



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

APRIL, 1976

GRANT FOR TREE-PLANTING

Queen Street and West Woollahra Association has offered to provide \$1000 for a tree-planting scheme for Queen Street.

The offer has been made to Woollahra Council on condition that it is taken up within two months. It is hoped the Council will match the donation on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Our association has been disappointed that so little has been done to implement a tree-planting scheme drawn up by Rowan Beckett, a member of our first committee, and adopted by the Council in 1972.

This called for Jacarandas and Illawarra Flame trees to be planted alternately down Queen Street to provide both shade and splashes of colour.

In the hope of getting something moving, we have offered to donate more than half the surplus from the 1975 Queen Street Fair for tree planting in Queen Street.

It is the association's wish that advanced trees—say 15-16ft high—should be planted so that residents will enjoy the benefit sooner than if saplings were grown.

The association's retiring committee has also decided to make donation of \$250 each to three non-denominational community organisations in the area.

These are Woollahra Children's and Community Association, Woollahra Senior Citizens' Association and Woollahra Demonstration School (towards the cost of its centenary celebrations).

These matters and several others of importance to the area are covered in the annual report of the association's president, Mr. Leo Schofield, which appears below:

Once again the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association can look back on a year of positive achievement.

The Queen Street and West Woollahra Association came into being largely to press for sympathetic planning consider-

EVERYBODY COME !!

Whether or not you are a member of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association, you are welcome to our

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, April 27th

Congregational Church Hall, Jersey Road
8 p.m.

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER —

EDWARD ST. JOHN, QC

on

"Stirring and How to Go About It!"



A former member of Federal Parliament and Australian President of the International Commission of Jurists, Mr. St. John is famous for his courage in speaking out in matters which deserve public inquiry, such as the aftermath of the Voyager disaster. He will speak on how ordinary people can raise their voices more effectively to influence governments.

Business of the meeting will include election of officers and committee for the coming year. Ballot papers will be available to financial members at the meeting. If you would like to join beforehand, fill in the form on the back of this newsletter.

ation for the area, and the past year has seen the formulation of a plan that will, if adopted, ensure the preservation of this remarkable environment.

A PLAN FOR WEST WOOLLAHRA

In one of its first publications, the Association stated as its chief goal the involvement of local residents in planning. The Association was to act "as a forum through which residents can raise their voices effectively on planning matters and

influence the decisions of public authorities."

That we have been able successfully to contribute constructively to the planning process was shown by the exhibition last October of a draft plan for Queen Street and West Woollahra.

Under the successive chairmanships of Mr. Karl Feller, architect, Mr. John Spatchurst, industrial and graphic designer,

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

**Statement of Income and Expenditure
March 1, 1975, to March 17, 1976**

INCOME:		
Subscriptions		878
Bank interest		57
Queen Street Fair surplus		<u>1768</u>
		2703
LESS EXPENSES:		
Bank fees	35	
Postage, printing, stationery, office expenses & Village Voice newsheet	735	
Office equipment & system	<u>257</u>	
		<u>1027</u>
SURPLUS for year		1676
Add net assets March 1, 1975		<u>3819</u>
		5495
Less Donations to local organisations		<u>1600</u>
		<u><u>\$3895</u></u>

BALANCE SHEET

Cash at bank	3916	
Less Sundry Creditors	<u>21</u>	
Net Assets		<u><u>\$3895</u></u>

**QUEEN STREET FAIR
Statement of Income and Expenditure**

INCOME:		
Stall rental		12033
Sale of goods, commissions, donations		<u>2650</u>
		14683
LESS EXPENSES:		
Salaries	1450	
Insurance	962	
Entertainment	877	
Cartage and hire	3836	
Concessions	1286	
Planning expenses	2753	
Publicity	1295	
Gratuities	376	
Compensation	<u>80</u>	
		<u>12915</u>
SURPLUS		<u><u>\$ 1768</u></u>

AUDITOR'S REPORT

The above statements of Income and Expenditure of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association for the period March 1, 1975, to March 17, 1976, have been prepared from the books and records of the Association and from information furnished by the Treasurer.

We report that the Statements truly reflect the financial position of the Association as indicated by the above sources.

M. P. GILOVITZ & ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
Registered under the Public
Accountants Registration
Act 1945, as amended.
MARCH 1976.

