



# Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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## MEG NEWSLETTER....MARCH/APRIL 2021

### From the Convenor's Desk

As we drive around our once beautiful, gracious Victorian city of Melbourne I am saddened by the destruction of beautiful old homes and what has replaced them. Have you noticed that nearly all the new apartment blocks have bars either vertical or horizontal and sometimes both? I see them everywhere and I think that it's architecture reverting to our prison origins. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Australian literature is littered with prison images and now, it seems, that architecture is embracing such imagery. The fact that there is no mandated minimum size for apartments augments the 'prison image.'

Add to this somewhat depressing aspect of modern architecture is the increasing use of the phrase "cutting edge apartments" in the advertising blurbs for new blocks and the sad attempts at landscaping. There is a block of apartments in Orrong Rd. Toorak with a mirrored glass facade which VCAT found acceptable as part of the landscaping because it reflected the street trees. Not mentioned in the VCAT report was the fact that this little trick saved the developer from any real attempt at landscaping which would include planting trees. Sometimes one despairs!

### "Turf wars....."

We noticed on the CRRT Facebook Page on March 27 a thoughtful paragraph by John Englehart who expressed grave concerns about the adverse environmental effects of synthetic turf which is proposed for 2 of the playing fields at CRR. This is something MEG has attempted to bring to Council's attention for some time to no effect.

Sunday Age (April 18) reported that the *"Port Phillip Baykeeper has a portable cooler full of fake grass tufts that have blown from a synthetic oval ..."* *"On the worst days, after strong winds, Mr. Blake found 300 to 400 tufts of plastic grass in 90 minutes of trawling."*

Dr. Pfautsch of Western Sydney University who specialises in the impact of rising temperatures in urban environments said, *"Synthetic grass is one of the hottest material that I find in public spaces during summer."* Duncan Fine wrote in The Age on April 21,, *"the community (rightly argues) that synthetic fields (made with old car tyres) are an environmental disaster causing rubber and microplastics to leach into water ways."*

MEG noted a comment on FB by a mother who applauded Council's 'plastic grass' at Gardiner Park. She said that it is wonderful to have her son come home clean after playing sport on artificial turf. (MEG is pleased to hear about a parent with the right priorities.!) Alas, there is a growing tendency for home owners to use artificial turf. We've also seen it in nature strips.

There is so much more that we could say about this scourge to the environment but we'll finish the words you've heard so often from Dr. Greg Moore, **"They're cooking the kids."**

### **Prince Phillip in 1997 ...comments on the Australian environment**

Tony Wright reported in The Age on April 20 that Prince Phillip spoke scathingly of the authorities in Australia probably not approving of his views re the environment and with that.....

*“he launched into a passionate assault on what he considered the scandal of land clearing, particularly in Queensland. He reeled off reams of figures about the immense amount of native vegetation that was disappearing across Australia wiping out wildlife. He reserved his greatest contempt for Queensland, where the loss of habitat for native animals was, he said, the most appalling in the nation and among the worst in the world.”*

At that time he hadn't heard of the Andrews Government's tree destruction programs. Nor had we!

### **Locals trying to save parkland**

There have been many instances during the last few months about local people resenting intrusions into existing parks. On March 19 in a Letter to the Editor Ann Birrell quoted words from then the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Trevor Huggard who said in 2005, *“If development on parkland continues at the rate it is now by 2050 there'll be no green open space left in Melbourne.”*

On Mar. 17 Adam Carey wrote that *“students of booming Albert Park College are being pitted against nearby residents aggrieved at their daytime use of a local park.”*

In Stonnington Penpraze Park in Tooronga Rd. is for school use only between 8.30 a.m and 4.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday even though some of the park belongs to Council.

(Actually here is hardly any of that park left. Most of what was 'green' parkland is now covered in the environmentally unsound hard surface.)

On March 19 Rachel Eddie reported in the Age that *“Kilsyth locals fight to keep parkland.”*

The Green Wedges Coalition reported recently on the proposals to build “stuff” in the designated ‘green wedges.’ Melbourne City Council has made determined efforts to build “stuff” in the heritage-listed Fawkner Park. This has been vigorously opposed by residents. Boroondara residents are fighting to retain parkland designated for destruction by State Government's north-west link. Stonnington residents fought long and hard to save Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park from that wretched stadium.

(We still have a CHANCE of succeeding. The report on alternative stadium sites is due this month.)

