



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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MEG Newsletter....Jan./Feb 2023

From the Convenor's Desk

I've been clearing out various files during the past few weeks and I've found countless documents saying much the same thing and I want to quote from one of them. You would recognize the themes. The documents go back to the founding of MEG about 16 years ago ...and even before that to the founding of SOS during the period of the Kennett Government. This article was fairly recent....only 3 years ago.

In The Age October 12/2019, Megan Backhouse wrote about an Open Day at Bickleigh Vale, the village Edna Walling planned about 100 years ago.

"In the 1920s Edna Walling couldn't imagine a life for herself that wasn't surrounded by garden." What a difference 100 years makes! Bickleigh Vale is still there and jealously guarded by the residents and by a strict Heritage Overlay. We have instead....

"Climate change, population growth and record-high levels of urban density....."

All of these have ensured that number plates with **"Victoria ..The Garden State"** are obsolete.

Of course some of us are fortunate to have space for a garden. Some have the space and fill it with artificial surfaces and artificial flowers... (TRUE!!)...and Stonnington Council is not the only council in Victoria that has a penchant for artificial 'grass,' a tendency to destroy an entire ecosystem in a park to build a concrete monstrosity, a seemingly uncontrollable urge to decorate open space with MURALS instead of a bush or two.

Megan Backhouse says, "We're still craving a touch of nature!"

In Domain on Feb.11 I noticed two advertisements for **green** real estate. One was for **"A green dream in Red Hill"** and the other for **"New residents and green spaces coming soon to South Melbourne."** I think a REAL green dream would be for more Bickleigh Vale villages and no more concrete or artificial 'grass.'

Haven't heard anything from.....

The new Planning Minister has been notable for her silence....so far. When listening to radio we hear endless reports from the **Department of Transport and Planning** but absolutely nothing is said about Planning. The reports are all about the transport conditions on Melbourne's roads and which stations are to be serviced by buses for the foreseeable future.

We wait with bated breath for the Planning Minister to be told by Premier Andrews what he wants done about filling Melbourne with yet more of the same....and he just might have to give his orders soon because a situation is arising in the seat of Hawthorn. A seat that was lost to Labor in the last State election.

David Hodgett is the MP for Croydon AND the **Shadow Planning Minister** and he hasn't said anything either!

State MPs snapping up real estate The Age Feb.26

"Victorian state politicians collectively own 260 properties, including homes, farms, retail spaces and vacant blocks, with 2 owning more than 15 each."

David Hodgett (Energy Spokesperson AND Shadow Planning Minister) has 18 properties with 11 in family trusts and David Southwick (Deputy Opposition Leader) has 17.

"Assistant Treasurer Danny Pearson and Tourism Minister Steve Dimopoulos owned 6 properties each, including investment properties rented out."

And there's more. *"The Age trawled through the register of interests published this month and in September and July last year found 90 per cent of the 128 parliamentarians owned at least one property. Half owned at least two, including those held by a family trust."*

MEG is not saying that MPs owning properties is in any way improper. We just thought that this was a very interesting article. The Land Tax bill for some of them must be HUGE!

Push is on to save 114-year-old Hawthorn home. The Age Feb. 15

"Planning Minister Sonya Kilkeny is being asked to reconsider a decision made by her predecessor, Lizzie Blandthorn, after the council's bid to protect 76 Wattle Road was rejected....."

In 2012 Boroondara Council did not list Wattle Road and in **2014 the precinct was not listed** for protection even though some properties in Wattle Road were but not 114.

After the developer who bought the property in 2021 lodged a planning application for nine 3 storey townhouses in July 2022, Boroondara Council again attempted to protect the property and DELWP under delegation from the then Planning Minister rejected it because there was not *"sufficient new evidence"* to justify protection. This decision prevented Council from proceeding with an Amendment process by going before Planning Panels to defend its decision. In the meantime the developer has lodged an appeal to VCAT. (*Why are we not surprised?*)

"...a Victorian government spokeswoman said yesterday that Kilkeny and the Department of Transport and Planning would assess a council proposal for an interim heritage overlay."

The Opposition Leader, John Pesutto has written to Minister Kilkeny asking her to delay the VCAT case until the heritage issue was resolved.

Will Minister Kilkeny act for protection or will she follow the precedents?

Dismantling history

That's a great title for a Letter to the Editor in The Age on Feb. 16.

"We flock to Europe to admire the fabulous old buildings both beautiful and functional for hundreds of years. Yet here, we are destroying our glorious architectural landscape to squeeze in more people to a single city when the bulk of our nation is sparsely populated....."

" While there are plenty of large new development areas where these cookie cutter homes with their white and charcoal interiors, no backyards or big trees can group together and complement each other why should we allow the random destruction of historical and beautiful homes that give this city so much character?"

To the writer of this letter we say

It's what State Government and the developers want!

Out with the old and in with the new!

