



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports *PLANNING BACKLASH*

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MEG NEWSLETTER....JULY/AUGUST 2020

From the Convenor's Desk

It is a good experience to start with news that has nothing to do with what the State Government is doing about planning issues. I'll tell you about that later. The good news is that a long-standing MEG member has been named

Volunteer of the Year...MECWA Victoria.....Olwyn Syle

Olwyn has worked in the MECWA Op Shop in Waverley Rd. Malvern East for 20 years. With her gentle nature and wonderful smile she has been a great asset to the community, always ready with a helping hand and endless encouragement to so many of us.

Congratulations, Olwyn, from your MEG family!

Membership Subscription

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your MEG membership and welcome to our new members. Those of you who haven't renewed yet may do so by cash, cheque or by making a payment directly to our bank account. Let me know if you make such a payment.

BSB 633-000 Account No.127 271 591 Account Name Malvern East Group

If you have decided not to join us this year, we thank you for your support in the past.

(P.S. Olwyn Syle has renewed her membership!)

Our once gracious Victorian city

On Feb.22 in Spectrum Edward Norton said, *"I had always wanted to do something about the moment of New York's deepest modern crime, **the destruction of the old city.**"*

MEG can certainly identify with that statement. We have lived through a time of the destruction of the gracious Victorian city of Melbourne...and if we thought that a pandemic might call a halt to that, albeit temporarily, we have had to think again.

We told you in our last newsletter about State Government's initiative in 'fast-tracking' developments at whim. Minister Wynne did just that to a proposed development in Stonnington this month. (Amendment C306) There were 3 appellants to Council's decision to approve the 8 storey development of Village Way in Toorak Village. The case was to be heard in VCAT next month with the appellants attempting to keep to the 5 storey limit. In one 'foul' swoop Mr. Wynne introduced C306 and said that 8 storeys was just fine so the appeal was vacated. The usual 28 days public notice of an Amendment was not carried out in Stonnington or in the other municipalities where Amendments were done.

(Ref. Planning Matters....August 13/2020)

We told you he was going to 'fast track' any old thing that took his fancy.

He calls them 'shovel-ready' projects.

Sun. Age ...July 19...Re-shaping Melbourne

Imagine MEG's delight when we saw this headline.....

COVID-19 will reshape Melbourne's high-rise developments, says top planner

From Bill Kusznirczuk.....*"As an urban and regional planner and former chief commissioner of the Victorian Planning Authority, I am certain there needs to be change in the way our cities and country areas function and how we can properly plan to build resilience in our communities."* *"People working from home will be the new norm."*

"People will place a higher value on suburban living as they will feel more safe and secure in the suburbs. This will challenge urban consolidation objectives that seek to achieve increased density in these areas. Planning Minister Wynne says it's too early to predict all of that. "There's still a very strong appetite for investment," he said.

Well, he would say that, wouldn't he? What would he do without developers?

Mark Twain...Melbourne in the 1890s

The Age July 29 Nicholas Reece wrote that in 1895 Mark Twain described Melbourne as *"a stately city architecturally as well as in magnitude."* Reece goes on to say that if we fast forward to 2020 we have hit a low point *"with some predicting COVID-19 will be the death of Melbourne as we know it. Bill Kusznirczuk wrote that "COVID-19 is a 'generational catastrophe' that will 'reshape every aspect of how the city is planned and developed."*

MEG says that perhaps something good will come out of this hideous pandemic!

Kusznirczuk went on to say *"there will be less demand for high-rise living, public transport will face declining patronage and urban sprawl will surge as people fear being close to one another."*

If people fear being close to one another, there's no need for the city to **sprawl**. We have an almost empty State of Victoria where people needn't live on top of one another. It's called 'decentralisation' and it's not rocket science. A State Government could build a regional rail system and populate country areas!