### **Government land for sale**

On March 25 Benjamin Preiss reported in The Age that *“Dozens of former schools across Victoria are being prepared for sale on the open market but planning experts warn the State Government may soon have to buy back nearby land at higher prices as more people move to the regions.”* This is a repeat of what happened in Inner Melbourne during the Kennett years and prior to that.

In a Letter to the Editor on March 31, Dr. John Parady asserts that *“.....the Andrews Labor Government repeats the mistakes of the Cain-Kirner governments of the 1980s and '90s.....The government abolished and closed more than 120 secondary technical schools across Victoria. Country schools, primary and secondary were also closed and former rural schools that had been reused by state schools for school camps were sold off. When Kirner was voted out, the incoming Kennett government finished the unsold rationalised school sites.....Government sales of state schools are not just short-sighted but fail to recognise these schools as important community resources.....”*

Governments of all colours have the quaint habit of deeming sites already owned by the taxpayer as being **“surplus to requirements.”** Some of the former schools that are FOR SALE are in Castlemaine, Geelong and Bendigo....all ‘growth’ areas. Some Melbourne properties are also up for sale. Do governments never learn from past mistakes? Previous sales of government (our) land which has been deemed **surplus to requirements** has been sold to developers. (See the site of the old Prahran Primary School.)

### **The Age...March 30....Councils ‘priced out’ of parkland**

*“Melbourne councils say land has become so expensive that they cannot afford to provide enough public open space.....”* Even though developers must make open space contributions these are never enough to cover the requisition of open space needed to cater for the additional numbers population. Cr. Griffin pointed out at a recent Council Meeting that \$8 million of Stonnington Council’s surplus (?) of \$15m is open space levy. This can only be spent on acquiring open space in the postal code where it has been collected.

### **Will there be a low-cost housing fund levy? The Age April 16**

*“The Andrews government plans to build 12,000 social and affordable homes by 2024 at a cost of \$5.3 billion.”* It’s not enough! In February 2021, there were 49,644 household on the Victorian list. The Committee for Melbourne has proposed a levy, similar to the bushfire levy. *“Housing Minister Richard Wynne did not respond directly to the Committee for Melbourne’s proposed levy .....”*

### **Homelessness groups face \$20m hit the Age April 23**

State Government agency Homes Victoria has told the homelessness groups that the Federal budget did not renew part of their funding beyond June 30. Federal Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston said, *“Any suggestion there has been a cut to funding for housing and homelessness is completely false.....”*

Well, there you go!

Who’s telling the truth and who’s doing some fibbing?

### **Social housing row exposes tensions...The Age April 10**

This refers to the ‘tension’ between Minister Wynne and the Greens-dominated Yarra Council over the land next to Collingwood Town Hall. Council refused a plan to build 100 new social and affordable housing units on council land. State Government *“had made clear that this would attract significant funding.”* Councillors had other thoughts along the line of a community hub....a library and maternal & child health care centre and they *“wanted State Government to instead provide an undisclosed number of social housing units on a smaller parcel of land.”* Mr. Wynne said “NO!”

The article stated that *“that Housing Minister Richard Wynne said he would no longer work with the Greens-dominated local council.....”*

### **Minister Wynne has made some new rules for apartment buildings**

Some years ago Mr Wynne decided on BADS “Better Apartment Design Standards.” Despite submissions from groups such as MEG in his infinite wisdom he refused to mandate a minimum size, hence the “prison image.”

The pandemic has caused him to take action again. He is ensuring that Victoria's high density living will put *"liveability and wellbeing at the heart of its design."*

(Well, that's what he said before!)

Below is a summary of his 'new' thoughts sent to Toorak Residents' Group from Stonnington's Director of Planning and Place

1. More greenery and communal open space. Any apartment building with 10+ dwellings will need to provide easily accessible, functional open space and all apartments will need to have landscaping incorporated from the beginning of the design process.
2. Better wind conditions. For apartment buildings of 5+ storeys the design will need to minimise any wind impacts to surrounding areas to keep them pleasant and safe. Requirements for private open space have also been changed, specifically for balconies facing north or south or located 40m+ above ground level.
3. Improved integration. When designing street frontages, blank walls or high fences need to be avoided and utility area (parking, waste collection, etc.) should not be visible from the street. This makes the street more engaging and attractive.
4. A focus on external materials. Building facades need to be durable, high quality and make a positive contribution to the surrounding streetscape.

The new (?) standards are expected to be put in place later this year. They won't apply to any planning applications lodged before they are formally implemented and, apparently, there will also be a two-month transitional period.

