

council to turn the reserved Moorabbin Hospital land over to **"housing for the aged"**. The Moorabbin Council agreed to this change as they were now persuaded that the expansion of Anne Street Hospital, and the development of the Monash Hospital at Clayton would satisfy Moorabbin resident's needs.

In 1963 the people who had worked so hard and contributed towards the Centre Road hospital saw their dream rapidly evaporating. There was opposition to the "patched-up" Anne Street Hospital solution, and also the misuse of the long-held hospital site now newly "ear-marked" for aged housing.

Finally it was a letter to the Moorabbin Standard, Mr Harry Smith of Bentleigh, "which said in effect that if the people of Moorabbin didn't wake up they would lose the hospital for all time", that galvanized a small group of community members to action.

The letter mobilised a local resident's force, and began a demonstration of the value of determination and **"people power"**! Importantly the Allens of East Bentleigh, Mr Harry Smith of Bentleigh, Mr Jim Wyles of McKinnon, Mr Alex McDonald and others formed a **Protest Committee**. In just three weeks the **save Moorabbin Hospital Petition**, was promoted and circulated throughout the City of Moorabbin in a bid to keep the Moorabbin Hospital project viable. Winifred Allen, (a nursing sister), and her husband Mr Noel Allen, who had responded to Harry's letter, initially set up card tables along the shopping strip in Centre Road, Bentleigh. This was not to prove successful. Next Winifred and her husband took the issue to their separate churches, (Winifred attended St Peter's RC Church, and her husband was Presbyterian), and this proved a far better forum. Many other churches throughout the City of Moorabbin were then contacted and in every case, religious ministers exhorted their parishioners to "sign up" for the Petition. Then Mrs Allen had the brilliant idea to contact butchers throughout the City of Moorabbin area, (and there were many butchers in 1963), and successfully sought their help in gaining many more signatures on the Moorabbin Hospital Petition. Other well known community families took up the challenge. Luckily the Smith brothers were already well known in Bentleigh, and as one brother, Arch Smith, owned the popular service station on the corner of Centre and Jasper Roads in Bentleigh, he had the perfect opportunity for a "captive" audience. Then other community organisations became enthused. In the end a bound Petition containing over 5000 signatures was handed to Mr J A Rafferty, MP, **who the Protest Committee knew was contesting an election at this time**. Accordingly, Mr Rafferty duly presented the Moorabbin Hospital Petition to Parliament.

As a result, (magically), there was a dramatic change in the previously shelved hospital plans. In a joint statement Mr J A Rafferty and Mr R Suggett announced that following "strong representations to the highest level", State Cabinet had agreed that a new hospital **would** be built on the Centre Road site, **but limited to thirty beds**.

Despite this assurance, hopes were dashed **yet again**, when in 1969 the then provisional committee for the new hospital made an application to the Supreme Court to seek approval to use the funds available for a **geriatric centre**. Just in time, in 1972 it was discovered that the provision of sufficient land at Monash Clayton for that hospital on the Clayton campus had become a problem. This fact caused the Hospital and Charities Commission to finally reconsider the contentious, but still vacant, Centre Road, Moorabbin Hospital site. In 1973, following continued community opposition to the annexation of the Moorabbin Hospital funds, the government finally capitulated and abandoned the contentious legal proceedings in the Supreme Court. Mr Lew Reese, MP for Moorabbin announced the tenders for stage one of the new Moorabbin Hospital.

It was on Sunday, October 26th in 1975 that Sir Henry Winneke officially opened Stage 1 of the 200 bed, new Moorabbin Hospital in Centre Road, East Bentleigh.

The Moorabbin Hospital has continued to change and develop over the last 36 years. For instance although both the Emergency Department and popular midwifery section have been closed, the Moorabbin Hospital importantly now boasts a state-of-the-art Oncology Department, as a subsidiary of the Peter MacCallum Hospital, as well as the traditional medical and surgical departments.

This **very** abbreviated history of Moorabbin Hospital is also an inspirational reminder of the benefits of perseverance and people-power. Whilst the general populace that now, (thirty-six years later), simply takes for granted the benefits of a modern public hospital on their doorstep, those of us with an interest in history must "dip our lids", and pay our respects to those community-minded volunteers whose