



MEG Newsletter November/December 2015

From the Convenor's Desk

It is difficult to deal with our usual business when awful things are happening in the world but it seems that nothing totally distracts people from a threatened development invading their particular space and we still need to do what we can to preserve our own bit of the world. Alas, we can't save the world and we have extraordinary trouble even saving our own little corner of it but for the time being I intend to persevere in informing you of what's happening in our little bit of the universe. The daily papers will inform you of the rest...and even occasionally tell you about what's proposed for where we live. We all need to continue to oppose the mentality of *'profit at any price,' 'the destruction of nature' and the 'largely faceless property developers.'*

Stonnington website

No sooner had we told you how to access the files for planning applications on advertising online than Council staff changed the website. The new instructions are ...go to **Stonnington Council**, click on **Development**, click on **Advertised Material**, click on the address you want. The PDF files will appear. If the address you want is out of advertising you will need to ring the Planning Department or go to their new 'home' at 311 Glenferrie Rd. Malvern. The Planning Register which lists all properties is offline until 2016.

VCAT

This is a never-ending saga and over the years of MEG's existence we have done everything we can think of to have VCAT meet its primary aim of delivering "natural justice" and stop their endless excuse for not doing so by proclaiming, "We only follow the rules."

The latest story on the grapevine will appal you as much as it did us. We were told that a resident of a distant municipality during a phone conversation with VCAT staff was told that the developer had asked for a particular Member to hear the case.

Unbelievable!!! To confirm this information another person (not from Stonnington) visited 55 King St. and asked at the front desk if an applicant could ask for (and get) a particular Member and was told that it does happen and if the Member is available the applicant gets what he/she requests!

Also on the grapevine MEG heard that a particular Member described the atmosphere at VCAT as "toxic." Glad Members recognize it too!

CCC Meetings

On October 14 the Community Consultation Committee of Planning Backlash met with the Shadow Attorney General, John Pesuto and outlined AGAIN the flaws in the process at VCAT. We made particular mention of the fact that expert witnesses are not required to give **sworn evidence**. You might remember that the Senior Advisor

to the Attorney General was surprised to hear that. We have found that MPs in general know little or nothing about what goes on at VCAT. On December 4 we met with the Minister Wynne and discussed a range of issues. (He appeared to be appalled about the VCAT story!) Before meeting with Planning Ministers the CCC has to meet to decide on an agenda which has to be sent in prior to the meeting. Planning Ministers don't like surprises. A considerable amount of time is spent preparing for and attending these meetings.

“Teen ‘thought bubbles’ danger to the city”

Age Aug.19 *“Roger Poole the outgoing chairman of architectural firm Bates Smart has issued a stern warning to architects, developers and planners about the ‘adolescent thought bubbles’ going up in the latest high-rise building boom.”* Poole is not against high-rise and high density (pity!) but thinks there's a place for it. (MEG would agree and suggests Hong Kong...not Melbourne.) Poole wants to *“protect our existing suburban areas that work well.”* He says that there's plenty of land for new developments...e.g. Fisherman's Bend, E-Gate, a 20 hectare parcel of land between Docklands and North Melbourne station. MEG wonders if Roz Hansen heard anything about *“protecting our existing suburban areas”* when she was writing *“Plan Melbourne Refresh.”* (MEG heard her say recently on radio that the solution to our transport problems is BUSES! How about that for an original thought!)

An interesting aside... Bates Smart is responsible for Crown...’nuff said!

New rules for high-rise...came in on September 4/15

And the question is...is it too late for Melbourne? In the Age on Oct. 17 Shane Green wrote...*“My city was fast becoming a Shadowland, a bleak and uninviting place of concrete towers that changed not only the micro-climate but the feel of the place...”*

For a moment we thought he was referring to Stonnington's very own ‘bleak and uninviting place of concrete towers’...the Forrest Hill Precinct in Sth Yarra and the mini one on our own doorstep the result of Amendment C173, the area from Tooronga Rd. to Bates St. in Dandenong Rd. Malvern East. How many more Shadowlands are being built as we write this newsletter? The “new rules” give the **appearance of action**, just like the pathetic “Recognising Objectors” Bill. It's all ‘smoke and mirrors.’

Green also mentioned the *“gradual erosion of important buildings that add to the richness of Melbourne yet don't have the necessary level of protection to prevent them being demolished.”*

MEG's comment is that we are slowly but surely losing the historic fabric of what was once a beautiful Victorian city.

Time to create a new vision for Melbourne.

Herald Sun Oct. 12...*“Melbourne is the world's most liveable city because of its people...”* says Greg Hunt (Federal Minister for the Environment). Clearly the Minister is not familiar with the Economist's Index that rates liveability. He mentions the original plans for a city and goes on to say *“almost half a century ago, then premier Dick Hamer and his ministers Bill Borthwick and Alan Hunt (Greg Hunt's father) planned out the next great expansion of Melbourne from 2 million to 4 million **by reserving the green wedges, preserving the Mornington Peninsula and creating the corridors for the future road and rail needs.**”*

Green wedges...well they sort of disappeared into the hands of developers. Our roads are gridlocked and rail...well that's another story. Wasn't there a rail link to the airport somewhere in the plans?