So help us all!

### **Call for faster housing approval...the Age April 17**

No, this recent call to get on with the destruction of our city (and State) **did not** come from developers or the Property Council. It came from the banks!

*"NAB chief executive Ross McEwan told MPs at the House of Representatives Standing Committee public hearing into the banks that while he strongly supported first home buyers incentives, the lack of new homes was an unsolved problem for housing affordability. We know supply is restricted and the states need to streamline approval processes for land development and residential construction."*

MEG wonders just how often someone is going to ask for 'streamlining of the planning process' and how often they need to be told that our erstwhile Planning Minister is consistently doing just that. He 'calls in' planning applications at the drop of the proverbial hat and, with his wholehearted approval, the VPA is doing its best to speed up the '**fast tracking**' of planning applications through its VicSmart program. This means that slowly but surely residents are being excluded from saying anything about where they live.

### **Backdown by Woolies**

(The Age April 16) *"Woolworths has scaled down plans for a \$100m mixed-use development in Elsternwick that had enraged some locals and been rejected by authorities."*

Woolworths had wanted a 14 storey tower and 10 level building at the former ABC site in Selwyn St. They have now proposed 10 and 9 storey buildings. Opposite this at 7 Selwyn St. another developer Elsternwick Towers is seeking a favourable decision about another 14 storey office building, museum and theatre. *"A government spokeswoman said Planning Minister Wynne would make a decision on the development after receiving advice from the*

Priority Projects Standing Advisory Committee.”

MEG has never HEARD of this Committee and we didn't think Mr. Wynne needed advice!

**Dodged a bullet**

Residents at Western Port are thanking Minister Wynne!! (We know! Astonishing!!) He actually refused the proposal for a gas terminal and an associated pipeline to Pakenham. He actually said *“the proposal would have unacceptable effects on the environment in Western Port.”* The application from AGL and APA *generated substantial local opposition, with an environmental effects statement garnering more than 6000 submissions.”* Residents are aware that Mr. Wynne's decision needs *“to be considered by the Federal Environment Minister.”*

**A snippet**

We don't know the source of this comment. We thought it was so relevant that we'd share it with you. “High Rise Blocks of Flats are COVID 19 Petri DISHES.” It's a thought!

**LOCAL NEWS**

**FOI ... and your Council**

On January 15/2021 MEG lodged an FOI application for the REDACTED items regarding the destruction of significant trees at 18 St. Georges Rd. Toorak. We should have received a response within 30 days and we didn't. For Council Meeting of April 19/2021 (three months later) we asked Council's reason for the delay and we requested that our question be read out. We were given no reason for the delay and our questions were not made public nor was our name. The Mayor simply said there had been a question regarding FOI and that it had been dealt with! Yes, we did receive 2 pages of response re the REDACTED items....no reason for denial of documents and no reason for the delay. Bewildering?? Indeed!! Council receives about 100 FOI requests a year and a Council spokesperson informed us that most of the information is released. For some unknown reason documents about significant trees are SECRET. We did not lodge an FOI request for the REDACTED documents regarding 2 significant trees at 43 Central Park Rd. Malvern East. Why bother?

**Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust.....Land Management Plan**

On April 14, three MEG members attended the launch of the Land Management Plan. This event was 'booked out.' The CEO and Mayor of Stonnington were welcomed. (We didn't see them and their attendance was not reported at a council meeting.) Glen Eira Council was well represented. It seems that Glen Eira residents believe that this is very welcome 'open space' for them and for all the sporting groups in that municipality. We would remind them that although the land is in Glen Eira it is actually owned by the people of Victoria .....bequeathed to all of us by Queen Victoria!

There will be 2 artificial turf ovals and 2 REAL GREEN GRASS ovals, a second racetrack for the MRC who will be allowed to have night racing...(the neighbours will love it.) The MRC spokesperson was ecstatic. NONE of this is going to happen SOON. The Trust has employed Price Waterhouse to prepare a Business Plan to present to State Government. That will take a while and it will take a while for State Government to find half of the \$585 million dollars for this to proceed. Meanwhile, the MRC has pledged the rest of it by selling Sandown Racecourse to a developer for housing.. Dandenong Council is opposing this as

are local residents. Council doesn't want housing on that large area. They want ....(you've guessed it!) ....OPEN SPACE!

### **Council's Budget for 2021/2022**

All MEG members with an email address have received the budget document and Cr. Griffin's response to it at Council Meeting April 19/2021. To those of you who decline to have your lives filled with the clutter of emails you can find hard copies of the budget document in your local library and at the Council's Service Centre at 311 Glenferrie Rd.

