



# Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

C/- 14 Chanak Street,  
Malvern East Vic 3145  
Phone/Fax 9572 3205  
Email [meg@chezsamuel.com](mailto:meg@chezsamuel.com)  
Web <http://www.chezsamuel.com>

## MEG Newsletter....Jan./Feb. 2024

### Vale Mary Drost OAM

On January 4/2024 we lost a great lady when Mary took her final breath. Mary had built over 20 years a body of some 250 residents' groups across the State and had managed to gain access to several Planning Ministers and a number of politicians from all parties in her pursuit of the protection of the suburbs. She was the founder and Convenor of Planning Backlash. Mary was a friend to so many people. Generous to a fault, she gave to so much. Those of us who were privileged to call her 'friend' will hold her in our hearts.

### From the Convenor's desk

In this newsletter we hear from another MEG member who lives in a different suburb in Stonnington, this time in Malvern East. We welcome Naomi's contribution. We hope you enjoy it and feel emboldened to volunteer to be a contributor to future MEG Newsletters.

*"Quite a few recent posts on the Nextdoor network have neighbours describe Carnegie as "neighbourly" and I have been given to wonder what exactly is meant by this common descriptor, so I thought how would I describe the street I live in and the adjacent streets with which I have become very familiar over the 42 years of living in this neck of the Malvern East woods. And it is this: it lets you be. You can go about your business without hindrance. You're not made to feel unwelcome or disliked. Your dog takes you for a walk and a high number of people acknowledge you as you walk past with a nod of the head or a smile or a quick 'hello' some even stop to pat your canine and then acknowledge you. That of course is the right order of things in this gentle and genteel area.*

*I will state the obvious advantage of this area before I get on to important matters. It is convenient with good transport, shops including the new Coles, services (e.g. dentists).*

*Now to what I really like—its parks and trees. I was gobsmacked at the number of parks my dogs soon discovered, much to their delight. There is Central Park with its beautiful pond and conservatory, then there's Ardrie park with its tennis courts and row of elm trees and, of course, Hedgeley Dene with its little lake, Japanese bridges and shady walks. Having lived here so long that one stops noticing what an attractive area it is. Friends who come here remark on its prettiness and I put that down to its variety of trees both native and non-native such as the elms and including those ubiquitous hay fever inducers, the plain trees on the nature strips.*

*My pet dislike are nemeses of suburbia—property developers and what they do. Build monstrosities and without an environmental qualm cut down trees. Of course I have seen many changes to the streets I know so well. Not all houses built are monstrosities and not all old houses are architecturally attractive. It may be inevitable but surely a thought should be given to effects of climate change when more and more concrete is laid down as new constructions go up and some beautiful trees are cut down.*

*On balance despite the above I wouldn't move. NAOMI*

## The YIMBYs

The President of this organization, Jonathon O'Brien, was interviewed on the ABC Breakfast Program on January 8. In case you are not aware YIMBY (YES IN MY BACKYARD) was set up by Mr. O'Brien to counter the NIMBYs' cry of NOT IN MY BACKYARD.

The YIMBYs want urban planning reforms. They want a complete re-write of the Planning & Environment Act. They want to get rid of the protection of heritage areas. We should continue to protect iconic buildings but not those large, environmentally inefficient houses....like the ones in the Gascoigne Estate!!!

Mr. O'Brien asks, *"Do we need to lock up 50% of our suburbs for the rich under heritage protection?"* He agrees that areas around transport hubs should be developed with mid-to high rise accommodation but asks, *"What about the area just beyond the transport hubs?"* He calls it *"the missing middle."*

The topic at the YIMBYs' last meeting, **held at Trades Hall Council**, was about parking. More about that coming up!

## Car parks slammed as 'badly run charities' The Age Jan.18

Guest speaker at the YIMBY meeting was South Australian Urban Planner, David Mephram and in this article had a few things to say about the car park built under the extraordinarily expensive Prahran Square, Stonnington's tribute to CONCRETE.

(The carpark is concrete as is the Square.)

*"Stonnington City Council spent about \$64 million...(MEG seems to remember that it was more than that)...building the 500-space, two-level underground car park along with a paved "European-style plaza" on the site of the old Cato Street open-air lot in 2019. Mephram estimates the parking levels at least \$50 million if you include the land value...about \$100,000 per bay."*

*"The plaza, built on a concrete slab, has also been criticized for its lack of grass and trees."*

MEG has certainly criticized the entire Square for the cost, the lack of grass and trees, for the amazing amount of concrete, for its starkness and for the sheer waste of the ratepayer dollar and for the 'hard to find' entrance to the carpark.

