



From the Convenors

A warm welcome to our new members and thanks to all those people who have renewed their MEG membership. If you have not done so since July 1/11 this is the last MEG newsletter you will receive. We appreciate your past support.

In this newsletter we have an Editorial from George Mackey on the population debate, an article from David Dammary about the ubiquitous “box on the back”... that thing we can see throughout the Heritage areas of Stonnington (David says, “Pity we don’t do photos!”), a review by Mathew Knight of the fascinating documentary about the St. Kilda Triangle called “The Triangle Wars”...and from me a collection of State and Local Planning news.

Editorial

The subject of population growth is both divisive and fuelled by ideologically driven vested interests. The fact of life however is that population growth is the strategic driver of conflict in the local planning process.

For the past 15 years Federal Governments of both persuasions have supported population growth driven by high levels of immigration.

All Governments like high population growth because it’s a lazy way of generating growth in GDP. That’s not just our view: economists such as Bob Birrell and Ross Gittens also support such a view. But promises of better infrastructure are rarely delivered. Meanwhile our public transport systems become even more crowded; traffic chokes our streets; public hospital waiting times increase, parklands disappear, trees are removed from our

suburbs; and high-rise development intrudes into residential areas. All in the name of progress.

But there are many different views about population growth.

The Committee for Melbourne argues that we are in the middle of a housing shortage, and that the power of Residents’ Groups should be curbed to permit more high density development in our City. On the other hand the 2006 census showed that there are about 830,000 unoccupied dwellings across Australia. That’s four times as many dwellings as there are in the City of Canberra. So what housing shortage, we ask?

We are told that we need more foreign workers to pay for the baby boomers when we leave the workforce. We NEED foreign workers, we are told. On the other hand Productivity Commission modelling concludes that increased migration is unlikely to have a significant and lasting effect on the ageing of Australia’s population. So what are the real ageing population issues, we ask?

The Mining industry wants to import more foreign workers, but with reduced skills and lower English language qualifications than the current rules require. The Building industry and the Tourism industry have joined in with similar demands to import more foreign workers. On the other hand we are told that youth unemployment in the City of Hume, in Melbourne’s North East, is currently running at about 53% and that most people who migrate to Australia on a 457 (skilled migration) visas settle not in the mining areas but in Sydney and Melbourne. What labour shortage, we ask?

So what the hell is going on? What is the National Strategy? Who is accountable?

Ministerial Advisory Panel on Planning

On September 30 Mary Drost (Planning Backlash), Christine Pruneau (Macedon Ranges Residents Association) and Ann Reid (MEG) met with members of the Panel which must present its recommendations to Minister Guy by the end of November. City and rural issues were discussed. We had been asked to tell the Panel what is good about planning in this State and what is not. MEG could only find one good thing and that is that third party rights still exist. Alas, there is an ever-present threat to diminish these. The Minister is keen on code assessment for developments under 10 units. This means that as long as the development complies with strict guidelines there can be no objections. The Panel indicated to us that this would be with us in the near future and also that New Residential Zones is a certainty. The Panel did not want to discuss VCAT and we pointed out that it is unrealistic to conduct a review of the planning system and exclude a major player such as VCAT. MEG suggested that the Panel request the Minister in conjunction with the Attorney General to instigate an external review of VCAT. As you can imagine many issues were discussed...loss of open space, loss of the green canopy, loss of heritage, sale and development of public land, appalling lack of attention to infrastructure particularly in the established areas, the unfortunate dependence on the construction industry to fuel the economy, the push for more and more people in Melbourne, the fact that there is no real **planning** just knee jerk reactions which result in more and more inappropriate development. We emphasised that there should be vision for the STATE, a plan for the STATE, not just another plan for Melbourne.

The Box at the Back

Inappropriate development takes many forms.

One of the more subtle forms of inappropriate development, and therefore

all the more visually jarring, is the creation of a square box of house extension behind the existing façade. There are several particularly offensive examples in the Malvern East area. It remains a mystery how these extensions could have passed planning restrictions in Heritage areas. One of the several purposes of the Heritage Overlay for parts of our suburb is to preserve the streetscape and the visual appearance of an area that was evenly developed in a particular period style. To create ‘a box at the back’ that is out of keeping with the style of the existing dwelling, made from different materials and sometimes painted differently is what has been called ‘façadism’. It fails to maintain ambience and simply pays lip service to the heritage value of an area. The box at the back is even more inexcusable when we have some excellent examples in Malvern East of extensions where the work has been done in such a way that the overall appearance of the building remains essentially unchanged. The roof line, the use of building materials and the style are fully in keeping with the area.

The box at the back is another form of development that we must be alert to – and resist in every possible way.

857 Dandenong Rd.

This site with a Permit for a 7 storey building for 110 student units has been sold and the new owner has lodged an application for a boundary to boundary 7 storey building for 59 one and two bedroom apartments with 52 car spaces, car stackers, one shop, 12 bicycle spaces and bicycle spaces on Dandenong Rd. and Clarence St. The existing Permit allows for a minimum setback from St.John’s Lane. This application allows for no setbacks anywhere. It’s a daunting prospect for the residents in the single storey units on the Lane and at 2 Clarence St.

875-879 Dandenong Rd.

Beside the proposed 7 storey building at 857 Dandenong Rd. is the blue Monash University building and right beside that to the east is a new application for a 6 storey building with 2 levels of basement car parking for 55 apartments and 50 car spaces. All cars will use St. John's Lane as the carpark entrance. The traffic report for 857 indicates that there will be 299 car movements a day from that address into Clarence St. so we can assume that the number will be about the same for 875-879. At present St. John's Lane has 80 car movements a day. This will increase to approximately 380. With no height limits allowed by the Panel for the Waverley Rd. UDF from Bates St. to Tooronga Rd. it looks as if we can expect a wall of at least 6-7 storey buildings in that area.