And NOW, says the Minister, it's time for **another grand vision**.

Why bother? Greed tends to cancel 'grand visions' before there's a chance to complete them.

Developer contributions

We quote a letter to the Age on Nov.28...

"Property developers know the game; their donations to a political party buy them influence, support and opportunities to line their pockets with fat profits."

On Nov.26 it was reported that the Ombudsman has called to *"clean up political donations to avoid perceptions of politicians being bought."*

(And MEG says, "As if we the people would **ever** think that politicians could **ever** be bought!") The article says that Minister Wynne wouldn't comment on the Ombudsman's suggestion and said that it was Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings' responsibility. A Bill regarding this matter will be introduced into Parliament during week ending December 12.

Monash Council failed the 'communications' test

Monash Leader reported on Nov.15 that Council intended to employ a "leading edge and innovative" communications expert (cost unknown) because Council may have "lost" some people's interest in the new residential zones. Apparently the technical language used in the letters to 133,000 residents of the municipality was incomprehensible and response was too limited for a decision to be made on the zones. Monash Council was ranked "poor" in the 2014 communications survey. Not really surprising!

The need for green

Some years ago we talked of the 'greying of Stonnington'...and we weren't talking about our hair! We were referring to the gradual destruction of trees and the loss of our green canopy. The need for trees is well-known. They absorb pollution, provide an outdoor cooling effect, cool our houses and promote a calming effect. Street trees can never compensate for the loss of the diversity of trees and shrubs in private gardens nor can any number of garden walls or rooftop gardens compensate for the inexorable destruction of plant life. We lose trees and shrubs on a daily basis.

An Urban Designer's comments re 2 significant trees on a site in Malvern East were that in keeping with State Government's Urban consolidation policy the trees would have to go to make way for 8 storeys of dogboxes. (Well, he didn't say dogboxes...we did!) In other words, trees are an expendable item and no fatuous words in any Government or Council document about "tree policies" will compensate for Planning authorities not telling developers that if they must build then they have to build around the trees.

Minister Wynne is passionate about the 'tree' issue and we have asked him to include some protection for the green canopy in the State planning laws as we believe that Local Policies take a second place to State Government requirements.

(N.B. In August 2013 MEG's home was assessed for a Green Loan by the Federal Dept. of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and because of the number of trees and shrubs we've planted and the verandas on the house it was recommended that we only needed to make some minor changes to our use of energy and water. The

assessor said that without the trees and verandahs we would have needed to make costly major changes and we would have needed the loan that was on offer. They offered us a loan of \$50. We didn't bother with that!

The loss of our heritage fabric.

We're sure you have all read about the destruction of "Idylewylde" at 16 St. Georges Rd. Toorak after Mathew Guy's refusal to grant a request from Council for protection. Permission to demolish "Arden" in a Heritage Overlay at 1045 Burke Rd. Camberwell was granted by VCAT and VCAT's decision was upheld by the Supreme Court after Boroondara Council's attempts to save it. The Princess Mary Club in the CBD is to be destroyed. Day after day the very fabric that made this city "Marvellous Melbourne" is being lost. If you live in a heritage area and think you're safe, think again. The protection you have is a temporary reprieve.

Major national debate about population ... Matthew Guy

(Age Dec.1) Leader of the Opposition Matthew Guy says that it's time for a discussion with community, business and political leaders about population. Mr. Guy is "very, very sure that the 4,500,000 people of Melbourne think our city is bursting." (Dead right there!) He poses the question, "Can you imagine it with another million people on top of this, as it will be in 15 years time?" (Everybody else is talking **8 million!**) According to the article by Josh Gordon Mr. Guy thinks that there could be incentives to encourage growth in regional cities. Well! Well! Well! He must have heard what we said over a period of 4 years of his apparently not hearing us! MEG's Convenor will continue to say..."Strategically directed, incentive driven de-centralisation will enable this state to cope with a population increase."

Over 50 and still living in a house with a backyard?

If you said yes to that then you are among the selfish people depriving 'young' people of their right to have what you worked for. According to the Fin. Review on Dec.2 the Productivity Commission is proposing that retirees should downsize. It's being called "compulsory downsizing." Unbelievable! (Pesky 'over 50's!) It seems that there's a moral obligation to downsize so the younger generation. Is not disadvantaged. Have you ever heard such twaddle!

Other headlines to raise your blood pressure

Crumbling Mount Waverley construction pit.....(N.B. Bill to come to Parliament week ending Dec. 12/16...attempt to control building industry.)

Parents anger at sale of school sites. (Teeth-grinding heard!)

Trees have benefits. (Applause!)

Guy shut out experts on Fishermans Bend (Are we surprised?)

Lib donors land bonanza (More teeth grinding!)

Don't erase all our history (Hear! Hear!)

..... Some Local Snippets.....

Not getting the Leader?

If the Leader is not being delivered in your street ring 9818 1139. Make sure you speak to someone. Don't leave a message If you continue to miss out ring again and, if necessary, again. Nagging works!

11-15 Chadstone Rd.