And another thing The Age July 7

*"At a time when so many Victorians are doing it hard, Lindsay Fox's bid to lay claim to a large slice of public beach to add to his already luxurious Portsea estate is **particularly distasteful.**"*

On July 5 Royce Millar & Chris Vedelago had reported that *"Billionaire trucking magnate Lindsay Fox has staked a new claim over thousands of square metres of beach in front of his cliff-top mansion in Portsea while also launching court action that would allow him to develop part of the beach he successfully claimed as his own in 2013."*

The conservationist Ursula de Jong said, *"It's not morally or ethically right."*

Well, she's dead right there!

Casey Council, IBAC....and all of that

MEG was reminded of the furore IBAC uncovered in Casey Council when we read an article in The Age of August 22 and learned that *"former Casey mayor Sam Aziz has returned to Australia this week 10 months after he left the country, following raids on his properties by IBAC and shortly before he faced public accusations of corruption. Mr. Aziz is a key figure in the Casey land scandal....."* He is in a Sydney hospital. IBAC is aware of his return.

You might remember it was reported on June 26 in The Age that *"Victorian Planning Minister Richard Wynne allowed a controversial re-zoning process to proceed against*

repeated advice of his own department.....” Despite the warnings and lack of strategic justification Mr. Wynne **authorised the process** in December 2015. Four years later in April 2020 he finally refused the re-zoning.

Took a while for the Minister to see that the writing was on the wall!

Controls along riverbank...The Age June 22

The Minister for Planning *“has approved tough controls along the riverbank, which stretches from Richmond to Warrandyte, imposing height limits and minimum setback requirements for developments.”* MEG thinks it would be great if he had banned development along the river entirely but then we also believe in “fairies in the bottom of the garden” too!

The Age July 24 North East Link case

We told you in a previous newsletter that 3 councils were taking the State Government to the Supreme Court over the destruction which would be caused in their municipalities by this monstrous road. On July 24 we read that Boroondara and Whitehorse had caved in. They had been “bought” by State Government. *“Boroondara has been given \$300,000 to instal a 40 km/h shopping centre speed limit on Doncaster Rd. to Greythorn Shopping Centre, \$500,000 to finalise improvements to Bellevue Shopping Centre and \$700,000 for pedestrian-operated signals on Balwyn Rd.”*

“Whitehorse was granted a new sports field and car parking at Elgar Park in addition to upgrades of other playgrounds near the Easter Freeway and a new cycling route.....”

On July 28 Banyule Council also pulled out of the appeal. A North Balwyn resident said the councils were allowing State Government to build *“a huge traffic sewer.”*

The Age Aug.19...Row erupts in a bid to save Boyd house

“The 1949 home on Tannock St. in Balwyn is an early example of Boyd’s influential work and remains intact after two sympathetic extensions he designed for the owners in 1971,”

BUT....there’s always a BUT....an application has been made to Boroondara Council to subdivide the land *“but it is on hold at the moment because there’s no demolition application to support the subdivision.”* Thousands have signed an online petition demanding that the house be protected....and that all depends on the whim of our erstwhile Planning Minister Richard Wynne. We can only hope that he sees the light....just for once! We’re not holding our collective breath!

The Age...June 21 Heritage clashes with homeowners’ rights

This particular battle was in Brighton but it has been fought in many suburbs of Melbourne and in the regions. People who own homes want to do what they want to do without restrictions. Councils are permitted by State Government to protect certain areas and certain homes. In the Brighton instance, *“some locals championed the heritage protection, others worried about the impact on property values and their ability to renovate and sell their homes.”* Stonnington worked its way through this dilemma in its early days. A bitter battle was fought then over Council’s wish to institute heritage overlays and list certain properties as ‘heritage.’ There are occasions now when the same battle is fought here the most recent one was over 34 Armadale St. Council maintained that it did not fit the criteria while residents deemed otherwise and in Heritage Overlays such as the Gascoigne Estate battles are fought over extensions.

It is the duty of all councils under state planning laws to undertake heritage studies and *“the*

Victorian planning minister ultimately has the duty to make decisions on this."