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

CONTINUED

and Mr. Douglas Gordon, architect, the Association's architectural sub-committee has worked on proposals for zonings that would ensure the architectural future of West Woollahra.

Resident surveys, discussions with independent planners and a cordial dialogue with Woollahra Council were all helpful in preparing the association's submissions.

As many of you know, the council engaged the services of an independent eminent town planner, Mr. P. J. Devery, B.Sc., M.T.C.P. (Syd.), to report on the draft proposals. After this, the association submitted to council further comments on Mr. Devery's report.

The planning process is never a rapid one and it is salutary to reflect that, after more than four years, we are only now on the point of having concrete long-term zoning proposals for West Woollahra.

Through these years, the association has advocated flexibility in planning, the introduction if necessary of special zones and, above all, sympathetic consideration at all times of a unique townscape.

The 2(g) zone proposed for Paddington had long been suggested as an ideal zoning for an area of architectural and historic importance and the association (as well as, somewhat earlier, the Paddington Society) recommended this zoning for some parts of West Woollahra.

It remains to be seen how any final zoning is interpreted. But it is the association's hope that conservation of a unique area and atmosphere should at all times be council's first consideration when interpreting their final plan.

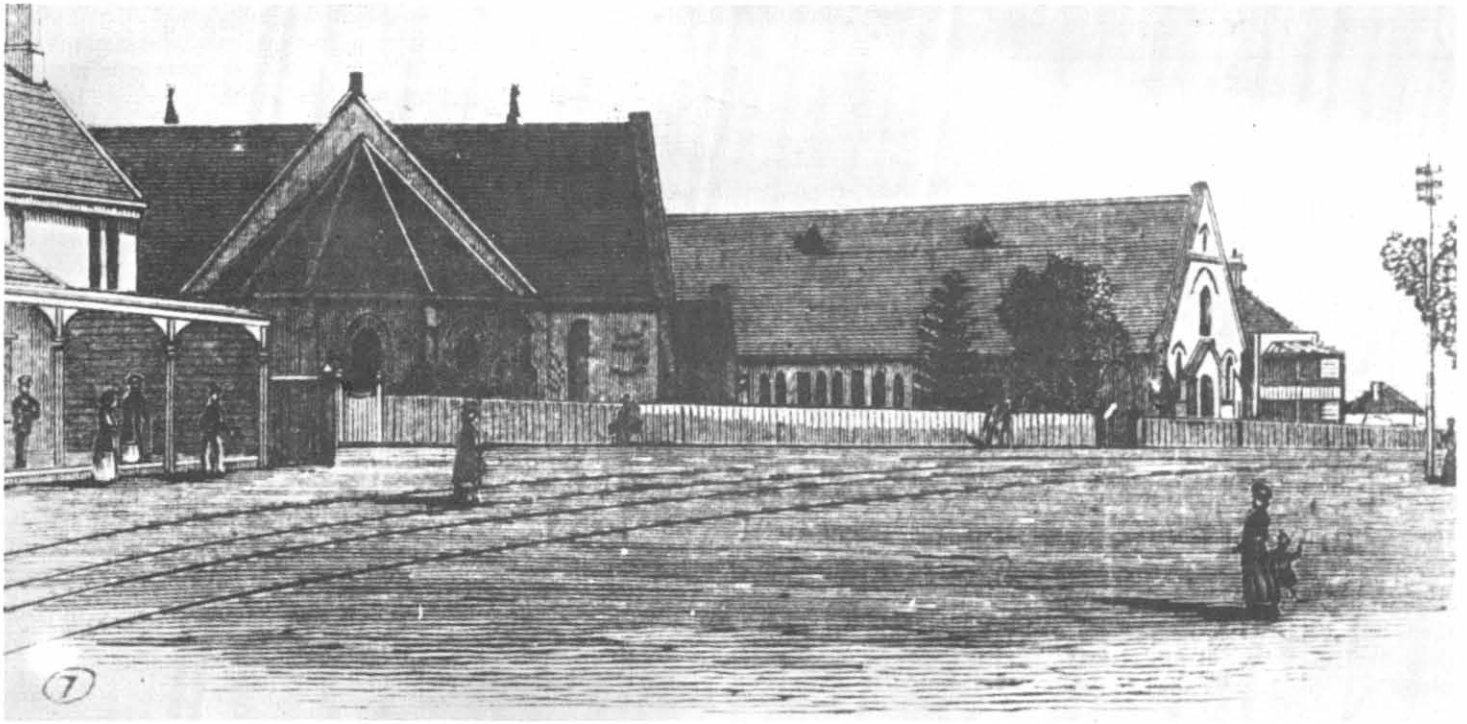
THE HELEN KELLER HOSTEL

The sorry business of the Helen Keller Hostel is still unresolved.