That's brutal: Residents split on car park heritage listing...The Age Feb.3

The article is about 'brutalist' architecture. A 7 storey concrete carpark in Carlton has been given a heritage overlay. The car park has *"the strengths of geometry and rhythm which were characteristic of brutal architecture."*

A resident opposed the listing saying that it would be better used for housing than for a car park. The resident got the impression that the panel was sympathetic to her but that the words of the heritage consultant were more significant. Gosh!

The resident had more to say about heritage protection in general.

She said, *"heritage protection leads to more greenfield sprawl."*

(Now that's a quantum leap.)

A message from MEG to all our members who live in heritage overlays.... please note that you are a major reason for the Melbourne sprawl!! So help us!

Did you know that we have our very own example of brutalist architecture??

It's right here in Stonnington. It's the Harold Holt Swimming Pool named after a Prime Minister who presumably drowned. As Barry Humphreys said, "Only in Melbourne.....!!!"

Fox land grab all at sea H.S. January 27

"A coastline land grab by billionaire trucking magnate Lindsay Fox appears dead and buried after three senior judges threw his case out of court.

Mr Fox has been fighting to reclaim hundreds of square metres of public beach for private use at his family's multi-million dollar Portsea compound."

MEG is pleased that the beach can now be used by THE PEOPLE and not just by Mr. Fox's family and friends. Our beaches are for us all not for a privileged few.

Councils call for review of state rates rise limit Business Age January 28

"The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has called for an independent review of the rate rise limit imposed by the state government, following what it describes as a modest increase for 2023 that is incapable of financing many local council services."

MAV president (Cr. David Clark said that costs for Council infrastructure had escalated by around 35% and *"the modest rate cap of 3.5% doesn't deal with this."*

If councils are unable to fund basic services why is Stonnington Council spending millions and millions on large projects such as that awful Prahran Square and the equally awful destruction of Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park?

MEG thinks they must have either been 'saving up' for years OR they are putting us into debt for years.

Victoria's most infuriating councils revealed Sunday Age Jan 15

"Everyone loves a good whinge about their local council but some attract more ire than others. The Victorian Ombudsman has named and shamed the state's most maligned municipalities with three outer Melbourne suburban growth areas and two inner-north GREENS-led councils taking out the dishonours."

Casey, Hume, Moreland (Merri-bek), Whittlesea and Darebin are top of the list.

Darebin Council has installed a "customer resolution officer position" to try to minimize complaints. (Where does the money go in Darebin?)

Stonnington is not mentioned in the article so that means either there are no complaints, not enough complaints for the number to be mentioned or, perhaps, we've just given up.

Journalist, Rachel Dexter, calls it the *"hit list of hostility."*

Local News

Councillor Joe Gianfriddo We sent an email to MEG Members about the countback required for another councillor due to Alex Lew's resignation in December 2022 but for those members who do not use computers please note that Joe Gianfriddo is the new East Ward councillor. MEG offers Joe our congratulations and we look forward to working with him. His email is jgianfriddo@stonnington.vic.gov.au and his Council phone number is 0455 357 355.

Transparency In 'Linked In' on December 20/2022 North Ward Councillor Koce wrote, *"Transparency is of fundamental importance....."*
Alas, he was not referring to Stonnington Council.

Council Meeting ...February 20

South Ward Councillor Sehr had much to say about State Government's 45% increase in Land Tax. We heard a passionate diatribe about the imposition of this particular tax especially when State Government leaves so much for councils to do with minimum funds. The connection puzzles us. WHY is a councillor so passionate about just **one** of State Government's taxes?

Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park and the endless dilemma re the stadium

At Council Meeting on Feb. 6 mention was made of Council's latest dilemma regarding that huge lump of concrete which stands in what was our park. Councillors have a dilemma. They don't know WHAT to call it.

Apparently it is vital that this thing should have a name. We advise you to send them some suggestions. Such a bother when one simply can't think of a name!!!

Petition tabled at Council Meeting

South Ward Councillor Scott tabled a petition from 39 residents requesting that Council support the Federal Government's referendum regarding Voice. No comments were made about this and MEG thinks that is the way it should be. Local Councils should not be officially involved in any way with Federal matters.

End of an era in Malvern

On Feb.11 Business Age reported that Scullerymade at 1400 High St. Malvern will close its shop after 44 years. The site will be sold vacant and expressions of interest are being accepted by the agents.

25 Dixon St. Malvern

We told you that this property was bought by Council in December '22 to be used as a pocket park. A MEG member (an ex-Building Surveyor) inspected the site and thought that a slightly larger park could easily be made available to residents if Council extended the site at 25 Dixon by including the nature strip on Ray St. Ray St. has no house frontages and appears not to be used for parking. Geoff took his plan to council staff and we are now have our fingers crossed for a slightly larger 'pocket park.'