Mr. Mephram says that we *"have to carry the cost burden to subsidise a car park that was never properly justified."* He says that Councils around Australia are *"running car parks like badly run charities."*

What MEG wants to know is how David Mephram got from Trades Hall Council to Stonnington and, specifically, to Prahran Square. Did someone drive him or did he virtuously come to us by public transport?

## Failure to think outside the Square The Age ...Feb.19

No sooner had David Mephram "done over" the carpark at Prahran Square, we saw that Norman Day had "done over" the entire Square. Day writes,

*"This is a story about good intentions, overt opportunity, wads of available public money and a prime site for creating a new open and friendly community space in the city. **And failure.**"*

Well, he's certainly right there. Prahran Square is a failure. A majority of members of the previous Stonnington Council failed miserably in their duty to the ratepayers of our city. Alas, some of them are still there. The only time the Square has frolicking people is when we, the ratepayers, pay for some event. The firm which was responsible for the design of this lump of concrete say that its true potential

*"will be realized over time as the community transfers their identity to make the place their own."* (Whatever that means!)

Day says that the Council could have dug a hole in the ground to make a functional car park and placed a garden at street level....but they didn't.

Instead what was built was something that *"eventually blistered into a nightmarish expression of over-decoration, garishness, zing and glitz. Talk about bells and whistles this one resets the bar for unrefined trumpery."*

Don't you just LOVE it?

\$64 million, with 4 of 9 councillors opposing it and, finally Norman Day has nailed it...and he says more. *"It feels more like a prison than a contemporary amphitheatre."* *"It is the opposite of a welcoming communal place."* *".....the attempted openness and relaxation come off as compressed and cluttered."*

Finally he says that *"it comes off as turdchicken...."* (Use your imagination!)

**All MEG can say is, "Norman Day, where were you when we needed you?"**

### **"I designed Prahran Square, and people love it" The Age ...Feb 22**

Carey Lyon, one of the designers of the 'great lump of concrete' leapt to the defence of the design of the Square. He calls Norman Day's comments as *"more than the rant of a cranky old critic"* and suggests that he *"joins the 21<sup>st</sup> century."* He claims that *the design is based on "exemplary contemporary urban design principles."* Norman Day suggested that lawn would have been good. Carey says *"lawn wears out"* and what is needed in inner-urban public spaces is *"hard, robust surfaces."* Carey congratulates Stonnington Council for funding this model.

(MEG reminds readers that 5 (only) councillors voted for this hard, robust thing. 3 of those councillors remain on Council.)

Carey claims that the vote of the 5 *"is paying off in spades when it comes to Prahran Square, as demonstrated by its heavy use by locals."*

It is used by lots of people when we, the ratepayers, fund an event. When we have checked on its use we have counted about 7 people.

### **There's a stink in Parliament House**

In The Age CBD on Feb. 12 *"the member for Brunswick was forced from his office after he and his staff were overwhelmed by an odour described by one of Read's fellow MPs as 'like cat's piss' and caused by the moisture penetration problem in the building...."*

Apparently the \$100million dollar building has sprung leaks first in the area the Labor MPs occupy, then in the area for Coalition MPs and ***"now it's the Greens getting a whiff of the damp and the mould."***

**(MEG says that we know about that smell and we'll continue to know about it until cats are confined to their owners' homes!)**

### **Insurers call for reform on planning legislation...Bus. Age Feb.6**

At a Federal Government Inquiry into insurers' responses to natural disasters insurance companies pleaded for reform to planning laws. The companies want "unfair taxes" on insurance companies abolished. Extreme weather events are having an adverse effect on their profits and are thus causing companies to increase their premiums. GOSH! Does this mean that if the planning laws are changed our insurance premiums will drop? MEG suspects that this won't happen even if planning legislation is changed, as requested by the Insurance Council.

### **Multiple threats put Councils on the back foot...The Age...Jan.13**

*"Local councils face battles on multiple fronts as they enter 2024, including a feared takeover by fringe conspiracy groups, removal of their planning powers and a rate restriction they say threatens their ability to provide services."*

David Clarke, President of the MAV, has warned that *"candidates from fringe groups with anti-government or conspiracy views were mobilizing to enter local government"*.