### **More about the proposed Budget**

In Stonnington Leader on April 20 Kiel Egging wrote that Stonnington Council's proposed budget contains a 3.5 per cent increase. *"The increase consists of the council clawing back the 2 per cent rise it waived after outcry from residents and traders last year, and another 1.5 per cent in line with this year's State Government rate cap. Chief Executive Jacqui Weatherill said a rate rise was unavoidable if the council wanted to maintain its healthy surplus and fund its capital works program. In February, the council was forecasting a \$14.7 million surplus at the end of this financial year---\$5.2 million less than initially expected.*

***If approved the budget is tipped to give the council a \$31.08 million surplus by July 2022. It contains \$82 million for projects including the revitalisation of Prahran Town hall, works at Harold Holt Swimming Centre and streetscape upgrades to the Chapel Street precinct and Toorak Village.***

*The Council has also set aside \$10.3 million for a "customer service improvements and digitisation program" and \$17.5 million to improve its parks and open spaces."*

We urge you to make a submission to this budget. You do not have to speak to it though many choose to do that. Your submission does not have to be lengthy. It does not have to cover every aspect of the paper.

**Chadstone Bowls Club** On March 14 the greens ...(no, NOT the political party)...at Chadstone Bowls Club were named after Denise Wallish and Jenny Lalor. We all remember when this Bowls Club was threatened with extinction by the previous Stonnington Council on that never-ending 5-4 vote. These two amazing women put in so much time, energy, skill and money in researching what Council records were available to them when "Chaddy Bowl Club" was threatened with extinction by the last Council. They even lodged an FOI appeal to VCAT against Council's refusal to provide documents at their own expense. It is great that they have received some public recognition of their work.

FOI works against residents, as we have discovered...see our first item under Local News.

### **Prahran Square**

This mostly concrete \$70 million open space on the old Cato St. carpark is listed on Council's website as **the jewel in the crown of Stonnington.**" Really???

At present Council seems to be the only body activating this expensive **jewel**. The Prahran Library has been moved to Prahran Square while the area that housed the library is being renovated and recently a 'Visitors Hub' was installed...and there was a jumble sale in the Square last weekend.

On the website it is referred to as *"the new cultural and recreational heart of Prahran"* and Kane Constructions won the Excellence in Civil Construction Award in 2020.

### **A snippet**

We were told by a local resident that one councillor advised her that her email would receive a response in 30 days time. The councillor to whom the resident had written was just too busy with other matters to deal with correspondence from residents.

MEG can only wonder WHY that particular person stood for a position on council. We can hazard a guess!

### **Tennis courts at Orrong Romanis Reserve**

At Council Meeting on April 19 councillors decided to approve the resurfacing of the tennis courts at Orrong Romanis Reserve so that they could be used for tennis AND netball. Prahran Netball Association will surely be pleased about that. Five more courts in the area where they are needed! With a bit of luck Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park will not be losing its significant trees after all. We should know for sure sometime this month.

### **A few of the Planning Applications in and around Malvern East**

**The Rialto West** Pt. dem. bldgs. And works to development in Ho.O. and SBO.

**6A Central Park Rd.. Pt. dem., alterations & addns to existing dwelling in H.O**

**55 Chadstone Rd.** Two double storey, side by side, dwellings.

**11 & 13 Darling Rd.** Cnr Maroora St. 3 storey bldg.. 23 apts 34 car spaces in GRZ.

**25 Nott St.** Alterations & addns to dwelling in H.O.

**17 Gauntlet Rd.** Dem. of existing dwelling & constr. of two 2 storey dwellings.

**14 Rotherwood Dr.** 3 unit development.

**1445 Dandenong Rd.** Constr. of res. bldg. & reduction in car parking req. 4 storeys, 22 apts. 18 car spaces, 8 bicycle spaces for res. & 8 for visitors.

**2 Beech St.** Construct 2 side by side townhouses.

**9-11 Ashley Gr. Malvern** Use, construct & illuminate a private tennis court.

**MEG MEETING....THURS. MAY 20...7.30p.m. EWING MEMORIAL CHURCH HALL**

**Cnr. BURKE RD. & COPPIN ST. MALVERN EAST**

**GUEST SPEAKER.....CLIFFORD HAYES**

**MLC ..Southern Metropolitan Region**

**“PROTECTING HERITAGE” and “FAST TRACKING”**