Holmesglen sold this site to a local developer in October for \$3.66 million. It was bought with a Permit for 6 two storey townhouses. Not a blow has been struck since the sale and to our knowledge no new application has been lodged. The site is in a GRZ10 zone with a maximum height limit of 9m.

267-271 Waverley Rd.

This site is in the shopping strip at the Terminus which has a Heritage Overlay. After a number of attempts to get a permit for the usual over-development the developer finally got one for a scaled down development..i.e. 2 storeys, 9 apts. and 3 shops. With great enthusiasm in 2012 the buildings were demolished **including the heritage façade**. The Permit stated that this had to be retained. Nothing could be done on site until the façade was replaced. The site was then put up for sale.

Cabrini...with impeccable timing!

Cabrini's at it again with full page advertisements in both the Leader and Weekly Review (wonder how much that cost!) telling the community that they intend to go ahead with their 7storey clinical building on the corner of Isabella St. and Wattletree Rd. (subject to Council approval.) Local residents will be pleased to read that Cabrini recognizes that this is a large project (gosh!) and that it **may** cause disruption for staff, patients, visitors **and neighbours**. (Glad the 'neighbours' got a mention.) Cabrini wants to minimise inconvenience to ensure swift project completion. In other words...whether you like it or not Cabrini is intending to get Council approval and go ahead.

After the ads appeared on Nov.10 a letter was sent to some residents telling them about the application and announcing an Information Session on Mon.Dec.7. On Nov.30 Yellow Notices were posted in Wattletree Rd. and Isabella St. On Dec. 3 residents were officially notified by Council. Does this timing sound wrong to you? Certainly does to MEG!

They assured readers in their advertisement that they get no Government or Church funding. Considering the prices at Cabrini we can't imagine why they would need any other funding. For example we're informed that 23,000 + people visit Emergency every year. MEG is told that the non-refundable charge for appearing at Cabrini Emergency is just on \$500. And don't forget that we told you in a previous newsletter that Cabrini made a profit of \$10 million on its last property sale.

At the Information Session on Dec. 7 MEG was told that Cabrini is an institution and as such has no height controls and "***we can do whatever we like.***"

Masonic Temple

The 5 storey building for student accommodation will commence very soon.

Corner Tooronga & Dandenong Rds. (18 storeys)

MEG member sent us a copy of an advertisement for apartments in this thing. The ad. was in Chinese only. The nearby area was not letter-boxed. We think that Vanguard may not consider us as future owners in that complex.

We suppose you realise that 322 apartments will have a greater population than some country towns in Victoria....and that's **one** apartment block.

Around Chadstone

Residents in the area are preparing for the onslaught of vehicles during the Christmas period while contemplating with some degree of horror the sheer size of the new development. (MEG is still contemplating the whizz-bang Bus Interchange! Beggars belief!)

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

A letter from DELWP to Glen Eira Residents' Association assures residents that the Department has been meeting regularly with the member of the Trust to ensure that the Auditor-General's recommendation re the management of **OUR** land are implemented. There will be a "*a performance monitoring and reporting regime.*" It has to be "*managed in accordance with modern standards of good public sector governance*"...whatever that means. (Is that like Deakin University selling off Stonington mansion and the site all of which belonged to the people of Victoria?) Finally DELWP has received an application for the use of the reserve for an outdoor cinema and the Dept. considers that this is consistent with the purpose of the Reserve. MEG emphasises that **no trees** will be planted on **OUR** land.

Covenants

Residents will be aware that many of the covenants in Stonnington are "no quarrying" covenants. The ones that restrict the development or use of the land can be contentious. The terms of the covenant can be complex and establishing who the beneficiaries are is a time-consuming process. Applications for the removal of covenants could be made through Council or the Supreme Court but on Oct. 19/15 Council determined not to consider further requests to vary or remove restrictive covenants via the Planning Scheme. (See Notice Paper Oct. 19/15..p.89.)

Planning Applications

Please note...this is a very brief list. So much is happening in our suburb and our time for searches has been limited during this period. We had to take into account the Pl. Dept. moving to Glenferrie Rd., the Planning Register being offline and general mayhem...so bear with us.

VCAT hearings

114-116 Argyll St. Against Refusal to Grant. Jan.11/16 for 4 days.

267-271 Waverley Rd. Compulsory Conference Feb.16/16. Hearing for 2 days
May 4/16

86 Burke Rd. Against Refusal to Grant. Oct.19/15. Awaiting decision.

168-172 Waverley Rd. Change of use. Requirement to give notice. Nov.13/15.

24 Kardella St. Against Decision to Grant. Feb. 29/16

84 Burke Rd. Against Refusal to Grant. April 4/16

7 John St. Demolition of dwelling & dev. of 2 storey dwelling on a lot less than 500sq.m. Permit issued.

21-23 Waverley 4 storey licensed restaurant with caretakers's residence (Height 19m. plus 1.1m for lift overrun.) Reduction of car parking requirements. 7 days a weeks from 7a.m. to 11p.m. 247 patrons including 68 outside
Cons. Mtg. Dec.10 at 6 p.m.

15 Mountfield Av. Application to vary covenant from one to two dwellings.
Application withdrawn