Few residents will be unaware that the Royal Blind Society has been selling off some of its properties in Woods Avenue, Waimea Avenue and Wallis Street (thus putting paid for all time to our hopes that this remarkable group of buildings might be developed as a whole rather than piece-meal!) but the main house remains unoffered.

The Royal Blind Society has informed the association that it is waiting for the outcome of zoning proposals in this area. It appears that some members of the Council of the Royal Blind Society still hope that they will get high rise on the site and are holding out just in case.

But it would be nothing short of scandalous if the recommendations of Woollahra Council's planning staff, the views of the independent planners who reported on the Woollahra Ridge area, the classification of the National Trust and the report of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (not to mention the views of local residents!) were all ignored.



The house **MUST** and **WILL** be preserved. Too many people have fought too long and too hard, to have it meet the fate of Cliffbrook or Sandtoft.

All that remains is for the Royal Blind Society to accept that fact, put a price on the building and allow someone to purchase and restore it.

QUEEN STREET FAIR

Despite opposition from a small and totally unrepresentative group of residents, the Queen Street Fair proceeded and was once again enjoyed by thousands of visitors.

The fair was filmed by the ABC and a ten-minute programme on the event shown nationally. Distinguished visitors included the Lord Mayors of both Sydney and Melbourne who have since contacted the association with a view to enlivening both Martin Place and Moomba!

Despite enormous expenses, the association made a small profit and we have again decided to distribute most of it to local organisations.

Our committee voted that, as Queen Street and its residents contributed so much to make the day possible, we should make a contribution in return to Queen Street.

We have therefore offered \$1000 on a dollar-for-dollar basis to help Woollahra Council implement a tree-planting and beautification scheme for the street.

Discussions are currently under way on the best methods of spending the money. The association favours the planting of large advanced trees in those parts of Queen Street that most need them. We also feel that neat cement rings round the bases and well-designed tree guards are essential.

The National Trust has just announced a preservation classification for St. Matthias Garrison Church in Oxford Street, together with the adjoining school erected in 1882 and the rectory building. This old print from the Mitchell Library shows the three buildings as they were at the end of the last century when steam trams ran in Oxford Street. The rectory at the left was recently restored by Leo Schofield, president of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association, and is now occupied by the creative consultancy of which he is head.

DONATIONS TO CHARITIES

In addition to the tree-planting scheme, we have decided to make further donations to the three charities we supported last year.

A cheque for \$250 each is to be given to the Woollahra Senior Citizens' Welfare Association, the Woollahra Children's and Community Centre and to the Woollahra School towards their Centenary Celebrations.

The committee has decided to maintain only sufficient funds to enable us to function smoothly and, from time to time, make such contributions to local non-denominational and non-sectarian bodies as would welcome them.

MEMBERSHIP

The association's membership now stands at 286. Over one third live locally and a further third live in the nearby Eastern Suburbs or city.

I would urge all members to renew their subscriptions for the coming year and ask you to invite your friends and neighbours also to join. The association's strength, and hence its potential to adequately represent residents' points of view, is dependent almost entirely on a thriving and interested membership.

YOUR COMMITTEE

Each year in this report I thank the committee that has given so generously of time, expertise and involvement in the association's affairs.

This is not mere ritual. All members of our committee are busy people and undertake considerable organisational responsibility both individually and on ad hoc sub-committees.

On your behalf, many thanks to them all.

Some will not be standing for committee again this year.

Our treasurer, Mr. Neville Marsh, is standing down after four years of non-stop service to the association and its members.

His own contribution to the neighbourhood . . . two superbly restored buildings that have added immeasurably to the beauty of the street . . . are some indication of his intense personal involvement and commitment to both the area and the broader notions of conservation.