In a recent newsletter, Clifford Hayes MLC for Southern Metropolitan Region, has called for a HERITAGE INQUIRY. We can look forward to that when we have a different Planning Minister!

LOCAL NEWS

Council Elections After months of "will they or won't they" the new Minister for Local Government Shaun Leane announced on August 13 that Council elections will take place on October 24/2020. We urge you to use every means possible to "**know your candidates.**" It's postal voting only so make sure your vote counts by having it in on time. Needless to say MEG will not be organising a 'Forum for Council Candidates' this year.

Stonnington Leader ...August 14

"Local Government Inspectorate is set to investigate matters surrounding Stonnington Mayor Steven Stefanopoulos' unauthorised six page, 23 picture newsletter."

The newsletter was distributed in South Ward in July.

(N.B. MEG asked a few of our members in South Ward if they had received this publication. Some had, some had not.)

"Acting chief municipal inspector Dr. John Lynch said the inspectorate was 'assessing a complaint regarding Stonnington Council.' Prahran's Denzil Griffiths said he had made a complaint to the Local Government Inspectorate and was concerned about the misuse of council's assets and staff involvement. Ratepayers Stonnington President Dean Hurlston is also considering a complaint to the Inspectorate."

Councils' rate rises

The Age Aug.1 *"All but five of Melbourne's councils are proposing 2 per cent rate increases this year, the maximum amount allowed under state law."*

In its Draft Budget Stonnington proposed a 2% increase. At Council Meeting August 17 each ratepayer who spoke to Council opposed this increase. They also opposed the huge expenditure of \$32 million on renovation of the Prahran Town Hall. There were 96 submissions to the Draft Budget. 16 people elected to speak to Council. Some didn't do so for a variety of reasons. Chrissie Mauss, Chapel St. Precinct' General. Manager said,

"This increase during a pandemic is completely unethical."

Chadstone Shopping Centre

We told you in a previous newsletter that the Vicinity/Gandel Corporation centre had proposed an office development that exceeded the Incorporated Plan Overlay by 8 storeys and a reduction in car parking requirements. At Council Meeting July 6 they got what they wanted and councillors spoke highly of the application and of the applicants. If council had refused all or part of the application MEG is sure the applicants would have appealed to VCAT and would have won there but we could have done without the accolades bestowed on the applicants by a number of councillors.

Governance Issues

Council allowed us just 2 weeks to make a submission about this. Our research with other groups in the Planning Backlash network of residents' groups revealed that in other

municipalities residents were given a month and most were done earlier in the year. Councils are required under the new Local Government Act to submit their governance policies to State Government by September 1. Some councillors at Council Meeting on August 3 deplored the fact that we were given such a short time to submit. For years we have taken issue with the fact that ratepayers in Stonnington are not permitted to ask questions at Council Meetings. So far we have found only one other council that keeps the people silent.

(A cat can look at a king...but not in Stonnington!)

We have objected to the fact that the written questions to Council are not read out in full and answers not supplied immediately. In most cases this would be possible. We have always been bothered by the fact that we are not permitted to advertise our meetings or forums on council property. The reason for this is that such meetings are **political**. Such twaddle! Some of us told them that. Now let's see if anything changes.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust

The Trust has held online consultation about the **new** plan for the "*vast open space in the centre of the reserve which has been underused for years.*" (H.S June 27) This is land that is owned by the people of Victoria and which has been virtually controlled by the MRC. The **Auditor General's report in September 2014** revealed just how 'the owners' of the land had been almost entirely excluded from using it. He pointed out how difficult it was to even access it. Everything had been done by the MRC to keep 'the people' out except for race meetings.

Finally, there's a plan....**BUT**....nothing is really going to happen until the MRC moves training to another venue. Andrew Dixon and Geoff Westcott are MEG's representatives at Trust meetings and have made a submission regarding the Masterplan. Council also has made a submission but, like us, has doubts about where the money is coming from to make the 'good stuff' happen. Even a stadium is proposed and they won't have to cut down one tree to build it! Stonnington's "five" councillors might learn something!

