



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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MEG Newsletter...July/August 2022

From the Convenor's Desk

We couldn't make it up!

The Age reported on July 22 that the State Government has appointed a Planning Minister who just happens to have a brother who just happens to be a director of a Labor-linked lobbying firm which just happens to have clients who happen to be prominent property and infrastructure companies.

Sometimes... (often actually)... I think I live in **Looking Glass Land** where everything is not what it seems and I search everywhere for Alice but can only find Dan!

In **Planning Matters August 12** I read this gem...

*"VC223 changes the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria by amending Cl.73.01 (General Matters) **to define Minister for Planning to mean a Minister for the time being administering the Planning & Environment Act 1987.***

So please note, in future when we refer to Planning Minister Lizzie Blandthorn we do NOT mean it. We actually mean "A Minister for the time being etc. etc."

We really do live like Alice don't we? Right there in Looking Glass Land!

Is this the first example of "a Minister for the time being?"

In Kingston, there is a proposal to have housing covering Kingswood golf course. The developer is a subsidiary of Australian Super, a client of Hawker Britton which is the firm associated with the brother of Planning Minister Lizzie Blandthorn.

"John-Paul Blandthorn is a director of Labor-linked lobbying firm Hawker-Britton whose clients—as listed on the public register of lobbyists include many prominent property and infrastructure companies..."

"The government said last month it was drawing up a 'robust management plan' to ensure the independence of Ms. Blandthorn's decision-making."

N.B. Royce Millar's article was printed on July 19 and by August 12 State Government had solved the dilemma with "**a Minister for the time being!**"

Don't you just love it?

More about Kingswood Golf Club development

The housing estate application for the Kingston Golf Club site is strongly opposed by Kingston Council, the residents and the Federal Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and we learned from Rosemary West's July newsletter to Kingston residents that the Minister for the Environment will make the decision re Kingswood Golf Club.

SO is Minister D'Ambrosia **a Minister for the time being?** Just asking!

And there's more.....

On July 22 The Age reported that a government spokeswoman said, *"Hawker Britton has been advised that the minister for planning will exclude herself from any planning decision-making that involves or mentions a client of Hawker Britton."*

The spokeswoman also said,

"The minister looks forward to continuing to work with local communities to deliver the best planning outcomes for Victorians."

(They say that sort of thing with perfectly straight faces!)

"Hawker Britton managing director Simon Banks said that while his company was disappointed by the government's response it would comply in full."

"Centre for Public Integrity research director Dr. Catherine Williams said the plan 'looks reasonable.'" She wondered if anyone is to have oversight of this plan and where the transparency was. At that stage neither she nor anyone else had heard of "minister for the time being." MEG wonders what she really thinks of that idea.

"Client lost over minister's sibling row" The Age July 23

It appears that Hawker Britton might lose clients after the government banned the firm from contacting the Planning Minister or her office because of *"potential conflicts of interest."*

"Tract, a planning consultancy with more than 1000 projects under way across the state and multiple major projects requiring Ministerial approval in Melbourne, has contacted the lobbying firm asking to be removed from its list of clients on Victoria's official lobbyist register."

The Shadow Planning Minister Ryan Smith said, *"The minister is now so compromised that many would view any decision she made as being tainted."*

MEG says that the tentacles of the planning industry are certainly spread far and wide. Tract having 1000 projects just appalls us as does the *'lobbyist register.'*

How much is going on in the development industry that we know nothing about?

Major developer in liquidation....The Age July 27

Caydon is a major property developer and it has been put into receivership. *"The firm's woes were exacerbated by the collapse of top-tier builder Probuild."* It has been reported that Caydon is a client of Hawker Britton and Probuild is/was employed by the MRC to build that unbelievable complex on the land north of Caulfield racecourse, bounded by Normanby Rd. and Station St.

It's all 'wheels within wheels' isn't it?

Building inspectors 'forced to cut corners' The Age July 27

A Work Safe report given to the Victorian Building Authority in July *"found that the authority was placing its 40 building inspectors at risk by demanding they finish at least three inspections a day and, in the case of plumbing inspectors, five a day."*

Shadow Minister for Planning, Ryan Smith, said that the report *"lifts the lid on some pretty damning work practices which put lives at risk."*

Planning Minister Lizzie Blandthorn is in charge of the VBA and she was asked by *The Age* if she was concerned about the findings in the report. A spokeswoman answered for the Minister saying, *"We expect the VBA and their staff to undertake detailed and thorough inspections to ensure community safety."*

Now that's a meaningful statement if ever we heard one!