This too will be my last letter to you as president. I am standing down as president but will, should you wish to elect me, remain on the committee.

I thank you most sincerely for your support, your continuing loyalty to the association and your understanding of what we have been trying to preserve in Queen Street and West Woollahra . . . a unique environment that gives pleasure to all of us who live here in agreeable surroundings and among good people.

**Leo Schofield,
President.**

POLITICS OF PROCRASTINATION

by Leo Schofield

"But there are no marble fireplaces!" cooed a former president of the socially OK Black and White Committee of the Royal Blind Society at the time of the attempted demolition of the Helen Keller Hostel. She advanced this as an apologia for bulldozing.

"The building is of absolutely no consequence," huffed a legal eagle who sits on the society's council.

What these people seem quite blind to is the fact that their opinion is neither a professional one nor widely shared.

"I refuse to discuss the matter any further," puffed the same legal eagle when taxed on his qualifications for pronouncing on historic buildings. (No attempt was made to pursue the matter further with the lady who saw absence of marble fireplaces as ample grounds for razing.)

No one doubts the good intentions of these people but it becomes increasingly difficult to support their arrogance.

The Queen Street Association is not simply being perverse in attempting to have the former Helen Keller Hostel preserved. It is supporting the opinion of a great many experts.

Not ladies on charity committees or worthy professional gentlemen with at best a vague view of history, architecture and planning. But properly qualified people whose opinion one must respect.

If the National Trust, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, independent planners appointed by Woollahra Council, the Council's own planning staff and the architectural committees of both this association and the Paddington Society ALL share the view that preservation of this house is vital, then it would take a brave man (or a stupid one) to try to make out a case for demolition.

And it would have to be supported by some weightier arguments than the absence of marble fireplaces.

The Glebe Administration Board of the Church of England has belatedly learned a lesson that it is taking rather longer for the Royal Blind Society to cotton on to . . . that old houses, with or without marble fireplaces, often bring fatter prices than liver-coloured brick bungalows.

The technique of allowing old buildings to decay, then shrug the shoulders and proclaim them irretrievable, is one well rehearsed in Georgian London by various feudal landlords and charity trusts.

But current experience seems to demonstrate that more and more people prefer old houses with character to modern ones without. And restoration and renovation are becoming somewhat more popular with developers than demolition.

The Church of England is now selling off, at handsome prices, what remains of the old Edgecliff Glebe.

But the Royal Blind Society still seems hell bent on demolition. They are unwilling to consider offers for the house alone (which is eminently saleable) and want to sell the whole parcel of land.

Yet they have been willing to sell off the cottages in Woods Avenue and Waimea Avenue individually, and at prices that, in the words of their Mr. Frank Benning, "surprised us".

These good gentlemen may not want to restore and live in a funny late 19th century cottage. But clearly others do.

If they would face facts and consent to sub-divide the main property and sell off the Helen Keller Hostel separately, then they may be surprised to learn that some civic-minded person IS prepared to repair the damage they have done to this historic house.

WHAT IS 2B WILL BE

Woollahra Municipal Council this month decided to adopt the town planning proposals for West Woollahra published last year.

Several months were allowed for public comment, objection and discussion before the plan became official.

In the formulation of the proposals, our association was fully consulted and we submitted to the Council our own action plan, based on what we believe to be the wishes of most local residents.

This was drawn up by the association's architectural sub-committee after a survey had been taken from homes in the area.

Generally there has been no objection to the Council's proposal—which our association welcomed—for the extension from Jersey Road to the north (commercial) side of Queen Street of the Residential 2(g) Redevelopment zoning which has served Paddington so well.

This emphasises preservation and restricts ugly high-rise buildings. At the same time it recognises the logic of allowing disused shops to become shops again, instead of remaining rather sordid blots on the townscape.

However controversy arose about the south side of Queen Street where some residents have campaigned for a less restrictive zoning than 2(b) Redevelopment which confines properties to residential use.

The more radical dissidents have argued for commercial redevelopment, on the ground that intensive commercial development on the north side and the traffic it creates have made the whole core of Queen Street unsuitable for homes.

Our association disagrees. We believe the charm and character of Queen Street

comes from its "village high street" atmosphere, caused by the unique mixture of homes and well-run businesses in premises preserved from another era.

