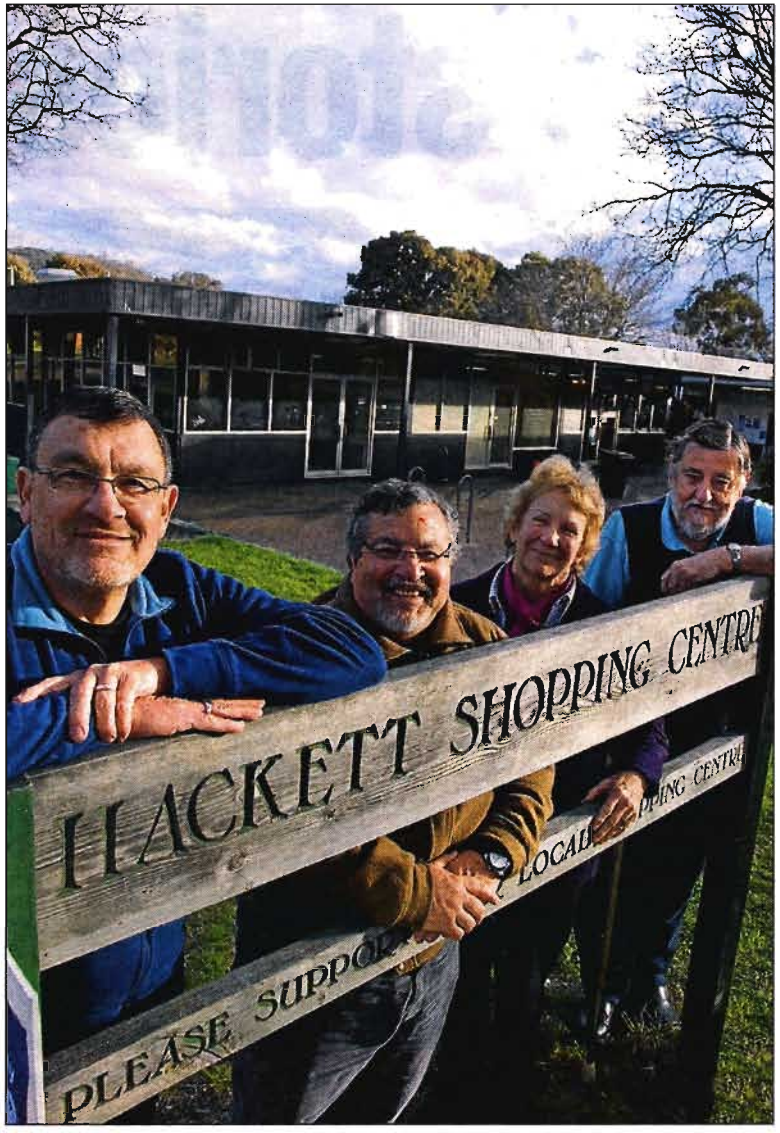

Hackett Community Association chairman Greg Haughey with members Terry De Luca, Dorothy Mackenzie and James Walker ahead of the suburb's 50th birthday activites. **Picture: Elesa Kurtz**

Close-knit suburb celebrates 50 years

By Emma Kelly

AS Canberra celebrates its 100th birthday the tree-lined suburb of Hackett is gearing up for a milestone of its own.

The north-eastern suburb will celebrate its 50th birthday this weekend with a bumper program of activities for past, present and future residents kicking off 10am on Saturday, with an official launch by Centenary of Canberra director Robyn Archer at midday.

Hackett Community Association deputy chair and birthday committee convener James Walker said it was a special milestone and the committee expected a big turnout over the two days.

"It is special, very special – 50 years is quite a time for any suburb so we're making a big thing of it. We have [a birthday celebration] every five years and the last one had about 3500 people," he said.

"There are still people here who moved here in 1962, '63, '64. We're also organising reminiscing sessions and will hopefully have some old photos and other memorabilia on display.

"We hope to contact people willing to recite their memories for our oral history. There are a few other groups getting together and bringing back the old days."

Local schools will play a major role in the festivities with reunions, fetes and performances including the singing of *Happy Birthday Hackett* during the launch.

A reunion photo of ex-students and teachers of the old Hackett Primary School will also take place on Saturday at 2pm.

"There will be a performance by Canberra City Band, which used to do all its rehearsals in Hackett. Folk Dance Canberra is also putting something on, hopefully something everyone can join in on," Mr Walker said.

"There will also be an evening event on Saturday with some local bands – Hit and Glide, The King Hits, Rafe [Morris]. They are all people who live here or close to this area."

Mr Walker, who moved to Hackett 32 years ago, said it was important to celebrate the suburb's milestone and reflect on years gone by.

"When we were looking to buy when we moved to Canberra, as soon as we looked at Hackett we knew we wanted to be here," he said.

"The suburb was largely founded for defence people, CSIRO, ANU – so many people were ripped from their previous lives and moved here and had to sort of band together. A tradition has grown that you know your neighbours and are aware of things happening."

He described the atmosphere as akin to a country town.

"I think it's the second or third smallest population suburb, so nearly everybody knows everybody. In the shops I still get asked how my son is and people reminisce about my dogs. It's just got that feel about it," he said.

Mr Walker encouraged anyone with a connection to Hackett to come along and enjoy the celebrations.

"It's a good chance to meet people and get a feel for the suburb," he said.

"I'm a newcomer; there are people who were here right from the start. Once you come here you don't want to leave. It's such a great suburb."

Watson will also celebrate its 50th birthday later this year.

■ Hackett's 50th birthday activities will run from September 21 to 22.

For more information, visit hackett.org.au or www.facebook.com/hackett50thbirthdayparty

For more information about the Hackett Primary School reunion and photo, contact Suzi Leverington on 0410 606 662 or email suzi@ctconsulting.com.au