MEG wonders if the Planning Minister is being kept silent in her portfolio. There always seems to be a spokeswoman (or spokesman) around to speak for her!

Outgoing Planning Minister Wynne...

"Outgoing Planning Minister Richard Wynne has left residents of Melbourne's inner north confused and angry by fast-tracking a contentious apartment development project to spur Victoria's COVID-19 economic recovery....." The Age July 4.

Concerned residents received an email from him saying he thought the Council *"is best suited to resolve the planning issues in the proposed development."*

Only hours later they received a letter from *"the government's priority projects standing advisory committee"* which indicated that the same project would be fast-tracked *"to boost the economy ..."*

The state's planning department DELWP said the first letter was a mistake!

Mirvac is waiting for a decision on its development by Minister Lizzie Blandthorn. Mirvac is NOT a client of Hawker Britton so the Planning Minister has to make the decision! We haven't seen a quote from 'a spokeswoman' (or spokesman) on this matter yet but we might have missed it!

"Sorry, bro' can't help you with that work"...H.S. July 22

Matt Johnston in the Herald Sun treats the whole sorry mess of the lobbyist brother and the Planning Minister with a degree of irreverence and refers to a Government spokesman ...(no, not a spokewoman!)...saying *"it was standard practice to have alternative ministers make decisions if there was a risk of potential conflict."* Headed **"Inept at best"** in the Sunday Age on July 26 a resident of Kew wrote, *"How could you appoint a person, no matter how talented, who has a close relative as a lobbyist in the area of arguably one of the most delicate and high profile ministries in state politics beggars belief. Was it thought that no-one would notice?....."*

Cash for councils push to help solve housing crisis...The Age...July23

Money from the Federal Government's controversial Urban Congestion Fund could be given to councils *"dealing with increasing population densities."* The suggestion is to give up to \$25,000 for each completed house in their area to improve local infrastructure or amenities.

Economist Peter Tulip has suggested this and he indicated the problems with such a scheme. *"A big problem is NIMBYs who don't want more people living where they live."* (Hands up the guilty ones out there in MEG Land!)

Mr. Tulip said, *"Just about every complaint about increased densities or more homes has people complaining about increased traffic, congestion, more people in local parks That can be dealt with."*

MEG wonders where Mr. Tulip lives and we hope he has lots of comfort and plenty of space in which to spread his wings....and his views.

If you scratch the surface of someone who is criticizing
NIMBYs you usually find another NIMBY.

Solving the housing crisis

Some years ago when MEG was a member of a group meeting infrequently with ex-Planning Minister Wynne, he raised his voice and said, "What? Do you want me to build another city?"

We said, "Yes, that's exactly what we want! Canberra is a planted city. We too could have a planted city!" That idea fell by the wayside, didn't it?

Elite schools' extraordinary property portfolios H.S. August 12

"Some of Victoria's biggest private schools are land-banking multimillion-dollar properties earmarked for future expansion on their city campuses."

In Stonnington, Caulfield Grammar is listed as just one of these schools amassing a huge property portfolio. It is listed "as the owner of nearly 100 properties but has also been buying up commercial and residential properties around its Malvern and Caulfield sites." There is a 2 storey mansion on Willoby Avenue owned by Caulfield Grammar and worth about \$5.5 million....and that's just ONE. MEG wonders where the other 99 are.

On August 25 MEG heard that Korowa Anglican Girls' School won a VCAT decision to build a Primary School and Day Care Centre on a seven-title site on Malvern Rd. Glen Iris, despite objections from Council and 24 residents. Bang goes seven art deco houses and in comes further desecration of one of our once gracious boulevards. MEG understands that this development has the artificial playing surfaces so beloved of developers and, we regret to say, Stonnington Council. Yet another school where they're intent on "cookin' the kids."

The H.S. article has a long list of schools which have been buying up expensive homes in their areas and we can only contemplate where all this money comes from. It can't all come from the astronomical fees.