It has also been argued, perhaps with more logic, that at least buildings on the south side of the street which already are being used commercially—even without planning permission—should continue as such.

This could be achieved with a 2(b)2 zoning.

After a further consultation with the outside planning expert who helped draw up the scheme, the Council has finally decided to stick to the original proposal.

So it's 2B.

QUEEN STREET COMMENTARY

The former Red Bird Cycling School, Ferndale Dancing Academy and Diamond Horseshoe Nightclub is not, after all, to enjoy another metamorphosis and become a cinema showing Australian films.

After several months of shilly-shallying, Woollahra Council finally decided to reject an application from local giftware wholesaler Mrs. Notaras to be allowed to implement a tasteful restoration scheme for the Oxford Street building erected in 1897.

Under this, the hall would have housed a 350-seat cinema with good catering facilities. The death blow to the scheme was lack of available parking.

As two schemes to restore the building to public use have foundered in recent years, may we hope that at least something will now be done to improve the very decayed appearance of the façade?

* * *

On other environmental matters, work has started in earnest on the town house development at the corner of Peaker Lane and Ocean Street.

While relieved that this is going up as an integrated development rather than a series of separately designed town houses, we are holding our breaths that the finished result will be in keeping with the architectural character of Ocean Street.

* * *

Although not expressing an association viewpoint, your *Village Voice* editor is by no means happy with the final appearance of the buildings added to Holdsworth Street playground.

We can only hope that their usefulness will compensate for their rather stark geometry and be thankful that we were spared the encroachment onto the reserve between Spicer Street and Moncur Street which was originally proposed.

* * *

Finally our compliments to Roderick Palmer on adding to the character of Queen Street by placing a venerable large-dial public clock on the corner of his antique business.

PLANNING TOO INFLEXIBLE?

Does an inflexible ban on new commercial activity in a residential area sometimes work against the cause of preserving worthwhile buildings?

Patricia Thompson, a former president of the Paddington Society and former member of our own committee, believes it does.

Sometimes the only hope owners have of meeting the heavy rate burden on large old properties is to use them for office, accommodation or catering purposes.

Mrs. Thompson made her point in a letter to the Woollahra Council which we print below in a shortened form:

"Rates are now so high that even on my very small house I am paying several dollars a week for Council and water rates.

"The rates on large properties with wide frontages and considerable depths must be almost prohibitive.

"One of the outstanding charms of West Woollahra is the variety of housing styles, very small cottages (like mine) and very large residences (like Neville Marsh's).

"Already in the past, we know that the large houses became too expensive to maintain as private residences and were turned into rooming houses or badly designed flats.

"The almost universal result was that the houses became run down, verandahs were built in and so on.

"Since the architectural revival spread from Paddington, where the proportion of large, elegant houses is much smaller, the ultimate fate of the big houses in West Woollahra has been somewhat doubtful.

"Unless they can in some way be utilised so as to return a sufficient income to cover running expenses such as rates, they will become quite impossible to maintain.

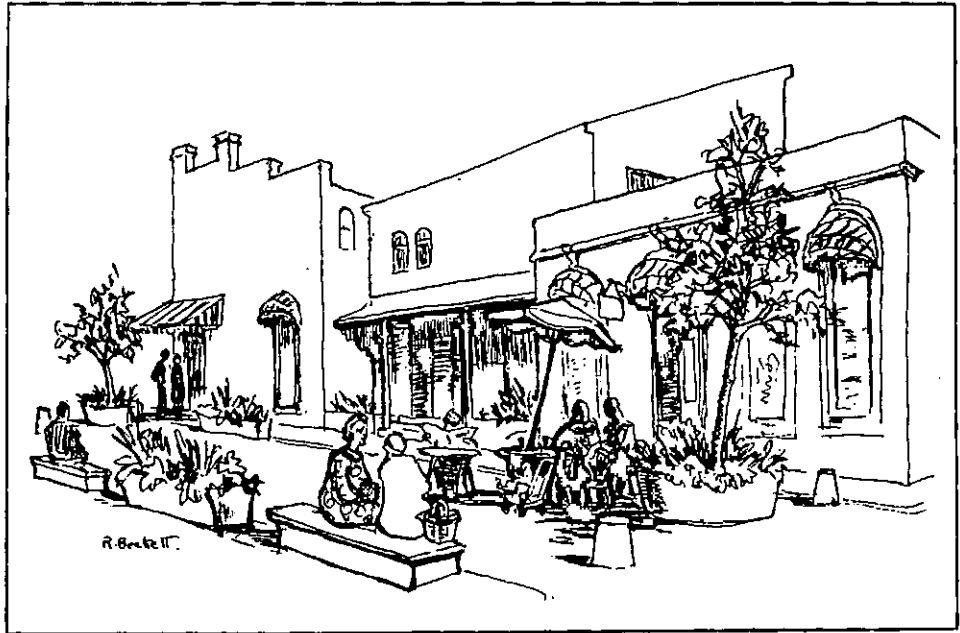
"Their loss would be grievous, because they are a very important part of the character of West Woollahra.