For example, "My Place" which claims to have 13,000 members is calling for candidates for local government elections due in October 2024.

A writer to The Age on Jan.9 said to would-be candidates for Council Elections.

*"You don't need experience, or sanity, just votes"*

Council elections occur at a time when State Government is making moves "to seize planning control over key city areas." These moves are happening "as part of the State's plan to build 800,000 new homes within the next 10 years."

David Clarke says "councils will relinquish some of their powers if the state does the same, and has called for a new metropolitan planning body to guide Melbourne's development." Meanwhile the same man has "lashed out at a state-imposed rate cap that limits council rate rises to 2.75 per cent for the upcoming financial year."

### **Meanwhile.....How Clayton is becoming a boom town...The Age Jan.13**

"The wider City of Monash area is set up to boom into an employment and population hub that...(if it comes to pass)...will rival Melbourne's CBD." What will drive this is Monash University Precinct and the Suburban Rail Loop. Three of the stations in the loop are in the City of Monash and the SRL has already seized planning controls over large areas of these precincts, "including buildings of up to 20 stories."

Box Hill multiplied!

### **The Reckless Chainsaw Massacre The Age...Good Weekend...Jan. 27**

"Getting rid of an inconvenient tree is almost a national pastime in Australia."

"We need trees to survive."

"Trees are canonical beings. They provide oxygen, shade and homes for animals; they are noble and uncomplaining, stoic and uncomplaining in the face of endless insults from nature and man alike."

"You'd think the fact that humans are hurtling into climate oblivion would make us more tolerant of trees, but it appears not."

Trees feature in more neighbourhood disputes than we care to think about. Different councils in each state of Australia have different rules about the retention of trees. Often councils break their own rules about saving trees. Stonnington Council waived its own rules when it destroyed 67 trees, 16 of which were significant, to pour tonnes of concrete in Percy Trevaud Memorial Park, with one councillor repeatedly excusing this heinous action, saying that they were planting 148 saplings to take the place of the ones they decided to destroy...and that's ONE of 79 councils in this State.

"People keep on killing trees."

## **LOCAL NEWS**

### **Stonnington Council could do the same as an enlightened Manningham Council**

In the Public Notices of The Age on February 15 we saw a Council Order from

Manningham Council relating to the **confinement of cats.**

Under this Order

***"a cat must be confined or at the premises where the cat is usually kept  
at all times."***

This means that cat owners must learn to be responsible for the animal's whereabouts every minute of every day just the same as dog owners are obliged to be responsible for their dog's whereabouts.

If only, Stonnington Council would issue a similar Order!

**Clarence St. to Finch St. ...833 Dandenong Rd.** We noticed this week that the Boothby site in this section of the service lane of Dandenong Rd. is still **For Sale.**

Too small for a developer??

Perhaps Council could buy it and fill it with trees to absorb some of the pollution??

Just a thought!

### **And talking of Council buying land for 'pop up parks'**

Some of the residents around Winter St. would like Council to buy the empty site in this street. This site has been empty for quite a while. It's a large site not far from the Major Activity Centre of Glenferrie Rd. very near Coles in Malvern. Just a thought!

### **Melbourne High School and Lindsay Fox**

In The Age on Feb.14 Cara Waters wrote about a long-standing arrangement that Mr. Fox has with the school.....i.e. he is permitted to land his helicopter on the school's sports oval. The area around the school used to be 'light industrial.' Known today as the Forrest Hill Precinct, it is now heavily residential. It's all high-rise apartment blocks and *"residents have complained to the Council and the Education Department about the excessive noise."*

According to Cara Waters, Fox has been landing his helicopter on the school's oval for 30 years and she reports that a *'spokeswoman'* from Council says that he has *"existing use rights."* Apparently, Council has no power to put a stop to this use of Public Land nor, it seems, does anyone else.

Mr. Fox seems to have an affinity with Public Land. He went to a lot of trouble to acquire part of the public beach at Portsea and we seem to remember that he lost the final legal battle for that. His use of public land in Sth Yarra has not previously been questioned and it seems that it really can't be questioned even now.

One more reason not to buy an apartment in Forrest Hill Precinct.

### **Questions from the community at Council Meetings**

At present the only way available to the community to lodge questions to Council is by mail or email before midday on the day of the meeting and then wait for an answer in writing from the Mayor.

It is MEG's experience that the questions are rarely answered.