Caulfield Village

That's the area between Station St. and Normanby Rd. where the MRC bought up all the houses and demolished them...just across the railway line from Stonnington. In the H.S. June 27 we saw that State Government had approved the \$250 million mixed use development for what's quaintly known as 'affordable housing', a supermarket, shops and offices.

MEG wonders what will happen there in the light of the pandemic

Cabrini Hospital & Gandel Wing

At a July Council Meeting a letter from 'Sylvia and Sue' was tabled. Council was informed that their work in having the Gandel Wing nominated for an award by the Australian Institute of Architects, National Architecture Awards in November had been recognised. The Mayor congratulated them on "*the award recognition of your state-of-the art Gandel Wing.*"

STAGGERED? MEG was. We had just been told by a Monash resident who hadn't viewed the 'louvred lovely' before..."That's an eyesore isn't it?" A MEG member gasped when told about this and said, "Gosh, they've lowered the standard this year, haven't they?"

Some of the Planning Applications in and around Malvern East

Breaking news.....7A Isabella St.

We had call from a MEG member on August 26 to tell us that Council and residents had won a significant victory at VCAT. The report came through on August 27 that a Refusal to Grant a Permit for a Medical Centre on the corner of Isabella and Edsall Sts had been refused. Council Planning Department had approved this application and Councillors had refused it. Often this is a dicey situation for objectors because some VCAT members tend to consider a councillor refusal to be a 'political' refusal rather than a 'professional' one. If you want to read the VCAT decision you can access the VCAT site or send MEG an email and it will be forwarded to you.

34 Cressy St. Malvern Dual occ.

23 Winton St. Demolition.

20 Coonil Cr. Malvern Pt. dem., bldg. & works to a dwelling in an H.O.

168 Burke Rd. Glen Iris Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

23 Albert St. Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

12 Mercer Rd. Armadale Pt. dem. bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

44 Fisher St. Subdivision into 2 lots.

24 Kerferd St. Limited licence renewable.

30 Glendearg Gr. Malvern Pt. dem. bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

54 Osborne St. Glen Iris Construction of 7 townhouses.

923 Dandenong Rd. 4 storey student acc. dev. Refused by Pl. Dept. Appeal by applicant lodged. VCAT Nov. 16/2020

268 Waverley Rd. Re-development of existing site into Bendigo Bank branch.

19 Belson St. Pt. dem. bldg. and works to dwelling in H.O.

20 Central Park Rd. Pt. dem. bldg. & works to dwelling in H.O.

24 Hughes St. Appeal by objectors to Council's decision to Grant a Permit for a single dwelling in NCO. Merits hearing April 18/2021.

Note the number of "building & works" in Heritage Overlays. Due to government grants???

Special request re Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust

Andrew Dixon, one of MEG's representatives asked that comments from his submission be added to this newsletter...

"A perimeter walking and running path like The Tan around the Royal Botanic Gardens would be a major improvement as it would prove a safe and healthy facility for exercise. Pedestrian access needs enhancing to ensure that access to the centre of the Reserve can be maintained during hirings such as Santa's Kingdom leading up to December. It is important that stadiums and other buildings for indoor sports do not dominate these spaces and that plastic lawn surfaces do not predominate on the playing surfaces as they are environmentally unsound. Plantings of advanced trees and other plants will be important to enhance the environment of the site.

*The most recent draft for community consultation: <https://www.crrt.org.au/draftImp/>
The Victorian Planning Authority continues with its work on the Caulfield Station Precinct. Members of the community also have the opportunity to provide input to the VPA scheme as it tries to come up with a scheme to improve the amenity of the local area that also serves as a major transport hub, local community retail hub and significant educational precinct. Sign up for updates here: <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/project/caulfield-station-precinct/>*