"Only too often, conservation and preservation turn out to place disproportionate burdens on some of the very people who are most anxious to co-operate.

"(The result of National Trust preservation orders in England has been that mysterious fires have occurred in some of these houses. The conclusion to be drawn is obvious enough, I think.)

"I would therefore ask that Woollahra Council remains as pliable as possible as regards our large houses. In other words, special consideration might profitably be given to uses which enable such properties to be well maintained and economically viable.

"In an age of official planning and a good deal of unavoidable regimentation, it would be a splendid gesture by Woollahra Council to show tolerance, vision and liber-



ality as regards the large houses of Queen Street, Ocean Street, etc.

"Otherwise, it is very possible that the present plans will turn out to be so impractical that they will fail to achieve their worthy aims.

"Mr. Neville Marsh has been something of a benefactor in West Woollahra, having beautifully restored two large old houses in Queen Street.

"It would be ironic indeed if such as he were to find themselves unable to carry on because of zoning restrictions and high maintenance costs. I do feel that such people deserve very special consideration ..."

After referring to the case of a boarding house owner who is having difficulty maintaining her large Victorian property, the letter continues:

"It is hardly equitable if such people are to be victimised by zoning restrictions when others, with smaller properties and therefore smaller rates, are free to perpetrate exterior alterations which make a nonsense of the original architectural styles.

"Unhappily, the best intentions frequently pave the road to a sort of urban hell, where regulations drawn up with the highest possible motives turn out to contain a backlash which the best of planners failed to foresee."

SPICER STREET MALL TRIAL

Woollahra Council has decided to temporarily close to traffic the area of Spicer Street between Queen Street and Peaker Lane as an experiment to see if it should become a pedestrian mall.

The closure decision is subject to the views of the police, and will be for three months.

During the closure, only eastbound traffic (towards Ocean Street) will be

allowed in Peaker Lane between Moncur Street and Holdsworth Street.

The Council has decided that the cut-off portion of Spicer Street will be "suitably landscaped and aesthetically treated so as to be attractive to passers-by."

Seats, chairs and planter boxes will be installed.

The proposal to turn the end of Spicer Street into a pedestrian mall was first made in 1973 by a group of shopkeepers in the Pagan's Pavilion building.

At that time, *Village Voice* first published the sketch on this page, showing how the scheme would look.

Later, an alternative scheme was proposed by council officers whereby one-way traffic only would be permitted in this part of Spicer Street, allowing vehicles to come from Peaker Lane into Queen Street.

The pavement would be widened on the western side to create a mall and Peaker Lane would be widened on the south (Queen Street) side by 10ft. This would involve resumption of land at the rear of Queen Street shops.

A Council survey then indicated a division of opinion on the merits of this scheme among both shopkeepers in Queen Street (2 for, 7 against, 1 undecided) and Spicer Street residents (10 for, 4 against).

The council's town planning department has since come out in favour of full closure of the end of Spicer Street.

The department suggested the three months trial closure which the council has now decided to adopt, with eastbound traffic only in Peaker Lane between Moncur Street and Holdsworth Street.

Towards the end of the trial period, the planning department will make a survey of public reaction to help Council decide if the mall should be a permanent feature of Queen Street.

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

A residents' action association covering the area bounded by Jersey Road, Edgecliff Road and Oxford Street, West Woollahra, N.S.W.

Address: Box 50, P.O. Woollahra, N.S.W. 2025.

