

## Obituary: Mac West

Many of you will already know of the tragic death of Mac West on June 2, 2009, and our deep sympathies go out to his wife, Sally, and their four sons, Tim, Duncan, Jackson and Lewis.

Mac was a long-time resident of Yarralumla, a member of the Yarralumla Residents Association and the committee for many years, and President for several. He cared deeply about the environment, about Canberra and for our suburb of Yarralumla, and was committed to what was best about Yarralumla and how to maintain and enhance it.

At the Annual General Meeting in September, 2006, Mac gave his outgoing report as President. These are some of the words that he expressed that day.

" I believe that the role of the YRA is to be a conduit for information, and this should work both ways.

Firstly, things come in from the grass roots level; for example, concerns about footpaths, the units down the road or the house next door, and so on. Sometimes, it is particular issues that bring people to the YRA--for example, things like redevelopment in heritage areas, redevelopment proposals for Hill Corner, or in my case--the destruction of the character of the suburb--have all helped to fire people up. Getting involved is a good way to find out about the issues (including those that differ from your own, of course, and it's important to see things in their broader context) and at least feel like you're able to do something instead of just sitting back and feeling cranky about things you don't like.

The second way the conduit works is from the top down, and it's this way that we tend to receive most information. For example, ACTPLA's Review of the ACT Planning System may seem a bit of a nebulous topic, but it's absolutely what you should be concerned with if you have strong feeling about the nature of local development. If it's permitted within the planning guidelines, then what basis do you have for objecting to something? If they are thinking of changing the planning guidelines, then you should be very interested in what they are proposing.

So you could make a submission; it doesn't have to be big or all-encompassing. Sort out what's relevant to you. You might find that when you are more informed by understanding the context better, that your first impressions become modified, and that you're willing to see the positives of something that you feared was wholly bad. This might be a good attitude to adopt, because many influences are acting on the government and its departments and agencies, and sometimes it feels as if even the worthiest public submission can end up having no effect. But at least have your say and make your point!"

We think that Mac would be proud to know that all the people who got 'fired up', who made a submission to 'make their point' about the proposed development of the Albert Hall precinct (DA53) have indeed won the day. We no longer have Mac in our midst to remind us to 'be interested', to 'do something', but the commitment he brought to local issues should be an inspiration to us all.