Melbourne Racing Club There are endless comments about the MRC on Facebook Page "Friends of Caulfield Racecourse Reserve." None of the comments are flattering to the MRC. They generally refer to the continuing destruction of trees and heritage buildings by the MRC as it proceeds with the building of a new stand. There are calls for the MRC Committee to be sacked by the Government. (That's a bit of wishful thinking!) One comment was, *"I've never known an organization to hate its own history so much as the Melbourne Racing Club."*

Another said, *"MRC not fit to lease public land. Vandalising their own history."*

Friends of Caulfield Racecourse Fb page (Feb. 21) There is an announcement that Heritage Victoria has released its report on what MEG sees as vandalism by the MRC. *"The outcome and process are less than optimal and may be regrettable...even if lawful."* Heritage Victoria has given a scathing assessment of the handling of the Caulfield Racecourse development.

"It highlights not only issues with the MRC handling of re-development but also flawed planning laws that allowed the Planning Minister to bypass normal process."

"Nothing the MRC did was illegal just highly questionable."

More about the MRC's activities You may have noticed the large and rather ugly development just south of the railway line. A new (and vast) Coles supermarket has opened in that complex as well as a Chemist Warehouse and other bits and pieces. This is to be known henceforth as **Caulfield Village**. The north/south street called The Boulevard has a number of small palm trees in a centre patch. Palm trees do not absorb pollution so they are certainly NOT suitable replacements for the significant trees in Smith St. that were destroyed by the MRC.

MEG has heard that the Coles store in the Plaza will close later this year and we assume that the shops that are left will soon be gone too. It will be interesting to see what Monash Caulfield does with the empty Plaza.

Villages in Stonnington

Stonnington is littered with 'villages' and new signs indicate which village one is entering at any given moment. The cost of the 'village' signs is unknown to ratepayers.

The rationale for Council's 'village' signs is equally unknown!

Darnlee 33 Lansell Rd. Toorak

Darnlee is up for sale. The heritage protected house has been many things in its time. Originally it was a private home owned by some well-known families. It was sold to the Public Works Department in 1949 for 16,000 pounds and until 1953 Red Cross maintained the house as a Rehabilitation Centre for male TB patients and in 1951 the Commonwealth Government reimbursed State Government 16,000 pounds. In 1953 it was used as the occupational Therapy School of Victoria. The T.B. patients had been moved to "Stonnington" in Glenferrie Rd. Malvern. In 1966 it was used as Toorak Technical Teachers' College and in 1970 it was taken over by the newly formed Teacher Education Division. Between 1980 and 1997 MEG has no idea what was going on in Darnlee but in 1997 Blue Cross bought it and operated it as a 48 bed nursing home until 2022. Now Blue Cross has put it up for sale. The rumour is that it is to become a private home again and that the going price is over \$20 million. Because it is on the Victorian Heritage Register it cannot be demolished. What a blessing that is!

Planning Applications in and around Malvern East

122 Finch St. Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

25 Johnstone St. Malvern Pt. dem. & ext, of dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m, in GRZ & H.O.

162 Finch St. Glen Iris Pt. dem. bldg. & wks to dwelling in H.O.

22 Kerferd St. Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

15 Douglas St. Pt. dem. & ext. of dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m. in NRZ & H.O.

5 Brunel St. Alterations & extension to dwelling.

14 Glenbrook Av. Demolish existing backyard decking & carport & construct new decking & carport in N.C.O.

6 Repton Rd. 2 lot subdivision.

6 Wilmot St. Pt dem., bldg. & wks to dwelling in NCO.

15 Macgregor St. Pt. dem. bldg. & works to dwelling in NCO.

28 Cummins Gr. Malvern Pt.dem., bldg. & wks re extension to dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m. in NRZ & H.O.

29 Ash Grove Pt. dem. bldg. & wks to dwelling in NCO.

38 Belson St. Ext. & upgrade to existing dwelling.

1/32 Burke Rd. Extend dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m.

44 Argyll St. Alt. & extensions to ground floor and 1st floor extensions.

3 Belton St. Pt. dem., bldg. & wks in H.O.

2 Ranfurlie Cr. Glen Iris Constr. of basement & 2 double storey dwellings in H.O.

18 Horace St. Malvern Alterations & additions to dwelling on a site less than 500sq.m. and a pool.

12 Sutherland St. Dem. of existing dwelling and proposal for new dwelling.

19 Rotherwood Dr. 3 townhouse development.

(Comment on Planning Alerts re this development...

"an ongoing sore to residents."

"Issues about drainage alone should mean that the development should be razed. The developer should be ashamed at the way he has treated the neighbours....."

The writer says more in the same vein.

13 Clarence St. Pt. dem., side & rear additions with basement car parking in NCO.

18 Nott St. Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m. in NRZ and H.O.

17 Glenbrook Av. Removal of trees and replanting in NCO.

21 Warida Av. Pt. dem. & ext. of dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m. in GRZ and H.O.