We have noticed that many councils allow the public to ask questions verbally and, if possible, get an answer on the spot. Some time ago we asked members of the number of municipalities what happened when members of the community wanted to ask a question and we were told "at the Council Meeting, of course."

NEVER has this been allowed in Stonnington.

I was told by a previous councillor that "It doesn't work!" Seems to work elsewhere!

Well, at last, after more than 20 years, we are permitted to ask a question of Council at a Council Meeting. On Feb. 19 councillors decided that "a cat can look at a king!."

You can find details of this "change of Governance Rules" on p.82 of the Agenda for Fe.19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

2 councillors voted against the motion.

The present system is still allowed. We can still ask in writing or by email.

### **At the same meeting**

Council opposed what **Homes Victoria** has proposed for the redevelopment of the Essex Street, Prahran and Horace Petty estates. These are the public housing estates in the western part of the municipality. The 'flats' in these high-rise estates are in poor condition due, mainly, to lack of maintenance by State Government and all except 2 recent sections State Government proposes to demolish and re-develop as a mix of public and private apartments. The plans were not accepted by Council so it would seem that it is a matter of 'back to the drawing boards.'

MEG wonders how State Government will handle this utter defiance!

### **Trees in Queens Avenue Caulfield**

On January 4 The Age reported that these trees were to be axed to make way for a shared bike-pedestrian path. Residents of Queens Avenue rose up in anger at this proposed desecration.

*"Glen Eira Council, which technically owns Queens Avenue nature strip but lost control of it as part of it as part of the level crossing removal project, has been discussing the design of the path with the state for at least two years."* (The Age..Jan. 4)

At their final meeting in 2023 Glen Eira Council *"it quietly revealed that Council agreed with the state's plan to raze and re-plant the trees and that work would begin in January."*

**Enter the media.....** whereupon Council changed its mind and told the Minister that it would no longer support the removal of the mature trees. The Level Crossing Removal Project wants to proceed with the destruction and is not willing to plan collaboratively with Council.

Residents have vowed to chain themselves to the trees if/when the chainsaws appear.

It's the year for Council elections so Council continues to support the residents.

Residents have put a Change.Org petition online. As we write this newsletter no resolution between the 2 warring parties has been reached.

### **MRC is at it again at Caulfield Racecourse**

The latest transformation of this public land has cost the MRC \$64 million.

*"A new mounting yard, parading and subterranean tunnel from stables to the track has been completed."* (H.S. Feb 27)

There are new jockey rooms for men and women, centralized horse stalls, trainers' lounge and broadcast facilities, the new mounting yard will have room for 900 owners and the old mounting yard will be turned into a members' lawn with room for 2000 people.

It's so good to know that **our land** is being put to such good use by the MRC.

### **Sensor Parking**

Without the sound of trumpets blaring Council has introduced Sensor Parking in Glenferrie Rd. Last week we noticed a small blue sign under the much larger One Hour parking sign announcing the arrival of the sensors. The small blue sign is easy to miss. Beware! You may find a Parking Fine in your letter box one day soon.

## **Planning Applications in and around Malvern East**

**13 Warrida Av.** Pt. dem., bldg. & works in H.O.

**7 Kenilworth Gr. Glen Iris** Pt. dem., bldg. & wks to existing dwelling in NCO.

**4 Manning Rd.** Pt. dem. & ext. alterations to dwelling in H.O.

**206 Glenferrie Rd. Malvern** Bldg & wks for ext. dem., alt. & bus. Identification signage.

**1275-1277 Malvern Rd. Malvern** To use land for a leisure and recreation facility..gym.

**134 Burke Rd.** Pt. dem., bldg. & wks to existing bldg. and display signage in Commercial 1 Zone and H.O.

**318 B Wattletree Rd. Malvern** Solar panels to dwelling in H.O.

**5 Elizabeth St. Malvern** Application for demolition of dwelling.

**48 Tooronga Rd.** Solar panels on dwelling in H.O.

**32 Cummins Gr. Malvern** Pt. dem., bldg. & wks to extend dwelling in H.O.

**419 Wattletree Rd.** Single storey alteration & addn. to single storey dwelling in H.O.

**3 Merville Av.** Proposed double storey townhouse at rear of property and carport to existing dwelling.

**1/16 Arcadia Av.** Extend dwelling on a lot less than 300sq.m. in GRZ.

**638 Warrigal Rd.** Construction of 3 dwellings on a lot in RGZ.

**44 Webster St.** Construction of dwellings on a lot in GRZ.