Mayor was unfortunately postponed due to the current lockdown.

We reported on another productive though Covid-affected year, with multiple submissions and letters written on a range of matters of interest and concern for members (*see our website*). We anticipate a similar year ahead but hopefully with more opportunity to meet, and as ever we thank you for your ongoing support.

Back in 2020 we were taken by surprise when Council replaced several hundred metres of heritage sandstone kerb and gutter with concrete. This was the original sandstone guttering on Gladesville Road alongside Joey's heritage sandstone wall. Although it was too late to save this section, with the help of the Mayor, we managed to prevent any more damage to other areas and are pleased to see that Council is developing a formal policy to ensure this destruction of our heritage sandstone doesn't happen again.

Council then installed some inappropriate concrete seats near Garibaldi Corner. Being flat, horizontal, low to the ground, and without back support or arm rests, they were quite unsuitable for many people. They are no longer there - but wouldn't it have been better and less costly for ratepayers if Council had sought the opinion of the community before acting?

The Trust is watching closely the proposals for Figtree Park and Council's buildings in Gladesville Rd (*see pages 2 & 3*). Council has access to \$4.75 million from the Public Spaces Legacy Program, from a grant application which contained contradictions to the proposals in the Property Strategy.

As you will have seen from previous Journals, the Trust has been actively engaged for over two years with the revision of the Plan of Management for our heritage Boronia Park and the contentious proposal to build a Sports & Community Facility between Ovals 1 & 2. Funding for the Facility comes from grants from the State (\$1 million) and Federal (\$500,000)



Jack Munday with eight of the thirteen 'Battlers' on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (left to right) Miriam Hamilton, Chris Dawson, Betty James, Jo Bell, Judy Taplin, Kath Lehany, Monica Sheehan, Joan Croll (SMH 15 June 1996)

Governments, and Council is contributing time and some resources. To complete the design to their chosen specifications the HH Rugby Union Club pledged to contribute an additional \$1.5 million to be raised from donations.

We were therefore astonished that the second item on Council's meeting agenda on 21 June was a motion put forward by Councillor Zac Miles to extract \$100,000 of a \$185,870 grant received under Federal Government's Round 3 of the Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Program - and gift it to the Club's construction project!

The suggestion was especially baffling as in the previous motion Councillor Ben Collins lamented Council had insufficient funds to cater for the basic needs of our municipality - such as roads and footpaths!

In light of this contradiction, the majority of Councillors chose to keep the whole grant for its original purpose.

## The Battle for Kelly's Bush

As our Battlers showed us all those years ago, the courage of their convictions was a gift to the community and the environment! It led to 42 further 'Green Bans' and the saving of over 100 heritage buildings.

The Trust, formed in 1968 to fight against the onslaught of unit building in the suburb that was demolishing heritage homes, was a vocal supporter.

To mark this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year the **Friends of Kelly's Bush** are holding a celebration onsite at Weil Park, Woolwich, on Sunday 29 August from 10am to 12pm. Speakers will be Meredith Burgmann, author of *Green Bans*, *Red Union*, *The Saving of a City*, and local celebrity Tim Ross, comedian, author and TV presenter, whose recent 'Summer Night Walks' video shared his connection to the history and stories of Kelly's Bush. There will be guided walks and Devonshire Tea, as a tribute to Jack Munday's 'wonderful morning tea matrons'.

In the meantime, when Covid conditions allow, be sure to visit the Historical Society's fascinating exhibition at the Museum 10am-12pm daily. Their display includes the original telegram sent to the Battlers by Bob Pringle of the BLF on 17 June 1971 (*see back page*) which starts with this inspiring and significant message:

**"Dear Friends – this union believes that social and environmental issues are matters that should be of concern to all citizens."**



## What's happening at Figtree Park?

As you will be aware, up until recently, details of Council's funding application for the \$4.75m Public Spaces Legacy Grant had not been released to the community.

Because of this lack of transparency as to what was being proposed, the Trust applied to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for a copy of the grant application via a Freedom of Information (GIPA) request.