Of course each is allotted millions from the Federal Government. MEG wonders if each school that gets "the tax dollar" is accountable. We've never seen nor heard of the method of accountability. Have you?

Residents fear their patch of green will be turned into a sport stadium

In the Sunday Age on August 7 this heading caught our eye. How could it not do so when that is exactly what is already happening in Stonnington so Yarraville residents have good reason to be fearful.

At present their park is used for....

"recreational sport, dog walking and as a playground for kids.....and residents are concerned that part of their valuable green space will be lost if it is chosen as the location for a future indoor sports stadium."

This situation mirrors the saga of Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park in Stonnington and, if Maribyrnong Council is anything like Stonnington Council, residents will lose their park. Maribyrnong residents claim that *"the process has not been transparent."*

Gosh! Who would believe that there could be a council anywhere in Victoria that does not operate transparently?

An election is coming.....The Age CBD August. 24

Asher Judah was once the Deputy Executive Director of the Property Council....a pro-developer body which advocated for high rise developments. Now Asher Judah is the Liberal candidate for Ashwood and is taking a different tack. He has *"taken up the fight against government plans to encourage higher-density developments around the loop's stations in Melbourne's east....."* He has teamed up with 'People Power Monash' which has been running a petition to scale back heights allowed under a council structure plan. He asserts that when he was with the Property Council he *"represented the public views of their membership, not my personal views."* (Don't you just love it?) He says now that he's doing his job in supporting a *"grassroots insurrection against Labor's plan for high-rise in the suburbs."*

MEG supports his present views as much as we spoke against what he said in his previous life on the Property Council.

LOCAL NEWS

Cabrini Hospital has announced the latest development

We are all aware of the land immediately to the east of Cabrini that has been an on-ground carpark for staff since Cabrini demolished houses on the site and no doubt you have thought that the Board would announce a multi-storey development for the site. Well, they have!! They briefed Councillors on July 4 and an online Forum for residents was on July 12. Most nearby residents had a flyer delivered.

There will be an increase in the number of beds from 50-80. (Big difference there but those are the numbers on the website.) Cabrini is seeking to remove its multi-bed wards to single bed wards.

When asked how high the new development would be the answer was...

"We have sought to achieve a transition in height downwards from the Gandel Wing to our eastern neighbours." In other words, Cabrini is not going to answer that question. MEG understands that it will be almost as high that the "louvred lovely."

The houses at 2 and 4 Coonil Crescent will be demolished. Each has a covenant but Cabrini will apply to have those either removed or varied.

The Planning Application for the entire development will not go to Council so residents will not be permitted to object to anything. A decision will be made by the Planning Minister IF Hawker Britton is in no way involved and, if that lobbyist firm is involved the Minister for the time being (whoever that might be) will decide.

Apparently Cabrini is looking for another philanthropic benefactor to fund this enormous expenditure. They might need more than one!

House price record smashed

On August 16 The Age reported that Victoria's house price record "was smashed twice in one week." Both houses are on St. Georges Rd. in Toorak 29-31 St. Georges Rd. was sold for more than \$80 million

"Buyer's agent Kim Easterbrook confirmed that she represented buyer Ed Craven, 27, in the off-market deal. She said " that the house is in derelict condition and he plans to build a new home on the block."

Mr. Craven is co-founder of cryptocurrency *Stake.com* and it is reported that he had bought a home on Orrong Rd. from William Deague for \$38.5 million.

The other house in St. Georges Rd. is No. 17 known as Blair House. It was sold for almost \$75 million.

Beggars belief, doesn't it? We have so many homeless people in Australia!

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust

CRRT held a Forum on August 11. More than 120 attended and with regard to the Land Management Plan among the topics discussed were....

A great need for tree protection and planting of more trees

The impact of having synthetic surfaces and paved areas and the need for shade

The need to keep dogs out of the lake to protect ducklings

Access to the Reserve.....how many race days...

MRC has a lease for 65 years.....and much more.

MEG wrote to all Councillors and the CEO prior to the Forum and asked who would be representing Stonnington C.C.

The Mayor replied, "We will discuss with officers and determine who will attend the forum." After the Forum we asked the Mayor who had represented Stonnington C.C. and in her absence the Deputy Mayor replied,

"I can confirm representatives from our Planning and Place team meet with the General Manager of CRRT, Andrew Paxton. He has also presented to Council's executive team twice over the past 12 months.

