



MEG NEWSLETTER....NOV./ DEC.2014

From the Convenor's Desk

I've decided to declare my political allegiance. **I'm a NIMBY.** I know I'm a NIMBY because I don't want the wall of dual occ.on our property boundary, I don't want a neighbouring McMansion, I don't want a 'Guyscraper' anywhere near our home, I don't want to be overlooked or 'parked out' or imposed upon in any way. Selfish?? I suppose it is but who wants to be in the position of the John St. people with that monstrous 18 storey 'thing' in their backyards or the residents along St. John's Lane who are to have 7 & 8 storey Luna Park buildings with them for breakfast and who wants the Chadstone circus nearby and who wants the "not for profit" ever-expanding Cabrini on their doorstep? Not me! Most people I know including politicians are NIMBYs. Local councillors are NIMBYs too. Developers are NIMBYs.

"Don't dismiss Nimbys..."

In the Age Nov.7, Sally Young puts the case for NIMBYs. She cites 2 cases, one in Stonnington and one in Darebin, where the Council 'sought to protect local residents' but she says this is not always the case. *"Sometimes residents battle not just the developer, but their own council to try to stop a development."* She asserts that because of the huge increase in population in the last 15 years *"we should have seen the growth of satellite cities with their own job opportunities, amenities and good transport."*

(We can't tell you how often MEG has said, "BUILD a city! PLANT a city and stop destroying the one we've got.")

There's a mention of VCAT in the article...*"VCAT is an unelected body that has a documented history of favouring developers."* (See Remy Favre's '**VCAT EXPOSED**' on the MEG website.) She makes the point that *"developers who front VCAT often have an army of expensive expert witnesses to outgun residents who try to make a case."* ...Haven't we all experienced that scenario and haven't we all felt so helpless!

Using the correct terms

A letter in the Age on Nov.20 urges us to use the correct terms when dealing with the planning system. The writer suggests that we change *“objector to custodian,” “foreign investor to kids’ landlord” “skyscraper to Guyscraper”...“carpark waiver to street-clogger”...“political donations to deposits”...“open space to elevator shafts”...“contemporary design to concrete and glass.”*

We will never be objectors again. We will be custodians!

Reform of Donor Laws

In a discussion about the pre-election situation a MEG member was asked, “WHERE is all this money coming from?” and the immediate response was, “Developers!” Donations to political parties is certainly a hot issue and is tied up with the need to strengthen the powers of the Auditor-General and do something about that ‘toothless tiger’ IBAC.

The Sunday Age (Nov.9) reported that, *“Liberal insiders have confirmed that the party is awash with property industry money ahead of the election. Most of it will never be publicly revealed---Victoria does not regulate political donations.”* Federal laws require that any single donation over \$12,400 be declared to the Australian Electoral Commission and these are not published until 18 months after the election.

Tim Smith (yes, another one!)...this one’s a QC and founder of the Accountability Round Table...says that politicians should put public interest above everything else. In the Age Nov.17 a report says that *“ART is asking each main party about their positions on three probity issues: unshackling IBAC, political funding and freedom of information.”* At the time of writing ART was still waiting for a response from State Government. Apparently the ALP says it will give the watchdog some fangs but is unspecific and the Greens want IBAC (Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Committee) to have the powers that ICAC has in NSW.

At a recent AGM that MEG attended the 3 candidates were asked if they would support public funding of election campaigns. The Greens said they would, the ALP candidate said he would “look into it” and the Liberal candidate said, “Certainly not. It’s a fundamental right.” MEG suspects that the Greens get the least amount in donations of any party and would benefit the most from such public funding.

Guy's Legacy

Professor Michael Buxton of RMIT has been a strident critic of Planning Ministers and the Matthew Guy is his latest target. In the Age on Nov.2, Michael pulled no punches. He declared that we have ***"A Melbourne beyond recognition for the worse."*** We have 'inner high-rise and outer sprawl ' with inner Melbourne *"being delivered to international investors"* and as a result we have *"tiny apartments performing worst on every building criteria."* He declared that Guy has given us one of the world's most deregulated planning systems and this *"empowers developers and disenfranchises citizens and reduces local government to a cipher."* He calls for *"greater probity."* Another public figure wanting accountability! MEG wonders if we'll ever get it.

And more attacks on Matthew Guy

On Nov.2 Heckler reported that Kennett declared he was *"accepting progress with some regret,"* and decried *"glass upon glass buildings in your face."* Winsome McCaughey was aghast and said, *"We're building an asylum –it's the old thing of greed taking over. Now it seems to be just shoving things up."* Heckler's favourite was John Cain, *"You can't just take one aspect of it and go willy-nilly and helter-skelter without considering the other aspects."*

'Willy-nilly, helter-skelter'...now that really simplifies the planning system!