The Grant Summary and Proposed Budget submitted as part of Council's application makes interesting reading - view the documents at [www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au) Amongst other apparent contradictions with the draft Property Strategy were statements that Council will:

- *Maintain the character of Hunters Hill and Figtree Park by improving the presentation and use of the area through regular public domain improvements and activities and services, like community gardens, playgrounds for children, maintaining parks and reserves and retaining the croquet club.*

- *Maintain the character of Hunters Hill and manage growth by protecting heritage cottages on Gladesville Road.*

These statements do not align with the proposals in Council's recent draft Property Strategy of a *re-development opportunity at 40-48 Gladesville Road*.



*Dog walkers enjoying a catch up*

In addition Council's own research of the usage of Figtree Park, submitted with their grant application, shows the Park's average usage over a period of 21 days as **280 visitors per day and over 500 visitors on all three Saturdays!** That's a lot of usage for such a small space without a playground or adequate seating! And is completely at odds with Council's claim that Figtree Park is underutilized!

As these photos, taken within a period of a few minutes show, the park is well used by multiple visitors daily who stay for a long time enjoying its quiet amenity.



*Mum and baby enjoying the leaves while older residents and their carers enjoy the sunshine*

### What the community wants:

From the Trust's survey at the end of last year, and from numerous community consultations, residents want:



*The daily coffee group*

- To maintain a high level of landscaping and care of the park with no loss of any part of the green space or existing trees.
- A children's playground reinstated in its previous location – an ongoing request by locals over several years.
- More seating and appropriate fencing along Ryde Road.



*A quiet place to relax*

A report on the project was finally presented at Council's meeting of 21 June.

We welcome the long overdue provision of play equipment and fencing but how will \$4.75M for this small area be spent?

The report states that 'the design should not affect the **upgrade/redevelopment of the Council controlled properties along Gladesville Road**'. What does this mean when the grant application says that Council is '**protecting heritage cottages on Gladesville Road**' and '**retaining the croquet club**'?

It also states there will be '**Infrastructure to support low key events such as markets**.' Why would this small area even be considered for events that are already held at the more appropriate sites of Boronia Park and Henley?

We are told there will be a traffic review, which should have been the very first consideration in this already congested area. Interestingly there is no mention of the obvious need for extra parking should events be held here!

We also note the report no longer mentions two major components of the grant application ie

1. The proposal to acquire 2 Ryde Road – a property which was not up for sale.
2. The provision of a screen and performance stage (part of the \$620,000 cost for an 'Amenity and stage block').

So how will this considerable cost saving of approx \$3M be used?

Community engagement starts on 10 July and we look forward to Council's promise that **the public's contribution will influence the decision**.



## Property Strategy 2021 (Draft Community Infrastructure Plan)

You will recall the above plan was exhibited in October 2020 when community consultation was sought.

A survey was designed by Council to gather feedback, but, by limiting comment as to how the proposed spaces or 'Hubs' would be used, it restricted the community's ability to question the entire premise of these development-led proposals. This led the Trust to run its own survey to broaden the response and obtain meaningful community input.

After the consultation period **and without any alteration**, the Draft CIP (now renamed Property Strategy) was again presented for approval at Council meeting on 26 April. This additional meeting was specially convened to allow many concerned residents to address Council. Throughout the coherent and passionate presentations, the depth of community opposition to the Plan was obvious.

Also very apparent, as with the draft Local Housing Strategy on exhibition around the same time, was that the submissions and residents' views were going unheeded and ignored.

Mayor Ross Williams acknowledged the lack of revision of the original Plan and, supported by Councillors Sanderson, Krassoi and McLaughlin, voted that the Property Strategy was not ready to be adopted and should be reviewed prior to further community consultation.

Two months later, we have not yet been formally advised that this has occurred - although there has been a *Revised Draft Property Strategy (post exhibition) 2021* on Council's website. This does not inspire confidence that the outcome, will be more than a cut-down version of the original document with the same frothy 'vision' statements and over-blown expectations for the three 'Hubs'.

In the Trust's view, the redevelopment preferences held by Council, so evident in their multiple plans and strategies, have been embedded over the course of many years. If these fail to reflect the expressed wishes of the residents consulted, then 'community consultation' becomes little more than a cynical marketing exercise.

With no business case, needs analysis or evidence-based justification for the proposals in the 51 page document, this appears to be yet another example of this approach.