Victoria House Medical Centre

Those of you have used the hospital and/or the clinics at this centre in Malvern Road might not be aware that it has been sold to a syndicate of private investors for a reputed \$18.7million. Healthscope has a lease in place until 2018 but it is reported that the new owners would consider it becoming a residential site in the future. More apartment complexes is just what Prahran needs!

Racecourse Hotel...Malvern East

The hotel is up for sale. It is in a small Heritage Overlay so hopefully it won't be bought by developers who can manage to bypass the overlay.

Fast-Tracking at VCAT

When the Attorney General put a stop to the fast-tracking of developments of \$5 million plus we thought that the big developers would have to stand in line for a hearing date just the same as anyone else. Not so!!! In September fast-tracking was re-instated ...this time for developments of \$10 million plus with the developer paying costs. The Labor

Government did not tell us that their fast-tracking was funded by the taxpayer.

East Ward Meeting...Oct.12

As usual various issues were discussed at the meeting. Many people were there to discuss quite angrily the situation re 1650 Malvern Rd. Glen Iris. Apparently this is being run as a boarding house and residents are resentful of the behaviour of the occupants of the building...e.g. the open use of drugs & alcohol, noise, aggression...and they want Council to do something about it. They claim that Council passes the buck to the police and vice versa. We have no doubt that after that meeting action will be taken.

The community representative on the Penpraze Park Committee raised the issue of Malvern Primary School encroaching even further onto the park to the extent that the local community has tended to stay away altogether. We should all be aware that the park belongs to Council and not to the Education Department for the sole use by the school. Councillor O'Shea undertook to investigate the matter.

Hot Off the Press

Leader (Nov. 15) reported that cleaners at Chadstone may walk off the job leading into the Christmas shopping period. That will add a nice touch to the general mayhem.

Helpful Hint

If you are having trouble getting an answer from Council regarding anything at all MEG suggests that you use Item (e) on the Council Agenda. Item (e) is 'Questions to Council from Members of the Public.' You can write your question or email it to Council prior to a Council Meeting. It won't be read or answered at the meeting but under Local Law you have to be given an answer in writing within 10 days.

1929 Plan for Melbourne

It is interesting to note that in the 1929 plan 113 trains pulled into Flinders St.

station every hour during peak hour. In 2011 we can only manage 108 per hour during the peak period.

Population Puzzle...DVD

Copies of Dick Smith's DVD "Population Puzzle" are available for borrowing from Stonnington Libraries. This population debate continues to be a divisive subject.

Heritage Overlays on Stables & Dairies

On November 7/2011 Council resolved to request the Minister to prepare Amendment C145 which would give heritage protection to eleven Stables & Dairies. Those in Malvern East are the former Malvern Dairy & Residence at 37-39 Clarence St., former Caulfield Butter Factory at 1091 Dandenong Rd., former Stables/Barn at the rear of 17 Dundonald St. and the former Nirvana Dairy at 60 Belgrave Rd. The others listed are in different areas of Stonnington.

590 Orrong Rd.

Council has completed consultation on its controversial UDF for this site. The Draft includes 8 storey buildings. Orrong Group is not happy about that. On Sept. 16 LendLease lodged a Planning Application with towers of 12 storeys comprising 475 units. Council requested the Minister to place interim height controls on the site to bring about a pause in the proceedings. Will the Minister or won't the Minister.....?????

The Triangle Wars

Triangle Wars is a fascinating insight into what happens when a vocal and active local community come together and fight a massive development in St. Kilda. Filmed as a documentary over three years, it includes interviews with all of the key players and exposes what really is taking place behind the scenes. The subsequent Ombudsman's Report and Port Phillip Council election result is the climax. Look for it in the cinema columns and don't miss it.

Planning Applications

Listed are **some** of the Planning Applications in Malvern East.

857 Dandenong Rd. 7 storeys, 59 one & 2br apartments, 52 carspaces. Advertising.

875-879 Dandenong Rd. 7 storeys, 55 apartments, 50 carspaces. To be advertised.

253 Waverley Rd. 3 & 4 storeys, mixed use, plus 5 two storey townhouses.

Against Refusal to Grant. VCAT Nov.2, 3 & 4. Awaiting decision.

278 Waverley Rd. Bldgs & works and business signage in a H.O. Against Refusal to Grant. VCAT Nov.2 Awaiting decision.

36 Hughes St. Dual Occ. Against Refusal to Grant. VCAT endorsed Council's Refusal.

3 Findon St. Dual Occ. Against Failure to Determine. VCAT Dec.1.

6 Chanak St. Extension at rear of dwelling. Against Decision to Grant. Awaiting date.

123 Manning Rd. Construction of 2 dwellings on a lot under 500sq.m.

7 Wattle Gr. Dual occ. Against Refusal to Grant. VCAT 13 Oct. Awaiting decision.

617 Waverley Rd. Second dwelling on a lot. Against Refusal to Grant. VCAT Oct.11. Awaiting decision.

22A Findon St. Second storey addition. Against Decision to Grant. VCAT Oct.7. Awaiting decision.

221 Waverley Rd. Medical Centre.

36 Karma Av., 25 Finch St, 19 Karma Av... These applications are all for part dem., alterations & additions to dwellings in Heritage Overlays.

35 Darling Rd. Constr. of second dwelling on a lot. Permit issued.

12-16 Carrum St. 3 storeys, 25 apartments, basement car parking for 31 cars. In advertising.

8 Steele St. Alterations & additions to a dwelling on a lot less than 500 sq.m.