Apartment Design Standards

You might remember that we told you that the Government Architect had submitted guidelines to the then Government's Planning Department and that at our last meeting with Mr Guy we were informed that these were confidential. According to an article in Sunday Age on Nov.23 *"draft document Better Apartment Design....was leaked. No-one knows by whom. But according to the Australian Institute of Architects Victorian chapter president Peter Malatt, the planning department wasn't happy with them Among the recommended guidelines were minimum requirements on apartment sizes and windows in all habitable rooms."*

So **where** are these guidelines? Why were they confidential in the first place? Is it because developers would be forced to stop the insidious practice of slapping together a number of 'dog-boxes' and getting a permit to build them because there's no way they can be stopped under the present system?

Treeless Outer Suburbs...a health risk

On Dec.2 ABC Adelaide reported that *."Urban planners and researchers warn that increasing density in Australian cities must not be at the expense of tree cover and its cooling effects."*

MEG's observations are that the outer suburbs are being developed without trees and the inner and middle suburbs are seeing on a daily basis trees being destroyed to make way for housing. The area from Tooronga Rd. to Finch St. and is systematically being "de-greened." MEG has been told that 'you can't fetter development to save the trees' and MEG says, 'why not?' We understand that a number of significant trees are to be destroyed to make way for that wretched development around Caulfield Racecourse. This means that those who can afford it will put in air-conditioners which means a greater use of power...and on it goes. Residents wouldn't need to do this if more trees were planted. Indeed residents wouldn't need to do this if so many trees were not destroyed. A Boroondara resident told us recently that their municipality was losing trees every day and we venture to say that this is happening in every established municipality. The appalling lack of common sense in the entire planning process never cease to amaze and appal us.

945-947 Dandenong Rd.

Talking of minimum standards there's a recent application for the old Masonic Temple site. The applicant wants a 5 storey building for 93 student accommodation units ranging from 17 sq.m. to 19 sq.m. with 20 of these gems receiving light from a light well...(i.e they have no windows)..and a ceiling height of 2.5m...only 3 car spaces for the whole complex. The units are slightly larger than the size required for a car space!

The reason the applicant gives for providing only 3 car spaces is that the car parks in all the local purpose-built student accommodation buildings are virtually empty. The reason for this is that the car spaces are separately sub-divided and subsequently available for students to rent. Students usually can't afford to pay rent for the unit AND rent for the car space....

We know that the very minimum standards apply to student accommodation and we know that this site is on Dandenong Rd. and we know it's near Monash Caulfield and we know they'll probably get away with it ... and MEG is appalled.

Chadstone Shopping Centre

MEG has been told that residents in the vicinity of CSC have received notice that construction work will take place out of the agreed hours. A MEG member has requested Council to look into this matter. We have no idea of

Cresthaven... 239-241 Waverley Rd. & 1(a) The Avenue

We've told you about this proposal in earlier newsletters. Blue Cross wants to demolish all of the buildings they own on Waverley Rd. between The Avenue and Ash Grove. The new Aged Care facility will be largely 3 storeys with internal gardens. There will be 118 beds with en s uites and associated communal facilities. The main wall of the building will present to The Avenue a height of 12.2m and to Ash Grove 10.7m and the top of the pitched roof on Waverley Rd. will be 14.5m.

At Council Meeting Dec.1 the Pl. Dept. recommended a NOD with pages of conditions and Councillors put up a Refusal on 4 grounds. Blue Cross now has the option of appealing to VCAT. If this is done the appeal will be on the Major Cases list and will be fast-tracked.

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Council's Planning Register online is not available at the moment so we are mentioning just a few of the many Planning Applications in which MEG members are involved.

- 32 Tooronga Rd. Dual Occ. Adv. complete.
- 72,74 & 76 Serrell St. 61 dwellings, 113 car spaces. Decision at Council Meeting on Dec. 15.
- 226-228 Waverley Rd. 25 apts and associated car parking. Decision at Council Meeting on Dec.15.
- 1015-1019 Dandenong Rd. Use of land as motel & emergency accommodation. Planner assessment.
- 383 Wattletree Rd...Multi-unit development. Appealed. Awaiting date.
- 11, 13 & 15 Chadstone Rd. Only 1 objection lodged. Planner Assessment.
- 86 Burke Rd. Multi-unit dev. with reduction in required car parking. On advertising.
- 18 Goode St. 2 dwellings on a lot. Appeal against a NOD. Awaiting hearing.
- 1009-1011 Dandenong Rd. Multi-dwelling. Appeal against Refusal. Awaiting order.
- 18-20 Leopold St. Glen Iris...3 storey multi-unit dev. Advertising complete. 37 objections. Awaiting Planner assessment.

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MEG Subscriptions

Thanks to all those people who renewed their MEG membership and welcome to those who joined us this year. To those who decided not to renew we thank you for your support in the past.