**No. 46 Gladesville Road – one of the five properties under threat**

The lack of transparency displayed in the management of the Property Advisory Committee is still entrenched. The persistence in continuing to pursue a development-led course of action is disturbing.

Some of the unsupported assertions by Council are that:

**\* Investment in income-producing property would secure Council's financial future.**

This lacks substantive facts. No other options are considered and risky development schemes potentially come at great cost to the community.

**\* There is a need for 'downsizing' units**

Where is the evidence? Current government focus is to enable people to stay in their homes and State taxes and policies can make downsizing an uneconomic proposition. Local downsizing options are already available and there is no guarantee that additional residential units sold on the open market will be for the benefit of locals.

**\* Existing Council properties are inadequate and not 'fit-for-purpose'**

Council must examine its work practices and explore the option of renovating community services buildings for adaptive reuse, as stated in its Draft CIP:

*The principle of adaptive reuse relates to **not building something new** unless there are no suitable options within the existing asset base that can be adapted or rejuvenated to meet the identified community needs for space.*

**\* Rate revenue increases will not be sufficient to underwrite Council's core functions**

There are far more creative and prudent ways to become sustainable than by pursuing redevelopment options. The apparent shortfall in Council funds appears to be the result of the obligation on Councils to revalue their assets - an accounting process that creates a deficit.

**\* Figtree Park is under-utilised.**

Evidence that this is not so is well documented on page 2 and Council's own research proves the opposite.

**\* Council needs to 'provide opportunities for business' in the Figtree Park precinct.**

This is an assumption with no factual basis provided.

Council's Property Strategy appears to invent problems for which a high level of development is the only proposed solution. This is unacceptable to many residents and we await a revision that will properly reflect community wishes.



**Croquet Club and Green – safe or not?**



## The cautionary tale of 61 Downing Place

**Development Application DA20151225 was lodged with Hunter's Hill Council on 15 Dec 2015; and a Decision was determined on 23 May 2016** giving approval for alterations and additions to the existing dwelling plus pool, landscaping and gate, subject to conditions.

In March 2019 we took photos of this house for the revised Green Book, along with its near neighbour at 4 Tarban Street in the same style. While not heritage listed, both are attractive and significant examples of their era with frontage to Tarban Creek reserve. 61 Downing Place had also been well renovated and stood proud in its corner streetscape.

A year later it became clear that this house was gradually being seriously altered; trees were removed, the garden bulldozed and scaffolding erected. One side of the block was excessively excavated through rock landscape to enable a large garage with potentially a two-storey dwelling above it, effectively creating a three-storey structure, in breach of LEP 2012, providing an undesirable precedent. The Trust urgently alerted Council's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP). To CAP's dismay this DA had not previously come up for assessment. Mr Steve Kourepis was asked to advise. Council's notified proposed works, included these details:

**Demolition** of the existing rendered building in the rear of the site and partially remove the roof of the existing dwelling to allow for the new additions.

**Construction:** At Basement level: New garage and storage, stairs, pergola stormwater tank. Ground & First Floor levels: Internal alterations to existing floor layout, new stairs and provide, new bedrooms, bathrooms, family room, laundry, etc.

**External:** new swimming pool and outdoor terrace upgrade. New driveway entrance to basement plus landscaping. The external finishes will match the existing building including the face brickwork and sandstone areas as indicated on the submitted plans.

At the Ordinary Meeting 4401 held 9 May 2019, Council deferred consideration of this application 'for Council's Heritage Advisor to review the proposal on streetscape and landscaping impacts and also review any associated impacts of the proposed building height to both Tarban Street and Downing Place'. As a result, additional conditions were added to Schedule No.1 of the Deferred Commencement Approval.



Amended plans were to be submitted to Council in regard to design refinement, particularly in relation to the proposed garage/south-eastern addition and the treatment of the proposed upper addition. Terracotta Marseilles tiles required to match existing roof; lightweight cladding to the external walls of the proposed upper level addition and finishes of the external walls to be provided.

When alerted to the deteriorating state of the house, a Stop Work Order was issued on 20 March 2020 as "unauthorised works have been undertaken on the subject site and Council is now pursuing this matter." Thereafter DA20151225-1 was lodged on 19 June 2020 resulting in a Decision on 25 Aug 2020. "Section 4.55 - New brick wall replace floor additional bathroom - Amendment Refused."