A key priority for Council is the establishment of a cross-over bridge or similar on Dandenong Rd, that will better facilitate pedestrian traffic between the CRRT and our entertainment and dining precincts. Separate to this, Stonnington addresses all potential transport and land use impacts through the South East Economy and Planning Working Group, which we have representatives on. We are confident that Stonnington's interests are well-represented.

Please let us know if you have any further feedback on the CRRT you would like us to raise."

Well, we would have liked an answer!!

MEG gathers that NO-ONE from Stonnington C.C. attended the Forum. We asked Andrew Paxton if Minutes of the meetings with Stonnington staff members were taken and he indicated that there were none.

Three MEG members were at the forum and we listened to all the plans that the Trust has for the 54 hectares of OUR land and the fact that none can be carried out because the Trust received no money in the last budget. MEG suspects that there will be no money in the next Budget either. Meanwhile, the MRC is proceeding with building the second race track against advice from jockeys and trainers.

Ward Meetings that are not REALLY Ward Meetings

South Ward...Thursday 1 Sept. 6--8p.m. Banquet Room at Malvern Town Hall

North Ward...Thursday 29th October 6--8pm..Toorak Sth Yarra Library

East Ward...Thursday 3 November 6--8p.m. T.H. King Oval Pavilion Glen iris

Inquiries lay bare town hall toxicity....H.S. July 27

"Two separate inquiries into behaviour at Stonnington council have cleared councilor Alexander Lew of serious misconduct but exposed a toxic culture at Malvern Town Hall. Former mayor Kate Hely's claim of bullying against Mr. Lew, a Liberal councilor, was thrown out by a Councilor Conduct Panel."

"Greens councilor Mike Scott succeeded in his internal arbitration but it found Mr. Lew's actions were at the "lower end" of misconduct and that an apology would suffice. Mr. Scott had alleged that Mr. Lew's presentation to the council's audit and risk committee breached standards of behaviour 33 times but arbiter Noel Harvey ruled that Mr. Lew had breached fair behavior only generally.

Mr. Lew said he would challenge the finding and was seeking a Supreme Court injunction To prevent him having to apologise to Mr. Scott at Monday's council meeting.

In the matter with Ms Hely the panel ruled no misconduct including in Mr. Lew's comments in a meeting that amounted to 'childish and aggressive behaviour' but were part of robust political debate."

We have printed the article in its entirety without comment for obvious reasons.

Some of the Planning Applications in and near Malvern East

3 Manning Rd. Alterations additions incl. front fence in H.O.

3 Horace St. Malvern Pt. dem., alterations & additions to existing single-fronted dwelling.

22 Bruce St. Removal of easement.

22 Durward St. Construction of 2 dwellings on a lot in NRZ,

401-405 Wattletree Rd. Application to vary existing covenant.

62-64 The Boulevard Construction of 2 dwellings on a lot in NRZ.

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

31 Hampden Rd. Armadale Pt. dem., bldgs. & works & removal of trees associated with a dwelling in H.O.

23 Cairnes Cr. Pt. dem. bldg. & works and variation of covenant to dwelling in NCO.

14 Glenbrook Av. Tree pruning in NCO.

23 Westgarth St. Dem of existing dwelling & construction of new dwelling in H.O.

16 Washington Av. Constr. of single double storey dwelling.

19 Sydare St. 2 dwellings on a lot in NRZ.

12 Bruce St. Pt. dem., bldg. & works to dwelling in NRZ.

18 Manning Rd. Dem. of lean-to & shed at rear & addn of re-configured kitchen, living/dining area. Replacement of carport with garage & ext. to first floor in H.O

32 Alice St. Malvern Proposed two storey dwelling.

11 Kerferd St. Alt. & addns to existing dwelling. Dem. of existing lean-to & garage & 1950s to 1970s addns made to single storey dwelling in H.O. Renovation to remaining existing single storey dwelling. Constr. of new single storey attached garage & double storey extension.

2 Beech St. Tree removal.

1117-1119 Dandenong Rd. Construction of multi-dwelling development in Residential Growth Zone.