Subscription: \$3 a year. Life membership \$25.

President: Leo Schofield
Vice President: Robin Brampton
Treasurer: Neville Marsh

Committee: Robin Howard, Marion Cowper, Douglas Gordon, Michael Magnus, Marcel Piat, Anthony Sernack.

Chairman of the Architectural Committee: Douglas Gordon

Auditor: Michael Gilovitz

Village Voice is published approximately every six months. Letters and other contributions on local topics are invited. The editor is Robin Brampton (357 1488 day, 32 4475 evening and weekends).

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US

Every home in the area covered by the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association gets a copy of *Village Voice*.

If you're reading this and you're not a member of the association, please join us by filling in the coupon below.

We need your support, both moral and financial, in our constant fight to preserve the architectural heritage of our area and ensure that it always remains a pleasant place to live.

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

ENCLOSED IS MY SUBSCRIPTION OF \$3 FOR ONE YEAR.
IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN A MEMBER, PLEASE PUT A TICK HERE

NAME

ADDRESS

POST TO: The Secretary,
Queen Street and West Woollahra Association,
PO Box 50,
WOOLLAHRA, NSW 2025.

FAIR AGAIN A SUCCESS

The 1975 Queen Street Fair was again spectacularly successful for the number and variety of stalls and entertainment, and the size of the crowds who came along for the fun.

Queen Street Fair is so much a national event that the Lord Mayors of both Sydney and Melbourne attended as visitors and observers.

Financially, the fourth annual fair was less profitable to the association than in 1974.

One of the main reasons was that the fair is now too big and complex for all the organisation work to be done voluntarily.

Although members of the association committee and other friends voluntarily gave up a great deal of their time to the venture, a paid organiser was employed together with other paid assistance.

An audited profit and loss account for the fair appears on page 2.

The 1975 fair again created great media interest. Radio 2KY set up a temporary broadcasting studio in Queens Court overlooking the fair and the ABC made a 10-minute film which was later televised nationally.

Stalls were very varied in nature and standard—with some imaginative presentations and a few which quite frankly made us wince.

Although we do our best, it is difficult to entirely eliminate grotty and lazy stallholders. We try to keep up the standards by making awards for those who try hard.

This time Maggie Tabberer, Reg Livermore and Ronnie Frazer acted as judges. The awards went to

WOOLLAHRA-WAVERLEY ART CENTRE, best non-commercial stall.

ROSIE NICE AND LENA COLEBY, best commercial stall.

THE HOUSE OF EDWARD BEAR (proprietor Barbara Walker), best decorated shop in Queen Street.

THE TOP DOG HOT DOG STALL, best costumes worn by stallholders.

As most residents know, the 1975 fair was threatened by the actions of a very small—and we believe totally unrepresentative—group of Queen Street residents.

This was sorted out in time for the fair. Now, through the help of some very sympathetic friends in Macquarie Street, we are hoping for State Government action to ensure that the right of authorities to close streets for popular events of this type is more clearly spelled out.

If you believe that street fairs should be part of our community life, would you please write to the association and say so? We want to get as much evidence as possible of resident support.

Following some discussion in Woollahra Council, our association has been asked to provide a full report on the 1975 fair, and the history of the fair generally, together with an audited financial statement and lists of stallholders, showing what proportion of them were charities.

This has now been done and the following are extracts:

“The fair was initially seen as a method of focussing Council and public attention on the particular attractions of the area in the hope of gaining separate planning consideration.

“Although the purpose of the fair has changed slightly, the event itself remains the same—a celebration of the area.

“Of course, each year new suggestions for improvements are advanced and if practicable adopted by the association. We have been scrupulous in the consultation of residents of Queen Street.

“It would be foolish to say, over four years, we have not experienced problems. But on the whole these have been of a relatively minor nature.

“On the credit side, the fair has been free of even the most minor kind of violence and, despite the obvious attraction of a crowd of this size, equally free from political activity.

“The organising committee consists of a mere ten people whose work is entirely voluntary and we feel sure Council appreciates the energy and effort that goes into planning this event.

“Our rewards for this effort are comparatively modest. Our satisfaction rests rather in the fact that a unique area is known about and enjoyed by so many Sydneysiders on one remarkable day of the year.”