In March 2021 the Trust requested an update on refusal of the modified plans for which the owners had sought retrospective permission for their unauthorised works. We were advised

that DA20151225-2 was lodged on 12 Jan 2021 with a Decision on 27 Apr 2021. "Section 4.55 - Modifications to the internal layout, minor addition to ground floor area, modified glazing and minor reconfiguration of the roof. Cost of Works: \$300,000.00. Amendment Issued."

In June we learnt from Council that "The section 4.55 Modification No. 2015-1225-2 approves demolition and reconstruction of the walls to match the existing structure.

This was following receipt of structural engineers' advice that the walls were not structurally stable due to cracking and softening of the lime mortar...."

We were also advised to contact the Principal Certifier ourselves for any enquiries regarding compliance with the DA!

It is disturbing that Council's Strategic Outcome to maintain the "Character and Amenity of Hunters Hill" is so dependent on a vigilant community and reliance on questionable oversight by NSW government's Private Certifiers. We also query whether allowing so many years for a DA to run its course, when serious damage can occur to the fabric of a building, is prudent or even ethical. The inevitable structural instability can then allow substantial alterations to be made to the original DA.

There are many examples across the municipality where such alterations to the original DA are made during the period of a build. Council's 50% requirement for garden landscape is also often, over time, incrementally reduced by patios, pools and additions.

**Brigid Dowsett**



## TONY COOTE

### A celebration of 50 years' dedication to the heritage of Hunters Hill

*Tony* - Thank you all and particularly thanks to Ross for tonight's acknowledgement.

I started off on the Conservation Advisory Panel when it was known as the Hunters Hill Advisory Committee. I replaced David Turner who, after chatting me up on the ferry one morning, nominated me for the task, as he was leaving the area and the Institute [RAIA] needed a replacement.

Some time later - after I joined the Hunters Hill Trust committee - I switched to represent the Trust on the panel and Brian McDonald took over as the Institute's rep. My being on the panel was somewhat accidental, as was my being in Hunters Hill at all, despite the fact that my grandmother had lived on the ground floor of Bentham in Wybalena Road, and Gillian's grandparents and her father had lived in the family home, Eurondella at 29 Woolwich Road for many years. Gillian and her family, the Barkers, lived in Lloyd Avenue until 1951.

We married in London in 1967, the year after I finished architecture at Sydney Uni. Gillian had gone ahead in 1966. A year later, when we returned to Sydney, Roy Barker had died leaving Eurondella empty and we put up our hands to be caretakers of the place until the family could find a buyer. When the house was finally sold, we need to find somewhere to live. That place turned up in the Saturday morning real estate section of the Herald the day we started looking. It was a semi near the Woolwich Pier Hotel and we could just afford it - ah, those were the days!

We lived there for some years. Gillian worked at the ABC and I was in an architects' practice in Kirribilli and we often drove over the Figtree Bridge. We became aware of a magic looking house right on the water's edge near Boronia Park. You could see it from the bridge. One day we noticed something that looked like a sign fixed to the front of the house - could this magic place be for sale?

We checked the Gregory's and determined that the place had to be in Bonnefin Road. We drove slowly along the street until we found a dilapidated set of steps running down towards the river. Down we went, our baby son in our arms, and discovered the house. It was a for-sale sign. On the way back up the steps, a woman poked her head out of the adjacent house, greeted us warmly, asked if we liked the house and volunteered that 'they' were asking x dollars but would accept y dollars. My God! So that's how we got to be the owners of Dempsey's Boatshed. In a wonderful twist to the story, the woman who gave us this information was Tilly Shelton-Smith who actually owned the boatshed but lived in the adjacent house which had been designed for her by the famed Melbourne architect, Roy Grounds.

Tilly was a Melbourne girl after all. In a final twist to my accidental connection with the heritage of Hunters Hill, three of the houses Gillian and I have lived in or have strong connections with, are featured in the Green Book: 13 Wybalena Road, 29 Woolwich Road and 31 Bonnefin Road. Perhaps my connection with heritage is not so accidental after all.



Mayor Ross Williams presenting Tony Coote with a plaque in recognition of his 50 years' service

### Recollections of our heritage homes by Tony & Gillian Coote

#### 'Bentham' 13 Wybalena Road (Tony)

In 1938, my grandmother, Anne Margaret Coote, rented the ground floor of 'Bentham', a three-storey mansion with lace balconies, wide verandahs, an old Victorian garden with grand old Bunya trees and a bamboo forest that went down to two old sandstone swimming pools - one covered for the ladies. My aunty Marg and Stace my father, lived with her until they both enlisted in WW11. Incidentally, my father was friends with Roger Barker, Gillian's uncle, killed in the war. Growing up, I remember visiting Granny Coote with my family, playing in her garden and swimming in the pool.

#### 2 Lloyd Avenue (Gillian)

I've lived in Hunters Hill beside Turrumburra (Lane Cove River) for all but twenty years of my life, from infancy until I was seven, in a weatherboard house with wide verandahs in Lloyd Avenue. Terraced gardens ran down to the river, and we swam in our baths at high tide. I dreamed of princesses in a magical white rotunda across the river. Back then, the streets were full of music, the bakery horses left their poo on the streets, painters lived up the road, and the old houses and their gardens were relaxed and wild. My big sister and I walked up the back road to Malvern School, long gone. That childhood house is now unrecognisably modernised and a subdivision, with obligatory imposing mansion

has obliterated the terraced gardens and wooden baths. But the rotunda, a folly in St Ignatius College's waterfront grounds, is still there.

#### 'Eurondella' 29 Woolwich Road (Gillian)

My grandparents, Roy and Mena Barker, lived in this Jeanneret house from 1920 to 1968 and raised five children, which they bought after renting 'Glenrock' in Glenview Road. There were family tennis games every weekend and each year, a huge bonfire for Guy Fawkes Day was built in the paddock, always a thrilling night with masses of fireworks and neighbours. I often stayed with Mena and Grandpa and recall, as a tiny child, munching into what I thought was a carrot but which turned out to be a red hot chili. Dad's sister Norma lived nearby in Gladstone Avenue. In 1968, when both my grandparents had died, Tony and I lived there until it was sold which, in those days, took many months. We loved going to work on the ferry and decided to find another house nearby.

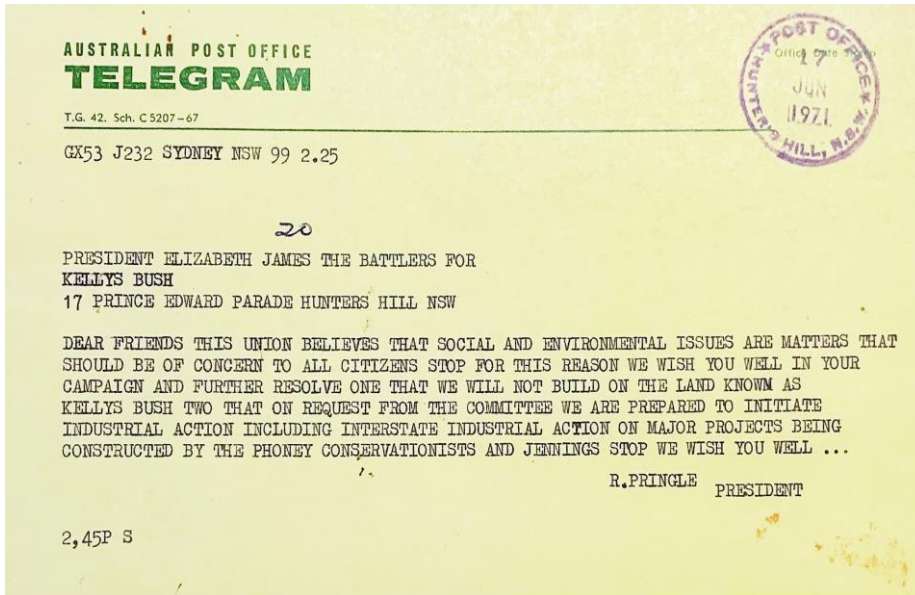
#### 'Tyrone' 87 Woolwich Road

The first time we looked in the SMH under 'Houses for sale', there was a semi-detached on Woolwich Road in our price range, so we bought it, moving in a few years before our son, Gully, was born. Tony's alterations gave us a new kitchen and better access to the garden, with its beautiful big mulberry tree. We met up with old neighbours from Lloyd Avenue, made lots of new friends, and swam in the Woolwich Baths. One Saturday, the noise from a neighbouring house - the races at full blast - sent us off for our first visit to Boronia Park with a picnic and baby Gully. Which is where, at the end of Princes St, we saw a small white sign affixed to the front of the derelict boatshed we'd long admired when driving over the Figtree Bridge. Hoping it might say FOR SALE, somehow we tracked down where it was, made our way down the many steps, burst in and found, yes - it was for sale. It was also derelict and there was a covenant protecting the owner's views, - who lived in the house above us so the boatshed had been on the market for over a year.

#### 'Marveen' 31 Bonnefin Road

Undeterred, we bought 'Marveen', took nearly a year to make it habitable, and moved in just before Gully's 1st birthday. We've now been living in what was known as Dempsey's Boatshed, where boats were once built and hired out, for almost 50 years. We share our home with possums, dragons, snakes, skinks, echidnas and a wide range of land and sea birds, spiders and other insects. Some nights, the Powerful Owl calls through Boronia Park. At dawn, we're awakened by laughing kookaburras and raucous cockatoos. Over the years, there's sadly been a marked reduction in the variety of birds, as eucalypts and angophoras are eliminated, forefront indigenous habitat cleared and replaced by exotics.





## The Battle for Kelly's Bush

(continued from page 1)

The above telegram to the Battlers was sent by Bob Pringle, President of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation on the day of the Green Ban - 17 June 1971.

Register to attend the free onsite celebration on Sunday 29 August 2021 at <https://kellysbush.eventbrite.com.au>

## Review of the Heritage Act 1977

Sadly the battles still continue today, and there is grave concern that the current Parliamentary Review of the NSW Heritage Act 1977 is an attempt to water down protections for heritage across our State. The National Trust (NSW) notes that the Heritage Act is the single most important instrument in our state that identifies, protects and conserves our heritage - see the HH Trust's submission at [www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

With the example of the long running battle to save the historic Willow Grove Villa on the Parramatta Powerhouse site in mind, we need to be on our guard.

The Green Ban that had been put in place by the CFMEU to prevent the demolition of Willow Grove Villa was breached, when on 21 June 2021 - seven minutes after the deadline had expired for no works to be carried out - Infrastructure NSW gave the order for non unionised contractors HAUS Building Services to commence works. Many residents joined the hundreds of CFMEU reps blocking all three gates to the

site and the combined efforts of the community and the union successfully blocked further work. Judgement on its fate is currently before the Supreme Court.



*Willow Grove Villa - can it be saved?*

## Council Elections 4 September 2021

Nominations for candidates close on 4th August for those wishing to stand for Council which will be in Caretaker mode as from 6th August.

Be aware that some candidates will only be standing for Mayor. It is critical for us to ensure our municipality will be well managed and thriving during the next 4-year term and we need to elect a Mayor and Councillors who we can trust to tread a careful path.

So please get involved and support those whose values you endorse. We will be holding our Information Evening for members as soon as conditions permit.



**Preserving our heritage**

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### Why not join us?

and help swell the number of voices speaking up for our unique municipality

Membership year Jan-Dec  
Become a member at  
[www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

To renew your membership email  
[members@huntershilltrust.org.au](mailto:members@huntershilltrust.org.au)

**Single membership \$30**  
**Family membership \$50**

Payment by cheque to  
above address or by bank transfer:

CBA Bank  
BSB: 062000 Act No: 16211909  
Acct Name: Hunters Hill Trust

### Publications

#### The Heritage of Hunters Hill

Available at Hunters Hill Post Office  
HH Museum & Lost & Found Department  
Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill

#### Or online at

<https://greenbook.huntershilltrust.org.au>

#### The Vision and the Struggle The Industrial Village of Woolwich

Available at Hunters Hill Post Office

*We acknowledge the Wallumedegal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of all land and water of the Hunters Hill local government area and pay respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.*